

Miraculous Messenger
Luke 2:1-20
December 15, 2019

“In Israel, the birth of a boy was an occasion of great joy. When the time of the birth drew near and it was a boy, the musicians broke out into music and song, and there was universal congratulation and rejoicing.” William Barclay

Other Ramsay quote

“The Pax Romana made it possible for the Christian religion to push forward to the center Mediterranean world.” William Hendrickson.

“Savior” in **verse 11** – the only time in all of the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus is called “savior.” Always remember that the Herodium could be seen from Bethlehem. (The Herodium was the world’s largest palace.)

Shepherds were not allowed to testify in Jewish courts. (women neither). **BUT** these shepherds in Luke were different. They obeyed with the correct message given to them in the text.

“Luke” is the longest book in the New Testament with a total of 19,482 words.

“The Acts” is second with 18,451 words. Luke 1 is the longest chapter in the New Testament with 80 verses total. (Luke has 1,151 total verses. Acts has 1006 total verses.)

Today's message is from Luke's Gospel (the only Gospel writer to discuss the shepherds). It's fascinating that God would choose Luke, a first-century Gentile physician, to write more of the New Testament than anyone else. **Luke** and **Acts** make up the largest portion of the New Testament from any single writer.

(Though Paul wrote more books, he has less material than Luke.) We know that Luke wrote the Gospel which bears his name (and Acts) because the title "Gospel According to Luke" is found at the end of the text of the oldest extant copy of the Gospel, p. 75, which is to be dated to the period A.D. 175-225. The second most ancient witness to Lukan authorship is to be found in the Muratorian Canon, which is normally dated to around A.D. 170-180. In these very early texts, Luke is stated to be a physician, one who had not seen the Lord himself, and as companion of (Rules of Canonicity) Paul (John Nolland, "Word Biblical Commentary," p. XXXV). He is normally thought to be of non-Jewish origin on the basis of:

Colossians 4:11 "and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me."

Screen 4

Luke was/is believed to have been Paul's companion at the time of Paul's writing to the church at Colossae. Luke is the only Gentile author found in the entire Bible (Old and New Testaments). This is HUGE because Jesus is not just Messiah for the Jews, but for Gentiles as well!!! I also find it fascinating that the details of Jesus' birth are given only in Luke - Matthew only states about the actual birth of the Messiah in [**Matthew 1:25**] which says, "but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus". (Matthew then goes on to discuss the māgi, which came to Bethlehem anywhere from one to two years later...) Jesus, the newborn infant is discussed only by Luke, a physician. (I wonder if he was a pediatrician.)

In **Luke 1**, the birth of **John the Baptist** is foretold in **verses 1-25**-- **Zechariah** is praying. -- **the birth of another baby – (we would know mostly about John's birth)**. This rendering is **(it's all about the fulfillment of Prophecies from Old Testament – New Testament)** striking in its parallels to the story in [**Daniel 9:20-21**] where Daniel is praying at the time of liturgical prayer and Gabriel (**appears to Elizabeth**) appears to him (this is the only other appearance of Gabriel in the Bible):

Daniel 9:20-21 "While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and he sin of my people Israel and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, 21while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice."

Screen 5

Daniel 10:7-15 refers to the one having the vision (Daniel) as being mute ("speechless" in NIV). Back in **Daniel 9:24-27** Gabriel interpreted for Daniel the 70 weeks of years, including the end when "**everlasting justice will be introduced, vision and prophecy will (the time of the Messiah) be ratified, and a Holy of Holies (being a person) will be anointed.**" (Anchor Bible Dictionary, H-J, vol. 3, p. 413).

In **Luke 1 :26-38**, the birth of Jesus is foretold by the angel Gabriel as well. Then, Mary visits with Elizabeth (her cousin/ "relative") after Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit, in **verses 38-45**. **Verses 46-56** contain "Mary's Magnificat", which resembles Hannah's song of praise after she conceived and bore a son in [**1 Samuel 2:1-10**]. Then, John the Baptist is born (**verses 57-66**); Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and gives a tremendous prophecy concerning his son (beautiful) in [**Verses 67-79**].

By speaking good and preferable futures into your children.

What if every father spoke this kind of prophecy (encouragement over their baby boys?< ---Ahhhh, babies *(Pediatrician?)*

The account of John's birth and circumcision has focused on the circumcision and naming the child (**verses 1:57-66**). The parallel account here of Jesus' birth and circumcision is centered upon the angelic announcement to the shepherds of the messianic identity of the newborn child. Comparing the stories of John to Jesus, in each case there is a statement about the pregnancy reaching term (**John - 1:57; Jesus - 2:6**); single birth statement...(**John - 1:57; Jesus - 2:7**); marveling onlookers to subsequent events (**1:63; 2:18**) (**people gathered at the temple for John**) the taking to heart of what had happened, (**Zechariah - 1:66 ; Mary - 2:19**}; and the circumcision and giving of the angelically determined name on the eighth day **Zechariah/ Elizabeth & Joseph/Mary (1 :59; 2:21)** ("Word Biblical Commentary" , p. 98).

