



CHRISTMAS

JOSHUA GOODLING

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Luke 2:1-40

1 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!” 15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. 21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. 22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him

to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD”), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” 25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.” 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” 36 Now there was one, Anna, a

prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. 39 So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. 40 And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.



The Christmas Story

By Boyd Goodling (Written 2007)

When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son..." (Gal. 4:4). God alone could know exactly the right time for Jesus to come into the world. He had to consider the fulfillment of every prophecy about Christ's coming--like Daniel's 70 week prophecy--and every one of the more than 300 Old Testament prophecies concerning the first coming of our Lord. ONLY God could work out all the logistics of when He should come.

Adam Clark, in his commentary on Luke, says that in his day (about 1826) there were at least 136 different opinions as to the year and day of our Lord's birth. Various scholars placed it in every month of the year--some in January, some in February, etc. Then he writes sarcastically, "but the Latin Church (Roman Catholic), supreme in power, and infallible in judgment, placed it on the 25th of December, the very day on which the ancient Romans celebrated the feast of their goddess Bruma." Clark goes on to say that this date is not acceptable--shepherds would not

have been in the field at that time of the year. Not everyone agrees--Edersheim in his book, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, writes: "There is no adequate reason for questioning the historical accuracy of this date. The objections generally rest on grounds, which seem to me, historically untenable" (p.132 footnote 18). We'll let the scholars argue over that--it probably produces more heat than light.

Luke chapter 2 contains the record of one of the most fantastic dramas of all the ages. God spared no effort to make this event memorable. Luke wrote it beautifully and the translators of the KJV have written it in an unforgettable style, full of beauty. Consider the cast of the drama:

1. **CAESAR AUGUSTUS** - I suppose it ought not amaze me, but it still does, that God can turn the heart of the most powerful ruler in the world at that time and have him perform His will and fulfill His plan. God put it in the heart of Caesar Augustus (grand-nephew of Julius Caesar) to force Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem to register for a tax. They traveled at exactly the right time; possibly took 3 days to cross the 70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem; arrived exactly when the inn would be

filled and they would have to spend the night in a stable. Roman rule of such a vast area also facilitated the spread of the Gospel in the years to come--a time of peace to allow travel; one language spoken, or at least understood, in the Roman world allowed the Gospel to flourish.

2. Luke mentions **CYRENIUS** - Henry Morris notes: "Luke's accuracy as a historian used to be questioned, but archeological and historical studies by William Ramsey and others have shown that all his references to names, places, and events are quite reliable, entirely apart from the further assurance of Divine inspiration." We ought to ALWAYS trust the Word of God--isn't it amazing how God works all things for good?!?

3. **JOSEPH** - Matthew's Gospel tells us that Joseph was a "just" man; Zodhiates, in his Word Study Dictionary, says that the word implies, "they are the people related to God and who, as a result of this relationship, walk with God." Joseph was willing to endure the ridicule of family and friends (probably many thought that Mary's pregnancy was illegitimate), and took Mary into his home as his wife, but the marriage was not consummated until after Jesus was born--then they had other children. What a great

privilege to watch Jesus grow up--a perfect child Who never sinned. The rest of their children must have been a great shock to them.

4. **MARY** - The angel Gabriel told Mary that she was "highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." Gabriel also said Mary had "found favor" with God." The word for favor here is the Greek word for "grace." We don't worship Mary as the Roman Catholics do, but we must realize that God gave to Mary a VERY special gift in choosing her to be the mother of Jesus. This enters Mary into a very elite group in the Bible--those who "found grace" in the eyes of the Lord. Noah "found grace" in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8). Stephen informs us in his sermon in Acts 7:46 that David "found favor" before God (again, the word "favor" is the word for "grace"). Mary "kept" (guarded, preserved) and "pondered" (carefully considered) all that was told her about Jesus.

5. **THE BABY JESUS** - I wonder if Joseph ran to get help (exactly what I would have done), or if he delivered the Baby himself. The Holy Spirit chose to not give us the details of the

birth--only that He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger (feed trough for animals).

R. G. Lee, in his sermon entitled "Christ Above All", said:

"Can one little coal of fire warm a thousand cold hearthstones?
Can one little rosebud perfume the stifling atmosphere of a city?
Can one little cup of water cleanse a thousand dirty hands?
Can any musician, no matter how skilful, play Beethoven's 9th symphony on a tin whistle?

You say 'NO!!!!'

I say, no more can all the words of the wisest of men, most skillfully combined and most eloquently spoken, set forth Jesus as He deserves to be set forth to the minds and hearts of men and women, boys and girls the world over.

Jesus is:

Heaven's bread for earth's hunger;

Heaven's water for earth's thirst;

Heaven's light for earth's darkness;

Heaven's glory for earth's shame;

Heaven's grace for earth's guilt;
Heaven's love for earth's hate;
Heaven's wisdom for earth's folly;
Heaven's peace for earth's strife;
Heaven's justification for earth's condemnation;
Heaven's salvation for earth's damnation--

WHO CAN PROPERLY PORTRAY HIM?"

And I say, "Amen!!!"--who can properly tell all there is to tell about Jesus? The apostle John tells us that if everything that Jesus did was written down the world itself could not contain the books that should be written (John 21:25).

