

LUKE 2:1-20
THE BIRTH OF THE CHRIST-
“CAESAR AUGUSTUS AND CHRISTUS AUGUSTUS”

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

I. A Tale of Two Kings

^{ESV} Luke 2:1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

Contrast between Caesar and Christ: It is historically significant that Christ the King of kings and Lord of lords was born during the first Emperor of Rome.

It is important to note that Caesar Augustus would have been the great king to be remembered historically because at the time he literally ruled the known world from Rome- -yet Jesus the Christ is born, the Son of God and Son of Man, and this is the One who is remembered because he did not see death, and his Kingdom endures as he sits on the Davidic Throne at God’s right hand!

Caesar: A. Proclaimed a god by the people; B. Proclaimed a savior of the people; C. Proclaimed as the One who brings Peace.

Christ: A. Proclaimed “Jesus the Christ” (or “Anointed King of God” by God himself (the Son of God); B. Proclaimed the Savior of the World by God; C. Proclaimed as the “Prince of Peace” by God.

- a. **Caesar Augustus (BC 63- AD 14)- Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus-** His mother Atia was Julius Caesar’s niece, and Augustus was adopted by Julius Caesar as heir in his will (His English name is “Octavian”).

- i. Proclaimed a god by the people (and considered himself a god!)- “Augustus”***

The **Myrian Inscription** (in Rome) declares of Caesar Augustus: “Divine Augustus Caesar, son of a god, imperator of land and sea, the benefactor and savior of the whole world...”

1. Augustus means literally “worthy of reverence” and this is nuanced as *“divine” or “majestic” or “Great Divine King”*.
2. After his death Augustus was formally deified and many temples and shrines were dedicated to him under Caesar Tiberus.

3. After Augustus all Emperors were given the name “Caesar Augustus” to continue his powerful legacy.
4. **Roman Historians on Augustus:**

Oxford scholar and historian of Rome Michael Grant wrote about Augustus: “Octavian...believed...that the supreme prestige (or authority) to which his public offices and achievements, and his sonship of the god Julius, entitled him, were sufficient safeguards against any defiance by governors or commanders.” *History of Rome*, Michael Grant, pg. 249.

The Roman historian Suetonius (ca. 69-130 AD) has given a description of Augustus which is confirmed by the many statues of him. "In person he was unusually handsome and exceedingly graceful at all periods of his life, though he cared nothing for personal adornment... He had clear, bright eyes, in which he liked to have it thought that there was a kind of divine power, and it greatly pleased him, whenever he looked keenly at anyone, if he let his face fall as if before the radiance of the sun. ... He was short of stature ... but this was concealed by the fine proportion and symmetry of his figure."

According to Julius Marathus [the freeman and secretary of Augustus and one of the historian Suetonius' sources for his life of Augustus], a public portent warned the Roman people some months before Augustus' birth that “Nature was making ready to provide them with a king; and this caused the Senate such consternation that they issued a decree which forbade the rearing of a male child for a whole year.”

...However, a group of senators whose wives were expecting prevented the decree from being filed at the Treasury and thus becoming law – for each of them hoped that the prophesied King would be his own son.

According to Paullus Fabius Maximus, proconsul of Asia, when the Roman New Year was declared to be on Augustus' birthday as the first day of the year, he wrote:

“It is hard to tell whether the birthday of the most divine Caesar is a matter of greater pleasure or benefit. We could justly hold it to be equivalent with the beginning of all

*things...; and he has given a different aspect to the whole world, which blindly would have embraced its own destruction if Caesar had not been born for the common benefit of all.” (Quoted in S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, pg. 55).*

ii. ***Proclaimed a Savior of the People*** (One who brings redemption from the people’s enemies)

1. Augustus brought peace to Rome and to all her enemies.
2. Augustus was “Prince of the Senate” (*princeps senatus*) or leader or “first man” of the House of the Senate.
3. Augustus was High Priest of Rome (or *Pontifex Maximus*) because he was the chief priest of Roman Religion as Caesar.
4. Augustus encouraged a worship of the Roman gods and a renewal of Roman religion because of the lax of morals he saw around him. (He has been called by historian Paul Meier as a religious reformer in Rome).