Luke 2:1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

Screen 6

Dr. Luke deals with the **historical** details surrounding the birth of Messiah (**the origins**) – the earthly beginning of the Lord/ Messiah, in Luke, while he **deals with** the History of Christian Origins" in **The Acts of the Apostles** (F.F. Bruce, "The International Commentary on the New Testament", p 15). (Luke is a master historian/ linguist!) "Caesar Augustus" was originally Gaius Octavius. He began his rule of the Roman world in 43 B.C. as part of a triumvirate. In a series of political and military moves, he gained sole control of the reins of power and in 27 B.C. the Roman Senate bestowed on him the title ("honorable") Augustus (B. 63 B.D.-D. 14

A.D.). He was the first Roman Emperor ("Word", p. 103). **The Myriam Inscription says: "Divine Augustus Caesar, son of a god, imperator of land and sea, the benefactor and savior of the whole world."** - Pax Romana

"decree" - The aging emperor (early - mid 60's), unbeknownst to himself, is instrumental in the fulfillment of messianic prophecy.

"all the world" (Roman world) - has caused great difficulty in the exact dating of Christ's birth. *Let it be said that this phrase could be translated simply "all the worlds"* (KJV, NRSV). It could be rendered "the whole land" to show not only Judea, but Galilee was included as well. -- It can be taken to mean ISRAEL exclusively based on verses such as [Matthew 4:8] which says, Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

The Land- NIV [Joshua 2:3; Luke 4:25]; and **Roman World**—NIV [Acts 11:28].

One thing is for certain, Luke did not make a mistake in his testimony. (See Luke 1:3) It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,

Luke 2:2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Screen 7

"registration" was simply registering of names and properties of citizens of that nation/ country. This particular census that involved Joseph and Mary was different than the better known and rather infamous census that is mentioned in Acts 5:37.

Luke 2:3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

This was a peaceful census (rather than a heavy taxation of the people) and everyone (the Jews) acquiesced.

Luke 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,

Screen 8

"went up" or "to go up" was the expression used of going to Judea (see **Isaiah 7:6; 2 Kings 18:1; 2 Samuel 2:1.**) Bethlehem is prophesied to be the birthplace of the Messiah in:

Micah 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Bethlehem is also the city where King David was born, reared and anointed to be King. Joseph was a direct descendant of David, another prerequisite of the Messiah... Though Joseph lived in Nazareth, his family is from Bethlehem.

Bethlehem is located some **85 miles** from Nazareth.



Screen 9

Luke 2:5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Screen 10

This verse gives emphasis to the fact that the couple had not technically married-- explain "betrothal period"-- six to twelve months, etc...in the traditional Jewish way.

Mary missed the most important day in the life of a young Jewish girl to give birth to our Messiah (she paid a terribly high price to be Messiah's Mother--see references to Jesus as the "son of Mary" in the Gospels)!

➤ **Please stand for the birth of Messiah.** <

Luke 2:6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

The time has finally come!

It's been 4,000 years since the "fall". 4,000 years since the very 1st Messianic prophecy-

Genesis 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

This verse echoes the words of **Genesis 25:24** speaking of Rebekah, Jacob and Esau: When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twin5 in her womb.

➤ **Please stand for the holiest moment in human history!**

Are you looking for hope today? Peek inside the manger with me--now there's hope! "Mangers today are stone." Vander Laan

Luke 2:7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Screen 11

"firstborn" establishes the status and privileges in Mosaic law of the firstborn child. (**Exodus 13:2; Numbers 3:12-13; 18:1 -16; Deuteronomy 21:15-17**).

"son" – Did you know that the Gospel of Luke uses the word "son" more than any other book in the New Testament. I counted 145 times (approximately, "Strong's")!

"cloths" -swaddled him as was common in Israel during that time period--see **Ezekiel 16:4**--and today as well!

"manger" - can mean a whole stable (see Adam Clark, CD). However, this is traditionally interpreted as a feed trough (water, Vander Laan) for animals (the Bread of Life (**John 6:48**) **Next week - Lord's Supper** [Bethlehem means "house of bread" -- "Unger's Bible Dictionary."] put into a feed trough).

"no room for them in the inn" - an inn can mean motel/ inn, to a guest room of a house, to a totally unspecified place where one might stay. * Though this phrase reads "no room for them...it should read "**no room for HIM**"--Jesus is the one laid in a stone water trough-- NOT his mother and father. * (**Is there room for him in your home? In your life? In your family?**)

You may be seated – BUT BEFORE YOU SIT → MAKE YOUR DECISION ABOUT THE Christ child – will He be afforded room in your home? Will He be allowed to “sit” upon the throne of your life?

