



GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

And it Came to Pass

Sermon Notes

The Birth Narrative of Jesus Christ

Luke 2:1-12

July 10, 2011

¹And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. ²(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) ³And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ⁵To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷And 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.

⁸And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

- It is often said, with respect to historical events, that "History repeats itself." In fact, when attempting to justify the validity of their subjects, History teachers often resort to this tact - convince students that history is cyclical so that when historical events "re-occur" (albeit in a slightly different form), then they (the students) will be prepared for them.
- What is interesting is first of all that I do not believe that this tactic has ever worked (students still don't care); and, secondly, it is simply untrue. In fact, a cyclical view of history is quite unbiblical.

- A biblical worldview, on the other hand, demands that an individual holds to a **linear view of history**. That is, the Almighty and Triune God created time and providentially moves time along toward a singular point - the Second Coming of Christ. Every event in time, therefore, is unique. Whether it is an event in redemption history (such as the Resurrection), or an event outside of recorded history (such as the D-Day Invasion), God's hand is moving history personally and purposefully along a particular line.
- Nowhere is this truth more evident than in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- In Galatians 4:4, the Apostle Paul writes: "⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,"
 - Christ was born "when the set time had fully come..." This was the time appointed by the Father and the Son in the counsel of the Triune God from eternity past.
 - Some versions read, "When the fullness of time had come..." That is, all preparations and all events had been completed that were necessary for Christ's advent. Time was "full" so to speak, with nothing left to be done, and "no room" for any other events. It was, indeed, the "fullness" of time and the "set time."
- Yet, not only had all events necessary for the preparation of Christ's birth been completed, but Christ was born at just the right time in order for the Gospel to spread in the manner it did in the first three centuries of the Church.
- Consider the elements that were sovereignly in place in the first century which ensured the spread of the Gospel:
 - **The *Pax Romana*** [The "Roman Peace"] (27 B.C. - 180 A.D.)
 - Jesus Christ was born towards the beginning of the *Pax Romana*, a period of peace throughout the Roman Empire, ushered in by Octavian, or Augustus Caesar, when he began his reign on January 13, 27 B.C.
 - The *Pax Romana* was a period marked by many Augustan advances and reforms in social cultural areas, as well as in politics and government.
 - "Augustus [Caesar] tried to turn Rome into a world capital and taught the Romans to identify their destiny with the destiny of all mankind. They were the chosen people who would bring peace and stability to a violent and changing world."
<http://www.historyguide.org/ancient/lecture12b.html>
 - The *Pax Romana*, therefore, provided a relatively peaceful and stable cultural foundation upon which Christianity would grow and build.
 - **A Unified Hellenistic Culture throughout the Empire**
 - During the fourth century, B.C. (over three hundred years before the birth of Christ), the armies of the Greek leader Alexander the Great conquered

the lands southeast of the Mediterranean, reaching all the way to modern-day India. As they conquered these lands, they intermixed with the indigenous people, ensuring an infusion of Hellenistic (ancient Greek) ideals in the conquered cultures.

