Luke 2 Christmas 2019

**Luke 2:1-16 (KJV)**
1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.
2 (*And* this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)
3 and all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
4  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:)
5  To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
6  And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.
7  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.
8  And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
9  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.
10  And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
11  For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
12  And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, good will toward men.

15  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.

The title of today’s message is “The First to be Invited” referring to the Shepherds who were in reality at the time of the Lord’s birth, the first to be invited.

**Luke 2:16 (KJV)**
And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

The Shepherds accepted the invitation to go to Bethlehem and they did not waste time. They went right away.

**Luke 2:1-2 (KJV)**
And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.
(*And* this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

This taxation was in reality, according to biblical historians, was done previous to the reign of Caesar Augustus. It was perfect timing. The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was prophesied in Micah 5:2 which reads:

**Micah 5:2 (KJV)**
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.

**Luke 2:3 (KJV)**
And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

Everyone made the trip to Bethlehem. No choice in the matter! The trip made by Joseph and Mary was at least 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Joseph was part of David’s royal line. Mary went with Him of course. It had to be a difficult trip for Mary since she was about to give birth. They went because it was the requirement of the Roman Empire. So, they went to Bethlehem. We see and understand how everything about Jesus and His birth plays out according to the time table of God, according to the Old Testament prophets.

Bethlehem means bread – House of Bread. And the Lord is the bread that came down from Heaven. True manna from above. Bread that no one should complain about –like the complaining done in the wilderness by Israel.

**Luke 2:4-5 (KJV)**
4 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 :)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

Joseph as a man of God was engaged to Mary. Joseph fully understood what was happening. He understood that Mary was to be the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph also had to know of the prophecy of Micah that was made a long time before.

**Luke 2:6 (KJV)**
And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

Before this Mary and Joseph lived in the wrong place. If they had not made the trip to Bethlehem, if the order of the king were not at the time, the whole of it would have been a failure. There would be no salvation for us. The Word of God would be leading people astray. However, at the very nick of time in Bethlehem Jesus was born. All this proves that the Bible is the Word of God and it can be relied on for salvation. True in every respect.

**Luke 2:7 (KJV)**
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.

No one was there in Bethlehem to announce that Jesus the Savior of the world was to be born. He came unknown. Sort of secret. Concealed. He was born in the silence of the night. When Jesus was born, God sent mercy, grace and truth. I think the inn keeper had a heart of concern for a woman whom he had never met – who was about to give birth. He cleaned out a place in the barn for Mary and Joseph. People he had never met!

Bethlehem was a busy place and it was the hand of the Lord – announced by the Angel that Jesus would be in a manger.

By the way, we often see the wise men in our manger scenes. This not really true since they evidently came three or more years later and to a house not a barn.

Mary and Joseph had other sons. Jesus was their first son. He was the first fruits.

**1 Corinthians 15:20 (KJV)**
But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the first fruits of them that slept.

Mary took Jesus and put appropriate clothing on Him. Then she placed Jesus in the manger. Perhaps Joseph was not present at the time.

**2 Corinthians 8:9 (KJV)**
or ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

And it was because there was no room at the inn. Others had come to be registered or taxed. Here I think we see an inn keeper who knew and understood there was a need. He wanted to help Mary and showed his compassion in providing a place for the birth of Jesus. Perhaps other guests made their visit to see Jesus. But they had no invitation. Maybe there were those who said, “Did you hear that a baby is born in the stable?”

There were those Jews who were not waiting of the Messiah to be born as a baby. They wanted a warrior riding in a white horse clothes in armor ready to battle to Romans.

**Luke 2:8 (KJV)**
And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

The Shepherds watched over the sheep right out in open country. They more than likely had to build fires to keep warm, they had to ward off any dangerous prey that ventured near the sheep. David the shepherd boy willed a lion and a bear with his bare hands.

They were men who were poor. It might have been difficult for them to get fed, or get water and so on – we wonder about this.

We hear much about angels – in songs, movies, while shopping, even in grocery stores! But this Angel that came first to the shepherds was a special angel. This angel was a special messenger sent to these men. He came alone. He is an Angel of the Lord. The Messianic Jews teach that this angel had a special relationship with the God. A very close and personal relationship. No doubt He was Gabriel.

**Luke 2:9 (KJV)**
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.

It was dark, no sun, maybe the stars and the moon gave them some light. And suddenly the angel came – and the glory of the Lord – not Gabriel’s glory – came on the scene. If angels shine it seems to me it because they are all close to the glory of God.

No wonder the Shepherds were afraid. Scarred stiff! Their hearts began to pound, they shielded their eyes and maybe bowed to the ground. Can we just picture this? It was for the moment. It did not last!

**Luke 2:10 (KJV)**
And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

The angel put the Shepherds at ease. Several times in Scripture the Lord tells people not to be afraid. The angel was a true messenger of the Lord. I bring you good tidings to all people – Jew and Gentile.

**Luke 2:11 (KJV)**
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Here again is proof that the Shepherds knew the promises of the Lord, here is proof that they knew the prophecies of the Lord. They knew that the Messiah, the Savior, the promised One would come out of the house of David. Jesus would be born in human form. God’s only begotten Son. Jehovah.

**Luke 2:12 (KJV)**
And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

The angel knew exactly where Jesus would be. So the Shepherds would know where Jesus birth took place. Proof positive. The Shepherds could count on it!

**Luke 2:13 (KJV)**
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

**Luke 2:14 (KJV)**
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

First one angel then a multitude of the angels – if the shepherds were afraid with one angel, now this fear would be multiplied. They were no doubt scared as we say “spit less.” I think they remembered the first angel and perhaps were less fearful.

**Luke 2:15 (KJV)**
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.

The fear was gone. The desire to go and see Jesus as fast as they could. Maybe they left some of their group to take care of the sheep.

**Luke 2:16 (KJV)**
And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

**Luke 2:17 (KJV)**
And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

Go tell it on the mountain is a great Christmas hymn. The shepherds did not keep silent. They had a message to proclaim. It is our privilege to tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now when Jesus comes again He will not come to a stall in a barn. He will come as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Every knee will bow to Him. He will be riding on a white horse.

Revelation 19:11

The first invitation was given to the shepherds. They responded by finding their way to Bethlehem.

Now the Lord invites us to come. We are invited to go to Jesus. We are invited to go to the Cross. We have a continual invitation to come.

**John 14:6 (NIV)**
Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Let me read you a writing called “A Christmas Letter from Jesus.”

When you look for Me at Christmas, you won’t need a special store

I’m no longer just in Bethlehem, I’m right here where you are.

You may not be aware of me amid the celebrations.

You’ll have to look beyond the stores, and all the decorations.

But if you take a moment from your list of things to do, to close your eyes and say a prayer,

I’m waiting here for you. You’re the one I want to be with, you’re the reason that I came!

And you’ll find me in the stillness, where I’m, whispering your name.

Closing Prayer