



Good Tidings!
Great Joy!

—
a mini Bible Study
—

By Valerie R Jackson

Off-Kilter Bible Studies

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These mini-blogs are too long for blogs, yet too short to become books.

And so they are offered to my brothers and sisters in Christ free of charge.

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Luke 2:8-14

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

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

Good Tidings! Great Joy!

These men were just shepherds, responsible for the health and welfare of herd animals that were a source of nourishment and clothing for people. They were shepherds, the blue-collar workers of their day, working the night shift as they always had.

As they sat in the silence, their watchfulness interspersed with the sort of small talk people make as they attend to a task together, their peace was abruptly shattered by the presence of an angel of the Lord. Imagine one suddenly meeting you at *your* job.

The glory of the Lord shone around them, a most amazing sight! Few in the world have been privileged to see God's glory during their life on earth. Moses walked into the glory of the Lord upon Mount Sinai¹ in the presence of the children of Israel. Generations later, at the dedication of Solomon's Temple when the ark of the covenant was established within the Holy of Holies, the glory of the Lord so filled his house that the priests could not minister.²

¹ *Exodus 24:15-18*

² *1 Kings 8:1-11*

The glory of the Lord is as fire, as color, as light and brightness. It is as the rainbow, yet breathtaking in its fierceness of holy life.³ The glory of the Lord is like none other. And it is rare upon the earth. When God allowed his glory to shine upon the earth, he didn't reserve it only for kings and dignitaries. He so often showed it to the common man as well as the priest. And on this day, as he once chose Moses to experience his glory, the Most High God once again selected shepherds.

They were just a handful of working men, keeping an eye on their flocks through the cold of a star-sprinkled night. And in the face of the supernatural appearance of an angel and of the glory of God, as any sensible

³ Ezekiel 1:27-28

man would, they responded with both awe and dread. They were "sore afraid." The angel immediately reassured them.

10) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

Good tidings! Great *joy*! And these good and joy-inducing tidings were meant for all of mankind. Not just the Jews, to whom were first delivered the message. Not just to the believers who were to come. The news the angel was about to announce affected every human being, past, present and future. It's the greatest announcement of all time! It's the declaration of an event that will forever change the way mankind relates to their Creator.

