

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

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 2- Luke 2:11** **22- Unto You is Born a Savior- Christ the Lord**

March 15, 2009

Luke 2:11

I really thought that we were going to journey through **Luke** a little faster than we are. We began this journey together on October 19, 2008 and this is the 22nd message and we are only at **Luke 2:11**. And I am tempted to apologize for that- but which message was not important? Which message was unnecessary? So forgive me for asking you to forgive me for going through this Gospel Account in such detail.

Now I knew Luke was a great historian, and that is being verified as we go- he was fastidious and very meticulous with detail. And I knew that Luke was a great Theologian- but the more I'm studying this Gospel- the more impressed I have become with the depth and the breadth and the height and the length of his theology. And when you're going through narrative passages- you can be content with the Story but not if you understand the heart of the writer...both the heart of Luke who wrote it and the Heart of God the Holy Spirit Who inspired it.

It seems as though everything Luke says on the surface has massive amounts of supportive truth and history underneath it. And that is certainly the case in the text that is before us today.

Let me read you **Luke 2:8-14**:

8 In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;

11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 And suddenly there appeared 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 men with whom He is pleased.”

Now that's a very familiar passage of Scripture. It is certainly read many, many times every Christmas season. It is probably the most familiar element of the Christmas Story to the world at large. But there are three things of depth and profound Truth in this brief Story.

1. It talks about a Savior, the Lord
2. It talks about a multitude of angels
3. It speaks of the Presence of God and glorifying God in the highest.

And all these are far-reaching subjects in the Bible. This is the kind of passage you could spend a lifetime in. And we'll just scan over it lightly- even if we spend a few weeks on it.

As I told you last week- seven hundred years before this Baby was born- a Hebrew prophet named Micah was moved along by the Holy Spirit to pen down an inspired prophecy that said that when the Messiah did come 700 years later- He would be born in of all places an obscure small town called Bethlehem. That's what the prophet said and it's recorded in **Micah 5:2**. And it was written down and published and was in wide circulation around the world for seven centuries before Jesus was born.

And because it is the Word of God- then it had to come to pass and so that is where the Messiah was born. God's Word always comes to pass- it's always accurate; It's always true. And if the prophet said He was to be born in Bethlehem- then Bethlehem it is. And that's exactly what the story tells us.

Luke 2:7 says, "**She gave birth to her firstborn son.**" And **Luke 2:4** says, "[Mary] **was in Bethlehem.**" But what is so strange is that it wasn't the parents of Jesus that assured the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Nowhere in the New Testament record does it say that Joseph was concerned because he knew that Mary was having a child conceived by the Holy Spirit and he knew this child was Jesus who would save His

people from their sins and he knew this child was going to fulfill the promise to David and be the son of David who would reign on a Kingdom...on a throne in a Kingdom that would last forever and ever- so Joseph knew that he had to go to Bethlehem so that his son would be born in the right city. The Bible doesn't say that anywhere. We don't know whether Joseph was even aware of **Micah 5:2**. We don't know anything about what Joseph thought.

And there is also nothing in the Bible that would make us think that Mary said to Joseph...*"You know, Joseph, my son is the Messiah, and the prophet Micah said that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem- so we need to make that 90 mile trip because I'm about to have the baby!"*

Nothing in the Scripture to indicate that either Joseph or Mary played any particular role in planning to be in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. Human nature would dictate that Mary would want to be near her mother, near her family, in her hometown- but not in a stable in the middle of a group of strangers overpopulating a small village- 90 miles from home because they were all there trying to get through a census registration that had been demanded by the Roman government.

No one would purposely plan to have your baby in a half public stable in the open air and have to put him in a feed trough. Certainly you would not want to make an 85 to 90 mile journey sometimes walking and sometimes riding on the back of a donkey when your nine months pregnant.

Certainly the thought of a birth without medication, a birth without comfort, would be enough to weigh heavy on your mind and cause you to say...*"You know, the best place for me to be is at home."* The point I am making here this morning, dear friends, is that the Bible is silent about these things. And there is absolutely nothing in the text of sacred Scripture to hint that either Joseph or Mary played any role at all in being in Bethlehem other than the fact that they were there.

