

The Big Day – Lk 2:1-20

Welcome. [West Campus.] Lk 2:1-20.

We just started a Christmas series last week titled *Behold Your God*. An expression used by the prophet Isaiah centuries *before* Christ . . .
But not fully realized *until* Christ. Until the big day of Christmas.

And when you get right down to it, that event, and the details surrounding it, is probably the best known account in the entire Bible.

We're reminded of it every year in our celebrations, we talk about it every year in church, and hopefully you read it every year in your devotions.

All of which is quite a blessing, b/c we get the details firmly ingrained in our minds.

But it's also a risk. B/c it's possible to focus so much on the *particulars*, that we miss the *principles*. The things about God and his work that apply *today*. To us.

God doesn't just want us to know the *details* of how the big day happened, but some truths about *himself* as well. Truths about the one who *made* it happen.

The first of which, is that . . .

God's sovereignty is amazing – Don't _____ it! (v1-7)

That's principle #1. Take a look at v1-7.

[1] *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.* [2] *This was the first registration [or census] when Quirinius was governor of Syria.* [As opposed to the one 11 years *after* Christ was born, that we also know about.]
[3] *And all went to be registered, each to his own town.*

[4] *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,*
[5] *to be registered with Mary, his betrothed [a legal engagement broken only by divorce], who was with child.* [6] *And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.* [7] *And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

If that doesn't put you in awe of God's sovereignty, I don't know what will. Defined as . . .

- **The absolute power and authority to accomplish his purposes, and the absolute certainty that he will.**

That's the sovereignty of God – his omnipotence and right, having *created* this world, to do whatever he wants; and our complete confidence that he will.

That's the sovereignty of God. And this passage is one of the greatest examples.

Think about it. There are no less than *5 main variables* mentioned or implied in these verses, that God orchestrated in order to fulfill his prophecy and uphold his Word. I'm referring of course, to the prophecy in **Micah 5:2**. Where it was foretold 700 years *before* Christ, that he would be born in Bethlehem.

Speaking for God, Micah says . . .

[2] *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah.*

But, meaning, despite the attack of foreign nations mentioned in the *previous* verse. And *Ephrathah* denoting the district in southern Israel where Bethlehem was located . . .
You O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah [too insignificant to have any influence], *from you shall come forth for me* [God says] *one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days.*

IOW somebody whose coming is a long *time* coming, is going to be *born* in Bethlehem as the next verse says, to rule over God's people. (**Micah 5:4-5a**)

[4] *And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.* And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. [5] *And he shall be their peace.*

It doesn't get much more specific than that.

And God's sovereignty to make it happen as recorded in Luke 2, is nothing short of amazing.*****

➤ Including his sovereignty over the **government**. That's the first variable we find. God had to establish a government with the power, capacity, and reach – to force its subjects, not even citizens, to take a census for the purpose of taxation. Not an easy thing in any day.

But he did it, by raising up the vast Roman Empire, just like he does with all governments. Rom 13:1 – *There is no [governing] authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.* He's sovereign. Even over governments. Then and now.

➤ The 2nd variable is a **ruler**. Someone with the inclination to *take* such a census, and the impulse to do so at just the right *time*.

Enter Caesar Augustus. A ruler who God raised up and controlled, just like all the other rulers in our world. Prov 21:1.

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. That's sovereignty.

Not that God *ordains* every decision – but knows, allows, controls, and uses. And when he *does* ordain their decisions, like he did with Pharaoh in the *Old Testament*, it's not as though he compels them to go *against* their will . . . He just makes them willing to go. So that they *want* to do the things they do.

That's sovereignty. The absolute power and authority to influence a king's heart like a stream of water. In this case, to call for a census at *just* the right time.

➤ 3rd, is a **law-abiding citizen**. Referring to Joseph. Who *went up from Galilee [v4], from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.* That's a law-abiding citizen. And yet *another* variable God had to orchestrate. Especially when the citizen was oppressed. Under the thumb of the government. God put Joseph in *that* place, at *that* time, with *that* kind of a law-abiding heart.

