

INTRODUCTION

- This week is Christmas and in our study today we're going to examine how we should respond to it.
- Every year we are faced with the commercialism around Christmas.
- Stores push "black Friday" for shoppers to get the best deals for gifts.
- Stores extend their hours.
- Networks air Christmas TV programs and movies like "It's a Wonderful Life" and "Frosty the Snowman" and "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer" and others.
- But what should be our focus?
- Is there a way to move from how the world responds to how we should respond?
- The answer is a resounding "yes"!
- And that's what we're going to see this morning as we examine the story of Christ's birth found in Luke chapter 2.
- Many of you are familiar with this story.
- In fact, we read this every Christmas morning with our family as we share in the Lord's Supper prior to opening any gifts.
- This year will be no different.
- We hear in the first 6 verses the circumstances surrounding Christ's birth, like the decree from Caesar Augustus to number his citizens and everyone's journey to their birth place (vv.1-3).
- Joseph, in verse 4, journeys from "Galilee...to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem" (vv.4-5).
- Verse 6 tells us "while they were there, the days were completed for [Mary] to give birth."
- You could image the difficult of such a journey during pregnancy.
- Some of you ladies had your pregnancy during the summer months and dealt with the difficulty of that but Mary's was on the back of a donkey to an unfamiliar city in a stable.
- Although the account is simply historical, one cannot miss how God is sovereignly at work through kings, governors, and nations to keep his promises and fulfill his prophecies.
- Verses 7-18 gives us the details of Jesus' birth which included the announcement by the angel of the Lord to the shepherds who were in the fields at night watching their flocks.
- It's in these verses where we learn how we should respond to Christ's birth.

Listen as I read verses 7-18:

(7) And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (8) In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. (9) And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. (10) But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; (11) for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (12) "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (13) And suddenly there appeared 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 men with whom He is pleased." (15) When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." (16) So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. (17) When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. (18) And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

*Luke 2:7-18 - NASB***LESSON**

In these verses we just heard the birth (v.7), the shepherds (v.8), The angel of the Lord (vv.9-12), then we heard about worship (vv.13-14), obedience (vv.15-16), and proclamation (vv.17-18).

Notice in verse 7...

I. The Birth (v.7)

(7) And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:7 - NASB

- What was promised by the angel Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:26-33 has come to pass.
- Jesus, who is called "the Son of the Most High" is born.
- No more questions, like "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (v.34) or dreams in the night detailing the work of the Holy Spirit in overshadowing Mary during Christ's conception.
- This is now a reality for Mary and Joseph.
- This was Mary's first son.
- He is treated as any new born would be treated.
- He is "wrapped in cloths."
 - "Cloths or swaddling cloths" were also known as a "swaddling band," according to Nelsons New Illustrated Bible Dictionary was "a long, narrow strip of cloth used to wrap a newborn baby. To swaddle a child was to wrap an infant in strips of cloth, much like narrow bandages. This was believed to ensure the correct early development of the limbs. Thus, swaddling was a mark of parental love and care, while the need for swaddling symbolized the humble, dependent position of the newborn child (Ezek. 16:4). (Youngblood, Ronald F., F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds. [Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary](#) 1995 : n. pag. Print.)
- Instead of being laid in a hospital bed in a newborn nursery, He is laid in a "manger" (2:7).
 - Based on archaeological evidence, many of the mangers in the ancient world were carved from stone. Mangers found in Meggedo were made of "ashlar blocks" but there were some found made of wood. The manger was a "feed trough or feeding bin for animals, especially livestock. (Parrott, Charles Joshua. "[Manger.](#)" Ed. John D. Barry et al. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* 2016 : n. pag. Print.)
- When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, there was "no room" in any of the inns because of all the travelers who also came to Bethlehem to be registered for the census.
 - The word for "inn" (kataluma) is not the normal Greek word for an inn (*pandocheion*, which Luke used in 10:34), but rather a general term for a shelter, or lodging place (it is translated "guest room" in 22:11).
 - Exactly what that lodging place was is not clear, but it may have been a public shelter or campground, perhaps a place where caravans stopped.
 - But with the overcrowding brought about by the census, there was no room for Joseph and Mary even in such a makeshift shelter.
 - As a result, Mary was forced to give birth in the only place available—the place where the travelers' animals were kept. (MacArthur, John F., Jr. [Luke 1–5](#). Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

Luke quickly shifts scenes from the king lying where animals eat to burly men protecting animals in their natural homes. (Butler, Trent C. [Luke](#). Vol. 3. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000. Print. Holman New Testament Commentary.)

Notice...

II. The Shepherds (v.8)

The good news of the Savior's birth came first to a most unlikely group of people.

Shepherds were near the bottom of the social ladder.

They were uneducated and unskilled, increasingly viewed in the post-New Testament era as dishonest, unreliable, unsavory characters, so much so that they were not allowed to testify in court.

Because sheep required care seven days a week, shepherds were unable to fully comply with the man-made Sabbath regulations developed by the Pharisees.

As a result, they were viewed as being in continual violation of the religious laws, and hence ceremonially unclean.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. [Luke 1–5](#). Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009. Print. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*.

Luke says...

- They were in the "same region"
- That "region" being near Bethlehem about 6 miles south of Jerusalem
- They were "staying out in the fields" with their flocks
- This was something typically done in Israel from April to November

According to rabbinic law, sheep were to be kept in the wilderness, and any animal found between Jerusalem and the vicinity of Bethlehem was subject to being used as a sacrifice in the temple. It may be, then, that the sheep these shepherds were caring for were destined for that very purpose.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. [Luke 1–5](#). Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009. Print. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*.