iii. ***Proclaimed as the One who gives peace- Pax Romana or Pax Augusta***

1. Augustus ruled for 41 years as dictator or Autocrat (the people greatly feared him!).
2. The so-called “peace of Rome” lasted for over 200 years, but it was an enforced, worldly peace of fear. In God’s providence, this *Pax Augusta* allowed the spread of Christianity.
3. Augustus was memorialized in a famous monument ‘*Ara Pacis Augustae*’ in Rome.
4. Augustus boasted that “he found Rome brick and left it marble.”
5. The **Roman philosopher Epicetus** once wrote of the *Pax Romana or Pax Augusta*:

“While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy. He cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearns more than even for outward peace.”

This Caesar Augustus required that the whole known world that he ruled over (“all the inhabited world” was the common expression to signify the whole Roman Empire) should be counted- -a census should be taken- -and this extended all the way to a little obscure town called ‘Nazareth’ of Galilee.

But we must remember God's ways of doing things- - His ways are not our ways, and he turns the world upside down. Remember Mary's 'Magnificat' in Luke 1:52-53?

"...He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away."

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 1:26-29:** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ **But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;** ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Additionally, we rejoice that even through might rulers like Caesar Augustus, God's purposes for his people are still accomplished!

- Christ is born in Bethlehem just as the prophets had spoken.

New Testament scholar Joel B. Green writes of God's sovereign purposes being fulfilled: "As often in biblical narrative...we find here a conjunction of intentions. On one level, Joseph's journey [to Bethlehem] is the consequence of the almighty decree of Augustus. On another, even the universal rule of Augustus is conceived as subordinate to another purpose, the aim of God. One may call this ironic, as if Rome is made unwittingly to serve a still greater Sovereign. But it is also prophetic, for it reveals the provisional nature of even Roman rule." (*NICNT, Gospel of Luke*, Joel B. Green, pg. 127).

- Remember this truth taught in the disciples' prayer in Acts 4:24-28:

"Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, " Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'- ²⁷ ***for truly***

in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

b. Jesus the Christ- Christ the King

- i. **Proclaimed the God by God himself, Maker of Heaven and Earth; Jesus is called the Son of God or “Son of the Most High”**, but is no less than God himself in the flesh, the Second Person of the Trinity.

^{ESV} **Luke 1:30-35:** And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.³² ***He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.***"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.

^{ESV} **Luke 1:46-53:** And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.⁵¹ ***He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.***

Luke 2:3-5: *And all went to be registered, each to his own town.⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.*

Young and pregnant Mary had to go with Joseph her husband to Bethlehem, a city about 6 miles south from Jerusalem, 80 miles south of Nazareth in her ninth month of pregnancy with Jesus.

Why Bethlehem?

^{ESV} **Micah 5:2-5:** 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 origin is from of old, from ancient days. ³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴ And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And he shall be their peace.

God would entrust his Great King who ruled the world- - the Mighty Counselor, the Prince of Peace, the One Whose government would never end- -to two poor, insignificant people in the world. You would think that if God were truly “wise” and wanted to make an impression on the world, he would have had his son be born in a King’s palace rather than a manger.

But God is not wise according to human standards. In fact, he is quite foolish in our eyes! Yet the Most Wise God makes no mistakes, and Mary and Joseph, were his instruments of grace to the world.

In fact, the angels proclaimed Jesus’ birth to lowly shepherds NOT to Caesar Augustus. Luke makes a contrast between Caesar Augustus and Quirinius the Governor who was ruling---and the shepherds abiding in their fields at night.

To whom does God make known the birth of His King?

As Mary sang in her ‘Magnificat’ the good news of the gospel comes to peasant shepherds not mighty rulers; the lowly are indeed lifted up in a way that is hard for us all to understand, but reveals God’s ways to man!

And when the shepherds were told by the angels how to recognize God’s Son, the King of kings, they did not describe him with outward glory and majesty as Caesar Augustus would be adorned, but a simple baby, wrapped in birth clothes in an animal’s feed trough.

