

# THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

## The Wonder of His Presence

Sunday, December 3, 2023

Luke 2:8-9

Sometimes the familiar has a way of being overlooked, undervalued, and even ignored. The Christmas story is like that. We have heard it so many times, if we aren't careful, we will hurry through December. Overlooking, undervaluing, and even ignoring the Christ of Christmas. Through this series of messages, I pray you will be inspired to renew your "Wonder of Christmas." Today we will begin a study from Luke 2:8-20. The text reveals the story of shepherds who were tending their flocks when God makes His presence known! God's presence had a profound impact.

**Key Thought: When you experience God's presence, your life will be profoundly impacted.**

**Key verses: Luke 2:8-9,18**

"Wondered" – to be amazed at an event an occurrence, to marvel, to be in awe, to be struck with admiration or astonishment.

### God makes His presence known!

#### God's omnipresence – Psalm 139:7-12

"God's omnipresence is His attribute of being everywhere at once. He is omnipresent even when we do not experience His presence; He is here, even if we do not recognize Him."

#### God's manifest presence

God's manifest presence is His presence made manifest—the fact that He is with us is made clear and convincing. "There is a difference between saying "God is everywhere," and saying "God is here."

#### 1. Theophany –

"The word theophany comes from the Greek word theos (meaning "God") and the Greek verb meaning "to appear." So a theophany is an appearance of God."<sup>1</sup> Theophanies show that the heart of God is to be physically and visibly and inseparably present with His people.

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Some of the theophanies are found in these passages:

- Genesis 12:7-9
- Genesis 18:1-33
- Genesis 32:22-30
- Exodus 3:2-4:17
- Exodus 24:9-11
- Deuteronomy 31:14-15
- Job 38-42 physically and visibly and inseparably present with His people.

Frequently, the term “glory of the Lord” reflects a theophany, as in Exodus 24:16-18; the “pillar of cloud” has a similar function in Exodus 33:9. A frequent introduction for theophanies may be seen in the words “the Lord came down,” as in Genesis 11:5; Exodus 34:5; Numbers 11:25; and 12:5.

## 2. Christophany – (John 1:1-14)

A Christophany is an appearance of Christ!

Some Bible commentators believe that whenever someone received a visit from “the angel of the Lord,” this was in fact the pre-incarnate Christ. These appearances can be seen in Genesis 16:7-14; Genesis 22:11-18; Judges 5:23; 2 Kings 19:35; and other passages. Other commentators believe these were in fact angelophanies, or appearances of angels. While there are no indisputable Christophanies in the Old Testament, every theophany wherein God takes on human form foreshadows the incarnation, where God took the form of a man to live among us as Emmanuel, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23).<sup>2</sup>

## 3. The Holy Spirit – The Holy Spirit is the personal presence of Christ operating in the life of the Believer (John 14:18-21)

**When you experience God’s presence you will be profoundly impacted!**

The first human ambassadors of the Gospel were humble shepherds who hastened to see the Baby and then told everybody what they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20). The Greek verb for “found” in v. 16 means “to find after a search.” The Magi had a star to guide them (Matt. 2), but all the shepherds had was the sign given them by the angel (v. 12). The shepherds, like the angels before them, glorified and praised God (v. 20).<sup>3</sup>

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## Shepherds

- Seeking (v. 15)
- Experiencing (v. 16)
- Testifying (v. 17)
- Praising (v. 20)

## “All who heard it” (v. 18)

- They were amazed, some would receive.
- They were amazed, some would reject.

## Mary (v. 19)

- Treasured all these things.
- Pondered

*“It is the presence of Christ with His people, in His people, working through His people, that makes us distinctive in this world.” - Nancy Leigh DeMoss Wolgemuth*

The presence of God provides everything you need in this life and the next.

- The presence of God will keep you from sin.
- It will encourage you.
- It will give you strength.
- It will give you courage and boldness.
- It will set you free from fear.
- The presence of God gives wisdom.
- It gives guidance.
- It gives protection.

(Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 43:2)

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What steps might you take to become more aware of God's presence this Christmas season?

*Cultivating God's presence requires you to...*

- 1. Slow down** – Psalm 46:10 (NASB95) <sup>10</sup> “Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”
- 2. Pursue the Lord!** Read your Bible, pray, meditate on God's Word. Remember Mary treasured and pondered “all these things.”
- 3. Live generously!** God's greatest demonstration of His love was when He gave His Son. God's great generosity toward us compels our generosity.
- 4. Prioritize worship!** “An appropriate place to begin a study on praise and worship would be with God's presence. We need to understand that the purpose of praise and worship is two-fold. First, to glorify God, and second, to enter His presence.”

**Scriptures to “treasure and ponder”:** (Exodus 33:14–15, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 41:2, Psalm 95:2, Psalm 140:13, Isaiah 9:3, Matthew 1:21–23; Matthew 28:19–20, John 15:5, Acts 3:19, Revelation 21:3)

Jude 24 (NASB95) <sup>24</sup> Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.

2 Thessalonians 1:8–9 (NASB95) <sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, **away from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ligonier.org/podcasts/simply-put/theophany-and-christophany>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/theophany-Christophany.html>

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament (p. 151). Victor Books.