

TITLE: THE WONDER OF IT ALL!

TEXT: LUKE 2:1-7

INTRODUCTION: (1) THE TRUTH THAT GOD BECAME MAN IS MIND-BOGGLING.

\* AND THE FACT IS, THE MORE YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THE MORE STAGGERING IT GETS.

\*\* NOTHING IN FICTION IS SO FANTASTIC AS IS THE TRUTH OF THE INCARNATION – THAT GOD WOULD BECOME MAN TO SAVE MAN.

(2) AND WHEN I TALK ABOUT THE INCARNATION, I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT FICTION, BUT A BIBLICAL TRUTH, ONE THAT IS SO FANTASTIC THAT NO ONE BUT GOD ALMIGHTY COULD COME UP WITH IT.

\* THE REASON BEING, IF MAN HAD COME UP WITH THIS PLAN, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH DIFFERENT, RADICALLY DIFFERENT. THE SETTING, THE SCENERY, THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE MEANS TO FULFILL THE PLAN WOULD HAVE BEEN TOTALLY DIFFERENT.

\*\* YET, CHRISTIANITY HINGES ON THE FACT THAT GOD BECAME MAN, THAT CHRIST HUMBLED HIMSELF AND

THEN WOULD BECOME OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

(3) CHRISTIANITY HINGES ON THE WORD BECAME FLESH, THAT DEITY TOOK ON HUMANITY, THAT THE SOVEREIGN BECAME A SERVANT, THAT THE CREATOR WOULD BECOME A PART OF HIS CREATION THAT GOD WOULD LAY ASIDE HIS CROWN FOR A ROBE, THESE ARE PROFOUND CRUCIAL BELIEFS IN CHRISTIANITY.

\* AND THINK ABOUT IT, IT'S NOT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT JESUS COULD PERFORM MIRACLES, DO GOOD, LIVE A PERFECT SINLESS LIFE AND THEN RISE FROM THE DEAD, IF YOU BELIEVE THAT JESUS WAS GOD – NO PROBLEM.

\*\* BUT IF HE WAS NOT GOD, THEN THOSE THINGS ARE HARD TO BELIEVE IF HE WAS A MERE MAN. BECAUSE OF THAT, THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION TO ME IS NOT GOOD FRIDAY, AS IMPORTANT AS IT IS, NOR IN THE EASTER MESSAGE OF RESURRECTION, BUT IN THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF INCARNATION.

(4) J. I. PACKER SAID AND I QUOTE, "THE REALLY STAGGERING CHRISTIAN CLAIM IS THAT JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS GOD MADE MAN.

\* THE SECOND PERSON OF THE GODHEAD BECAME THE "SECOND MAN" DETERMINING HUMAN DESTINY, THE

SECOND REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RACE AND THAT HE TOOK HUMANITY WITHOUT LOSS OF DEITY, SO THAT JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS AS TRULY AND FULLY DIVINE AS HE WAS HUMAN.

\*\* HERE ARE TWO MYSTERIES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE – THE PLURALITY OF PERSONS WITHIN THE UNITY OF GOD, AND THE UNION OF GODHEAD AND MANHOOD IN THE PERSON OF JESUS.

\*\*\* PACKER SAID “IT IS HERE, IN THE THING THAT HAPPENED AT THE FIRST CHRISTMAS, THAT THE PROFOUNDEST AND MOST UNFATHOMABLE DEPTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION LIE.

(5) THE WORD BECAME FLESH, GOD BECAME MAN, THE DIVINE SON BECAME A JEW; THE ALMIGHTY APPEARED ON EARTH AS A HELPLESS HUMAN BABY, UNABLE TO DO MORE THAN LYE AND STARE AND WIGGLE AND MAKE NOISES, NEEDING TO BE FED AND CHANGED AND TAUGHT TO TALK LIKE ANY OTHER CHILD.

