

# CONTENTS.

	Page
<b>The Foreglow</b> .....	6
Bonar.	
<b>The Nativity of Christ</b> .....	7
<b>The Rough Cradle of Our King</b> .....	9
T. DeWitt Talmage.	
<b>The Birth of Christ</b> .....	17
C. H. Spurgeon.	
<b>The Center of History</b> .....	33
Joseph Parker.	
<b>The End of Fear</b> .....	36
C. H. Spurgeon.	
<b>Joy Born</b> .....	42
C. H. Spurgeon.	
<b>A Personal Question</b> .....	59
C. H. Spurgeon.	
<b>Savior—Christ—Lord</b> .....	68
C. H. Spurgeon.	
<b>The World's Need</b> .....	73
Joseph Parker.	
<b>The Lowliness of Christ</b> .....	81
C. H. Spurgeon.	
<b>The Song of the Angels</b> .....	86
C. H. Spurgeon.	
<b>Jesus</b> .....	99
T. DeWitt Talmage.	
<b>Come! Come!</b> .....	109
John McNeill.	

## THE FOREGLOW.

*The angel has come down;  
 The glory now has shone;  
 The shepherds see the light and hear the voice:—  
 "Fear not, Behold, I bring  
 Glad tidings of your King.  
 Let all the nations of the earth rejoice."*

*Sing a new song to-night,  
 Sing, all ye stars of light!  
 The Lord of Glory leaves His glorious heaven.  
 To earth behold Him come  
 From His celestial home.  
 To us a Child is born, a Son is given!*

*O music of the past,  
 The sweetest and the last  
 Of all the notes of ages gone is this,  
 That tells of the great birth,  
 That sings of peace on earth,  
 And man restored to more than primal bliss.*

*O lingering night, speed on!  
 Arise, thou golden sun,  
 And bring up in its joy the day of days,  
 When the eternal Word,  
 Creation's King and Lord,  
 Takes flesh that He may flesh to glory raise.*

# THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

Luke 2: 1 to 14.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed; and this taxation was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them:

**"FEAR NOT: FOR, BEHOLD, I BRING YOU**

**GOOD TIDINGS**

**OF GREAT JOY, WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE.**

FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD. AND THIS SHALL BE A SIGN UNTO YOU; YE SHALL FIND THE BABE WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES, LYING IN A MANGER."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN."

# THE ROUGH CRADLE OF OUR KING.

By T. DE WITT TALMAGE.

How painfully and wearily one thousand years of the world's existence rolled along, and no Christ. Two thousand years, and no Christ. Three thousand years, and no Christ. Four thousand years, and no Christ. "Give us a Christ," had cried Assyrian, and Persian, and Chaldean, and Egyptian civilizations, but the lips of the earth and the lips of the sky made no answer.

The world had already been affluent of genius. Among poets had appeared Homer, and Thespis, and Aristophanes, and Sophocles, and Euripides, and Alexis Aeschylus; yet no Christ to be the most poetic figure of the centuries. Among historians had appeared Herodotus, and Xenophon, and Thucydides; but no Christ from whom all history was to date backward and forward—B. C. and A. D. Among conquerors Camillus, and Manlius, and Regulus, and Hannibal, and Scipio, and Pompey, and Caesar; yet no Christ, who was to be conqueror of earth and heaven.

But the slow century, and the slow year, and the slow month, and the slow hour at last arrived. The world

had had matins or concerts in the morning and vespers or concerts in the evening, but now it is to have a concert at midnight. The black window-shutters of night were thrown open, and some of the best singers of the world stood there, and, putting back the drapery of cloud, chanted a peace anthem, until all the echoes of hill and valley applauded and encored the hallelujah chorus.

The Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar, had issued a decree for an estimate of the resources, and an enumeration of the people, of the many provinces that composed his empire. Ostensibly, this census was taken for the purpose of fixing the levies of the tax which might equitably be taken for the dependencies of the Roman government; but its application to Judea seems to have been rather an initial act, under God, toward the fulfilment of Micah's prophecy:

“AND THOU, BETHLEHEM, IN THE LAND OF JUDAH,  
ART NOT THE LEAST AMONG THE PRINCES OF  
JUDAH;  
FOR OUT OF THEE SHALL COME A GOVERNOR  
THAT SHALL RULE MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.”

At the time the decree was published, Judea was not publicly recognized as a Roman province, but rather as a dependency. Herod was nominally king of Judea, but in fact he was only a viceroy and a Roman subject, who had to observe the edicts of Caesar. In order to give the appearance of independence, he recognized Jewish customs, and, therefore, in obeying the decree he issued an order that every family within his government should

proceed for enrolment to the place where their respective genealogical records were kept. As both Mary and Joseph were of the lineage of David, in pursuance of Herod's order they proceeded to Bethlehem for registration.

Thus the edict of Augustus Caesar, issued when the world was at peace, and without any apparent reason for taking an enumeration (since the taxes were collected in Judea by Herod, who in turn paid the fixed tribute to Caesar), appears conclusively to have been an instrumentality of the Divine will. The birth of Jesus was so near at hand that God moved the Emperor of Rome to do the one necessary thing that would fulfil the words of Micah.

In obedience to the order of Herod, Joseph and Mary made ready immediately for the journey to Bethlehem, which lies almost due south of Nazareth, their home.

The journey was completed without special incident of apostolic record, but upon reaching the ancient place of David, Mary and her husband found that so large a throng of strangers, brought together for the same purpose, had preceded them that all the public lodging places in the town of three thousand inhabitants were already occupied. What! no place to house the royal mother? No couch in which to lay the King of earth? No lords of state awaiting in antechamber? No messengers mounted at the doorway ready to herald the advent from city to city? No satin-lined cradle to receive the infantile guest? No, none!