^{ESV} ***Luke 2:12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."***

How would they find the glory of God in Christ? What was to be there *sign of the birth of the new king?*

- No majesty.
- No crown.
- No beautiful outward adornment.
- No riches.
- No glory.
- No throne.
- No palace.
- Birth clothes.
- A Manger-cave for animals to sleep and feed.
- A feed trough.
- A human child.

Reformed Pastor Kent Hughes eloquently and descriptively describes the birth of Jesus Christ in a manger-cave:

“If we imagine that Jesus was born in a freshly swept, county fair stable, we miss the whole point. It was wretched- -scandalous! There was sweat and pain and blood and cries as Mary reached up to the heavens for help. The earth was cold and hard. The smell of birth mixed with the stench of manure and acrid straw made a contemptible bouquet. Trembling carpenter’s hands, clumsy with fear, grasped God’s Son slippery with blood- -the baby’s limbs waving helplessly as if falling through space- -his face grimacing as he gasped in the cold and cry pierced the night.” (*Preaching the Word, Luke, Vol. 1, pg. 83*).

ii. Proclaimed by God and the angels as a “Savior”.

Luke 2:10b-14: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a 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.* ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was 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 those with whom he is pleased!"*

iii. Proclaimed “Christ the Lord”

iv. Proclaimed as the “Prince of Peace”

II. “What Child Is This?”- -More than a Birth (but not less!)- -An Incarnation!

^{ESV} Luke 2:6-7: And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

- a. Son of God
- b. Son of Man/Son of Mary

Although Caesar Augustus proclaimed himself and was considered by many in the Roman Empire as “son of god and son of a man” it was Jesus the Christ who was truly very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, who for us, and for our salvation, came down...

WHAT CHILD IS THIS? “WHO IS HE?”

The hymn asks the question: ‘What child is this?’ and this should be the thoughtful question of every person’s heart?

Have you known the birth of Christ as a true saving fact through faith in the Word of God?

In other words, “who do you say this Jesus is?”

As Mary pondered this message, so let us ponder this message by faith as well (cf. Luke 2:19)

a. Deity of Jesus Christ

- i. **Let us consider Christ “Before the manger...”** Before Mary wrapped him in baby clothes and placed him in a filthy animal feed trough. While Caesar Augustus was seated on the throne of Rome (and by extension, ruler of “the known world”), the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords was ruling from a feed trough.

^{ESV} **John 1:1-3:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:1-3 (Greek) Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. ² οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. ³ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν

Nicene Creed

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
*Begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,*

*Very God of very God,
Begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,
By whom all things were made...*

- ii. Jesus Christ was “In the beginning” (*en arche*)
 - Before the creation “in the beginning”
 - a. Jesus the Christ lived eternally before he had his first birthday! “Before Abraham was, I AM” –John 8:58.
 - b. John the Baptist witnesses in John 1:15: The Bible says: John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'"
 - “In the beginning **was the WORD**. *The Word existed before creation, before all things were made through him.*
 - All things were created through him (v. 3). Christ is **God’s Agent of creation**. John says: “Nothing was made or created that has been made or created without him.”

ESV John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

- iii. **What is ‘the WORD’?** The Wisdom/Word to Hebrews/ the Logos/Word to Greeks
- iv. “The Word was With God and was God...” -***Distinct from, yet equal with God.***
 - καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
 - The Word was “with” or “toward” God (intimate relationship) and literally “God was the Word” to emphasize his deity- -his Godness.

Christ’s Supreme Deity

1. John’s main intent in his gospel is to stress the deity, or “Godness” of Jesus Christ in his prologue as well as throughout his gospel (Compare 1:1, 18; 20:28-31; “I AM statements of Jesus).
2. This is the ultimate question for ourselves, our friends, family and neighbors: **“Who Do You Say Jesus Is?”** How you answer

this reveals whether you have a Savior who can truly save: One like you, not like you; One who was with God, and was God!

