

# Jesus's Birth + The Announcement of the Birth + The After-effects of the Birth

## Introduction

**Alexander McLaren** – Scottish by birth, he ministered in England as a non-conformist pastor in the 1800s and early 1900s. *In regards to this passage, he preached the following:*

*“Why should there be a miraculous announcement at all, and why should it be to these shepherds? It seems to have had no effect beyond a narrow circle and for a time. It was apparently utterly forgotten when, thirty years after, the carpenter’s Son began His ministry. Could such an event have passed from memory, and left no ripple on the surface? Does not the resultlessness cast suspicion on the truthfulness of the narrative? Not if we duly give weight to the few who knew of the wonder; to the length of time that elapsed, during which the shepherds and their auditors probably died; to their humble position, and to the short remembrance of extraordinary events which have no immediate consequences. Joseph and Mary were strangers in Bethlehem. Christ never visited it, so far as we know. The fading of the impression cannot be called strange, for it accords with natural tendencies; but the record of so great an event, which was entirely ineffectual as regards future acceptance of Christ’s claims, is so unlike legend that it vouches for the truth of the narrative. An apparent stumbling-block is left, because the story is true.*

*Why then, the announcement at all, since it was of so little use? Because it was of some; but still more, because it was fitting that such angel voices should attend such an event, whether men gave heed to them or not; and because, recorded, their song has helped a world to understand the nature and meaning of that birth. The glory died off the hillside quickly, and the music of the song scarcely lingered longer in the ears of its first hearers; but its notes echo still in all lands, and every generation turns to them with wonder and hope.”*

It was fitting. It was fitting so the world could “understand the nature and meaning of that birth.” It was fitting because Jesus—Saviour, Christ, and Lord—was born. The announcement helps us understand the point of this passage: A Saviour is born; he is Christ and Lord and his name is Jesus. And the announcement was not just fitting in the information it contained, but also in the actions that accompany the announcement. Let us look again at this story with wonder and hope, reminding ourselves of the grace and mercy it displays as well as the praise and worship it demands.

**Luke 2:1-21 ESV**

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup>And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <sup>6</sup>And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup>And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup>For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

<sup>15</sup>When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup>And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup>And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup>And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

<sup>21</sup>And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

## Humble Circumstances 2:1-7

### Historical Circumstances 2:1-3

Places the birth narrative in history: a census by Octavian, Caesar Augustus

Jews were to be registered for the purpose of taxes

*- + the rest of the world*

*a system*

*Interesting:* God used taxation to initiate the greatest work he would ever do on earth...think about that as you get your 2017 taxes in!

*economic* God uses a tyrant who desires to bring the Jews—and the whole world—into bondage through taxes to bring about the birth of a ruler who would bring freedom from *spiritual* bondage to the world.

God is the Sovereign ruler of history: he employs the “emperor of the world” as His agent to ensure His promises → *from most prominent person (Caesar) to the seemingly obscure (Mary), God uses people to achieve his ends*

The great, royal, Davidic messiah must come from Bethlehem: the seeming accidents of history are truly the fore-planned steps God ordains to achieve his ends

*It is popular these days to talk about...*

Right side of history: abortion, homosexuality, transgender issues, marriage – “We’re on the right side of history as long as we stand with the Lord of history.”

*Jonathan Leeman*

*• slavery • physical abuse • smoking*

Returning to ancestral homes was a Jewish custom, not a Roman one; it is likely the Romans used a Jewish custom to mitigate the inconvenience and discontentment with the registration

*government grants*

God used the earthly powers to bring about heavenly fulfillment: Mary and Joseph needed to be in Bethlehem

### Geographic Circumstances 2:4-5

Joseph left Nazareth and went, in obedience to the Romans, to Bethlehem which is called the city of David

Mentioning Joseph's ancestry and Bethlehem as the location indicates the prophetic connections of this birth: here are hints of the royal, Davidic importance of this child → *the geography was proclaiming the coming of the savior before the angels uttered a word!*

### Micah 5:2 ESV

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
 who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
 from you shall come forth for me  
 one who is to be ruler in Israel,  
 whose coming forth is from of old,  
 from ancient days.