And, he made sure that he was of the right *house and lineage*. The lineage of King David. Variable #4. Forget the lineage, and Joseph would have gone to a *different* city.

But b/c he was from the line of David, he went to Bethlehem; exactly where he *needed* to go. And the fact that the law *required* such a thing for a census . . .

Instead of being counted in the town where you live, is yet *another* variable that God ordained.

As is Joseph's hometown of Nazareth. Where lo and behold, he met *Mary*. Had they lived in 2 *different* towns, they may not have met.

And both of them were most likely *given* in marriage to one another, by 2 sets of parents so inclined. Even *more* variables that God orchestrated. Any one of which would have derailed the whole thing.

But not under God's watch.

Having determined [the] allotted periods [of their lives, just like everyone else], and the boundaries of their dwelling place like it says in Act 17, he's amazingly sovereign.

➤ And then 5th, is a **couple**.

A couple that he not only put together at the right *time*, but kept together despite their crisis of an "out of wedlock" pregnancy. Once again, that's sovereignty.

B/c not many couples would do that. And God used an angel in a dream to ensure it. And when you put it together with all the *other* variables, it's flat-out amazing. (**Summ**)

➤ So whatever you do . . .

God's sovereignty is amazing – Don't doubt it! (v1-7)

Don't doubt God's sovereignty in the *world*, and don't doubt it in your *life*.

What was true then, is true now. B/c God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And he's still at work to *accomplish* his purposes. With the absolute power and authority to do so, so that we can have absolute certainty that he will. Don't doubt it.

Even for something as simple as *getting* you here this evening/morning. God only *knows* the factors he orchestrated to do that.

Maybe it was a friend who invited you. Maybe it's a low point you're experiencing. Or a newfound desire for fellowship. Or a hunger for truth.

Maybe it's a longing for purpose. Or a sense that something's missing. Or all the above.

Whatever the case, don't doubt God's amazing sovereignty to bring you to the end of yourself, reveal your need, and awaken you to faith. Don't doubt it.

You're not here by accident. You're here to believe and behold. To believe in the one who's sovereign, and behold him for yourself.

That's the first principle behind the details here.

The 2nd is that . . .

God's Son is astonishing – Don't _____ him! (v8-14)

[8] *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.* [9] *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.*

The glory of the Lord if you've ever wondered, is the radiance of his holiness and power.

Like light is to a bulb, or heat is to fire.

And it's so strong apparently, that it lingers with those who have been exposed to it. It sticks to them. Causing *them* to glow. To *re-radiate* his glory.

Think Moses in the *Old* Testament. His face shone so brightly after being with God, that he had to wear a *veil*. The Israelites couldn't even *look* at him.

And that was after just 40 *days* of being with God.

Can you imagine the angels after 40 *millennia* in his presence?

No wonder the *glory of the Lord shone around* the shepherds. No wonder they were afraid. God's glory is that powerful. That overwhelming. That sticky.

And you know you've experienced it, when it changes you. Like it changed the shepherds.

Who went from solitary herdsmen, to outgoing preachers (17-18).

Telling everybody they *could* about what they had seen and heard.

Or how about the apostles later on? Who left their nets and became fishers of *men*.

Why? B/c they experienced the glory of God in Jesus Christ, and it *changed* them.

And the same will happen to you, if *you* behold God's glory.

Oh, you probably won't have the privilege of *directly* seeing it. Like Isaiah did, in a vision of God's throne. Or the Apostle John, in the book of Revelation.

Or Mary, or Joseph, or the shepherds via an angel.

But you sure can see it *indirectly*, with the eyes of your *heart*.

You sure can see it through the eyes of *others*, as recorded in God's Word.

You sure can see it in *prayer*, as you spend time with him.

And you sure can *feel* it in your heart of hearts. B/c at the end of the day it wrecks you, breaks you, inspires you, and moves you.

And if it doesn't, you haven't seen it. You haven't beheld it.

Behold your God. Behold your God. So that his glory shines around *you*.