- One of the most profound implications of Hellenism was the spread of the Greek language. It would be this aspect of Hellenism that would allow Christianity to spread so quickly throughout the entire Roman Empire (consider that the New Testament was written in [*Koine*] Greek).
 - Furthermore, the common culture throughout the Empire allow for quick spread of the gospel message as well.
- **The Unity of the Diverse Roman Empire**
- The Roman Empire of the first century (the empire into which Christ was born) was highly diverse as it covered such a large area.
 - However, despite the tremendous ethnic diversity, the entire Empire was unified by the Greco-Roman system and culture. This unification of such a large and diverse area allowed Christianity to spread to highly diverse ethnic groups from Europe all the way to India in Asia during the first century.
 - Furthermore, Rome granted its citizens particular rights so as to establish law and order throughout the Empire.
 - Because of this aspect of Roman law, the Apostle Paul was a Roman citizen, and appealed to this truth, which eventually gave him access to Caesar. Because he was a citizen, he had the right to certain “hearings,” therefore, allowing him to proclaim the gospel at the highest governmental levels in the Empire.
- **Greco-Roman Mystery Cults**
- The Greco-Roman society was largely a pagan culture with local deities and altars from town to town. Far from being atheistic (i.e., believing that no god exists), the Greeks and Romans were polytheistic (believing in many – often thousands – gods). As the Apostle Paul said at the Areopagus in Acts 17:22: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.”
 - The Greek and Roman gods represented virtually every aspect of life – from fertility to growing crops to hunting for food. The Greco-Roman world personified Paul’s assessment of fallen man in Romans 1:25: “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”
 - Therefore, Christ was born into a “religious” setting. In fact, many of the pagan cults spoke of god becoming man (although in a fundamentally different manner than the Incarnation). Consequently, when the gospel came to the pagans in the first century, many embraced Christ as the true revelation of the true God. Christianity alone provided the answers to the questions that plagued the Greeks and Romans.

- **The Roman Road System**
 - One of the greatest advancements of the Roman Empire was their elaborate and safe road system. This allowed for citizens to safely travel throughout the Empire and also allowed for the trade of goods.
 - However, a secondary benefit (certainly unintended!) was that Christianity was able to spread quickly as well. Consider Paul’s Missionary journeys as recorded by Luke in the Book of Acts. Had it not been for the Roman road system, it is doubtful that Paul would have been able to travel as much as he did.

- **The Roman Army**
 - Another Roman element that helped cultivate a fertile ground for the growth of Christianity in the first century was the Roman Army.
 - Everywhere the Empire when, the Roman Army went as well. Consequently, it was the Roman soldier that came into contact with foreign peoples and cultures.
 - These Roman soldiers were, then, often influenced by such people.
 - Therefore, Roman soldiers stationed in areas where Christianity took root, to include Jerusalem and Judea, were often the first Romans to embrace the truth.
 - Thus, Christianity often spread throughout the Roman Empire by way of the Roman Army.

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- Therefore, because of these and other factors, Christ was born at a time that was providentially suited for the spread of the Gospel message.

 - As Michael Green, in *Evangelism in the Early Church*, writes, “[P]robably no period in the history of the world was better suited to receive the infant church than the first century A.D...by the second century Christians...began to argue that it was a divine providence which had prepared the world for the advent of Christianity.”

 - And so we read today that “it came to pass” that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem when the “fullness of time had come.”

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- In the first century, the people were truly dwelling in darkness, but the light of Christ was about to shine.

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| <p>I. The Futile Plans of Men</p> <p>II. The Providential Plans of God</p> <p>III. The Person of Christ</p> |
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I. The Futile Plans of Men

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 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, who was with child.

- *Luke 2* begins, “Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus...

Caesar Augustus

- Caesar Augustus was born Gaius Octavian in 63 B.C. He was the grandnephew of Julius Caesar and was later adopted as his [Julius Caesar’s] son and designated as his heir.
- In 43 B.C. Octavian [Caesar Augustus], Lepidus, and Mark Antony were named as the Second Triumvirate, the three rulers who shared the office of emperor. In 27 B.C. Caesar Augustus became the sole leader of the Roman world.
- He reigned as emperor until his death in A.D. 14. He ruled for more than 44 years – from January 13, 27 B.C. until August 19, 14 A.D.
- He was a highly effective emperor politically and militarily and put an end to the civil wars which had raged throughout the empire.

“The reforms of Augustus as well as his long life contributed to the idea that he was something more than human -- **he was certainly a hero, the Romans thought, perhaps even a god.**”

The History Guide

- Throughout the Roman Empire, Augustus Caesar was revered as more god-like than human. Notice the ancient inscription:

“Divine Augustus Caesar, son of a god, imperator of land and sea, the benefactor and savior of the whole world...”