Joseph didn't go alone, Mary was with him; she would clearly desire to be with her husband as the birth of the child was approaching *or maybe she had to go but their geographic circumstances were pointing to the birth of a savior*

### Birth Circumstances 2:6-7

Jesus was born in a stable, and Mary wraps him in cloths and lays him in a manger: not said-there is no more space in Bethlehem, there was a grumpy inn keeper who begrudgingly gave them the stable, ~~no indication of the poverty of Mary and Joseph~~ *Mary on a donkey*

This is a humble start for someone of such expected greatness

*The historic circumstances that*

**J. C. Ryle:** "We see here, the *grace* and *condescension* of Christ. Had He come to save mankind with royal majesty, surrounded by His Father's angels — it would have been an act of undeserved mercy. Had He chosen to dwell in a palace, with power and great authority — then we should have had reason enough to wonder. But to become as *poor* as the very poorest of mankind, and *lowly* as the very lowliest — this is a love which surpasses knowledge! It is unspeakable and unsearchable!

Never let us forget that through his humiliation, Jesus has purchased a title to glory for us. Through His *life* of suffering, as well as His *death* — He has obtained eternal redemption for us. All through His life He was poor for our sakes — from the hour of His birth to the hour of His death. And through His poverty, we are made rich. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor — so that you through his poverty might become rich!" (2 Corinthians 8:9.)"

Firstborn points to his regal rights in David's lineage

stable, cave, conal? a room

The manger indicates that Jesus was born in a room for animals

Luke is a book that will constantly bring contrasting ideas and images together

- The secular emperor unknowingly helps with the prophetic birth of the divine emperor
- The creator of all animals is born in a room for animals and laid in a trough for ~~animals~~ the food of animals
- The most glorious human to ever live is born in a humble dwelling

We need to remember this is a true beginning to the FULFILLMENT of God's promises  
 Bock: "From this simple setting emerges the Lord Jesus, the focus of all God's promises and of all human hopes."

The birth setting was simple, humble, overwhelming... but the one who was born and the work he would do in massive and glorious beyond our imagination!

\*\*\*Humble circumstances versus wrong expectations\*\*\*

The HISTORIC, GEOGRAPHIC, and BIRTH circumstances all point to the birth of an unexpected yet greatly anticipated Savior!

We saw the HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES of this birth, now look at...

## Heaven's Reaction 2:8-14

### Place and People 2:8-9

To shepherds in the fields; possibly two miles from the town

Shepherds = all people, more than just a family affair

Shepherds not despised, but certainly humble

Birth is followed by announcement to ordinary people

To the fields and to the people is where the angel arrives

*extraordinary and shining*

The glory of God's majestic presence is juxtaposed to the dark fields and ordinary shepherds

*↳ again the contrast is memorable: the visitation of glorious angels to the blue-collar shepherds*

Ryle: "Let us resist the suggestion of Satan, that religion is not for the working man." ⇒ *my hands vs. Seamus's hands*

*This announcement involved ORDINARY people*

### Proclamation 2:10-12

This proclamation is both good news and a great joy

Why is it good news and a great joy?

- 1) A Saviour is born
- 2) City of David = fulfillment = THE Savior is the long awaited Messiah
- 3) Names – Saviour, Christ, Lord – The saviour who is the Messiah is also the Lord

*Don't miss this!*

It is a personal, individualized proclamation - "*For unto you is born...*"

**John Calvin:** "The pronoun "to you" is very emphatic; for it would have given no great delight to hear that the Author of salvation was born, unless each person believed that for himself he was born."

*- Jesus was born for me*

We should identify with the shepherds – personally identify - GOSPEL -

*↳ believe*

*- Jesus came so that you could come  
- Jesus left the Father so you could come to the Father*

Saviour, Christ, Lord = this combination of titles is unique

- Deliverer from enemies and bringer of salvation
- Regal deliverer
- Absolute sovereign uniquely related to God

The person who this describes has come! And he has come for you!

*Heaven reacts by proclaiming the greatness, joyfulness of this event... and this leads to...*

### Praise 2:13-14

The angelic entourage are heavenly commentators on what is commencing

Through praise they reveal what the results of the good news will be

- Does our praise do this? Worship leaders? The angels' praise explained the good news. Does our praise explain the good news?

The good news of Jesus's coming brings glory and peace: the glory goes to God and the peace goes to men?