3. **Men today deny his divinity and accept him as just a “good teacher” or nice religious person.** He is called by some to be the first social activist, feminist, pluralist, and everything else under the sun other than “very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one essence with the Father.”
 1. Denying Christ’s divinity is man’s last ditch effort to diminish or rewrite the revelation of God’s hope extended to man through the babe in the manger, in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.
 - Strip Jesus of His Authority- No Obedience
 - Strip Jesus of His Majesty- No Worship
 2. Perhaps men inherently know he is their only hope but do not want to submit to his will because of their **sinful selfishness and self-centeredness.**
 - a. What Philip Rieff the sociologist called ‘*The Therapeutic Self*’.
 - b. ‘The Therapeutic Self can take bits and pieces from each religion if it suits their vague self-centered spirituality (AKA “cafeteria religion” or “buffet spirituality”).
 3. Perhaps men want Jesus on their own terms. Give me the baby Christmas Jesus, but don’t threaten me with the one who said “I AM that I AM” or that **“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me!”**

^{ESV} *Colossians 2:9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...*

Although Jesus is God, he is One who is full of grace and truth!

b. Humanity of Jesus Christ

Luke 2:10b-14: *"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a 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. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was 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 those with whom he is pleased!"

John 1:14: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

In this child, the hidden God who we cannot approach because he is so holy made himself visible in flesh- - human flesh (let that grip you). This everywhere-present God, a God who is in all places at one time was made present in a crying infant to those who adored him.

This all-powerful God showed forth all of his power in a small, weak and helpless little baby. This all-knowing God became flesh and dwelt among us as a baby, learning to understand the world around him, and teaching men that the true path to peace and the true way to God was through humility.

Some Notes of Reminder as we tread in this mysterious, yet glorious territory:

- i. Jesus Christ was not some cosmic “half and half” (a little bit God and a little bit man).**
- ii. God the Second Person of the Trinity did not cease being God when he became man.**
- iii. Jesus Christ is *theanthropos*: The God Man (One unique Person or individual with two natures).**
- iv. Jesus Christ did not take upon human nature just for a little while, but permanently became the God Man (both God and Man) permanently forever- -*The Second Person of the Trinity became something he was not previously in the incarnation without in any way diminishing his deity.***

Christ is two natures united in one person forever. This doctrine is called **the "hypostatic union."** The Westminster Shorter Catechism very concisely and clearly states this essential doctrine:

"The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever."

Nicene Creed

“... Who for us and for our salvation,
Came down from heaven,
And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,
And was made man...”

ii. “The Word became flesh...” (v. 14)

- What kind of flesh?
 - a. Not flesh tainted by sin.
 - b. But the “likeness of sinful flesh”- Romans 8:3-4
 - c. Flesh united to deity that was born to bear our burdens, sins, and the curse.
 - d. Flesh united to deity that was without sin, yet able to feel our infirmities, weaknesses, and the struggles and temptations of a world of sin and misery.

- Read Romans 8:3-4

ESV **Romans 8:3-4: For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

- Read Hebrews 2:14-18

ESV **Hebrews 2:14-18:** Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

- a. Made like the Seed of Abraham “real flesh and blood”
- b. Took upon himself flesh and blood in order to take upon himself the curse of sin and hell for his people.

- c. Took upon flesh in order to destroy death, hell, and the devil.
 - d. Now he is able to help in time of temptation and struggle.
- iii. Getting an understanding of Jesus Christ's true humanity through an understanding Mary's conception, her pregnancy, her delivery of her son, and how his life and death caused her great pain.
- Mary's amazement at the words of the angel.
 - Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit.
 - Mary's pregnancy and pain during the pregnancy (including Jesus kicking within the womb).
 - Mary's carrying the Eternal WORD for 9 months.
 - Mary delivering the Eternal WORD in a manger-cave.
 - Mary caring for the Eternal WORD who became flesh for most of his life.
 - Mary's pain and helplessness in his suffering God's wrath on the cross.
 - Mary's salvation found in her Son alone!

*Jesus Christ was Son of God and son of Mary!
Deity and humanity in hypostatic union!*

The Creed of Chalcedon

October 22, 451

“We then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial (homoousion) with the Father according to the Godhead, and **consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (theotokos), according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature preserved, and concurring in one person (prosopon) and one subsistence (hypostasis), not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only –begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ;** as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.”