But even though Joseph and Mary did not initiate being in Bethlehem- they were there- weren't they?

And the reason they were in that small little village the night that Jesus was born was because Almighty God Sovereignly planned to have them there and He Sovereignly allowed the pagan Roman army to invade Israel and overtake them and God Sovereignly allowed a pagan Caesar to proclaim a census to force Joseph and Mary to have to make

the 90 mile trip so that what God Sovereignly spoke through the prophet Micah- 700 years earlier would come to pass. That is the extent that God goes to assure that His Promise comes to pass.

And you and I can take great hope in that because if God goes to that length to make sure that an obscure prophecy comes to pass- 700-years later- what will God do to assure that His promise to never leave us nor forsake us- even in a Recession, even in a country that is becoming more and more hostile towards Biblical Christianity, even in tough times- what will God do to assure that His Promises to us will come to pass?

And I've always said that while I can't comprehend the Power of miracles- I do understand how God does miracles. I can understand how things are just rocking along and suddenly God inserts Himself into the affairs of men, He invades history, God violates the stew out of our wills, and He imposes His Sovereign Will on human beings and on nations and on events that nobody would have ever thought of in a million years, but, suddenly- God just does something for no other reason other than to assure that what He says and what He wants will come to pass- exactly the way He says it.

God just stops the natural processes of life and physics and matter and the universe, and He does something supernatural and incomprehensible to me. And what I find so unfathomable in my own thinking is how God works not just Miraculously but Providentially.

And Providence is a term that has gone out of fashion in the modern Church with the rise of pagan humanistic philosophy- but Providence has to do with God orchestrating all of those contingencies and all of those thoughts and actions to effect exactly what He wants, when He wants, with whom He wants, where He wants. Now that is amazing. But that's what you have here with Joseph and Mary.

So you have this decree by a Roman Caesar- who knows nothing about Messianic hope and prophecy, or the Bible, or the Old Testament, or God. And you have a stalling off or a delay by a Herod who is least of all interested in doing anything that would bring about a new king, or to give credence to His claim by being born in Bethlehem. And neither of these men knew anything about what God was doing here. And yet every single thing they do, every independent choice they made, every willful act that they ignorantly made- worked to the effect that God's perfect Will came to pass and Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

So both Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem only because they were *forced* to go to Bethlehem at that particular time for no other reason than because of this census. The Bible never says anything about that they were trying to get there so they could make sure they fulfilled Biblical prophecy. You can't find that anywhere. It was the census that drove them to Bethlehem which implies that they were up against a deadline. And it would have been a lot more convenient- especially for Mary- if they could have waited until the child was born and *then* go to Bethlehem- but if Jesus was to be the Messiah- He has to be born in Bethlehem.

The master expositor, David Gooding writes,

"Of course, Augustus knew nothing about this effect of the census and the last thing he or his vassal, Herod, would have done would be to strengthen the credentials of a messianic claimant to the throne of Israel. For Augustus, the taking of censuses was one of the ways he employed to get control over the various parts of his empire. But...and here is the irony of the thing...in the process as he thought of tightening his grip on his huge empire, he so organized things that Jesus, Son of Mary, Son of David, Son of God, destined to sit on the throne of Israel and the throne of the world was born in the city of David, His royal ancestor. Fulfilling all unknowingly the prophecy of Micah, Caesar Augustus established this particular detail in the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah."

And Gooding goes on to say,

"When John the Baptist was conceived, God turned back the processes of nature." That was a miracle because Zacharias and Elizabeth were old and barren. "When our Lord was conceived in the womb of Mary there was introduced into nature something which nature had never known before and which nature by herself could never have produced, namely a virgin conception. That is miraculous. But when God's Son and destined ruler of the kings of the earth entered the world of men, there was apparently no interference with men's will or freedom of action whatsoever. Augustus had his own completely adequate reasons for his action and he did exactly what he wanted to do...and we could add Herod was the same way. Yet Augustus did what had he known he would not have wished to do, he established the claim of the royal Son of David. He did in fact what had been predetermined by the counsel and foreknowledge of God."