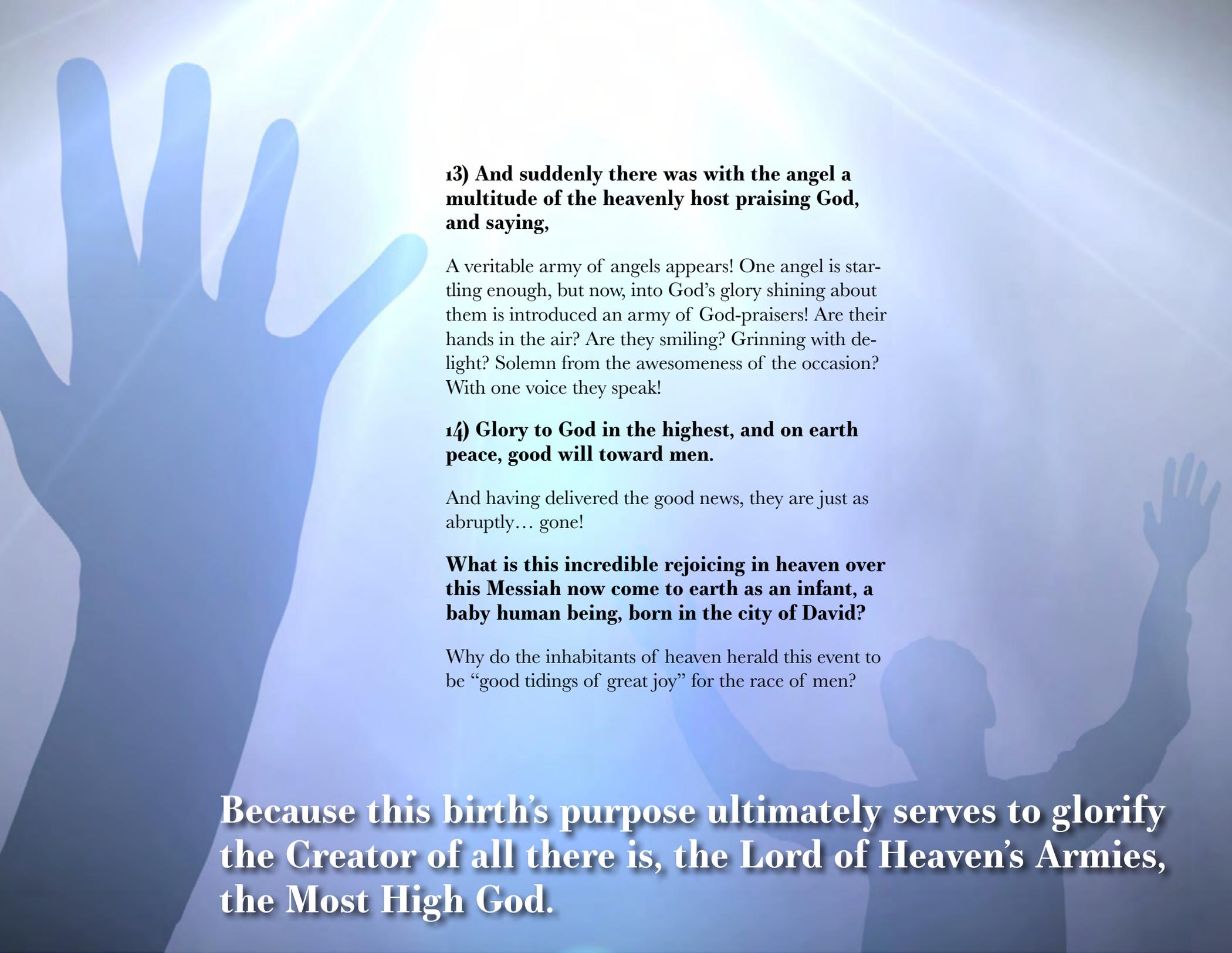




**11) For unto you is born this day
in the city of David a Saviour,
which is Christ the Lord.**

**12) And this shall be a sign
unto you; Ye shall find the babe
wrapped in swaddling clothes,
lying in a manger.**

Notice the assumption that they would go examine this wonder for themselves. They were going to find this newborn, the fully human, fully God Saviour which is also the long-promised Messiah and Lord. They would know him by the unusual circumstances he would be in, for who lays a newborn in a feeding trough? Were this not astounding enough,



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

A veritable army of angels appears! One angel is startling enough, but now, into God's glory shining about them is introduced an army of God-praisers! Are their hands in the air? Are they smiling? Grinning with delight? Solemn from the awesomeness of the occasion? With one voice they speak!

14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And having delivered the good news, they are just as abruptly... gone!

What is this incredible rejoicing in heaven over this Messiah now come to earth as an infant, a baby human being, born in the city of David?

Why do the inhabitants of heaven herald this event to be "good tidings of great joy" for the race of men?

Because this birth's purpose ultimately serves to glorify the Creator of all there is, the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the Most High God.

They rejoice because this birth ushers in a new era on earth, one characterized by a declaration of peace between man and his Creator. It speaks not of an attitude of goodwill between one man and another, though in the coming era of Christianity where men are taught to love even their enemies, such goodwill is encouraged.

No, it speaks of God's goodwill toward men. Something long planned is finally set in motion. Man's sins have long put him in a constant state of war against God.¹ They have separated him from the one they ought to cling to for comfort in this hard life.

For all mankind, God now introduces an eternal way to atone for their sins; a way to repent and, despite our moral and spiritual weaknesses, return safely to the arms of the God who made us and loves us. A Saviour is born into the world of men, a Saviour who bridges the gap between God and man. His birth heralds an era when the rift is bridged, the breach is healed, and mercy triumphs over judgment.

¹ Romans 5:8-10; Isaiah 59:1-3



When this babe's mission is complete, the worshiper will no longer be separated from the worshiped. The curtain will no longer protect sinful man from God's holy presence. We no longer need faint and tremble before him.² Instead, we will be clothed with the untainted holiness of the Messiah himself, and made able to stand confident before our God. From this man's life forward, when a human being chooses to accept the salvation offered on God's terms, we accept that "[Jesus] was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."³

As we accept Jesus as the manifestation of God's deep and abiding love for us, we understand why the angels rejoiced. We understand why, 33 years later, upon the occasion of this once child and now adult Jesus' triumphal entry into the gates of Jerusalem, another multitude, not of angels but this time of disciples, also rejoiced and praised God, proclaiming joyous news! We understand why they echo their angelic predecessors.

² *Isaiah 6:1-7*

³ *I John 3:5*

Luke 19:37-38

37) And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they have seen;

38) Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.





About the Author

VALERIE R. JACKSON is a Bible instructor and blogger. Her primary focus is on teaching the Bible in a way that is easy to understand, and on encouraging her brothers and sisters in Christ to make walking by the Word of God a part of their everyday life.

She has been teaching since 2001. She has a minor in Biblical Studies from Abilene Christian University but depends largely on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit when she studies the Word. (Which probably accounts for her slightly unorthodox view of the Scriptures.)

Valerie lives in the country in Louisa, VA with her husband Johnny R. Jackson Sr.