

The Birth Announcement of God's Son

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[0:00] Luke chapter 2, I'll read verses 1 through 20. In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

This was the first census that took place while Cyrenius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

She wrapped him in clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

[1:14] An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you.

He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.

Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

[2:28] So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Well, a very nervous husband and wife check in at the local hospital, and labor pains are steady and effectual and just three minutes apart, and several hours later, your first child was born.

Do you fathers remember that day? It was news too good to keep to yourself, and if it wasn't the middle of the night, you went to the phones and immediately started calling family and friends to announce the birth of your baby.

Well, we've come this morning to remember the birth announcement of another baby. This is the birth of God's own son. When the eternal son of God, this wasn't the beginning of him, the eternal son of God who is from everlasting, when he became a man and was born of a virgin.

[4:12] And it seems that this birth took place at night, but God did not wait until the morning to announce his birth. He found some lowly shepherds, as we've already seen, awake and out in the fields with their sheep, and he sent his angels to them with the birth announcement of his son.

And they're not told anything about his height or weight or even his name, the color of his eyes, the color of his hair, the things that we often announce in our announcements.

But what they did tell him was enough to amaze these grown men and to send them running at once into Bethlehem to see this thing that had come to pass.

So let's go back to this birth announcement 2,000 years ago of the most important person who ever lived. And may the Lord himself visit us this morning and cause us to be amazed all over again at

the wonder of who he is and what he has done.

Well, we're on the hills outside of Bethlehem. It's nighttime and some shepherds and sheep are here. Now, this is not an unfamiliar sight.

[5:31] A thousand years earlier, a little shepherd boy named David took care of his sheep on these same hills, took care of his father's sheep. And so on these open hills, the sheep would graze during the day and then they'd be corralled together at night for their protection from wild animals and any thieves that would come to get them.

And so the shepherds are keeping watch over their flock like any other night. And then it happened. Out of the darkness, there was light. It wasn't like going from darkness to light like it happens every day.

A little bit of light appears on the east and then the breaking forth of the sun. It went from pitch dark or at least starlight darkness to bright blazing light.

An angel of the Lord lit up with the blazing glory of the Lord that shone all around the shepherds and were told that this was the glory of the Lord that shone around them.

Now, angels are messengers of God. Follow me here. The word angel, angelos, means messenger. And so these angels are messengers who stand in the presence of God, receive his errands and run on them back and forth from earth to the presence of God and to earth they come on his errands.

[6:58] And so this angel has been in the immediate presence of God, has received the birth announcement from him that he's to run and to tell. And then he steps into the dimension of mankind.

Whatever that means. He steps into the dimension where mankind could see him. And when they saw him, he was shining with the glory of God.

Reminds me of what happened in the Old Testament when the glory of God came down in the wilderness to the tent of meeting. And there Moses, the leader of Israel, would go into the tent of meeting and meet face to face with the Holy God, this God of glory.

And what happened when he came out of the tent of meeting? He emerged with a face that was just glowing with the reflected glory of the God that he's just spoken to. So it was this night with the angel.

Light, glory that was not there a second ago, it appears. The response of these shepherds is not surprising that they were terrified, petrified, terrorized.

[8:14] These were rugged men who were used to the sounds and noises, the shadows of the night. But just one angel of the Lord appearing to them scared them to death.

Think what it will be like when the Son of Man returns in all his glory with all his holy angels with him. Glory. Glory. Fear was the universal response of men to angelic visitors.

Their visitants were so unexpected, so stunning. But beyond that, they bring a message from God. That would be the God I've sinned against.

And they come with a message from that God. Oh, what does the holy God of heaven have to say to me? And these angels are therefore used to seeing terrified faces on men.

Do you know the most often words heard out of the mouth of an angel right up front is, fear not.

Don't be afraid. Why is that? It's because almost to an instant, whenever they appeared, there was immediate fear.

[9:31] That was the very response of Zechariah in Luke 1 and of the Virgin Mary in Luke 1 when the angel Gabriel appeared to them and they had to be told, do not be afraid. But then the angel tells them why they shouldn't be afraid.

For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. And we want to be sure to never forget that the birth of our Savior, the birth of God's Son, is good news of great joy.

I wonder if it's that to you this morning. Or have we lost the wonder of it, the joyful wonder of it, the excitement of it, the amazement of it?

It is no small thing for the holy God to have good news to announce to sinful men. You've lost your job and haven't made your mortgage payment for three months.

