

Opening Illustration: Modern News vs. Ancient News

Modern headlines (npr.org 12/19/2019):

- [President Trump Impeached By The House In Historic Rebuke](#)
- [Tracing The Roots Of A Partisan Impeachment](#)
- ['Act Of Evil': 15 Horses Were Shot After Being Hunted In Rural Kentucky](#)
- ['The Rise Of Skywalker' Makes For An Exciting, Exhaustive, Effortful Ending](#)

The Teacher's Commentary by Larry and Lawrence Richards introduced the book of Luke in the following way...

Had there been newspapers in the Roman Empire almost 2,000 years ago, some of the headlines that month might have been:

- KING ARTAXUS NEAR DEATH
- GRAIN SHIPS DOCK, ROME RIOTS END
- NINE PIRATE SHIPS SUNK BY SIXTH FLEET
- ATHENS STUDENTS CLASH WITH POLICE
- OLYMPIC WRESTLER STILL IN COMA
- REPORT ANGELS SIGHTED IN JUDEA

Such headlines look very much like the headlines in our newspapers today. For the world of the NT was a world very much like ours.

- There were wars.
- There was sickness.
- There was poverty and injustice.
- There were people who struggled to keep on living, living by habit long after they had lost a sense of purpose, meaning or goal.

It was a world like ours, populated with people like ours. *But God had made preparations.* God was about to burst into this world of men. Jesus was to be born, and after His birth our world, despite all its poverty and injustice, wars and terrorists, has never been the same.

To every person who lives by habit, without direction or meaning or real hope – to you and me – Jesus' birth offers a fresh newness, a life turned around and transformed by the power of God. This is what the Gospel of Luke is all about: a transformed life.

Think with me for a moment: WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS THE BIRTH OF JESUS MADE TO SOCIETY? WHY DID JESUS SAY, I HAVE COME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY? Consider the following three truths...

- I. The Gospel was orchestrated by God. (1-7)**
- II. The Gospel was presented by angels. (8-14)**
- III. The Gospel is passed along by men. (15-20)**

Paul Harvey Aurandt (September 4, 1918 – February 28, 2009),^[1] better known as Paul Harvey, was a conservative American [radio broadcaster](#) for the [ABC Radio Networks](#).^[2] He broadcast *News and Comment* on weekday mornings and mid-days, and at noon on Saturdays, as well as his famous [The Rest of the Story](#) segments. From the 1950s through the 1990s, Harvey's programs reached as many as 24 million people a week. *Paul Harvey News* was carried on 1,200 radio stations, 400 [Armed Forces Network](#) stations and 300 newspapers.

Inside the Text:

Luke was a physician & travel companion with the Apostle Paul (Col. 4:14)

Luke is the author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts (Acts 1:1-3 & Luke 1:1-4 – “Theophilus”)

Luke was not an eyewitness of the life of Christ but one who collected information about the life of Christ from eyewitnesses. (Luke 1:2).

Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles around AD 63 (The destruction of Jerusalem occurred in AD 70)¹

- Luke was known for including the fulfillment of prophecy that had already occurred as with Agabus (Acts 11:28... “(this took place in the days of Claudius...)”. We can assume that he would have included the details regarding the death of Paul and the destruction of Jerusalem if he wrote after the events occurred. He did not.
- The books were written to provide an accurate, well-ordered account of the basic Christian message, to enable his reader to “know the certainty” of the things he has learned (Luke 1:4).
- Both the Gospel and Acts are dedicated to the “most excellent Theophilus” (the name means: “friend of God” or “beloved by God.” Theophilus is both a common name and an honorary title among the learned (academic) Romans and Jews of the era.
 - Such a dedication is common in books intended for a wider audience.
 - The main theme of the book is to present the purpose of the coming of the Messiah – “To seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)
 - Luke had a special interest with many people who would be neglected by most writers of his day – children, women, non-Jewish people, and the poor. By doing so, Luke demonstrated Jesus’ special concern for them!
 - Luke also was unique in his focus on prayer! Luke records that Jesus prayed before crucial occasions of His ministry. Nine of Jesus’ prayers are included in the Gospel (seven of them found only in Luke), along with parables on prayer found only in Luke.
 - Finally, Luke included expressions of joy that often accompany the good news of the Messiah! Only this Gospel includes the magnificent songs of joy regarding the birth of the Messiah (1:46-55, 68-79; 2:14, 29-32)

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY (Luke 2:1-20)

- **The Gospel was orchestrated by God. (1-7)**
- **The Gospel was presented by angels. (8-14)**
- **The Gospel was passed along by men. (15-20)**

¹ The Reformation Study Bible, 1451-52.

