

# Christmas 2022

- Session 1

—Christ the Lamb

- Session 2

—Christ the King



# Christ The Lamb

- The story of Christmas began in the book of Genesis...

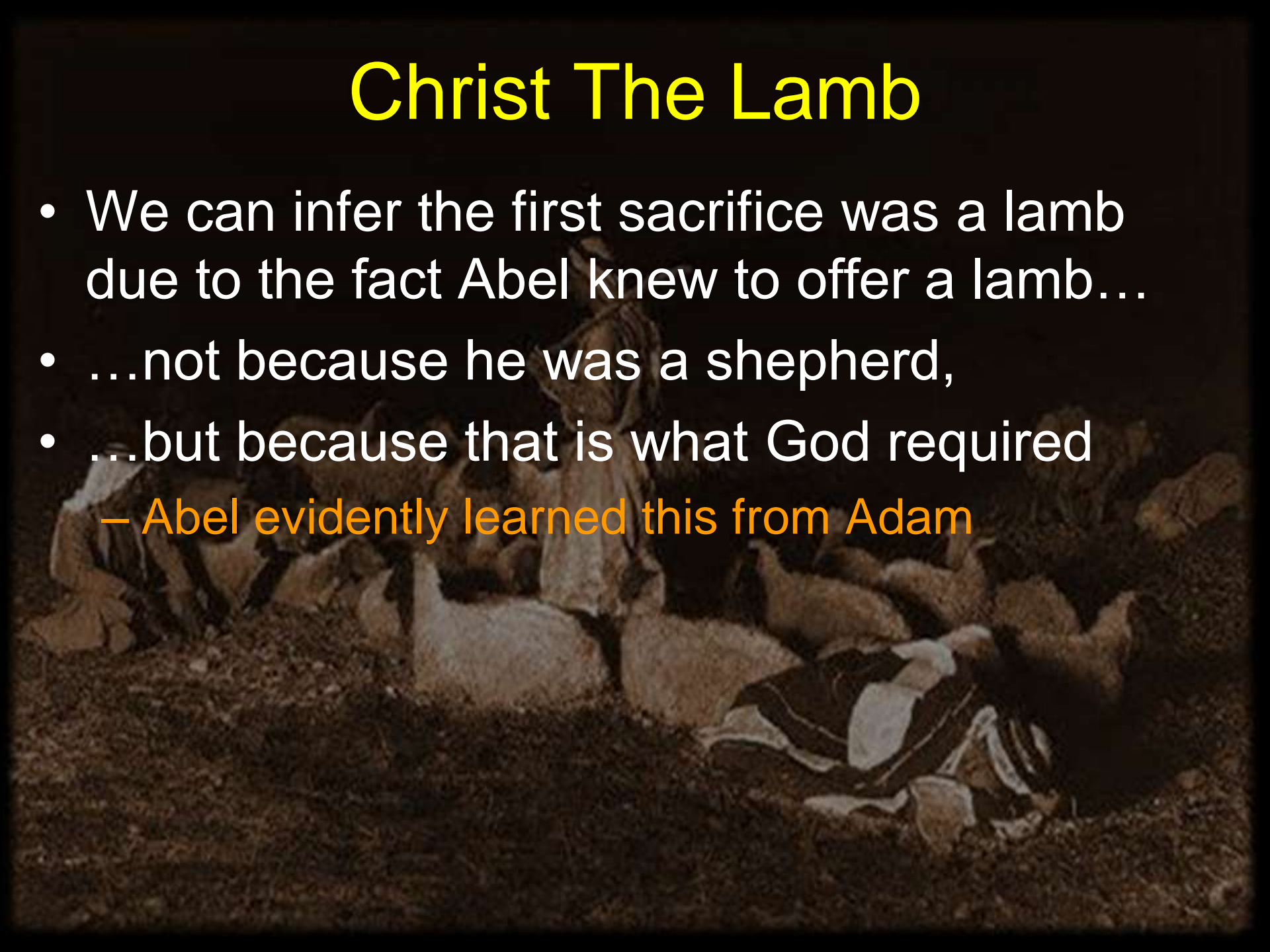
<sup>21</sup> Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

**Genesis 3:21**

- God institutes the first blood sacrifice as an atonement for sin
- An innocent substitute is slain to provide a covering

# Christ The Lamb

- We can infer the first sacrifice was a lamb due to the fact Abel knew to offer a lamb...
- ...not because he was a shepherd,
- ...but because that is what God required
  - Abel evidently learned this from Adam



# Christ The Lamb

- The plan for the first Christmas then becomes clearer in Genesis 22:

<sup>8</sup> And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering

**Genesis 22:8**

# Christ The Lamb

- Abraham also states the location for this great sacrificial offering...

<sup>14</sup> And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day,  
In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

**Genesis 22:14**

# Christ The Lamb

- In Exodus God gives Moses the specific details...