Now remember that even though this was the greatest birth in the history of the world- it was very obscure. Look again at **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 Mary laid her new born Child- the Owner and the Creator of the Universe in a manger. Now remember that there were these commercial shelters- maybe with the four sides- the kind of a lean-to with a loft so that some could sleep above and some could sleep below in little rooms that would have thin walls between them made of wood. And in the middle of those shelters was a courtyard where all the animals would stay and there would be feed troughs there. And there they were- Joseph and Mary- and it was there that Mary gave birth to the savior of the World.

And when that little child came into the world and cried its first cry of life- nobody knew who it was. Nobody realized that the eternal holy creator God of the universe had just entered the world in human form. That little child was born in utter anonymity in a busy, bustling, overcrowded little town. And nobody besides His parents even knew.

Joseph knew because he had been told to name the baby "Jesus", for He would save His people from their sins. And he had been told that His name would be Immanuel- God with us. So Joseph knew this was the incarnate God Who was to save His people from their sins.

And Mary knew because Gabriel had told her the details that this would be the Son of the Most High, the one who would sit on the throne of David and reign on that throne forever and ever. But nobody else knew.

And frankly- it would have been pretty difficult to convince anybody else that this baby was God in human flesh because what you have lying in a feed trough was a little Jewish baby. Not an uncommon situation. And there may have been other births in the same town that night. And that may be why the angels said, *"Look for the one in the manger- the feed trough- that's the sign."* Any baby born that time in Bethlehem would have been wrapped in cloths- they all did that. But there would be only one in a feed trough. Not a very grand entrance for God into the world, was it?

But our passage for today breaks the silence and ends the anonymity in a most remarkable way. And as I read- an angel appears to make the announcement of just who it is that has been born. A few hours after the birth, this monumental miracle- just a few hours after the arrival of the Son of Mary, the Son of the Most High God- there is an announcement made.

Now like I told you last week- if you were planning the strategy for this PR campaign- you would never do it this way. If you were going to make an announcement about the birth of God in human form- you might have made sure that the main authorities got the message first. And certainly if you didn't want to tell Caesar because you were afraid he would see this as a threat, or you didn't want to tell Herod because you knew he would see it as a threat- you still might want to go to the religious leaders and the high priest and the Sanhedrin- the ruling body of Israel. And you might even want to go to the chief priests or the scribes or the Pharisees and Sadducees or somebody who has some clout and some connections and somebody who was important.

You might want to go to the Temple, for example, and there you would surely have found Simeon and Anna and others who were looking for the Redemption of Jerusalem- looking for the Salvation of Israel, and earnestly waiting for the Messiah. And you might have gone to some group of devout and righteous Jews who were waiting to hear this, some who might have a great measure of influence. But shepherds? Are you kidding? Who in their right mind would announce the birth of the Savior of the world to a bunch of Shepherds?

Shepherds would be the last people on earth that you would go to- to announce this birth- because they were the lowest of the low, and, yet, that is exactly what God did.

Now this story is well known. The story of the angel and the shepherds and then the heavenly host that follows. And the thesis of this whole passage is summed up in one statement in verse 11, and we'll discuss it all. But for this morning I just want to deal with one statement- **Luke 2:11**.

And this is the thesis, and, then we'll build the outline around it. From **Luke 2:11**- all the way down to verse 20 is one paragraph. That whole thing will build around this thesis, here it is, verse 11,

For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Wow! This is the heart of the entire Story of Salvation. This is the high point of all that God has spoken and all that God has done since the moment of Creation! All of God's Word and all of God Promises and all of the Old Covenant has pointed to this very moment- "There has been born for you a Savior!"

And that's the New Testament, isn't it? That's the Gospel. That's the heart of everything. That's the pinnacle of Redemption. There has been born for you a Savior- and that is supposed to be the Christian message. That's what we're still telling people, isn't it? There has been born for you a Savior. And may I hasten to add that the shepherds would understand that.

You say, "Wait a minute, Brother Blair- isn't the concept of a Savior a New Testament idea? Isn't Savior a New Testament concept that Jesus came to save and He's the Savior? So how would those shepherds know about a Savior?"

You see, dear friends, being a Savior is not a New Testament concept- it's an Old Testament concept. Shepherds would know what that meant because all who were in Israel knew God as Savior. That is a Jewish concept. Oh, I know there are some liberal theologians who want to put a great gulf between the New Testament and the Old Testament, and they say that the Christ of the New Testament is a compassionate, loving, saving Personality, while the God of the Old Testament is an angry, vengeful, envious, vitriolic, hostile, punishing kind of Deity. But that is not accurate by any stretch of the imagination.

The God of the Old Testament was known to His people as a Savior. Israel knew God as a Savior. And that was unique to Israel because that was not the way it was with the man-made gods of the other false religions.

You see, there's only one God- the one true and living God- the eternal God- the God Who is revealed in Scripture- and this God is by Nature- a Savior- He is a saving God. To use another word, a synonym for savior- the one true living God is a Deliverer. God delivers people from threatening things. He is a Rescuer, that's another synonym for

Savior. And He is that by Nature, and that's not how it is in the false and unbiblical world of religion and deities.

In fact, you can study religions and you're not going to find any other god who is a savior by nature. You're going to find in every religious system in the world a means by which somehow Man can do something to appease the god, and somehow by his own efforts and his own works- Man can save himself.

But you're not going to find any God Who is by nature- a Savior, and a Deliverer, and a Rescuer.

For example- if you were living in Israel during Bible times- you would be exposed to a god named, Baal. And as you read the Old Testament- Baal is a very dominating deity among a group of people called, the Canaanites- who were the forerunner to the Palestinians of today.

Baal, meaning lord, was the deity of the Canaanites. But if you read through the Old Testament- you find that Baal is a god who is certainly not interested in saving anybody. In fact, he had a perfect opportunity to do that on Mount Carmel with Elijah in **1Kings 18**.

And is that story- the prophet Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, *"Look, we'll decide who's God, you've got Baal and I've got Jehovah, and let's decide. You build an altar, put a sacrifice there. I'll build an altar, put a sacrifice there. You pray to Baal and I'll pray to Jehovah, and we'll see who sends fire down to burn up the sacrifice. Whoever sends fire down, He's God."*

So in a classic characterization of Baal- these priests of Baal are trying to get Baal to react and rescue them from Elijah. Well there is no Baal so he can't do anything because he doesn't exist. And even the demon impersonators who might want to impersonate Baal are unable to effect this miracle. So in classic fashion- Elijah identifies the nature of Baal by saying this to them,

Turn with me to **1Kings 18:25-29**:

25 So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, **"Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it."**

26 Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, **"O Baal, answer**

us.” But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made.

27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.”

28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them.

29 When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.

Now this is the best that can be said about the deities that demons concoct or that men invent. The best that can be said is that they are indifferent and somehow they just don't pay attention. This is the god of the moralists and the deists- you know, like we have in our country- who have invented a god in their own image and likeness- but who is not the God of the Bible.

This is the god of men like Benjamin Franklin and others- the god who wound the world up and set it off in motion, and then went away and couldn't care less about it. That's the god of apathy, the god of indifference. And somehow you're screaming and hollering and yelling at this god to do something to save you and deliver you and rescue you from your plight- but he really isn't that interested in it or you and he doesn't ever answer.

But the spectrum swings all the way over from indifference on the one hand, to hostility on the other hand. And you have a classic illustration of that in the land of Canaan in another god called, Molech.

Molech was so vicious and so hostile and so angry and had to be appeased so that he didn't obliterate people to the degree that in order to pacify Molech- women took their newborn baby or their little child and you put their little child on the altar and burned it alive. What kind of god would want you to burn your baby alive? That is the god of the Mayans and the Incas over here, and the Canaanites over there.

So these are no noble people, dear friends, these are not people we should respect or admire- no, these are people who are deceived by doctrines of demons and who are following a false religion which is brutal and wicked and which keeps people from the one true living God.

That is why I do not respect Islam. I do not respect Islam nor Muhammad nor those who follow the Koran. Islam is a false religion- it is a doctrine of demons; it keeps people away from Jesus and from Salvation. Islam is nothing to be admired and it is nothing that should cause you to want it. Muhammad was a demon possessed violent murderer and a pedophile whose last wife was six years old when he took her to his marriage bed.

