

The Birth of Jesus – Lk 2:1-14

Lk 2. This is the third message in our Christmas series, focusing on the Christmas story itself. The account of how and why Jesus was born. And I think it goes without saying, but it's more than just a story. More than just a feel-good tale. The account of Jesus' birth is the foundation of our faith. The prerequisite to everything that follows.

No Jesus, no Christianity. No Jesus, no cross. No Jesus, no life, no salvation, no assurance, no nothing. It's that important. So follow along as I read v1-7, and let it sink in.

[1] *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus* [leader of the vast Roman Empire at the time] *that all the world should be registered* [counted]. [2] *This was the first registration* [or census] *when Quirinius was governor of Syria* [a province of the Roman Empire that included Israel]. [3] *And all went to be registered, each to his own town.* To his own town, probably to accommodate the Jews. Who greatly valued their ancient *tribal* connections, because it proved they were “in.” Part of God's people. Hence all the genealogies in the Old Testament.

[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 that's where David was born (1 Sam 16:1)], *because he was of the house and lineage of David*, [5] *to be registered with Mary, his betrothed* [his soon to be wife], *who was with child.* Mary went with him as part of his family, because betrothal was a legally binding marriage agreement.

[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.* (ESV)

Jesus was **born**:

Just like the prophets said and the angel promised. And the principle we cannot miss here, is the sovereignty of God to make it happen. The sovereignty of God to *fulfill* the prophecies, and *keep* the promises.

Jesus was born . . .

As an act of God's **sovereignty** (v1-7)

Sovereignty, as in his firm control over all that happens in our world. His power and authority to accomplish his purposes. And the certainty that he will.

And the birth of Jesus is one of the greatest examples of it in all the Bible. Ensuring that Jesus was born **at just the right time**, in just the right place, to just the right family.

Just the right time because *civilization* was ready. Roads were being built, the Greek language was widely used, people were spreading, and life was improving. Plus, the land of Israel was at the center of it all. The place you had to go through to get just about anywhere. It was just the right *time* for civilization.

And just the right time for the government and dictator in power. Caesar Augustus. Who had the authority and courage to *decree* an unpopular census. Because they usually meant higher taxes and revolts. But decree it he did, at just the right time. In order for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem. It was an act of God's sovereignty.

As was the readiness of God's *people*. After hundreds of years of subjugation and infighting, they were ready and *waiting* for a messiah. A deliverer. Jesus was born as an act of God's sovereignty, at just the right *time*.

➤ And, **in just the right place**. The place where a ruler of God's people was *supposed* to come from. Like Micah said 700 years *before* Christ. **Micah 5:2** – *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah* [Bethlehem in the district of Ephrathah], *who are too little to be among the clans of Judah* [too insignificant to have any influence in the events of Micah's day], *from you shall come forth for me* [God says] *one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.* As in, decided way back.

Bethlehem was the place Jesus *had* to be born, and in God's sovereignty, orchestrating a census, he made it happen. At just the right time, in just the right place.

➤ And third, **to just the right family**. The family of Joseph. Who “just happened to be” from the lineage of David. The royal line from which Jesus was *prophesied* to come. And out of all the young women in Nazareth, Joseph “just happened to be” engaged to Mary. The one pregnant with the Christ-child.

And together, they “just happened to be” so sensitive to God's leading, they left town on a dream. And so brave that they lived in a foreign country until God gave the all-clear.

Put all that together, and Jesus was born as an act of God's amazing sovereignty. It's not just a story.

Second, and even better, Jesus was born . . .

To be our **Savior** (v11)

Our Savior. V8 – *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 God from just *one* angel, shined all around them. Filling the sky, filling the earth, and filling the shadows. There wasn't a crack for a cockroach or crevice for a criminal.

But it didn't fill their hearts. *They* were filled with fear. *The glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear* [it says] (9). Understandably so. Because God's glory is that powerful. Even from the residual glow of an angel.

Oh that we would feel just a part of that. To never be trite or presumptuous in our bold approach to God, but reverent and humble.

They were filled with fear, v10 – *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.* Not just any Savior, but the promised one. The Christ. The Messiah. He's here the angel said.

And not for a few, but for all. *I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people*, he said (10). Which means he's *our* Savior. Your Savior, my Savior.

➤ But that begs the question, from what? What was Jesus born to save us *from*?

2 things. Starting with consequences. Jesus was born to be our Savior . . .

• **From the consequences of our sin**

Just like an angel told Joseph in Mt 1:21 – “*You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*” Why? Why do we need to be *saved* from our sins?

Because sin has consequences. The consequences of eternal separation from God, and eternal punishment in hell. Like it says in **2 Thess 1:9** regarding those who *reject* the good news of great joy. [9] *They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.*

That’s what the Bible is talking about when it says *the wages of sin* [or the consequences of sin] is *death* (Rom 6:23). It’s not just physical death but eternal death. *Eternal* destruction. Suffering that never ends, in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:15). Jesus was born, to save us from that.

And, save us . . .

