

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 2- Luke 2:1-7** 20- The Birth of Jesus Christ

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Luke 2:1-7

Now in the second Chapter of Luke's Gospel Account- we find what is probably the most familiar Story in all of Christianity because it is the Story of the birth of Jesus Christ. And, of course, we associate the Truth about the birth of Jesus with a Holiday known to us today a Christmas. Not let me say to you that I have no idea when Jesus was born- and I have much against this Holiday called Christmas.

But I do appreciate a nation that will have a Federal Holiday to commemorate the Birth of the only Savior of the world, and while I cry out against the commercialization and the materialization of Christmas with its pagan elements and greed- it is better that we have this Holiday in America than we don't have it, and so I am not with those who do not want to celebrate Christmas at all.

And so because of Christmas- a whole lot of folks know about Christ's birth who might not normally know about it- so I use the time of Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus and to make sure that my children know this Man Who lived and died and rose again.

Now while it is true that most people know that Jesus was born in a manger- most people do not know all of the rich details that Luke provides for us here in his account. And you can move through this rather rapidly and it seems pretty simple and straightforward- but if you slow down a little bit- as I intend to do, and dig in a little deeper- you will find some very profound things that are going on behind the scenes.

As I have told you before- Luke is a very remarkable historian. His selectivity under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is rich and profound, and we are being blessed by what God gave to him as we go on through this Journey together.

Now I told you before that Luke is one of four biographers- one of four Gospel writers- who tell the Story of Salvation in Jesus Christ. And this is how Chapter 2 begins:

Luke 2:1-7

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,

7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Now that last statement, "**there was no guest room available for them.**" has become a very familiar part of Christmas lore. And it really is not legend- it is fact as that text indicates.

Now we've all seen "No Vacancy" signs posted outside motels as we have traveled on vacation, and there was a certain level of desperation that the kids were in need of a place to sleep and it was a strange town and it was getting late and the "No Vacancy" sign made this a potentially serious situation.

Well, as far as Joseph and Mary were concerned- their circumstances made the "No Vacancy" sign in Bethlehem all the more severe since Mary was about to deliver a baby. This young couple, Joseph probably being very young, and Mary- no older than 15- the two of them had journeyed about 85 to 90 miles on donkey from their home in Nazareth.

They had traveled through land that was filled with sacred memories- memories which they would have because they knew the Old Testament history and the Old Testament stories. They passed through Shiloh- where Hannah came to pray for a child before the Lord. And then there was Gilgal- where her son Samuel sat to judge Israel. They

may have even passed through the valley of Bacah- which the psalmist had sung about, and the road perhaps would wind pass Bethel- with all its patriarchal memories, and Rama- where Jeremiah pictured Rachel weeping for her children. And they would climb up a little bit to Gibeon- where Solomon worshiped, and finally they would come to the great metropolis of Jerusalem- and passing through Jerusalem- they went by Mount Miriah by the hill of Zion- across the top of that mountain- that plateau on which Jerusalem sits- about six miles further- they would then come to the small village of Bethlehem.

Now Bethlehem is the town of Ruth and Boaz. Bethlehem is the place where Jacob's first love Rachel died and was buried. And even to this day as you go through that region- even the taxi drivers will point to the right as you go out from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and say, *"There's Rachel's tomb."*

But Bethlehem was most notably the town where David- the beloved King was born. David was the greatest king that Israel had ever known, and David was the great ancestor of royalty out of whose loins eventually would come the Messiah- Who would be the great King of all kings- Who would rule over a kingdom in Israel that would extend across the face of the earth and would last forever.

And so when they came to Bethlehem- verse 7 says that there was no room for them. Nine months pregnant, in a matter of a few days to deliver a baby, and no place to stay. No relatives waiting with a warm home. It was late fall or early winter. Nobody to care for this little couple- no room for them. And that note certainly is symbolic of the future for Jesus. It seems to me that as far as Jesus is concerned there's still a "No Vacancy" sign hanging on most of the world.

