

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
Luke 2:1-20

Intro: Luke is the only Gospel writer to give us an account of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew tells us what happened concerning Joseph before the Lord was born, and about the wise men afterwards, but he does not tell us about the birth itself.

Mark omits the birth of Christ completely.

John gives more of a theological presentation ("And the Word was made flesh . . ."), but he gives us none of the historical details.

And so to learn about the nativity of our Lord, we must go to Luke's Gospel.

We have that account in Luke 2:1-20.

The 20 verses have 3 parts:

- 1) The first part, vv. 1-7, speaks of the providence of God -- although like the book of Esther in the OT, God is not mentioned in these verses. Yet there is an unmistakable way in which we can see the hand of the Lord in the events that are recorded there.
- 2) In part two, vv. 8-14, our attention is directed first, to "the angel of the Lord," and then to "a multitude of the heavenly host." We need to be concerned with what they had to say -- and so we can call this section the angels' proclamation.
- 3) The last part, vv. 15-20, has to do with the shepherds -- the promptness with which they acted, and the results which followed.

It all gives us one of the most amazing of all stories given in the Scriptures. Although there are several miraculous births recorded in Scripture, there is none more marvelous in Scripture or out than the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I. GOD'S PROVIDENCE (Luke 2:1-7).

Proverbs 21:1 tells us,

"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth whithersoever he will."

This is the story of Scripture -- the story of history -- the story of the birth of Christ.

No king has ever been able to withstand God. All have been His servants. And it was at the time of the mightiest of

all governments that our Lord was born. Without any outward pressure, the royal decree goes forth "that all the world should be taxed."

THE RIGHT THING AT THE RIGHT TIME
AND THE RIGHT PLACE.

Note: We have no reason to fear what any head of government may do -- all are fitting in with the sovereign purpose of our God!

And note another thing . . .

Just as we have seen the condescension of the Lord in what Luke has written previously concerning the birth of Christ, so we see it again here -- not as an accident, but obviously designed by an all-wise, all-mighty God: our Lord was born in a stable (maybe even a cave) -- "because there was no room for them in the inn."

Was this the place for the King of kings to be born? Most certainly it was -- and taking place away from the eyes of men -- fitting in perfectly with all of the humiliation that our Lord experienced when He came to the earth!

Note: How we need to worship Him for this!

II. THE ANGELS' PROCLAMATION (Luke 2:8-14).

Notice again the evidence of the grace of God and of the humiliation of the Lord. The announcement was not made to royalty, nor to the rich, but to the poor -- to lowly shepherds, busy at night, guarding their sheep!

We have two messages:

GOD'S CALLING - 1 COR. 1:26-31.

A. The message of the angel of the Lord (vv. 9-12).

Every detail is important:

- "good tidings" -- the best comes from heaven, and there never was better news than this.
- "of great joy" -- the greatest, just what men are seeking.
- "for all people" -- not limited to the Jews only.
- "unto you" -- specifically with them in mind.
- "is born this day in the city of David" -- after so long a wait and in full accord with prophecy. Cf. Micah 5:2.
- "a Saviour" -- man's greatest problem is sin, and his greatest need is for a Saviour!
- "Christ the Lord" -- the only Saviour. Note His Deity.

Take no other explanation for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world!

B. The message of the heavenly host (vv. 13, 14).

This places the Gospel in its proper perspective.

Why did Jesus Christ come to the earth? Primarily for the glory of God!

"And on earth peace." Is it possible? What kind of peace is it? Who will have it?

The angels give the answer in the words, "good will toward men."

This verse has been given many interpretations. It is impossible for men on earth to understand the language of heaven unless the Spirit of God reveals it to us.

The angels are not talking about the effect which the Gospel has on men . . . Nor are they talking about some kind of character which God is looking for in man so that salvation will be a kind of reward for good character . . . NO! It is just the opposite. "Good will toward men" means men toward whom God is favorably inclined. One Greek lexicon translates εὐδοκία as describing men "upon whom divine favor rests" (A&G, p. 319).

So those who experience salvation, peace with God, are those to whom God extends His grace.

This message has never changed -- and never will!

But we have one more thing:

III. THE PROMPTNESS OF THE SHEPHERDS (Luke 2:15-20).

Note first:

A. What they did (vv. 15-17).

How wonderful it is to see the Lord's dealings with the hearts of men! Here is a wonderful lesson in how people are brought to the Lord.

Note the order:

1. They went to see (v. 15).

The heavenly message produced in their hearts a desire to investigate further -- and so they went their way to Bethlehem (which was nearby).

Let me ask what might seem to be an unimportant question: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SHEEP? See what they had been doing according to v. 8b.

The answer: It is so insignificant that it is not even mentioned. When the Lord is dealing with people nothing can hold them back from coming to the Lord -- and they will not want to wait!

2. They saw (vv. 16, 17a).

And it was just like the angels had said that it would be. People are never disappointed when they check out the facts of divine revelation. They always prove to be true.

3. They began to tell others (v. 17).

And there was no delay in this either!

And note that their theme was "this child."

Now let us look at . . .

B. What the results were (vv. 18-20).

1. Everybody who heard it "wondered at those things"(v. 18).

Millions of people have, and will again this years, but they never go beyond this.

Have you?

2. Mary (v. 19).

She very obviously was not omniscient.

But what a wonderful example she sets for us.

"Pondered" means that she was thinking, meditating, literally putting it all together.

Do you do this -- even though you know the Lord? Do you think that you have exhausted "all these things"?

3. The shepherds (v. 20).

The evidence that the truth of it all had gotten into their hearts is evident from the fact that

they were "glorifying and praising God."

Concl: Where do we stand in all of this?

Obviously some still need to be saved.

Those of us who are saved need to understand more clearly the truths of the Gospel so that we can give God the glory which belongs to Him, and so that we will experience in a greater measure that "peace" which belongs to those who have experienced His grace.