

Luke 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The 'glory of the Lord shone round about them' as the angel appeared, and 'they were sore afraid.' The 'glory of the Lord' (Greek 'doxa kyriou,' δόξα κυρίου) refers to God's manifest presence—the Shekinah glory that filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) and temple (1 Kings 8:11). This theophany demonstrates that Christ's birth is a divine invasion of earth, God breaking into human history. The shepherds' fear is appropriate—sinful humans rightly fear encountering holy God. Yet the angel immediately addresses their fear with good news, showing that this divine invasion brings salvation, not judgment.

Historical Context

The glory of the Lord had departed from Israel's temple before Babylonian destruction (Ezekiel 10-11) and had not returned despite the second temple's construction. Jewish hope yearned for glory's return, signaling God's renewed presence with His people. The angelic glory appearing to shepherds in fields rather than to priests in the temple radically subverts expectations—God's glory returns to Israel outside religious institutions, revealed to humble working people. This pattern continues in Jesus' ministry—divine presence manifests among common people rather than religious elites.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the appearance of God's glory at Christ's birth fulfill hopes for divine presence returning to Israel?
2. What does the glory appearing to shepherds rather than priests teach about where God chooses to manifest His presence?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἰδού, ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐπέστη αὐτούς καὶ δόξα
And lo the angel of the Lord came upon them And the glory
G2532 G2400 G32 G2962 G2186 G846 G2532 G1391

κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον
of the Lord shone round about them And afraid G5401
G2962 G4034 G846 G2532 G5399

μέγαν

they were sore

G3173

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 60:1 (Glory): Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (Glory): But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Revelation 18:1 (Glory): And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

Acts 27:23 (Parallel theme): For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

1 Timothy 3:16 (Glory): And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

1 Kings 8:11 (Glory): So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.

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