But before we look at the young couple- let me go back in the text a little bit because there's so much more here that we need to understand. Reviewing briefly, a startling event happened back in **Luke 1:26**.

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,

27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

So in the sixth month of the pregnancy of Elizabeth- the mother of John the Baptist- an angel came by the name of Gabriel came to a city in Galilee. Now Galilee is the northern part of the land of Israel. And this messenger from God came to Nazareth- which was a non-descript kind of off the beaten track blue-collar community. And in that place - the angel came directly to a virgin named Mary- who had been betrothed or engaged to a young man whose name was Joseph and Joseph was a direct descendant of King David.

And in verse 28- Luke tells us what the angel said to Mary:

...Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.

And of course- Mary was greatly troubled at the statement and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be. And in Verse 31, the angel says,

... You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

That's the announcement from God to you- Mary- you're going to have a baby, and your baby will be a boy, and you will call His Name- Jesus. And Jesus means "God Saves", and Jesus will save His people from their sins, as Matthew records it.

Further, the baby is described in verse 32,

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

The phrase, "**The Most High**" is "El-Elyon" and is a term God.

32 ... [Jesus] shall be called the Son of the Highest. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

The Kingdom that Jesus will rule over will have no limit and it will have no end. So Mary- you're going to have a baby. And your baby is going to be the Son of God- as well as your Son- as well as the heir of David's eternal Throne. And this Jesus is going to reign over the throne that was promised to David, and His reign will have no limit and no end. And, of course, this young girl, Mary, said to the angel,

"How can this be since I'm a virgin? This is impossible." And the angel said, "Here's how it's going to happen...verse 35...

...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

In other words, it's going to be a miraculous conception. God is going to plant life in you without a man. Verse 37,

For nothing will be impossible with God.

So the Promise had come to this young girl that she was going to be the mother of a baby- even though she was a virgin. The baby would be miraculously conceived by God. The baby would be the Son of God in human flesh. And when Mary appeared soon after this to be pregnant, and when Joseph, to whom she was engaged, found out about it- he was shocked- he was stunned- because there was no normal explanation for her pregnancy other than obviously Mary had had a relationship with someone else.

And Joseph knew her to be a godly young girl- a righteous young girl. And he was shaken by the fact that she was pregnant and had obviously betrayed him and he was trying to decide what to do- whether to divorce her, whether to just break off the engagement, or whether to stone her to death for this sin when an angel appeared to him, as recorded in **Matthew 1:20** and said to him,

20 ... do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of 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."

So Joseph got the message from another angel- in a dream- that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit to bring into the world the King, the Savior, God in human flesh.

So when you come to **Luke 2**- this prophecy has come to pass. Nine months have passed since Gabriel's announcement. And Mary is full term, and in this passage- she gives birth to the baby Jesus. Now as

Luke tells us the story of the birth- which is very simply told, the beginning of verse 7,

And she gave birth to her firstborn son...

... that's it. This is another one of those classic understatement that Luke makes- she brought forth her first born son. Nothing particular about that birth- it was like any other birth. So while this Child was not like any other child- the birth was like every other birth.

But Luke wants us to grasp the significance of what's going on here- so he provides for us- like any good historian does- a setting for this event. The event is in verse 7- **“she gave birth to her firstborn son”**. But the setting is what enriches the event and informs it. And Luke works his way down- and starts with the world setting and then a national setting and then a personal setting.

First we learn the role that the larger world played in this- then we see that part of the world that was uniquely designed by God for the nation of Israel- and then the particular circumstances of this particular couple in Bethlehem and then the birth of the Baby.

So Luke gives us the big picture and then zooms in to the little picture- so that we can grasp- in every perspective- the wonderful solemn richness of this remarkable, unheard of event.

So let's look at the world setting first. Look again at **Luke 2:1-3:**

1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.

"Now in those days," that is the days when Herod was reigning as an Idumaeen king in Israel, the days when Gabriel came to Elizabeth and Zacharias, the days when John the prophet and forerunner of Messiah was born- those days,

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

Now I am going to show you one of the primary rules of Biblical interpretation. And that is the rule of context. In Real Estate- there are only three things that matter- location, location, and location. In other words- the most important things when buying real estate is the location of the property. And there are only three things to remember when interpreting the Bible: context, context, and context. The single most important thing in Biblical interpretation is the context of the verse or passage that you are dealing with. Who is doing the talking, to whom is he talking, and is this an eternal Truth or a temporary statement?

What God the Holy Ghost actually said in that verse is very important- but what God meant by what he said is even more important- because sometimes what the Bible looks like it says is not exactly what the Bible means. Now before you stone me and cast me out- let me explain.

Take this verse in **Luke 2:1:**

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

Note: In the King James Version, Verse 1 reads:

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

The Bible says “**all the inhabited earth**”. That’s what it says, right? But did, in fact, Caesar tax the nation of China in this decree? Did Caesar tax the North American Indians with this decree? Did he tax Greenland or South America in this decree? No. So even though it says here- “**all the world should be taxed (KJV)**” all the world was not taxed- was it?

So what this verse *says* here is not exactly what it *means* because what it *says* is not enough, and we must put this verse in context. What region of the world was Caesar Augustus ruling over? Was he ruling over China or North America or South America or Greenland? No, Caesar Augustus was the Roman Emperor and he ruled over the Roman Empire which basically surrounded the Mediterranean Sea and excluded the rest of the world.

So when it says here that all the world was taxed we know by putting this verse in context that Luke meant all the *Roman* World or all the world over which Caesar Augustus had control. Now that is an example of putting infallible Scripture into context, and if you don't do that as you study God's Word- you will get off base real quick.

Now we also know from history that this was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and so all were proceeding to register for the census- just like it says here- **each to his own city**.

Now it's amazing how God orchestrates everything- how Sovereign God is- whether He has a willing or an unwilling subject, whether He has a knowing or unknowing subject- part of God bringing together the details and all the components of the birth of the Messiah- the right time in the right place- God had to move on the mind of a pagan, godless Caesar- who knew nothing about the Old Testament, nothing about the coming of the Messiah- and nothing about God whatsoever. Caesar was in every sense of the word- a pagan- and yet he paid a critical role in the fulfillment of prophecy about the birth of the God/Man- the Messiah- Jesus Christ. And it was because Caesar made this decree.

And his name was Caesar Augustus- which is how we know him in the New Testament. His actual name was Gaius Octavius- and he's known as Octavian- that was his given name. "Caesar" is a term like king, or emperor, or Pharaoh, or President- it's simply a title. "Augustus" is an adjective meaning: *revered one, honored one, or majestic one*.

And it was a title given to him in 27 B.C. by the Roman Senate. His actual name Gaius Octavius, and he is known as Octavian Caesar, but became known as Caesar Augustus because the Roman Senate honored him with that description.

And we know that this man ruled the Roman Empire for 45 years. And we also know that he was a brilliant man and was a formidable ruler. This is the man who created what was called- the "Pax Romana", or the Roman Peace that stretched over the whole Roman Empire, the farthest point of Europe to the west- all the way to Balbek in the Middle East. He was a gifted, gifted ruler and leader. He was such a remarkable man that he was called, and it's inscribed in stone, "the savior of the world." That's how highly he was revered. He was worshiped as a god and as a deity.

This one- who was the false savior of the world- knew absolutely nothing about the birth of the true Savior of the world. But in the normal course of his rule he determined that a census needed to be taken in the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was vast and he used census basically for taxation. That's the same reason we have census today in our own country- to identify all the citizens so they can be taxed. And that's exactly what was happening in that day. He wanted to tax the full extent of the Roman Empire because he was providing services for all of these nations which had become vassals to the great power of Rome. And so he made a decree that the whole of his Empire would be registered so they could be taxed.

