

GREAT DAY!

Luke 2:1-20

Of what culture might we read the following headlines?

“People already heavily taxed, are facing a sharp increase in taxes this year . . .

Threat of world domination by cruel, power-intoxicated band . . .

Moral deterioration has corrupted upper levels of society, rapidly spreading through grass roots.

Nationalism is clashing openly with new, sinister forms of imperialism.

Conformity is the spirit of the age.

Government entitlements keep people from rising up against leaders.

Interest rates are spiraling upward; inflation is out of control!

Religious ritual--going through the motions of “playing church”--is a political asset.

Exaggerated interest placed on sports, and athletic competition.

Racial tension is at the breaking point “

Sound familiar? Such circumstances surrounded our Lord’s birth too!

Local shepherds discussed such issues at night, as they sat around the fire

Some were asking: What’s this world coming to?

How much longer can our society survive?

What kind of world will our kids and our grandchildren face?

[Writing to people living in this troubled society, Luke shows how . . .]

God sovereignly intervened, using historical events to verify that Jesus is Messiah. 1:1-4:13

EVIDENCE OF MESSIAH’S ARRIVAL 1:5-4:13

=> *At least 38 evidences identified*

Luke deliberately designs passage to demonstrate that Jesus is Messiah.

Testimony from Gabriel’s revelation to Zechariah 1:5-25

Testimony from Gabriel’s revelation to Mary 1:26-38

Testimony from Mary’s visit to Elizabeth 1:39-56

Testimony from John’s birth 1:57-80

TESTIMONY FROM JESUS’ BIRTH 2:1-20

The evidence from the historical circumstances 2:1-7

Like what happens when Detroit brings together pieces to fill a new car order, so they all arrive at just the right moment!

They keep less than one hour of component parts on hand!

At just the right moment--precisely as God arranged it--in keeping with His plan--Messiah arrives.

Micah said it would be in Bethlehem, Judah. It was.

“But I thought Joseph and Mary were from Nazareth, Galilee.” They were.

“Aren’t those places miles apart?” Yes. They were days apart! Then, how?

That’s what’s amazing about the plan. Especially when you consider Mary was almost “term”.

To get them south in time required good roads--unheard of before Rome’s

takeover.

And they had to be *forced* to travel . . . hence a required census from Caesar to force Joseph to register in person in the city of his family roots, Bethlehem.

God brought all the right pieces together at just the right time to make this happen, according to His plan.

That's what Luke wants us to see! **2:1-7a**

1. God moves Caesar's pagan government to order a census that forces Joseph and Mary to have their son in Bethlehem—as Scripture prophesied.

Caesar was the most powerful man of his time.

Yet God uses him to accomplish His purpose.

It's ironic. *The great Caesar* gives the decree.

The world remembers little more than Caesar's name, yet most people who've lived since know about what his decree produced—a baby born in Bethlehem.

This wasn't the normal Roman way of collecting!

Rome used place of residence;

Jewish system used family heritage as center for the tax.

Caesar was “a god”—yet God uses Him to bring about the true God's birth.

Caesar's Census forces Joseph and Mary to have their son in Bethlehem, as Scripture predicted.

Bethlehem was the city of David. 1 Sam. 17:12

Everyone knew Messiah was to be born there

Magi go to the palace in Jerusalem—logical place to seek a newborn king.

Herod's sources: religious leaders knew to look in Bethlehem.

(Cp. response to Herod about where He was to be born. Mic. 5:2)

Messiah is born at the right place, at the right time!

2. Lack of room in the inn causes Mary to lay Jesus in a feeding trough — a sign to the shepherds **2:7b**

Bruce Larson: “Have you ever looked for lodging in a strange city and found only “no vacancy” signs?

A few years ago my wife and I went to Atlanta for a conference.

Hotel where we thought we were registered wouldn't take us.

They told us repeatedly, “Sorry, we're filled.”

A friend overheard all this.

He went up to the desk; told them he's with a well-known firm and he wanted a room for friends.

Somehow they found one.

He explained: “There's always room if you belong to the right company!”

Mary and Joseph didn't have the right connections. There was no room!"

So Jesus was placed in feeding trough, in a stable--sign for shepherds!

The testimony of the angels to the shepherds 2:8-20

God used the angels' and the shepherds' testimony to confirm to His people that He's about to fulfill His promise.

1. The evidence from the appearance of the angel 2:8-9

Angel's appearance and God's glory got their attention!

God had something to say. *They were terrified!*

2. The evidence from the message of the angel: Messiah has been born! 2:10-11

Good news for all people! 2:10

He is born today!

He is the Savior => deliverer

As Savior, Jesus would **deliver His people** from political bondage and sin.