\* AND THERE WAS NO ILLUSION OR DECEPTION IN THIS: THE BABYHOOD OF THE SON OF GOD WAS A REALITY. (END QUOTE)

\*\* NOW WHAT A WONDERFUL REALITY IT IS. JESUS WAS DIVINE. THE BABE IN THE MANGER WAS GOD. AND THAT REALITY MAKES SENSE OF EVERYTHING ELSE THAT THE

N.T. CONTAINS ABOUT JESUS, AGAIN FROM HIS MIRACLES, HIS LIFE, HIS DEATH, AND HIS RESURRECTION.

(6) SO THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE AND THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY RESTS ON THE GREAT FACT THAT THE CHILD IN THE MANGER WAS GOD-IMMANUEL. THAT IS ONE OF THE CORNERSTONES OF OUR FAITH.

\* BUT GET THIS, BY BECOMING MAN JESUS DID NOT CEASE TO BE GOD; HE WAS NO LESS GOD THAN BEFORE, BUT HE HAD BEGUN TO BE MAN.

\*\* HE WAS NOT NOW GOD MINUS SOME ELEMENTS OF HIS DEITY, BUT GOD PLUS ALL THAT HE HAD MADE HIS OWN BY TAKING MANHOOD TO HIMSELF. (HE WHO MADE MAN BECAME MAN).

\*\*\* ONE OF THE EARLIER CHURCH CREEDS PUT IT THIS WAY, "OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, IS GOD AND MAN, PERFECT GOD AND PERFECT MAN.

(7) WHO ALTHOUGH HE BE GOD AND MAN; YET HE IS NOT TWO, BUT ONE CHRIST; ONE NOT BY CONVERSION OF THE GODHEAD INTO FLESH; BUT BY TAKING OF THE MANHOOD INTO GOD." (END QUOTE)

\* AND BELOVED, THE POINT I WANT TO MAKE IS CHRIST DID NOT LAY ASIDE HIS DEITY TO BECOME MAN, HE LAID ASIDE HIS GLORY, HIS MAJESTY THAT HE HAD IN HEAVEN

WITH HIS FATHER TO BECOME MAN, QUOTE JOHN 17:5 AND JOHN 1:1-3, V. 14.

\*\* AND ONE OF THE GREAT TEXTS IN THE N.T. THAT COMMUNICATES THE MEANING OF THIS IS II CORINTHIANS 8:9, WHERE IT SAYS: (QUOTE IT).

\*\*\* NOW THIS VERSE TEACHES US NOT THE MARVEL OF NATURE IN THE INCARNATION, BUT THE WONDER OF CHRIST'S GRACE. IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT WAS BEHIND THE PLAN OF GOD BECOMING MAN WAS GRACE. GOD'S RICHES AT CHRIST'S EXPENSE, UNDESERVED, UNMERITED, DIVINE FAVOR WAS THE MOTIVE FOR THE INCARNATION.

(8) THE ONE WHO WAS RICH IN GLORY, DIGNITY AND HAVING HEAVEN WORSHIPPING HIM, BECAME POOR, NOT ONLY MATERIALLY, BUT LIT. IN BECOMING MAN, LAYING ASIDE HIS GLORY.

\* THAT WE THROUGH HIS POVERTY WOULD BECOME RICH, NOT IN TEMPORAL RICHES, BUT ETERNAL RICHES, SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST'S SACRIFICIAL SUBSTITUTIONARY DEATH.

\*\* SO THE WHOLE N.T. STORY OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION IS ABSOLUTELY AMAZING AND EACH ACCOUNT OF HIS BIRTH SHOULD BE VERY SPECIAL TO US THAT KNOW HIM BY HIS GRACE.

(9) AND ON THIS CHRISTMAS MORNING 2011, I WANT TO LOOK AT ONE OF THOSE WONDERFUL ACCOUNTS OF CHRIST'S BIRTH, THE ACCOUNT OF DR. LUKE IN LUKE 2, VERSES 1-7.