And this was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And that would have been around 8 B.C. And so if you work all the chronology backwards of the years- you would have a known census in the year 6 A.D., and they were at 14-year intervals, as history tells us, so 14 years before that, the first census would have been 8 B.C., the second one in 6 A.D., fourteen years later.

So this census was made in 8 B.C. But there was not compliance with that census apparently in Judah until two to four years later because the Jews did not like to pay taxes to Rome and apparently Herod was able to stall it off as long as possible. But finally sometime between 6 to 4 B.C- the Jews were forced to comply. And, in fact, they were forced to comply with such specificity that there was evidently a deadline like the April 15th deadline that we have in which you had to be registered. And that's why Joseph and the very pregnant Mary had to make a 90-mile journey walking or riding a bumpy donkey over very rough terrain in late fall or winter to do this thing and couldn't have put it off any longer.

And all of this just so happens to fit into the Purposes of God to be sure that they were there in Bethlehem when that child was born because that was God's Plan.

Now Caesar didn't know anything about this. And Herod didn't know anything about the Purposes and Plan of God. But God was working all the details on a world setting. So from Caesar's standpoint he was just taxing the people. And Luke says that it was at a time when a man named Quirinius was governor of Syria. And it was the first of two periods in which he exercised some official duty. And he was also a ruler at the second census that came along in 6 A.D.

So based on the timetable that Luke gives us here- Jesus was born sometime between 6 to 4 B.C. and the people who read **Luke** originally would have know more specifically about this- but we don't have any records as to anything more specific than in that general time frame when Jesus was born. So Jesus wasn't actually born in- say- zero A.D., but rather somewhere between 6 to 4 B.C. and He was born literally in Bethlehem as a result of the political strategies of a godless, pagan Caesar.

Now verse 3 says that everybody had to register for the census and it says,

each to his own city

And this was not a Roman stipulation- as far as we know. The Romans would have been happy for people to register in the town they lived in. So this is most likely a Jewish stipulation that the Jewish rulers put on their own people or something that King Herod made them do- but not the Romans.

Now since this is the very first census that the Romans had, there wouldn't have been any tradition or precedent to go by since there hadn't been any prior censuses by the Roman government. So the requirement that everyone had to register in the city of their ancestry was most likely was a Jewish prescription. The Jews decided that everybody should go back to the place where the records were kept. You remember when the children of Israel came to the land of Canaan, the whole land was divided into sections and tribes were given sections. And in those tribal sections families were given areas and among those families there would be certain areas they would live in and certain villages their ancestors would have settled in. And that's where they would go. They were very careful about keeping genealogical records.

Now, by the way, when they destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD- the Romans destroyed all the Jewish records- every one of them. But at the time that this census was taken- those records would have been carefully kept by scribes in all the local areas. So I'm sure by Jewish demand the people were to go back to the place of their original ancestry.

Now this may seem like nothing to some of you-but this was all very critical to the Purposes of God so that the Messiah would be born

in the place that God had pre-determined. If Caesar Augustus had made his decree one year earlier or later, if Herod had resisted Caesar's decree one month shorter or longer- the child would have been born in Nazareth and would not have fulfilled Prophecy, and, therefore, their child would not have been the Messiah and we would all still be in our sins. And then we could conclude that God couldn't control circumstances and was, therefore, not Sovereign.

But that didn't happen and it never happens because God is Absolutely Sovereign and He controls everything. God literally writes history as His Story.

Now let's turn to the second setting- the national setting of Israel. Luke is concerned now to move from the world scene to the land of Israel itself. And so in verses 4 and 5 he says,

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,

5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.

Now when it says here that Joseph also went up from Galilee from, or literally in the Greek, "out of" the city of Nazareth where they lived to Judea- that's the lower portion of Israel- to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, which is probably a term meaning house of bread. And he went there because he was of the house and family of David in order to register along with Mary who was engaged to him and was with child.

