

December 2012

**Lighted  Lamp  
Magazine**



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*photography by Isaac Swanson*

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# From the Editor

Simeon and Anna are two of the most forgotten parts of the Christmas story. After Jesus' birth, His parents brought Him to the temple to present Him to the Lord, and while they were there, Simeon and Anna recognized Him as the Christ.

Simeon and Anna didn't lead auspicious lives. Anna was a widow. Simeon spent his days waiting for the Consolation of Israel. What they did have in common was that they had devoted their lives to God. The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon. Anna did not depart from the temple and prayed and fasted night and day.

It is easy to get carried away with the world's definition of success, and even to apply it to our spiritual lives. God does not limit the privilege of seeking His work to the well-known, the young, or those with perfect circumstances. Instead, He chooses those who give their time and focus to Him.

God bless, and Merry Christmas!

*Priscilla*

## **Matthew 5:16**

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

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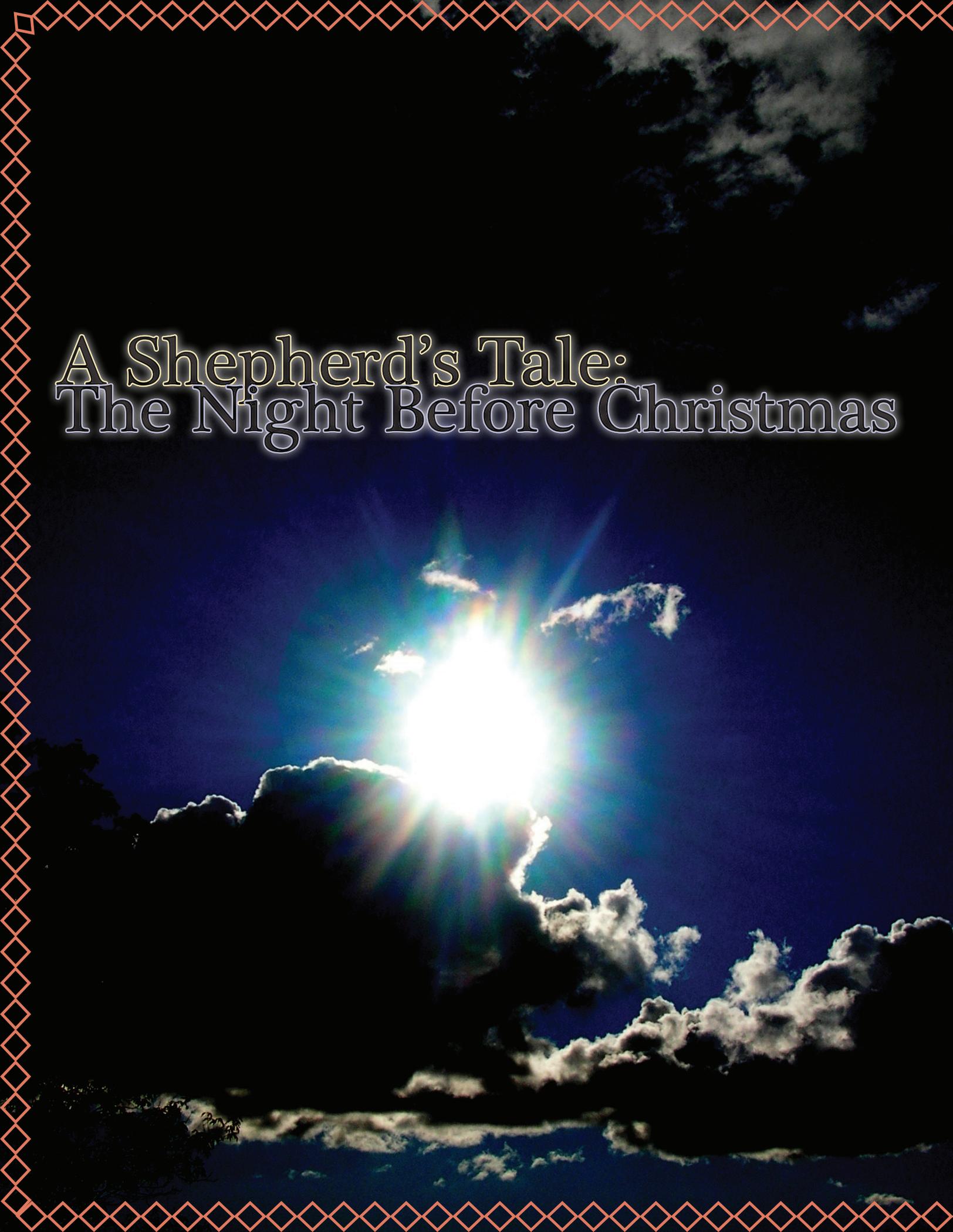
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A Shepherd's Tale:  
The Night Before Christmas



by *Leanne Nelson*, photography by *Jen Forsberg*  
**Bethlehem – Year of the first registration under Quirinius, governor of Syria**

“Jeremiah! A sheep is wandering down that street over there, go bring it back towards the group!” Abdon, the head shepherd called from the front of the pack of sheep.

