

"The Birth of the Savior"

Luke 2:1-20

Introduction: Today we celebrate one of the greatest events in the history of the world. It was the day when God became a man in order to meet the GREATEST need of mankind.

This morning I want to walk you through the account in Luke and as we make our way through the events we shall at the same time gather some great lessons for our lives today.

I. The History

Notice Luke 2:1-3

There is a great deal of history behind what is recorded here and there is great comfort for us when we understand the history. We see that it was under Caesar Augustus that all the world was to be taxed. "ALL THE WORLD" here refers to the Roman world. Let me back up and explain how all of this came together.

Caesar Augustus was born and given the name Octavian. He was the great nephew of Julius Caesar. As he grew he demonstrated abilities and talents which caught the eye of Julius Caesar and for those reasons he was adopted by his great uncle and he was made his official heir. Within a year Julius Caesar was murdered and when this happened Octavian was joined by 2 others who were hungry for the power of Rome. This then split the power of Rome 3 ways. The 2 others were Lepidus and Mark Antony. Under the 3 heads of power Rome was in constant turmoil as wars and violence were part of the everyday life.

Octavian and Mark Antony eventually pushed out Lepidus. The 2 then existed together as rivals until the tensions all came to a head in 31 B. C. when they gathered their forces to do battle. Octavian defeated Mark Antony and he then became the sole ruler of the Roman world.

The Rome which Octavian inherited however was in great disarray. Listen to the words of Durant:

"The lusty peninsula was worn out with twenty years of civil war. Its farms had been neglected, its towns had been sacked or besieged, much of its wealth had been stolen or destroyed. Administration and protection had broken down; robbers made every street unsafe at night; highwaymen roamed the roads, kidnapped travelers, and sold them into slavery. Trade diminished, investment stood still, interest rates soared, property values

fell. Morals, which had been loosened by riches and luxury, had not been improved by destitution and chaos, for few conditions are more demoralizing than poverty that comes after wealth. Rome was full of men who had lost their economic footing and then their moral stability: soldiers who had tasted adventure and had learned to kill; citizens who had seen their savings consumed in the taxes and inflation of war and waited for some returning tide to life them back to affluence; women dizzy with freedom, multiplying divorces, abortions, and adulteries."

Octavian had an answer for all of this. He brought three things that turned the tide miraculously. First, he brought peace because he had defeated all his rivals. Second, he brought political and administrative skill, perhaps even brilliance. Third, he brought a truckload of money from Egypt to pay all the soldiers and pump up the Roman economy.

But in the midst of this the government of Rome was changing. Listen to the words of Guzik:

For hundreds and hundreds of years, Rome prided itself on being a republic - a nation governed by laws, not by any man. The idea that no man was above the law, and the Roman Senate and the army and various political leaders lived together in a sometimes difficult arrangement. Now, Octavius would change all that. In 27 B.C. he arranged for the Roman Senate to give him the title Augustus, which means "exalted" and "sacred." Now Rome wasn't a republic, governed by laws; it was an empire governed by an emperor. The first Emperor of Rome was this same Caesar Augustus.

As we now step into Luke 2 we come face to face with the most powerful man in the world, Caesar Augustus. We find here that he gives the command for ALL in the Roman Empire to return to their own city to register for the census.

Now Caesar Augustus most likely believed he was exercising his supreme authority as he gave this command and he watched as all of Rome marched in obedience.

But he had no idea that his power was from God and as he was exercising his will God was using him to fulfill a prophecy of the Old Testament.

II. The Faithfulness of God

Notice Luke 2:4-5

Here we see that Joseph and Mary would make an 80 mile journey to the city of David while she was close to the end of her pregnancy.

This had to happen because of what God had foretold concerning the birth of the Messiah.

Micah 5:2

² *But thou, **Bethlehem** Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

God had declared that Jesus Christ would be born in Bethlehem and so while all of Rome was going through a major change and while Caesar Augustus was exercising his free will, God was using His sovereign control to be sure His plan was fulfilled just as He had foretold.

Caesar Augustus believed he was supreme in power but he did not know that his power was given to him by God. Remember what Jesus said to Pilate?

