



Luke 2:1-7 | "What Christmas Is All About"

INTRO: Christmas is a glorious time to reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ. I believe that today on Christmas Eve, it is a great time to be reminded of WHY we celebrate Christmas and the true meaning of it. I feel that this reminder and exhortation is needed in these days more than ever because there is an adversary that wants to add to it and eventually change the meaning of Christmas, and distract us from what is truly important. The world has been busy to turn the Christmas message into something that it really isn't. Industry, marketing, and the media, are all promoting an idea of Christmas that is contrary to the New Testament.

The world's idea of Christmas is that it is about joy, peace, and family living in harmony. It's about the "Christmas spirit" of happiness, good cheer, gift-giving, and a jolly holiday of rest and celebration. Those things might be benefits that come from Christmas, but they are not what Christmas is really about.

Christmas today is filled with traditions, myths, legends, fairy tales, and make-believe. However, Christmas (the Incarnation of Christ) is a foundation of the Christian faith, which is based upon SOLID, CONCRETE FACTS! If that is not the case, then we simply deny the Gospel of its central glory and the thing that makes it most wonderful of all.

It is on these days of the Church's calendar that we are reminded of the FACTS of our faith concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, on Christmas Eve, we are reminded of the FACT of His birth in the little town of Bethlehem in a stable, and how they put Him in a manger as His crib. This is just one of the facts about His life that is recorded in the Gospels.

I. THE FACTS OF CHRISTMAS.

THE TIMING OF HIS BIRTH (v. 1-3)

(1) And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

"And it came to pass in those days,"

- A. Rome was being formed.
 - 1. The Roman Republic has passed away, and in its place the Roman Empire had emerged. Gradually, the government was taken from the people and given to military governors until the power went to one man, Caesar Augustus.
 - 2. The world was bludgeoned into submission and was crushed by the Roman Empire.



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- B. The doors of the *Temple of Janus* were closed and had been closed for about 10 years or more, which meant there was no war.
1. When there was war, the doors would be open and the people would seek their gods for protection for the soldiers, but at this time there was universal peace.
 2. This was a time called "Pax Romana," the Roman Peace.
 3. You might think, "What a beautiful time for the Prince of peace to be born," but that wasn't the case. There was only peace because Rome had bludgeoned the world into submission and squashed everyone else.

"that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus,"

- A. "*Caesar Augustus*"
1. First Roman Emperor and the great-nephew of Julius Caesar.
 2. His real name was Gaius Octavius.
 - a. The Roman Senate wanted to call him "the Dictator of Rome" or "the King of Rome, but he didn't like those, but then they called him Augustus, which has the idea "**of the gods**" and he liked that one!

"that all the world should be taxed."

- A. "taxed" - Gr. "*enrolled; census be taken; registered*"

(2) (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

- A. Critics of the Bible would cite this as an example of an error because for a long time, the only historical records we had at that time said that he didn't become governor until A.D. 6, which was after the death of Herod.
1. However, archaeologists discovered that Quirinius was governor of Syria ON TWO SEPARATE OCCASIONS, once while



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prosecuting the military action against the Homanadensians between 12 and 2 B.C. , and later beginning about A.D. 6. This "first" census would have been during his first term before 2 B.C., and another census during his second term in A.D. 6-7 which was linked to the uprising of Judas of Galilee ([Acts 5:37](#)).

(3) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

A. MAN'S PERSPECTIVE:

1. Caesar Augustus had achieved hegemony – world mastery.
 - a. He gives the decree that *all the world should be taxed, and "all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city."*
 - 1) No appeals.
 - 2) No getting out of it.
2. In a small province of the Roman Empire, far from the capital, there was a couple from this little ghetto city called Nazareth, and they had to travel about 80 miles to Bethlehem for the taxing.
 - a. Joseph and Mary had to obey the powerful man Caesar.
 - b. There is no way they would travel this in normal conditions.
 - 1) Her pregnancy being in the ninth month.
 - 2) The travel was by foot and camel.
 - 3) It was an 80 mile journey.

B. GOD'S PERSPECTIVE:

1. About 650 years before this, the prophet Micah said, "*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.*" ([Micah 5:2](#))



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- a. **KEY:** When I read that, I realize that it is not Caesar that is in control, but he is a puppet in the hand of God!
 - 1) **God had a problem** — Mary was 9 months pregnant in Nazareth, but the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. So, He had this little guy Caesar make a decree that would move Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem so that His Word would come to pass!
- b. **KEY:** God has His ways to accomplish His plans in your life. He has a way of orchestrating events to get you where you need to be!

THE FAMILY OF HIS BIRTH (v. 4-5)

(4) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee"

- A. Nazareth is about 1,830 feet above sea level, and Bethlehem is about about 2,564 feet above sea level, so they literally "*went up*"!

