

## **An Extraordinary Birth**

### **Luke 2:1-7**

Have you ever considered how ordinary the birth of Jesus was? If I were God, sending my Son into the world as its redemptive King, I would certainly opt for a more spectacular event.

Imagine a global display: angels appearing not only to shepherds but also to kings, presidents, and leaders worldwide. The fanfare would be mind-blowing. Jesus would arrive on the fiery chariot of Elijah, making it clear to everyone that this person is not only the King of kings and Lord of lords but also the Savior of the world.

Thank the Lord I am not God. Instead of choosing fanfare and great pomp and circumstance, God took the path of humility from the start. A humble young woman gave birth in humble surroundings. Humble shepherds were the only ones to witness the birth of the new King. And after it was all said and done, Mary and Joseph raised the Messiah in the ordinary ways of life.

Don't get me wrong, this birth was like no other. The birth is where God became a man and dwelt among us.

### **Main Idea: The Ordinary Nature of an Extraordinary Birth !**

How was this so?

Two ways...

#### **1. God Working Behind the Scenes to Prepare the Way (Verses 1-5)**

AKA Providence

*"Providence is the governing power of God that oversees his creation and works out his plans for it." - Gerald Bray*

Gerald Bray, "Providence," in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

#### **Luke 2:1-5 ESV**

*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 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, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.*

God providentially orchestrated all the events to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem thus fulfilling the prophecy about Jesus in the book of Micah.

#### **Micah 5:2 ESV**

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

In [Luke 2:1-3](#) We see some pretty big names who were the movers and shakers of their day. People who thought they were pretty big stuff back in the day.

### **Proverbs 21:1 ESV**

*The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.*

And God turned the heart of Caesar Augustus, who was about as big a deal as you could be...

**Octavian, Caesar Augustus** - *He was born in September 63 b.c. and was the great nephew of Julius Caesar. After the murder of Julius Caesar, he was named chief heir and ruled in a triumvirate with Mark Antony and Lepidus. Lepidus fell from power in 36 b.c. and Antony's involvement with Cleopatra of Egypt brought him into conflict with Octavian. In 31 b.c. Octavian won a decisive victory over Antony at Actium and was finally acknowledged as Augustus Caesar by the Senate in 27 b.c. when they gave him the honored Greek name Sebastos (= Latin Augustus). His reign was known for its peaceful character, as his accession ended a long period of civil strife. He died in a.d. 14 and was succeeded by Tiberius, the ruler of Rome during Jesus' ministry.* - Darrell L. Bock, [Luke: 1:1-9:50](#), vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 202-203.

**All the World** - In other words, the known world that Rome was in Charge of under Caesar Augustus

Luke also mentions Quirinius as governor of Syria as a **time stamp** to let people know in the future when this took place. The English text say "when Quirinius was governor" and it would be better translated "**before Quirinius was governor.**"

### **The ESV Study Bible Chapter 2**

*"This was the registration before Quirinius was governor of Syria" (see ESV footnote), which is grammatically possible (taking Gk. prōtos as "before" rather than "first"; the Greek construction is somewhat unusual on any reading). This would make sense because Luke would then be clarifying that this was before the well-known, troublesome census of A.D. 6 (Acts 5:37).*

Rome demanded, even of Israel, that they were to go to be registered for tax purposes.

Why should they be registered? So, Rome could tax the people. Each tribe needed to check in with their home of origin.

*I was born in Onekema, Michigan. It's northwest of Ludington in Manistee. And so that's where I would head under the same circumstances as Joseph.*

Verse four says...

### **Luke 2:4-5 ESV**

*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, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.*

### **Jesus Birth Map**

Interestingly both Joseph and Mary were of the lineage of David (BTW - this qualified Jesus to be Messiah).

*Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David and therefore went to their tribal home in Judea to be registered. This was a difficult trek of more than 70 mi. through mountainous terrain—a particularly grueling journey for Mary, on the verge of delivery. Perhaps she and Joseph were conscious that a birth in Bethlehem would fulfill the prophecy in [Mic. 5:2](#). - MSB*

And remember what betrothed means? She and Joseph were legally bound together, but they have not consummated their marriage yet. The fact that she was pregnant during their betrothal period was scandalous, to say the least.

The extraordinary thing about these verses is how ordinary they are! It is not extraordinary that registration for taxes would occur to force this couple to journey to their town of origin.

Looking from the outside in, this would have appeared to be an exceedingly normal situation. After all, there were a lot of people on the move because of the decree from Caesar.

But for those of us who are in the know, we understand that there is God's amazing and perfect providential hand at work behind the scenes. While Caesar, of his own free will called for this registration, God was the one who made sure it happened at the right time and in the right place to fulfill the 700 year old prophecy found in [Micah 5](#).

Whether you believe it or not, God is not out of control but is very well in charge and capable to get His will accomplished whenever and however He chooses. He can use a Caesar or a donkey to get done what He needs to be done.

*I hear a lot of bellyaching about our current president and his administration from Christians.*

But you do understand, Christian, that it is God that raises up and brings down king, presidents, and those in authority? He is in charge of history - After all, it is His Story and He His Story is heading somewhere.

Do you know where? He will bring all things to completion one day. He will judge the world.

**Acts 17:31 ESV**

*because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

Jesus came into this world as a baby! He lived as a man. He died as a sacrifice. He rose from the dead as a redeemer. He will come again as judge.

But don't miss the point. While God does move and will move in extraordinary ways in our world. For the vast majority of history, God has moved through the ordinary circumstances and processes of life.

God worked through the ordinary to accomplish the biggest, most necessary event in history. The birth of the Christ to bring redemption to the world.

**Review** - The Ordinary Nature of an Extraordinary Birth!

- God Working Behind the Scenes to Prepare the Way

## **2. God Working Through Normal Processes to Deliver the Lord (Verses 6-7)**

### **Luke 2:6-7 ESV**

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

While they were there - Bethlehem - the time came.

Many of us have experienced when *"the time came."* Angie and I had that experience three times. It is exhilarating, frightening, and amazing. The process of giving birth to a child is nothing short of miraculous.

My wife's three births were aided significantly by modern hospitals and modern medicine.

But the birth of our Savior knew nothing of our modern accoutrements and comfortable accommodations.

Not only was our Lord's birth normal, it was shockingly raw, base, and primitive.

Again, if I were God, I wouldn't have chosen such an austere path for my Son. But God was demonstrating something powerful about the Son of God. Do you know what that is?

He was humble - This is such an amazing thought. That the God of the universe. The Creator God, who brought all things into existence, came here in a way that no one expected. He came through the path of humility. This humility is the hallmark of Christianity.

Paul makes this clear with the church at Philippi - Their pride was rising, and they needed a dose of Christ's humility to put them in their place.

### **Philippians 2:3-8 ESV**

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

What could be more humbling than the Creator of all that is to subject himself to come to this earth through the normal, messy, bloody birthing process? Leaving the glories of heaven for the sin-cursed earth, but to do it in such a primal way is simply mind-boggling.

Why would God go through such a humiliating process?

Because He loves You and desires to have a relationship with you.

You may be asking how his birth as a human demonstrates His love for me?

Well, it wasn't merely His birth, as astonishing as that was. It was His sinless life and undeserved death that demonstrated His love for you.

**Romans 5:10 ESV**

*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

Christ was born in an extraordinarily ordinary way. But, his birth was by no means ordinary.

Listen to the profound nature of Jesus' birth articulated so well in the theologically rich Hymn...

**Hark the Herald, Angels Sing**

*Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners **reconciled!**"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"*

*Christ the everlasting Lord;  
Late in time, behold Him come,  
Offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail th'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus our Emmanuel.*

*Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die;  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.*

**Refrain:**

*Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

God delivered the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver you from eternal condemnation in Hell.

Hell is your fate unless you turn in repentance and, by faith, accept God's gift of eternal life! This is why Jesus was born. This is why Jesus died. This is why Jesus was raised from the dead.

So you could live in the presence of God for all eternity!

**John 3:16–17 ESV**

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

Would you repent and accept this beautiful gift of everlasting life from Jesus right now?

(Tell them how)

*Bethlehem and Golgotha, the Manger and the Cross, the birth and the death, must always be seen together. - J. Sidlow Baxter*

**Review** - The Ordinary Nature of an Extraordinary Birth!

- God Working Behind the Scenes to Prepare the Way
- God Working Through Normal Processes to Deliver the Lord

**Conclusion**

*On Christmas Day two thousand years ago, the birth of a tiny baby in an obscure village in the Middle East was God's supreme triumph of good over evil. - Charles Colson*

Many times, we want to see God move in spectacular ways to increase our faith. While God certainly can do that, He often chooses not to. He works through the ordinary ways of this life to display His glory and amazing grace. He even did it this way with the birth of His Son, who came into this world just like we did.

So, this Christmas, don't look for the spectacular; instead, praise God for the ordinary rhythms of life. Because often, if we look closely enough, that is where the miracles are.

**Connection Group Reflection Questions**

1. In what way does the knowledge that God is always working behind the scenes give you hope and encouragement?
2. Why do you suppose that God chose for Jesus to go through the normal human birthing process?
3. Who are you praying for daily?
4. Who are you engaging with weekly?

5. Who are you sharing the gospel with monthly?