<sup>3</sup> In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them *every man a lamb...*

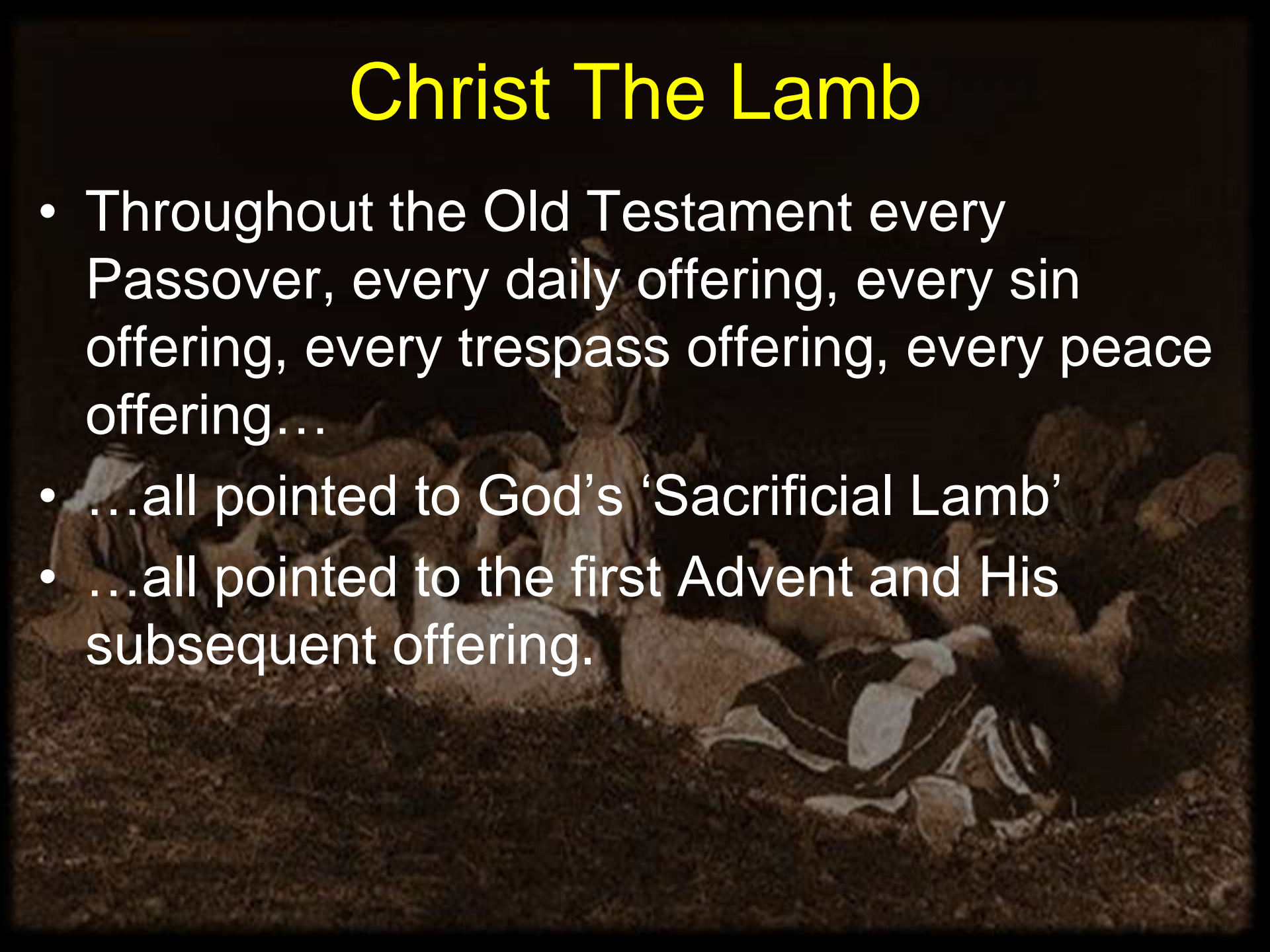
<sup>5</sup> Your lamb shall be **without blemish** a male of the first year:

<sup>6</sup> And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

**Exodus 12:3-6**

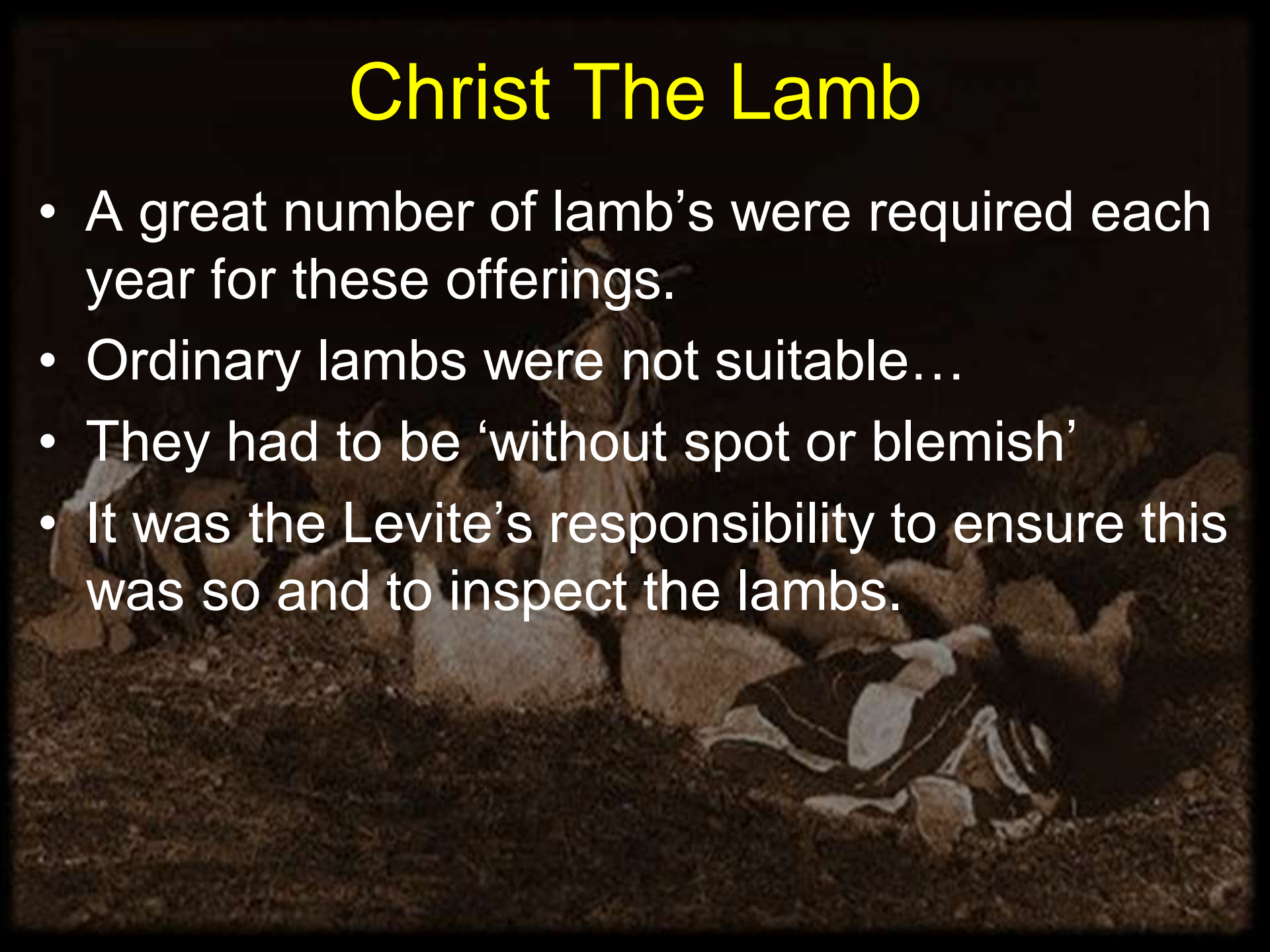
# Christ The Lamb

- Throughout the Old Testament every Passover, every daily offering, every sin offering, every trespass offering, every peace offering...
- ...all pointed to God's 'Sacrificial Lamb'
- ...all pointed to the first Advent and His subsequent offering.