When they arrive, they find a baby named "Yahweh saves" or "salvation of Yahweh"-- *that would make an impression!*

He is Christ

He is Lord => **Messiah-Yahweh**

A generation later, when Jesus is grown--after He died--people STILL don't get it!

3. The evidence of the place of His birth: Bethlehem

-as Scripture promised 2:11a

He was born in the right place: **It is the city of David**

4. The sign of the baby lying in a feeding trough 2:12

Sign: He'll be wrapped in cloths--not the appropriate clothes for a king.

He'll be lying in a manger--a feeding trough!

--not the appropriate place for a king.

We have a tendency to glamorize the scene.

This was a stable! There was nothing glamorous about it!

Not the scene of angels gathered around a soft cushion of hay while the baby lies there in soft flowing garments.

It was humiliating scene. The God of the universe--the king--Messiah--was laid in a smelly, dark, dingy, stable, wrapped in some cloths they found lying around!

Ken Gire: "Where you would have expected angels, there were only flies.

Where you would have expected heads of state, there were only donkeys, a few haltered cows, a nervous ball of sheep, a tethered camel, and a furtive scurry of curious barn mice.

Except for Joseph there was no one to share Mary's pain. Or her joy.

Yes there were angels announcing the Savior's arrival--but only to a band of blue-

collar shepherds.

And yes, a magnificent star shone in the sky to mark his birthplace--but only three foreigners bothered to look up and follow it.

God's King was wrapped in cloths in a feeding trough!

5. Combined testimony of the angels 2:13-14

Proclaimed **2 results of His coming:**

Glory to God in heavenly places.

Peace on earth

God tells the shepherds the meaning of the event: Peace (*shalom*)

Included peace in the political sense; but much more than that!

It includes well-being, health, prosperity, security, soundness, wholeness.

Roman law, Greek philosophy, even *Jewish* religion, couldn't meet need of the heart.

Then God sent His Son! He came to bring internal peace--peace with God.

Peace on earth for those who seek to please God--common concept related to the coming kingdom (Isa. 9:6-7; Psalms 72:7; 85:10)

O.T. concept: people of God's good pleasure (Isa.) will have "shalom" when Messiah comes.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN? 2:14

It's not easy to bring peace to this world!

Andrea--M.A. in International Peace Negotiations.

Self-centered desire to come out on top motivates us to look out for #1!

You'll never find peace that way!

We only find real peace when we give up our rights, and start looking out for others first.

The problem: *no one does that!*

We all look out for ourselves!

We--like people of that day--live in troubled times.

People look for peace, but can't get their hands on it--it keeps escaping us.

People say, "Peace! Peace!" but there is no peace!

Isaiah said it well--and said it repeatedly: "*There is no peace for the wicked!*"

"*Shalom*" is for those who have found God's good pleasure.

When Messiah comes, He brings peace to those who please God.

God's good pleasure has come--through Child born in Bethlehem!

What a wonderful gift! It's the best gift ever given!

And God gave it TO US!!!

Are YOU looking for peace?

Angels announced Jesus came to bring peace--God's peace!

If you're looking for peace, you'll only find it in HIM!

He's the source of peace with yourself--peace with God--peace with others

6. The testimony proclaimed by the Shepherds. 2:15-20

The shepherds believed the angels, and went to see for themselves.

2:15-16

Suppose they responded differently.

Suppose they sat around *discussing it*.

40 years later one of the shepherds tells his grandson about that night.

The child asks: "Grandpa, was it really true?"

All the shepherd can say: "I don't know. We never went to see!"

Many people have heard about Jesus.

They've seen the change He's made in the lives of others; but they've never checked it out for themselves.

They've never looked for Him, to see if the story is true.

The shepherds had to know! So they went to see.

They were convinced by what they saw.

They spread the word everywhere! 2:17-20

They couldn't keep quiet about it!

Results of what they'd seen:

All marveled

Mary had to think about what had happened for a while. 2:19

Shepherds themselves praised God for what they had seen.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

1. Trust Him.

2. Meditate on the implications of the evidence for us.

3. Spread the word!

Have you found the One Who came to bring peace?

Have you told anyone about it?

Joe Bayly:

Praise God for Christmas.

Praise Him for the incarnation,

for the Word made flesh.

I will not sing of shepherds watching flocks on frosty nights,

or angel choristers.

I will not sing of stable bare in Bethlehem,

or lowing oxen,

wise men trailing star with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Tonight I will sing praise to the Father who stood on heaven's threshold

and said farewell to the Son

as He stepped across the stars to Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

And I will sing praise to the infinite, eternal Son,

who became most finite,

a baby who would one day be executed for my crime.
Praise Him in the heavens. Praise Him in the stable. Praise Him in my heart.