- “Augustus reigned during a time of peace and extensive architectural achievements. After his death, the title ‘Augustus’ was given to all Roman emperors. The ‘Augustus Caesar’ mentioned in Acts 25:21, 25, for instance, is not Octavian but Nero.”

Nelson Bible Dictionary

- The reign of Augustus Caesar ushered in a great time of peace, known as the *Pax Romana* (27 B.C. to 180 A.D.).
- An inscription at Halicarnassus describes Augustus Caesar as the “savior of the whole world.”
- Then, we read, in **Verse 3**, ³“And all went to be registered, each to his own town.”

- “All it took was a word from the emperor, and people thousands of miles away were set in motion. Every man in every province had to be registered – almost certainly for the purpose of levying taxes.” Philip Graham Ryken
- According to the historian Tacitus, Augustus Caesar kept the results of the census by hand, and according to Justin in the second century, the census results could still be viewed in the city of Rome.
- Then, in **Verses 4-5**: “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, who was with child.”
 - At this point, Luke transitions from the universal to the particular – from the decree of Caesar Augustus that affected every citizen, to a specific citizen – Joseph.
 - As was the typical custom, they would have bypassed Samaria, thus Bethlehem was about ninety miles from Nazareth (and higher in elevation as well).
 - Consider as well, that Mary was likely well along in her pregnancy. They probably could not afford a donkey, so she likely walked the entire journey.

R. Kent Hughes states that Octavian’s “relentless arm stretched out to squeeze its tribute even in a tiny village at the far end of the Mediterranean. Thus it came about that a village carpenter and his expectant teenage bride were forced to travel to his hometown to be registered for taxation.”

- Scholars are somewhat divided (albeit not fiercely) over whether or not Joseph and Mary were truly husband and wife, or whether they were still betrothed. Likely, they were husband and wife, but since they did not consummate the marriage until after the birth of Jesus, Mary was considered Joseph’s “betrothed” or “espoused wife.”
 - Luke notes that Joseph was accompanied by Mary, his betrothed wife.
 - To the Jew, the betrothal period (similar to our engagement period) was as binding as a legal marriage.
 - However, the point Luke is clearly making is that Joseph and Mary are together, yet, they have not yet consummated their marriage.
 - Consequently, the reader understands that the fact that they were betrothed (and therefore had not yet consummated the marriage) and Mary was with child, was quite significant. A miracle had indeed occurred.

II. The Providential Plans of God

⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. 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.’”

- The planning and working of Augustus Caesar [and Herod as recorded in Matthew 2] underscores the ultimate providence and sovereignty of God in orchestrating human activities [even sinful activities] in order to perfectly fulfill the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah.
- In Luke 2:1-7, the Gospel writer describes a decree that went out from Caesar Augustus which required “everyone” to register in their home of ancestry.
- It is clear, however, that Luke is contrasting the “sovereignty” of Caesar with the sovereignty of God. As powerful as Caesar was – he could make *everyone* register for the census, he was still under God’s sovereign control.
- For, it was the Caesar-decreed census which would become the God-ordained means by which Mary and Joseph would arrive in Bethlehem in order for Mary to give birth to Jesus the Messiah.

Micah 5:2: “²But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.”

- David Gooding writes, “For Augustus the taking of censuses was one of the ways he employed to get control over the various parts of his empire. But – and here is the irony of the thing – in the process, as he thought, of tightening his grip on his huge empire, he so organized things that Jesus, Son of Mary, Son of David, Son of God, destined to sit on the throne of Israel and of the world, was born in the city of David, his royal ancestor.”
- Darrell Bock rightly states, “The real emperor of peace is Jesus, not Octavian.”

