

Christmas Joy

Luke 2:1-20

Good News of Great Joy

This is the message from the angel to the shepherds, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy; good tidings of great joy. That will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

You see this word, "Joy" used much during this time of year. It's a word found in Christmas songs...in hymns celebrating the birth of Jesus. We sang a moment ago, "Joy to the World, the Lord has come". The word "JOY" is not only for the Christmas season, it's for the entire year. We can say along with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest.." in the month of July as well as the month of December.

I believe our God has purposely withheld giving us the exact day of our Lord's birth. No where in Scriptures do we have the calendar date given. The early church did not have annual ceremonies to commemorate the birth of Jesus. Here's what they did have.... They had knowledge of His birth as given in Luke's gospel, and also Matthew's gospel.

Even though the world has paganized and commercialized Christmas, we as the church of the Lord Jesus have an opportunity to tell the world, Who Jesus is, How He came into the world, and the purpose for which He came. The world has "joy" only because of what God has given for them to enjoy. The Christian, however, has "great joy" which is far superior. It's a joy the world knows nothing about. In Christ we have a joy that's unspeakable and full of glory.

And what makes it possible? This GREAT JOY is made possible because....

First, there was

- The Incarnation of Christ
- The Visitation of Angels
- The Proclamation of Shepherds

I. The Lord's Incarnation vv. 1-7

Christmas Joy was wrapped in the incarnation of Christ.

Incarnation is a mysterious concept. It's what we believe. So what is it?

Jesus Christ, our Lord, in all eternity past was with the Heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity ---the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit existed eternally before the world was ever created. There came a time when Jesus, the Son of God came into this world and took upon himself, human nature. He became flesh.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14 ESV).

Jesus being fully God, became fully man.

There is both an ordinary side to the Birth of Christ; and a Miraculous side to the birth of Christ.

A. His birth was ordinary.

Notice how his birth is described. v.1 "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus..."

The events leading up to the birth of Jesus was ordinary. Nothing unusual about a decree from a world leader to order people to return to their ancestral home to be registered, counted, and taxed. This was common. Joseph and Mary were not the only ones traveling to Bethlehem. Many people were doing the same thing....traveling to Bethlehem. They were not able to find room in the inn. The Greek word for inn is kataluma and literally means "guest room". There was no room in the guest room. This was a shelter for travelers. It could have been a home that had a guest room. The Jews were known to be hospitable and it was their duty to put up travelers, and certainly their own kinfolks.

Joseph's hometown was Bethlehem and he no doubt was seeking to stay with family or friends. We have the image of Joseph knocking on the door of Motel 6 and the innkeeper puts out a "no vacancy" sign. The word "inn" is seen in the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:34. The Samaritan brought the wounded man to an inn. That's a different Greek word than what we have here in Luke 2:7. Joseph probably sought shelter at a regular house, but the guest room was full.

Attached to a house was the place where animals, the cow, donkey were brought in for the night. And for privacy this is where Mary gave birth to Jesus. She laid him in a manger, which is a feeding trough. We often think of Joseph rushing around Bethlehem to find a place because Mary was about to give birth. It seems from our text that they were already there for a while, and there was not this rush because Mary was going into labor. LOOK at v.6 **and while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.** They might have been there for weeks or a few months before she gave birth. Joseph may have already registered for the census, and because Mary was full term, purposely stayed in Bethlehem until the baby was born.

v.7 And she gave birth.... swaddling cloths... what's that? This was the ordinary way to wrap a newborn. Long strips of line cloths were used to wrap the baby. The arms were wrapped and then the legs, and the body was wrapped for the purpose to stay warm. It would help the baby to feel secure and snuggle almost like the womb. Wrapping a baby in "swaddling cloths" is ordinary. Nothing unusual about that.

B. His birth was miraculous.

We noticed in v.1 "In those days a decree went out...." Caesar had his decree. God has His own decree. Little did Caesar Augustus know, and little did Quirinius the governor of Syria know that

God was accomplishing His Divine Decree to bring His Son into the world. God has his ways with the kings of this world. There is no sovereign king among men. There's no political leader that has absolute authority and control.