**McLaren:** "On earth peace.' The song drops from the contemplation of the heavenly consequences [glory to God] to celebrate the results on earth, and gathers them all into one pregnant word, 'Peace.' What a scene of strife, discord, and unrest earth must seem to those calm spirits! And how vain and petty the struggles must look, like the bustle of an ant-hill! Christ's work is to bring peace into all human relations, those with God, with men, with circumstances, and to calm the discords of souls at war with themselves. Every one of these relations is marred by sin, and nothing less thorough than a power which removes it can rectify them. That birth was the coming into humanity of Him who brings peace with God, with ourselves, with one another. Shame on Christendom that nineteen centuries have passed, and men yet think the cessation of war is only a 'pious imagination'! The ringing music of that angel chant has died away, but its promise abides."

There is glory for God in heaven; there is peace for men on earth

What sort of event could initiate the praise of heaven and the peace of earth?  
 What an event this must be! *Heaven's reaction was to praise! What is our reaction? Anxiety? Indifference? Disdain?*

**John Calvin:** "Again, we are convicted of more than brutal stupidity, if our faith and our zeal to praise God are not inflamed by the song which the angels, with the view of supplying us with the matter of our praise, sang in full harmony. ... Whenever our salvation is mentioned, we should understand that a signal has been given, to excite us to thanksgiving and to the praises of God."

The heavenly reaction is an announcement of good news causing great joy that echoes throughout history for the glory of God and for the peace of mankind.

*We have considered the HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES of Jesus' birth  
 We have considered HEAVEN'S REACTION to that birth  
 next we now consider HUMANS' RESPONSE*



## Humans' Response 2:15-21

- 1) The shepherds respond in faith and go to find the child
- 2) They tell others about their experience
- 3) The surrounding people react to the shepherds' report
- 4) Mary responds to all that transpires

### Confirmation 2:15-17

- 1) The shepherds respond
  - God delivers his word
  - The shepherds respond in faith
  - The resulting action is to testify to what they have experienced
  - God's Word, faith, testimony –a good model
    - John Calvin: "This conveys an important lesson. Instead of allowing the word of God, as many do, to pass away with the sound, we must take care that it strike its roots deep in us, and manifest its power, as soon as the sound has died away upon our ears."
  
- 2) The shepherds report their experience
  - Often called the first evangelists
  - Faithfulness is determined after the angels leave and the voices are no longer heard
  - What does our faithfulness look like when the church service is over, and the music and preaching are no longer heard?

### Wonder, Ponder, Praise 2:18-20

- 3) Everyone who hears the shepherds report respond with wonder
  - Wonder does not insist on belief
  - **\*\*don't stop at wonder\*\*** *wonder is a first step... proceed to these other things: praise, sharing your faith, pondering*
  
- 4) Mary responds
  - Different than the wonder of the crowds, this is a deep reflection
  - Bock: "It cannot be doubted that Mary is an example of a proper response to the message of Jesus."

How will you respond to the announcement that a Saviour was born?

The shepherds' response was one of faith in God's Word and praise of God's work. Will we respond in faith and praise? Remember, the shepherds knew of Christ's birth but they knew nothing of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension. How much more reason do we have to respond in faith and praise at Christmas time?

The shepherds responded by proclaiming what they had seen and heard? Do we not have a great responsibility to proclaim what we have seen and heard? And as recipients of all the benefits of the work of the Saviour who was born, shouldn't we desire to proclaim this message as opposed to proclaim it out of duty?

*Our response should be more than wonder, but never less than wonder!*

The people responded with wonder? Do we respond with wonder? If not, then we aren't seeing this story for what it truly is! The wonder of God becoming man; the wonder of divine nature taking on human nature; the wonder of infinite spirit taking on miniscule flesh. If this doesn't cause wonder, open your eyes!

Mary responded with quiet, serious reflection on the events. We would do well for some quiet, serious reflection on the birth of the Saviour as well!

### Faithfulness 2:21

Faithful in fulfilling the law in seeing that Jesus was circumcised

Faithful to God's word in naming the baby Jesus

What does faithfulness look like for you this Christmas?

The Saviour has been born. He is Jesus Christ our Lord!

A faithful response to this glorious truth, for you, is what? Praise? Wonder?  
Sharing your faith? Quiet, serious reflection? All of the above?

Let us respond faithfully to this good news of great joy: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.