

THE BIRTH OF JESUS: ITS UNUSUAL EVENTS

LUKE 02 :01–14

Introduction

The prophecy given by Jacob back in Genesis was now being fulfilled.

Gen 49:10 *The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he [the Messiah] comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*

1. Watch how the sceptre of rule had departed from Judea. Judea was under the rule of Rome, with Caesar Augustus reigning as emperor. Cyrenius was governor of Syria, and Judea was included in the province of Syria. Herod was now the *King of Judea*. An usurper, a foreign, alien power, now ruled over Judea. Judea was no longer ruled by one of its own princes; it was ruled by an Idumean prince, a descendant of Esau, Herod the Great.
 - The promised land was no longer in the hands of Israel; it was in the hands of a heathen power.
 - The prince (ruler) was no longer appointed by God; he was empowered by Rome.
 - The temple was no longer cared for by the prince of God; it was (misused) under the authority of an usurper.
 - The priests of God were no longer the ministers of God; they were the servants of the secular world.
2. Note how clearly and how dramatically the prophecy was fulfilled: the sceptre had most definitely departed from Judea, and *now* it was time for Shiloh to come. And He would come. God destined His coming in the counsel and foreknowledge of His will.

The prophecy of *Shiloh's coming* was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was Shiloh who was to come (Gen. 49:10). His coming into the world was surrounded by the most unusual events.

- I. The miraculous taxation (v. 1-6).
 - II. The shocking place of birth (v. 7).
 - III. The unbelievable appearance of a real angel to shepherds (vv. 8-12),
 - IV. The spectacular appearance of the heavenly host (vv. 13-14).
-

I. ***Luke 02:01–06 The Birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, God’s Providence***

There was the miraculous census. Three things should be noted.

1. The taxation was used by God to fulfil His plan for the birth of the Messiah. It had been prophesied that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, and Scripture had to be fulfilled. Joseph and Mary lived in Galilee, and Mary was now great with child. How was God going to make sure that the child was born in Bethlehem? The taxation happened just at the right time and in the right way; that is, everyone had to return to the city of his birth to pay his taxes. God was miraculously controlling the events of the world, working all things out for good so that He might fulfil His promise to send the Saviour into the world.
2. The taxation forced Joseph to Bethlehem. Everyone had to return to the city of his birth. Note the great details given in describing the journey to Bethlehem. The point is that Bethlehem was the prophesied city of the Messiah’s birth (Mic. 5:2). The Scribes understood it (Mt. 2:5-6) and so did the common people (Jn. 7:42). The taxation was certainly an event wrought in the plan of God to fulfil Scripture.
3. The taxation led to the fulfilment of Scripture, despite man’s plans. Mary, was about to deliver; she was “expecting a child” (v. 5). Apparently, Joseph and Mary had planned for the child to be delivered in Nazareth; but God overruled. He either caused or used the taxation and saw to it that Joseph and Mary were forced to Bethlehem.

Now, why did Jesus have to be born in Bethlehem?

- a. The Messiah was the prophesied Son of David. Jesus was the Davidic Heir - He was qualified to be the Messianic King. (See Jesus Christ, King of Israel, Jn. 1:49). God had given to David and His seed (the Messiah) the promise of eternal government (2 Sam. 7:12; Psa. 39:3f; 132:11).

The Jews believed these promises of God. Therefore Jesus, “who is called Christ” (Mt. 1:16), was the promised Son of Abraham, the promised Son of David (Mt. 1:1).

- b. David had been born in Bethlehem; therefore, it was necessary for the Son of David to be born there.
- c. Scripture foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).

JOHN 01:49 JESUS CHRIST, THE KING OF ISRAEL

Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” John 01:49

Jesus was declared to be the Messianic King. God had given to David and his seed (the Messiah) the promise of eternal government (2 Sam. 7:12; Psa. 39:3f; 132:11).

Note how often Jesus was called the son of David. (Mt. 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31: 21:9, 15; Acts 2:29-36; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16.) It was the common title and popular concept of the Messiah. Generation after generation of Jews had ached and looked for the promised deliverer of Israel. The people expected Him to be a great general who would deliver and restore the nation to its greatness. In fact, they expected Him to make the nation the centre of universal rule. He would, under God, conquer the world and centre the glory and majesty of God Himself in Jerusalem; and from His throne, the throne of David, He would execute the Messianic fire of judgment upon the nations and peoples of the world (Mt. 1:18; 3:11; 11:1-6; 11:2-3; 11:5; 11:6; Lk. 7:21). □

II. *Luke 02:07 The Birth of Jesus Christ*

There was the shocking place of birth. Jesus was not born in comfortable surroundings. Shockingly, He was born in a stable and laid in a manger or feeding trough. The birth is covered in one simple verse, yet much can be gleaned from it.