- Thus, Caesar Augustus was considered the Sovereign of the land, the one who possessed absolute authority.
 - Therefore, when Luke writes that Caesar ordered a census be taken, “**everyone** was on his way to register for the census...” he was showing the earthly authority of the emperor.
 - One scholar writes, “The census...signals an unwelcome, alien intrusion into the affairs of the Jewish people, a reminder of the allegiance required of Israel as a conquered people.”
 - Often times censuses were taken to enlist soldiers for the military, but the Jews were exempt from military service.
 - The purpose of the census was likely, to (eventually) levy taxes against the Jewish people. However, once again, the purpose was also to show the conquered people (in this case, the Jews), who was “in charge.”
 - No doubt, the motivation for Caesar’s decree [for the census] was born out of a desire for greater power, authority and wealth.
- **Yet, this sinful act on the part of the pagan Caesar was the pre-ordained means by which God would ensure the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah!**
- Indeed, Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus Christ presents one of the great ironies of the New Testament. The most powerful and brilliant men of the first century – kings, in fact – stood in great contrast to a helpless baby. Yet, it was the young baby, born in great modesty [possibly even poverty] to obscure parents, in an obscure town, in an obscure stable of sorts, and laid in a feeding trough, who was the true King – indeed, the King of Kings.
 - This truth is magnified when one considers the condition of a newborn baby, the most helpless and dependent of all mammals for the longest period of time following birth.
- Luke writes, in Verses 4-6, “Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.”
 - Further, Luke’s words that “...while they were there [in Bethlehem], the days were completed for her to give birth” demonstrate that not only was it time for Jesus to be born, but that the timing of His birth marked the culmination of the providential plan of God the Father in sending His Son as Savior into the world.

- One scholar writes, “On one level, Joseph’s journey is the consequence of the almighty decree of Augustus. On another, even the universal rule of Augustus is conceived as subordinate to another purpose, the aim of God. One may call this ironic, as if Rome is made unwittingly to serve a still greater Sovereign. But it is also prophetic, for it reveals the provisional nature of even Roman rule.”
- The specific mention of the name of Christ’s birth-town, Bethlehem, was due to the fact that this was the “city of David.” It was the city where Samuel went and anointed David the future king of Israel.
 - However, Bethlehem as literally means “house of bread.” This name is quite fitting, given that fact that Jesus is the “Bread of Life” who comes down from heaven.

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. 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.’”

- Luke now shifts his focus from the events that have unfolded in Bethlehem to the first announcement of the birth of Christ.
- It occurs “in the same region...”
 - Currently, there is an area known as the “Shepherds’ Field” about two miles outside of Bethlehem.
- But what is interesting is not **where** the announcement of Christ’s birth occurs, but **to whom** it is given.
 - The first announcement is given to **shepherds**.
 - The Bible says that they were “keeping the watches” over their flocks.
 - There were four watches in the night (1st: 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.; 2nd: 9:00 p.m.-12:00 a.m.; 3rd: 12:00 a.m.-3:00 a.m.; and 4th: 3:00 a.m.-6:00 a.m.).
 - The fact that God first announces the birth of Christ to shepherds may be a somewhat veiled reference to David (who quite possibly tended his flocks of sheep in this same field).

- Furthermore, what is interesting is that is quite possible that the sheep that the shepherds were watching would later be slaughtered as sacrifices in the Temple.
- Notice as well, the reference to **night**.
 - The announcement of Christ’s birth occurs at night – in the darkness.
 - The reason for this is that Christ is the Dayspring...the Bright and Morning Star.
 - He alone cuts the darkness of sin and shines His light on us.
 - The shepherds, along with every other person in the first century, were “the people who walked in darkness” who will “see a great light...”
- But, again, these men were **shepherds**.
 - Other than possibly lepers, shepherds were the lowliest of class in ancient Israel.

Philip Ryken states, “Because they lived out in the fields, they [shepherds] were unable to keep the ceremonial law, and thus they were treated as unclean. They were also regarded as liars and thieves, which is why their testimony was inadmissible in a court of law. Shepherds were despised. With the exception of lepers, they were the lowest class of men in Israel.”