"out of the city of Nazareth,"

- A. Nazareth was a little town that had a bad reputation ([John 1:45-46](#)) and was despised. It was considered a reproach to live in Nazareth.
 - 1. Cf. [Luke 1:26-27](#)
 - a. **NOTE:** The angel Gabriel did NOT come to Jerusalem, the capitol and religious center of the nation, but flew past the Temple and Jerusalem and went to this little obscure village with a bad reputation to a young, teenage girl to announce that God chose her to be His instrument in bringing His Son into the world.

"into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)"



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A. Q = Why *Bethlehem*?... Read the story of Ruth!

1. Cf. [Ruth 4:17-22](#); [Micah 5:2](#)

(5) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

A. Mary's belly is HUGE!! She is getting far along in her pregnancy at this point!

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS BIRTH (v. 6-7)

(6) And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

A. Mary is now 9 months pregnant and ready to deliver this Baby!

(7) And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And she brought forth her firstborn son,"

A. "brought forth" - Gr. "birthed; delivered"

1. **NOTE:** It seems that Mary was ALONE giving birth. Usually midwives would deliver the baby, but it says, "**she** brought forth..."

B. "firstborn"

1. This implies that Mary and Joseph later had more children, which they did ([Matt. 13:55-56](#); [Mark 3:32](#); [6:3](#); [Luke 8:19-21](#); [John 7:1-10](#); [Acts 1:14](#)).

"and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,"



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- A. *Swaddling* infants was a custom in the ancient villages of Israel ([Ezek. 16:4](#)), and is still practiced to the present day.

"and laid him in a manger;"

- A. "manger" - Gr. *phatne* - "stall; feeding trough"
1. This word could refer to:
 - a. A "stall" as a holding area for animals ([Luke 13:15](#)).
 - b. A "feeding trough" where animals would eat.
 - 1) Cf. [Proverbs 14:4](#) - "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox."
 - a) "crib" - same as "manger" in LXX
 - 2) Most feeding troughs in Israel were made of stone, not wood.
 - a) **NOTE:** The traditional nativity scene that we see in our Christmas nativity sets are not really accurate Biblically. There have been a lot of traditions that have crept into the story.
 - i. So often, we have in our minds that scene of the little wooden manger with baby Jesus, with Mary and Joseph looking down on the glowing baby. The star is blazing above the wooden stable with the camels laying down, the 3 Wise Men standing there with a couple shepherds. However, that is not how it happened!
 - 3) [Chuck Missler](#): "If you were there that night... watch where you step! You would smell the manure and straw as trembling hands grasped the infant, slippery with blood, and placed Him in a feeding trough."



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"because there was no room for them in the inn."

- A. "inn" - Gr. *kataluma* - "lodging-place; guest-chamber; guest-room; dining-room; eating-room"¹
1. There has been some debate among scholars because the Greek word *kataluma* translated here as "inn" is a very generic term and can refer to a few different things.
 - a. Some scholars think this refers to the "guest-room" or "guest-chamber" in a home.
 - 1) Later on, when Jesus has His Last Supper with His disciples, Luke uses this same Greek word *kataluma* (Luke 22:11), which Mark describes in his Gospel as a "large upper room" that is "furnished" (Mark 14:14-15). Thus, the Greek word *kataluma* is used to describe the second story room in a private home.
 - 2) Also, in the Septuagint (LXX), the translators used the same Greek word *kataluma* in 1 Samuel 9:22 for the word "parlor; room; chamber", which was a room that had 30 people in it!
 - 3) Also, the peasant homes in those days were just one room (Matt. 5:15), which had a terraced family living area, and then a lower area for the animals when they brought them in at night that was about 4 feet lower than the main living area (Luke 13:15) near the door, and there for the animals was a *manger* built into the floor. The family animals were brought into the one-room house at night, but taken out early in the morning.
 - b. Other scholars point out that the Greek language indicates that it was actually a "public inn."
 - 1) **KEY:** The Greek text uses the definite article "the", which means that this *kataluma* was a SPECIFIC, PUBLICLY KNOWN LODGING PLACE in the city of Bethlehem.



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- a) It was common for poor families to build a shared *kataluma* to host travelers, which today we would call "caravansaries" or "khans". These were basically a large square building with a court in the middle for the animals, and single rooms with no furniture around the perimeter.
- 2) **NOTE:** Later on, Luke will use another Greek word for the inn ([Luke 10:34](#) - Gr. *pandocheion* - "public house; hostel") in the story of the Good Samaritan, which speaks of a commercial inn where the owner would charge for extra services ([Luke 10:34-35](#)).
- 3) **NOTE:** This one wasn't a commercial inn, but a public inn, set up by the townspeople or the Roman Authorities.
- 4) **KEY:** Don't think of Motel 6! These public inns were basically ANCIENT TRUCK STOPS!
- c. Some commentators speculate that the "Inn of Bethlehem" was the same as "the inn of Chimham" ([Jer. 41:17](#)) that may have been built by Chimham, the son of Barzillai, whom David seems to have treated as an adopted son ([2 Sam. 19:37-38](#)), as a testimony of his gratitude towards David. Also, there is a very ancient tradition that there was a cave attached to the "inn" of Bethlehem.²
2. **Q** = Was the *kataluma* a *guest-chamber* of a larger house or a *public inn*?... It seems that it may have been the public inn, but that's not really the main point of the story! The point of the story is that JESUS WAS BORN INTO THIS WORLD IN A PLACE OF LOWLINESS, and there was *no room for Him* there!
 - a. The Middle-Eastern culture has always been a very hospitable culture to guests! So, it seems very surprising that Mary had Joseph could not find accommodations with somebody!
 - b. **Q** = Why would nobody want to take them in?...