\* AND LUKE 2 MAY WELL BE THE MOST FAMILIAR AND BELOVED PORTION IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

\*\* AND YES THE STORY IS OLD, BUT HOPEFULLY IT IS FRESH FOR YOU, THAT BELIEVER, YOU WILL NEVER TIRE OF IT, BUT THAT IT WILL BRING THE RESPONSE OF PRAISE, ADORATION AND WORSHIP.

\*\*\* AND SPECIFICALLY THIS MORNING I WANT TO LOOK AT VV. 1-7 WHICH I'VE TITLED, THE WONDER OF IT ALL!

(10) AND UNDER THAT TITLE WE'LL LOOK AT TWO THINGS, NO. 1 THE PERIOD OR TIMING OF CHRIST'S BIRTH, VV. 1-3; AND NO. 2 THE PLACE OF CHRIST'S BIRTH, VV. 4-7.

\* AND WITH THAT IN MIND, LOOK AT V. 1 PLEASE WHERE WE'LL START TO SEE THE PERIOD OR TIME OF HIS BIRTH.

I. THE PERIOD, (READ V. 1)

A. NOW JESUS' BIRTH WAS DATED BY LUKE AS FALLING IN THE REIGN OF WHOM? CAESAR AUGUSTUS. AND HE WAS OFFICIALLY MADE THE RULER OF THE ROMAN

EMPIRE IN 27 B.C. AND RULED TO A.D. 14. HE WAS THE NEPHEW OF JULIUS CAESAR AND TOOK OVER AFTER HIS UNCLE'S DEATH.

\* NOW LITTLE DID AUGUSTUS CAESAR KNOW THAT HIS EDICT, HIS DECREE, WOULD BE USED BY GOD PROVIDENTIALLY TO BRING JOSEPH AND MARY TO BETHLEHEM FROM NAZARETH. FOR YOU SEE AUGUSTUS CAESAR WAS RULING, BUT GOD WAS IN CHARGE!! GOD WAS AND IS AND ALWAYS ON THE THRONE.

\*\* AND ISN'T THAT A WONDERFUL THOUGHT AND TRUTH THAT GOD IS IN CHARGE AND THAT HE IS IN CONTROL. I WOULD GO BANANAS IF I DIDN'T BELIEVE IN GOD'S ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY AND HOW HE USES AUTHORITY TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES – PROVERBS 21:1, ROMANS 13:1. AND HOW HE USES ALL THINGS, ROMANS 8:28. AND NOTHING HAPPENS TO US AS BELIEVERS WITHOUT PURPOSE.

\*\*\* AND AUGUSTUS CAESAR WAS BEING USED BY THE LORD AND SPECIFICALLY THE DECREE BY CAESAR WAS FOR ALL THE ROMAN EMPIRE, THE ROMAN WORLD. AND THE DECREE WAS THAT ALL THE ROMAN WORLD WOULD BE TAXED ACCORDING TO THE KING JAMES WHICH LIT. MEANS A CENSUS WAS TO BE TAKEN, TRANSLATED THAT WAY IN THE NIV AND IN THE NASB WHICH I READ TO YOU EARLIER, AND TRANSLATED REGISTERED IN THE ESV AND NKJV.

1. AND WHAT HAPPENED WAS, ROME TOOK A CENSUS EVERY 14 YEARS FOR BOTH MILITARY AND TAX PURPOSES, AND EACH JEWISH MALE HAD TO RETURN TO THE CITY OF HIS FATHER TO RECORD HIS NAME, OCCUPATION, PROPERTY AND FAMILY. (NOW WITH THAT SAID, LOOK AT V. 2 PLEASE.)

B. READ V. 2. NOW SKEPTICS OF THE BIBLE POINT TO V. 2 OF LUKE 2 AND SAY THAT WHAT IS STATED IS AN IMPOSSIBILITY. FOR YOU SEE CYRENIUS ALSO CALLED QUIRINIUS IN MOST TRANSLATIONS WAS GOVERNOR IN SYRIA IN A.D. 6&7, MUCH TOO LATE FOR JESUS' BIRTH. (JESUS WAS BORN BEFORE THIS.)