6. **The SHEPHERDS** - These men raise all sorts of questions in my mind. Questions like: Who were these shepherds, that God chose them above all others, to be the first to learn of the birth of our Lord? Surely, they were devout men--did they spend their spare time, while watching the flocks, studying the Scriptures? Luke 3:15 tells us that the "people were in expectation"--evidently Bible scholars of the day realized that the time for the Messiah had come--were the shepherds expecting His arrival? Did they

leave someone to watch the flock? If so, how did they decide who should stay? (I surely wouldn't have wanted to be left behind!!!!) Notice there was no hesitation about whether they OUGHT to go--they went "with haste." Then they became the first evangelists to tell of the Savior's birth, telling what they had seen and heard.

7. **THE ANGEL OF THE LORD** - Was this Gabriel, as in Matthew chapter 1? Some say this was Michael, the archangel.

8. **THE MULTITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST** - How many is a "multitude"? Hebrews 12:22 mentions an "innumerable" company of angels--were they ALL here for this occasion? What a marvelous sight and sound!!!!

9. **SIMEON** - Forty days after Jesus' birth, after the days of Mary's purification (Lev. 12:1-8), Mary and Joseph brought 2 turtledoves or pigeons (wealthier folks brought a lamb) to the temple in Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice. Here they met Simeon--"just and devout and waiting for the Consolation of Israel", and the Holy Ghost was upon him. See how he obeys the slightest leading of the Holy Spirit. How much blessing we miss by quenching the Holy Spirit's leading and direction.

10. **ANNA** - Mary and Joseph met her in the temple also. She's 84 years old and filling her life with prayer, fasting, and service. So often senior citizens just sit back and "retire" from God's service. What a great joy Anna would have missed if she had "retired" from service. Notice that she "spake of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

What great examples we have in this chapter. We need to be "just" as Joseph; "pondering" the works of our Lord, as Mary did; telling others, as the Shepherds; praising God, as the angels; obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit, as Simeon; speaking of Jesus to all who will listen, as Anna.





THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW

book of the genealogy of
the Christ, the son of David,
Joseph, the son of Jacob,
the father of Jesus, who
was born of Mary and
Joseph, and was called
the Son of David.
This is the genealogy of
Jesus the Christ, the son
of David, the son of
Abraham.

17 So all the generations from
Abraham to David were fourteen gen-
erations, and from David to the gen-
eration of Joseph were fourteen gener-
ations, and from Joseph to the Christ
fourteen generations.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ
was thus: Mary had been betrothed
to Joseph, before they came together
and he was with child of her. But he
was resolved to put her away secretly,
for he was a just man and did not
will to make her a public example.
And when he had conceived her in
this way, she bore a son, and he
called his name Jesus, for so will
the Holy Spirit say by the prophet
Isaiah, who said, Behold, I will
send my messenger before my face,
and he shall prepare the way before
me, saith the Lord.

His Name Is Jesus

Joshua Goodling

At Christmas time, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, and perhaps we think more about Him and His amazing love during this time than at other times, but what do we REALLY think about Him? Do we love Him enough to give Him our lives? Do we love Him enough to repent of our sin and turn away from this wicked world and it's momentary pleasures? Do we love Him enough to tell others about Him?

Like Charles Weigle wrote, "No one EVER cared for us like Jesus. There's NO OTHER friend so kind as HE!"

We can celebrate His birth BEST by GIVING Him our LIVES!! Christmas after all is a time of "GIVING", and who deserves a gift more than HE who DIED and GAVE HIS LIFE for us?

The following paragraph was written by an unknown author:

“He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpentry shop until he was thirty, and then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. When the tide of popular opinion turned against him, his friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies. He was tried and convicted. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never went to college. He never traveled more than two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompanies greatness. Yet all the armies that ever marched, and all the governments that ever sat, and all the King’s that ever reigned, have not affected life upon this earth as powerfully as He did!”

Many famous people have lived and died in the history of this world. Julius Ceaser, Napoleon, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, and many others. However, not a single one of them, nor all of them combined have touched and changed as many hearts and lives as the person written about in that above paragraph – Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells about Jesus, and in His life we find the greatest story ever told.

Dr. A. T. Pierson, a Bible teacher, wrote, “This precious Book, tells us of One who resigned the throne and crown of heaven, exchanged the radiant robe of the universal King for the garment of a servant, descended to death, condescended to human want and woe and wickedness, lay in a lowly cradle in a cattle stall at Bethlehem, and hung upon a cross of shame at Calvary, that even those who crucified Him might be forgiven...There is nothing like it in history, not even in fable.”

There is no greater person to pattern our lives after, to surrender ourselves too, and to love, worship, and adore than Jesus Christ. And the amazing thing about it – He loves us!! Yes, Jesus – the Son of God, the perfect sinless Lamb of Calvary, He LOVES you and me and wants a personal relationship with us!

You’ll NEVER find another friend like Him. You’ll never have an opportunity greater than the opportunity He ALONE offers, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am

gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is EASY and My burden is LIGHT.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

We must remember the greatest gift ever given, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18)

If you do not have a relationship with Him, you are missing out on the greatest joy you can ever know! All of the other gifts and presents in the entire world cannot even compare to having Him!

And, I must stress here, you have to have a RELATIONSHIP with Him! You can't just know about Him! Many people in the world today know about God and His Son, but they have never come to personally know Him, and that is what changes our hearts and our lives! Make this the best Christmas ever - Get to know God!



ABOUT JOSHUA

Joshua Goodling is a terminal cancer survivor, speaker, and author. At the age of four, He was diagnosed with cancer, and given just one week to live. The doctors said his chances were zero! That was almost 50 years ago, so it's been a LONG week! Joshua's life is a testimony of how truly amazing and powerful God is, and how He has a perfect plan for each of our lives. Joshua uses his faith and the lessons he has learned in his life to inspire and impact the lives of others.

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