- Luke says the shepherds were "keeping watch over their flock by night"

The night was divided into four watches, the even, midnight, cock-crowing, and morning; and these kept them, as the Arabic version adds, alternately, some kept the flock one watch, and some another, while the rest slept in the tent, or tower that was built in the fields for that purpose.

Gill, John. [An Exposition of the New Testament](#). Vol. 1. London: Mathews and Leigh, 1809. Print. *The Baptist Commentary Series*.

But suddenly they see...

III. The Angel of the Lord (vv.9-12)

- The angel is not identified, but in light of his earlier appearances to Zacharias and Mary, it may have been Gabriel
- Verse 9 says, He "stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly afraid" (v.10)
- When he appeared to Zachariah and Mary, they too had the same response:
 - Luke 1:12 says, "(12) Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him."
 - Luke 1:29 says that Mary was "very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was."
 - The word for "perplexed" (diatapasso) comes from *diá* (1223), through, and *tarássō* (5015), and means "to agitate, trouble. To stir up throughout. Spoken of the mind, and elsewhere, to disturb, agitate." (Zodhiates, Spiros. [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) 2000 : n. pag. Print.)

- Verse 9 also says, "the glory of the Lord shone around them"
 - The "glory of the Lord" was a "bright, glorious light" (MacDonald), a "beaming radiance" (Lenski)
 - In the OT, it was the manifestation of God to His people (Ex.16:7)
 - So in the case of the angel it was "an exceedingly great or bright luminous appearance" (Barnes)
- The angel told the shepherds not to be afraid because "I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people" (v.10)
- This was not bad news, but good
- Verse 10 says It was "good news of great joy" (v.10)
- The news was "For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
- This was "Bethlehem, the town where David was born—not the City of David, which was on the southern slope of Mt. Zion (cf. 2 Sam. 5:7–9). (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.)
- "There has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (v.11)
- This is one of only two places in the gospels where Christ is referred to as "Savior"—the other being John 4:42, where the men of Sychar confessed Him as "Savior of the world." (MacArthur)
- The angel refers to Him as "Christ" (or Messiah) the Lord (kurios, which in the LXX is YHWH)
- Here's the "sign" to prove the birth of the Christ-Child: "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."
- This goes back to verse 7

There are two possible responses when confronted with the truth. One is "fear" as in v.9.

The other is...

IV. Worship (vv.13-14)

(13) And suddenly there appeared 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 men with whom He is pleased."

- Appearance with the "angel of the Lord" was a "heavenly" army of angels
- The word "host" (stratia) means an "army"
- Luke says there was "a multitude" or plethos, which means "a large indefinite number" of angels
- The Bible says there are "myriads of angels" (Heb.12:22)
- Revelation 5:11 says "the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands."
 - Taken literally, this has two possibilities: (1) 10 to the 8th power plus 10 to the 6th power equals 101 million, or (2) 10 to the 8 power times 10 to the 6th power equals 100 trillion. These may be only a part of the heavenly host. This expression, however, may not be an exact number but an indication of a multitude beyond comprehension. (Dickason, C Fred. *Angels Elect and Evil* (p. 90). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.)

At His betrayal, Christ could have called upon God for twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53).

In the time of Augustus Caesar, a legion numbered about 6,000 men, usually backed by an equal number of auxiliary troops. If there is a parallel in the number of troops and of angels, Christ may have called for 72,000 angels, or as many as 144,000 angels.

Actually, He could have called the whole heavenly army if needed.

*Dickason, C Fred. *Angels Elect and Evil* (pp. 89-90). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.*

- What were they saying? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."
- This is worship, which is what Good angels do
- Fallen angels don't worship God. They worship Satan, who is also an angel (cherub)

After the angels left, the shepherds exercised...

V. Obedience (vv.15-16)

- By going "straight to Bethlehem" to "see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us" (v.15)
- "So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger" (v.16)
- This was undiminished obedience

They are not taken up with the angels, the glory that invested them, and the lofty strains with which they filled the air. Nor do they say, Let us go and see if this be true—they have no misgivings. But “Let us go and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.” Does not this confirm the view given on Lu 2:8 of the spirit of these humble men?

Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#). Vol. 2. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997. Print.

So all men should without delay seek the Saviour. When told of him by the servants of God, they should, like these shepherds, forsake all, and give no rest to their eyes until they have found him. We may always find him. We need not travel to Bethlehem. We have only to cast our eyes to heaven; to look to him and to believe on him, and we shall find him ever near to us, and for ever our Saviour and friend.

Barnes, Albert. [Notes on the New Testament: Luke & John](#). Ed. Robert Frew. London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885. Print.

Their obedience also produced a...

VI. Proclamation (vv.17-18)

- They made known the statement which had been told them
- This is what all believers are to do today!
- We are to "make disciples of all the nations" (Mat.28:19)
- We are to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk.16:15)
- Verse 18 records the peoples response to the shepherd's message:
"And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds."

CONCLUSION

- What is your response to the good news?
- Are you obedient to tell others the same good news that has been told to you?
- Do you worship Jesus this morning because of His birth, and let's include, His death and resurrection?
- Let's worship Him now and give Him the glory He deserves!
- If you do not know Him this morning at Lord, confess Him now.
- Believe the message of the angel.
- "There has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (v.11).
- Do you believe this?
- Let's pray.