\* BUT THERE IS A SIMPLE SOLUTION, WHICH OF COURSE MOST SKEPTICS OF THE WORD DON'T WANT TO SEE, AND THAT IS THE WORD FIRST, PRO-TOS, HERE LIT. MEANS BEFORE, AS IT DOES FOR EXAMPLE IN JOHN 15:18.

\*\* JOHN 15:18 – “IF THE WORLD HATES YOU, YOU KNOW THAT IT HAS HATED ME BEFORE (PRO-TOS) IT HATED YOU.” AND THE WORD BEFORE IS FROM THE SAME GREEK ROOT WORD AS FIRST.

\*\*\* AND IN LIGHT OF THAT LUKE 2:2 WOULD THEN READ, “THIS WAS THE CENSUS THAT TOOK PLACE BEFORE QUIRINIUS WAS GOVERNOR OF SYRIA, IN OTHER WORDS BEFORE A.D. 6 WHICH WORKS PERFECTLY.



1. SO THERE'S NO CONTRADICTION HERE, DR. LUKE IS JUST GIVING US SOME HISTORICAL FACTS TO SET THE PERIOD AND TIME OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. (NOW LOOK AT V. 3 PLEASE).

C. READ V. 3. NOW OBVIOUSLY PEOPLE OBEYED THE LAW IN THAT DAY, FOR ALL WHO HAD TO WERE GOING TO THE TOWN TO WHICH THE VILLAGE OR PLACE OF THEIR BIRTH BELONGED, AND WHERE THE HOUSE AND LINEAGE OF EACH WERE REGISTERED.

\* IN OTHER WORDS, EACH MAN WENT TO THE TOWN WHERE HIS FAMILY REGISTER WAS KEPT FOR THIS CENSUS. SO A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE ON THE MOVE AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME, THERE WAS A LOT OF HUSTLE AND BUSTLE.

\*\* AND DURING THIS PERIOD OF TIME OUR SAVIOR WAS BORN. NOW LOOK AT V. 4 PLEASE WHERE WE'LL SEE THE PLACE OF CHRIST'S BIRTH AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IT – OUR SECOND POINT TODAY.

II. THE PLACE, (READ V. 4)

A. NOW FOR THIS CENSUS, JOSEPH AND MARY WENT TO BETHLEHEM IN JUDEA, JOSEPH'S ANCESTRAL HOME

WHICH WAS ABOUT AN 80-90 MILE JAUNT FROM NAZARETH IN GALILEE.

\* NOW LUKE ALSO POINTS OUT IN THIS VERSE THAT JOSEPH WAS A DESCENDENT OF DAVID THE FORMER KING OF ISRAEL WHO WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM, SO HIS LINEAGE WAS RICH.

\*\* AND AGAIN GOD THE FATHER WAS USING CAESAR'S DECREE TO FULFILL THE PROPHECY THAT HIS SON WOULD BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM, PROPHESED OVER 600 YEARS BEFORE CHRIST'S BIRTH IN MICAH 5:2, QUOTE IT.

\* SO BETHLEHEM WOULD BE THE PLACE.

1. AND BETHLEHEM LIT. MEANS HOUSE OF BREAD, THE IDEAL BIRTHPLACE FOR THE BREAD OF LIFE, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, FOR IN JOHN 6:35 JESUS SAID, (QUOTE IT).

\* SO THE BREAD OF LIFE, THE LORD JESUS, WAS BORN IN THE HOUSE OF BREAD BETHLEHEM, SO THAT HE WOULD COME AND SATISFY THE HUNGER OF OUR SOULS FOREVER.

