

“Christ the Savior Is Born”
(Luke 2:1-20)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

So far we've seen:

The angel's announcement to Zacharias

That he and Elizabeth would have a son (John)

Who would prepare the way for the Lord;

We've seen the angel announce to Mary

That she would conceive

And give birth to the Messiah by the Holy Spirit –

That the eternal Son of God,

Would become the Son of Man through her–

We've seen Mary's visit to Elizabeth:

When John was filled with the Spirit

And leaped for joy at the presence of Jesus;

When Elizabeth announced to Mary by the Spirit

That she was blessed among women

Because of the child she was carrying;

When Mary exalted the Lord

For choosing her to bring the One into the world

Who would save her and all Israel from their sins

In fulfillment of His promise to Abraham;

We saw the birth of John the Baptist:

When Zacharias prophesied

About God raising up
 A King from the line of David,
 Who would save His people
 That they might serve Him
 In holiness and righteousness all their days;

And regarding John:
 That he would go before Jesus
 To prepare Israel to receive Him:
 By preaching the Law,
 And pointing to the One,
 Whom if they trusted,
 Would not only forgive them for breaking that law,
 But would give them the power to keep it.

B. Preview.

This morning, Luke continues his account
 By telling us about the birth of the Messiah:

Here, we see four things:

The census the Lord used to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem (vv. 1-5);

The birth of Jesus the Christ/Messiah (vv. 6-7);

The angelic announcement to the shepherds (vv. 8-14);

And the shepherds' trip to Bethlehem to see the Savior (vv. 15-20).

II. Sermon.

A. First, we see the census the Lord used

To bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem (vv. 1-5);

Luke tells us

That Caesar Augustus

Ordered that a census be taken

Of all the inhabited earth –

He meant by this the Roman Empire

Because it covered the whole civilized world.

The purpose of the census

Was to count the number of people living in each province,

To determine how much tax each owed Rome.

Luke points out

That this was the first census taken

While Quirinius was governor of Syria (v. 2) –

This was an office he held from 4 BC to 12 AD –

Caesar Augustus reigned from 27 BC – 14 AD –

Remember,

The way people remembered

When something took place,

Was by how long it was

From some important event,

Or whose reign it was during.

Luke is telling us

That what he's recorded here

Isn't some myth or legend –

It isn't something some religious people

Chose to believe –

This took place in real time and space history –

Until recently,

History was divided by *this event*:

B.C. means before Christ,

And A.D., means Anno Domini,

The year of our Lord:

It was believed that Jesus was born in 1 A.D.

We now believe He was born around 4-3 B.C.

Because of this census,

Everyone had to go to their own city to register (v. 3):

Joseph –

Being from the family of David –

Went to Bethlehem in Judea –

The city of David –

To register along with Mary –

To whom he was engaged –

Who was also of the house of David,

And who was with child (v. 4).

As noted before,

Augustus' ordered this census

For purposes of taxation;

But the Lord ordered it

To fulfill His Word through the prophet Micah:

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity” (Micah 5:2).

Out of Bethlehem –

The house of bread –

Would come the Bread of life –

The One who comes down from heaven –

Who was to rule not only over Israel,

But over the whole world.

B. Second, we see the birth of Jesus Christ (vv. 6-7).

Now that the Lord had them in the right place,

It was time for Mary to give birth:

And she did: to her *firstborn* Son (v. 6) –

The fact He was firstborn also made Jesus special:

Luke will point out this evening, “As it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘EVERY *firstborn* MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD’” (2:23).

To be *holy* means to be the Lord’s –

When the Lord struck down all the first-born in Egypt,

He also claimed all the first-born sons in Israel (Ex. 13:2) –

Later, He took the whole tribe of Levi

In lieu of these firstborn

That they might belong to Him in a special way:

Serve Him in His tabernacle/Temple.

Jesus is holy in that He is firstborn;

He is holy because He is the Son of God;

He is holy (in a spiritual/moral sense)

Because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit;

And He is holy because He was set apart

For a particular work:

That He might make *us holy* –

That He might cleanse our hearts by His Spirit,

And separate us from this world,

That we might serve Him.

