

A Child Is Born

Long Beach Alliance Church • Merry Christmas • December 25th, 2011 • Pastor Chris Lankford

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. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

~Luke 2:10-12 (NASB)

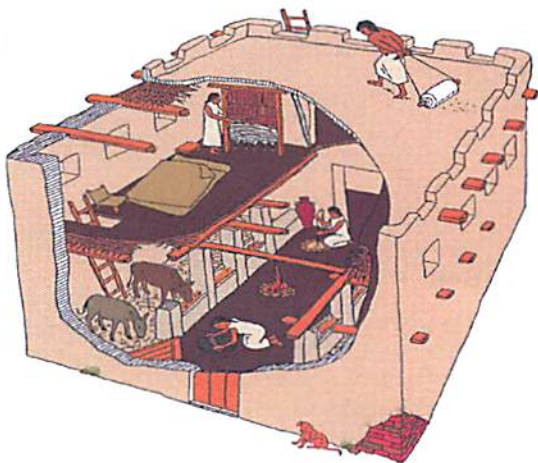
1) The Promises Are For All People

- A) The miraculous virgin birth of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25, 24-25; Luke 1:26-35) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, cf. Matthew 2:1, John 7:42) was the fulfillment of promises which God had made through history to the Jews (Genesis 3:15, 12:1-3, 17:1-8).
- B) The “Good News” of Jesus Christ (Gospel) was not limited to the Jewish people alone, but was also (as promised, cf. Isaiah 9:2-7) “for all people” (Luke 2:10, cf. Galatians 3:28).

2) The Promise Of Christmas

- A) The marvelous story of Jesus Christ’s miraculous birth is magnificently recorded in Luke 2:1-20. Jesus Christ truly is ‘God with Us’ (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23).
- B) Caesar Augustus* is portrayed by Luke as an unwitting agent of God (Luke 2:1). His decree makes it possible for Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem, the town of the royal-line of David (1st Samuel 17:12).

- C) The purpose of a census was to make an assessment for taxes, and for Roman citizens, to assure registration for military service. Church history tells us that it was Jewish custom to travel back to your hometown for a census (2:3).
- D) Joseph returns with Mary to Bethlehem because he is of the line of King David (2:4). During this time in Bethlehem, Mary delivers her firstborn son, Jesus (2:6).
- E) The reference to an "inn" in Luke 2:7 was most probably the main guest room in the family home of Joseph (cf., Luke 22:11)†. The manger was almost certainly a feeding trough located in the lower area of the home.



† One of the most significant historical issues in all of the Bible is located here in Luke 2:1-7. The association of a census taken during the governorship in Syria of Quirinius is widely debated. Historically speaking, there is no evidence of such a census ever being conducted during the time of Caesar Augustus, and the only census historically recorded during Quirinius' reign was in A.D. 6 and is well documented because it caused widespread revolt. Further, the Roman census of Jesus' time would not require Joseph to go to Bethlehem, as Roman census' never required this kind of "hometown travel." In fact, historical records show that Quirinius was not a governor in Syria during the time when Jesus was born. The answers to these objections are lengthy, and not appropriate for a simple footnote. I would direct you to Darrell L. Bock's "Excursus #2" (pages 903-909) from *Luke 1:1-9:50, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, for a more thorough discussion. I have made several copies of this selected section available in the lobby this morning, please take a copy for further study. Suffice it to say though, for our purposes here, that a census during the reign of Augustus, and a Jewish-styled census (which would require Joseph to travel to Bethlehem), along with the impending birth of Jesus (making Mary's travel more necessary), and a lower governmental role for Quirinius which could have placed him in a position to have administrated more than just the census of A.D. 6, are all historically plausible explanations for Luke's recording of the facts in Luke 2. As Bock notes, "it is clear that the relegation of Luke 2:2 to the category of historical error is premature and erroneous." I would conclude this note with a final thought... When sharing the message of the Good News with others, these types of opposing objections can be presented with great intellectual force and persuasiveness. Do not be deterred by these compelling presentations. Check out the facts and historical data for yourself, and I believe you will be satisfied with the content of the Scriptures. The Word of God is truly sufficient for all we need (Hebrews 4:12-13):

- F) The birth of Jesus was unadorned and simple. Jesus came into the world in the most humble of circumstances, driven by the decree of a distant ruler, and born to two teenagers who were probably very scared at being away from home.