John 19:10-11a

¹⁰ *Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?*

¹¹ *Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above:*

Application:

Let me just remind you that no matter who sits in the White House and no matter who has the most control over the world in which we live in, it is God who is sovereign. He has a plan and he will move the hearts of kings and servants to fulfill what has been prophesied in His Word. So this means that we have nothing to fear.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Notice Luke 2:5 again.

Mary went with Joseph on the journey but what we need to know is that her journey was not required under the Roman decree. She did not need to go with Joseph she would have been free to stay in Nazareth.

God moved her to travel with Joseph however because that of Micah's prophecy. But the question which many would ask would be, "What did God use to move her to travel when she was almost full term?"

We do not know for sure but let me give you something to consider. In the small town of Nazareth people knew she had become pregnant outside the bonds of marriage. This would have brought great shame to her and it no doubt placed her under the ridicule of the town. Therefore, Joseph may have seen this as an opportunity to get her away from the shame and the ridicule. Whatever the reason was we do know that God was behind the scenes moving Mary and Joseph where He needed them to be.

Application:

When I think of the journey which Mary had to make I am reminded of how difficult it would have been at that stage of her pregnancy.

Then in all of this I am reminded that walking in the will of God can be very difficult at times.

Illustration:

Susanne Wesley was a STAY AT HOME MOM with 14 children before the days of disposable diapers. Can you imagine watching 14 children every day and having to hand wash cloth diapers? God's will for her life was very difficult but the rewards were great. From her family came John and Charles Wesley whose ministries rocked the British Isles.

Let me show you the pressure which can come while walking in the will of God.

Luke 22:41-44

⁴¹ *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,*

⁴² *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

⁴³ *And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.*

⁴⁴ *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Notice Luke 2:6-7

That night Mary gave birth to the Son of God and from what we see here in these verses she had no one to help her. We are told that SHE brought forth her firstborn son.

It is very important here that we are told Jesus was her FIRSTBORN Son. This statement backs up the virgin birth which is so vitally important.

Isaiah 7:14

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Let me show you what the angel of the Lord had said to Joseph.

Matthew 1:23-25

²³ Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

²⁴ Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

²⁵ And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Mary was a virgin until after Jesus was born. The virgin birth has been attacked by so many people and every attack against the virgin birth is completely Satanic.

If Jesus was the biological son of Joseph then we have absolutely no hope for eternity. You see if Jesus was the son of Joseph then he would have had a sin nature and therefore He would not have qualified to be the Savior of mankind. God required a PERFECT SINLESS Sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world. No man would qualify because only God is perfect. But God is a Spirit and a spirit cannot die so God became a Man to die in our place on the cross to pay our sin debt.

III. **The Announcement**

Notice Luke 2:8

Now the scene changes and the Holy Spirit now takes us out into the fields the night of Jesus' birth. The Spirit then zooms in on a group of shepherds abiding in the fields who were keeping watch over their flocks. We are also told it was night time.

Notice Luke 2:9-11

Here is the announcement. There are several points to be seen here.

1. **It was first made to the shepherds.**

The shepherds were the outcasts of society. They were the people whom others looked down upon. It was much like it was in Egypt in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 46:33-34

³³ *And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation?*

³⁴ *That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.*

Listen to the words of Morris:

"As a class shepherds had a bad reputation ... More regrettable was their habit of confusing 'mine' with 'thine' as they moved about the country. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law courts." (Morris)

It is also important to notice that the shepherds were "in the dark". It was night time but there is more here.

The shepherds in this passage represented all of mankind. They were in the darkness which is a picture of spiritual darkness. They were known for their dishonesty. We were no different for we too were deep into the darkness of sin and we were known as sinners. These were the very people whom Jesus came to save.

2. It was a universal message.

The message of the angels was for all people. It was a universal message.

1 John 2:1-2

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

² *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

3. It was a personal message.

The angel's message was that unto YOU is born this day a Savior.

The message of salvation is personal and each person must make the choice to receive Jesus Christ.

John 3:3

³ *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

IV. **The Change**

Notice Luke 2:12-20

The men whose word was not accepted in the courts were now going abroad testifying of the birth of the Savior. They had met Jesus and now their lives were changed.

Application:

This is what meeting the Savior does, it changes your life.

If meeting the infant Jesus in the manger did this how much more should our lives be filled with testimony knowing of His death and resurrection?

Conclusion:

God did all of this for each of us. Have you received Him as your Savior?