

January 1, Mary Mother of God - 2018

## **What Was Seen at Bethlehem**

by Leonard Sweet

I wonder what I would have heard had I been there that night. It is a question that annually haunts me. Would I have heard the choirs of angels singing or simply the sounds of barnyard animals shifting around? Would I have seen the star in the sky that night or simply two poor and very frightened kids? Would I have understood the hushed silence of the divine presence, or simply the chill of a cold east wind. Would I have understood the message of Emmanuel, *God with us*, or would the cosmic implications of that evening have passed me by?

I am convinced that had two people been there that night in Bethlehem it is quite possible that they could have heard and seen two entirely different scenes. I believe this because all of life is this way. God never presents himself in revelation in a manner in which we are forced to believe. We are always left with an option, for that is *God's way*. Thus, one person can say "It's a miracle, while another says "It's coincidence."

Certainly very few people in Palestine saw and heard and understood what took place that night. The choirs of angels singing were drowned out by the haggling and trading going on in the Jerusalem bazaar. There was a bright star in the sky but the only ones apparently to pay any attention to it were pagan astrologers from the East. If anyone did see Mary and Joseph on that most fateful night, they were too preoccupied with their own problems to offer any assistance.

In one of the *All in the Family* episodes that aired some years ago, Edith and Archie are attending Edith's high school class reunion. Edith encounters an old classmate by the name of Buck who, unlike his earlier days, had now become excessively obese. Edith and Buck have a delightful conversation about old times and the things that they did together, but remarkably Edith doesn't seem to notice how extremely heavy Buck has become.

Later, when Edith and Archie are talking, she says in her whiny voice, "Archie, ain't Buck a beautiful person." Archie looks at her with a disgusted expression and says: "You're a pip, Edith. You know that. You and I look at

the same guy and you see a beautiful person and I see a blimp. Edith gets a puzzled expression on her face and says something unknowingly profound, "Yeah, ain't it too bad."

### **Stay Focused!**

We sometimes miss the great opportunities of life because we get sidetracked. I once heard the tale of a talented and gifted bloodhound in England that started a hunt by chasing a full-grown male deer. During the chase a fox crossed his path, so he began now to chase the fox. A rabbit crossed his hunting path, so he began to chase the rabbit. After chasing the rabbit for a while, a tiny field mouse crossed his path, and he chased the mouse to the corner of a farmer's barn. The bloodhound had begun the hunt chasing a prized male deer for his master and wound up barking at a tiny mouse.

It is a rare human being who can do three or four different things at a time-moving in different directions.

The Apostle Paul knew his number one priority in life was to live his life to the honor and glory of God by preaching the Gospel. However, we know that Paul is not in a plush hotel room but in prison. He receives a report that all is not well at the Church in Philippi. His very life could be ended at any moment. And the list goes on. However, the Apostle Paul would not allow anything to cross his path that would deter him from his priority. Paul knew that his new life was a gift from God, not from the promises of humanity. His life was to be lived for his master. Nothing would sidetrack him of that priority! (by Eric S. Ritz from *The Ritz Collection*, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com))