But humans must be sheltered as well as beasts. Some place must be found. If not among the lords, then among the lowly; if not among the lowly, then let it be among the beasts, for these poor creatures will not refuse to share their quarters, even though they stand in narrow stalls and feed at the hands of those who begrudgingly give small allowances of food while taxing them to the limit of endurance. So Mary and Joseph, finding no welcome in either inn or cottage, are forced to seek shelter among the beasts, to accept the discomforts of a stable even at a time the most critical, at the approach and at the fulfilment of motherhood. And in a stable among the asses, and cows, and the camels, while the air outside was disturbed by the vexatious cries of muleteers, hostlers and camel-drivers, Mary bowed herself and was delivered of her first-born, the joint-heir of God; the arch-King; a monarch upon whom the night pointed her bediamonded finger, while the door of heaven set wide open to give the angels sight of Him; and orchestral batons of light waved oratorios of the Messiah across the sky, and the minstrelsy of heaven flung out melodies of glory and good-will.

But while heaven was all aglow with joy, the Son of God was not yet raised from the straw in the manger where His mother had laid Him, covered with coarse linen. For her there was neither comfort nor privacy. A better adapted place hath the eaglet in the eyrie, hath the whelp in the lion's lair. The exile of heaven lieth down upon the straw; the first night out from the palace of heaven,

spent in an outhouse! One hour after laying aside the robes of heaven, dressed in a wrapper of coarse linen.

One would have supposed that Christ would have made a more gradual descent, coming from heaven first to a half-way world of great magnitude, then to Caesar's palace, then to a merchant's palace in Galilee, then to a private home in Bethany, then to a fisherman's hut, and last of all to a stable. No, no! It was one leap from the top to the bottom!

Let us open the door of the caravansary in Bethlehem and drive away the camels. Press on through the group of idlers and loungers. What, O Mary, no light? "No light," she says, "save that which comes through the door." What, Mary, no food? "None," she says, "only that which is brought in the sack on the journey." Let the Bethlehem woman who has come in here with kindly attentions put back the covering from the babe that we may look upon it. Look! Look! Uncover your head. Let us kneel. Let all voices be hushed. Son of Mary—Son of God! Child of a day—monarch of eternity! Omnipotence sheathed in that babe's arm. Omniscience strung in the optic nerve of that child's eye. That voice to be changed from the feeble plaint to a tone that shall wake the dead. Hosanna! Hosanna! Glory be to God that Jesus came from throne to manger, that we might rise from manger to throne, and that all the gates are open, and that the door of heaven that once swung this way to let Jesus out, now swings the other way to let us in. Let all the bellmen of heaven lay hold of the rope

and ring out the news: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ, the Lord!"

### **A GLORIOUS NIGHT!**

Bethlehem lies upon a hillside overlooking a beautiful valley, rich with succulent grasses on which great flocks of sheep were sent to graze in the time of Christ, and over which shepherds were appointed to watch. It was so in the days of David, perhaps, long before, and it is so still. These shepherds were accounted faithful, honest and religious; their occupation has ever been a symbol of humility and providential care, and the shepherd's crook has been made to take its place in church ritualism as a token of complacency with the Divine will, as well also to serve as an emblem of priestly authority.

It is not strange that to these faithful watchers the first news of the birth should be conveyed; but it was not by messengers a-foot, nor by acclaims of priests, nor by cymbals and hautboys in the hands of worshipers. The effulgence of the day would have been needed to give them dispatch. The time was night, a holy night, when silence was nature's invocation, and the stars blazed their orisons with tremblings of ecstasy.

While "night," in all languages, is the symbol for gloom and suffering, it is often really cheerful, bright and impressive. I speak not of such nights as come down with no star pouring light from above, or silvered wave toss-

ing up light from beneath—murky, hurtling, portentous—but such as you often see when the pomp and magnificence of heaven turn out on night-parade; and it seems as though the song which the morning stars began so long ago were chiming yet among the constellations, and the sons of God were shouting for joy. Such nights the sailor blesses from the forecandle, and the trapper on the vast prairie, and the belated traveler by the roadside, and the soldier from the tent. Earthly hosts gazing upon heavenly, and shepherds guarding their flocks a-field, while angel hands above them set the silver bells a-ringing: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

On this blessed night the angel of the Lord rode out from the mansions of alabaster, down the steep from the skies, drawing with him streams of dazzling radiance like shadows of sun and stars, and with a rush of glories floated over the heads of the startled shepherds as they were keeping their quiet, perhaps half-sleeping watch. It was Gabriel, the holy messenger, who now came bearing more joyful tidings than were ever before unfolded.

But a flaming presence, at once so awful and magnificent, struck the simple shepherds with fear, for they did not immediately perceive the import of the angel's coming. Fear came upon them; and I imagine that a sight of so wondrous a spectacle, a revelation of sublime glorification floating in a blazing sea, would bring a flush of fear to the bravest heart. But the shining messenger at once spake peace to the shepherds by these inspiring words:

**"FEAR NOT: FOR, BEHOLD, I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY, WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE. FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD. AND THIS SHALL BE A SIGN UNTO YOU: YE SHALL FIND THE BABE WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES, LYING IN A MANGER."**

To the splendor of the holy messenger there suddenly flamed up a yet greater light, throwing its radiance higher in the sky, until there was revealed to the startled shepherds the vision of a heavenly host, an angelic band raimented with an effulgence that flooded the fields afar, a constellation of immortals that bejeweled both earth and sky with an ineffable illumination; and from this holy choir there poured forth a song of triumphant joy, a chorus of blissful oblation, a symphony of rapturous pronouncement, an oratorio of doxology filled with glory and goodwill:

**"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN."**