

The Coming of the Lamb and the Shepherd

Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth between Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might, come and save us. Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved (Psalm 80:1-3 NIV).

Picture the nativity scene. That's easy for most of us. Displayed in illustrated Bibles and Bible storybooks and set up in homes and churches during December, the characters are always the same. Mary and Joseph with shepherds and wise men and animals in the stall surround a baby in a manger – the Son of God who had just become the Son of Man.

The most striking elements in this picture are its simplicity and its majesty. No one seems to think it strange that rich wise men from the east are facing humble shepherds from the fields - standing or kneeling on a carpet of straw with singing angels above joining sounds of animals below and the sweet coos of the baby who planned it all.

This scene had been foretold by many but understood by few. Unable to grasp the possibility that God's Son would make His entrance with such humility, most were expecting the Savior to come with the only kind of majesty they were accustomed to – to reign and to rule.

Amidst the many prophecies about His coming, the two that capture our attention in the nativity are symbolically sitting at the feet of the child or standing at His side: the lamb and the shepherd.

The baby lying in this manger would someday hang on a cross. Naked, He would die there. His humble beginnings would lead to an even more humiliating climax.

Submitting Himself to be led like a lamb to the slaughter, the Good Shepherd did for His flock what they could not do for themselves. All His sheep having gone astray, the Lord laid on Him the sins of them all. He bore those sins on the cross and left them there.

The one announced as the Lamb of God also revealed Himself as the Resurrection and the Life. Having shed His blood and redeemed His flock, the Good Shepherd walked out of the tomb.

There is no longer any need for a sacrificial lamb. Now, the church, the Bride of Christ, is being made ready for the Bridegroom, the Lamb who sits upon the throne.

The tranquil scene of the nativity makes perfect sense to those who worship the Son of God who came in humility in order that we might reign with Him.

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb . . . for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:10, 17).