

At The Name Of Jesus

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Isaiah 9:1-7; Luke 2:1-20 / Psalm 96

I. Augustus Was Caesar, But God Was Lord

A. The Roman civil system dominated the Mediterranean world. “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out **a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.**” (LUKE 2:1)

B. The Providence of God used the Roman empire as an instrument of grace, as it had the Egyptian empire in the days of Joseph. “But as for you, **ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good**, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, **to save much people** alive.” (GENESIS 50:20)

C. What would the Caesars have thought if they had known that they built their military roads to transport missionaries? “And **this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations;** and then shall the end come.” (MATTHEW 24:14)

D. Even the tax registration fulfilled prophecy and served the gospel. “And all went to be **taxed, every one into his own city.** And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, **into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)**” (LUKE 2:3-4) “**Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh** of the seed of David, and **out of the town of Bethlehem,** where David was?” (JOHN 7:42) Rachel, Ruth, Naomi, David, Micah, and the Messiah

II. The Messiah Was Born in Grace, Not in Magnificence

A. What men think, or even demand, is a small matter compared to God’s eternal plan. “**There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.**” (PROVERBS 19:21)

B. Mary said YES to Gabriel, Joseph, and the tax collectors; great things follow when people say “Not my will Lord, but Thine.” “To be **taxed with Mary his espoused wife**, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, **the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.**” (LUKE 2:5-6)

C. Little things matter to God. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be **little among the thousands** of Judah, **yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel;** whose goings forth *have been* from of old, **from everlasting.**” (MICAH 5:2) “**He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much:** and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” (LUKE 16:10)

D. The birth in poverty set the FIRST COMING entirely in the context of grace. “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because *there was no room for them in the inn.*” (LUKE 2:7)

III. God Tells His Own Story Graciously

A. Shepherds were improbable witnesses to the greatest event since creation and they were appropriately terrified. “And there were in the same country *shepherds abiding in the field*, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and *the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.*” (LUKE 2:8-9)

B. Remember how God had approached Moses; the GOOD SHEPHERD seems to like giving tasks to other shepherds. “Now *Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law*, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and *came to the mountain of God*, even to Horeb. And *the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush*: and he looked, and, behold, *the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.*” (EXODUS 3:1-2)

C. The gospel was not warm and friendly to these humble people; angels can be scary. “And, lo, *the angel of the Lord came upon them*, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and *they were sore afraid*. And the angel said unto them, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*” (LUKE 2:9-10)

D. Heaven could not hold back. “For unto you is *born this day in the city of David a Saviour*, which is Christ the Lord. And *this shall be a sign* unto you; Ye shall find the *babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger*. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the *heavenly host praising God*, and saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*” (LUKE 2:11-14)

E. Being the sturdy folk they were, prophecy and angels were not enough for shepherds; they wanted to see for themselves. “And it came to pass, *as the angels were gone* away from them into heaven, *the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing* which is come to pass, *which the Lord hath made known unto us.*” (LUKE 2:15)

F. Believing sometimes takes more than seeing; the shepherds were on an errand for every believer yet to enter the kingdom. “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*” (JOHN 20:29)

G. Beginning with Mary, believers have meditated on this astounding story. “But *Mary kept all these things, and pondered them* in her heart.”
(LUKE 2:19)