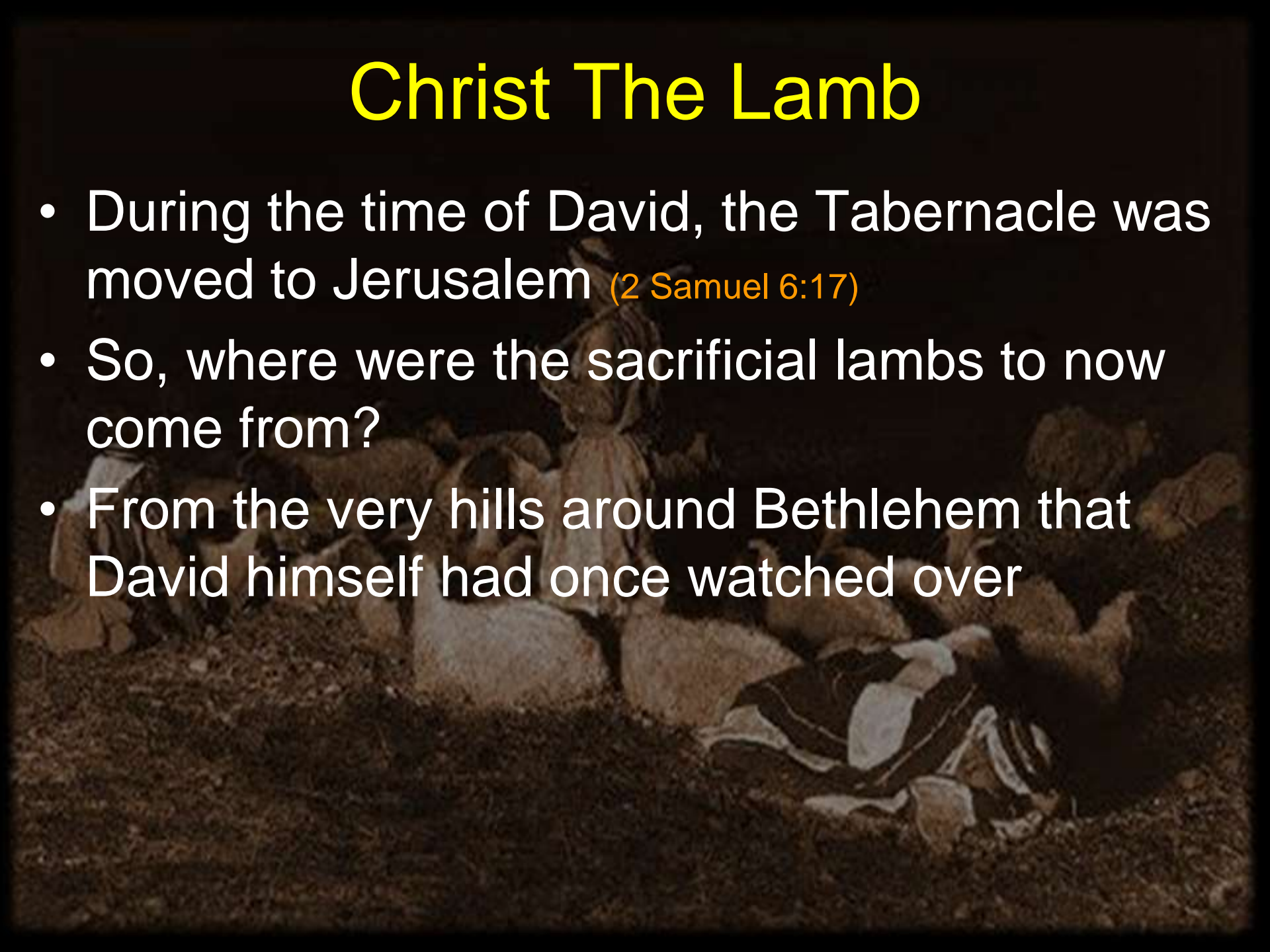
# Christ The Lamb

- A great number of lamb's were required each year for these offerings.
- Ordinary lambs were not suitable...
- They had to be 'without spot or blemish'
- It was the Levite's responsibility to ensure this was so and to inspect the lambs.



# Christ The Lamb

- During the time of David, the Tabernacle was moved to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:17)
- So, where were the sacrificial lambs to now come from?
- From the very hills around Bethlehem that David himself had once watched over



# Bethlehem's Shepherds

- In the Jewish Mishnah: (Shekelim Ch7: Section 4)
- *“The lambs that were raised in this particular place were particularly special in that they were from a unique flock that was made up of sheep that were designated to be sacrificed in Jerusalem, and in particular, the sacrificial lambs for the Passover sacrifices”*
- The men who kept them were Levites, specifically trained for this task, & were educated in what an animal to be sacrificed had to be like.

# Bethlehem's Shepherds

- Their job was to make sure that none of the animals were hurt, or damaged because they had to be 'without blemish' according to the Torah (Exodus 12 / Leviticus 1:3)
- And for that reason, these lambs when they were born were wrapped in "swaddling bands" to protect them from injury,
- The swaddling bands were actually made from worn-out priestly robes

# Bethlehem's Shepherds

- *“When you said Bethlehem, you said “sacrificial lambs”. The hills around Bethlehem were home to the thousands of lambs used in ritual worship in the Temple”.*
- *“Everyone in Israel recognised Bethlehem as being synonymous with sacrificial lambs”.*

*- Harold Smith*

# Bethlehem's Shepherds

- *“As a boy from Bethlehem, King David would likely have tended sheep destined for the daily offerings or used in the sacrifices on the high holidays in these very hills”.*
  - *Harold Smith*
- Is this why God supernaturally protected David (and the lamb's under his care) from the lion and bear attacks? (1 Samuel 17:34-35)

# Bethlehem's Shepherds

- *“Every day, according to the Torah, two lambs were required for a daily sacrifice in the Temple, meaning that 730 were needed each year plus the tens of thousands more lambs needed for Pesach (Passover) as well as for the other religious rituals”. - Harold Smith*

# Bethlehem's Shepherds

- According to the Talmud, all sheep found in the area “*from Jerusalem as far as Migdal Eder*” [Bethlehem] were deemed to be holy and consecrated
- They could *only* be used for sacrifices in the temple...
- ...in particular for the Peace offerings and Passover sacrifices.

# The Tower of the Flock

- "migdal edar" refers to a particular tower that was built in ancient times to watch over the valley on the edge of Bethlehem, to protect the city,
- The name means "watch tower of the flock"
- Several of these towers are recorded in scripture
  - We find them in Judges 8:71, 9:46, & 9:51; and in 2 Kings 9:17, 18:8; and in Nehemiah 3:1

# The Tower of the Flock

- Rabbi Short states:
- *“This Migdal Eder was not the watchtower for the ordinary flocks that pastured on the barren sheep ground beyond Bethlehem... but it lay close to the town on the road to Jerusalem”.* Book 2 chapter 6
- Migdal Eder, is also mentioned in the Jewish Targums and is translated *“The anointed one of the flock of Israel”*

# The Tower of the Flock

<sup>19</sup> And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

<sup>20</sup> And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

<sup>21</sup> And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.

