

# One Nation Under God - Walk Across America

Vol. 3 No 10

December 2004

This year as I walked in West Virginia, I passed a sheep and goat farm. It was not like the well kept farms in the Pennsylvania Dutch Country in which I live. About twenty sheep were separated from twenty goats by a wood fence in this small farm and the small unpainted barn was in a deplorable state. The two small fields were all muck and mire without a single blade of grass and the smell was rancid. The farm reminded me of a scene but what scene? Later I realized the answer. It was very similar to a nativity scene without the three wise men, the shepherds, Mary, Joseph and of course the baby, Jesus. A manger scene or crèche is an important part of the Christmas story. No, this could not be right with all the muck and the stench, or is it right? Do Christians today sanitize the birth of Jesus? Let's examine the birth of Jesus.

Only the gospels of Mathew and Luke tell of the birth of Christ. We know that Joseph and pregnant Mary traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for a census. Tradition was Mary riding a donkey on this long journey. This may or may not be true. On long expeditions, a donkey would have carried food, water, bedding and perhaps a tent with the travelers walking and leading the animal. Perhaps, there was no tent and Mary rode the donkey. They would have traveled around Samaria causing the trip to be about 125 miles. That little town of Bethlehem is just south of Jerusalem means 'the house of bread'. For there, in that town, was born the Bread of Life amidst farm animals because there was no room in the inn. Actually the word, inn in Greek, means the upper room of the house. The lower or outer room (stable) may have housed animals. Some theologians believe that Mary gave birth to our Savior in a cave. In either case, the conditions were appalling. What mother today would place their newborn child in a manger or feeding trough?

Next we read in Luke that the shepherds in the fields were told by an angel. *"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 Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."* The shepherds were first to see and know who the baby, Jesus, was. Even at the birth of Jesus, the shadow of the cross was already falling over his face. Those shepherds raise lambs to be sacrificed at Passover in Jerusalem for the forgiveness of sins. Did Mary and Joseph know that their son would become the Lamb of God, a sacrifice for all mankind?

In the Book of Matthew, we read about the wise men or magi. *And when they came into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense and myrrh.* Why would anyone give a newborn king myrrh? Myrrh, like frankincense, was a perfume. But the use of myrrh in the ancient world was not to make a living person smell better, it was used to embalm a corpse. Mary Magdalene may have brought myrrh to the tomb of Jesus to anoint Him, only to find an angel instead of a body on that first Easter. Did the wise men

know the future of that tiny babe on that day about two thousand years ago? Today Christians celebrate His birth by giving gifts on Christmas. On that first Christmas, God gave us His son to die on a cross so our sins could be forgiven. No more lambs needed to be sacrificed. It is the greatest gift that anyone can give, the gift of eternal life in heaven. Amen.

Today in America the meaning of Christmas is no longer about the birth of Christ. It is about profit and being politically correct. Last year near my home town, the Exton Square Mall refused a church group from wrapping Christmas gifts for free while other non-profit groups were allowed to do so. The reason was that they would have to allow any religious group to take part in helping. In Denver, Colorado, a local Christian church was banned from participating in the annual "Parade of Lights" parade because of its religious theme. In that same parade was the "Two Spirit Society's" float, which honored homosexual American Indians as "holy people". In many schools throughout our nation, religious music can not be played during their Christmas concerts. In Indiana a principal banned any mention of the word, Christmas, in his school. Where is the freedom of speech in our nation? In North Carolina, a customer complained to drug store owner that his manger scene in his store offended her. He later removed it.

The Macy's department store chain has replaced "Merry Christmas" with "Happy Holidays". Are they concerned losing non-Christian business? Did they not make a profit of the selling of DVD's, *The Passion of the Christ*? The CEO of Target stores banned Salvation Army bell ringers from their stores nationwide. Are they afraid that they would steal from the stores profits? Why is the attempt being made in America to remove Christ from Christmas? Why in America can people use the name of our Lord in vain, but Christians can not use His name without offending someone? Please pray that Christmas would again have meaning in this nation.

To learn more about the One Nation Under God –Walk Across America, go to our new web site, [www.geocities.com/walk\\_across\\_america](http://www.geocities.com/walk_across_america).

God bless,  
Jim Shaner  
jims19372@yahoo.com

Total miles walked of the American Discovery Trail	- 440 miles
Number of walkers	- 43 walkers
Number of people praying for America	- 21,992 prayer warriors