The Creed of Athanasius

“...It is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ . For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, **that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man. God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Substance of His Mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul in human flesh subsisting; Equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching His Manhood. Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person.** For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead...”

Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 8.2

WCF 8.2 The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man’s nature,(1) **with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin**;(2) being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance.(3) So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion.(4) Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.(5) (1)John 1:1,14; 1 John 5:20; Phil. 2:6; Gal. 4:4. (2)Heb. 2:14,16,17; Heb. 4:15. (3)Luke 1:27,31,35; Gal. 4:4. (4)Luke 1:35; Col. 2:9; Rom. 9:5; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Tim. 3:16. (5)Rom. 1:3,4; 1 Tim. 2:5.

iv. Jesus’ sympathy with us

- **“No one understands how I feel?!”** How can we ever say this? Christ was born to sympathize with our weaknesses (sufferings, troubles, pains, cares, worries, and anxieties...all that this present evil age with its sin and misery has to offer you).
- **Think of Christ’s human emotions as the One who is God and has taken upon himself permanently a human nature:**

- a. Compassion or pity for the weak, sick, and suffering of this present evil age
- b. Sympathy
- c. Understanding
- d. Anger at the effects of the curse of the fall in the dark world of sin and misery
- e. Sadness, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief
- f. Love
- g. Patience with sinners
- h. Hebrews 2:17: “Made like his brethren in every way...”

This is the loving reigning One at God’s right hand who ever intercedes for you!

^{ESV} **Hebrews 4:14-16:** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.** ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 3:16** Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: ***He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.***

***All creation reveals God above us;
The Law reveals God against us;
The manger reveals God with us...
...and if God is with us, he is for us!***

III. A Proclamation to the Humble

- a. Shepherds- -and all who have ears to hear!
- b. Lives of glorifying and praising God at this good news!

Caesar: A. Proclaimed a god by the people; B. Proclaimed a savior of the people; C. Proclaimed as the One who brings Peace.f

Caesar Augustus is dead; the Roman Empire has become dust in the wind and all that remains is a few archaeological traces.

Christ: A. Proclaimed “Jesus the Christ” (or “Anointed King of God” by God himself (the Son of God); B. Proclaimed the Savior of the World by God; C. Proclaimed as the “Prince of Peace” by God.

Christ is risen; Son of God and Son of man, the God-Man at God’s right hand, the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all to the glory of God the Father!

Philippians 2:6-11: ...*Though [Jesus the Christ] was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

CRB

Exegetical Notes from the Text of Luke 2:1-20

^{ESV} **Luke 2:1** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. [The narrative is rooted in historical circumstances; all good history like this can be researched and verified.]

³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. [Joseph and his family obey the laws of the land to return to his home town of Bethlehem which was the city of David; cf. Micah 5:2]

⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. [Mary gave birth after they had traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and the Christ was born in a lowly cave-manger; there was not hospitality show perhaps? Perhaps the inns were full, but nevertheless, it was extremely cold not to make room in an inn for a pregnant young woman.]

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. [God’s birth announcement of his great son, the Greater Son of David, the King of kings is made to lowly, outcasts such as shepherds; the Christ will too be a shepherd- -the Great Shepherd of the sheep, cf. 1 Peter 5:1ff.]

⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a 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. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was 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 those with whom he is pleased!" [Summary of the gospel for those to whom God extends his peace (v. 14: "among those with whom he is pleased"); the message is one of good news (gospel- v. 10) for all kinds of people (not just Israel, but all who believe); As the prophets spoke (Micah 5:2, so a Savior is born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord (v. 11); Those who believe will find him in a lowly manger cave (v. 12); The angels give glory to God and praise God (v. 14).

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. [The shepherds went quickly to rejoice in the Christ!]

¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. [All hearts, even Mary's, are affected by the coming of the Christ; it is still hard to believe for her all that is happening as she is still "pondering these things in her heart" and the shepherds glorify and praise God for all that they had heard and seen, even as the angels had told them.]