**Genesis 35:19-21**



Jerusalem: 8 Miles

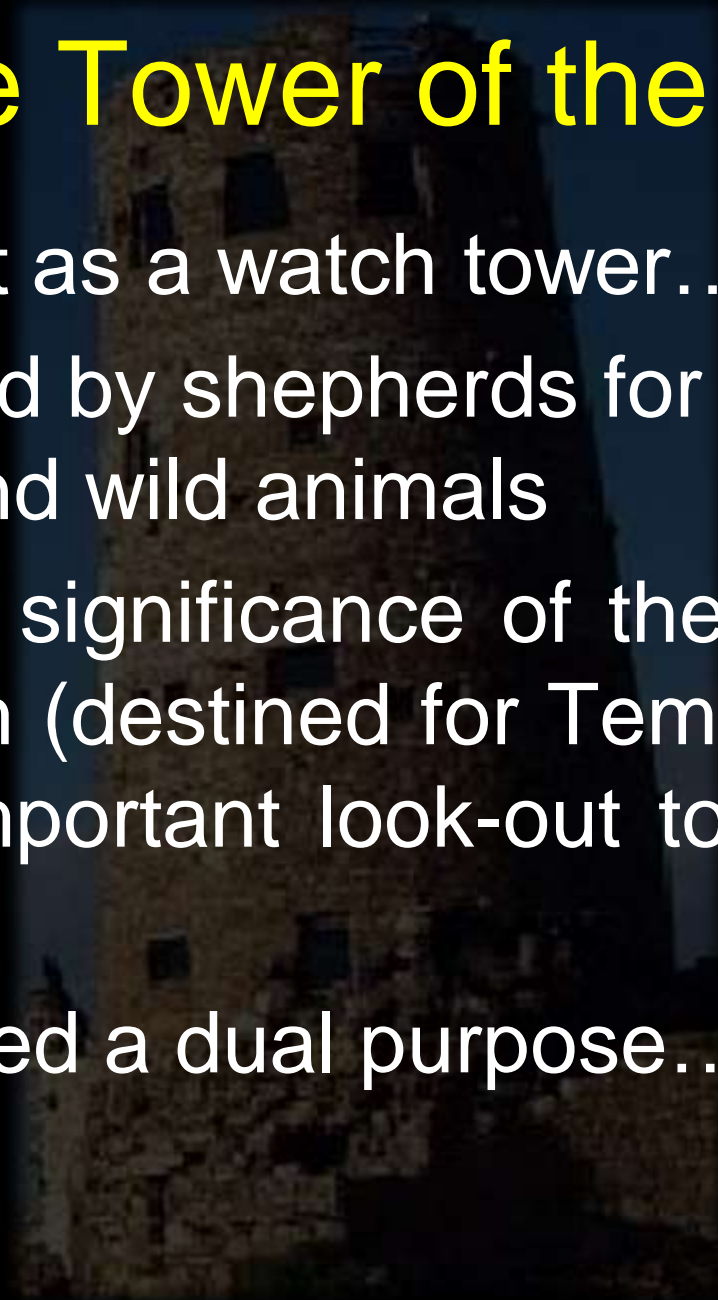
Migdal Eder

Bethlehem-Judah



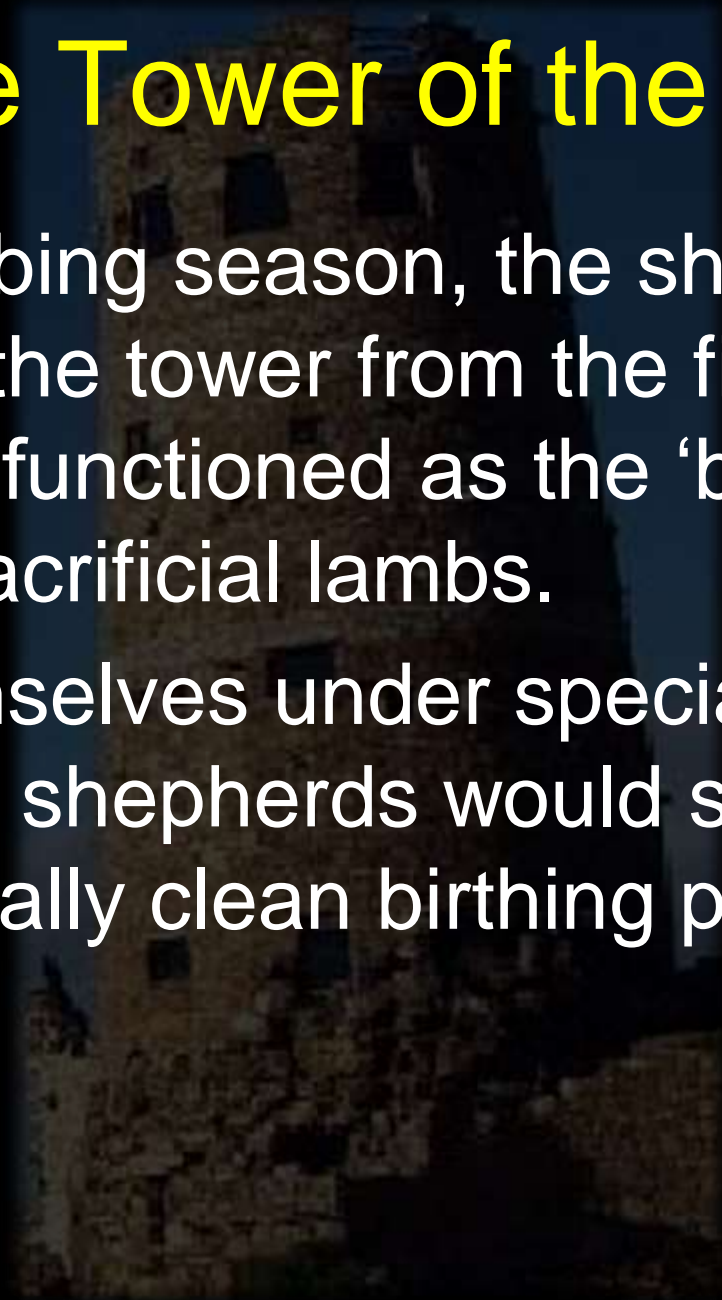
# The Tower of the Flock

- It was built as a watch tower...
- ...and used by shepherds for protection from robbers and wild animals
- Given the significance of the sheep around Bethlehem (destined for Temple sacrifice), it was an important look-out to guard against trouble
- But it served a dual purpose...



# The Tower of the Flock

- During lambing season, the sheep were brought to the tower from the fields, as the lower level functioned as the 'birthing room' for these sacrificial lambs.
- Being themselves under special rabbinical care, these shepherds would strictly maintain a ceremonially clean birthing place.



# The Tower of the Flock

- Once birthed, the shepherds would routinely place the lambs in the hewn depression of a limestone rock known as "**the manger**"
- They would "wrap the new-born lambs in **swaddling clothes**," preventing them from thrashing about and harming themselves "until they had calmed down" so they could be inspected for the quality of being "**without spot or blemish**"
  - *Jewish oral tradition & Alfred Edersheim, the Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.*

# The Tower of the Flock

- *“Approaching this subject from the Hebrew perspective will show, that while swaddling “cloths” were used in the handling of newborn babies, swaddling “bands” (as referenced in Job 38:9) were used for subduing animals prior to sacrifice. These “swaddling bands” were strips of gauze-like cloth used to restrain a lamb being prepared for inspection before sacrifice to prevent thrashing that they not “blemish” themselves”.*

# The Tower of the Flock

- *“A sacrifice had to be “bound” (Hebrew `aqad) in order to be valid. “Binding” an animal for sacrifice is the Hebrew akeida specifically mentioned in Abraham’s “binding” of Yitzchak (Isaac) for sacrifice to the Almighty in Genesis 22:9”*
  - *Jewish oral tradition & Alfred Edersheim, the Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.*
- These swaddling bands were made from old priestly robes!

# Micah's Prophecy

<sup>2</sup> But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

**Micah 5:2**

- Do you know what *else* Micah prophesied?

