

Love Reaches Far
Luke 2:1-20
Berean Baptist Church
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INTRODUCTION

Jesus came fully sharing in the humiliations and hardships of poor human life, and He came with the Glory of God bringing light and hope to people in darkness. The One who is fully human and fully God came as no one else could have: in abject poverty and splendid glory.

“...though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (2 Cor 8:9).”

Marvel at Jesus' coming in human humility and divine glory; live praising Him and trusting Him!

Luke 2:1-7 A Strange Way For God To Come

Vs 1-3 The Census Secular history from this time is fragmentary. Augustus was working on tax reforms across the empire (Luke's word translated here "world" is the idea of the "civilized world" or the "Roman world.") and there was a Cyrenius (or "Qurenius") that ordered a census but this happened a few years after Jesus birth.

It may be that Cyrenius was a Governor more than once and that the census in the historical record was the second one he conducted. Another possibility is that "first" in Vs 2 should be understood as "before"; this does work with the grammar. So, then Luke would be saying that this census was before Cyrenius' census.

Luke's main points about the census match current history: Augustus pursued a policy of tax reform and this involved many local censuses. The census in Israel started either right before or very early in Cyrenius' administration.

Vs 4 “And Joseph also went up from Galilee,” Jerusalem and Bethlehem are south of Galilee but about 1000 feet higher. The shortest route would be about 85 miles.

Vs 3-4 Joseph was a decedent of David and the prophecies demand that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.

“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 (Micah 5:2).”

Vs 5 Mary and Joseph's engagement (espousal) was considered binding – it was as though they were married.

God used the plans and power of evil Rome to fulfill his Word and advance his plan of salvation. The people of God seem powerless under the boot of Rome, but God is turning the works of the power of darkness to fulfill His own plan.

Rejoice in a God who turns things meant for evil into His glory and the good of His people!

Vs 6-7 “swaddling clothes” were soft strips of fabric that would keep the baby warm and snug. After Calvary Jesus will be wrapped again.

“And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:...This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus...And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.”

Praise God that in birth and death Jesus shared the common experiences of mankind!

Vs 7 “And she brought forth her firstborn son” The Bible strongly implies that Mary had children with Joseph after Jesus' birth (Acts 1:14, Mark 6:3). But Jesus was the firstborn and this status foreshadows revelations about Jesus' nature.

Being “the firstborn” in Mary's world meant being the prime inheritor and the next chief of the family; it is a title of importance and authority.

Jesus is firstborn over all of creation (Col 1:15), over the resurrected (Col 1:18), and over His church; “that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29).” Those who are adopted by God through faith in Jesus are like the younger brothers of Jesus the firstborn.

Jesus shares the common experience of mankind, yet He is different – He is the firstborn.

Praise God that the Firstborn lives and in Him, we are "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven (Heb 12:23)!"

Vs 7 “laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” We should abandon the pious and warm feelings of the Christmas manger. A manger is a feeding trough – it is a dingy and humiliating substitute for a crib.

Vs 7 What a marvel! The one who made the heavens and earth is contained in Mary's womb, and then swaddled and sleeps in a feeding trough, but still the world can find no room for Him. This king takes a slave's birth and will die a slave's death for those He came to save.

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:14-16)!"

Praise Jesus for His coming in full and humble humanity!

Luke 2:8-14 A Wonderful Way For God to Come

Vs 8 “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field” As Luke is telling the story of the Messiah who will lead God's people like a shepherd, and we draw near to the city of David the shepherd king, we're not surprised to meet shepherds.

But remember that shepherds at this time were not well regarded. The nature of the work made it almost impossible to keep kosher and they were often suspected of being trespassers and thieves. These men were low in society, but they would see more glory that night than any king in any palace.

Vs 9 “the glory of the Lord shone round about them:”

This moment sets the tone for much to come. The glory of the Lord represents the presence of God. The glory coming is a sign of restoration – God's people are not left alone.

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it (Isa 40:3-5).”

Vs 9 “Fear not” - So, why were they afraid? There is great encouragement in the Glory of the Lord, but it is not quite safe.

“And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel (Exd 24:17).”

“Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low (Isa 2:10-12).”

The vastness of the stars, the weight of gold, the might of heroes, the satisfaction of justice, the awesome splendor of nature, the joy of Christmas and Easter, these are like faint echos of the Glory.

The Glory looks like a fire (Lev 9:23-24) that cannot be endured by mortal man; even faint exposure left Moses shining like the sun – too bright to look at (Ex 33).

Vs 10 Fear turns to joy. Fear is the natural response of fallen creatures to the present glory of heaven. Fear is also a natural response to the uncertainties of life in a sin-cursed world.

Vs 10 “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” The angles bring good news - a “gospel” - of great joy.

The words of the angle could be understood as all people (all humanity) or all the people (all of Israel). Certainly, both are true.

Vs 11 The Gospel is a message of joy because Jesus is...

Savior – The name “Jesus” means “God saves” or “salvation of God.”

Christ - “Christ” means anointed as a person of supreme importance. He is appointed by God as the King and Priest; the Lord and Savior.

Lord – This might be the most surprising title. There is something of Jesus authority and power that goes far beyond provincial Judea (Isa 9:6). Jesus' authority stems from His divinity; He has made all things and sustains all things.

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist (Col 1:16-17).”

Rejoice and trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord appointed by God!

Vs 12-14 We get to see the angels respond to their own message. Now there are many praising God. They sing “Glory to God in the highest” and of peace between God and man.

Vs 13-14 A “**host**” is an army, we should not be thinking of this so much as a choir of angels singing Christmas songs. We should be thinking of this as the army of God's angels, fit for war, pouring through the sky above the plain of Bethlehem (if only King Herod had seen it!) terrible and splendid.

Now this army rides out looking for all the world like Judgment Day, but they sing "**Peace! Peace!**" And “**good will toward men.**” Their message is one of peace from heaven and God's goodwill toward those who trust Him.

Trust in God and receive His offer of peace and benevolence by accepting Jesus as your saving Lord!

The next time the sky is broken and the army of heaven comes tearing though, they will not be offering peace.

“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all (Jude 14-15).”

Praise God for His coming in the full and glorious divinity!

CONCLUSION Luke 2:15-20 The King is Recognized

Vs 15 they believe the message and want to go and see. It can be no accident that the good shepherd and king of angels is visited by shepherds and sung by angels.

Vs 18 “**Mary kept and treasured these things considering them carefully.**” The picture is that she did not go about bragging or boasting “I've born the messiah!” but carefully watched and remembered. Luke probably interviewed her directly for his book.

Vs 20 The shepherds respond in another appropriate way, they went “**glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen.**”

Jesus' entry into the world was strange and wonderful; it defies the World's value system and surpasses all expectations. It is the story of a king among the poor, of a God who participates in the poverty of mankind. Both Mary and the Shepherds are right: *Consider these things carefully and praise God for them!*

Marvel at Jesus' coming in human humility and divine glory; live praising Him and trusting Him!