

The Arrival of Jesus

I. Introduction

A. The Annunciation to Mary

1. The Unlikely Recipient
2. The Unnerving Nature
3. The Unimaginable Message
4. The Unparalleled Miracle

II. The Arrival of Jesus

A. God uses the perceived power of empires to his own good ends.

1. Caesar Augustus (Octavian) (63 B.C.-A.D. 14—the year is about 6 B.C.
 - a) Grand nephew of Julius Caesar...defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C...took control of Empire and was named Augustus at age 34.
 - b) “Every age has its prevailing mood: the sunny confidence of the nineteenth century, the violent chaos of the twentieth. In the era of Jesus birth, at the height of the Roman Empire, hope and optimism held sway... Anticipation soared for a ‘new order of the ages’ at the time of Jesus’ birth...The Roman poet Virgil coined the phrase, sounding like an Old Testament prophet as he declared that ‘a new human race is descending from the heights of heaven,’ a change that would come about due to ‘the birth of a child, with whom the iron age of humanity will end and the golden age begin.’ Virgil wrote these messianic words not about Jesus, however, but about Caesar Augustus, the ‘present deity,’ the ‘restorer of the world,’ who had managed to reunite the empire after the civil war sparked by Julius Caesar’s assassination.”¹
 - c) “More than any other ruler, Augustus raised the expectations of what a leader could accomplish and what a society could achieve. It was Augustus, in fact, who first borrowed the Greek word for ‘Gospel’ or ‘Good News’ and applied it as a label for the new world order represented by his reign. The empire declared him a god and established rites of worship.

¹ Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 56.

His enlightened and stable regime, many believed, would last forever, a final solution to the problem of government.”²

2. Unbeknownst to Augustus, his decree for a census will be the catalyst for the entrance of YHWH’s Messiah.
 - a) “Providence means that God has not abandoned the world that he created, but rather works within that creation to manage all things according to the ‘immutable counsel of His own will’ (Westminster Confession of Faith V, i).”³
 - b) Thus fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 5:2...Luke is continuing to stress the importance of Jesus’ Davidic and kingly connections...Notice to, that God moves the entire Roman Empire to get two people in the right place... interesting...God’s providence is key in walking with Him. Would you rather deal with live as if God is working or as if He is not working?
 - c) God uses certain circumstances beyond our control to shape our lives for certain purposes.
 - (1) It is not easy, glorious, or sentimental.
 - (2) It’s not chance, luck—but rather Providence.
3. “For it is implicit in Scripture that all the mammoth political forces and all the giant industrial complexes, without their even knowing it, are being guided by God, not for their own sake but for the sake of God’s little people—the little Mary and the little Joseph who have to be got from Nazareth to Bethlehem. God wields an empire to bless his children.”⁴

B. God often works in the obscurity of the margins. We must look closely and listen intently to recognize his presence.

1. Joseph and Mary head too Bethlehem to take part in the census...if they bypassed Samaria...this would have been a trip of roughly 90 miles from

² Yancey, 33.

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 176.

⁴ John Piper, *Good News of Great Joy: Daily Readings for Advent* (Minnneapolis, Minnesota: Desiring God, 2013), 8.

Nazareth. Mary didn't have to go...so perhaps he brought her with him to avoid the scandal at home...more than likely because of the closeness of the birth.

- a) Really want to make sure we consider the role Mary and Joseph play in this plan of redemption. I'm confident that Mary and Joseph did not feel that they had what they needed.
2. More than likely not your traditional...get there just in time to have the baby...possibly could have been there days or even weeks...Born in either a stable or a cave..."Ancient tradition associates Jesus' birth with a cave (Justin Martyr & Origen)."⁵
3. Simple unadorned description of his birth. "The arrival of the incarnated Son of God is a study in contrast between how God did it and how we might have done it."⁶ It reveals something regarding the nature of the Kingdom to us—enters in obscurity and lowliness.
 - a) "O what a dark night this was for Bethlehem, that was not conscious of that glorious light! See how God shows that he utterly disregards what the world is, has, or desires; and furthermore, that the world shows how little it knows or notices what God is, has, and does."⁷
 - b) 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."
 - c) "This is the first picture with which Christ puts the world to shame and exposes all it does and knows. It shows that the world's greatest wisdom

⁵ Darrell Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1: 1:1-9:50, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1994), 208.

⁶ Darrell Bock, *Luke, Niv Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 86.

⁷ Martin Luther, *Sermon for Advent and Christmas Day* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 94.

is foolishness, her best action are wrong, and her greatest treasures are misfortunes. What had Bethlehem when it do not have Christ? What do Joseph and Mary lack now, although at that time they had no room to sleep comfortably.”⁸

d) “Importance is not a matter of one’s environment or the supposed status that things bring. Rather, importance is a function of one’s role in God’s work. Jesus is not important because of the setting of His birth, but because of who he is before God. For one moment, the center of God’s activity resides in an animal trough. The dignity of this event comes from the person lying at the center.”⁹

4. Teaching us a different way in this world—not power dictated by strength, wealth, or prestige—but a power displayed in humility, love, and service.

C. Jesus came to a place that had no space for him so that he could make space for us in His kingdom.

1. 2 Corinthians 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich...”
2. Jesus has made space for us...will you make space for Him? Who is he asking you to make space for?

⁸ Luther, 94.

⁹ Bock, *Luke*, 86.

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