

The Message Of Christmas

December 18, 2005 8:30 A.M. Service

Luke 2:1-14 (NKJV)

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. [2] This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. [3] So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. [4] 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, [5] to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. [6] So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. [7] 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.

[8] Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. [9] And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. [10] Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. [11] For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [12] And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." [13] And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

[14] "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

I have just read to you the announcement of the birth of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel Of Luke.

I want to point out several very important things about what Luke said.

First, I want you to notice that he didn't begin this story with the words, "**Once upon a time**". He begins by giving the **specific time** in the history of Israel when this event took place. It was when **Caesar Augustus** made a decree for the people to be taxed and it was when **Quirinius** was governing Syria.

This is not a fairy tale. This is an actual event that took place at a specific time. As a matter of fact, we have come to relate all other events in history to the time of this event.

We are about to start a new year, the year of 2006. That means it has been 2006 and six years since this event took place. **We call it 2006A.D.**

What does the AD mean? A generation ago, there were still schoolchildren who could tell you that AD represents a Latin term, “animal dominoes” or something like that. Not anymore. As a result, AD is now sometimes replaced by CE (for “Christian Era”, or “Common Era”).

The term “AD” was created by a monk named **Dionysius Exiguus in 525 AD.** Before that time, dates were calculated by an individual king’s reign (“In the fifth year of Emperor Augustus”, “In the second year of King Henry VIII”) or dated from the founding of a kingdom or an empire.

Dionysius noticed that kings died, and even empires vanished (the Roman Empire, after flourishing for centuries had collapsed just the century before). This created confusion, with some people following one calendar, and others another calendar. (This confusion is why Dionysius made a mistake of 4-6 years in trying to calculate the year of Jesus’ birth.)

Dionysius therefore proposed establishing a calendar based on a kingdom which would never end. He began counting time from Jesus’ birth.

AD literally means “In the year of the Lord”. So, this year, instead of being the fifth year of George Bush’s presidency, is the 2005th year of Jesus’ reign.

In establishing the “AD” calendar, **Dionysius** was not just finding a convenient starting point for a calendar. He was declaring that he accepted Jesus as his King and that he was a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Those who follow Jesus today, declare the same thing.

Verse 8 says, “...Now at that time there were **shepherds** living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night”.

The Angel of the Lord made the announcement of the birth of Jesus to a group of shepherds who were living out in the fields near Bethlehem. They were out there tending to their flock of sheep.

Shepherds were at the lowest end of society during those days. They were transients for the most part. They lived by stealing and lying, and the decent people of society avoided them as much as possible.

Bethlehem is located just a few miles from Jerusalem. No sheep were allowed in the fields close to Jerusalem unless they were going to be used as sacrifices for the in the Temple. The only time that there were a lot of sheep and shepherds around Jerusalem was just before Passover, because thousands of sheep were needed they as Passover lambs.

That would suggest that the birth of Jesus occurred sometime in January or February because that's when those shepherds would be out in the fields near Bethlehem.

Someone has said, "If that is true, why do we celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25th?" The answer is, "Since we don't know the exact date He was born, we do it on December 25th because it's not the exact date that's important. It's the fact that He was born that's important!"

These particular shepherds must have **not** been the run of the mill variety. They must have been devout persons who were among the minority of Israelites who were at that time waiting for the promised Messiah to come.

It was to them that the very first announcement of the birth of Jesus came.

Luke 2:9-12 (NKJV)

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. [10] Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. [11] For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [12] And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

Notice that the **very first thing** that the angel said to them was **“Do not be afraid.”**

That’s significant! It had been 400 years since they had heard a word from the Lord. Four hundred years earlier the Prophet Malachi had announced that the **“Sun of Righteousness would rise with healing in His wings.”** And, having announced that, there was not another prophet, not another word from God for four hundred years.

Suddenly, in a blaze of glorious light, a messenger from God stands before a group of transient, homeless people and says, “Do not be afraid.”

The very first words that Adam spoke after committing sin in the Garden of Eden were, **“I was afraid.”**

Here, the very first words of the gospel are, **“Do not be afraid.”**

Jesus came to destroy fear.

Adam and Eve were afraid because they had broken their relationship with God. Jesus came to make it possible for that relationship to be reestablished. You don’t have to be afraid of God anymore!

The angel said, “Behold!”

Behold is a “wow” word! It means, “Look! Listen! Pay attention! It means, “Don’t just listen to what I’m saying. Believe it! It’s incredible!

“Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy!”

The original is more like, “I announce good news of a great joy to you.”

The Living Bible puts it this way....

