

Luke 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Shepherds 'abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night' receive the first angelic announcement of Christ's birth. God's choice of shepherds—among society's lowest classes—to receive heaven's greatest news demonstrates divine inversion of worldly values. The phrase 'keeping watch' (Greek 'phyllassontes phylakas,' φυλάσσουντες φυλακάς) means guarding vigilantly, suggesting spiritual alertness. These shepherds faithfully fulfill humble duties while remaining spiritually receptive, making them fitting first witnesses to the Good Shepherd's birth.

Historical Context

Shepherds ranked low in Jewish social hierarchy—ceremonially unclean due to constant contact with animals, unable to observe Sabbath and purity laws strictly, often suspected of theft and dishonesty. Their testimony was inadmissible in court. Yet David was a shepherd when anointed king, and God called Himself Israel's shepherd (Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34). The fields near Bethlehem may have been where temple lambs were raised—sacrificial lambs for Jerusalem's temple possibly watched by these shepherds who first witnessed the Lamb of God who takes away the world's sin.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does God's choice of shepherds as first witnesses to Christ's birth teach about the gospel's reach and heaven's values?
2. How does the shepherds' faithful watching in humble circumstances model spiritual receptivity to divine revelation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ποιμένες	ἦσαν	ἐν	τῇ	χώρᾳ	τῇ	αὐτῶν
And	shepherds	there were	in	G3588	country	G3588	the same
G2532	G4166	G2258	G1722		G5561		G846
ἀγρουλοῦντες	καὶ	φυλάσσοντες	φυλακὰς	τῆς	νυκτὸς	ἐπὶ	
abiding in the field	And	keeping	watch	G3588	by night	over	
G63	G2532	G5442	G5438		G3571	G1909	
τὴν	ποίμνην	αὐτῶν					
G3588	flock	the same					
	G4167	G846					