

The Nativity Part 2

Dr. Luke's Record of Christ's Birth

Text: Luke 2:8-20

Introduction:

1. The word 'nativity' simply means 'birth'. For example, Boaz said to Ruth, "It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, **and the land of thy nativity**..." (Ruth 2:11). The word is most often used when speaking of Christ's birth since His birth was the most significant in all of human history.
2. Matthew and Luke are the two Gospels that provide records of the nativity. Each contribute important details but Luke's account provides the most details. Luke records not only the details of the birth of Christ but also the events leading up to it such as the angel's visit to Mary.
3. We are considering Luke's account of the nativity with the help of the following outline:
 - The Historical Context of Christ's Birth (Vs. 1-5)
 - The Humility of Christ's Birth (Vs. 6-7)
 - The Heralds of Christ's Birth (Vs. 8-20)
4. As we study this account let us be in awe and wonder of the truth that "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). J.C. Ryle wrote, "Every birth of a living child is a marvellous event. It brings into being a soul that will never die. But never since the world began was a birth so marvellous as the birth of Christ."

I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CHRIST'S BIRTH (VS. 1-5)

A. The Providence of God was Active (Vs. 1-3)

B. The Prophecy of God's Word was Accomplished (Vs. 4)

C. The Purity of God's Son was Affirmed (Vs. 5)

II. THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST'S BIRTH (VS. 6-7)

We stand in awe and wonder at the humility and condescension of Christ at His birth. Everything about Christ's birth was humble.

A. A Humble Covering – "swaddling clothes".

B. A Humble Crib – "laid him in a manger".

C. A Humble Context – "because there was no room for them in the inn".

III. THE HERALDS OF CHRIST'S BIRTH (VS. 8-20)

I. THE HERALD OF THE SERAPHS (VS. 8-14)

“Throughout our Lord’s ministry, every major event was preceded or attended to by angels: His annunciation, His birth, His temptation prior to His ministry, Gethsemane, His resurrection, and His ascension. Moreover, His return from heaven will be accompanied with His mighty angels.”
(Sorenson)

A. The Appearance of the Angel (Vs. 8-9)

1. To whom the angel appeared (Vs. 8)
 - a. The news of Christ’s birth was first delivered, not to the rich, famous and powerful but to lowly shepherds in a field in Bethlehem. Evidently, they were godly men who were awaiting God’s promised Messiah. How fitting that Christ who is our Shepherd should have his birth announced first to shepherds. Christ is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4). Jesus came as the good shepherd to give His life for the sheep. John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”
 - b. These shepherds were watching over their “flock”. It is possible they were looking after lambs for the temple worship. How fitting that the announcement that God’s perfect Lamb had come be first given to shepherds watching over the temple sacrifices that pointed in type to Christ’s great sacrifice.
2. How the angel appeared (Vs. 9)
 - a. Suddenly (Vs. 9a). Imagine the shock and surprise when all of a sudden, the angels of the Lord appeared to these shepherds in the dark of night.
 - b. Shiningly (Vs. 9b). Heavenly glory accompanied the heavenly messenger. Throughout the N.T., the word ‘glory’ has the sense of brilliant, almost blinding light (Sorenson). He had come to deliver a glorious, heavenly message concerning the Son of God.

B. The Announcement of the Angel (Vs. 10-12)

1. The Character of the Angel’s News (Vs. 10)
 - a. It was Good News (Vs. 10a). The phrase “good tidings” comes from the Greek word ‘**euaggelizo**’ which forms the basis of our word ‘evangelism’. The same word is often translated “preach the Gospel” in the New Testament (e.g., Lk. 20:1, Acts 8:25, 14:7, 21, 16:10, Rom. 1:15; 1 Cor. 1:17). The word occurs twice in Romans 10:15 “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that **preach the gospel** of peace, and **bring glad tidings** of good things!” The best news this world has ever received was the news that the Saviour Jesus Christ had come.