“To the shepherds, the first notice of Christ’s birth was given; not to the princes and chief priests, and learned men at Jerusalem, but to weak, mean, and illiterate men; whom God is pleased to choose and call, and reveal his secrets to; when he hides them from the wise and prudent, to their confusion, and the glory of his grace: and this was a glimpse of what the kingdom of Christ would be, and by, and to whom, the Gospel would be preached.” John Gill

- Many see this as a reference to a prophecy in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 33:13-16: “¹³ In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the LORD. ¹⁴ ‘Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”

- But, it is to these shepherds that the angel of the Lord says:

‘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.’”

- The news of Christ’s birth is cause for “great joy” not “fear.”
- Specifically, it is cause for **good news of great joy!**
 - This is the good news of the Gospel. When the angel appeared to the shepherds, he said, “...behold, I bring you **good news** of great joy which will be for all **the** people...” [emphasis added]
 - The word here for **good news** is *euangelizomai*. This is our word for **evangelize**.
- Notice, as well, that the good news spoken of here is for all **the** people. This is not a reference to Jews and Gentiles. It is also not a reference to everyone in the world, without exception.
 - So often, people interpret this verse as meaning that the birth of Christ is “good news for every single man...”
 - Luke, however, is referring to a **specific** and **particular** people – the nation of Israel.
- This is important because it is consistent with the spread of the Gospel from Pentecost onward. It is God plan for the spread of salvation...to the Jews first and then to the Greeks.

Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

- In fact, this is the theme of Luke’s two-volume Luke-Acts narrative.
 - We see the Gospel spread from the Jews to the Gentiles...from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth.
- Furthermore, the fact that God first appeared to shepherds demonstrates God’s pursuit of sinners...of the lowly.
- Ultimately, the plan of God, as revealed throughout the Scriptures was to send Christ to the earth to save sinners.
- Not only this, but given the words of the angel, the day of fulfillment...the day of salvation has come!
 - “For unto you is born **this day**...”

- In other words, the day has come. Messiah is here. As Isaac Watts wrote, “Joy to the World, the Lord is come!”

III. The Person of Christ

- As one reads Luke 2, what ultimately emerges – in the midst of the grand decree by Caesar – is the true identity of the newborn baby in the manger – the Person of Jesus Christ.
- Throughout this entire passage, Luke’s main point is to establish the credentials and identity of Jesus Christ:
 - **Fulfillment of the Davidic Promise**
 - **Firstborn**
 - **Savior**
 - **The Christ**
 - **The Lord (Divine)**

● **Fulfillment of the Davidic Promise**

- Verse 3 states, “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,”
- Luke beautifully demonstrates how a universal decree by the Emperor of Rome affects Joseph and sets into motion the events that would fulfill Old Testament prophecy.
- In so doing, Luke shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic promise to Israel.
- That is, Joseph, because of the census, goes to the “city of David” because he was “of the house and lineage of David...”

● **Firstborn**

- Luke writes, “...And she gave birth to her firstborn son...”
- It literally reads, “And she brought forth the son of her, the firstborn...”
- This phrase is **VERY** significant: Jesus is the possessor of the rights, privileges, and inheritance associated with the Jewish firstborn son.
 - Read Exodus 13:2
 - Numbers 3:12-13; 18:15-16

- Deuteronomy 21:15-17
- John MacArthur writes, “As the firstborn, Jesus had the primary right to the family inheritance. Joseph was not wealthy, and had no great estate to bequeath to his firstborn son. But what he did pass along was the right to the throne of Israel.”
- Not only this, but in Colossians 1:15, the Apostle Paul refers to Jesus as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”

Wayne Grudem states, “Colossians 1:15, which calls Christ ‘the first-born of all creation,’ is better understood to mean that Christ has the rights or privileges of the ‘first-born’ – that is, according to biblical usage and custom, the right of leadership or authority in the family for one’s generation. So Colossians 1:15 means that Christ has the privileges of authority and rule, the privileges belonging to the ‘first-born,’ but with respect to the whole creation.

