

**Subject: Good News of Great Joy**

**Scripture: Luke 2:1-20**

Christmas is a time of great joy for people who know the Scriptures and trust in Christ as Lord and Savior. It's a time of great joy because we know that Christ came to earth, and we know how He came and why He came to earth. Christ has richly blessed us by coming to save us. He is the reason for the season and His birth is good news of great joy to us.

Now we know that some people struggle at Christmas time with depression and grief. It could be that a loved one has passed recently or even years ago and they feel the loss at this time of year more than other times. When families gather there is an empty chair or maybe more. And yet, there can be and should be an overriding sense of joy, especially if our departed loved ones are in heaven with the Lord. They are celebrating Christmas in the best possible way, in the very presence of the Lord where there is fullness of joy, and we can share in that joy knowing they are with Him.

The familiar Christmas story found in Luke 2 tells us about the good news of great joy when Christ was born (vs. 10). If we think about it, there are several reasons for great joy in this story and I'm going to mention a few.

### **1. We have great joy because God was in control (vs. 1-3)**

Luke begins the Christmas story with a decree from Caesar Augustus that the world should be taxed. That doesn't sound like a good reason for joy, does it? But when we realize that God is behind Caesar's decree, we can rejoice in that.

There is no reason given for Caesar making this decree that everyone must be registered for tax purposes, and that involved people returning to the place of their ancestors so the registration could be complete and as accurate as possible.

When you stop to consider it, you realize there are three kings involved in the Christmas story: 1) Augustus Caesar was the supreme ruler of the Roman Empire; 2) Christ was born to be the King of Israel and the King of Kings; and 3) God the Father is King of heaven and earth and He is working behind the scenes in all the details.

*Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*

When Augustus Caesar made his decree you can imagine that was terrible news to Joseph and Mary and thousands of other people. Their lives were disrupted and they had to travel against their will, in some cases for many miles, on their own time and at their own cost. And just think of Mary expecting a baby near the end of her pregnancy going with Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem (about 75 miles).

Life can bring some surprising and difficult trials, but we can have great joy if we know that God is in control

### **2. We have great joy because Scripture was fulfilled (vs. 4-7)**

Joseph, Mary, and her baby traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem so the prophecy of Micah could be fulfilled.

***Micah 5:2** But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

And other scriptures were fulfilled in Christ's birth and life.

***Genesis 3:15** And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

***Isaiah 7:14** Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

Everything predicted about Christ's first coming was fulfilled, and we know that everything predicted about His second coming will be fulfilled. That is a reason for great joy.

The whole Bible is about Christ. He said so.

***John 5:39** Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

The Old Testament says Christ is coming. The Gospels say Christ is here. The rest of the New Testament says Christ is coming again. We can have great joy because we know that God keeps all His promises.

### **3. We have great joy because Christ was born (vs. 8-11)**

The angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to the shepherds.

The glory of the Lord shined around them.

The angel told them to "fear not" because he brought good news of great joy.

The good news was that Jesus was born. He is the Savior, Christ the Lord.

He is the only one with these titles. He is the only one who can fill these roles.

### **4. We have great joy because Christ's birth was revealed, confirmed, and proclaimed**

The birth of Christ was good news of great joy to all people (vs. 10).

The angel of the Lord announced His birth to the shepherds.

The angel then confirmed His birth with a sign (the baby would be lying in a manger)

Then a multitude of angels appeared and praised God.

Then the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see the baby because the Lord made it known.

They came and saw baby Jesus lying in manger and they knew He was the one.

Then they made it known abroad what the angel told them about Christ.

The Bible describes the different reactions when people heard the good news of Christ's birth.

All that heard it wondered (marveled) at the report (vs. 18).

Mary kept all the things she knew and thought deeply about it (vs. 19).

The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God (vs. 20).

The same thing happens today. We have the same good news, but see different responses.

We have no control over how people respond to Christ, but we do have the privilege and responsibility to share the good news. We have good news of great joy which shall be to all people.