The teachings of the Koran do not bring peace- they bring the sword, they bring death, they bring enslavement, they bring violence. Islam means "Submission". And that is what they do. The followers of Islam subjugate all who oppose them. So they kill in the name of their wicked god, they strap bombs to their own children and they blow up their own children in the name of this monster called Allah- and then they rejoice over it. Islam is the ancient religion of the false god named Molech.

And the backslid Muslims- those who are too scared or too wealthy to be willing to die for Allah- they give \$25,000 to each family that sent their child off to die. I don't respect that. I don't admire that. And I don't think that we should do anything about Muslims but weep and cry out to God for their Salvation.

So somewhere on that spectrum from apathy to vicious hostility are all the gods of the world. But one thing is common among them all. None of the other gods is a Savior. And what set Jehovah apart, the one true and living God, is that He is by Nature compassionate, merciful, tender-hearted, filled with loving kindness and seeks to save people.

And the Jews knew this. That was distinctive. They knew God to be wise. They knew Him to be powerful. They knew Him to be understanding. They knew Him to be just and all of those things. But they also knew that by nature in contradistinction to all the other deities of the world – the God of the Bible was a Savior.

And they would know that if they read the book of **Genesis**, because in **Genesis** God said in **Genesis 2:17**,

But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.

And in **Genesis 3:6** both the man and the woman ate of the forbidden fruit, and, although, they died spiritually- they did not die

physically. After Adam sinned- he lived to be 930 years old. So what does that tell you? That's called Mercy. God didn't immediately deliver the deserved consequences of their behavior because it's His Nature to be patient. Please turn with me to read a passage found in **Romans 2:1-4**:

1 Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Here it is called the patience and the tolerance of God which is meant to lead you to repentance. I mean, God by nature is that way. Now, God in Egypt says, *"I'm going to send the angel of death and he's going to kill all the firstborn, but I just want to let you know that if you'll hold the Passover and take the Passover lamb and sacrifice the lamb and eat the lamb, take the blood and put it on the doorpost and lintel, I'll pass by and the angel of death won't touch your house if you do that."*

Because it's God's nature to deliver men from the consequence of sin, that's His Nature- and the Jews understood that.

And those shepherds out on that field at the bottom of the intellectual pole, at the bottom of the educational ladder, as it were, on the very bottom- the very lowest class people there were would understand that God was by Nature a saving God. And they would also understand this- they would understand that there never had been a sacrifice that really did it. They of all people, because what I'm going to point out to you in a couple of weeks is the fact that they were very likely shepherding sheep headed for temple sacrifices. So they of all people along with the priests who were bloodied up to their ears the whole time they were in the temple, slaughtering all the animals that had to be slaughtered to say nothing of what happened when they

slaughtered a quarter of a million of them in a few days at Passover, they were used to unending sacrifices trying to deal with sin in order to rescue the nation, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. In order to rescue individuals from the consequences of their sin they brought offerings to God and they were saying...God, we're sorry for our sin, here's our sacrifice, forgive us. They knew God to be a saving God but yet that salvation had never finally been effected by one sacrifice.

So when the announcement came there's been born today a Savior- they immediately understood it. They didn't even ask a lot of questions- because they understood it. In the Old Testament God is a Savior, and over and over again His Salvation is spoken of. Like **Deuteronomy 20:4:**

For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

I mean, by nature God did that. That's just in the very fabric of His eternal being. God is called the God of His Salvation. **Psalm 25:5,**

"...For You are the God of my salvation;"

I mean, they knew Him as a Savior. In fact, David in **Psalm 51** was praying to God and he lost the joy because of his disobedience, and he says to God, **"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation."** They knew God as a Savior God. And the Old Testament is just filled with indications of that.

Isaiah 63 is another one worth mentioning. **Isaiah 63:8-10:**

8 For He said, "Surely, they are my people, Sons who will not deal falsely." So He became their Savior.

9 In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.

So He *became* their Savior." What did that mean?" In all their affliction...verse 9...He was afflicted. In His love and His mercy He rescued them, He redeemed them, He brought them back. He lifted

them. He carried them all the days of old but they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit, therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy. He fought against them. He started out as their Savior and they fought even that. How sad. He was their Savior.