After He was born,

Mary washed and wrapped Him in clean cloths (v. 7) –

She did this by herself,

Showing she was poor

And had no maid to help her.

Our Lord chooses the poor

To make them spiritually rich.

Then she laid Him in a manger –

His first crib was a feeding trough –

They were staying in a stall,

Because there was no room for them in the inn –

The census brought many people from out of town,

And the inns were filled before they arrived.

C. Third, we see the angelic announcement to the shepherds (vv. 8-14).

In that same region

There were shepherds watching over their sheep (v. 8) –

From the time of Passover (in April),

Until autumn (beginning in September),

Flocks were pastured in the open fields,

Which means Jesus' birth took place

Within that time-frame –

Hippolytus of Rome

Appears to have been the first

To suggest His birth as December 25 –

Chrysostom also agreed –

Apparently, they were mistaken.

But let's not forget:

The date isn't nearly as important

As the fact that this birth took place.

While they were watching their sheep,

Suddenly, an angel appeared to them,

The glory of God surrounded them,

And as Zacharias in the Temple,

They were “terribly frightened” –

But again,

The angel wasn't appearing for judgment,
But to bring good news/Gospel –
God's promise of salvation
To all the people of the world –
Beginning with the Jews,
But also to the Gentiles –
Was being fulfilled.

And so the angel comforted them:

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (vv. 10-11).

He also gave them a sign

To confirm what he was saying was true:

“You will find a baby wrapped in cloths
And lying in a manger” (v. 12).

There was nothing special about finding
A newborn wrapped in cloths.

But that He would be lying in a manger

Would be unique:

This was the evidence what he said was true.

As if his appearance,

And the sign he had just given them,

Wasn't enough,

The Lord did one more wonderful thing:

Heaven opened up,
 And a multitude of angels
 Appeared with the first
 Praising God, and saying,
 “Glory to God in the highest,
 And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased” (v. 14).

The angels –
 Who love to watch God’s plan of salvation unfold –
 Were glorifying Him
 As He was sending His Son into the world
 To reconcile fallen man.

D. Finally, we see

The shepherds go to Bethlehem
 To see this sign (vv. 15-20).

Once the angels had gone back into heaven,
 The shepherds decided to look for the Child (v. 15).

They found their way to Mary and Joseph –
 Maybe the Spirit guided them,
 Or maybe it was easy to find Him –
 Bethlehem wasn’t that large a town:
 William Albright, the archaeologist, estimates
 There were only about 300 people
 Who lived there in those days –
 Though the census likely brought

A couple hundred more –

There also weren't that many inns,

Or that many stables –

When they saw the child in the stall

And that He was laying in the manger (v. 16).

They knew what the angel said was true:

This was the Christ/Messiah/Savior of the world.

When they realized this,

They began to tell others what the angels had said –

Luke writes, "All who heard it wondered at the things that were told them by the shepherds" (v. 18).

They were the earliest witnesses to Jesus –

What they had seen and heard,

They were happy to tell to others –

And those who heard were amazed.

That's really all the Lord wants us to do:

Tell others what we've seen and heard

So they might come to know Him as well.

Their testimony also served

To confirm in Mary's heart

What the angel had told her,

And Elizabeth had prophesied:

We read in verse 19,

That Mary treasured all these things –
She held onto them/remembered them –
And she pondered them in her heart –
She kept thinking about what they could mean.

That's what the Lord
Would have us to do this morning:
To remember the birth of our Lord,
And to think about what it really means:

God sent His Son into the world
So that everyone who believe in Him
Will be saved.

There's no other way
To be reconciled to God
Except through Jesus –

But to be reconciled,
We need to trust Him:
To look to Him for all we need
To be made acceptable to the Father.

We should also think about
What His gift calls us to do:
We should also thank God
For showing us His truth,
And worship Him:

Luke, “The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them” (v. 20).

May the Lord help us to do this today,

And every day of our lives. Amen.

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