



OPINION

The Christmas Story

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyree-ni-us was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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. And the angel said unto them, fear not; for, behold, I bring you, good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child. All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Farm Calendar

- Tuesday, December 27**
Lebanon County 4-H Livestock Winter Roundup Beef & Sheep Show, Lebanon Fairgrounds, 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, December 28**
Lebanon County 4-H Swine Show, Lebanon Fairgrounds, 8:30 a.m.
- Lebanon County 4-H Livestock Sale, Lebanon Fairgrounds, 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 31**
Deadline for Emergency Feed Program Applications To Be at ASCS Office.
- Wednesday, January 4**
County Tobacco Meeting Show, Lancaster Farm & Home Center, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Wayne Co. Dairy Reproductive Management Seminar, Extension Office, Honesdale, 9:30 a.m.
- Schuylkill County Dairy Day, Penn State Schuylkill Campus.
- Thursday, January 5**
Northeastern Weed Science Society Symposium, Stouffer Harbor

- Place Hotel, Baltimore.
- SOILS PSU Course, 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Montgomery Co., 4-H Center, Creamery, PA.
- Future of Lancaster Agriculture, Lancaster Farm & Home, 7:30 p.m.
- Lycoming Co. Annual Meeting, Hoss's Steakhouse, Williamsport.
- Saturday, January 7**
PA Farm Show, Harrisburg Farm Show Complex, through Jan. 13.
- Dauphin County Annual Meeting, Dauphin Co. Ag & Natural Resource Ctr.

FARM FORUM OUR READERS WRITE

Editor:
Thank you for printing the information about the state lottery plans, to use the Farm Show audience.
I like to think life could be simple, more honest and direct.

Can't we try a little harder to live within our means and assume responsibility for family members?
If some elderly need help must we resort to deceptive money

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NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin
Lancaster County Agriculture Agent

To Take Inventory

An area of our operation that is very important at this time of year is inventory. With the close of the year most of our farmers close out their records for the year. This means that if you are going to have a Farm Analysis made you should take inventory of all your supplies.

You'll need this to do any kind of farm analysis, because the amount of grains, hay and other supplies that are in storage will vary from year to year, and unless this is taken into consideration, you cannot have an accurate analysis of your year's operation. So, as accurately as possible, record the amount of hay, grains, feed, seeds and fertilizer that are on hand. This is the first step in an accurate farm analysis.

To Evaluate Cows' Need For Niacin

It is important for high producing cows to consume enough feed to support the amount of milk they produce in early lactation, according to Glenn Shirk, Extension Dairy Agent. Thus in an effort to sustain their will to milk, high producing cows must draw upon their body reserves in early lactation. For this reason, it is very important to feed cows properly during their dry period so they will be in proper condition at calving time.

Researchers have found that niacin (vitamin B₃) can help cows mobilize their body reserves and reduce the risk of ketosis, which is the excess production of ketones. They accomplish this by feeding 6-12 grams of niacin per cow per day starting two weeks before calving and continuing for 100 days after calving.

To Check Barn Ventilation

Proper ventilation of all types of livestock and poultry buildings is very important during the winter months. When the warm, moisture-laden air is not moved out of the area, we usually see condensation on the windows,

walls and ceilings. This is especially true with little or poor insulation. Exhaust fans will move the air out, and protect the building. During this time of year barns are filled with livestock; these animals give off large amounts of body heat. When condensation occurs it is a sign that some attention is needed; in most cases it is a problem with ventilation or with insulation.

To Protect Orchard Fruit Trees

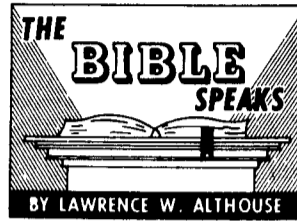
While most of the hard work for fruit growers may be over, it is that time of the year for mice, deer and rabbits to get busy.

On young trees preventive measures are necessary. The most effective way to prevent rabbit damage is to use tree trunk guards on individual trees. Cylinders of

¼ -inch mesh hardware cloth 18 to 24 inches high, set into the ground surrounding the tree, will help prevent gnawing damage to the main stem. The "self-wrapping" plastic wrap also does an excellent job.

Another way to keep rabbits and deer from chewing branches and buds is to "paint" tree trunks and limbs with a mixture of 5 to 6 pounds of powdered rosin in one gallon of ordinary alcohol. Simply use a whitewash brush to apply the material. The rabbits and deer find the rosin too gritty and aside from an occasional nip will usually leave the tree alone. Be sure to apply the material to a height well above the reach of the deer.

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THE 365 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

December 25, 1988

Background Scripture: Luke 2:21-40.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 35.

The three stories of what happened after the first Christmas are seldom read as part of the Christmas story, but that doesn't make them any less important to it. After all, Christmas didn't end in the stable of Bethlehem. It continued on through Jesus' circumcision, the purification in the temple, and the encounter of the prophetess Anna -- and even beyond that.

Mary and Joseph celebrated the birth of their son with typical Jewish rituals. The first of these was circumcision, a ritual that acknowledged that Jesus shared in the heritage of Israel that could be traced by through Moses, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham. It was in accordance with this ritual that the child was named Jesus as the angel had specified. The second ritual was the presentation of Jesus in the temple, a rite by which he was dedicated to God. This included a sacrifice of "a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons."

The third ritual was that of the purification of Mary, for it was held (Leviticus 12:6) that a woman was "unclean" for seven days after giving birth and should remain in ceremonial isolation for another 33 days. Today we find this concept troubling, for it implies that there is something "unclean" about the God-given gift of childbirth. Nevertheless, Mary and Joseph faithfully performed the ritual.

TRADITION!

The rituals Mary and Joseph performed seemed utterly foreign to us. But there is also something

to be said for the continuity of tradition. Would Jesus have been any less the Christ if Mary and Joseph had decided to skip any of these rituals? I think not, just as I am convinced our children today would not be any less God's children if we failed to baptize. Still, for Mary and Joseph, as well as for Jesus, there was a "rightness" about keeping their religious traditions -- as there is for us, too.

At the same time that they were faithfully fulfilling their religious traditions, there was also something happening that can occur within rituals, but also reaches far beyond them. We can put human fences around our rituals, but we cannot lock-up the presence and power of God's Spirit. Because Mary and Joseph kept a tradition, God chose this occasion to pour out his Spirit through Simeon. As Luke tells us, "the Holy Spirit was upon him" (2:25).

INEFFABLE SPIRIT

There are always rules and regulations with rituals, but with the Holy Spirit there are none. As churches, we control the rituals, deciding when, how, who and why. But no matter whether we are clergy or lay, or belong to this church or that, we have no control over the Holy Spirit. So, while the rituals bring us a sense of continuity and security, the Holy Spirit brings us inspiration for which even the best words are inadequate: "Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all people, a light for the Gentiles, and glory to the people of Israel" (2:29-32).

The encounters with Simeon and Anna helped Joseph and Mary to realize that what had happened to them in Bethlehem was not just an event for them to remember with nostalgia, but a reality that would stay with them after they returned to Nazareth -- indeed, for the rest of their lives. Christmas Day is but 24 hours, but the Incarnation is something we can celebrate and experience 365 days of the year.

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Lancaster Farming
Established 1875
Published Every Saturday
Ephrata Review Building
1 E Main St
Ephrata, PA 17522
— by —
Lancaster Farming, Inc.
A Steinman Enterprise
Robert G. Campbell General Manager
Everett R. Newswanger Managing Editor
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