² The Pulpit Commentary. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/luke/2-7.htm>



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- 1) The town would have been packed because of the census.
- 2) There were rumors going around that Mary was pregnant out of wedlock (**Matt. 1:19; John 8:41**), which people wouldn't want to associate with in that culture.
- 3) If Mary found a hospitable family member that did believe her about the virgin pregnancy (like Elizabeth did), you would think she would have related that to Luke, but there is no mention of that by Luke.

B. **KEY:** In reality, this was a PROPHECY OF HIS LIFE:

1. No room in His family. (**Mark 3:21**)
2. No room in His hometown. (**Luke 4:29**)
3. No room in Israel. (**John 1:11; Lk 19:14; 23:18**)
4. No room today in our schools.
5. No room in our businesses.
6. No room in our culture.
7. No room in so many empty lives.

C. **Q** = WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN? WHY DID GOD BECOME A LITTLE BABY? WHY DID HE COME HOW HE CAME?...

II. THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS.

THE WORD "CHRISTMAS"

A. "Christmas" - Old English *Crīstes maesse* - "Christ Mass"

1. "Mass" - From Latin *missa*, which is Late Latin (Vulgar Latin) for *missio* ("sending; mission").



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2. Thus, *Christmas* means "*Christ-sent, Christ-mission, or the Mission of Christ!*"
- B. **KEY:** When we are celebrating Christmas, we are celebrating THE MISSION OF CHRIST!!
1. **Q** = What was *Christ's Mission*?...
 - a. Cf. **2 Corinthians 5:19-20** - "*To wit, that **God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;** and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, **be ye reconciled to God.***"

#1 - THE NEED CHRISTMAS – MAN'S PROBLEM

- A. Man is unhappy and miserable.
1. A lot of people love Christmas time because it's a time to feel happy and get away from the grind of work and real life.
 - a. For many, Christmas is a like a Disneyland time of year of make-believe and magic that helps us forget our misery and our problems.
 - b. To many people, Christianity or religion is a means to a happier life.
 2. However, these are just symptoms of the real problem. The reason we are not happy is because we are separated from God.
- B. Our REAL PROBLEM is that we are all SINNERS and SEPARATED FROM GOD IN REBELLION, and the unhappiness, misery, and other things that trouble us or torment us are the results and consequences of Original Sin and the Fall of Adam.
1. **KEY:** MAN'S PROBLEM IS THAT WE ARE BORN IN SIN AND REBELLION AGAINST GOD. THUS, WE ALL NEED A WAY TO COME BACK INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM!



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#2 - THE REASON FOR CHRISTMAS – THE SOLUTION TO MAN'S PROBLEM

A. CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT JESUS SEEKING AND SAVING THE LOST!

1. Cf. **Luke 19:10** - Jesus said, "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*"
2. **Q** = Why did He come into the world as a Baby?... To come rescue sinners and bring them back to God!

B. CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT THE CROSS!

1. Cf. **Hebrews 2:9, 14-18** - "*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. ... Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."*
2. Cf. **Titus 2:11-14** - "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."*

 - a. **Q** = Who was that Baby in the manger?... The Great God and our Savior! This was no ordinary baby! He is the Son of God!



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3. Cf. [1 Peter 3:18](#) - *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"*
4. Cf. [John 17:3](#) - Jesus said, *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."*
5. Cf. [Romans 5:8](#) - *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
 - a. **KEY:** It is Cross of Christ, the real meaning of Christmas, that the love of God is displayed for you!

C. **CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT YOU RECEIVING GOD'S GIFT OF SALVATION.**

1. Cf. [John 3:16](#) - *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*
2. **KEY:** If you focus on the "WHAT" of Christmas (the events of the Nativity), but you're not moved by the "WHY" of Christmas (redemption and reconciliation to God), then you've missed Christmas!
 - a. **KEY:** Tomorrow morning, on Christmas morning, when you think of that little Baby lying there in a manger, in such a lowly place, from a poor family, think about WHY He did it — He did it for YOU!! He did it so that you could receive Him and be saved. So, this Christmas, just surrender your life to Him and thank Him for that **GREATEST GIFT THIS CHRISTMAS, THE SON OF GOD AND BEING RECONCILED TO GOD BY HIM!!**