And the phone rings and your wife hands you the phone saying, it's the bank. How do you feel?

Immediately the knot forms in your stomach and you're afraid you're going to lose the house.

[10:40] You're afraid what he's going to say. And then on the other end of the line comes the voice, well, Mr. Smith, we understand the situation that you're in.

And I've just called to wish you a happy holiday and let you know that we understand that and we're going to wait until you get a job again and are able to resume your payments.

And you say, that's good news where I expected bad news. But the illustration really is not doing justice to the case because it was of no fault to you, perhaps, that you've lost your job.

A better illustration would be that you've been shoplifting, you've been stealing from the homes in the neighborhood and the phone rings and your wife says, it's the police. And you think, oh no, I've been found out.

This is the message of judgment. But put away the illustrations and let's come to reality. Reality is you've sinned against God.

[11:50] We all, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned each one to his own way. That means we've given God the back and we've given our way the front. And it's not a phone that's ringing.

It's a living messenger who's come straight from this holy God against whom I've sinned. Well might we tremble at the sight.

But wonder of wonders, the message from heaven is good news. There had to be some sweet surprise on the hills of Bethlehem that night.

And it's reminiscent of the sweet surprise that was found in the Garden of Eden way back at the beginning. Adam had been told, you're free to eat from all the trees of the garden, but just not this one tree.

He listened to the serpent. He disobeyed his God. He ate from that tree. And then he hid from God. When God comes to speak to him, no wonder he hides.

[12:52] He's to hear a message from the God he sinned against. No wonder he clothes himself in fig leaves and hides among the fig trees. But again, wonder of wonders.

After being confronted for his sin, he hears the most amazing good news. That the seed of the woman, you Eve, one from you, will crush the head of the serpent.

A savior is coming. One who will destroy Satan. The first gospel promise was found when the expectation was judgment.

Good news where only bad news was expected. A savior is coming for fallen sinners. For some four thousand years, that promise of a savior ripened on the tree.

And to it were added other promises. That the seed of the woman would also be the seed of Abraham, who would bring blessing to all the nations. And he would also be the seed of David, because he would be a king whose reign would be forever.

[14:01] And he would be the suffering servant of the Lord, who would bear the sins of his people. And by his death would justify many. All of these promises, you see, were given about this coming child.

And now this night, in the fields outside of Bethlehem, an angel from heaven appears with the message from God. And it's not a message of wrath and judgment, but it's the message of good news for great joy.

Today, in the town of David, a savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. Now, let's look closely at that birth announcement that God gave when his son entered this world.

First of all, when? Notice he says, today. Today in the town of David. And it stands in contrast to all the yesterdays of promise.

One is coming, is coming, is coming. Today he's here. Year after year, century after century, millennia after millennia, and then today.

[15:06] The long-expected Jesus, born his people to deliver. He's here. Where? In the town of David. That would be Bethlehem, where David himself had been born, as Micah promised.

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me, one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. He'll be born in Bethlehem. And 700 years later, the angel says, Today, in the town of Bethlehem, he's been born. He's right here.

And I imagine the angels could point, the angel could point right down from the hilltops of Bethlehem, down into that valley where the lights of the city were shimmering. And he could say, Today, in the town of David, right there, he is there.

The Savior has been born. Who is he? Well, we don't have his name, but we have three of his titles that explain his work and what he will do.

[16:11] First, he's called a Savior. A Savior has been born to you. What a title. Why call him Savior? For one reason. Because he will save.

He will save people. That's his job. That's his mission. That's why he's come to earth. He's here as a Savior, not as a judge.

And I ask you, is that not good news for us sinners? Some 30 years later, this same Jesus would have grown up and become a man and would have started his public ministry.

And as he's going about preaching, he would say to his audience, For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

That's the message on the night he was born. He's come not to condemn. He's come not to judge. He is here to save. Now, why would Jesus say that as he's preaching?

[17:12] That I've not come to condemn, but to save. Well, because that's what we deserve. And that's what his word has been saying all along.

To him who sins, death, judgment, condemnation. And so we would be expecting that when God sends his Son into the world, we would be condemned.

And Jesus says, no. The angel on the night of his birth said, no. A Savior has been born. I've not come to condemn, but to save.

It's not a judge that's been born. It's a Savior. You know, God didn't need to give up his one and only Son to come into this world to condemn us. We were already condemned.