I. The Gospel was orchestrated by God. (1-7)

A. He determined the place. (1-5)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

***Gaius Julius Caesar**^[2] (Classical Latin: [ˈɡaː.i.ʊs ˈjuː.li.ʊs ˈkaj.sar],^[3] July 100 BC^[4] – 15 March 44 BC)^[5] was a [Roman general](#), [statesman](#), [Consul](#), and notable author of [Latin](#) prose. He played a critical role in the events that led to the demise of the [Roman Republic](#) and the rise of the [Roman Empire](#).

Caesar Augustus: His original name was Gaius Octavius. He was known to many as Octavian. Octavian was Roman emperor from 27 B.C. until his death in A.D. 14. He was the grandnephew of Julius Caesar.* Ironically, Julius Caesar, thought highly of him and showered gifts and honor upon him. When the great Roman statesman and general was murdered (44 B.C.), Octavian learned that in his will he, the grandnephew, had been named Caesar's son and heir. He then change his name to Gaius Julius Caesar.

Octavian or Gaius Julius Caesar formed the **Second Triumvirate (the first triumvirate was not officially recognized by Rome)**, the name historians give to the official political alliance of Octavian (later known as [Augustus](#)), [Marcus Aemilius Lepidus](#), and [Mark Antony](#), formed on 26 November 43 BC with the enactment of the [Lex Titia](#), (The *Lex Titia* gave this "three-man commission for restoring the constitution of the republic" (*triumviri rei publicae constituendae*) the power to make or annul laws without approval from either the [Senate](#) or the people) the adoption of which marked the end of the [Roman Republic](#). The Triumvirate existed for two five-year terms, covering the period 43 BC – 33 BC.

Following their victory at [Phillipi](#), the Triumvirate divided the [Roman Republic](#) among themselves and ruled as [military dictators](#).^[note 3] The Triumvirate was eventually torn apart under the competing ambitions of its members: Lepidus was driven into exile and stripped of his position, and Antony committed suicide following his defeat at the [Battle of Actium](#) by Augustus in 31 BC.

A sister of Octavian was married to Antony. Antony was best known for leaving his wife (Octavian's sister) for Egypt's bewitching Queen Cleopatra. When Antony began to show far greater concern for himself and Cleopatra than for the welfare of Rome, Octavian and the Romans understandably turned against him. This climaxed in a naval battle of Actium (31 B.C.). Antony was defeated. Both he and Cleopatra shortly afterward committed suicide. Octavian conquered.

After the demise of the Second Triumvirate, Augustus restored the outward facade of the free Republic, with governmental power vested in the [Roman Senate](#), the [executive magistrates](#), and the [legislative assemblies](#). In reality, however, he retained his autocratic power over the Republic as a military dictator. By law, Augustus held a collection of powers granted to him for life by the Senate, including [supreme military command](#), and those of [tribune](#) and [censor](#). It took several years for Augustus to develop the framework within which a formally republican state could be led under his sole rule. He rejected monarchical titles, and instead called himself [Princeps Civitatis](#) ("First Citizen"). The resulting [constitutional framework](#) became known as the [Principate](#), the first phase of the [Roman Empire](#).

In the year 27 B.C. the Roman senate conferred on the former Octavian – now Julius Caesar – the title *Augustus* (= majestic, sublime, highly revered). From then on he was known as Caesar Augustus.

When you study Caesar Augustus, you will find him ruthless during his climb to power but later a wise administrator and famous organizer of his military forces and of his bodyguard (Phil. 1:13 – “so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.”). He showed superb tact in dealing with his subjects, and allowed even the conquered provinces to retain a considerable measure of home rule. He stimulated the arts and encouraged literature. He was a great builder. He gave to the world a lengthy period of heretofore unknown

peace. He has been called a “benevolent ruler.” He died of old age in the arms of his wife after serving for 41 years as the Roman Emperor. One of the many reforms he instituted was a massive census.

ALL OF THIS WAS PART OF GOD’S SOVEREIGN PLAN... causing the great Julius Caesar to take note of his grandnephew, Octavian... allowing Antony to be seduced by Cleopatra and later causing the leaders of Rome to support Octavian... giving Octavian (Caesar Augustus) the gift of administration and the desire to keep meticulous records... causing Joseph to return with his wife to the location prophesied some 400 years earlier as the birthplace of the Messiah!

²This was the first registration when^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.