- b. It was Glad News (Vs. 10b). This was news of mega joy! Jesus Christ is the greatest source of joy for mankind. We live in a world full of evil, sad and heart-breaking news but the most joyful news is the news of the Saviour's birth, life, death and resurrection. Whatever challenges you face this Christmas, you can have great joy in the fact your Saviour came.
 - c. It was Global News (Vs. 10c). This news was not just good news for a select few. It was good news "to **all** people". Jesus Christ came to be the "Saviour of the world" (John 4:42). Christ is available to be YOUR SAVIOUR if you will receive Him! We are reminded that God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9) and that His desire is that all men would be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). The Gospel message we preach is a 'whosoever' message.
 - i. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - ii. Rom. 10:13 "For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
 - iii. Rev. 22:17 "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever** will, let him take the water of life freely."
2. The Content of the Angel's News (Vs. 11)
- a. The place of the Messiah (Vs. 11a). The "city of David" is one of the names for Bethlehem. It is an important reminder that Christ was born of the lineage of David and in the city of David, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 5:2.
 - b. The Person of the Messiah (Vs. 11b)
The angel uses three titles in relation to Christ. Each title reveals an important truth concerning His Person.
 - i. **Saviour** – this is good news indeed! Only Christianity has a true Saviour. In John 4:42, Christ is called "the Saviour of the world". The title 'Saviour' only appears three times in the four Gospels and only in relation to Christ (Luke 1:47, 2:11; John 4:42). This precious title is reserved for Christ. The word means one who delivers or saves. There is only One Saviour and His Name is Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12, "Neither is their salvation in any other..."
 - i. Christ – the word means 'anointed' and is the New Testament equivalent to the Old Testament word 'Messiah'. It reminds us that Christ is anointed for three offices – Prophet, Priest and King.

- ii. Lord – a reference to Christ’s Deity. He is Christ the Lord! He is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). We are reminded of the great declaration of Christ’s Lordship in Philippians 2:5-11.
3. The Confirmation of the Angel’s News (Vs. 12). The angels give the shepherds two important pieces of information that would help them to locate and identify the baby Jesus.
- a. He would be wrapped in swaddling clothes, hence a newborn baby.
 - b. He would be lying in a manger. There would only be one such baby that night in such a unique circumstance.

C. The Adoration by the Angels (Vs. 13-14)

The announcing angel is suddenly joined by a multitude of other angelic beings and a song of rapturous praise erupts in glorious strains that echo down to us through the centuries. The song of the angels contains two great themes and goes in two directions – heavenward and earthward. The words of verse 14 are some of the most well known and oft quoted at Christmas. Even a lot of unsaved people have heard them. But let’s remember what they actually mean!

1. Praise to God – “glory to God in the highest”.
 - a. God’s plan of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ brings Him great glory. Worship should be our response to the wonder of salvation. God is worthy to be glorified for the marvel of the incarnation.
 - b. God is the Highest above all and is worthy of the highest praise. The phrase “in the highest” seems to emphasize the fact God was being glorified and worshipped in the heavenly realm for the marvel of His salvation plan. The term “highest” is also used in the New Testament as a reference to God as “the most high” God so it also reminds us of His exalted position over all.

2. Peace to Men – “and on earth peace, good will toward men”.
The focus now turns to the blessing of the incarnation for the world. There are two parts to this:

- a. Peace – “and on earth peace”. Jesus Christ is the “prince of peace”. Many quote these words at Christmas, expressing their desire for peace but they fail to realize that true peace only comes through Jesus Christ.
 - i. Individual peace can only be found in Christ. He is the only one who can bring peace to guilty, troubled hearts. Christ is the only one who can bring about peace between a sinner and a holy God – “And, **having made peace through the blood of his cross**, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.” (Col. 1:20)

We were “enemies” in our “mind by wicked words” (Col. 1:21) but Christ made reconciliation possible. In the words of Ephesians 2:14, “he is our peace”.