We were already perishing under God's wrath. For the very next verse, Jesus says in John 3, 18, For whoever believes in him, that is the Son of Man, is not condemned.

[18:16] But whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he's not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. You see, if you've not believed in Jesus, God doesn't need to send his Son from heaven to condemn you.

You're already condemned. You're condemned in Adam. You're representative. When he voted sin, you voted sin in Adam. And every day, you ratify his choice because you sinned. And thought, word, and deed.

Yes, we deserve to be condemned. We're already condemned. Sometimes men wrongly think that they must do something really horrible in men's eyes to be condemned to hell. And for that reason, I think it's an effective track that I saw.

And as it's lying there, there's a question on the front. What must I do to be condemned to hell? And then you open it up and inside it says, absolutely nothing.

You're already condemned. And then John 3, 18, the words of Jesus are quoted. But the answer is to believe in God's one and only Son.

[19:23] Because whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. John 3, 36. So as sinners, we already stand under God's wrath.

We're already condemned. And if we don't believe in this Savior, that wrath will remain on us forever and ever and ever. So he did not come to condemn us.

We were already condemned by our sin. The question is rather, what must I do to be saved from condemnation? And the answer is, believe on this Savior. And you will not perish, but have everlasting life.

You see, it's the bad news. First, we need a Savior because we're already condemned. And then it's the good news. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born for you.

For you. No, the Savior's not born for all the fallen angels. He's born for you.

[20:29] You realize that? The angels sinned. They fell. No Savior was born for them. They are reserved in darkness for the eternal judgment of hell.

But today in the town of David, a Savior's been born for you. Mankind. Sinful men. Amazing grace to men. And he will save you if you only have him on his terms.

Repent and believe. And all of this is true of this little newborn baby. He's come as a Savior to rescue. But there's more for the angel points out his second title.

He is Christ. The Greek is Christos. It's a translation of the Hebrew Messiah. The anointed one. Who is this baby? He is the Messiah.

These shepherds are to know that the baby is the great deliverer promised throughout all the Old Testament. The Messiah who is coming has come. The one anointed by God to be a prophet, a priest, and a king.

[21:33] In the Old Testament, whenever a prophet or a priest or a king took his office, he was always anointed. And that's why Jesus is called the anointed one. The Christ. Because he has been anointed by God to be our prophet.

To teach us the will of God. To be our priest. To die for our sins. And to intercede with God for us. He's been anointed by God to be our king.

To rule over us and to defend us. He is Christ. The anointed of God. He's everything that we need. One to teach us.

One to intercede for us. To die for us. To rule over us. To defend us. Who is he? He's the Savior. He is Christ. And thirdly, he is the Lord.

And this title declares his deity. He is God. God. This is the title that was given to God throughout the Old Testament. And now it is given to this baby in Bethlehem.

[22:34] He is Christ. The Lord. He is Yahweh. He's the Yahweh that you met up with in the Old Testament scriptures. He is David's son.

Yet he's David's Lord. He's both the root and the offspring of David. David. The eternal God. The great I am. The uncreated creator.

Now born. A man. And so he who is forever God continued to be what he always was. God. But he became 2,000 years ago what he had never been to that point.

Man. And he continues today to be God. Man. Forever and ever. He has joined his divine nature to our human nature.

And so he is Christ the Lord. The Lord. Great is the mystery of godliness that God appeared in a body. God appeared.

[23:34] The word was made flesh and tabernacled among us. Shepherds, as you peer into the manger you must know the baby is God. You must know that.

He's a savior. He is Christ. He is God. Because if you take away his deity you take away the good news. If he's not God then he can't save you.

You're so lost that only God can save you. I have an infinite debt to pay for my sins. And there's no man however kind his heart that can pay for one of my sins.

Even if he would lay down his life he's simply dying for his own sins. No, I need God. A God of infinite value to his person and life and work to lay down his life to pay the debt that I owed God that I might go free.

Oh, blessed be God. He is the Lord. He is God. And so he can be my savior. For he took on the cross during those three dark hours what I would have paid for all eternity and never would have got done paying the penalty for my sin against such an infinitely holy God.

[24:52] He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. There was none other good enough to pay the price for sin. He's a savior.

He is Christ. He's the Lord. What a birth announcement. Shepherds' hearts were pounding as they heard the stunningly good news and they were ready to be off to find this amazing baby of whom such things were said.