# Micah's Other Prophecy

<sup>8</sup> And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

**Micah 4:8**

<sup>8</sup> And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

**Luke 2:8-9**



**10** And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

**11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

**12** And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

**Luke 2:10-12**



**13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

**14** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

**15** 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.

**Luke 2:13-15**



**16** And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

**17** And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

**18** And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

**Luke 2:16-18**



19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

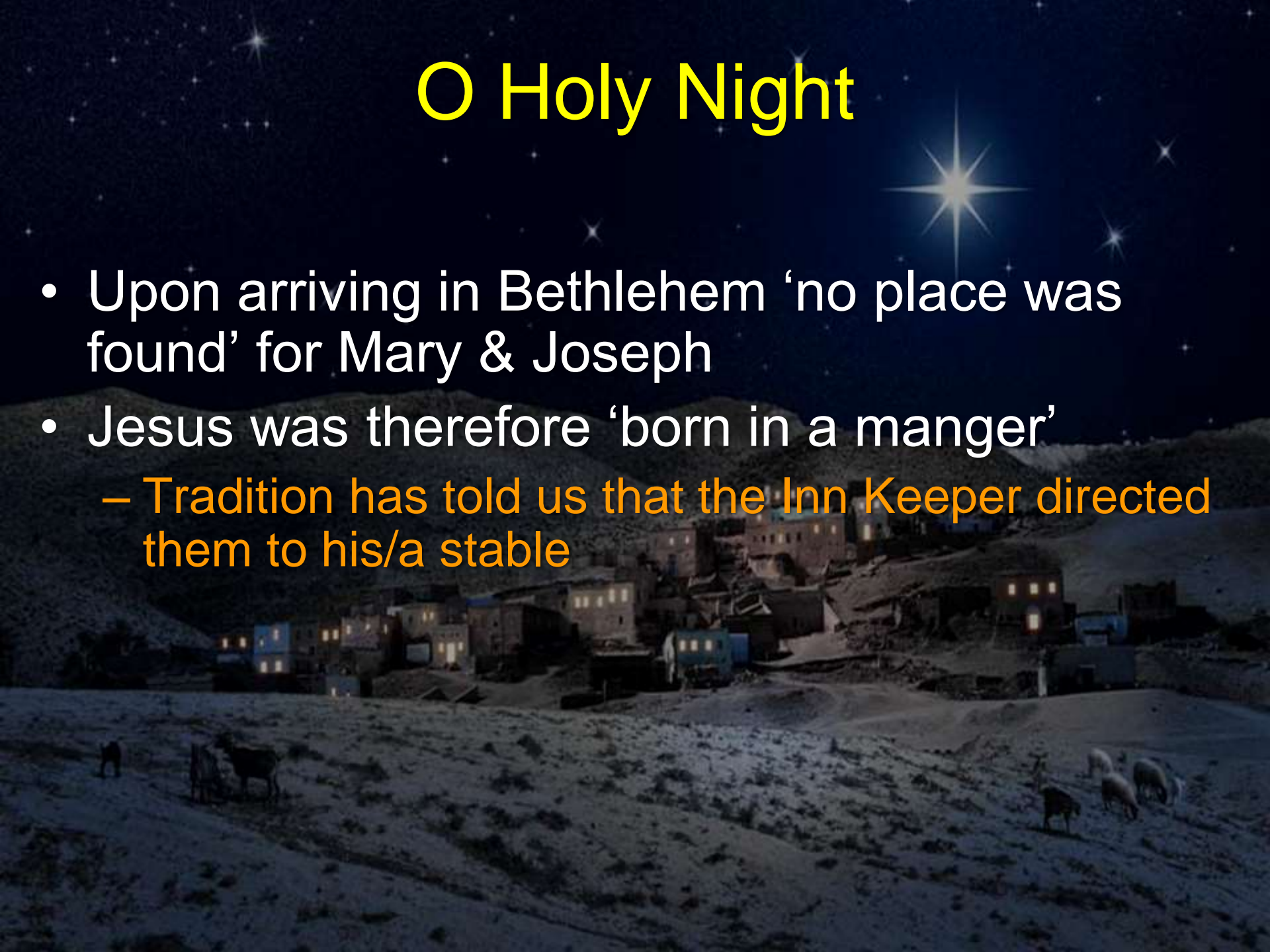
20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

**Luke 2:19-20**



# O Holy Night

- Upon arriving in Bethlehem 'no place was found' for Mary & Joseph
- Jesus was therefore 'born in a manger'
  - Tradition has told us that the Inn Keeper directed them to his/a stable

