

THE LORD IS COME!

Luke 2 may well be the most familiar and beloved portion in Luke's gospel. The story is old, but it is ever new, and God's people should never tire of it.

"As weak as a baby!" is a common expression that could not be applied to the Baby Jesus in the manger. While He was as weak as any other baby humanly speaking, He was also the center of power as far as heaven was concerned. God's power was going to be revealed and three groups of people were going to come and get a front row seat as this drama unfolded . . .

Mary And Joseph Came!

Luke 2:1-7 *And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.*

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into 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 wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Augustus Caesar was ruling, but God was in charge, for He used Caesar's edict to move Mary and Joseph eighty miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill His Word. Rome took a census every fourteen years for both military and tax purposes, and each Jewish male had to return to the city of his fathers to record his name, occupation, property, and family.

Came To Pass = γίνομαι *ginomai* = *To be fulfilled or performed.*

Remember the words Mary stated as we studied in Luke 1:38?

Luke 1:38 *Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*

When Mary said "Be it unto me according to thy word", it meant that from then on, her life would be a part of the fulfillment of divine prophecy . . . And here it was coming to pass!

God had promised a Savior!

• He would be a human:

Genesis 3:15 *And I will put enmity **Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed;** He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

Hebrews 2:16 *For indeed He does not give aid to angels, **but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham***

• He would be a Jew, not a Gentile:

Genesis 12:1-3 *Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. **I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**"*

Numbers 24:17 *“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; **A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,** And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult.*

• **He would be from the tribe of Judah:**

Genesis 49:10 *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.*

Shiloh = שִׁילֹה *šīylō* = *The Messiah. One Who brings ultimate tranquility and peace.*

• **He would be from the family of David:**

2 Samuel 7:1–17 *Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.”*

Then Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, “Go and tell My servant David, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?’ ” ’ Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.

“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” ’ ’

According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

• **He would be born of a virgin:**

Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*

• **He would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David:**

Micah 5:2 *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.”*

All of this occurred just as the Scriptures said!

A.T. Pierson used to say, “History is **His story.**”

President James A. Garfield called history “*The unrolled scroll of prophecy.*”

If God’s Word controls our lives, then the events of history only help us fulfill the will of God!

Jeremiah 1:11-12 *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?”*

And I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.”

*Then the LORD said to me, “**You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.**”*

For those who were watching, God was going to bring His Word to pass and they would see it!

Mary and Joseph were already husband and wife, but since they did not consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born, she is called his “betrothed wife”:

Matthew 1:18–25 *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. **But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”***

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

Bottom line . . . No one had room for the Son of God and His dejected family.

Swaddling Cloths = **σπαργανόω** *sparganoō*; = *To wrap with strips of cloth.*

Mothers in that day wrapped their infants in long bands of cloth to give the limbs strength and protection.

Manger = **φάτνη** *phatnē* = *A stall or trough.*

Notice also that Jesus was called her “**firstborn son**”. This implies that she had other children after Him.

But Mary and Joseph were not going to be the only people who came . . .

The Angels Came!

Luke 2:8-14 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

How amazed the angels must have been when they saw the Creator born as of all things . . . "a creature", the Word coming as a speechless baby . . . AMAZING!

Listen to the commentary:

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

The first announcement of the Messiah's birth was given by an angel to some anonymous shepherds. Some of us might be wondering, "Why shepherds? Why not to priests or scribes?"

The main thought is that by visiting the shepherds first, the angel revealed the grace of God toward all mankind not just the high and mighty! Shepherds were really outcasts in Israel. Their work not only made them ceremonially unclean, but it kept them away from the temple for weeks at a time so that they could not be made clean.

But God's plan was for them, and all "unclean mankind" to come and be clean:
Luke 1:51-53 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.
1 Corinthians 1:26-29 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Another reason Jesus was probably announced to shepherds first was that they would relate to Who He was:

• He Is The Good Shepherd:

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

John 10:14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

• He Is Also The Lamb Of God:

John 1:29b . . . "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Some even speculate that these shepherds could have been the ones caring for the flocks that would provide sacrifices for the temple services. It was fitting that the good news about God's Shepherd and Lamb be given first to humble shepherds.

We do know that after this, a chorus of angels joined the first angel and gave an anthem of praise. For the first time in about four centuries, the glory of God returned to earth. If shepherds, who were extremely brave, were afraid at what they saw and heard, then you can be sure it was real and that we had best believe it too! And this was GOOD NEWS!

The Stoic philosopher Epictetus stated, *"While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy. He cannot give peace of heart for which man yearns more than even for outward peace."*

"What was the good news? Not that God had sent a soldier or a judge or a reformer, but that He had sent a Savior to meet man's greatest need. It was a message of peace to a world that had forgotten what that word meant with all of the wars around."

*The Jewish word shalom (peace) means much more than a truce in the battles of life. It means wellbeing, health, prosperity, security, soundness, and completeness. It has to do more with character than circumstances. Life was difficult at that time just as it is today. Taxes were high, unemployment was high, morals were slipping lower, and the military state was in control. Roman law, Greek philosophy, and even Jewish religion could not meet the needs of men's hearts. **Then, God sent His Son!**"* Warren Wiersbe

The Shepherds Came Too!

Luke 2:15-20 *So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.*

After hearing the good news, they came to their savior! They were willing to make the trip, no matter how far it was, in order to see the Messiah.

(This was the first "Christmas Rush")

The shepherds knew what to look for: a newborn Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And they found Him! They worshipped Him and marveled at God's grace and goodness and the miracle He had wrought for them.

These shepherds are good examples for us to imitate today. They received by faith the message God sent them and then responded with immediate obedience. After finding the Baby, they reported the good news to others, “glorifying and praising God.”

We can say that they took the place of the angels . . . Maybe we can take the place of the shepherds! (interestingly enough . . . shepherds could not keep ceremonial laws and **were't allowed to testify in court**) **BUT WE'RE NOT SHEPHERDS, ARE WE?!**

- Have we heard the Good News?
- Have we praised God for it?
- Are we proclaiming it to others?
- Come on . . . It's Christmas . . . What are we waiting for?!