

## A Significant Christmas

*Prayer*

Turn with me this morning to the book of Luke chapter 2 and starting at verse 1.  
(CEV)

### *The Birth of Jesus*

**2** *About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. <sup>2</sup>These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.*

<sup>3</sup>*Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. <sup>4</sup>So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.*

<sup>5</sup>*Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, <sup>6</sup>and while they were there, <sup>7</sup>she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

### *The Shepherds*

<sup>8</sup>*That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. <sup>9</sup>All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. <sup>11</sup>This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."*

<sup>13</sup>*Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said:*

<sup>14</sup>*"Praise God in heaven!*

*Peace on earth to everyone  
who pleases God."*

*<sup>15</sup> After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup> They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay.*

*<sup>17</sup> When the shepherds saw Jesus, they told his parents what the angel had said about him. <sup>18</sup> Everyone listened and was surprised. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept thinking about all this and wondering what it meant.*

*<sup>20</sup> As the shepherds returned to their sheep, they were praising God and saying wonderful things about him. Everything they had seen and heard was just as the angel had said.*

What an amazing narrative. Some have called the birth, life, death and life again narrative of Jesus the greatest story ever told. This morning I want to ask some questions as we celebrate our amazing savior.

Did you know that there were over 2000 prophecies about the coming of the messiah in the Old Testament? These prophecies came out from Genesis forward, but many are not aware of their existence.

Did you know that between the Old and New testaments there is a period of 600 years called the Intertestamental period? This means that the OT prophecies foretelling of the coming of Jesus were at least 600 years old.

Turn with me to Isaiah 9 starting at verse 6 (ESV)

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

It would take some time, but we would come to know the meanings of the name Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Immanuel or God with us as these terms applied to Jesus. We would see them established in his ministry on earth.

For example turn with me to Matthew 1:23 ESV

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (God with us)*

Next let us look at Micah 5:2 ESV

*Bethlehem Ephrath, you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah. But the Lord will choose one of your people to rule the nation—someone whose family goes back to ancient times.*

Now from history we know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and was of the lineage of David. But so what a lot of people were probably born in Bethlehem.

On a personal note as a former analyst familiar with the scientific method, how did a guy like me become convinced that Jesus was God, that he was the one foretold and that he was the son of God? It came from a lot of in-depth research, study and exegetical work from both biblical and secular sources. But make no mistake this is a thing of which I am now completely convinced. But we were talking about the prophecy that the messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Turn with me to Matthew 2:6

*'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.'*

Or how about John 7:2

Here we see a question being asked...

*Doesn't the Scripture say that the Messiah comes from David's offspring and from the town of Bethlehem, where David once lived?"*

Today if we came across the same information... Wouldn't we question it? I mean wouldn't we as human beings naturally doubt these prophecies?

Yes probably, but now that Jesus was on the scene and his life and actions lined up with so many prophecies that no one could manipulate the circumstances to make them all come true, especially the circumstances and place of birth. I would point out that Jesus incarnate in his mothers womb would have little say as to where he would be born.

**So Jesus was born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of prophecy.**

That's one of thousands that were fulfilled.

Turn with me to Isaiah 7:14

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

And again in the New Testament we see this one again in Matthew 1:23:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”

So the messiah was to be born of a virgin. Now with today's society many would be skeptical of this. Didn't Joseph take a lot on faith? Did Mary try to cover up an affair? And so on... I have heard occams razor as an argument here. But that is lazy, as intelligent people, shouldn't we investigate all the facts and form our conclusions based on evidence.

Yes. But as we will discover faith has a major role to play. Not in the proof of Christ or the historical narrative we read in the bible. That I have found has proved itself, in every instance of my inquiry; we require rather faith to believe that in our lives that it is an important enough topic to consume our time to study out the facts and discover the truth of Jesus.

