

Reminders

Luke 2:1-20

(Special Message 12/21/25 — stand alone study)

Intro

Though you wouldn't know it by the weather, ***Christmas week*** is upon us once again...

- And in the midst of all the distractions that this week brings, it is good to ***remind*** ourselves of ***why*** we celebrate Christmas in the first place...

Also, it is my hope that this morning we will be ***reminded*** that our faith is built on ***historical events*** and not on fanciful superstitions or man-made traditions...

*So, to get us started let's see what a couple of the Apostles had to say about the ***historical validity*** of faith in Jesus Christ — turn if you would to...*

2 Peter 1:16-18

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

- [Peter referring to his experience with the Lord Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration...]

Now let's turn just a little further right to...

1 John 1:1-4

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—

2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—

3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

- [expand on the Bible recording *actual* historical events...]

With this as our introduction, would you please turn to the passage that we will be studying this morning...

Luke 2:1-20

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

2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into 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 wife, who was with child.

6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

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

11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, 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, goodwill toward men!”**

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us

now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”

16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

I've divided this passage into two sections — so let's move into the first section...

1) Heading South (vs 1-7)

1 And it came to pass in those days

Here Luke is letting us know that what he is writing about is ***actual history*** — it is not some fairy tale...

In fact, let's remind ourselves of what Luke wrote at the beginning of his gospel...

Luke 1:1-4 *[turn there]*

1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,

2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,

3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus,

4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

These words **remind** us of the fact that Luke was a serious historian who set out to provide an accurate account of the life of The Lord Jesus for this person called **Theophilus**...

Turning back to Luke 2:1 we read...

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out

decree - *a command, ordinance or law...*

In other words, this **decree** was **compulsory** — it was **not optional**...

• And this **decree went out from Caesar Augustus**...

*Now, **Caesar Augustus** was a fascinating historical figure...*

His original name was **Octavian** and he was the great-nephew of **Julius Caesar**...

- Julius Caesar had adopted Octavian as his son and Octavian famously defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the *Battle of Actium in 31 BC*...

As a result of the victory, Octavian became the undisputed leader of Rome...

- In 29 BC, the Roman Senate named Octavian the first Emperor of Rome and two years later the Roman Senate bestowed upon Octavian the name **Augustus** meaning "**Exalted One**"...

Under **Augustus'** rule the Romans dominated the Mediterranean region and the area enjoyed a time of prosperity and relative peace commonly referred to as the *Pax Romana – The Roman Peace*...

- Caesar Augustus continued to rule Rome until his death in 14 AD at the age of 76...

Now, as we continue on in Luke 2:1 we read...

a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This registration refers to a census of all the people who found themselves under Roman rule...

- And the census was usually reserved for Roman citizens and was primarily a means of accounting for all of the Roman citizens as well as a way of registering young men for military service...

However, it seems that at this point in history Caesar Augustus wanted to number the *non-Romans* under his rule as well...

- Interestingly, this census of the non-Romans would become a method to aid the Roman government in their collection of the ***poll tax***...

And it was the ***poll tax*** that both Matthew and Zaccheus were engaged in collecting before they encountered Christ...

2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

As we seek to put all the pieces together from secular historical sources it seems that **Quirinius** may have been the governor of this region *twice*...

- If so, the census that is referred to here in **Luke 2** most likely took place between 6-4 BC...

It is also worth noting that there was another census that took place in 6 AD that sparked a violent Jewish revolt that is referred to by Gamaliel in **Acts 5**...

Moving on to vs...

3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

As we will see in our next verse, people under Roman rule went to the place of their tribal origin to be registered in this census...

And as we move into vs 4, please take note of all of the geographical markers that Luke refers to...

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

Joseph - Mary's betrothed husband...

Now, it is important to remember that by this point Joseph had been on an emotional roller coaster...

To see what I mean, please turn to...

Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary

your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:

23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife,

25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

This must have been a great burden for Joseph to bear but he seems to have borne it well...

Back now to Luke 2:4...

Joseph also went up from Galilee,

This was the region in northern Israel around the Sea of Galilee — and even though Joseph and Mary are heading south they are referred to as going **up** because **Judea** is higher in elevation...

out of the city of Nazareth,

Nazareth was just a common city in the region of **Galilee** — nothing special...

into Judea,

This was the region of southern Israel west of the Dead Sea and the most important city in this region was Jerusalem — the most important city in all of Israel...

Continuing on in Luke 2:4 we read that Joseph and Mary went...

to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,

Joseph was a descendant of King David (as was Mary) and so Joseph was to go to David's hometown for the census...

Again, please notice that everything is taking place in ***historical locations...***

Luke is recording ***actual events*** that took place in ***actual places...***

Now, Joseph and Mary are traveling down to Bethlehem and in the process are fulfilling prophecy...

Micah 5:2

**“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting.”**

*And I find it very interesting that God would use a census decree by the pagan emperor **Caesar Augustus** to accomplish His purposes — it reminds me of...*

Proverbs 21:1

**The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord,
Like the rivers of water;
He turns it wherever He wishes.**

REMINDER - God is able to get his prophecies fulfilled — Don't get nervous for Him — "Don't throw away your Bible yet"...[expand] 😊

Continuing on in Luke 2 we come to verse...

5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife,

David Guzik

"According to the Roman law, Mary didn't have to go with Joseph for the tax census; but it made sense for her to go with Joseph, especially because she was in the latter stages of a controversial pregnancy — [and] surely the subject of much gossip in Nazareth."

Moving on in vs 5...

with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.

Now, we have already read of Joseph coming to grips with how Mary came to be **with child**...