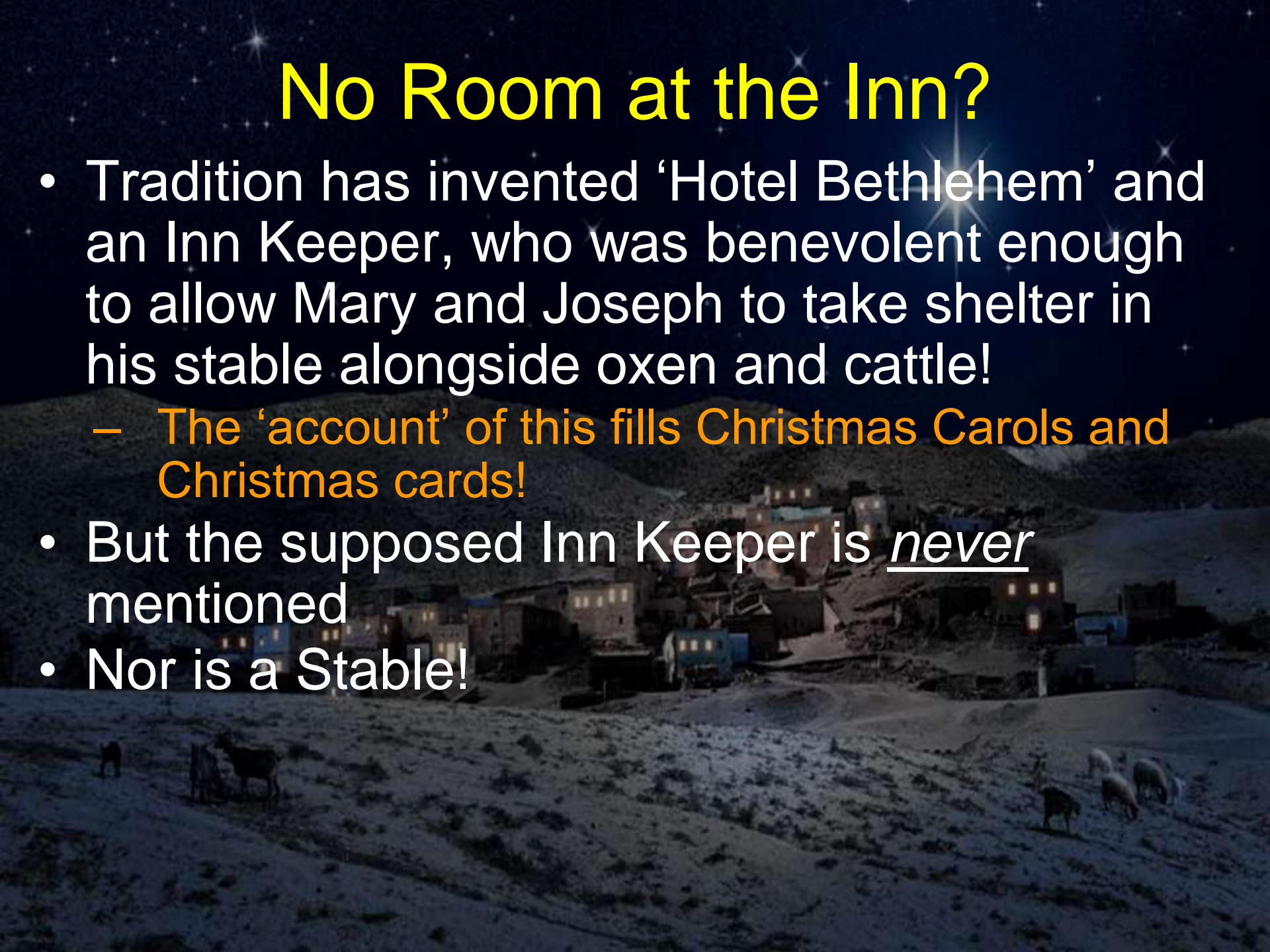


# No Room at the Inn?

- The word translated 'inn' is properly '*guest-chamber*'
  - It is more likely this was an annex built onto the family home
- But why wouldn't the family welcome them in?
  - Firstly, there genuinely might not have been enough room with the rest of the family there
    - most of whom would probably live closer than Nazareth
  - Secondly it may have been more to do with the laws of ceremonial purity Lev 12 / 15:19-30
    - Giving birth in the house would have defiled the house
  - Thirdly, the family would have wanted to avoid the scandal of welcoming Joseph and his pregnant girlfriend!

# No Room at the Inn?

- Tradition has invented 'Hotel Bethlehem' and an Inn Keeper, who was benevolent enough to allow Mary and Joseph to take shelter in his stable alongside oxen and cattle!
  - The 'account' of this fills Christmas Carols and Christmas cards!
- But the supposed Inn Keeper is never mentioned
- Nor is a Stable!



# O Holy Night

- The Shepherd's were in the fields around Bethlehem
- The angels appeared to them of all people to announce Jesus' birth (the Messiah!)
- Why the shepherds?
- What was their job?
- Lamb inspectors!
- The angles gave the Shepherd's a sign that revealed the exact location!

# The Sign!

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

**Luke 2:1-18**



# The Sign!

<sup>12</sup> And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find **A babe** wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in **THE manger.**

**Luke 2:1-18**

- The Greek text indicates they were to find **A babe** lying in **THE manger** (definite article)
- Thus a babe lying in the manger wrapped in swaddling bands would itself be the sign that would confirm the words of the angel

# The Sign!

- There was only one 'manger' in Bethlehem were they would also find swaddling clothes...
- It was in their tower!
- Immediately the shepherds know exactly where to go...
- ...and when they do they are able to inspect this Lamb – Who was without blemish!
- They would not have been ignorant of Micah's prophecy regarding their tower
- No wonder they went away rejoicing!

# A Reason To Celebrate

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

**Luke 2:20**



# Prophetic Implications

<sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

**Luke 2:19**

- Lamb's born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes and inspected by Levitical shepherds had only one destination...
- To be offered as atonement for sin in Jerusalem
- This is the real message of Christmas!

# The Reason For The Season!

- The real reason to celebrate Christmas is because of the priceless gift that God gave
- It had been planned for 4000 years!
  - Actually planned from before the foundation of the world!
- Every present under the tree is a reminder of the greatest gift of all
- The angels appeared to the shepherds first because Jesus had to first come as the spotless Lamb... before He can come as King!

# Christmas 2022


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The background of the entire image is a photograph of the HMS Victory, a three-masted sailing ship, docked in Portsmouth harbor. The ship is seen from a low angle, emphasizing its massive size and complex rigging. The hull is painted with yellow and black diagonal stripes. A Union Jack flag flies from the mainmast. In the background, the red-brick buildings of the harbor are visible under a clear sky.

# Calvary Chapel Portsmouth



*Simply teaching the Bible, simply*