- ii. Global peace can only be achieved by Christ. This turbulent, war torn and troubled world will never achieve peace on its own. They will think it has come when the antichrist rises to power but it will be a false peace (1 Thess. 5:3). There will be true, world-wide peace during the Millennial reign of Christ.
- b. Pleasure – “good will toward men”. This phrase reveals the kindness, love and benevolence of God behind the incarnation. The phrase “good will” comes from the Greek word meaning “good pleasure, kindly intent, benevolence.” “The gift of the Saviour is an expression of good-will or love to people, and therefore God is to be praised.” (Albert Barnes)

II. THE HERALD OF THE SHEPHERDS (VS. 15-20)

A. Their Decision to see the Saviour’s Birth (Vs. 15-16)

In these verses we note the response of the Shepherds to the announcement of angels. In their response we see:

- 1. Simple Faith – “let us now go...and see this thing...which the Lord hath made known unto us.” They took God at His Word, believed it and acted upon it.
- 2. Eager Obedience – “they came with haste”. Simple faith leads to trusting, joyful obedience.
- 3. A Rich Reward – “and found Mary, and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.” Their simply faith and trusting obedience was richly rewarded. They got to be the first to see the Christ child apart from Mary and Joseph.

B. Their Declaration of the Saviour’s Birth (Vs. 17-19)

- 1. The message of the shepherds (Vs. 17)
 - a. The subject of their preaching – it is of interest that the main theme of their message was the word that had been proclaimed to them by the angel concerning the child (See Vs. 10-11). The fact they were eyewitnesses would add further weight to the message. They proclaimed the good news that the Saviour had come! The world still needs to hear the same message today as much as it did back then. So go out this Christmas and on into the New Year and tell others the good news of salvation through Christ!
 - b. The scope of their preaching – they made the message known “abroad”, meaning they spread it far and wide. Our mission is to take the message of the Gospel far and wide to every corner of

the globe, beginning as the shepherds did, with our immediate area. It is not enough to talk about the Great Commission, we must do something about it!

2. The response to the shepherds (Vs. 18-19)
 - a. Many wondered (Vs. 18). The touching news of the Christ child stirred those who heard it to marvel. Perhaps for some it was a worshipful wonder. They too had been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the promised Messiah. **Sadly, it may well have been the case that many wondered but few repented.** Today it is no different. At Christmas time when we pause to remember these wondrous events, even some unsaved people pause to wonder at the story of the babe in the manger but then go on in their sinful ways unchanged. Don't just wonder as you wander this Christmas. Repent of your sin and receive the Saviour! Make room in your heart for Christ this Christmas!
 - b. Mary pondered (Vs. 19). Mary had much to ponder as the mother of the Christ child. The angel's visit, the shepherds account of the angelic hosts and soon and many other things. The word 'pondered' according to A.T. Robertson is "An old Greek word. Placing together for comparison. Mary would go over each detail in the words of Gabriel and of the shepherds and compare the sayings with the facts so far developed and brood over it all with a mother's high hopes and joy." The glorious truths of these events of Christ's nativity should also lead us to worshipful meditation. Don't let the wonder of the incarnation get all buried in tinsel this Christmas! Take time to mediate on it and worship God for it.

C. Their Delight in the Saviour's Birth (Vs. 20)

1. The shepherds not only proclaimed what they had heard and seen, they were filled with thanksgiving and praise to God as well. They glorified and praised God for the miracle of the Messiah.
2. Our hearts should also be filled with awe, wonder, joy, thanksgiving, praise and worship in the light of these glorious truths. As born-again believers, we are the most blessed people in the universe. Our hearts should be filled with overwhelming, overflowing gratitude and praise to God for sending His Dear Son for our redemption. Worship Christ this Christmas!

Conclusion:

1. Will you receive Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour this Christmas? Will you make room for Him in your heart and life?
2. Are you worshipping and witnessing this Christmas season as a believer?