(1) Here we see the Miraculous Hand of God in Providence. God has his way

Proverbs 21:1 *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.*

The Lord's birth did not just happen; it was pre-determined by God. The Lord's coming was foreordained. God moves through history to bring about His purpose to redeem sinners.

1Peter 1:18-20

*¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ **He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you***

(2) The miraculous hand of God in Bible Prophecy.

The place of our Lord's birth was no surprise. God gave a prophet by the name of Micah a prophecy concerning the place where Jesus would be born.

Micah 5:2

But 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.

Here's the miracle of God's prophetic Word --- 700 years before it happen, it was told by God's prophet Micah.

Here's another miracle of God's prophetic Word --- The birth of Jesus was predicted by the prophet Isaiah who lived around the same time as Micah.

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(3) The miracle of the virgin birth of Jesus v. 5to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child...

betrothed - espoused wife (KJV) “legally committed to be married” It was binding, and only could be dissolved by divorce. The betrothed couple were called husband and wife. The only thing they had not had the official marriage and the consummation of marriage.

who was engaged to him and was pregnant. (HCSB) the betrothal, or the engagement was much stronger than “engagement” today. In Jewish custom...an engagement could only be broken off by a divorce.

HOW WAS IT THAT MARY IS PREGNANT...BUT HAS NOT KNOWN A MAN.....??? When Mary was visited by the Angel Gabriel.... SEE Luke 1:26-35

34 And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” **35** And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

Joseph... thinks...she’s been unfaithful....

Joseph contemplated divorce.- Matthew 1:19 An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream... Matthew 1:19-21

19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Isaiah 7:14

⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, **the virgin shall conceive** and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Theologians calls the birth of Jesus...and how he came into the world **...the INCARNATION...**

The “incarnation” speaks of how Jesus came into this world. Incarnate is not a word we use every day. It means embodied in flesh. When we speak of Jesus, we say He is incarnate deity. He is God in human flesh.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the **incarnate deity**;
Please as man with man to dwell; Jesus our Emmanuel
Hark the herald angels sing; Glory to the newborn King

The belief in the virgin birth of Christ is decreasing in the United States.

As earlier reported by *The Christian Post*, the 2020 [survey](#) conducted by Ligonier Ministries, a Florida-based Reform Church nonprofit, **found 52 percent of U.S. adults say they believe Jesus Christ is not God** — a belief that contradicts traditional teachings of the Bible through the Christian church, which state Jesus was both man and God.¹

¹ [52 Percent of Americans Say Jesus Isn't God but Was a Great Teacher, Survey Says \(newsweek.com\)](#)

Jesus is God in the Flesh. Adrian Rodgers...

Everything that God is, Jesus is. Everything that God has, Jesus has. Everything that God does, Jesus does. Jesus is God. He is fully God. He is not part-God and part-man. He's not all God and no man. He's not all man and no God. He is the God-man. Jesus makes the invisible God known to man. He is the very Word of God. He is God's Word to this human race. He is God in human flesh. Adrian Rodgers²

This is miraculous.... the incarnation of Jesus Christ....

There would be no Christmas Joy with the Incarnation of Christ. and really no good news for the entire year, if the birth of Jesus was only ordinary, and did not include the miraculous.

Christmas Joy and...

II. The Angelic Visitation vv.8-14

When Jesus was born there was no big crowd gathered around the manger. There were no bands playing; no parades; no reporters to write about him in the papers; It was a seemingly quiet night with the Lord's birth accompanied by the bleating of sheep.

There was, however, a celebration that took place. Mary and Joseph did not know this at first. Just outside town some shepherds were getting the shock of their lives. **(Review vv.8-12)**

This will be a sign for you.... **WHAT WAS THE SIGN?**

Three times we see the word. In v.7 "...laid him in a (what?) MANGER.

AGAIN look at v.12 last part of verse "...lying in a manger" and then v.16"...found the baby lying in a manger"

THE SIGN.... not the swaddling cloths.... all the babies of that time were wrapped that way.... the unusual thing...to find a baby LYING IN A MANGER....A FEEDING TROUGH.

notice this.... as soon as the angel said in v.12 "lying in a manger"...it triggers something....SUDDENLY THERE WAS..... PRAISE TO GOD.

The multitude of angels -- saying....Glory to God!

