

Jesus' Birth

Luke 2:1-17

SS Lesson for 12/22/2013

Devotional Scripture: Isa 9:6-7

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson teaches about **Jesus' Birth**. The **study's aim** is to see that it was not beneath God to take on humanity in order to redeem sinners. The **study's application** is to show that Christmas is about God's gift to a world He loved.

Key Verse: Luke 2:7

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.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Jesus' birth was dated by Luke as falling in the reign of Caesar Augustus, who was officially made the ruler of the Roman Empire in 27 B.C. and ruled to A.D. 14. (See the list of Roman emperors.) Because Herod the Great's reign ended in 4 B.C., Jesus was born before that time. The mention of Quirinius as governor of Syria poses a problem. He was governor in A.D. 6-7, much too late for Jesus' birth. Therefore does the word first (prōtē) refer, as in the niv, to a first, that is, an earlier, census by Quirinius? If so, one would have to posit a previous governorship for Quirinius at about 4 B.C. Perhaps a better solution is to take "first" to mean "before," as it does, for example, in John 15:18. Luke 2:2 would then read, "this was the census that took place before Quirinius was governor of Syria" (i.e., before A.D. 6). For the census Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, Joseph's ancestral home. Joseph was a descendant of David (cf. 1:27), who was born in Bethlehem. Some have argued that it seems strange that people were not registered in the places where they currently lived. However, other instances of the same practice are known (see I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 101-2). Mary accompanied Joseph for several reasons. The couple knew she would have the Baby during the time Joseph was gone, and they most likely did not want to be separated at that event. Also both of them knew that the Child was the Messiah. They also would have known that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The Child was born during their time in Bethlehem. The fact that Jesus was called Mary's firstborn implies that later she had other children. The couple was housed in quarters which were not private. According to tradition, they were in a cave near the inn. The Child was placed... in a manger, from which livestock fed. Being wrapped in strips of cloth was important, for this was the way the shepherds would recognize the infant (v. 12). Some infants were bound up in that way to keep their limbs straight and unharmed.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Think of how many people Joseph and Mary passed on their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem! They no doubt passed right through Jerusalem. Surely, a lot of people saw them, but it seems unlikely that many took note of them. When they got to Bethlehem, as our text points out, "there was no room for them in the inn." This often quoted verse displays the great irony of the Lord's entry into the world. The earthly origins of the Christian faith, the birth of Jesus, lay in the shadows of history. Amazingly, the birth of the Son of God was lonely and ordinary. Think about it. They had no doctors, hospitals, or medical care. There were no servants or workers to help. There was no money or wealth. No fame or headlines immediately emerged. Jesus was born in a simple way and embraced by His parents in the usual way of the ancient poor. He was simply swaddled and laid down in the most convenient place—in this case a manger, an animal's feed trough. It was all so very ordinary. Perhaps we might even say that the circumstances of life seemed to overtake this burdened couple. They had the apparent misfortune of receiving their firstborn child under very austere conditions. However, their misfortune represented blessing for the whole world. This is the irony. As we read this text, we are reminded that the birth of this child to an obscure Jewish couple was at the time seemingly a mere detail of human history. Much of the world was indifferent to the birth of Jesus.

As we go on to study Jesus' life in the pages of the Gospels, we find that many Israelites remained indifferent to Him. Despite the fulfilled prophecy, His wonderful miracles, and His remarkable teaching, large numbers of people who encountered Him turned away unaffected. Many who were initially curious turned away before conversion. There was nothing wrong with the Lord's life or message. Rather, there was and is something terribly wrong with the human heart, which does not always see the gift of God. And today, sad to say, many around us seem similarly indifferent. They take great note of Christmas, but little of the One who was born so long ago, who has given the name to this special holiday. We live in a man-centered and self-centered world. Plans, dreams, and "this-worldliness" occupy the minds of many around us. The birth and life of Christ so many years ago is still easy to overlook. In many places and in many lives, there is still no room for Him. Let us not fall into forgetfulness. Let us celebrate the birth of Jesus. Let us go over the story again and again. Let us remember that He is the Saviour of the world. And let us proclaim this to a sleeping world so that perhaps, God might awaken some afresh today. Let us urge others not to remain indifferent to Him but to study receive, believe, and embrace Him. Christ is called here the "firstborn." Elsewhere in God's Word He is called the firstborn of all those who will be saved and glorified (Rom. 8:29). May many more be born anew to salvation.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The outline of the lesson was repeated from a previous SS Lesson dated 12/23/2007 & 12/21/2008 and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

Verse	Phrase	Commentary
6	So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered	Circumstances of Jesus' Birth
11	For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord	Announcement of Jesus' Birth