Luke 2:10 (Living)

"Don't be afraid!" he said. **"I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone!"**

What is that wonderful, joyful news that is the most joyful news that has ever been announced?

It's the news that the Savior has been born. The Messiah has finally arrived! The Sun has risen with healing in His wings. The light has come, and wherever that light goes, sin is dispelled. Satanic power is broken.

It's the most joyful news that has ever been announced!

The Creator of the universe has come to live with us.

Someone sent me this the other day. Let me share it with you.

~He Is God~

He is the First and Last,
The Beginning and the End!

He is the keeper of Creation and the Creator of all!
He is the Architect of the universe and the Manager of all times.
He always was, He always is, and He always will be ...
unmoved, Unchanged, Undefeated, and never Undone!

He was bruised and brought healing!
He was pierced and eased pain!
He was persecuted and brought freedom!
He was dead and brought life!

He is risen and brings power!
He reigns and brings Peace!
The world can't understand Him,
The armies can't defeat Him,

The schools can't explain Him, and The leaders can't ignore Him.
Herod couldn't kill Him, The Pharisees couldn't confuse Him, and The
people couldn't hold Him!

Nero couldn't crush Him, Hitler couldn't silence Him,
The New Age can't replace Him, and "Oprah" can't explain Him away!

He is light, love, longevity, and Lord.
He is goodness, Kindness, Gentleness, and God.
He is Holy, Righteous, mighty, powerful, and pure.

His ways are right,
His word is eternal,
His will is unchanging, and His mind is on me.
He is my Savior,

He is my guide, and He is my peace!
He is my Joy,
He is my comfort,
He is my Lord, and He rules my life!

I serve Him because His bond is love,
His burden is light, and His goal for me is abundant life.

I follow Him because He is the wisdom of the wise,
the power of the powerful,
the ancient of days, the ruler of rulers, the leader of leaders, the overseer of
the overcomers, and is to come.

And if that seems impressive to you, try this for size.

His goal is a relationship with ME!
He will never leave me,
never forsake me,
never mislead me,
never forget me,
never overlook me and
never cancel my appointment in His appointment book!

When I fall, He lifts me up!
When I fail, He forgives!

When I am weak, He is strong!
When I am lost, He is the way!

When I am afraid, He is my courage!
When I stumble, He steadies me!
When I am hurt, He heals me!
When I am broken, He mends me!

When I am blind, He leads me!
When I am hungry, He feeds me!
When I face trials, He is with me!
When I face persecution, He shields me!

When I face problems, He comforts me!
When I face loss, He provides for me!
When I face Death, He carries me Home!

He is everything for everybody everywhere, every time, and every way.

He is God. He is faithful. I am His, and He is mine!

My Father in heaven can whip the father of this world.
So, if you're wondering why I feel so secure, understand this...

He said it and that settles it.
God is in control, I am on His side,
and that means all is well with my soul.

Everyday is a blessing for GOD Is!

Praise God! The good news is God came and lived among us!

That was the news that the angel announced to the shepherds.

News is always the announcement of what has already been done. When you watch the news in the evening you hear what has been done on that day. And so when the angel announced, “I bring you good news”, He was saying, “I bring you an announcement of what God has already done. It’s not the announcement of what you have to do.”

The good news is that God has done it!

“After all these years of waiting, God has done it! This is the most joyous news that has ever been announced! What God has done is lying in a manger (a feeding trough) in a cave in Bethlehem.”

That really sums up what Christmas is all about and what Christianity is all about.

It is the announcement of what God **has done**. It’s not an announcement of what **you** have to do. It’s not about what God is **trying** to do or what he is **going** to do. It’s the announcement of what **He has already done**. Period!

Luke 2:10-11 (NKJV)

Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. [11] For there is born to you **this day** in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

All of the prophets of the Old Testament had always said, “**Tomorrow He will come.**”

They forever pointed ahead to a day in the future. “In that day...” was their constant word. They forever pointed ahead to “**that**” day.

The people of Israel waited and waited and waited; year after year; decade after decade; century after century.

Then, suddenly, on that winter night outside of Bethlehem, the angel appeared to a few shepherds with the most joyful news ever announced in the history of the world, “ there is born to you **this day** in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

He's here! The One we've waited for so long is here! The Savior is here!

That's the Christmas message! That is what the choir will be singing about in the 11:00 o'clock service!

That's why we celebrate!

The question is, "Have you received Him as your personal Savior?"

Is He just someone that you've heard about and perhaps even sung about or is He someone you have a personal relationship with?

Christ the Lord has come! The Savior has provided eternal life for all who will receive Him! Have you received Him? If not, do it now!

Give invitation.