



Shelby Christian Church

CHRISTMAS - HOLY MOMENTS: THE POWER OF A MEMORY

LUKE 2:1-7 * 12/21/2025

MAIN POINT

At the time of God's choosing, Jesus Christ came into the world as Savior, in the humblest of circumstances—born of the virgin Mary and laid in a manger in Bethlehem.

INTRODUCTION

What are some interesting facts about the year you were born?

What does it mean to be “a child of the times”? To what extent and in what ways do you think one person can change the course of his or her “times”?

Whether we recognize it or admit it, all of us are shaped to some degree by the times in which we live. As social beings, we do not develop our attitudes and outlooks on life in a vacuum. We're shaped by our family environments, our generational attitudes, our friendships, our schools and churches, and—not insignificantly—by key historical events that happen in our lifetime.

On the other hand, we're not robots. We might be shaped to some degree by our times, but we're also made in God's image with the opportunity to not be conformed to this world but to be transformed to a new life through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the true message of Christmas: the good news that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came into the world in the humblest of circumstances to change the course of history and transform our lives. In Christ, believers break free from sin to live in righteousness. We're delivered from fear and hopelessness to live with grace and purpose. We're saved from death to experience eternal life. All of this is possible because of one Person who was born in a specific place, at a particular time in history.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 2:1-3.

What are three historical facts Luke mentioned in these verses?

Why do you think Luke selected these facts in particular to set the context for Jesus' birth?

If Jesus had been born in the same country and year as you, what might have happened differently? What would have been the same?

On the surface, this was a political and tax-gathering measure. How does this event fulfill the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)? What does this reveal about God's ability to use worldly rulers to accomplish His divine plan?

"All went to be registered, each to his own town" (v. 3): This required significant travel. Consider the hardship this placed on people, especially a heavily pregnant woman like Mary. How might Joseph and Mary have felt about this timing?

Along with being inspired by the Holy Spirit, Luke brought an historian's approach to his Gospel account (see Luke 1:1-4). This approach included setting the world's most significant event within its proper context. The birth of Jesus Christ didn't happen in a vacuum or by accident. God had promised to Israelite kings and prophets centuries earlier that one day He would send His Son as Messiah and Savior (see 2 Sam. 7:13-16; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 33:14-16). The apostle Paul later wrote concerning Jesus' birth: "When the time came to completion, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 2:4-5.

What impresses you about Joseph and Mary in these verses? What further insights about the couple are learned from Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38?

What hardships did the couple face at this time? How was God involved in helping them overcome their hardships?

What do Joseph and Mary's experiences teach you about God? What do they teach you about when you face hopeless-looking situations?

Both Joseph and Mary could trace their family lineage back through King David, ancient Israel's most beloved ruler. David's hometown was Bethlehem, a village located just a few miles south of Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth—some ninety miles north of Bethlehem—at the time of the registration. They would have to travel over difficult and, at times, mountainous terrain to complete their duty as citizens. However, there was another factor that made the trip far more complicated and significant than the terrain they had to cover.

Mary was pregnant and close to her time of delivery. This fact was complicated by the reality that she was a virgin; she was engaged to Joseph, but they had not consummated their marriage. Joseph was a godly man who had considered ending the couple's marriage plans when he first discovered that Mary was pregnant. He could only assume that Mary had committed a sin by having sexual relations with another man. In a dream, however, the Lord's angel assured Joseph that Mary's pregnancy was not sinful but was, in fact, miraculous—brought about solely by the power of the Holy Spirit. She would give birth to a Son named Jesus, who would save His people from their sins (see Matt. 1:18-25).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 2:6-7.

The timing was precise; God's plan unfolded exactly when it needed to. How can we find comfort in God's perfect timing in our own lives, especially during times of waiting or stress?

Of what significance to your faith are the following facts surrounding Jesus' birth: His birth to a virgin? Why do you think God orchestrated such a lowly entry for the King of the Universe? What does this teach us about the values of the Kingdom of God versus the values of the world?

What do our modern celebrations of Christmas get right about the significance of Jesus' birth? What do we get wrong?

Luke's Gospel presents the historical facts that Jesus Christ was conceived and born while Mary was still a virgin. The theological significance of this reality is crucial for the gospel and Christian faith. Matthew 1:22-23 reveals, for example, that the virgin conception and birth of Jesus fulfilled prophecy about the Messiah found in Isaiah 7:14. In other words, God is always faithful to keep His promises. Further, through the Messiah, God promised that He would personally enter into human history. Jesus Christ would be Immanuel, "God with us." He would, as Paul wrote in Philippians 2:7-8, "come as a man," humbling himself "by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross." The doctrine of the virgin birth assures us that Christ was a unique person: fully divine (the eternal Son of God), yet also fully human (born to a Jewish virgin on a specific day in human history, in a particular place on earth). In His uniqueness, Jesus alone was qualified to be our Savior. He alone "has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Revelation 5:9-10 depicts Christ as the sacrificial Lamb who alone is able to transform mankind's destiny by redeeming us from sin by His death on the cross.

APPLICATION

What effect has the news of Jesus' birth had on you personally?

How does the birth of Jesus in a particular time and place impact the way you view the time and place in which God has placed you? How is this significant in fulfilling His purposes in your life?

Why is it important for Christians to anchor Jesus' birth in its historical context when they share the gospel with others?

The Innkeeper had no room for the Savior. What "rooms" in your life (e.g., time, worries, pride, busy schedules) might you need to clear out to make more room for Jesus this season?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

Luke 2:1-7

2:1 Augustus (meaning "Exalted," a title approved by the Roman Senate in 27 b.c.) was the Roman Caesar from 31 b.c. to a.d. 14. This decree... that the whole empire should be registered was a census for the purposes of taxation and military service.

2:2 It is thought that Quirinius served two terms as Roman governor of Syria: from 6-4 b.c., and then a.d. 6-9. Jesus was born during the period of the first registration. There was also a census registration in Quirinius's second term (Ac 5:37).

2:3-4 His own town refers not to where Joseph presently lived (Nazareth in Galilee), but to the town of his ancestral roots (Bethlehem in Judea), which was called the city of David because King David grew up there (1Sam 16:1). Joseph was descended from David (1:27). The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem would have taken three days and covered roughly 90 miles.

2:5-6 As months before in 1:27, Mary at this time was still only engaged to Joseph because they had not yet consummated their marriage via intercourse. Nevertheless, she was pregnant and ready to give birth.

2:7 The words her firstborn Son naturally implies that Mary later had other children (Mt 13:55-56). In that day, a newborn was wrapped...snuggly in cloth to keep its arms and legs straight. That baby Jesus was laid... in a feeding trough indicates that the family was forced to stay in a stable, or perhaps a cave that served as a stable, because there was no other room available in Bethlehem.