What condescension! God condescending to the low state of man. What humility! The humiliation of Jesus takes him to a dirty, smelly, feeding trough.....

The Sign of the Manger was a sign of WHY JESUS came. He left the glories of Heaven to a stable. As one preacher called it "From a Throne to a Trough"

² [Jesus' Supernatural Nature - Love Worth Finding - December 5 - Daily Devotional \(crosswalk.com\)](http://crosswalk.com)

This is the first step toward the cross..... Jesus laid aside his royal robes of glory, and took upon human flesh....HE became one of us.... he identified with sinners...

as Paul said in Philippians 2

Philippians 2:7-8

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: **8** And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This is the JOY of Christmas.... **Luke 2:10-11**

10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of **great joy** that will be for all the people. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord

Christmas Joy and....

III. The Shepherds' Proclamation vv. 15-20

The Joy of Christmas is worth seeing; It's worth experiencing; and it's worth proclaiming to others...

At first the angels proclaimed the good news of the Lord's birth to the shepherds, then the shepherds PROCLAIMED the good news to others.

- A) **Let's go and see this thing.** v.15 An incredible event had just taken place. The shepherds were given the best news anyone could receive. They **said to one another**, "Let us go...." They didn't keep this to themselves. They said to one another. Did you see what I saw? did you hear what I heard? They spoke among themselves... what shall we do? How shall we respond?

The angel did say.... I bring YOU good news of great joy.... For unto YOU is born this day.... This will be a sign for YOU...YOU will find a baby wrapped....

It's for US.... this good news is for us.... YOU will find a baby.... **let's go and see this thing!!**

- B) **And they went with haste** v.16

It wasn't enough for Luke who writes his account to say.... and they traveled on down to Bethlehem... or they walked on down... THEY WENT WITH HASTE....

- the event they witnessed demands they go in haste.
- the message they heard demands they go in haste.

They could have said among themselves... we need to stay with the sheep.... they might wonder off....someone might steal the sheep; a wolf might come and get one.....

What's more important? tending sheep, or running to the Savior? tending to your own interest, or making haste to see what captured the interest of angels?

They no doubt ran...like the women and the disciples who ran to the empty tomb. Some things you don't need to post phone... coming to Christ is one of them....

Today is the day of salvation.... here's an important lesson on how to respond to good news that brings GREAT JOY. You hurry and get to where you should be. Like Zaccheus who heard about Jesus coming to his house, he was in a hurry to get down from the tree where he had climbed to see Jesus.

*And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."⁶ So **he hurried** and came down and received him joyfully. (Luke 19:5-6)*

so the shepherds went to Bethlehem..

C) **They made known the saying** vv.16-19

v.16 They found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger.....the sign was the manger...look for the manger with a baby....that's the sign...

v.17 when they saw it, they made known the saying.... the shepherds did not keep quiet fearing people would not believe them, or think they had been drinking, or gone crazy....

they made known the saying...

v.18 and all who heard it wondered at.....

v.19 Mary treasured up all these things....pondering them..... you don't hear good news like this, and dismiss it. You don't forget it... you behold it... allow it to fill your thoughts with WONDER..

all who heard it wondered at what...

Like Mary ...treasure it. you allow your heart to ponder ...and feast upon the Words of God. You savor Christ and He becomes the delight and treasure of your heart.

D) **And the Shepherds returned....**

v.20

they returned differently. No one comes to experience Jesus and go back the same.....

they came and saw Christ.... they returned Changed....

- glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them

The shepherds became proclaimers Proclaimers of the GREATEST NEWS ever told.

They had met the Good Shepherd. They can say now....The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want....

These shepherds came to Bethlehem and found the **DOOR of the sheep**. And later Jesus will say this...

*Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **9** I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. **10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:7-10)*

If you've truly met this baby of Bethlehem... you can't help but be a proclaimer of God's salvation. Christ will transform your life....and the fruit of the Spirit will be JOY!

Jesus said, **John 15:11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 16:21-24

21 When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. **22** So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. **23** In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. **24** Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Thank God...for the good news of great joy! The Joy of Christmas!

The Joy of Jesus!

The Joy of a Savior!

[The Incarnation of Jesus Christ: Purpose and Significance for Mankind \(christianity.com\)](http://christianity.com)