2. BUT LET ME ADD A FOOTNOTE HERE THAT BRINGS OUT A REAL IRONY ABOUT BETHLEHEM AND THE CHRISTMAS SEASON.

\* AND THAT IS OUR ENGLISH WORD BEDLAM IS A CORRUPTION OF THE WORD BETHLEHEM. FOR IN THE 1500'S THE PRIORY OF ST. MARYS OF BETHLEHEM, A LONDON MONASTERY SERVING AS A HOSPITAL, BECAME A CITY-RUN INSANE ASYLUM.

\*\* AND THIS IS SAD, BUT FOR A SMALL ADMISSION PRICE, PEOPLE COULD ACTUALLY GO THERE TO HECKLE THE PATIENTS OR INMATES. UNFORTUNATELY, IT WAS ONE OF THE FAMOUS TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN THE CITY.

3. AND ST. MARYS OF BETHLEHEM WAS SHORTENED TO BETHLEHEM, PRONOUNCED "BEDLAM". AND IN TIME THE WORD BEDLAM CAME TO REFER TO THE NOISE AND CONFUSION THAT SYMBOLIZED THE INSANE ASYLUM.

\* AND SO BETHLEHEM AND BEDLAM ARE SEMANTICALLY RELATED. AND TO ME THERE IS A REAL IRONY ABOUT THAT, AND THAT IS THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS MARKED BY DEEPER EMOTIONAL STRAIN, GREATER ANXIETY, AND MANY ACTS OF VIOLENCE, BUT ALSO GRIEF FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST LOVED ONES RECENTLY, IT CAN BE VERY DIFFICULT.

\*\* AND THE STRESS OF THE HOLIDAY, THE DEPRESSING WEIGHT OF LONELINESS AND THE MEANINGLESS OF MINDLESS REVELRY MAKE THE HOLIDAY INTOLERABLE FOR MANY PEOPLE.

4. AND IT'S NO WONDER THAT MANY PEOPLE SUFFER BREAKDOWNS AT CHRISTMAS AND THEY HATE THE HOLIDAY, IT CAN BE A NASTY TIME OF THE YEAR.

\* BUT HERE'S THE ROOT PROBLEM, INSTEAD OF THE FOCUS BEING ON THE SAVIOR THAT WAS BORN AT BETHLEHEM AT CHRISTMAS, IT'S ON THINGS, PARTIES, GLUTTONY AND OTHER ACTS OF SELF-INDULGENCE.

\*\* AND FOR THAT REASON, PEOPLE WHO DO THOSE THINGS COME AWAY EMPTY, HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF FEELINGS, AND TO THEM CHRISTMAS IS A BLUE TIME, A MESS BECAUSE IF YOU TAKE CHRIST OUT OF THE WORD CHRISTMAS, ALL YOU HAVE IS A MESS.

\*\*\* WE MUST WORSHIP THE SON, NOT THE SEASON, ALTHOUGH I LOVE THE SEASON, BUT KEEP YOUR FOCUS.

5. AND AS WE GET BACK TO OUR TEXT, BETHLEHEM IS THE PLACE OF BREAD BIBLICALLY AND BEDLAM HISTORICALLY. AND THAT'S AN IRONY BECAUSE

CHRISTMAS IS BEDLAM FOR SOME PEOPLE. NOW LOOK AT V. 5 PLEASE.

B. READ V. 5. NOW MARY WENT WITH JOSEPH FOR THIS CENSUS TO BETHLEHEM PROBABLY FOR A COUPLE OF REASONS.

\* NO. 1 THE COUPLE KNEW SHE WOULD HAVE THE BABY DURING THE TIME JOSEPH WAS GONE – SHE WAS GREAT WITH CHILD THE SCRIPTURE SAYS. AND THEY MOST LIKELY DID NOT WANT TO BE SEPARATED AT THAT EVENT.

\*\* AND NO. 2, BOTH OF THEM KNEW BY NOW ACCORDING TO LUKE 1 AND MATTHEW 1 THAT THE CHILD WAS THE MESSIAH. AND BEING DEVOUT JEWS, JOSEPH AND MARY ALSO WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT THE MESSIAH WAS TO BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM, ACCORDING TO MICAH 5:2.

1. BUT ALSO NOTICE IN V. 5 THAT MARY IS SAID TO BE ENGAGED TO JOSEPH OR IN THE KJV CALLED JOSEPH'S ESPOUSED WIFE, ALSO IN THE ESV AND PLEDGED IN THE NIV, AND THE WORD ESPOUSED OR ENGAGED OR

PLEGGED HERE LIT. MEANS PROMISED, OR A PLEDGED WIFE AND HAS TO DO WITH THE JEWISH BETROTHAL.

\* AND THE JEWISH BETROTHAL WAS A PLEDGE, A PROMISE, A KIND OF CONTRACT OR ENGAGEMENT THAT WOULD LAST FOR ABOUT 10-12 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE ACTUAL WEDDING WHEN THE MARRIAGE WAS FINALLY CONSUMMATED PHYSICALLY.

\*\* AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IS THAT AN ENDOWMENT WOULD BE PAID TO THE PARENTS OF THE BRIDE AND WHEN IT WAS PAID THE MARRIAGE COVENANT WAS ESTABLISHED AND THEY WERE REGARDED AS HUSBAND AND WIFE EVEN THOUGH NO PHYSICAL UNION HAD TAKEN PLACE.

2. IT WAS A PERIOD OF TESTING AND PROBATION TO INSURE THE BRIDES VIRGINITY AND THE FIDELITY OF BOTH PARTNERS. AND MARY AND JOSEPH HAD MADE THIS COVENANT, BUT PHYSICAL SEXUAL CONSUMMATION BETWEEN THEM HAD NOT TAKEN PLACE YET. MARY WAS TRULY A VIRGIN, THE BABY THAT WAS IN HER WOMB WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND NOT JOSEPH.

\* SO JOSEPH AND MARY WERE STILL IN THEIR PERIOD OF BETHROTHAL OR ENGAGEMENT, THEY WERE ESPOUSED AND THEY WERE PURE. NOW LOOK AT V. 6.

C. READ V. 6. NOW WHILE MARY AND JOSEPH WERE AT BETHLEHEM, CHRIST WAS BORN. AND OF COURSE THIS WAS THE RIGHT TIME AT THE RIGHT PLACE, GALATIANS 4:4&5.

\* NOW NO DOUBT THE TRIP FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM HAD TO PHYSICALLY DRAIN MARY, REMEMBER SHE WAS FULL TERM EITHER WALKING OR TRAVELING ON A DONKEY FOR 80-90 MILES.

\*\* AND IT'S NO WONDER SHE HAD THE BABY WHILE THEY WERE THERE. I MEAN SOME OF YOU GUYS HAVE DONE SOME STRANGE THINGS TO GET YOUR WIVES INTO LABOR. (BUMPY ROADS, AMUSEMENT RIDES, RAKING GRASS).

\*\*\* BUT I'LL GO OUT ON A LIMB, GUYS THAT HAVE FULL TERM PREGNANT WIVES, GO OUT FOR AN 80 MILES DONKEY RIDE AND I'LL GUARANTEE YOU THAT THE BABY WILL BE BORN RIGHT AWAY.

1. WELL, MARY WENT INTO LABOR AND HAD JESUS AT BETHLEHEM, AT THE PROPER PLACE AT THE PROPER TIME. AND V. 7 TELLS US ABOUT THIS. LOOK AT IT PLEASE.

D. READ V. 7. NOW THE FACT THAT JESUS WAS CALLED MARY'S FIRSTBORN IMPLIES NOT ONLY WAS THIS HER FIRST CHILD BUT THAT LATER SHE HAD OTHER CHILDREN, AND OF COURSE WE READ OF HALF BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF JESUS IN SCRIPTURE, MATTHEW 12:46&47, LUKE 8:19-21, MATTHEW 13:55&56. AND THEY WERE HALF BROTHERS AND SISTERS BECAUSE THEY HAD DIFFERENT FATHERS.