So this part of Luke's narrative gets us into the context of the land of Israel. So we're out of the Roman Empire, we're away from Quirinius and Caesar Augustus- and we're now talking about Galilee, Nazareth, Judea, and the city of David, called Bethlehem.

So the focus has narrowed away from the world scene to look at the nation Israel. And the nation of Israel is connected to Scripture. God gave to the Jews the Scripture. And the Scripture was very, very specific about where the Messiah was to be born.

You see, there was a prophet by the name of Micah, and in his prophecy **Micah 5:2**, this is what we read- turn with me to the Old Testament to **Micah 5:2**,

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.

Now if you go back to **Genesis 35:19**, you will find this village was originally called Ephrathah- and later became known as Bethlehem. And so the prophet Micah identifies it by both names- Bethlehem Ephrathah. And he says you are little among the clans of Judah, or too little to be among the clans of Judah- and there's a couple of ways to translate that- but it means "insignificant". So Bethlehem is insignificant- but from you- "one will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel." So Bethlehem is going to be the birthplace of the ruler of Israel.

Now Micah can't be talking about David here because David had been born 300 years before Micah prophesied this. David was born a thousand years before the Messiah. And Micah's prophecy was 700 years before the Messiah. So here we are- Micah is talking 700 years before the birth of the Messiah- and he says here that "One will go forth out of Bethlehem to be a ruler in Israel."

Now some would ask, "How do you know that Micah is talking about the Messiah here?" Because the very next line says,

... His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity

...in other words- this ruler who is going to be born in Bethlehem some day- his goings forth are from long ago from the days of eternity. In other words- this ruler will be an eternal being.

So Micah was saying here that there will be a ruler born in Bethlehem who has been alive forever. And that is a very specific prophecy.

So Luke wants us to understand this- but interestingly enough- Luke never mentions this prophecy of Micah. Luke never refers to the prophecy of Micah. He just doesn't say anything about it. But every Jew who was waiting for the Messiah knew the prophecy of Micah. It was an unmistakable prophecy.

But Matthew does mention it in his Gospel Account. In Matthew 2- Matthew records that when Herod asked his scholars where Christ should be born- they said this beginning in verse 5:

5 They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

6 ‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’

... referring to this specific prophecy here in **Micah**.

So the Jews knew that Bethlehem would be the birth place of the Messiah- and it was common knowledge so this is probably why Luke didn't need to mention it in his Gospel Account.

But it becomes very important because when Caesar Augustus put the census in motion- the end result of that was that this young couple was going to be in Bethlehem, and because of the date established- they were going to be there at the very moment when that Child was born.

So, Joseph went up from Galilee- out of the city of Nazareth- to Judea. By the way, when you look at a map- you see Galilee where appears and you see Judea down there- and you think, *“Well- that's up”*. But geographically- Galilee is actually *lower* than Bethlehem. In fact, Nazareth sits up on a hill- on the north part of the Plain of Esdraelon, the Valley of Migiddo- and you would go down into the valley or the plain and you would start a slow climb to about 2564 feet or so to where Bethlehem is- almost on the same hill as Jerusalem. So that's why it says he went “up”.

He went up to the city of David, it says. Up to the city of David. Judea is the southern region. The city of David is called Bethlehem. Now I need to clarify something for you.

If you go to the Old Testament and you read about the city of David in **2Samuel 5** and elsewhere- you'll read about the city of David. And in the Old Testament the city of David refers to the hill of Zion in Jerusalem where David sat as king. In fact, if you talk to a historian or a guide in Israel- they even call this section of Mount Zion which is a little bit to the south of the temple mount in Jerusalem- they call that hill of Zion- “the city of David”.

The city of Jerusalem was the larger city but the “city of David” was the place where David reigned and ruled on Mount Zion. It was the city of David *within* the larger city of Jerusalem. So when you're reading in the Old Testament about the city of David- it's referring to the Mount Zion where David reigned.