[BKC] Caesar Augustus was officially made ruler of the Roman Empire in 27 B.C. and ruled to A.D. 14. 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 (prote)** refer, as in the ESV, to a first, that is, an earlier, **registration / 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 (If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.). Luke 2:2 would then read, [as stated in the footnote] “this was the registration before Quirinius was governor of Syria” (i.e., before A.D. 6).

³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed,^[b] who was with child.

- [BKC] 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 [separately via an angelic messenger and most likely collectively as they talked together] that the Child was the Messiah. They would have known that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

THE ORIGIN OF JOSEPH:

- HE WAS FROM BETHLEHEM
 - He (Joseph) went up from Galilee (from the town of Nazareth)
 - He traveled to Judea (to the city of Bethlehem)

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE IN DEFINITION BETWEEN “TOWN” OF NAZARETH AND “CITY” OF BETHLEHEM?

- HE WAS RELATED TO KING DAVID (Luke 3:23-31ff)
 - Bethlehem was the city of David
 - Joseph was of the house and lineage of David

WHY SUCH AN EMPHASIS ON THE CONNECTION TO KING DAVID?

- HIS PLACE OF BIRTH BOTH GEOGRAPHICALLY AND GENEALOGICALLY FULFILLED PROPHECY (Place: Matt 2:6 from Micah 5:2; Line: 2 Sam 7:12-13)

There is great significance to the connection between Joseph and David due to OT prophecy related to the coming King or Messiah! Both Mary and Joseph belonged to the house of David. The Old Testament prophecies indicated that the Messiah would be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), of the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18), through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), and of the family of David (2 Sam. 7:12–13). Matthew’s genealogy traced the line through Solomon, while Luke’s traced it through Nathan, another one of David’s sons. It is worth noting that Jesus Christ is the only Jew alive who can

actually prove His claims to the throne of David! All of the other records were destroyed when the Romans took Jerusalem in A.D. 70.²

B. He ordained the time. (6)

⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

Galatians 4:4-5 -- ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

John MacArthur Study Bible: Daniel 9:24-26 explaining the 70 weeks of Daniel. He refers to the fact that when King Artaxerxes made a decree to rebuild Jerusalem in Nehemiah 2:1-8 (c.a. 445 B.C.) it began the timeline of the first 7 weeks (49 years), possibly closing Nehemiah's career in the rebuilding of the "street and wall," as well as the end of the ministry of Malachi and the close of the OT. The next 62 weeks (434 more years) elapsed between the OT and NT (the coming of the Messiah in Triumphal entry on 9 Nisan, A.D. 30).

C. He chose the setting. (7)

⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son...

- [BKC] The fact that Jesus was called Mary's **firstborn** implies that later she had other children.
 - Fathered at least 4 boys according to Matthew 13:55 (James, Joseph, Simon and Judas) and probably a handful of girls according to verse 56.

and wrapped him in swaddling cloths...

- A few have suggested that Jesus was not only clothed in humility, He was also clothed in garments that were symbolic of death (grave clothes – the clean linen shroud of Matt 27:59). Perhaps it was a vivid picture of the constraints He would experience in His incarnation?
- More accurately... the angels were instructed to look for a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes (2:12)
 - We know that most infants were bound up in that way to keep their limbs straight and unharmed. In other words, MARY WAS BEING A GOOD FIRST-TIME MOTHER.

and laid him in a manger,

- A place where the livestock fed. This manger was either made out of wood or cut into the floor of the cave. Any way you look at it, the Creator left the glories of heaven to VERY HUMBLE CONDITIONS!!!

because there was no place for them in the inn.

- Not a Holiday Inn or Comfort Inn... more likely a reference to ANYONE with a guest room that could house this young couple wearied from travel... the wife, ready to give birth.

[Teachers Commentary] Though in the late stages of her pregnancy, Mary probably rode a donkey along the dusty roads and waited in weariness as Joseph tried to find accommodations when they reached their destination. The inns were filled, but Joseph found a sheltered stable, possibly a cave behind an inn. There, in the most common of circumstances, to the simple sounds of animals shifting their weight and munching their straw and contentedly swishing their tails, Jesus was born.

²Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Mt 1:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

Illustration: Reflecting on God directing me to teach... (draw attention to my attitude toward the teaching profession while at school and then His amazing provision of resources from college tuition to seminary to Doctorate work to my kids education!!!)

I. The Gospel was orchestrated by God. (1-7)

II. The Gospel was presented by angels. (8-14)

A. He reflected God's glory. (8-9)

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Why reveal His plan to shepherds?

