

THE KING'S HEART IN THE LORD'S HAND

Luke 2:1-20

Intro: Those of us who are familiar with the Bible should not forget that the miracles of the Bible cause a great number of people to be skeptical of its message. Miracles play a large part in Scripture--both in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament. AND THERE IS NO LIFE IN WHICH MIRACLES HAVE A LARGER PART THAN IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF!

Undoubtedly the man who wrote this Gospel had at one time been skeptical about what he had heard about Jesus Christ--about the miracles involved in His birth, as well as those He did during His lifetime, followed by the miracles of His resurrection and ascension.

He himself had not been an eye-witness. But he carried on a most thorough investigation, gathering all of the information, talking to the people who had been eye-witnesses, examining the results. This led to the writing of the Gospel in which we find that Luke was completely convinced that all he has written about was absolutely true!

In this connection it is significant that Luke has more to say about the birth of Jesus Christ than all of the other three writers of the Gospel put together!

There are a number of miraculous births in the Bible: Isaac, Samuel, and John the Baptist are perhaps the most outstanding. BUT NONE IS MIRACULOUS TO THE EXTENT THAT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IS! Not only was the birth of Christ a virgin birth, but all of the writers of Scripture who touch on this subject claim that that Jesus Christ was a unique person in that He was not only man, but God!

Some of you may still be skeptical.

Let me plead with you not to turn away from the record until you have examined the evidence BECAUSE, IF THE BIBLE IS TRUE, THEN YOUR RESPONSE TO WHAT IT TEACHES ABOUT JESUS CHRIST IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE YOU WILL EVER FACE IN YOUR LIFE!

Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ Isaiah wrote these words:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14b).

Let us note, first of all, what Luke has to say about:

I. THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST (Luke 2:1-7).

Why does Luke begin with an historical reference in vv. 1, 2?

Because Luke wants us to know why Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem instead of Nazareth! The angel Gabriel went to Nazareth in Luke 1:26. Of what importance is this detail?

It is important because a contemporary of Isaiah, Micah by name, 700 years B.C., had predicted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem!

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

Who was Augustus Caesar?

He was the greatest of all world rulers! The Roman Empire was never greater in size or in power than it was under him. AND YET TO SHOW THE MIGHTY, SOVEREIGN POWER OF GOD, AT THIS VERY POINT IN WORLD HISTORY GOD MOVED UPON THE HEART OF THIS EMPEROR SO THAT HIS DECISION TO REGISTER THE PEOPLE OF HIS EMPIRE WOULD SET THE STAGE FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF A 700-YEAR OLD PROPHECY! If Jesus had been born in Nazareth, He could not have been the Messiah.

Cf. Matt. 2:5. When Herod the king inquired as to where the Messiah was to be born, the chief priests and the scribes answered,

"In Bethlehem of Judaea."

In Prov. 21:1 we find words from which I have taken my subject this morning:

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

The mightiest human force, the power of the Roman Empire, was not able to withstand God at this most critical moment in human history.

But, notice this other thing.

If you are acquainted with the OT, especially with the book of Deuteronomy, you will know that there was something dreadfully wrong for Israel to be living in such absolute bondage! Cf. Deut. 28. The nation was in a position of national disgrace because of her rebellion against God.

Therefore, we can say this: GOD CHOSE THE VERY MOMENT WHEN THE BIRTH OF HIS SON WOULD BE THE GREATEST POSSIBLE ACT OF GRACE TOWARD HIS OWN PEOPLE, ISRAEL, AS WELL AS TO THE WHOLE WORLD! No one could possibly deserve such a gift from God, and the times in which Jesus Christ was born will always be a reminder of this fact.

One other thing before we leave these verses . . .

Note the humble circumstances of our Lord's birth. Much is covered from our eyes. Think of the trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem. We do not know how hard it was on Mary. When they got to Bethlehem, there was no place for them to stay. There is no evidence that anyone assisted Mary (except Joseph) when our Lord was born. We do not know how difficult it was for Mary, but she evidently took care of the baby Jesus right afterwards. "She . . . wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."

If this story were a fraud, you would have just the opposite kind of a record! But cf. Phil. 2:5-8.

II. THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE SHEPHERDS (Luke 2:8-14).

At this time shepherds were in disrepute with the Jews. Their witness was not acceptable to the Sanhedrin. They were not considered any more worthy of help than Gentiles were.

The fact that the announcement was made to them was another part of the humiliation surrounding our Lord's birth. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS PROVED THE ABSOLUTE RELIABILITY OF THEIR TESTIMONY.

Note the words:

- 1) "Great joy" (v. 10).
 - 2) "A Savior"--His work. This is why He came //
 - 3) "Christ"--the Messiah predicted in the OT // (v. 11).
 - 4) "The Lord"--Deity, incarnation, Jehovah //
 - 5) The order:
 - a) "Glory to God in the highest"
 - b) "Peace" toward men in whom God is well-pleased.
- Cf. v. 14.

A denial of any of these is a denial of what the Scriptures teach about Jesus Christ. No real peace nor lasting joy can be found except in coming to know Him as Savior.

And, in Him and His work, God has to be glorified, or it will mean absolutely nothing to man.

The importance of this announcement is seen in the fact that only once before did anyone hear an angelic chorus. Cf. Isa. 6:1 ff.

This is what angels believe about the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. THE CONFIRMATION OF THE MESSAGE (Luke 2:15-20).

Note the faith expressed in v. 15. They were not going to see IF this had been done, but to see what had been done.

Note the complete confirmation in vv. 16, 20.

The shepherds were the first witnesses. Cf. v. 17.

The reaction to their witness is given in vv. 18, 19.

Concl: Luke is the only one who mentions the shepherds, and after this point they are never mentioned again, and never appear again in Scripture!

How unusual are God's ways! They fulfil their part. They are not glamorized. They do not become apostles. Their testimony is given. They speak in confirmation of the miraculous birth of Christ--and then disappear!

None of the succeeding events throws the slightest doubt on anything that we have here. In fact, it is all confirmed. Many of us here this morning are living witnesses to the fact that what the shepherds said was, and is, true!

IF THERE IS EVER A TIME WHEN CHRISTIANS SHOULD WORSHIP IT IS WHEN WE REMEMBER THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, ITS CIRCUMSTANCES, AND ESPECIALLY ITS MEANING.

But for those of you who have not received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the message could not be any clearer than it is here. God HAS SENT His Son. He did die for our sins. He arose from the dead, and ascended back to the Father. He is coming again. HE DID ALL OF THIS THAT YOUR SINS, AND MINE, MIGHT BE FORGIVEN. BUT, AS FAR AS YOU ARE CONCERNED, IF YOU HAVE NOT PERSONALLY TRUSTED HIM AS YOUR SAVIOR, HE MIGHT JUST AS WELL HAVE NOT COME!

Are you bothered about your sins? You have a right to be. Do you long for peace and joy? Many feel today that we will have peace and joy if we are only free to do whatever we want to do. This will only remove these farther away from us. It is not this church or any other church that you need; YOU NEED CHRIST.

Will you trust Him this morning? You can leave here this morning with peace and joy in your heart, and with your sins forgiven--through trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior.