

Well, last week Tim kicked off in our new series, we’re calling:



“Christ the Savior is Born.” It’s true, “familiarity breeds contempt,” and certainly the story of the birth of Jesus is a most familiar story because it’s tied to many people’s favorite holiday. But even though Christmas is named after the Christ, we can totally miss Him in all of the hustle and bustle of the season. Our prayer is that won’t be the case today as see Luke’s account of the birth of our Savior.

Luke 2:1-7

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when^[a] 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.

“There was no place for them in the inn...” Sounds an awful lot like today. People don’t have room for Jesus...no place for Him in their lives. Oh...Jesus is cute in the manger... He’s amazingly sacrificial on the cross...and triumphant out of the tomb...but, what about in our hearts? Is there any room for Jesus? We’ll ask that again before we’re done...but, you be thinking about it.

I want to take a few minutes now and ask you to go back in time to the events that led up to His birth. **Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 1:18.** The angel Gabriel had come to a teenage girl named Mary in the village of Nazareth and told her that she would give birth to the Son of God. Can you imagine? But she proclaimed: “I’m a virgin. How can this be so?” The angel said, “The baby will be miraculously conceived by God.” This baby, then, would be God in human flesh, Emmanuel. Well, this all came true and Mary became pregnant. Now, here’s the problem...Mary was betrothed to a young man named Joseph. He was also likely a teenager or at the most around 20 years of age. Mary told Joseph what had happened to her and he was shocked and dismayed. Mary assured Joseph that she hadn’t been with anyone else; yet, understandably, Joseph was left reeling. Joseph knew Mary

was an amazing, godly young lady...righteous in all her ways; but nonetheless, her explanation made no sense to him and so, he decided to divorce quietly.

“Divorce her?” you say. “I thought they weren’t married.” Well, they weren’t. They were betrothed to one another...but as we learned in the message on Dating...this isn’t like dating, or our modern-day engagement, which you can break by giving the ring back. No, with a betrothal, you had to get a certificate of divorce to break that engagement covenant, or a second option, if you believed she had been unfaithful...was to stone her to death. What a quandary. Watch this play out...

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ^[a] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed^[b] to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Joseph and Mary were an amazing couple and they were willing to endure tremendous ridicule in the community because of all that was taking place. The gossip-mill was churning big-time. But then Rome got involved and it changed everything for Joseph and Mary. **Go back to it. Luke 2:1.**

Luke 2:1-2

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Now church family, it's absolutely amazing how God orchestrated everything we just read. You say, “How?” Well, it had been prophesied by Micah (770 BC) that the Son of God would be born in Bethlehem, BUT Joseph and Mary were in Nazareth. Not a problem for God. He'll get them there. Just get Rome involved and have Caesar issue a decree. Who is this Caesar? It's Caesar Augustus.



His actual name was Gaius Octavius. He was known as Octavian. That was his given name. You understand that the name: “Caesar” is really just a title for the man who was Emperor over Rome.

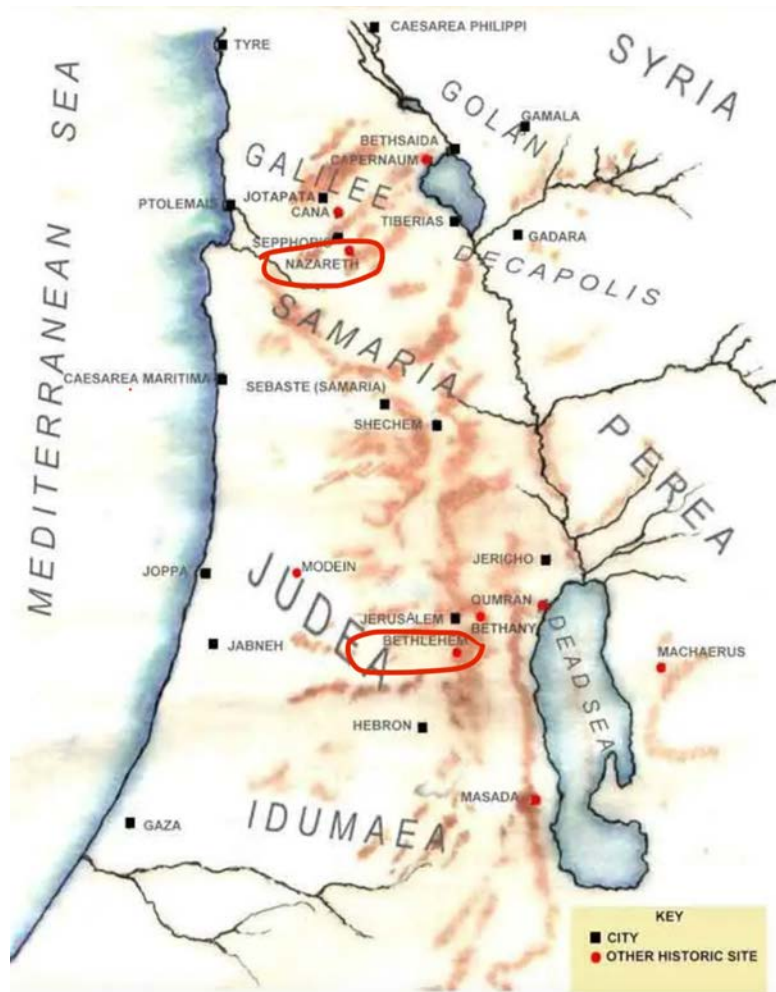
Like the title: pharaoh for the man in charge of Egypt. You say, “Okay...but, what’s Augustus?” Well, that’s an adjective meaning: “revered one, honored one, majestic one.” This title was given to him in 27 B.C. by the Roman Senate, when he started to rule as Caesar. He ruled the Roman Empire for 41 years, from 27 BC to 14 A.D. when he died at the age of 75. Octavian was a very powerful ruler, creating what’s known as the *Pax Romana*, which means: “Roman Peace.” And that peace stretched over the entire Roman Empire for 200 years. Look at this map:



The Roman Empire was massive and it stretched from Europe to Africa and into the Far East. Well, with Rome in charge, that’s when God decided He would send His Son to earth...this was all part of God’s sovereign plan. So, to get Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, Caesar Augustus, (unbeknownst to him), made a decree that the whole known world would need to be registered/counted (census), by going back to their ancestral home. What this was to Rome was...was a way to get more money. You count the people when you want to get more tax money.

Now, we’re also told this census was taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria and this helps us piece together when Jesus was born, and I’ve got a newsflash for you...He wasn’t born at 0. But it’s close. If we go back in history and look at the reigns of Caesar Augustus and Quirinius and work backwards, understanding that Rome had a census every 14 years, scholars date the birth of Jesus around 6-4 BC. Now don’t let that bother you...oh, we definitely keep time by Jesus, but His birth was so obscure, that it wasn’t something that was an exact to the second frame of reference like we have today with the exact minute of birth, like we have on our birth certificates. The point is: Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as prophesied, as a result of a census required by a pagan Caesar.

And so, Joseph and very pregnant Mary had a 75-mile journey they had to make, south to Bethlehem. See the map and the red circles...



Nazareth up north, Bethlehem to the south, near Jerusalem. Now something else you need to know... Jesus was probably not born in December. I'm not going to take the time to get into all the details on why December 25th was chosen as the date for the birth of Jesus, only to say that it was more likely in the fall or spring, as "shepherds were abiding in the fields by night." The sheep were grazing and eating grass, and that doesn't normally happen in the winter. Nonetheless, in the "fullness of time," Jesus came.

Now church, in saying all of this, I want you to understand that God is sovereign over all of our lives. There is the "fullness of time" in all of our lives. Something else we need to see, (and Tim talked about this last week), Mary and Joseph didn't complain about the journey...they didn't whine and moan about how hard they had it. They just did it. But we are a whining people. We moan and groan so much about how hard we have it... Lord, forgive us. We just came out of "Thanksgiving." May we be more thankful and be grateful for what we have instead of whining about what we don't have.

Luke 2:3-5

³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 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 he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

So, Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem, because that's where Joseph's ancestors are from and that's where the ancestral records were kept regarding his family. BTW...Joseph and Mary would not return Nazareth after Jesus was born. Remember, He was around 2 years of age when the wise men came to a house, (Matthew 2 tells us, we'll see that in a moment). Why did they stay?

Likely for work...because he would have been ostracized in Nazareth for taking Mary as his wife...there was a scandal.

You see, I believe Joseph and Mary were relieved to get out of Nazareth because of all the ridicule they had been enduring. Everywhere they went, there were people talking and whispering...make their own theories as to what led to Mary's pregnancy. So, to escape this cesspool of gossip had to be a blessing. And it also tells me something about Joseph. He had been saving up his money, otherwise, I'm not sure how they would have been able to survive once they got to Bethlehem. He had to have been putting back some money until he could establish work.

Turn back to Matthew, chapter 2. The wise men had come from the East...NOT on the night Jesus was born, but when He was about 2 years old. The wise men were leaving...

Matthew 2:13-18

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

There again...prophecy fulfilled... Let me remind you yet again...the Bible is a book of fulfilled prophecies. Meaning: People said stuff would happen and said stuff did happen...it's that simple. No other "holy book" can make that claim...and that's because the Bible is the only Holy Book...it's the book inspired by the Holy Spirit from the Holy God, the ONLY GOD of the universe. **Go back to:**

Luke 2:6

⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

Now notice what it says... "While they were there." It doesn't say that the night they arrived, Mary gave birth. That's how they depict it in the movies. You know...Joseph in a cold sweat running around trying to find a place for her to have the baby. Maybe they were there for a few days or even a week or a month. We're not told. It just says, "While they were there, she gave birth." Now, some have asked, "Why didn't they just stay with some of Joseph's relatives? Now think of the situation. I know there's no email, text or Facebook ...but I bet word had traveled to Bethlehem from Nazareth to their relatives, and I imagine they were afraid of asking anyone...out of fear. So, they were own their own. But were they?

Oh remember, God was in control every step of the way for this couple. But I remind us all, just because you're doing God's business, trying to live for Him, doesn't mean you won't go through some hard times. In fact, if you think about it, God seems to have made this entire situation an absolute ordeal for Joseph and Mary. There was nothing easy about what they were going through.

Come on God give them a break! Give them time for a quick coffee at the local coffee shop on their way in. Maybe a brief stopover at Walmart to get a few supplies. Oh no...I'm sorry...none of that. Just hard. Why does God make it so hard sometimes? The Apostle Paul gives this instruction:

2 Corinthians 1:9-10

⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

Where are you setting your hope? Church family, we must never forget that when our spiritual lives are hard, that's when we grow the most. No...we don't like it. In our flesh we want it easy...but, we know the muscle gets stronger when you put it under strain. Maybe that's you this morning. You're under spiritual strain. Think again of this young couple: Joseph and Mary... See them...



Traveling to Bethlehem...trusting God every step of the way. They trusted the angel Gabriel...in what he had told them. You say, "I've not had an angel tell me what to do." No...but you've got the Word of God that tells you that Jesus is faithful and He will never leave us nor forsake us and that we don't have to be anxious about anything, but pray and trust Him. Are you doing that?

I want us to think for a moment about the significance of what we've been talking about. Think of this now: When Jesus came to this earth, in essence, God came to this earth in the second person of the Trinity. Think of that...the Creator came to this earth just like one of His created...just like we came into this earth, in the form of a baby. Think of it: the Creator in a manger. I read this quote in John MacArthur's Commentary that said: "The baby Mary carried was not a Caesar, a man who would become a 'god,' but a far greater wonder, the true God who would become a man." Verse 7.

Luke 2:7

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.

Why "no room in the inn?" Well, that's simple: because whatever accommodations there were in Bethlehem, would have been taken by the Roman and Jewish officials who were charged with

carrying out the census. Also, don't think of the inn as being a nice hotel. It wasn't. It was a roadside inn with very few rooms, because Bethlehem is a small village. Something else is this: people think Jesus was born in a stable/barn, but that's not what it says in verse 7. It says that He was "laid in a manger." You say, "That's where they get the barn part," and normally in cards: this is shown...



a wooden feeding trough. But wood was not plentiful. They used what wood they had for furniture and for making fires. They built their houses out of mud and straw. Here's what the manger would have looked like...



A manger carved out of stone. Park your brain around that. That's what Jesus was placed in. No, Jesus was NOT born in a wooden stable...it was a **cave at best**. You see, a roadside inn is not going to build a stable out of wood for you to "park your animals." You're going to place those animals

in at best a cave of some sort nearby. In fact, if you go to Bethlehem today, you will go to a church built on top of that cave. Let me show you inside the church...it's pretty gaudy...



All kinds of stuff hanging everywhere. Honestly, it's a place full of smells (not very good, body odor), and clutter and tremendously long lines. Honestly, that place was a zoo. I won't take groups there because it's such a letdown and you have to wait 3+ hours to even get in on most days...and you eat up so much time. Well, you finally make your way down into this hole...



see where we're going down. I had to duck.



And once you're down there, you walk through this little tunnel, and I want you to see what the walls were made of...see it...



Stone. Someone had torn the paper that covered the stone of the cave we were in. And finally, we went into this room that had a marble looking fireplace with a star...see it... It looked like a fireplace.



Here's a better picture of it:



So, that's where Jesus was born. Look at verse 7 again:

Luke 2:7

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.

“Her firstborn son.” That’s true! But she would have four (4) more sons. Now this is in contrast to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church who says Mary only had one child and she was a “perpetual virgin” until her death. That’s just blatantly untrue. According to Matthew 13:55, Mary had four more sons. Their names: James, Joseph, Simon and Jude. And she also had girls...the same passage says that Jesus had: “sisters,” in the plural. Point is: she was a virgin...she gave birth to her firstborn, Jesus, but those weren’t her only children.

Now brothers and sisters, think about that scene in that cave. Think with me about Joseph for a moment. He’s seen birth before. He’s seen animals born...likely children born...they were born in homes, no hospitals...but this was HIS first child. A child he has to care for and He’s the Son of God. I can see him holding Mary’s hand, perhaps wiping the sweat and pushing her hair out of her face. Yet, he could offer no real comforts, such as a doctor or nurse, no bed...just the ground and maybe some straw. And finally, Jesus was born and Jesus, the Son of God cried the cry of human life.

Yes, in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, Emmanuel, the Lord of eternity, the Lord of omnipresence was now confined to a little 6, 7, 8lb, body. And then some simple details: “She wrapped Him in swaddling cloths.” That was normal for a baby. Long strips of cloth were used to wrap them tightly and we still do that, because it mimics the womb. Jesus was treated like any other child born in the first century. But He is no normal child...He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Yet, there were no royal robes, no silk cloth, no crowns for his head.

Jesus chose not to stay in heaven, but He humbled Himself and came into the earth in a stinking manger, so that He could one day bear something even worse, the stench of our sin. No, there was **no room in the Inn. What about for you? Is there room for Him?**

As we close, I return to the thought that God is in control all of life...but just as it wasn’t easy for Joseph and Mary, life isn’t going to be easy for us. But it wasn’t easy for Jesus either. Jesus lived with no running water, no indoor bathroom, no car, no coffee shop, no grocery store, no cell phone, no pillow-top mattress. And yet, Jesus came to this earth during the Pax Romana to one day die on the cross, to buy your pardon and offer you salvation if you will come and kneel/surrender your life to Him. That’s what I thought as I bowed down...



o go to the place where He was born. You have to kneel to come to Jesus. Do you want to know Jesus? You've got to bow to Him. You have to surrender to Him? No, there was no room in the inn for Jesus, but will you make room for Him in your heart? The choice is now yours.
