

HE IS GIVEN THE NAME JESUS

Luke 02: 15–21

Introduction

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

Gen 49:10 *The scepter 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 scepter 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 scepter 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 excited shepherds seeking evidence (vv. 15-18).
- II. The awe-stricken, pondering mother (v. 19).
- III. The common, non-religious shepherds worshipping God (v. 20).
- IV. The unusual naming of the child: named by God Himself (v. 21)

I. *Luke 02: 15–18 The Exited Shepherds*

There were the excited shepherds seeking evidence. Note their excitement.

1. They decided immediately to visit. "They [the shepherds] said to one another, 'let's go'..."
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2. They *rushed* to see for themselves. There is a sense of extreme urgency in these words. They acted with haste, rushed, hurried. They felt an urgency to act and to act now. They wasted no time. They found the baby just as the angel had said.
3. They shared the message. They first experienced seeing the child themselves, then they shared their experience wherever they went. They were the first to bear witness to the Savior of the world.
4. They caused a stir among the people. Note that nothing is said about these hearers seeking out the child. They only wondered about what they heard; they never responded and never moved to find Him for themselves.

II. *Luke 02:19 Mary – Symbol of Humility and Trust*

There was the awe-stricken, pondering mother. This is a beautiful picture of a humble, trusting heart. Mary had been told that her child was of God, truly of God. Above all others she knew that the Messiah, the very Son of God, had now come. She had been through so much: pregnant, yet unmarried; the possibility of being found out and rumours heaped upon rumours; the discussions with Joseph and with her parents; the long trip from Nazareth; the exhaustion of giving birth without help in a smelly stable; the visit of some rough-hewn shepherds with an amazing story of the heavenly hosts proclaiming the praises of God.

Mary was tired, as weary and exhausted as a person could be. So much had happened, and she was at the very centre of it all. No one could even begin to know the thoughts that had filled her mind for nine months, nor could anyone know the feelings and emotions of the experience. The wonder, the amazement, the astounding reality was too much to talk about. All she could do was continue in the humble sweetness that had so characterized her over the past months. She merely bowed once again in *humble adoration* to God and *quietly entrusted* all these things into God's keeping. She said nothing, only pondered in her heart what was happening.

III. *Luke 02:20 The Messenger Shepherds*

There were the common, non-religious shepherds worshipping God.

1. The shepherds had spread the message, and the shocking fact is that the shepherds alone are seen praising God. No one else is seen seeking or praising the Saviour.
2. The shepherds were praising God for what they had *heard* and *seen*. God had spoken to them and they had received the message. They obeyed God's instructions to seek out the Messiah; therefore, they had been privileged to see the Messiah. They had reason to praise God. (How many hear and see, yet never respond and never praise God?)

Jer 29:11-13 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

IV. Luke 02:21 Naming of Jesus Christ

There was the unusual naming of the child. The child was named by God Himself.

1. The child Jesus was named by God before He was conceived in the womb (Lk. 1:31).
2. The name Jesus (iesous) means Saviour or He will save. The Hebrew form of the name is Joshua (yasha), which means *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; Ga1. 1: 4; Heb. 2:14-18; 7:25.)

1 Tim 2:3-6 This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men - the testimony given in its proper time.

Titus 3:4-7 But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

3. There was the ceremony of circumcision. (See *Circumcision*, Phil. 03:03) ■

PHILIPPIANS 03:03 CIRCUMCISION

Before Christ, circumcision was the physical sign that a man was a follower of the true God. It was the sign that a man believed the promises that God had made to Abraham and Israel (see Gen. 17:10-14; Rom. 4:11). God never intended circumcision to have any value other than being a sign. It was not to bring righteousness to any man — not even to Abraham (Rom. 4:9-10). It was given only as a sign — a sign of the faith that a man already had in God’s promises. Righteousness was imputed to the man because he believed God’s promises; then the man was circumcised as a sign of his faith in God (see Rom. 4:11).

However, many abused God’s purpose for circumcision.

1. Some made circumcision a substitute for true righteousness. A man was thought to be safe and secure in the arms of God if he was circumcised. Believing God and

loving men had little to do with being a child of God. Many forgot the circumcision of a pure heart and became Jews of the circumcision in name only. Circumcision became merely an external and physical sign.

2. Some used circumcision as a way to divide and categorize people.

A great wall of division was thrown up around the uncircumcised (cp. Acts 10:1; 1 Sam. 17:26, 36; 2 Sam. 1:20). Any man who was uncircumcised was thought to be *cut off* and *far off*, not only from those thought to be the people of God (the Jews and the circumcised) but from God Himself. (See Acts 10:1-33.) An uncircumcised man was looked upon with bitter contempt. In the mind of the Jew, God was thought to love only Israel, despising and rejecting all other people (the Gentile nations).

3. God has done away with circumcision as a sign of righteousness since Christ has come (Gal. 5:6; 6:15; Col. 2:11). Righteousness is now of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter of rules and regulations (see Rom. 2:25-29; 4:8-12, 23-25). The truly righteous man is the man who is God's *inwardly* — the man whose spirit has been *recreated* into the very nature of God. God's very own righteous nature is implanted into the very nature of man when he is *born again*. A man *born again* by the Spirit of God is God's "new creation" (Jn. 3:3f; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 1:4). □