\* AND LET ME SAY HERE UNDER THAT, THAT THERE IS NOT A PARTICLE OF EVIDENCE FOR THE NOTION THAT MARY REFUSED TO BEAR OTHER CHILDREN BECAUSE SHE WAS THE MOTHER OF THE MESSIAH AS SOME TEACH, PERPETUAL VIRGINITY, SHE WAS EVER A VIRGIN MAKING JESUS HER ONLY BIOLOGICAL CHILD.

\*\* AND YES JESUS WAS HER FIRST CHILD, BUT SHE HAD OTHERS AFTER JESUS BY JOSEPH.

1. BUT ALSO NOTICE THAT SHE TOOK HER CHILD JESUS AND WRAPPED HIM IN CLOTHS, IN THE KJV-IN SWADDLING



CLOTHES, IN THE ESV SWADDLING CLOTHS AND NKJV. AND MOTHERS IN THAT DAY WRAPPED THEIR INFANTS IN LONG BANDS, LONG STRIPS OF CLOTH, SWADDLING CLOTHES, TO GIVE THE CHILD'S LIMBS STRENGTH AND PROTECTION. AND THIS WAS A COMMON PRACTICE, SO THIS WAS NOT THAT UNUSUAL.

\* BUT AFTER MARY DID THIS SHE LAID JESUS IN A MANGER. AND THE WORD TRANSLATED MANGER HERE IS TRANSLATED STALL IN LUKE 13:15, AND CAN MEAN EITHER A FEEDING TROUGH OR AN ENCLOSURE FOR ANIMALS, PROBABLY A FEEDING TROUGH, A FEEDING CRIB, A PLACE WHERE CATTLE WERE FED. AND HOW UNSANITARY, THE GERMS, NO DOCTOR WITH A MASK AND LATEX GLOVES, JOSEPH WAS THE MID-WIFE, NO CRIB FOR A BED, NOT IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

\*\* AND OF COURSE MARY AND JOSEPH HAD TO DO THIS BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN. THE INN WAS CROWDED WITH ALL OF THE PEOPLE TRAVELING FOR THE CENSUS AND BY THE TIME THEY GOT THERE, THERE WAS NO VACANCY, SO THEY STAYED IN EITHER A STABLE NEXT TO THE INN OR A CAVE USED

FOR THAT NEAR IT, AS SOME TRADITION STATES. BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR A PREGNANT WOMAN, NO ONE WOULD GIVE UP THEIR ROOM, SELFISHNESS.

2. REGARDLESS, THE KING OF KINGS HAD A VERY HUMBLE BEGINNING. THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THE KING OF GLORY THAT NIGHT IN THE INN. AND THAT WAS THE FIRST CHRISTMAS.

\* AND THINGS HAVEN'T CHANGED A WHOLE LOT. BUT THE IRONY TO ME IS THAT MANY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS HAVE NO ROOM FOR JESUS AT CHRISTMAS TO GIVE, TO SERVE, TO COME TO CHURCH, TO READ AND STUDY, TO TAKE CARE OF SPIRITUAL PRIORITIES, RESPONSIBILITIES – THEY ARE TOO BUSY!! THEY ARE ALL WRAPPED UP IN OTHER THINGS AND ITS JESUS' BIRTHDAY.

\*\* TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT I MEAN, MANY YEARS AGO A TRUE NEWSPAPER STORY REPORTED ABOUT A WEALTHY BOSTON FAMILY WHO HAD A CHRISTENING PARTY FOR THEIR NEW BABY. (THIS IS REPORTED IN JOHN MACARTHUR'S BOOK, "GOD WITH US.")

\*\*\* THEY INVITED ALL THEIR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TO THEIR MAGNIFICENT HOME TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF THEIR PRECIOUS INFANT.