But first a sign was given. Hang on. I've got a sign for you whereby you will know that you found the right baby and that all these words that I've spoken to you are true of him.

You're looking at him. How will you know which baby it is? Here's the sign. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths. Now, there's nothing unique about a baby wrapped in cloths.

That could have been happening many places in the little town of Bethlehem that night. We don't know. So that's no helper. That's no sign. No, it's not that.

[25:55] Keep reading. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger. That's the greater sign. Now, the cloths are there as part of the sign, but this is the distinguishing thing about the sign.

There will only be one baby lying in a manger down in Bethlehem town. You see, mangers, folks, that's just a cattle trough.

That's where cattle eat. It's not the most sanitary place to lay a newborn. And though they didn't have hospitals, they didn't lay their babies in mangers. mangers. And so this would be the sign, a baby lying in a manger.

Is it not startling to think of the Savior, this long expected Messiah, God himself in the flesh, creator of all lying in a cattle trough for a bed?

We're meant to be shocked by it. We're meant to say, wait a minute, whoa, what is he doing in a place like this? Does not the very surroundings of his birth remind us that you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be made rich.

[27:21] And he will become poor yet, not only having a cattle trough for a bed, later he will have no place to lay his head and he'll get even poor when he takes the sin debt of all of his people upon him and marches up the hill Golgotha and dies and pays the full debt.

You talk about poor, all of our bankruptcy and he takes it on himself and bears it and pays the full debt. When you find the baby in the feeding trough, you'll know you found this son of God, this savior, the anointed God of heaven.

And then suddenly, instead of just one angel, the whole night is lit up with an army of angels, praising God and announcing the blessed results of this birth. First, the birth announcement, now the larger choir to describe the results of this birth.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests. This birth has stupendous ramifications both toward God and toward men.

It will be glory to God in the highest in heaven and peace to man on earth. Both will benefit from this birth. First of all, through this baby, God is glorified.

[28:48] Glory to God in the highest. Now this is always first. This is always the primary consideration. Before you ever come to what does man get by the birth of this child, it always starts with God and you will never understand the birth of Jesus until you understand that he came to glorify God and his birth brought great glory to God in the highest.

The whole saving mission of Christ is begun and carried on and completed with an eye to God's glory, to his honor, to his everlasting fame.

The bottom line with God is always his own glory and that's why Jesus was born to bring glory to God in the highest and God will be glorified by his very person the very person of Christ because the glory of God will be seen most clearly in him for the son is the radiance of God's glory.

He's the exact representation of his being. So in him you see the glory of God the glory of the one and only God he Christ has made him known and in seeing him you've seen the father God for God in God in God in God in the God he is the outshining of God's perfections so God's glory is seen in its fullest expression in this child this person he's God in the flesh and it's chiefly by the work of Jesus Christ in saving sinners that God's glory will be seen I have brought you glory on earth Jesus says by completing the work you gave me to do he perfectly obeyed God's law what we could never do and then he died the death that we deserve to die and it all glorified

God his death conquers death and so God's glory is brought into its fullest display at Calvary where we see justice and mercy you see the glory of God is the outshining of all of his attributes and we see justice in who in Christ at the cross we see his truth and his grace in Christ we see wisdom and power wrath and love all in high definition it's seen most clearly in this child in this one born in Bethlehem so as he approaches the cross he cries now my heart is troubled and what shall I say father save me from this hour no it was for this very reason I came to this hour father glorify your name you see the heartbeat of the son of God all of his life here on earth in this mission was to glorify

[31:56] God and God responded I have glorified it and will glorify it again no wonder angels rang out on the night of the Savior's birth glory to God in the highest but secondly this baby also brings peace on the sense of fullest blessing being right with God having him for you and living under his gracious favor peace to men on earth the only kind of men living on earth are sinful men there's peace for them there's only men living under

God's wrath and condemnation for their sins peace to them there's a problem here for God to be glorified their sins must be punished how can glory go to God in the highest if men who are sinful are left to live in peace and under the favor of God cheating out the glory of God's justice his holiness is being trumped how can there be peace to man glory to God the two seem to be at odds there's only one way it's the baby who's born in Bethlehem and in him these two that seem so at odds God being glorified in man living in peace under God's favor these two will happen in him outside of him no no men will receive peace and favor from this God God will be glorified in their damnation

God will whatever happens but if ever men are to have peace from this God they've sinned against it will only be because of this child who is to be born a Savior Christ the Lord all of man's hopes for

peace lie in the manger that night he is our peace the one who made peace through his blood shed on the cross being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and so God's glory and man's peace join at the Bethlehem manger and the one who is there the prince of peace but notice this peace is not the benefit of all men without exception did you notice that peace to men on whom his favor rests!