But here Luke tells us about the city of David and he's referring to Bethlehem. And that also is a city of David. Now it's not the city where David reigned- but it is the city where David was born. And that, too, is a city of David because David was born in Bethlehem.

Now Bethlehem, as I said, was a pretty obscure place. But there was a man living there identified in **1Samuel 16** as Jesse the Bethlehemite. And in **1Samuel 16**- God goes to Samuel and He says...Look, I've had it with Saul- he's history. Saul's out and I have pronounced a curse on his blood line. And He says to Samuel- you're going to have to get a new king. And I want you to go to Bethlehem because there's a man there by the name of Jesse- the Bethlehemite- and I'm going to pick one of his sons to be the new king.

Now Jesse went and got all of his sons all shined up and polished, and all the sons stood in line and God picked the most unlikely one out of the whole bunch. He picked the baby boy of the family- David.

Now it's important then since God spoke through Micah and said that the Messiah is going to be born in Bethlehem- that the Messiah be born in Bethlehem- because God cannot lie. And so, God uses Caesar Augustus and Herod and all the political machinery to work together to push Joseph down to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, and he goes there because he was of the house and family of David.

And as we learned earlier in **Luke 1:25&26**- Joseph was a direct descendant of David. And we will also find out in **Luke 3**- that Mary also was a direct descendant of David. And that's important that through Mary and Joseph- even though Joseph was not His real father- but through both of their bloodlines- Jesus was qualified to be King.

And again I remind you- that this is not just a series of coincidences- but that this is the Sovereign Plan of God to bring Redemption to lost Man, and this Sovereign Plan is working itself out through the lives of all these people- Providentially getting them exactly where they needed to be because the Messiah was a son of David and was to be born in the city of David. And let me tell you just how important this is- if Jesus was born anywhere else besides Bethlehem- then He was not the Savior and we are all yet in our sins- heading straight for Hell.

Now **Luke 2:5** says they went to register for the census, along with Mary who was engaged to him and was with child. Really a fearful thing for a 15-year old to take such a trip under such circumstances.

Now historians have struggled for many years over this issue of what Luke meant when he said "with Mary." Here in this verse. Was it required that she go there to register, too? Wouldn't it have been enough for the father to register for his wife and his family? And we really don't know the answer to that. We don't know whether she needed to register or not. We don't know whether Caesar or Herod or the Jews required to have her signature, or whether it was required to have her indicate some properties or some ancestry or whatever...we don't know that.

But we do know this- that upon being pregnant- she knew there was only one person in the whole world who would understand her condition and the circumstances surrounding her conception. And it must have been very difficult to explain to her mother and her father how all of a sudden a 15-year old girl appears pregnant and she's never had a relationship with a man. And everybody was suspicious that she is lying. And it would have been hard enough for her parents to understand that- let alone strangers and outsiders. And we can only imagine the gossip which must have gone on and the shame that she must have had to bear.

But we also know that Mary went to visit Elizabeth for those three months as a way not only to connect to somebody who would understand a conception miracle because she had been allowed to conceive John in her old age- but to get her out of that environment where she was exposed to so much potential shame because she was pregnant.

Now I said all that to say this. I don't think there's any way in the world that Joseph who had to make the trip to register would ever have gone without her. I mean, it was a way for him to take her out of that environment which was very difficult for her, and it's also for certain that he wanted to be there when that little life came into the world- because by this time- he knew what was going on too. Joseph knew that his wife- whom he had not yet even consummated their marriage- was pregnant with the Son of God.

Now I don't think that Joseph would have ever said that publicly- he wasn't about to say that and get stoned to death for blasphemy- but he probably just said something like- *"You know, I've never seen a woman bring forth the Son of God before and I want to see it- I don't want to miss this even- so I'm taking her with me."*

Because you have to understand that by now- Joseph knows that Jesus is going to be born and that this child is going to save God's people from their sins because that is what the angel told him in a dream. He knew this was Immanuel- God with us. He knew what Gabriel had told Mary. How many times had Mary rehearsed that conversation to her husband? We can only imagine. I mean Joseph comes home and his fiancé looks at him and says, "Well it's like this, Joseph- the angel Gabriel came and told me I was going to be impregnated by God." Sure. How many times did Mary have to tell him that? Well probably a lot of times until the angel finally appeared to him and told him the story, and now he knew exactly what was going on. So they both had to go. Worldly conditions pressed them both to go- but Joseph no doubt wasn't going to miss this event for anything.

So I want you to notice that a forced journey to Bethlehem was necessary for a pregnant virgin in order for the Word of God to be fulfilled concerning the birth of the Messiah. And it had to be Bethlehem because that was the home of David the great king. And that again would ensure by virtue of Scripture not only the decree of Caesar but by virtue of Scripture- God moved them there to fulfill the clear Promise of God by the prophet Micah.

So that is the world setting and the national setting- all fitting in nicely with Roman strategy and Old Testament prophecy. And now we come to the personal setting- and this is where the magnificence of the Story really comes through.

So as we move on past the world and national setting- Luke's focus now is on the personal circumstances that are so interesting. Please read **Luke 2:6&7:**

6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now look closely at verse 6 for the phrase- "**while they were there.**" So we really don't know how long Joseph and Mary were there. The Bible says right after that that "**the days**" were accomplished that she should be delivered. So they were there some days- how long – we don't really know- but it was days- maybe three, maybe four, maybe six,

maybe seven- I don't know, maybe eight- we don't know. But they were there for days.

And also please notice that it doesn't tell us *where* in Bethlehem they were. But it does tell us at the end of verse 7, "**there was no room for them in the inn.**" And I'll tell you this, if there had been room in an inn for the prior days, nobody in their right mind would have kicked them out when she was about to deliver the baby. And some have suggested that for the first few days they were there they might have stayed with relatives. But what relative is going to kick them out on the day of the birth of the child? No, the fact of the matter is wherever they were when the baby was born was where they had been the whole time- they were there in that manger. And they just were there for an unstated time in an undesignated place.

Now these are very simple words that excite profound imagination because for all intents and purposes- Joseph and Mary were homeless. They were the homeless. Now we know from history that there were shelters- just like there are today- that the nation of Israel provided for people who were homeless. Public shelters.

But because we can read about how the Roman soldiers were at this time- you can be sure that the Roman soldiers and the Roman registrars- who were doing the registration of the people- and all the Roman dignitaries occupied whatever few guest rooms existed in a little tiny place like Bethlehem. And we also have to understand that the "inn" that Luke talks about here was not like what you think of as an inn in our day- like it might have been some kind of three-story motel.

No such thing existed. Whatever accommodations there were in all of Bethlehem would have been taken by the officials- either the Roman or the Jewish officials- who were running this whole census and Joseph and Mary were left with nothing but a manger. Now read **Luke 2:7:**

And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

So they were there in Bethlehem and the days were completed for her to give birth- the nine months was up. And Luke says absolutely nothing about the details except to say,

And she gave birth to her firstborn son

And she gave birth. That's all it says. In the fullness of time- God sent forth His Son born of a woman- Immanuel- the God of all eternity stepped into time and space. The Lord of immensity- the Lord of Omnipresence was confined to a body about seven pounds in weight and under two feet in length. And that little life came out into the arms of that young father. And neither of them could fathom what was going on. God became Man and nobody had a clue what to do.

Now Luke is careful to tell us that Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, and it is interesting that Luke uses the Greek word *prototokon*- which means: *firstborn*, but he does *not* use the word, *monogenes*- which means: *only son*.

Now Roman Catholic Theology would have you believe that Mary had only one child and that she was a perpetual virgin until her death, and that she ascended up into Heaven where she hears and answers prayers and dispenses Grace and intercedes for us to Jesus, and Mary has been lifted up to the point where she is almost the fourth part of the Godhead. But none of that is true. Roman Catholic Theology about Mary is – for the most part- blasphemous and Unbiblical and should not be accepted by anyone.