*So let's remind ourselves of how **Mary** handled the news of her impending pregnancy by turning to...*

Luke 1:26-38

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,

27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”

29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

30 Then 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 bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.

32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give 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 Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?”

35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing will be impossible.”

38 Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Please turn back now to Luke 2 as we move into vs...

6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.

Mary's baby was going to be born in Bethlehem just as it was foretold in **Micah 5:2...**

7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths,

In those days, newborn Jewish babies were normally washed, rubbed with salt and then bound tightly in strips of cloth...

- These **swaddling cloths** helped protect the baby from scratching its eyes and face...

Also, **swaddling cloths** were thought to strengthen the baby's limbs — basically newborn resistance training...

Continuing on in Luke 2:7 we read that Mary...

wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger,

manger - a feeding trough (which may have been carved out of stone)...

As we put all the pieces together it seems likely that The Lord Jesus was born in a cave that was used for sheltering animals-- but WHY?...

because there was no room for them in the inn.

Interestingly, Jesus would later say in...

Matthew 8:20

“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

I guess some things never change...

APPLICATION - Whenever we question God's goodness in the midst of our difficulties, it is vital that we go back to the gospels and remind ourselves of the hardship that The Lord Jesus encountered throughout His life...[expand]

*Let's move now from **Heading South** to our final section...*

2) Heralding Shepherds (vs 8-20)

8 Now there were in the same country

This refers to the area in Judea surrounding Bethlehem...

shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. [explain scene...]

Now, as we move on into verse 9 it is interesting to note that *shepherds were considered **untrustworthy** at best and **extremely dangerous** at worst...*

One commentator

"As a class shepherds had a bad reputation...More regrettable was their habit of confusing [yours with mine] as they moved about the country. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law courts."

With this in mind, the fact that shepherds were heralded with an announcement of the birth of Jesus reminds us of something Luke recorded in...

Luke 5:30-32

30 And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

31 Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

REMINDER - There is no person or group of people who is too bad for the gospel...[expand]

Revelation 22:17

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Continuing on in Luke 2 to vs 9-10...

9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy

Beautiful scene!...

- [expand on the **good tidings of great joy** being the equivalent of saying *"I have great news!"*...]

Continuing on in vs 10...

good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

This is very significant — the **good news** that the angel was bringing wasn't just for the Jewish people, it was for **all people!**...

The birth of this baby was the fulfillment of what God had promised to Abraham many centuries before in...

Genesis 12:3

**"I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

REMINDER - The good news of the gospel is for all!...

Revelation 14:6 (NKJV)

**Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven,
having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell
on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people...**

Moving on to vs 11 of Luke 2...

11 For there is born to you this day

It is absolutely amazing that The Lord Jesus was born ***to shepherds!***...

- And it is equally amazing that He was born ***to us!***...

Continuing on in vs 11...

**For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior,
city of David — *Bethlehem...***

Savior - deliverer...

But what would The Lord Jesus save us or deliver us from?...

1 John 2:2

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

propitiation - sacrifice or appeasement...

As you may remember, there are 3 ways that the Lord Jesus saves us from sins...

1) PAST — The Lord Jesus saved us from the penalty of sin — JUSTIFICATION

2) PRESENT — The Lord Jesus continually saves us from the power of sin — SANCTIFICATION

3) FUTURE — The Lord Jesus will save us from the presence of sin — GLORIFICATION

*We must never lose sight of the fact **saving us** was the primary purpose of the incarnation...*

- The Lord Jesus took on humanity that He might die to save us from the **penalty**, **power** and **presence** of sin — everything else is secondary...

We see this truth clearly in...

John 3:16-17

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Moving on in Luke 2:11 the angels continue...

For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Christ - Messiah, "Anointed One"...

the Lord - Master — reference to the deity of the Savior...

Let's look now at vs 12-14...

12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, 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, goodwill toward men!"**

Suddenly a great number of angels appear and break out into spontaneous praise...!

- And the **angels** are super excited!...But **why** are they so excited?...

I believe we are given a clue as we turn to...

Luke 15:1-10

1 Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.

2 And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”

3 So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

4 “ What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! ’

7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

8 “ Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost! ’

10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

I believe that the angels in Luke 2 are rejoicing because they are excited about the salvation of the lost!...

And what could be more exciting?!...

- [ex. Compare to excitement over the gifts that we receive at Christmas time — nothing compared to the birth of a baby...]

Now, it must be stated that this phrase “**And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!**” is a reference to God’s **offer** to mankind through the Lord Jesus Christ...

- In other words, **anyone** who **receives** the Lord Jesus Christ will be at **peace** with God — that person will be a recipient of God’s **goodwill**...

But anyone who **rejects** the Lord Jesus Christ **does not** have **peace** with God and that person cuts themselves off from the **goodwill** of God...

The Lord Jesus put it this way in...

John 3:18 (NKJV)

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Back to Luke 2 as we move into vs...

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”

- [expand on the shepherds responding to the message — they are **doers** and not **hearers** only...]

Continuing on to vs...

16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

Glorious! — The shepherds see The Lord Jesus and immediately they become evangelists...[ex. woman at the well — John 4]

APPLICATION - Be willing to share what happened when you came into contact with Christ — you never know what The Lord might do through your testimony...

18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

This was a lot for a first-time mother to take in...[expand]

20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

What a wonderful verse on which to end on...

- And I look forward to meeting these shepherds in heaven one day and hearing their account of this phenomenal event...

Conclusion

Now, as we begin to wind down our time I will leave you with three reminders to contemplate as Christmas draws near...

1) Remember that our faith in The Lord Jesus is built on historical events...[expand]

2) Remember that The Lord Jesus is the focus of our celebration...[expand]

3) Remember that The Lord Jesus came to save us from the penalty, the power and the presence of sin...[expand]