

Bible Passage

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And 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.

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And 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!"

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Outline

1. The Infinite Becomes Flesh

- a. **Incarnation:** The Infinite God chooses to become finite in Jesus.
- b. **Contrast with Old Covenant:** Unlike Moses and the Law, Jesus represents a new way of God relating to humanity.
- c. **Human Experience of the Divine:** Jesus, fully divine, experiences human needs and desires, teaching us about true humanity.

2. A Baby Born to Die

- a. **Sacrificial Purpose:** Jesus's life was not just for living, but for dying to bridge the gap between humanity and God.
- b. **Fulfillment of the New Covenant:** Jesus's death and resurrection complete the work necessary for reconciliation, shifting the focus from human effort to divine grace.
- c. **Parallel with Moses:** While Moses showed human limitation, Jesus perfectly fulfilled his role, showcasing the difference between the Old and New Covenants.

3. The Generosity of God

- a. **Divine Generosity Illustrated:** The Incarnation as the ultimate act of God's generosity.

- b. **Shift in Christian Focus:** Moving from self-interest to serving others, as exemplified by Jesus.
- c. **Christian Response to God's Generosity:** Embracing a life marked by humility, service, and understanding that everything we have is from God.

Notes

The covenants represents God's unique method of engaging with His creation. It is an expression of God's desire for a relationship with His people, communicated through prophets, signs, and wonders. God's intent is to establish Himself as their God and King, creating a dynamic where He, as the Creator and ruler, graciously offers His creation a path to communion with Him. Throughout the Old Testament, various covenants are detailed, highlighting a top-down relationship where God's grace and love are central. These covenants outline the responsibilities and expectations within this divine-human relationship. A pivotal figure in this narrative is Moses, who receives the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai to guide the Israelites in maintaining their covenant with God.

Despite God's grace, the Old Testament often depicts the Israelites struggling to adhere to His commandments, frequently turning to other gods or neglecting their part of the covenant. This recurring theme underscores human fallibility and God's persistent attempts to reconnect with His people. The New Covenant introduces a significant shift in the divine-human relationship. It acknowledges human shortcomings and establishes a covenant where God, through His grace, completes the necessary work to bridge the gap between divinity and humanity. This covenant eliminates the dependency on human righteousness for communion with God.

Central to the New Covenant is the concept of the Incarnation, where the infinite God chooses to become finite in the form of Jesus. This paradoxical event signifies God's desire to close the chasm between Himself and humanity. Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, fulfills the conditions of the covenant, offering a new pathway to divine relationship based on grace rather than human effort.

The core message of the Gospel contrasts sharply with the Old Testament's emphasis on adherence to the law. It focuses on God's infinite love and grace, highlighting that the path to God is not through human righteousness but through acceptance of God's grace and Jesus' sacrificial act. The story of Jesus, especially emphasized during Christmas, is a profound reminder of God's decision to experience human life. Jesus, being God, experienced human needs and desires, including hunger and temptation. This highlights the significance of Christmas - God incarnate as a baby, embodying both divinity and humanity, living a life of perfect submission to the Father.

Jesus, while fully divine, chose to live in complete submission to God the Father. This wasn't an unattainable standard set for humanity but an example of what humanity was meant to be - a life of surrender and submission. Contrary to being an impossible ideal, Jesus's life demonstrates the intended nature of human existence. Christmas, often celebrated with joy and family gatherings, also bears the weight of Jesus's purpose. His life was not just about living perfectly but also about dying sacrificially to bridge the gap between humanity and God. This act of sacrifice is central to the understanding of Christmas.

Philippians 2 sheds light on the mystery of Jesus, who, despite being divine, chose a life of humility and obedience, even to the point of dying on a cross. This act was the fulfillment of the New Covenant, where God took all the necessary steps to reconcile with humanity.

There are many parallels between Moses and Jesus. Both faced threats at birth and had significant roles in God's plan. However, their lives diverged in crucial ways. Moses, raised in royalty, ultimately failed to enter the Promised Land due to his human limitations. In contrast, Jesus, born in humility and raised in obscurity, perfectly fulfilled his role, highlighting the difference between the Old and New Covenants. Moses represents the Old Covenant, where even the most righteous, like him, could fall short of God's standards. The New Covenant, exemplified by Jesus, shifts focus from human righteousness to divine grace. Unlike Moses, who was raised in royal courts, Jesus's humble upbringing and perfect life leading to his sacrificial death showcase a different path to God – not through human righteousness but through divine grace.

This perspective challenges the common religious notion of earning God's favor through good deeds. It suggests that comparing oneself to figures like Moses is futile under the Old Covenant. The New Covenant, centered on Jesus's life and sacrifice, offers a new way of relating to God, not based on personal righteousness but on accepting the grace offered through Jesus.

There were contrasting responses of Moses and Jesus to injustice. Moses, in his human reaction, responds to injustice with

anger and violence, a reflection of our innate human tendencies. In stark contrast, Jesus, even in the face of personal attack and suffering, prays for his accusers, demonstrating a divine response of forgiveness and love.

Jesus's life, particularly his birth and death, is central to understanding the reconciliation between mankind's sins and God's love. His sacrificial death was necessary to bridge this gap, embodying perfect godliness and submission. This narrative underscores the profound meaning of Christmas - not just a celebration of birth but a recognition of Jesus's purpose to reconcile humanity with God. The New Covenant illustrates that the gap between humanity and God has been bridged by Jesus. It renders futile the human attempts at reaching God through good works or moral perfection. This covenant asserts that God now resides within believers, thanks to Jesus's sacrifice.

A common misconception among Christians is that sin distances them from God. However, Jesus has already conquered sin, and believers are forgiven. The emphasis is on accepting this forgiveness rather than striving to earn it through personal efforts. Under the New Covenant, the focus for Christians shifts from self-interest to considering the interests of others. This approach aligns with the teaching in Philippians 2 and is a call to embrace a life of service and kindness, reflecting Jesus's example.

The generosity of God, especially evident in the Incarnation, sets a profound example for believers. It challenges the notion of earning God's favor through deeds or material gifts. True Christian generosity is rooted in humility and the understanding that everything comes from God.

There is a human struggle between self-interest and the Christian call to serve others. True spiritual development involves dying to oneself and allowing Christ to live through us. This involves prioritizing the needs of others and trusting that God will provide for our own needs.

Christmas is a time for intimacy with God and a reminder of His ultimate generosity. We should view Christmas beyond consumerism, seeing it as an opportunity to reflect God's love and generosity to others, sourced from the ultimate gift of Jesus's sacrifice.