Take Mary. Go back to **Luke 1:46**. Mary knew that God was a Savior. This is a 15-year-old girl, a sweet and meek and righteous young girl. And she hears from Gabriel that she's going to be the mother of the Son of the Most High, and she says in verse 46-47,

“My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

... so Mary knew that Jehovah God was her Savior.

And take Zacharias. Zacharias, it says in **Luke 1**, was a righteous priest. He was righteous- verse 6 of chapter 1- in the sight of God and walked blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. Here was a godly priest and in his great praise at the birth of John, the forerunner of the Messiah, verse 69 Zacharias realizing the Messiah is going to be born, Mary has just spent three months at that house and she's already pregnant with Messiah, he knows what's happening and he says, **"God has raised up a horn of salvation for us."** Here comes the Savior, the great power of Salvation. And down in verse 77 he tells you what kind of Salvation he's talking about, **“To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.”** So, even Zacharias knew that the truest Salvation came when sins were forgiven.

The prophet Micah had said in the Old Testament- "Who is a pardoning God like You?" The Old Testament says that God is a forgiving God who removes your sins as far as the east is from the west, buries them in the depths of the deepest sea and remembers them no more. They knew God was a saving God. They knew God as a forgiving God.

There were many of them in that nation who had experienced personal, spiritual, and eternal Salvation from God. You say, "Did they get that in the Old Testament?" Yes, they did. They would measure themselves against the Law of God, find themselves disobedient, falling short, realize their plight...they couldn't keep the Law of God, therefore, the Bible says if you break the Law of God you're cursed. They were under a curse. The curse meant death and punishment. They would,

therefore, feel the burden of that, they would go to God, they would say, "God, I've broken Your law, I can't keep it, I'm cursed, please be merciful, be gracious, forgive me." That's the penitence of the Old Testament. That's like the man beating his breast in **Luke 18**, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." When a person in the Old Testament came to a true assessment of their sinfulness, a true recognition that they had failed to keep the law of God and were therefore cursed and knew they couldn't gain salvation, they disdained self-righteousness, but threw themselves on the mercy of God...God then forgave their sins. That's what Isaiah says in chapter 54 and 55. Mary was such a person, so was Zachariah and he was recognizing the Salvation of God that is personal, spiritual, and eternal that would come.

You say, *"Well then what part did Messiah have?"* Well Messiah would come and offer the Sacrifice upon which all this forgiveness had always been given. They were forgiven in the Old Testament because God would take their sins and later place them on Christ, just as you're forgiven because God takes your sins and places them on Christ Who lived 2,000 years earlier. The same. Christ bears the sins of all who believed in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament age. They knew God as a Savior. Mary knew that. Zacharias knew that.

Luke 2:25-35

25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,

28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word;

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel."

33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—

35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

The Bible says that Simeon was another Old Covenant believer- who was a righteous and devout man looking for the consolation of Israel. Here's another true penitent. Here's somebody who has been forgiven by God. Here's somebody to whom God is a Savior. He realizes that. He picks up the little baby in this account and down in verse 30 says,

For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

Finally the Savior has come. He understood that there was Salvation from God and that God was a Savior. But he also understood that there was One Who had to come- that there had to be a final spotless, sinless Lamb. God had to provide that final Sacrifice. And when he saw that little baby he said, *“This is it!”*

So don't underestimate some of these Old Covenant Jews. There were devout people all over who were looking, as it says, for **“the consolation of Israel”** in verse 25, or in other words- *“the comfort of Israel”*, or *“the salvation of Israel”*.

Now down in verse 38, Anna was looking for **“the redemption of Jerusalem.”** So there were some who knew what they were looking for- they were looking for a final spotless Sacrifice that was pictured by all the animal sacrifices that had been given by the millions through the history of that Old system. So they knew God to be a Savior.

