

“And it came to pass . . . “

“And it came to pass . . .”; a phrase familiar to our ears.
Why, most of us have heard it read at Christmas time for years.
‘Twas Luke that penned those words divine so many years ago;
the sweetest love story every told because God wants everyone to know
just exactly what happened in Bethlehem that night,
when in a sin darkened world, there shone a great Light.
Indeed, not just a great light, but The Light of the World.

Just to think about what happened makes my hair curl
with excitement and joy with the thought of what took place
when God stepped out of heaven and gave love a face.
“And it came to pass . . .” just like God had said it would.
For century after century, His prophets had stood
in the temples of Israel and before the Watergate,
warning all who would listen of the world’s sure fate.
With loud voices and tears the preachers proclaimed
there was need to repent of the sins they then named:
pride, corruption, prejudice and greed,
thievery and gossip and other misdeeds.
Deeds and attitudes folks had practiced for ages;
they called for repentance before sin paid its wages.

“And it came to pass . . .” of such humble means;
a stable, a manger, well, you’ve seen the scenes
on Christmas cards and coloring books and in movies too,
with cattle and sheep and donkeys; what a zoo.
It seemed hardly the place for the birth of God’s Son;
but there was no room in the inn for this Holy One
who left heaven’s splendor to dwell among men;
born to a virgin, as prophesied, and then,
a life without sin He would live just to be
the Perfect Lamb slain for a sinner like me.

“And it came to pass . . .” on a hillside that night
that certain poor shepherds were startled by a light
and an angel appeared with news from above;
a news flash from God to mankind with love;
“This night you will find in Bethlehem town
the promised Messiah from heaven come down
as a Babe in a manger nestled in hay.
Get up! Go see! And praise God on your way.
And they went and they saw and they worshipped that night
a baby named Jesus who came as the Light.

“And it came to pass . . .” that for 33 years
the Light shone with miracles and laughter and tears.
A life without sin, marked by compassion and prayer.
When He entered a room, you knew God was there.
He taught with authority and showed folks the way
God would have them to live day after day.
By example He led. With patience He taught.
Yet sometimes it seemed it was all for naught.
For people kept sinning, rejecting God’s plan
and followed rather the doctrines of man.

“And it came to pass . . .” as God knew that it would;
indeed as He had always known since before He stood
at the dawn of human history and spoke the world into view
with complete, perfect knowledge that one day for me and you
He would need to come in a house of clay
just like the one we live in today
and shed His precious blood to atone for our sin;
and that time had come - never before had there been
a ransom so high paid for an unworthy slave,
yet God loved us so much that His Son, He gave.

“And it came to pass . . .” on a hill not so far away
from the place that wondrous night where a baby did lay
in a manger surrounded by a curious crowd
who knew He was special, while most shouted loud,
“He’s not the One we’ve waited for so long!
We’ll wait for another - and Satan danced and sang a song.
Yes, most folks rejected God’s Gift from above;
Given for all people with unequalled love.
And as the cross was lifted atop Calvary,
God cried, humanity screamed, and Satan snickered with glee.

“And it came to pass . . .” that very afternoon
that the sun was darkened and the world covered with gloom.
An earthquake, strange sightings, the temple veil torn in two
from the top to the bottom - the Holy of Holies in full view.
Christ’s blood had been shed - sin’s debt had been paid.
Bethlehem’s Babe had lived perfectly and laid
Himself on the altar of sacrifice for all
who repenting in faith will trust Him and call.
Call out for forgiveness; “Lord, please save me;
unworthy as I am, Lord, make me like Thee.”

“And it came to pass . . .” on the third day
that an angel came down and rolled the stone away

from the entrance of the tomb guarded by men
who were threatened with death if they let anyone in.
And yet they fled frightened though none had gone in
and no one came out for it was empty by then
since Jesus who died and was buried within
had risen victorious over Satan and sin.
“He is not here”, the angel had said.
“He is risen; tell everyone. He is not dead!”

“And it came to pass . . .” or you can be sure it will,
but as of this minute God is knocking still
at the heart’s door of men and women like you;
He’s dealing with teenagers and children too.
Knocking and asking for entrance within
to cleanse and save you from the penalties of sin.
He wants to give you the greatest Gift ever given;
peace and love now and an eternity in heaven.
But though He is offering you can’t receive
until you open your heart, trust in Him and believe.

“And it came to pass . . .”, that’s what everyone will say
when they bow on their knees on that fateful day
to confess “Jesus is Lord”, but ‘twill be too late
for many who sadly did seal their fate
by rejecting that Baby in the manger of hay
and chose to live life in their own Godless way.
Many will plead citing works they have done
and God will say, “but you rejected my Son;
so depart from Me; your name I don’t see
in the Lamb’s Book of Life, so hell is yours eternally.”

And it came to pass . . .”, oh, surely it must
for though God is love, He also is just;
And you can be sure that each person on earth,
has, or will have, the chance to hear of his worth
to the God who created him for heavenly joy;
each man, each woman, each girl, each boy.
To be sure, all will hear the Holy Spirit’s call;
that tug at his heart to surrender his all
to the God who so long ago lay in the straw
of a manger while shepherds worshipped Him in awe.

”And it came to pass . . .” that as time has marched on
that today in this place we have worshipped with song;
Jesus, God’s Son, Bethlehem’s Babe,
Calvary’s Lamb, slain, lost sinners to save;

the garden tomb's tenant who victoriously arose
defeating completely all of our foes
who would lead us astray from the heavenly way
to hell forever with Satan to stay.
And yet as we celebrate this story once more,
many will hear and still the message ignore.

"And it came to pass . . .". These words ring loud and true.
Jesus left heaven to save me . . . and you.
For many this season is just a holiday of glee,
presents and reindeer and a decorated tree.
I know, for I too am a part of the show;
all involved in the action, rushing to and fro.
But I have come today to pause and kneel
at a tiny manger to display how I feel.
I invite you right now to come kneel with me
and worship the Christ Child who alone sets men free.

-James Lochridge

(I first delivered this poem as my sermon dressed as Santa Claus, wig,
beard and all).

It got their attention and many came to the altar to pray at the end of the presentation.
One lady asked to join the church. I asked her if she had ever been presented
to a church by Santa Claus. When she said no, I told her that's why we
were called First Baptist; we had a lot of firsts happen there. After
a few moments of silent prayer, on our knees around that manger/altar,
we sang the chorus that I had written and taught the congregation earlier,
"Christ Is Lord". (You can find it in the music selections on this
website.) We sang it through once, then I began to pray as the music
played the second time through. I concluded my prayer as the music
neared the third repeat of the song and we sang it once more. God worked in the hearts
of us all.