

## #18 - Jesus is born - Luke 2:1-20

### Engage:

We are entering into a study of how God's Redemptive Story is portrayed in the New Testament part of the Bible. It only seems appropriate to start with the miraculous birth and coming of Jesus into the world, as the New Testament does.

In Luke's gospel, he said that he would "write an orderly account of the life of Jesus—a life marked by *humility*. Women, not kings, are the first to hear the announcement of His coming. His birth takes place in a stable, the only available room in a crowded inn. Shepherds of the field, not sages of the palace, greet His arrival. As a boy, He amazes the scholars in the temple. As a young man, His first messages are greeted with ridicule and rejection. But His mission is clear: 'to preach the . . . gospel . . . deliverance . . . and . . . the acceptable year of the Lord' (Luke 4:18-19)." *DW*, October, 1982

### Thoughts about the story:

#### **1 – Luke 2:1-7 - The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem**

Bethlehem was said to be the birth place for the coming Messiah by the Old Testament prophet Micah, approximately 700 years earlier (Micah 5:2). Note: Bethlehem means the "house of bread". It is only fitting that Jesus would be called the Bread of Life - John 6:35.

The birth of Jesus was dated during a time when Caesar Augustus was emperor of the Roman Empire and when Quirinius was governor of Syria. There was once a question about the accuracy of this account concerning the time when Quirinius was governor. At first the only reference to Quirinius was at a later date that did not agree with the birth time of Jesus. But further archeological evidence found in the last century shows that Quirinius served two different times as governor (first 6-4 B.C. and then A.D. 6-9). The former time would agree with the time in which Jesus was born.

The timing for Joseph and Mary to make the 75-80 mile trip to Bethlehem was perfect. This "just happened" to be the time of the census that was taken by the Romans every 14 years to register every Jewish male for both military and taxation purposes. The male was to go to home of his ancestors to do this. Joseph and Mary would have known that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. The census gave them the perfect opportunity to go to Bethlehem at a time when Mary would give birth to Jesus.

#### **2 - Luke 2:8-14 - The angels announce the birth of Jesus to the shepherds**

Shepherds were considered to be at the lowest place of the social ladder. Their work always made them ceremonially unclean. Yet, God determined to make His first announcement of the birth of the Messiah to a group of shepherds. This announcement was made by an angel, who frightened the shepherds. It is commonly thought that this angel was Gabriel, although the angel is not mentioned by name. (See Luke 1:11, 19, 26). This announcement was followed by a whole host of angels who joined in praising God because of the coming of Jesus. It must have been amazing for the angels to see that the Creator was born as a creature (See 2 Corinthians 8:9).

It has been suggested that the shepherds chosen for this announcement could have been raising lambs which were to eventually be used as sacrifices during the time of Passover.

### 3 - Luke 2:15-20 - The shepherds went to find Jesus and his parents in Bethlehem

The shepherds journeyed to Bethlehem to find the baby Jesus. They boldly told others what had happened and praised God for what they had experienced. Those who heard their message were amazed. See how this theme of amazement and wonder is also found throughout the gospel of Luke (1:21, 63; 2:18, 33; 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:14, 38; 20:26; 24:12, 41).

Just as the angels had praised God, so did the shepherds. These shepherds serve as models for us to imitate today. After they received the message from God about the birth of the Messiah, they immediately responded in obedience to go and find the Christ child. After that they began telling others what they had seen and experienced. This is appropriate because one of the stated purposes for God's people is to live to the praise and glory of God (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14).

It is noteworthy to point out that Mary "treasured up all these things." She had to be both amazed and humbled that she was the mother of the Messiah.

#### **Extra:**

The wonder of it all - that God could and did become a man who would live on the earth and then be willing to become the perfect sacrifice for our sins by going to the cross (Philippians 2:5-11). What are your thoughts about God's revelation of love through Jesus for all humankind?

The angels, the shepherds, the wise men and no doubt Joseph and Mary praised God for the birth of Jesus. How could you glorify and praise God in a different way with your family, your friends and our church family in celebration of the birth of Jesus?

"Though Christmas marks the celebration of God's free gift to the world—the gift of His only Son—it is striking that nearly everyone involved in that first Christmas paid a high price for the privilege.

Mary and Joseph gained a son—at the expense of their virtuous reputations. (One of the [*Talmud writings*] of the first century, in referring to Jesus, calls Him '*Jesus ben Panthera*,' son of a Roman soldier—a play on the Greek word *pantheons*, 'virgin.') The shepherds lost at least one night's work. The wise men invested perhaps years of their time in pursuing the star of Bethlehem. But was it worth it?

Mary exclaimed, 'Be it unto me according to thy word' (Lk 1:38).

The shepherds 'returned, glorifying and praising God' (Lk 2:20).

The wise men 'rejoiced with . . . great joy' (Matt 2:10).

And you? What price are you willing to pay to follow the Christ who paid the ultimate price for your salvation?" *DW*, October, 1982

"As a baby in Bethlehem, He needed to be comforted and rocked, but later He would do the comforting. Soon He babbled and cooed, but later He spoke the most meaningful and purposeful words known to humankind. Then He needed quietness, but afterward He needed to be heard by the multitudes. He was content at one time to sleep in a manger, but now He is seeking for men and women in whom He can live. In people, He has moved from the boundaries of the manger to the ends of the earth. The innkeeper did not know who Jesus was, but we do. Or do we? Do we save any room for Him in our lives? The synagogues had no room for Him. The Sanhedrin had no room for Him. His hometown had no room for Him. The only place He found undisputed was on the cross!" (copied)