Screen 12

Luke 2:8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Screen 13

These shepherds probably slept in tents while out in the fields. They were **working** a night--in fact, because they had to work 24 hours a day, they were considered spiritually/ religiously unclean because they could not keep the Mosaic Law--honoring the Sabbath, etc... They probably were uneducated, but definitely were outcasts to Jewish society (especially the religious elite...) * It has been proposed that the sheep they were watching over were actually those that would be sacrificed at the Passover *

Micah 4:8 And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem.

Screen 14

Shepherds in the Israeli culture today are little boys, little girls, old men [extremely aged] and old women! Explain the chief shepherd sitting under the tree. . .

They have an important job!!!< But they are outcasts!!!

Luke 2:9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

Screen 15

"appeared" - can be translated as "to come up and stand by" (" Word", p. 106).

" glory of the Lord shone around them" - "to shine around" is used only in **Acts 26:13** in the entire New Testament:

Acts 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. (Paul) to Agrippa)

"they were terrified"*

Luke 2:10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

Screen 16

"good news" - in English, "to evangelize" ("Strong ' s"). - political term -

"great joy" - a mega joy.

"for all the people" - even the religious / social out casts.

What is the good news?

Luke 2:11 "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Screen 17

Augustus was said to be savior - an altar to pax Augustus (" Augustan peace") stood in Rome. The Roman calendar was rearranged to begin the year on Augustus' birthday; on the basis that Augustus had been sent as savior to end all war . (" Word", p. 107).

Did you know that these are the only people who know that God has just shown up in the flesh? Augustus did NOT know. Quirinus, Governor of Syria did NOT

know. King Herod the Great did NOT know (yet)! Not one priest, prophet or king knew - only the (redneck) humble outcasts shepherds (and Mary and Joseph)!

"a Savior" - the first and only time in Luke this word is used of Jesus. *

Screen 18

"to you" - HUGE for these guys.

"Christ" - Greek for Messiah (Jewish > Hebrew) "anointed one"

Luke 2:12 "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

Screen 19

(Johnny Hunt and the car in Argentina)

The "sign" - is the baby in the manger, in fulfillment to:

Isaiah 7:1 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Screen 20

("Strong God With Us")

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

Screen 21

A huge host of angels join the single angel . . . **(I believe the Magi saw this!)**

Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Screen 22

(This is a much better translation than the old KJV.)

"Glory" - refers to God 's good reputation as in **Isaiah 43:7; 48:11; Jeremiah 13:11.**

"in the highest" – heaven (where Jesus had just vacated- the angels had to miss him ...) Heaven is impressed by what God has achieved!

"peace" - as in [Isaiah 9:5-6](#) where peace is linked with the coming Messiah.

"with whom he is pleased" - the recipients of the messianic peace can be called "the people of good pleasure " - those in covenant relationship with God through Christ.

Luke 2:15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

Screen 23

The angels did NOT visit Augustus, Quirinus, Herod, there were some very important people alive then – **NONE** of them were visited!

They were not too busy with their jobs/vacations to miss this . . .

"Let us go" – they did **NOT** delay in seeking Jesus! (Delays are deadly!)

Luke 2:16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. (Stone water trough)

Screen 24

They hustled - "hustle builds muscle"

"Mary" - is mentioned first by design. For she has precedence as Jesus' mother/ the Holy Mother. [I have no idea how they knew exactly where Jesus was in Bethlehem - perhaps Jesus was the only newborn there and in a manger...small village, etc...]

Luke 2:17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

Screen 25

These shepherds were the very first preachers of the Gospel of Christ! * What is the message? - "had been told them concerning this child" in:

Luke 2:14 - "Glory to God in the highest, (heaven) and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

This is the sum and substance of the Gospel of God (Adam Clarke, CD). This is the message which all Christ's true pastors or shepherds bring to men. The shepherds were the very first pastors...and propagators of the Gospel. AMEN!

Luke 2:18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

Screen 26

The extraordinary tied up in the common/mundane!!! -

Evidently, the first people the shepherd shared their story with were the people present at the manger (in the house, stable, etc...) **Have you ever wondered exactly who?**

Luke 2:19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Screen 27

Mary understood and rightly interpreted what has been divinely revealed.

Luke 2:20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

* They went to Jesus Shepherds; they returned pastors...* - **"Miraculous Messengers"**

Screen 28

Come just as you are but you won't leave that way!

Just as in **Matthew 2**, the magi returned or went home different ("another way", **Verse 12**) after/ from their encounter with the Christ child, so did the shepherds (the shepherds were the **FIRST** to be forever changed)! The shepherds repeat on earth the heavenly recognition and had occurred in **Verse 14** ... They have "heard" the gospel!

They have "seen" their salvation / savior.

- Have you seen the Savior?
- Have you heard the Good News? > Have you been too busy to act upon it?
- Have you shared the Good News with somebody?

...as the very first pastors did...

They went home different/changed. What about you today?

PRAYER AND INVITATION

Screen 29