1. Jesus was born in a smelly stable. He was neglected and turned away by men from the very beginning. There was no room in the inn when Mary was about to deliver. If someone had cared, room could have been rented for her.
2. Jesus was born in poverty. If Joseph had possessed the money, he could have rented a room.
3. Jesus was born in obscurity and loneliness. The birth took place away from people, all alone. Note that Mary herself wrapped the child in cloths and laid Him in a manger.
4. Jesus was born in humiliation. He did not enter the world...
 - in a hospital,
 - in the home of a friend or relative,
 - under the stars of heaven, nor even out in open
 - but in a smelly stable, the lowest imaginable place for a birth.
 - in a comfortable home,
 - under a doctor's care,
5. Jesus was born into a corruptible world full of sin and selfishness, greed and unkindness. This is seen in that...
 - the world (represented in the innkeeper) was so wrapped up in its affairs that it could not help a woman bearing a child.
 - no one made room for Mary in the inn. Money and personal comfort were more important to all who had become aware of the situation.

Thought 1. Note how so many missed the first coming of Christ. How many will miss the second coming of Christ?

Luke 21:34 *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.”*

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

III. **Luke 02:08–12 The Shepherds**

There was the unbelievable appearance of real angels to shepherds. In the eyes of many, an angel would never appear to a shepherd. Shepherds would seldom be found praising and worshipping God; as a result they were looked upon as anything but worshippers. Their reputation was lowly at best, and religious people snubbed and ignored them. They were despised because they were unable to attend services and to keep the ceremonial laws of washing and cleansing. Their flocks just kept them too busy. What a beautiful foretaste of the salvation to come: God gave the first message of His Son to common shepherds, those looked upon as sinners.

1. The angels’ appearance was that of splendour and glory. This was the Shekinah glory. There was the strength of God’s presence.
2. The angels’ message was one of reassurance and good news. He proclaimed the Messiah’s birth and charged the shepherds to visit the child. He gave them a sign: they will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Thought 1. The Saviour was coming to call sinners to repentance; therefore, the first announcement of His coming was given to sinners.

Luke 5:31-32 *Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

1 Cor 1:26-29 *Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

LUKE 1:31 JESUS (IESOUS)

Jesus means Saviour; He will save. The Hebrew form is Joshua (yasha), meaning Jehovah is salvation or He is the Saviour. The idea is that of deliverance, of being saved from some terrible disaster that leads to destruction (see Jn. 3:16). (See Lk. 9:23; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 2:14-18; 7:25.) □

MATHEW 01:18 CHRIST, MESSIAH (CHRISTOS)

The words Christ (Christos) and Messiah are the same word. Messiah is the Hebrew word and Christ is the Greek word. Both words refer to the same person and mean the same thing: the Anointed One. The Messiah is the Anointed One of God. Mathew says Jesus “is called Christ” (Mt. 1:16); that is, He is recognized as the Anointed One of God, the Messiah Himself.

In the day of Jesus Christ, people feverishly panted for the coming of the long-promised Messiah. The weight of life was harsh, hard, and impoverishing. Under the Romans, the people felt that God could not wait much longer to fulfil His promise. Such longings for deliverance left the people gullible. Many arose who claimed to be the Messiah and led the trusting followers into rebellion against the Roman State. The insurrectionist Barabbas, who was set free in the place of Jesus at Jesus’ trial, is an example (Mk. 15:60f)

The Messiah was thought to be several things.

1. *Nationally*, He was to be the leader from David’s line who would free the Jewish state as an independent nation and lead it to be the greatest nation the world had ever known.
2. *Militarily*, He was to be a great military leader who would lead Jewish armies victoriously over all the world.
3. *Religiously*, He was to be a supernatural figure straight from God who would bring righteousness over all the earth.
4. *Personally*, He was to be the One who would bring peace to the whole world.

Jesus Christ accepted the title of Messiah on three different occasions (Mt. 16:17; Mk. 14:61; Jn. 4:26). The name “Jesus” shows Him to be man. The name “Christ” shows Him to be God’s Anointed One, God’s very own Son. Christ is Jesus’ official title. It identifies Him officially as:

- Prophet (Deu. 18:15-19),
- Priest (Psa. 110:4), and
- King (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

These three officials were always anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit who was to perfectly anoint the Christ, the Messiah (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-33). □

IV. Luke 02:13–14 The Appearance of the Angels

There was the spectacular appearance of the heavenly host. The word “host” means an army of angels, “ten thousand times ten thousand” (Dan. 7:10; see Psa. 68:17). God either

gave the shepherds a special sight into the spiritual world and dimension or caused the spiritual dimension to appear to physical sight. The angels did two things.

1. They cried out for glory to be lifted up to God...
 - who is the highest possible Being.
 - who dwells in the highest realm of being possible, in heaven itself.
2. They cried out for peace, for good will toward men. By peace is meant the peace of reconciliation, the good will between God and man. The alienation and separation, struggle and divisiveness, restlessness and fear caused by sin needed to be solved. The heavenly host was praising God that the alienation and separation were now being solved in the birth of the ‘Saviour... he is Christ the Lord’ (v. 11).

Col 1:20 And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. ■