Now let me take this one step further. God showed Himself a Savior to Israel two ways:

1. God showed them that He was a Savior by Nature, temporally...that is in time...and physically...that is in this life.

Now you say, *"What do you mean by that, Brother Blair?"* I mean by that- that God showed to the nation Israel His saving Nature by physically and literally saving them or delivering them from Egypt, and by saving them or rescuing them out of the Red Sea and drowning Pharaoh's army, and by rescuing them and delivering them, as it were, out of the 40 years of wilderness wandering into the promised land. God delivered or saved His people from a number of enemies who hated them and tried to destroy them. And throughout their history- God showed how He delivered or saved His people. He delivered them from hostile nations, He delivered them from sickness, He delivered them from trouble, He delivered them from danger, He delivered them from death...over and over and, folks- and it's still going on.

God delivered the nation Israel from massive attempts at genocide by Joseph Stalin and Adolph Hitler. And here they are, the Jews are still alive. There should not be one Jew left alive today after all they have been through- the most persecuted, the most hated, the most mistreated, the most enslaved group of people in the history of the world. God has rescued them and saved them and delivered them for thousands of years. And today- the Jews are independently functioning as a nation of their own in their own land- which is Testimony to God's Sovereign Election and the fact that God keeps His Promises and the fact that God is a saving God.

This is testimony to the fact that even an apostate people- who reject God and who turn their back on God, and who reject their own Messiah, and who execute the Savior are still being delivered by God! That is amazing- but I tell you that that is God's Nature.

So the next time you feel unworthy, the next time you sin and think that God has thrown you aside, the next time you fail and think that God doesn't love you anymore- look at the Jew. Look at a people who for over 5,000 years have been held onto by God and whom God will not let go- in spite of their sin and in spite of their unbelief and in spite of their rebelliousness.

That's why Paul in Romans says, *"Can't you see this? This deliverance, this salvation on a temporal, physical level as the patience and forbearance of God meant to lead you to personal repentance? Can't you see if God is so gracious to the nation that He will also be gracious to the individual sinner?"*

Dear friends, we must know that God is a Savior by nature and He has saved that nation through the years because it's His Nature to deliver temporally and physically from the immediate and just consequence of sin- which would be instant death and hell. But His Nature is not to give sinners what they deserve- even in this life. And that's still true. And it's true outside of Israel. The world is predominantly populated by non-Christians. The world is massively populated by non-Christians- who seem to flourish to one degree or another in this life without God. They enjoy life. They smell the flowers. They see the sunrise and the sunset. They drink the cool water. They eat a good meal. They fall in love. They kiss a baby. They see a mountain. They enjoy the richness and the fullness of life. They breathe the air. Why? Because God by Nature delivers them from the immediate consequence- the just and immediate consequence of what they deserve.

That's why in **1 Timothy 4:10** Paul says,

For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

“God- who is the Savior of all men.” So the whole world of sinners exists and is not immediately destroyed because God is a saving God. He has delivered them from what they deserve.

And people ask me this a lot: *“Why do bad things happen to good people?”* And the answer is really amazing. Are you ready for the answer? Here it is. Bad things don't happen to good people- because there are no good people. Everybody is bad, everybody has sinned, everybody has fallen short of God's Glory, and everybody on earth deserves the eternal Wrath of a holy God. So there are no good people, there are no righteous people, there are no people on earth who do not deserve damnation.

So the *real* question is, *“Why do good things happen to bad people?”* That's the *real* question. How could a Holy and Righteous God possibly do good to any of us? Ever? And there is one answer to that question- Because God is by nature a Savior- He's a Deliverer, He's a Rescuer by Nature.

Now Paul uses the word **“especially”** in **1 Timothy 4:10**. He says:

... God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers

Especially of those who believe, or “specially” of those who believe.

Now just what does that mean? Well, God delivers all men from the just and immediate consequence of their sin, temporally and physically- but He specially delivers those who believe from their sin spiritually and eternally. And that “special Salvation” that is eternal is better and more far reaching than the “normal salvation” that God gives to all men.

In other words- God is the “Savior” to all men- in the sense that He temporarily rescues them from the immediate consequences of their sins, and many of them live long and productive lives. If God was not that kind of Savior to all men- then every human on earth would be immediately judged the very instant that he sins. But they are not judged the very instant they sin- only because God is a savior to them.