The Bible says that Mary had many sons and daughters. Mary absolutely was a virgin until she brought forth Jesus, and then Joseph and Mary had normal relations as any other husband and wife do and they had boys and they had girls.

In **Matthew 12**- we are introduced to Jesus' half-brothers. In chapter 13- they're even named for us. Jesus' half-brothers- who were born to both Joseph and Mary- James, Joseph, Simon, Judas. And it is this Judas who wrote the next to the last Book in the New Testament that is titled with the Greek transliteration of his Jewish name and is called Jude.

And in **Matthew 13:54** we read this:

54 He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers?

55 Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

56 And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man get all these things?"

The people of that area looked at that family as just an ordinary family- a whole family full of kids. And we meet Jesus' half-brothers again later on. Luke records their appearance in chapter 8. And we read about His brothers in **John 2** and **John 7**- that they didn't believe that Jesus was God until after His Resurrection. And we read about His brothers again in **The Acts 1**. So while it is true that Jesus was the prototokon- the first born son of Mary- He was *not* the *monogenes*, the *only* son of Mary.

And that's very important because not only is He the firstborn which, of course, means that she was a virgin- but He is the firstborn which means that He has the right to the inheritance. Jesus is the primogenitor, as it was called- the primary one who alone had right to the family inheritance.

Now Joseph really didn't have a lot to leave Him because he was a tradesman- a carpenter. And Mary didn't have any great estate, as far as we know, to leave Him either. But what Jesus did have was the right to the throne of Israel.

There hadn't been a king in Israel for a long, long time. And the Babylonians had devastated the nation of Israel, and they were followed by the Medo-Persians, and they were followed by the Greeks, and they were followed by the Romans. And somebody was always ruling in Israel but it wasn't in the royal line of David. But now through Jesus- the royal line is there, and so what they passed on to Jesus was the right to rule on the throne of David. He was the firstborn. If you study the Old Testament you find how important that firstborn inheritance was.

So when Jesus came into the world- He came in the most comfortless conditions...smelly, filthy...and this is the wonder of Grace. And this is part of the Story that when God came down He came all the way down. Jesus thought His equality with God was not something to be held on to but He gave it up and humbled Himself, and He humbled Himself all the way down...not just to a stinking stable but to become a substitute for stinking sinners and bear the stench of our guilt in His own body. He came down to the poor and the lowly and the humble and

the base and the wicked. He came down to the common people to bring His glorious Salvation.

And so it was fitting that He was born in a stinking, smelly stable because what was smells far worse to the Nostrils of God is not the odor of animals- but the odor of sinners. So God sent the Savior all the way down into the lives of the lowly and the whole picture of that scene is a metaphor for the stench of sin which Jesus bore in His Own Body.

His little cloths and His little Body must have collected the smell. And it would have been the smell of animals, the stench of animals, the smell of fires burning there to keep people warm, the smell of the humanity that milled around in that place, the filthiest place imaginable. Unthinkable entrance for the...into the world for God's Son...sweat and pain and blood and coldness and manure and straw and odors...but He came all the way down to the stench of sin to bear in His Own Body- our sins on the Cross. And this was a picture and metaphor of the condescension of God. He came all the way down, all the way down...all the way down to the smell of a stable, all the way down to the smell of a sinner like you and like me. They had no room for Him then, they still don't have any room for Him.

The Apostle John says that Jesus was in the world, and the world was made by Him, but the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, His own received Him not. But I tell you that Jesus came for sinners. He came all the way down to bear in His own body the wretched, wicked sin that belongs to us. They didn't have any room for Jesus on that day- but I ask you this morning. Do you have room for Jesus in your heart? Does Jesus have a place in your life or will you do like they did and just push Jesus off into a stable?

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.