This morning, I do not want anyone to simply believe what I am saying. That sounds pretty odd coming from a preacher doesn't it? Well... my feeling on this is that each person needs to own the facts for themselves. Don't take my word for it. The facts I present each Sunday are seminary study and my personal discovery of the scriptures. Own it for yourselves. Seek out the truth, look up the facts, study them out; prove to yourself that what I tell you from the scriptures is true. A faith based on hearsay is not likely to endure. Read, study and apply your bible.

So I was talking about Mary and her state. At the time women who had had sex prior to wedlock were considered tainted and of ill repute. In many cases a woman found to be de flowered prior to her wedding night could be stoned to death.

A husband who upon consummating his marriage and finding his wife not a virgin could return her to her parents and the marriage would be void.

And yet Mary was a virgin. At the time of Christ they knew what a hymen was and what function it performed.

Mary had a lot to fear... She was an innocent virgin who would conceive and bear the Son of God. What a joy and an honor yet, remember that she could be stoned, rejected, reviled, even put to death. Yet, she had a real experience with God that built her faith.

What of Joseph, he had been raised in the synagogue to believe in the purity of his mate. His experience with an incarnate manifestation of the host of the Lord telling him the truth of the circumstances went a long way, I am sure to allay his fears.

Let's look at some more circumstances' around the birth of Jesus.

Turn with me to here what the prophet Hosea has to say 11:1 HCSB

*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.*

In short, when the Israelite messiah was born he would be called out of Egypt and he would be the Son of God.

Now as we examine the New Testament in Matthew 2:13-15

## The Escape to Egypt

*<sup>13</sup>After the wise men had gone, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to kill him."*

*<sup>14</sup>That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, <sup>15</sup>where they stayed until Herod died. So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "I called my son out of Egypt."*

Let's look at what the prophet Jeremiah has to say in Jeremiah 31:15

*A voice was heard in Ramah, a lament with bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children because they are no more.*

Jeremiah prophesied that the children of Israel would be put to death but let's look at the context. It is not an end, here we find the Lord offering up hope.

But what has Rachel got to do with it. Rachel was the wife of Jacob...

Numbers 24:17a

*What I saw in my vision hasn't happened yet. But someday, a king of Israel will appear like a star.*

Jesus is the star of David. He is of the lineage of David and so also of the lineage of Jacob.

Let us examine together Matthew 2:16-18 ESV

## Herod Kills the Children

<sup>16</sup>Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.<sup>17</sup>Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup>“A voice was heard in Ramah,  
weeping and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Now Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were considered the Fathers of the nation of Israel. Let's take a quick look at God's plan for blessing.

Genesis 12:3

Here God tells Abraham that he will bless Israel through Abraham... But pay close attention to this portion of scripture: *“I will bless anyone who blesses you, but I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you. EVERYONE on earth will be blessed because of you.”*

Later as we study the life of Abraham we see that the Lord promises to bless Abraham's seed. Which study will bear out was not referring to Isaac but to Jesus.

Ever wonder why we have all those lists of who begat whom in the bible? Well In Matthew 1:1 we read: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham...

Oh hey, now I see why....

Genesis 26:4

*I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,*

Here we see that a descendant of Isaac would bring blessing to the world. Jesus is a descendant of Isaac...

Genesis 28:14

*Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

Genesis 49-8:12

*Judah, you will be praised by your brothers; they will bow down to you, as you defeat your enemies. My son, you are a lion ready to eat your victim; You are terribly fierce; no one will bother you. You will have power and rule until nations obey you and come bringing gifts.*

So a descendant of the tribe of Judah would be given power over all and would receive gifts. Now Israel had 12 tribes... We are told that the entire world would be blessed by a descendant of the tribe of Judah. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah.

Matthew 28:18

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

John 14:12-14

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.*

Now Israel had 12 tribes... We are told that the entire world would be blessed by a descendant of the tribe of Judah.

There are thousands of examples of how this small babe who was born, served, died and was raised from the dead fulfilled OT prophecy. Obviously, were I to cover them all, we would be here in this service for a very long time.