But this *temporary* “salvation” is not permanent because when these unbelievers die- they will incur God’s Wrath in Hell forever- because they did not believe. So this kind of temporal physical salvation is the kind of Old Covenant Salvation that all men enjoyed.

But God is a *special* Savior to those who believe – in the sense that to those who believe- God gives eternal life and an eternal Salvation or Rescue or Deliverance from His Wrath.

And that’s all that really matters, isn’t it? You can look at the Old Testament and you’ll see God delivering Israel temporally and physically, and you’ll see God delivering individual Jewish people and even Gentile believers spiritually and eternally. You look at the world today and God delivers sinners from the just and immediate consequence of their sin all the time, and you also see all over the world those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ- and they’ve been delivered eternally from the consequence of their sin spiritually and eternally. So God is by nature a Savior.

Titus chapters 1, 2, and 3 refer to “**God our Savior**”. And there’s no discrepancy between the God of the New Testament and the God of the Old Testament. God is by nature a Savior, and that is why Jesus is a Savior because Jesus is God. That’s a syllogism that you can work with.

For example- when we read in **2 Peter 1:11**, “**Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**,” we’re not surprised that Jesus is our Savior because Jesus is our Lord. So if He’s God the Lord- then He’s God the Savior because

God is a Savior. It's not, as some people say, that God is the bad guy and Jesus is the good guy, and that, you know, Jesus gets up there and really, really pleads with God, trying to soften Him up. It's not that at all. To the degree that Jesus is a Savior- that is the degree that God is a Savior and to the degree that the Holy Spirit a Savior- because they are all one and they are all the one true living God.

There's no diminishing of that saving nature in any member of the Trinity.

God shows His goodness and His kindness to all. And He restrains evil in the world- and as bad as the world is- believe me- it could be worse, and it isn't worse because God restrains evil. He provides families, He provides Governments with laws and that maintain social order, and God provides beauty and joy, and He shows compassion- even on sinners.

And God calls sinners to repent, and He offers the Gospel- eternal Salvation in Christ is offered to all sinners. He is by nature a saving God. And, folks, I'll say it again, there isn't any other God in the spectrum of deities who is by nature a Savior.

So when this angel told these shepherds- **"There has been born for you a Savior."** This message was just loaded with significance. The Savior they had all been looking for, they've all been waiting for. And this was consistent with God's Own Nature. And that's why Joseph was told in **Matthew 1:21**, **"You shall call His name Jesus,"** because that name means: Yahweh saves! For Jesus will save His people from their sins.

And that's why Luke records the words of Jesus later in **Luke 19:10** when he said: **"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."** Above all things- God is a Savior.

So you see, God can't be our King until He's our Savior. So He can't fulfill the Davidic Covenant, as we saw in our study at the end of chapter 1- He can't fulfill the Davidic Covenant and be our King, and He can't be our Blessor and fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant with all its blessings- until first He fulfills the New Covenant and becomes our Savior.

All the Davidic Promises and all the Abrahamic Promises are predicated upon the New Covenant Promises of Immanuel being our Savior. God can't be the Blessor and He can't be the King until He's the Savior. And so the Covenant that dominates everything, the Covenant that opens the door to Abrahamic fulfillment and Davidic fulfillment is

the New Covenant that is through His Blood because it is in His Blood on the Cross that He absorbs the Wrath of God, the Fury of God against my sins and fully pays the penalty for sin, and completely and eternally satisfies the Justice of God, and, therefore, rescues us forever from sin and death and hell.

And once He is our Savior- then He opens to us all the Promises that come in His Kingdom and through Abrahamic blessing.

Now one little phrase in there- and I'll close with this, "*There has been born for you.*" Isn't that good? For us? For who? For us!

In the end, what does it matter if you don't take the words "for you" personally? Though Christ be born a thousand times in Bethlehem- if He is not born in me- then my souls is still lost. Jesus died for you. Come to Jesus today and be saved. Come to God- your Savior; repent of your sins and be born from above and trust that Jesus has paid the price for you.

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.