I raced off down the uneven side street to fetch the wandering sheep. By the time I got to it, it was bleating loudly as if wondering where its family had gone. I tucked my shepherd’s crook under my arm and gently picked up the animal. Its wool coat felt rough against my skin but the heat from its body warmed me a bit. It had been cold for this time of year, especially out in the fields where we spent the nights as the sheep grazed.

Finally, we got the sheep back to their pen and I could go home. My friends Azel and Mahari waved as I started off towards my house. Soft chattering floated through the air from the open windows of the rough brick houses I passed. The sun was just coming up so I picked my path carefully. It wouldn’t do to get stopped by any Roman soldiers at this time in the morning. Especially since this was the time that his father had gotten beaten by the soldiers. My mother would never let me leave her sight again if she knew I encountered any of the intimidating Romans.

My sister, Abihail, greeted me at the door of our modest, one room brick house. “Miah!” Her little four year old voice exclaimed. My mother shushed her from inside the house. She grinned as I picked her up and spun her around.

After a few more turns I let her slip to



the ground and reached into my pocket. "I got a whole denari today, mother. Abdon was feeling generous today." I smiled on the outside as I handed her the coin but more likely than not he had noticed how skinny (slender?) my mother and two sisters had looked at the synagogue last Sabbath. Now that my father had passed on the responsibility had passed to me to be the sole provider for my family, we lived on the few coins that I worked for each day. Abdon was a kind boss and I was very thankful to him for taking me on, but often the wage was not enough for us to survive on. Sometimes I felt the hopelessness in my heart bearing down on my shoulders as if it were a weight.

The glow of pride in my mother's eyes was worth the bruise to my pride, though. She gave me a quick kiss on the cheek and then told me to wash up for breakfast.

That evening I carried my small sack that held my dinner for the night towards our meeting spot. As I weaved through the streets emptying of people, I glanced up at the sky. Earlier the sky had been covered with grey clouds which were typical of this time of year but tonight the setting sun was casting a red glow over the town which mingled with the dark, velvety blue sky. Stars were just starting to appear and I noticed one that was unusually bright to the east before I stumbled on the uneven ground and focused on the path ahead of me.

A few hours later, we were all sitting around the fire eating our food as Abdon told us a story - the story of Isaiah seeing the throne of God, our favorite. I listened intently as I ate a piece of bread drizzled with olive oil. Azel nudged some of his figs my way. I was going to refuse but my rumbling stom-

ach led me to do otherwise.

“And he said ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips,’” Abdon exclaimed, emphasizing each word as we listened intently.

He had just started the next line when all of the sudden a bright light appeared in the sky. We all looked up, shielding our eyes and murmuring to each other. I put a sweaty hand on my shepherd’s crook, ready to leap into action at any moment. The sheep bleated wildly and started to get restless. As my eyes adjusted to the light a shiver of fear ran down my spine.

“Fear not,” the being said. His melodic voice echoed throughout the field. “For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” At this we all got to our feet, the story of Isaiah forgotten.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” The angel continued. “And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” I looked over at Azel who was looking as dumbstruck as I felt. Was this an angel talking about the Messiah? The one who was supposed to come and save us all?

Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of angels praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

My heart swelled with joy at the sound of their voices all resounding as one. God’s presence was in this place and I was there to witness it. Another shiver passed over my spine, this time it was one of excitement. I looked on in wonder as the angels continued praising God.

Finally, after a few minutes, the bright light

and the angels disappeared. Leaving only the silky navy blue sky and a smattering of stars where they once were. I noticed again the unusual star.

We looked over at Abdon. He was still gazing at the spot where the angels had been, a look of pure wonder on his face. When he realized that we were all looking at him, he cleared his throat and said, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

We all nodded in agreement and started making our way towards town. Our crooks and bags stayed where they were, the fire stayed crackling and the sheep, finally calmed down, grazed unaware that they were being left.