• **From the bondage of our sin**

Jesus was born to be our Savior from the *bondage* of sin. The *grip* it has on us. Like the Apostle Paul said in **Rom 7:18b-19** – *For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. [19] For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.* He was in bondage. And we’re no different.

The cure to which, is Jesus. It’s what the angel said, and it’s what Paul said a few verses later in **Rom 7:24-25a** – *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death* [this bondage of sin]? *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* In other words, God will deliver us, through Jesus. Our Savior.

➤ But here’s the caveat. It doesn’t apply just because you’re alive. Yes, it’s good news for *all*. Yes, he’s the Savior of the *world*. But it only applies to *you* if you believe it. If you *believe* he’s your Savior. If you *agree* with him about your sin and the consequences. You repent and *receive* him into your life. All of which I’m going to give you an opportunity to do before we’re done. An opportunity to pray with me and be saved.

Because the birth of Jesus is not just a feel-good bedtime story. It’s the entrance of our Savior and the basis of our salvation. Nothing’s the same.

Third, he was born . . .

To be our Lord (v11)

[11] *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* Shocking. Because that was a term normally used for God. 442x in the Old Testament. Yet the angel just applied it to Jesus. Essentially calling him God. It’s shocking.

But that’s just part of it. The title *Lord* carries a boatload of meaning. From rightful leader to sovereign authority. Benevolent master and supreme ruler. So that the angel’s basically saying, the one in charge has been born. Lord of heaven and earth. Lord of all. Lord of our lives.

➤ The only question is whether we acknowledge it. The lordship of Jesus is a fact. The angel said it and Jesus went on to prove it. Fulfilling Scripture, discerning hearts, doing miracles, rising from the dead, and ascending to heaven. He’s Lord.

But is he *your* Lord? Do you *acknowledge* him as such? Do you *follow* him? Is he your leader, and master, and authority? It’s vitally important.

Because if he’s not your Lord, he’s not your Savior. We don’t have the luxury of salvation apart from surrender. Claiming Jesus as our Savior but living for ourselves. That’s fire insurance. Thinking you can avoid hell while living like it; just because you prayed a prayer, or got confirmed, or attend mass. Jesus wasn’t born for fire insurance. He was born to be your Savior and *Lord*.

If that leaves you wondering whether he really is, let me give you 3 ways to assess yourself. 3 ways to know whether or not Jesus really is Lord of your life.

You know he is if . . .

1. You openly confess it. You publicly *declare* that Jesus is Lord of your life. It’s one of the reasons baptism is so important. *Believer*’s baptism. But it doesn’t *start* there, and it certainly shouldn’t stop there. From the moment you believe the angel’s words, you should openly confess it. And keep confessing it. “Jesus Christ is Lord of my life.”

Second, you know he is if . . .

2. You do his will. It’s not just lip service, but *life* service. Like Jesus said in Mt 7:21 – “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* Which is the same as doing the will of Jesus, because he and the Father are one (Jn 10:30). Jesus was born to be our Lord, and you know he’s yours if you do his will.

And third, you know he’s Lord if . . .

3. You have his heart. It’s not just lip service and going through the motions, it’s from your heart. His heart is your heart. His desires are your desires. His thoughts are your thoughts. Nothing manufactured and nothing fake. If that’s you, keep on. Jesus is Lord.

If it’s not, get on your knees. Get on your knees and admit it to him. Get on your knees and repent. Ask him to forgive you and change you. Committing to openly confess him, eagerly serve him, and wholeheartedly follow him. *That’s* what Jesus was born for.

And last, he was born . . .

To give us peace (v14)

The angel continues in v12 – “*And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger* [a feeding trough; such a unique sign that they couldn’t miss him].” [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!”* Peace, as in tranquility. Harmony. Rest. Settled-ness. And on the other side of the coin, a lack of strife. A lack of enmity. A lack of fear.

Jesus was born to give us peace. Peace in our hearts and peace with each other. *Peace among those with whom he is pleased* the angel said. Those who are his. Those who love him and live for him.

And it starts with being reconciled to him. Peace on earth starts with peace with God. Like Paul said in **Rom 5:1** – *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith* [declared righteous by virtue of our belief and trust in Jesus], *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Jesus was born to give us peace in our heart, peace with others, and peace with God. All by virtue of our faith in him. “No Jesus No Peace” is not just a bumper sticker.

The question is, do you have it? Do you *have* God’s peace? Are you *reconciled* to him? If so, praise the Lord. Relish it. Savor it. Rest in it.

If not, if you *don’t* have the peace Jesus was born to give; if your life is characterized by strife and fear and doubt; pray with me right now. Because Jesus was born to change all that. He was born to be your Savior, he was born to be your Lord, and he was born to be your peace. Let’s bow our heads.

Prayer – Lord, you’re so good to us. At Christmas and always. Thank you for hearing our prayers and saving our souls. Give those who just prayed an overwhelming sense of your peace. Surround them with your glory and fill them with joy. May they never be the same. In Jesus’ name, amen.

You Are Loved