

December 18, 2010
"A Wonderful Sign, a Wonderful Savior"
Luke 2:1-12

Whatever God does, He does for a reason! The birth of Christ was according to prophecy and the will of God! God knew His Son would be found by shepherds, lying in a manger, it was part of His purpose, part of His plan. Therefore, we should seek to understand this! Why did Jesus Christ come to our world in such a humble manner?

I. In this God's Kingdom is shown to be different from the Kingdom's of this world!

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:9 NKJ)

1. What a stark contrast is drawn in this passage between seeming and real power/ between seeming and real sovereignty –

A. Note Augustus Caesar proclaiming his decree –

The census called for by Caesar Augustus seems to be "The BIG Event"

* It involves "all the world" – Luke 2:1

* It would work toward the advancement and / or stability of the already strong Roman Empire

* It is decreed by Caesar Augustus (known as the greatest of all the Roman Emperors (his real name was Octavian)

Consider his titles: Princes – the first citizen of Rome; Imperator – leader of the Roman army; Caesar – the name taken from his famous adopted father "Julius Caesar"; Augustus – the "revered," a title reserved for gods

Consider Augustus' accomplishments:

Pax Romana – his rule initiated a time of 200 years of world peace/ He extended the already large Roman Empire to its largest extent / He established a professional bureaucracy to run the business of the empire/

He built roads to reach the remotest parts of his empire/ He organized a permanent professional army / He would solidify his empire through censuses, counting the population and figuring the value of property for tax purposes. In obedience to his decree Mary and Joseph, travel the weary road to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born.

B. Yet, Christ was born according to the decree of God – Luke 2:1-14

His birth into this world happened in the most humble, most unobtrusive manner. Yet, it was all according to the awesome decree of the Most High God!

* It happened according to Divine prophecy –

A. In the days of these kings (including Caesar Augustus) – Daniel 2:44-45

"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.⁴⁵ "Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold-- the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure." (Daniel 2:44-45 NKJ)

* In Bethlehem, according to the prophet Micah (Micah 5:2) and according to God's decree (650 years prior)

"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." (Micah 5:2 NKJ)

* According to prophecy Jesus would have even greater titles and accomplishments than Augustus, and He would rule forever – Isaiah 9:6-7 HE (Jesus) is what Augustus pretended to be!

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 NKJ)

The decree of Caesar Augustus reached the remote parts of his empire, even to Mary and Joseph, he commands and they must move, he did not even know them they were seemingly – insignificant!

Yet at least 650 years before, God through the prophet Micah let us know that according to His decree, Christ would be born in Bethlehem. Knowing of this prophecy and seeing things from the vantage point of 2,000 years later we realize that the less significant person in this story was Augustus – his decree brings Christ to HIS appointed birthplace, his roads eased the way for the preaching of Christ's Gospel by Paul and others. As great as he was Augustus Caesar was still a mere pawn in the hand of God. God would have His King (Jesus Christ) in His proper (predicted) place of birth, and the Census of Caesar is His (God's) method of moving His chosen people to their proper place.

The birth of Christ was unattended by human heads of state, yet, it was announced by a multitude of the heavenly host – Luke 2:13-14 and by the Shepherds – Luke 2:15-20. Jesus' birthday was the REAL BIG EVENT!

II. Yet, Christ's birth situation also shows us His humility and hints at the cross –

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, *There is no beauty that we should desire Him.* (Isaiah 53:1-2 NKJ)

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 NKJ)

1. *Jesus is God, yet as a man He is humble –Philippians 2:6-7*
2. *This meant many people did not recognize Him – Isaiah 53:1-2*
3. *Yet, His humble station at birth hinted at His service at death –*

A. *He was on a mission –*

"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28 NKJ)

B. *He was born to die and save us from our sins –*

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21 NKJ)

C. *This was God's will for the King of kings –*

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:8 NKJ)

Therefore the "sign" is fitting –

"And this *will be the sign* to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12 NKJ)

³⁰ **Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (Joh 20:30-31 NIV)**

***Mark 16:17 & 20; John 2:11; 3:2; 4:48; 6:2 & 26; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:37; 20:30* references to Jesus' miracles called signs**

© Copyright Pastor Arnold Brevick