

THOSE WHO SAW THE LORD

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Lesson: Luke 2:1-20

Every year, as we hear the stories of Christmas time, and feel happy in our hearts because the Lord was born as a tiny baby in Bethlehem of Judea, we realize that what happened on that day was really the most important and wonderful thing that ever happened. Wouldn't it have been wonderful if we could have been alive at that time, and been one of the very few lucky ones who came to see and to worship the baby Lord? How wonderful it would have been to be there on that night so long ago, when Mary and Joseph watched over the Baby, as He lay in the manger.

Only a few very special people had this joy. They were very special people. But they weren't the kind of people you might have thought would come to see the Lord, who was the King of all the earth. Since the Lord is so important, you might have thought that kings and rich men, and men who were high up in the church would be called to see Him. But they weren't. The people who saw the Lord were special in another way, in a way much more important.

Who were these people? First of all, of course, there was Mary herself. She was just a young girl who had just been married, but she was special because she was content to do whatever the Lord told her. Remember what she said, when the angel told her she was to be the mother of the Lord? She said, "Behold, the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." She didn't argue with the angel, and she didn't boast to others that she had been chosen out of all the women. She was happy, just to serve the Lord. That was what made her a special person.

Then there was Joseph, the husband of Mary. He was not a great and important man, he was just a carpenter, using his hands and iron tools to make furniture, tables, chairs, and things. But we are told that he was a just man. That means that he was fair in all the things that he did; he didn't want to do things that were not fair.

A man also who was just, and devout too (that means he worshiped often), was Simeon. He was a very old man who had lived all his life, and had longed to see the Lord come to save the world. And the Lord had promised that he would see Him come. He saw the Lord when Joseph and Mary came to present Him at the temple.

At that time also the other woman to see the Lord was there: Anna, a prophetess, of a very great age, who spent all her time in worshipping the Lord.

Then there were the wise men. We have thought that they might have been kings, because of the precious presents which they brought to the Lord; but all the Word tells us is that they were wise men. What made them special was the way in which they were wise, and it was because of this that they too could see the Lord at His birth. For they weren't just wise in worldly things. They didn't spend all their time with the things of this world. They were wise in the Word; how else could they have known about the Lord? But they studied the Word, and from it knew and remembered that a great star would appear when the Lord was born. They weren't just clever—they were really wise. They didn't boast of seeing the star. They left everything they were doing, and made a long journey to Bethlehem, to come and worship the Lord and to bring Him their presents, wonderful presents that they had made ready before they left home. They are called wise men, and they are special above other wise men in that they were wise in the Word, and followed where it led them.

And last of all there were the shepherds. These were not kings and rich people. They were ordinary people who didn't have much money, but they were special too. For they were doing their work, quietly, without any fuss and show, simply keeping watch, on a lonely night in the hill country, making sure that their sheep were safe. To them the angels of heaven could come, and thrilled them with the news that the Lord was born, and let them hear the joyous songs of heaven. For heaven is always close to those who with open hearts do the work which the Lord has laid before them. These simple people, who were doing their work that night in Judea, were the first of those who saw the Lord.

We would love to have been asked to come and see the Lord as a tiny baby, if we had been alive at that time, wouldn't we? We would want very much to see Him now too, wouldn't we? For those people will see Him who come into His heaven. There they will not see Him as a tiny baby, but as the king of all the heavens and earth. If we want to see Him, we're going to have to be like the people who first saw the baby Lord on earth. Remember, they weren't special because of being kings or rich people or anything like that. Mary was special because she was willing to be the servant of the Lord, and do whatever the angel said. Joseph and Simeon were just men, who tried to be fair in all things, and not cheat the people around them; and Simeon's heart longed, too, to see the Lord. Anna was one who worshiped the Lord. The wise men were wise in the Word, and followed what it taught, to worship the newborn king. The shepherds were faithfully doing their work which they had been given to do, watching over and guarding their sheep from danger. These are the kinds of people who can come to see the Lord. They are special people because they do what is right, and so are angels in heart. When they do see Him, then just like those people in Judea, their hearts will be filled with joy. *Amen.*