

# THE SIMPLE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

## The Beginning

TEXT: Lk. 2:1-7

INTRODUCTION: The Christmas story as given to us by Luke, ancient medical doctor turned historian, has always been one of my favorites in Scripture.

- Perhaps it is because this passage, Luke 2:1-20 was the first extended passage of Scripture I ever memorized, when I was just a boy in the fourth grade.
- Maybe it is because of the detail and precision that is contained in this brief account, or
- It could be because of the immense importance of the record of the Son of God coming to this earth

I don't know for sure, but it remains a passage that delights my soul each time I consider it.

The next three Sunday mornings, I want to share it with you in a short little series of sermons I call THE SIMPLE STORY OF CHRISTMAS.

Lk. 2:1-7 <sup>1</sup> And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup> So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into 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 wife, who was with child. <sup>6</sup> So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

I am not a preacher who often uses alliteration in my sermon points, probably because I am not smart enough to do it, although I prefer to think it is because I value precision and faithfulness to the text over literary devices. However, in this case, we are not forced to choose because we clearly see in these seven verses

### The Power

#### The Providence

#### The Provision of God

### I. THE POWER OF GOD

- A. More than 500 years before Octavius was born, God revealed to Daniel, His servant and prophet, the rise of the Roman Empire. Octavius became the Emperor of Rome and was called Caesar Augustus, but it was Almighty God that set him upon the throne and who put the decree for a census upon his heart.

- B. This was actually the first of three such registrations in the regions we know as the holy land, a fact not well understood by critics of the historicity of Luke.
- C. Bethlehem, the ancestral home of King David, was a small town of just a couple of thousand people. Yet God had promised that in that singular place, Messiah would enter the world.

Micah 5:2

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
 Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,  
 Yet out of you shall come forth to Me  
 The One to be Ruler in Israel,  
 Whose goings forth *are* from of old,  
 From everlasting.”

- D. See here a picture of the extent to which the Almighty will go to keep His promises.

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *Like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

1. God caused Cyrus, King of Persia, to allow the remnant return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.
  2. God causes King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) to fall in love with a Jewish maiden and take her for his wife. Then through a miraculous turn of events which you are studying right now in Lifechange Groups, the Lord saves His chosen people from annihilation.
  3. Then God moves the heart of King Artaxerxes to allow a second return to Jerusalem, this time sending the priest Ezra with a royal commission and money from the King's treasury to go toward the rebuilding of the temple of God.
  4. Later the Lord prompts that same king to send Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of the city and to be the governor of the province.
  5. So, when God wants a decree to be sent out through the Roman Empire to cause two people He has chosen to go to Bethlehem at just the right moment in the history of the world, it is no challenge to His power.
- E. Dear friend, every time this Christmas season you see a star on top of a tree or perched on top of a building, mimicking the star that shown over Bethlehem ...

Every time you see a manger scene with a baby in the feed trough and Mary and Joseph kneeling there in wonder and adoration,

See there an eternal portrait of the power of the Almighty God and that He knows no limits in what He will do to keep His promises to you.

*“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* Hebrews 13:5

...God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.  
 1 Corinthians 10:13

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

We not only see the power of God, we also see

## II. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

### Providence – divine guidance and care

We see God's clear guidance and care in the lives of Mary and Joseph.

Nazareth was probably even smaller than Bethlehem, maybe as few as 500 people in the days mentioned in Luke, chapter 2. What are the odds that two descendents of the Great King David, themselves being only very distantly related, would both live in this tiny village?

What are the odds? Well, by just random chance, probably less than 1%.

But with the working of the providence of God? 100%

- A. Joseph, as a descendent from King David, carried the legal right to Israel's throne, but he also carried the curse God placed upon the descendents of Jeconiah, that none of his descendents should ever sit upon the throne again.
- B. Mary, also a descendent of King David but through a different branch of the family, carried the physical lineage of David and without the curse of Jeconiah.
- C. Through the miracle of the virgin birth with Mary as the mother of Jesus and Joseph as His adoptive father, God made Jesus the unique legal heir to the throne of Israel and bestowed on Him the credentials to be the Messiah Savior.
- D. We do not know all the details of how God orchestrated the events in the lives of Mary and Joseph's families across the years to bring them both to the little village of Nazareth. We do not know what heartstrings God pulled to cause Joseph's eye to fall upon Mary or for her heart to be stirred by young Joseph.
- E. But we do know some of the final part of the workings of God in that when Mary was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit, and Joseph's natural and understandable inclination was to break their engagement, God sent an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream to reveal to him the purpose and plan of God.
- F. Because Joseph and Mary were under the guidance and care of the Lord Himself.
- G. And so, my friend, are you.
  - **God knows you by name.**
  - **God knows all about you.**
  - **God loves you still.**
  - **God has a plan for you.**

- **God has a purpose for you.**
- **His purpose for you has eternal value.**

I really began to understand that God had a purpose for my life when I was in high school. I did not know all of it, but God began to show me parts of it, enough to take the next step. Enough to say “yes” by action as well as word.

Mary and Joseph were objects of the providence of God, but they still had a choice as to whether or not to live the plan God had for them. He did not coerce or force them. He cared for them. He guided them. But they had to say “yes” to Him. And they did.

Even so, each of us are objects of the providence of God. God cares for us, has a plan for us, guides us toward that plan. But we must answer. We can say “yes” or we can say “no” to God.

Later today and next week, when something makes you think of Christmas, would you let your mind go to Mary and Joseph for a moment? Would you think about God’s guidance and care, God’s providence in their lives? And would you let that remind you of God’s providential care in your own life and of His plan for you? And would you give to Him the same answer that Mary and Joseph gave so many years ago?

Finally, we see here in these verses that are just the beginning of the Christmas story

### III. THE PROVISION OF GOD

Lk. 2:6-7 <sup>6</sup> So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Wow!

The providence of God brought the right people together in the right way,  
The power of God brought them to the right place at just the right time,

And now God sends His perfect provision.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman ...

We could easily spend months rather than minutes in talking about the perfection of God’s provision in sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, but for our purposes today I will only call to your attention three important details in the simple story.

A. The manger speaks of the humility and meekness of the Savior.

It is the peak of irony: The Son of God, by Whom and for Whom all things have been created, when He enters the world He made is laid in a feed trough as a bed.

But our Lord, who Himself said “Blessed are the poor in spirit, and blessed are the meek” perfectly modeled the qualities of humility and strength under control every moment He was upon the earth, beginning with His birth.

- B. The swaddling cloths speak of His death, for these strips of linen were often used to wrap a body for burial.

Jesus was and is the Son of God Who ever lives, but He came to this earth to die to pay the death penalty for the sins of each one of us.

- C. No room at the inn pictures that although all power in heaven and on earth belongs to Him, He will not force His way into heart or home.

It is the same picture of

**Revelation 3:20** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

**CONCLUSION:** Jesus is knocking at the door or the heart of some of you here this morning. He wants to come into your life, forgive your sins, give you eternal life, start fulfilling the promises of God in your life as the child of God, working out His plan providentially in your life.

But you must say yes and let Him in.

**Rom 10:9** that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.