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Though the Christmas holiday is influential, the true power of Christmas is in the Christmas story. As Luke tells it, Jesus' birth marks a sharp contrast between two kinds of power. One is the military and economic might of the Roman Empire; the other is the power of Jesus, the king whom God sent. He was God incarnate, the Creator himself entering the world as a human. He deliberately assumed a position of humility, lowliness, even poverty. Beginning in that unlikely position, he conquers the world. The Roman Empire conquered territories around the Mediterranean Sea in the centuries before Jesus' birth. By 63 BC, Rome had controlled the historic territory of Israel, although it took some years to solidify that control. Caesar Augustus became emperor in 27 BC, and the great age of Roman power began to take shape. Subject peoples were taxed heavily. Those who did not submit to Roman authority could be fined, flogged, exiled, or executed. Roman domination was more than a political and economic burden for the Jewish people. It was also a religious problem: as long as Rome ruled, God did not (or so it seemed). The reality of Roman occupation was a constant reminder that God had consigned Israel to a state of exile—even "exile" within its own borders—for generations. The faithful looked to the promises of Scripture for hope. God had promised a great Son of David to rule over his people (2 Samuel 7:12-16). He had promised that beyond exile lay restoration (Isaiah 51:11), like the exodus of Moses' time. One day the pagan powers would be destroyed, and God would rule supreme over all nations (Daniel 7:1-14). Though centuries had passed since God gave his promises, the faithful looked beyond the failures of their forefathers and kept their trust in God's promise to take back his world. These ideas intersect with Luke's story of Jesus' birth. The power of Rome is portrayed through its power to tax. We glimpse the

oppression of Israel in the poverty of Jesus' family. The promise of God is clear as we hear again of David, whose promised Son is to rule over all.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Circumstances of Jesus' Birth (Luke 2:1-7)

- 1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.
- 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.
- 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.
- 4 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,
- 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.
- 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.
- 7 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.

Birth in the lineage of David (1-4)

Lineage of David prophesied in the Scriptures (John 7:42)

42 Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?"

Lineage of David sworn by God (Ps 132:11)

11 The Lord swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne —

Lineage of David from the root of Jesse (Isa 11:1)

1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Lineage of David that will be a righteous King (Jer 23:5)

5 "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

Lineage of David from the clan of Judah (Mic 5:2)

2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Birth of a humble servant (5-7)

Jesus is humble in heart (Matt 11:29)

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

God chose Jesus as His servant (Isa 42:1-4)

1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. 3 A

bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; 4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."

Jesus, as a servant, brought the light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6)

6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

God's Spirit was upon His servant Jesus (Matt 12:18)

18 "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

Jesus became a servant to confirm God's promises (Rom 15:8)

8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs

Announcement of Jesus' Birth (Luke 2:8-17)

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

10 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.

11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

15 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."

16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

Announcement of joy (8-10)

Joy because God has come in the flesh (Isa 40:9)

9 You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Joy because God has come to reign (Isa 52:7)

7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Joy because of being in the presence of God (Ps 21:6)

6 Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.

Joy through worship (Luke 24:52)

52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy .

Announcement of a Savior (11-12)

A Savior who brings repentance and forgiveness (Acts 5:31)

31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

A Savior of the Church (Eph 5:23)

23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior .

A Savior who destroyed death and brought immortality (2 Tim 1:10)

10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

A Savior of the world (1 John 4:14)

14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

A one and only Savior (Jude 25)

25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Announcement of peace and goodwill (13-14)

A peace greater than anything in the world (John 14:27)

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

A peace that comes with having a Lord of all (Acts 10:36)

36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

A peace that comes from having a Savior who overcame the world (John 16:33)

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

A peace provided us through justification (Rom 5:1)

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

A peace provided us through reconciliation (Eph 2:14-18)

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

A peace through Jesus' blood (Col 1:20)

20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Announcement that was investigated (15-16)

Investigation through searching God's word (Acts 17:11)

11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Investigation through testing the spirit by the Spirit (1 John 4:1)

1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Investigation through testing to see if it is good (1 Thess 5:21)

21 Test everything. Hold on to the good.

Investigation through seeking God's kingdom (Matt 6:33)

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Investigation through prayer (Matt 7:7)

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Announcement that was responded to by spreading of the good news (17)

Witnessing to others started with the scattering of the disciples (Acts 11:19-21)

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Witness to others because Jesus commanded it (Matt 28:18-20)

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Witness to others through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Witness to others through teaching (2 Tim 2:2)

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thought From Bob Deffinbaugh

From the series: Luke: The Gospel of the Gentiles

There are four lessons which I wish to underscore here, which I believe are taught in our text. Let us prayerfully consider what God has to say to us from this passage.

(1) The sovereignty of God in history. Luke is a historian, and his historical account of the birth of Christ surely seeks to demonstrate the sovereignty of God in history. In the first 7 verses of the text, everything is viewed solely through a “secular” grid. A pagan potentate makes a decree, and the Israelites comply with it by registering in the town of their birth. In the process, a pregnant woman is forced to make a long journey with her husband, and to bear the child far from home and without the conveniences of a home. Luke then lifts the veil, showing us that all of these seemingly sad events occur in order that God’s Messiah might be born in the vicinity of some shepherds, and in conditions which set Him apart from all other babies in Bethlehem. These shepherds are guided to the Messiah by a divinely appointed angel and an angel choir, so that they serve to edify and encourage Mary and Joseph and to announce Messiah’s birth to all who live in that area. You will note that no mention is made of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Micah 5:2 is specifically mentioned by Luke because the recipient of the account, Theophilus, is a Gentile, who probably holds a high-level political position. While Theophilus would not be particularly in the prophetic fulfillment aspect of the birth account of Luke, he would be greatly impressed to learn that God is sovereign, and thus able to achieve His purposes and fulfill His promises by means of pagan powers, even the highest political power of that day—Caesar. Theophilus would be very impressed by this fact, which Luke is careful to reveal.

(2) Luke provides us with a lesson in the communication of the gospel. Luke is writing an account of the gospel here, and in doing this very well he provides us with some lessons in communicating the gospel to others. Luke passed up the opportunity to highlight the fulfillment of Micah 5:2 because it would not have as much impact on his Gentile recipient as it would have had on a Jew. Luke emphasized the sovereignty of God over history and over a heathen king, which would have had a great impact on Theophilus. In what he has done and not done Luke teaches us that we dare not change the gospel, but we should carefully chose to focus on those details of the gospel which will have the greatest impact on our audience. Thus, the need for more than one gospel is once again apparent.

(3) Luke’s account of the birth of Christ reminds us of the principle of proportion. We have already pointed out that Luke alone records the details of our Lord’s birth. Only one gospel in four describes the birth of Christ, while all four carefully depict His death. To press this point further, only a very few verses describe the events surrounding the birth of Christ while several chapters of each gospel are devoted to a description of the arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. The principle of proportion teaches us that much time and space is devoted to what is most important, while little time and space is given to that which is of lessor import. On the basis of this simple principle we would have to conclude that the death of Christ is more important to the gospel writers than His birth. Why is this so? Because it is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ that saves us, not the babyhood of Christ. Granted, Christ had to take on human flesh before He could reveal God to men and save them, but it is His atoning work on the cross of Calvary that saves us. Why, then, is the Christmas story so important to many today, even those who do not believe in Christ for salvation? Because, I fear, the babe in the manger is far less threatening than the Christ of the later gospels, who interprets and applies the Law, who condemns sin and who speaks of faith in His blood. The baby in the manger is sweet and cuddley, and “controllable.” The baby in the manger is a kind of “God in the box,” a God whom we are comfortable to approach, to think about, even to worship. But the Christ hanging on the cross is not a pretty picture, He is not one to whom we are drawn, who evokes in us warm and fuzzy feelings. Many have made much, too much, of the babe in the manger because this is the kind of “god” they wish to serve, a “god” who is weak, who is helpless, who needs us, rather than a God who is sovereign, and who demands our obedience, our worship, our all. What kind of God do you serve, my friend? What is the Christ like whom you worship? Worshipping the “babe in the manger” is not enough, for this is only the way He came. The way He will be for all eternity is the way He is described by John in the book of Revelation: John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. **BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, AND EVERY EYE WILL SEE HIM, EVEN THOSE WHO PIERCED HIM; AND ALL THE TRIBES OF THE EARTH WILL MOURN OVER HIM.** Even so. Amen (Rev. 1:4-7). According to Revelation and the prophecies of the Bible,

the Jesus who came the first time as a little baby, is coming again, as an avenger and as a righteous judge, to punish the wicked and to reward the righteous. This may not be the kind of Jesus you wish to think of or to serve, but it is the same Jesus that came to Bethlehem. His second coming will be vastly different from His first appearance. Then, He came to humble himself, to die on the cross, and to save. Next time, He comes to judge. Are you ready to face this Jesus, to fall before Him in worship? This is the Jesus of the manger. This is the coming King. I urge you to accept Christ as He came the first time, as your Savior, and then to wait for Him eagerly, to come the second time, to make things right, to establish His kingdom on earth, and to rule over all creation. Let us learn from Luke's account that the babe in the manger is the Savior of the world, whom we must accept as our Savior.

(4) Finally, we learn that God's purposes are often achieved through suffering, and that God's purposes in our suffering are often not immediately apparent. All of the suffering, inconvenience, and discomfort that was occasioned by the decree of Caesar was not immediately recognized as the sovereign hand of a loving God, who was bringing about His purposes, in a way that was for the good of those who suffered. Let us learn from Mary and Joseph that those seemingly "secular" sufferings of life are most often instruments in the hand of God, which time or eternity will make clear to us.

From URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/birth-messiah-luke-21-20>

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. God acts in time with His eternal plan (Luke 2:1)
2. God uses even the acts of pagan leaders to fulfill His prophetic Word (vss. 2-3)
3. God uses obedient people to carry out His plan (vss. 4-6)
4. Christ's incarnation is a great miracle; God in the flesh identified with us (vs. 7)
5. God uses angels (messengers) to accomplish His eternal purposes on earth (Luke 2:8-14; cf. Heb. 1:13-14)
6. Our first response to God's calling should always be obedience (Luke 2:15-17)