Well on whom does God's favor rest? Only those who are in Christ you must get into Christ this this savior this anointed one the mediator you must get into him if you would enjoy peace with God peace with heaven only those in Christ are those in whom his favor!

His favor rests favored sinners to be in Christ a lot of sinners in the earth today favored sinners to be in Christ the blessedness is ours the glory is all God's well how do we apply such good news well in the first place I'm thankful for this birth announcement that we got from heaven aren't you I really don't care what what he weighed when he was born how long he was the color of his eyes the length of his hair but I'm sure glad to know that he was a savior come to save sinners and I'm sure glad to know he is the anointed one the one to teach me the will of God the one to die for me the one to intercede before God the one to defend me and rule over me I'm sure glad he's the anointed and I learned that from this announcement I'm so glad he he's

[36:28] God this baby born is God for only God can save me well what will we do with this birth announcement what will be your response five things very quickly and I mean quickly first run to Jesus when the angels had left them and gone into heaven the shepherds said to one another let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about so they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger folks do you know that this same Jesus who was lying in the manger lived died rose again ascended into heaven and he's there at the father's right hand today and he's still the savior he's still the savior he's still god he's still the anointed one to bring blessing and peace to men on earth then run to him run to him you run to him by prayer you call on his name you ask him to save you to have mercy on you you believe all that

God has said about him like these shepherds who heard the message and believed it and ran you've heard the message the savior is born he's born for you whoever you are whatever you've done he will have you he'll be your savior if you'll run to him so run to him secondly spread the word because after the shepherds hurried to see the savior it says they spread the word concerning what had been told about this child I wonder if you're keeping the good news to yourself pass it on to other dying sinners who need a savior tell what a savior Jesus is talk of his divine glory how he made peace between God and men between God and you and as you do reflect the great joy the great joy that such news is joy of sins forgiven there are many sad sinners in the world today in this season that need to hear the good news run to Jesus spread the word and then be amazed because it says all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherd said to them let's recover our amazement at this good news that God has anything good to say to fallen sinners is amazing grace anything good to say to any of it's amazing grace that he would send his son not to condemn but to save that he would become so poor to make us so rich that he would give us peace with God! when we had earned his wrath let's be amazed all over again at this savior come to save us fourth ponder anew ponder anew Mary Mary Mary treasured treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart she cherished them she fought over them she meditated on them she rolled them around over and over in her mind now you and I have far more to ponder about our savior than she did at this point don't we we've got the whole Bible she's standing with just the Old Testament and what the shepherds have told her about her son and she's rolling it over just pondering it treasuring it oh let's ponder anew all that has been written about him all that he's done! for us how that he has indeed saved his people from their sins by his life death resurrection and ascension and ministry to us ponder the goodness of God in sending you his son ponder what it cost this savior to save you ponder God's holiness and your sinfulness his worth and your worthlessness what you deserve to get and what you got instead what you expected a judge what you got a savior and pondering these things is surely the way back to amazement amazed at God's grace and giving giving us a savior run to Jesus spread the news be amazed ponder anew and lastly glorify God you see it all ends where it begins this child is born that there might be glory to God in the highest have you heard have you run to Christ have you believed have you thought about it well then glorify

God the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things just as they had been told praise God from whom all blessings flow for the greatest of his blessings is his son come from heaven to save us from our sins you glorify God with your lips you glorify God in your heart you glorify God in your life we've heard the birth announcement and you and I have heard more than the announcement of what he would do we've read the accomplishment the facts as we heard this morning that he has done what he came to do his saving mission has been carried out let's give him all the glory let's pray oh our father we thank you for sending your one and only son and sending him on such a mission to bring glory to

[42:17] God and peace to men we are staggered at how much it costs you to bring peace between us and you oh help us to love our savior let me live that I might praise you help me to forget myself caught up in the wonder of this glorious self humbling of our savior this wonderful gift this indescribable gift of your son and so send us on our way pondering thinking over these things telling others and glorifying and praising God we ask in Jesus name amen