It took us only a few minutes to find where we needed to be. It was a manger.

The small building glowed from the light of a lantern and, though it was cold outside,

I felt oddly warm as I entered the humble building.

A man only a few years older than me greeted us as we entered and, though he looked surprised that we were there, he seemed to know exactly why we had come. A young woman sat in the back of the building wrapped in a rough blanket. Though I wouldn't have called her beautiful, her eyes radiated with a beauty that was indescribably and her face glowed with joy. She sat by her baby who, as the angel had said, was wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

The lot of us gathered around the manger and looked down upon the baby's face. His face also radiated the joy that was coming from his mother's as he slept soundly.

Abdon's right hand man, Ezra described our encounter with the angels to the baby's parents, who introduced themselves as



Mary and Joseph. Mary smiled softly and slipped her hand into Joseph's.

We didn't stay long but as we made our way back to the fields, it felt like somehow we were all changed. The whole way back to our fire we glorified and praised God for all that we had seen and heard.

As I lay in the grass later that night, I looked up at the stars and thought about what had happened. I couldn't believe that I had witnessed angels. Angels of God, praising God. And I had seen the Messiah. The one who would save our people. The one who would beat back our enemies and free us from our bonds. It was hard to believe that a baby so small would one day grow into a man that could fulfill the prophecies but I was glad that I had had the chance to welcome him to our world.

Hope filled my heart. God was up there and He was going to provide. He was

watching out for us. He was bringing His people hope and love and life through this baby that I had seen tonight and I couldn't wait to share that story with my family and friends.

Quick note: this is not an accurate account of what happened that night. These characters are all fictitious and, while this story is based off Luke 2:8-20, I took many liberties and created the character Jeremiah. I would encourage you to read through the gospels to gain a better understanding of the true account of Jesus's birth. Merry Christmas! 🕯️

# The Quest Of The Wise Men

★ **Why did the wise men come to Jerusalem?**

- a. To worship Jesus.
- b. To be respected in their own country.
- c. To find out whether the Old Testament was true.
- d. To meet with Herod and other powerful people.

★ **How did the wisemen know where the Christ was to be born?**

- a. They were told in a dream.
- b. They knew the Old Testament prophecies.
- c. Herod knew.
- d. Herod asked the chief priests and scribes.

★ **Which Old Testament prophet said the Christ would be born in Bethlehem?**

- a. Ezra
- b. Haggai
- c. Joel
- d. Micah

★ **How did the wisemen find Jesus?**

- a. They followed Herod's directions.
- b. The star went before them.
- c. They went door to door looking for Him.
- d. The prophecy specified which house He was in.

★ **Isaiah 60:6 mentions two of the three gifts the wise men brought. Which was left out?**

- a. gold
- b. frankincense
- c. myrrh
- d. aloe

★ **Where did Joseph take Mary and Jesus in the night?**

- a. To Jerusalem.
- b. To Moab.
- c. To Egypt.
- d. To Samaria.

★ **In which other book of the Bible did the ruler of a country order the death of baby boys?**

- a. Esther
- b. Genesis
- c. Exodus
- d. Song of Solomon

Answers: 1a;2d;3d;4b;5c;6c;7c

# Zacharias

*by Alice, photography by Alice*

Zacharias was a righteous man.  
Elizabeth was his wife.  
They both were getting older.  
They had lived a faithful life.

When to the temple he did go,  
the angel Gabriel did appear.  
Though it was really quite a sight,  
the angel told him not to fear.

The angel said a big surprise,  
that Elizabeth would have a son.  
The boy being filled with the Holy Spirit  
would prepare the way for the coming One.

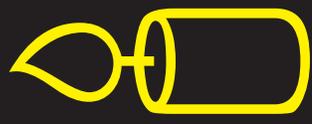
Zacharias wanted a sign that it was true,  
so silent he became,  
unable to speak a word  
or even speak his name.

In the temple he was delayed.  
His son would be God's man.  
His son would do what God would want,  
to work toward what was in God's plan.

Elizabeth had that baby boy.  
God said that John should be his name.  
Zacharias did obey,  
and his voice went back to be the same.

If the story interests you,  
you should read it, too.  
It's in Luke 1 in God's own Word.  
Read it all anew.

Ask God to work within your heart,  
and speak to you today.  
Ask Him to make you obey Him,  
and close to Him to stay.



# LL Maggazine

Matthew 5:16