- Jesus is, indeed, the great *prototokos* – the **firstborn**. He is not the “first created” as Arius would have us to believe; rather, He is the One with all privilege, rights and authority over all creation!

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Savior

- In his announcement to the shepherds, the angel says, “For unto you is born this day... a **Savior**.”
 - In other words, the prophecy of Zechariah – the raising up of the Davidic horn of salvation – has come.
 - The irony here; however, is that the “horn of salvation” is a Hebrew term that refers to the power of God and His strength in destroying the enemies of His people. And here, in Bethlehem, He will accomplish this through the birth of a baby boy.

- I love the manner in which the King James Version translates Verse 6:

“⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.”

- This can be viewed as a play on words. That is, Mary will deliver a child who will be her deliverer.
- The popular contemporary song *Mary Did You Know?* by Mark Lowry draws on this theme:

“This child that you’ve delivered,
Will soon deliver you.”

- And so, again, through the birth of a helpless baby boy, the words of Zechariah are fulfilled:
- Luke 1:74-75: “⁷⁴that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,
⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

• **The Christ**

- Jesus is not only the firstborn, Davidic Savior, but He is also the Christ...the long-awaited Messiah.
- To many Jews of the first century, the Messiah’s linkage with the house of David was essential.
- The “Messiah” or, in Greek, the “Christ” was the Anointed One of God.
- Further, He would be anointed for a particular task, just as the Prophets, Priests, and Kings of Old were anointed for a specific time, for a specific purpose – to save all that the Father gave Him.

• **The Lord (Divine)**

- Finally, the angel refers to Jesus Christ as “Lord.”
- This term or title puts Christ in the category of King.
- Yet, in this context, *kurios* or “Lord,” refers to the sovereign King of Kings.
- Darrell Bock writes, “...it [the term “Lord”] here serves a literary foretaste of what is to come. The term will clearly come to refer to the absolute sovereignty and divine relationship that Jesus possesses as the one who brings salvation.”
- Even as a newborn infant, Jesus Christ was the Sovereign of all Creation. The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords – worthy of all praise, honor and glory.

Hebrews 2:7 states, “You have made Him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned Him with glory and honor.”

- Darrell Bock writes, “Savior points to his role as deliverer; Messiah points to his office in terms of the promised Anointed One of God; and Lord indicates his sovereign authority.”

- In a time when the Caesars ruled from Rome and no one challenged the authority of these “sovereign” men, a baby is born in an occupied land who possessed all of the authority of heaven and creation.

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- In conclusion, from the account in Luke 2, we see the supreme **humility** of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.
 - The King of Creation came to earth. To borrow a word from Zechariah’s prophecy, He “**visited**” us...And what type of welcome did he receive?
 - Philip Ryken writes, “Jesus deserved to have every person from every nation come and worship him. He deserved to have every creature in the entire universe – from the fiercest lion to the tiniest insect – come to his cradle and give him praise. He deserved to have the creation itself offer him worship, with the rocks crying glory and the galaxies dancing for joy. He is God the Son, and anything less than absolute acknowledgment of his royal person is an insult to his divine dignity.”
 - Yet, when the Creator of the entire Universe came to earth, He could not even get a room to lay His head!
 - According to Justin Martyr, writing in the 2nd century, “Since Joseph had nowhere to lodge in that village, he lodged in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there, Mary brought forth the Messiah and laid him in a manger.”
 - The manger was likely a feeding trough dug out of the ground rather than a wooden container as is typically depicted.
 - R. Kent Hughes writes that the “sweat and pain and blood and cries as Mary reached up to the heavens for help. The earth was cold and hard. The smell of birth mixed with the stench of manure and acrid straw made a contemptible bouquet. Trembling carpenter’s hands, clumsy with fear, grasped God’s Son slippery with blood – the baby’s limbs waving helplessly as if falling through space – his face grimacing as he gasped in the cold and his cry pierced the night.”
 - As one commentator [J.R.H. Morrison] puts it, “When Christ first came among us we pushed him into an outhouse; and we have done our best to keep him there ever since.”
 - J.C. Ryle states, “We see here the grace and condescension of Christ. Had He come to save mankind with royal majesty, surrounded by His Father’s angels, it would have been an act of undeserved mercy. Had He chosen to dwell in a palace, with power and great