\*\*\*\* A HALF HOUR INTO THE PARTY, WHEN IT WAS TIME TO BRING THE BABY OUT FOR EVERYONE TO SEE, THE MOTHER MADE A TRAGIC DISCOVERY.

3. THE LARGE BED WHERE SHE HAD LEFT THE BABY ASLEEP WAS PILED HIGH WITH THE COATS OF THE GUESTS.

\* THE BABY WAS LYING DEAD UNDERNEATH THE MOUND OF COATS, SUFFOCATED BY THE CARELESSLY DISCARDED WRAPS. (AND WHAT A TRAGEDY! THAT IS HEART WRENCHING!)

\*\* BUT THAT TRAGIC HEART BREAKING SCENE PERFECTLY ILLUSTRATES WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO CHRISTMAS.

\*\*\* LOST IS THE REALIZATION THAT CHRISTMAS IS FIRST OF ALL A CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR.

\*\*\*\* HE IS ALL BUT FORGOTTEN, CRUELLY AND THOUGHTLESSLY SMOTHERED IN THE HASSLE AND COMMOTION. MAY IT NOT BE THAT WAY IN OUR LIVES BELIEVER.

AS I WRAP UP THINGS ON THIS SPECIAL DAY (1) THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE IS THAT THERE IS HOPE FOR A RUINED HUMANITY, HOPE OF PARDON, HOPE OF PEACE WITH GOD, HOPE OF GLORY.

\* THE REASON BEING AT THE FATHER'S WILL JESUS CHRIST BECAME POOR AND WAS BORN IN A STABLE SO THAT A LITTLE OVER THIRTY YEARS LATER HE MIGHT HANG ON A CROSS.

\*\* AND THAT IS THE MOST WONDERFUL MESSAGE THAT THE WORLD HAS EVER HEARD OR WILL HEAR. JESUS, THE GOD-MAN WAS BORN TO DIE.

(2) FOLKS THOSE LITTLE SOFT HANDS OF MARY'S FIRSTBORN SON, FASHIONED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN MARY'S WOMB WERE MADE SO THAT NAILS MIGHT BE DRIVEN THROUGH THEM. JESUS WAS BORN AND LIVED IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS. IT'S AS IF THE CROSS WAS THERE IN THE STABLE HANGING OVER THE CHRIST CHILD THAT NIGHT.

\* AND I TRUST THAT THAT MIGHT BRING TWO RESPONSES TODAY.

\*\* TO THOSE WITHOUT CHRIST, WHO ARE NOT IN HIM, NOT SAVED, THE RESPONSE OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH (FOR CHRIST CAME TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM SIN, QUOTE MATTHEW 1:21 AND LUKE 2:11 AND EXPLAIN.)

(3) BUT TO THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN SAVED BY GOD'S GRACE ALONE THROUGH FAITH ALONE, I TRUST THAT OUR RESPONSE WILL BE WORSHIP, PRAISE, TOTAL

SUBMISSION AND REALLY PRACTICING THE “SPIRIT” OF CHRISTMAS.

\* FOR YOU SEE THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT IS NOT GOOD FEELINGS OR BUBBLY EMOTIONS OR SOMETHING MYSTICAL, BUT SACRIFICE, GIVING, SERVICE AND TELLING OTHERS OF THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST’S BIRTH, YIELDING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

\*\* AND YES, IT IS A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO SPEND EXTRA TIME WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND GIVING GIFTS AND DOING THINGS. AND THOSE THINGS ARE GREAT; I LOVE THIS TIME OF THE YEAR, AND WE OPENED GIFTS THIS MORNING.

\*\*\* BUT LET US NEVER LOSE SIGHT THAT IF THAT’S ALL WE DO, WE WILL BE EMPTY, LET US ALSO SACRIFICE, GIVE AND TELL OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST’S BIRTH, TO FOCUS ON HIM. I CLOSE WITH II CORINTHIANS 8:9 (QUOTE IT AND PRAY).