Yet, I think we have time for one more example.... Turn with me to the prophet Isaiah chapter 11 verses 1-10

## The Righteous Reign of the Branch

**11** *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*

<sup>2</sup>*And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

<sup>3</sup>*And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.*

*He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,*

<sup>4</sup>*but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*

<sup>5</sup>*Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

<sup>6</sup>*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
and a little child shall lead them.*

<sup>7</sup>*The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

<sup>8</sup>*The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.*

<sup>9</sup>*They shall not hurt or destroy  
in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.*

<sup>10</sup>*In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of  
him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.*

Jesse was King David's Father and a forefather of Jesus.

We see this in Luke 3:23-33 Check it the genealogy.

*Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son  
(as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, <sup>24</sup>the son of Matthat, the son of*

*Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, <sup>25</sup>the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, <sup>26</sup>the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, <sup>27</sup>the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, <sup>28</sup>the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, <sup>29</sup>the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, <sup>30</sup>the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,<sup>31</sup>the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, <sup>32</sup>the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, <sup>33</sup>the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,*

Conclusion.

There is so much more that goes to prove out the miracle of Jesus Christ.

So what is the purpose of this academic sermon today? What is the Goal?

Jesus came incarnate, this is established in the bible as well as external secular historical references of the day. Those who say Jesus was a myth. Have not done their homework. Those who question the veracity of Mary's story, need to look deeper at the cultural implications of the day. Those who wonder why Joseph would believe her have never read and understood the events surrounding Jesus birth. Those who think he was just another man have not done any study to see the interconnections across 600+ years in fulfillment of prophesy. Those who doubt the miracles he performed have never looked at the contemporary historical documents of the time.

As a former computer scientist/analyst, I want facts. The conjecture by so many today without doing the research to hold a valid opinion on the veracity of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ have not looked at the evidence presented.

We see this in the church today... Many will simply read a Christian book, and assume that it is correct, without looking to the scriptures to see if what they are reading actually lines up with the facts of Gods Word. This is how doubt, heretical ideas and disbelief come into play. The Bible says to study to show yourself approved. It does not say, be gullible and listen to popular opinion.

I have found that those who do not put in the effort to discover the facts of this miracle birth at Christmas, miss out and in many cases fail to believe.

So if you walk away from here today, you need to know what this sermon is getting at... It is simply that as a Christian you can believe what you are told or you can prove it out for yourself.

You can believe and there are areas which require faith. But a lot of doubt, fear and apprehension of what the bible tells us is caused by a lack of knowledge and study.

Let me illustrate.

Do you can believe that a Tylenol will cure your headache? Why?

What if some people decided to make a new product called Gullibol for the same purpose of a headache cure. They decided that a small rock swallowed twice a day could cure a headache. But they never studied chemistry. They never examined the facts. They never looked at the results. The people making the product had no degrees. They simply picked up and packaged rocks.

Would you take the new product?  
Would you examine the facts?

What if your doctor or surgeon never went to medical school?

Some things are too important to trust to others... This is your eternal life we are talking about. You need to own it and understand it.

We can all believe and have faith, we can all simply believe what we are told or we can examine the facts for ourselves and make an informed decision.

The more I study the word of God the more I see proofs. When Joseph saw the angel of the lord do you think his faith increased. He had the evidence of his eyes. When Mary was spoken to, do you think it helped allay her fears?

There is a reality to God.

There are some areas that require faith. In fact without faith it is impossible to please God.

It is hard for a person to believe John 3:16 ESV

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

This requires faith! Faith is essential. But when we can verify through God’s word the truth of the graves opening up at Galgotha and the historical accounts of many risen from the dead. When we look at the astronomical chances that would be involved in him fulfilling all those propesies. When we examine the

scriptures in context and in light of historical evidence. How can one not have faith in what one has proved for themselves.

Is faith required... Absolutely, but diligence and study of God's word can build your faith. When you really understand the miracle of Christmas. Your life will never be the same.

This morning I leave you with one last scripture from the prophet Jeremiah regarding the words of the Lord:

*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

Prayer.