authority, we should have had reason enough to wonder. But to become poor as the very poorest of mankind, and lowly as the very lowliest – this is a love that passeth knowledge. It is unspeakable and unsearchable. Never let us forget that through this humiliation Jesus has purchased for us a title to glory.”

- Jesus hardly received a royal welcome, despite his royal and divine credentials.
- As Norval Geldenhuys puts it, “What the inhabitants of Bethlehem did in their ignorance is done by many today in willful indifference – they refuse to make room for the Son of God. They give no place to Him in their feelings, their affections, their thoughts, their views of life, their wishes, their decisions, their actions, or their daily conduct.”
- Martin Luther wrote that Jesus “did not flutter about like a spirit, but He dwelt among men. He had eyes, ears, mouth, nose, chest, stomach, hands, and feet, just as you and I do. He took the breast. His mother nursed Him as any other child is nursed.”
- Martin Luther wrote, “Therefore, whenever you are concerned to think and act about your salvation...you must run directly to the manger and the mother’s womb, embrace this Infant and Virgin’s Child in your arms, and look at Him – born, being nursed, growing up, going about in human society, teaching, dying, rising again, ascending above all the heavens , and having authority over all things.”

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- One of the biggest news stories this week in America is the arrival of Prince William and new bride, Kate. They arrived at the end of this past week in Los Angeles, following a nine-day Canadian tour. The Duke and Dutchess arrived in Los Angeles for the first American trip as a married couple in a private Canadian military jet. They were greeted by the Governor of California, Jerry Brown, as well as the Mayor of Los Angeles. They have been given, literally, the royal treatment – staying at the finest hotels, eating the finest foods, greeted by the wealthiest and most prominent members of society.
 - These are members of the British royal family. So, how should the King of all Creation be treated?
 - According to Scripture (and, therefore, in accordance with God’s providential plans), His parents could not even find a place to stay (likely because it was so busy in Bethlehem due to the census).

John Calvin writes, *Because there was no room for them in the inn* We see here not only the great poverty of Joseph, but the cruel tyranny which admitted of no excuse, but compelled Joseph to bring his wife along with him, at an inconvenient season, when she was near the time of her delivery. Indeed, it is probable that those who were the descendants of the royal family were treated more harshly and disdainfully than the rest. Joseph was not so devoid of feeling as to have no concern about his wife’s delivery. He would gladly have avoided this necessity: but,

as that is impossible, he is forced to yield, and commends himself to God. We see, at the same time, what sort of beginning the life of the Son of God had, and in what cradle he was placed. Such was his condition at his birth, because he had taken upon him our flesh for this purpose, that he might, “empty himself” ([Philippians 2:7](#)) on our account. When he was thrown into a stable, and placed in a manger, and a lodging refused him among men, it was that heaven might be opened to us, not as a temporary lodging, but as our eternal country and inheritance...”

- Consider the final words of the angel in Luke 2: “And this will be a sign unto you, you will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger.”
 - In other words, **Jesus would be recognized by His humility.**
 - Writing in around the eighth century, the Venerable Bede stated, “It should be carefully noted that the sign given of the Savior’s birth is not a child enfolded in Tyrian purple, but one wrapped round with rough pieces of cloth; he is not to be found in an ornate golden bed, but in a manger. The meaning of this is that he did not merely take upon himself our lowly morality, but for our sakes took upon himself the clothing of the poor.”

- And so it was with Christ. He would be born in humility and die a criminal.

- Yet, for all who believe in Him, we become joint-heirs with Him, inheriting all the treasures of heaven!