- [Teachers's Commentary] Perhaps because the shepherds would understand. The Savior, now lying in the quiet manger, was to be the Lamb of God. And as the Lamb, He was destined to die for the sins of the world, to die for these very shepherds as their Savior. So perhaps shepherds, who cared for the young lambs, who sat through cold dark nights in the fields to guard and protect their flocks, might understand the shepherd's heart of God the Father- might glimpse what it meant for Him to give His one Lamb for all.
- Possibly watching over the lambs that would be used for sacrifice in the temple.

⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them,

Without warning, the shepherds receive a divine guest. (appeared = has the idea of approaching someone or walking up on someone) ; that is just how the angels operated [c.f. Luke 24:4 on the road to Emmaus and Acts 12:7 when Peter was in prison] It leaves you wondering whether or not the stranger is coming to help you are hurt you.

and they were filled with great fear.

- Great fear – The Greek for “terrified” (lit., “they feared a great fear”) stresses the intensity of this fear.

B. He revealed God's plan. (10-14)

¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³And 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 among those with whom he is pleased!”

His PLAN INCLUDES:

- (10a) **Removal of Fear** – “fear not” (also found in 1:13 and 1:30)
- (10b) **Anticipation of a New Beginning** – “good news” (Isaiah 52:7 – “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”)
- (10c) **Provision of Joy** – “great joy” / “for all the people”
- (11) **Fulfillment of His promises** (“this day”... “in the city of David”... Davidic Covenant)
- (11) **Offer of Salvation** -- found only in the Messiah who is LORD (Master)

- (12) **DEMONSTRATING HIS IMMINANCE** – Personal Tender Leading – “this will be a sign for you...”
- (13) **DEMONSTRATING HIS TRANSCENDENCE** – a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying
- *The angelic choir would be seen in direct contrast to the worship ascribed to the emperor during that time. The current emperor, Augustus, was praised for having inaugurated a worldwide peace.*
 - (14) **The ultimate purpose for our existence** – “Glory to God in the Highest”
 - (14) **The ultimate fulfilment of His plan** – “on earth PEACE”
 - AMONG THOSE WHOM HE IS PLEASED

I. The Gospel was orchestrated by God. (1-7)

II. The Gospel was presented by angels. (8-14)

III. The Gospel is passed along by men. (15-20)

A. You must be open to accept the truth. (15-18)

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

- Probably were we get the idea of the angels being in the clouds when they sang “Glory to God in the highest...” because they departed **into heaven** where they came from.
- The shepherds responded by wanting to see the sign for themselves.
- They were curious and willing to do something about it. (“they went with haste and found...”)
- Their faith was confirmed by the evidence. It produced a desire to GO AND TELL!
- All who heard it **wondered** – ethaumasán “to be amazed, to wonder, to be astonished,” and is usually connected to the proclamation of the Messiah...occurring in Luke 1:21 (the people were wondering at Zechariah’s dely), 63 (when Zechariah wrote down the name John they all wondered); 2:18, 33 (his father and mother marveled at what was said about him); 4:22 (and all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?); 8:25 (the disciples marveled when Jesus rebuke the wind and the waves); 9:43 (the people marveled at the miracles of Jesus); 11:14 (the people marveled when the demon possessed man was healed), 38 (the Pharisees marveled that Jesus did not wash his hands before dinner); 20:26 (the religious leaders tried to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answers they became silent); 24:12 (Peter marveled when he saw the linen cloths and the empty tomb), 41 (the disciples marveled when Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection).
- YOU MUST DO MORE THAN MARVEL... YOU MUST ACCEPT HIM!

B. You must be eager to ponder the truth. (19)

¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

- Treasured up – protect, defend; keep in mind; preserve
- Pondering them – think about seriously; debate; consider

Genesis 37:11 – And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

Psalm 119:11 – I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

C. You must be willing to share the truth. (20)

²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

- They returned to their area of influence as new people.
- They glorified and praised God based on two components:
 - All they had heard (angels) [OFFERING HOPE]
 - All they had seen (angels and the Christ-child just as they told them) [PROVIDING CONFIDENCE]

Illustration: How effective has your witness been in 2019? When was the last time you were **AMAZED** by the Gospel? When was the last time you **MEDITATED** on the Gospel? When was the last time you **SHARED** the Gospel?

Apply the Text:

What **GOOD NEWS** do you have to report? Do you have any reason to rejoice over this Christmas Season? God is blessing our church in so many little ways (lives changing, giving increasing, opportunities opening). The kids are officially on Christmas break.

- Trust God to direct your steps.
- Live a joy-filled life with holiness and sincerity.
- Cherish and share the good news.