➤ [10] *And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.* [11] *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* [10W behold, your God.] [12] *And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger [a feed trough].* [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 among those with whom he is pleased!"*

We saw last week that this baby was none other than God's Son. God in the flesh.

Swaddling cloths and all.

And this week, we find that he's nothing short of astonishing!

First of all, b/c he was **announced by angels**. With *good news of great joy* no less.

Can you imagine that happening *today* with a baby?

You'd have to pick your jaw up off the floor. Talk about a viral video.

➤ But even more astonishing, is that he's called a **Savior**. V11

Unto you is born this day . . . a Savior. And not just any savior. But the one who went on to die for our sins and rise again to new life, that *we* might be saved.

Saved from what? The *consequences* of our sins. The consequences of the wrong things we've done, and the right things we haven't.

Consequences that include death, *separation* from God, and torment in hell. Forever.

With no second chance. Those are the consequences of our sin and sinfulness.

From which, God's Son, Jesus, can *save* us. And will, if you ask him (**Rom 10:13**). If you call on him. *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved* the Bible says.

Everyone who reaches for him. Everyone who embraces him. Everyone who depends on him. You'll be saved.

Saved from hell. Saved from guilt – both the feeling *and* the reality.

Saved from bondage to the same old sins over and over again. Saved from meaningless futility in life. And saved from emptiness.

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord *will be saved*. It's a promise you can be *certain* of. B/c Jesus, God's Son, is a Sav-ior. Astonishing.*****

➤ And all the more so, b/c he's **Christ the Lord** (11).

Meaning, he's the long-awaited Messiah, the *Christ*, who they thought would deliver them from *political* oppression and rule over their *nation*.

But Jesus went on to fulfill those promises of deliverance in a *different way*.

So that now, he delivers us from the oppression of *sin*, and rules as Lord over our *lives*.

From the inside out. Way better than being ruled from the outside in.

No wonder the heavenly host busted out with praise (13-14)! (**Summary**)

He's astonishing. Astounding. Amazing. Incredible.

➤ So whatever you do . . .

God's Son is astonishing – Don't miss him! (v8-14)

Don't miss him, to save you from your sins and reign in your life. As Lord.

Where you do what *he* wants instead of what you want.

Where you live for *his* glory instead of your own.

Where you *enjoy* him instead of avoiding him.

Where you live with *assurance* instead of dying in fear.

Don't miss him. Turn your eyes upon Jesus and don't take them off.

Call upon him to be saved, and follow him as Lord.

B/c there's no other way to be forgiven of your sin, freed from your bondage, and filled with peace. No other way.

No other way to behold your God, and experience his glory. Glory that wrecks you, and moves you, and changes you forever.

➤ Don't doubt God's sovereignty, don't miss God's Son, and don't ignore God's Word.

That's the *last* principle embedded in the details here.

God's word is true – Don't ignore it! (v15-20)

[15] *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."* [16] *And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.* [17] *And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.* [18] *And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.* [19] *But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.* [20] *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

God made some things known to the shepherds that they didn't ignore (15). Things they checked out with *haste* (16). And found true. Just *as it had been told them* (v20).

And no wonder. The *word* they heard was from God. Who's trustworthy in *everything* he says. Including the Word he *wrote*. It too is true.

Confirmed by the church for 2000 years now. In the hearts and souls of people just like you and I. Living with the joyful assurance of their salvation . . .

Under the loving lordship of Jesus Christ. It's true. All of it.

➤ The only question, is what you're going to do with it. (**Summary**)

Are you going to *ignore* what you just heard, or act on it? Reject it, or accept it?

God is sovereign, but he's not going to force you into a decision.

He wants your heart. He wants your love. He wants your devotion.

And if you're ready to give it – turn your eyes upon Jesus, call upon his name, and be saved. Right now. Receive him as Lord and follow his way.

Prayer – Lord, thank you for awakening each and every person who just prayed. Your sovereignty *is* amazing, and your Son, astonishing.

Fill and seal each and every one with your Holy Spirit, just as you promised. Protect them from the evil one. And give them a hunger for your Word, and your church.

We love you and praise you for all you do. And give now with hearts that are full, to see you do more.