

December 18 2011
"God's Sovereignty and Christ's Birth"
Luke 2:1-14

I. We see this sovereignty in God's exact fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy –

1. Regarding WHERE Jesus Christ would be born –

"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)

A. Note Caesar Augustus' decree was used to bring about God decree – Luke 2:1-5

B. Note the prophecy in Micah 5 refers to Christ as "Ruler" He is God's King and as "from everlasting" – He is eternal, He is God!

2. Regarding WHEN Jesus Christ would be born –

"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. (Daniel 2:44 NKJ)

This verse refers to the time of the Roman Empire (more later)

²⁴ **"Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.**

²⁵ **"Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; ... (Dan 9:24-25 NKJ)**

I am not going to attempt in detail to interpret Daniel 9 today, I just want you to reference "seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" refer to weeks of years, "Until Messiah the Prince" ... I believe part of the reason the "wise men from the East" came to Jerusalem WHEN they did was they understood the timetable given by prophecy regarding Christ.

3. Of course HOW Christ was born was also prophesied –

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14 NKJ)

II. WE see God's sovereignty displayed in Christ's coming in the midst of earthly kings and in the shadow of Caesar Augustus and yet He comes ultimately and gloriously to outshine him and them –

What was the "BIG EVENT" on the night on which Jesus was born? Well, it is easy to say the birth of Christ – which is true. Yet, on that night very few people knew about Christ's birth, certainly they did not realize its significance.

What then was (or at least SEEMED) the BIG EVENT that night?

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

A. It involves "all the world" – Luke 2:1

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

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

Consider his titles: * Princeps – 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 his 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 to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born.

2. Yet, as we all know now, the truly “Big Event” of this night was the birth of Jesus Christ – 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!

A. As I said before, it happened according to prophecy –

* In the days of these kings (including Caesar Augustus) – Daniel 2:44-45 * In Bethlehem, according to the prophet Micah (Micah 5:2) and according to God’s decree (650 years prior)

B. According to prophecy Jesus would have even greater titles and accomplishments than Augustus, and He would rule forever – Isaiah 9:6-7

When Daniel 2:44 speaks of “in the days of these kings” it is referring to the GREAT EMPIRES which CHRIST OUTSHINES!

In Daniel 2 & 7 we have an *inclusio* (a literary framing device) formed by the dreams (and interpretations) of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel showing us through dramatically fulfilled prophecies; that it is God Who raises and deposes kings and ultimately, however proud and powerful an earthly king may seem to be, it is God Who holds that king as a pawn in His hand as He prepares the eternal throne for JESUS CHRIST!

In Daniel chapters 2 & 7 we see prophesied:

1. The Babylonian Empire ruled by Nebuchadnezzar -
Nebuchadnezzar is the head of fine gold – Daniel 2:31-32; 36-38 and the Lion with eagle’s wings – Daniel 7:1-4
2. The Medo-Persian Empire ruled by Cyrus & Darius
In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream they are the chest and arms are silver– Daniel 2:32-39 In Daniel’s dream pictured as a bear, with three ribs in its mouth as it conquered three other kingdoms to become a world power: (1) Babylon (2) Egypt (3) Lydia

3. The Greek Empire ruled by Alexander the Great and his successors – The belly and thighs of bronze – Daniel 2:32 & 39 / A leopard with four wings – Daniel 7:6

4. The Roman Empire, most notably, ruled by Caesar Augustus, and Roman derived governments – Legs and feet of iron and clay – Daniel 2:33; 40-44 / The strange beast – Daniel 7:7-8; 11-12; :19-26

5. The Eternal Kingdom of Christ –

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Christ is the STONE which becomes a Great Mountain – Daniel 2:34-35 & 44-45 / In Daniel’s dream He is “One like the Son of Man” and He is “coming with the clouds of Heaven!” He sets up an eternal Kingdom – Daniel 7:9-10; 13-18 & 27

III. We see God sovereignty displayed in God’s bringing His King (Jesus Christ) on the scene in spite of both worldly and Satanic opposition –

See Psalm 2 and

"¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." (Matthew 2:14-18 NKJ)

NKJ Revelation 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. ² Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

⁵ She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

(Rev 12:1-5 NKJ)