3) A Kingly Pronouncement

- A) Despite this simplicity, there was a birth announcement from Heaven as Jesus was born (Luke 2:8-14)! However, it was to shepherds, a rather lowly and simple (albeit faithful, cf. 2:20) group of laborers in Jesus' time.†
- B) The angels send the shepherds to find baby Jesus (wrapped in "cloths") lying in a manger (2:12). This would have been a strange sight, and thus, an easier discovery for the shepherds.
- C) The whole birth narrative is highlighted with the angels proclamation in Luke 2:14 of "Glory to God in the highest..." The scene on the Bethlehem hillside is consistent with the view from Heaven, an explosion has split the skies!

† The passage tells us that Joseph and Mary were there because there was no room at the **κατάλυμα** (*katalumati*, public shelter). **Κατάλυμα** suggests that a formal inn is not in view here. The LXX (Septuagint) refers to the public shelters where many people might gather for the night under one roof, cf. Exodus 4:24. Luke 22:11 uses the term of a guest room in a house, while 10:34 uses **πανδοχείον** (*pandocheion*) to describe a formal inn. The traditional Christmas associations of an inn and an innkeeper, however, do not reflect the language of Luke's text. Rather, **κατάλυμα** seems to refer to either some type of reception room or guest room in a private home or some type of public shelter. Since that location was full, the stable was utilized. It is also notable that Bethlehem was a very small village without a great number of overnight travelers because of its proximity to Jerusalem. A public inn would not be practical in this setting. A public shelter still might be possible, though improbable. Rather, the private family home with its attached stable is the most historically and archaeologically accurate picture of the first Christmas. Summarized from many sources, at least partially from Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, pages 207-208.

‡ Some people attempt to represent the shepherds as being the despised and downtrodden class of people in Jesus' time, finding significance that the proclamation of Jesus' coming came first to a class of people which were widely considered sinful. Most of this tradition comes from too late a source (5th Century) to be of real validity. Rather, shepherds are generally viewed in a positive light in Scripture (note that Abraham, Moses and David were all shepherds), and the metaphor of Shepherd is used of Jesus Christ (the Chief Shepherd, cf. 1st Peter 5:4), and of leaders in the New Testament church (Acts 20:28, John 21:16). It is most likely, then, that the shepherds were another picture of a larger scene, one of quiet humility, serene ambivalence, and utmost simplicity. Jesus came without much fanfare, in a remote location, to a bunch of people who the world would call "nobody's." This was His beginning, and foreshadows the objects of His ministry.

- D) News of Jesus' birth traveled fast (2:17-18), but the fullness of what is happening is not understood at this time, even by Jesus' own mother, Mary (2:19). Like all new birth, the treasure of Jesus will not be fully understood until maturity.

4) The Inauguration Of The King

- A) As with any Kingdom, there must be an inauguration. The King must assume his throne. This was a significant problem, though, for the Kingdom of God. All of the subjects of God's Kingdom were slaves to another Kingdom (John 8:34).
- B) In order for the King (Jesus Christ) to assume the throne (inauguration as King), He first had to pay a ransom for His subjects, a payment to secure their transfer from one kingdom to God's Kingdom (Colossians 1:13, Mark 10:45).
- C) Mankind was originally designed to be in God's Kingdom (Adam & Eve, etc.). Mankind was removed from God's Kingdom because of sin (Romans 3:23). So, the ransom which had to be paid was not to Satan (Ephesians 2:2), but to God Himself (cf. Leviticus 4:32; Hebrews 10:3-4).
- D) Jesus Christ paid this ransom (1st Timothy 2:3-6), even when we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). We know that God accepted the payment, because Jesus was resurrected from the dead and restored to life (1st Corinthians 15:20-22).
- E) The birth of Christ began the promise, but the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ inaugurated the King (Philippians 2:7-11) and seals that the promise is available for us (1st Timothy 1:12-15).
- F) Receiving the gift of God (Jesus) is accepted by trust/faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) in Christ through the humble confession of sin (1st John 1:9), and complete trust in God for forgiveness (Colossians 1:13-14) and eternal life (Romans 6:22-23).