

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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## *The Birth of Christ Announced to All Creation*

December 27, 2015

**Sermon Text:** Luke 2

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 10

### **Introduction-**

I am going to read the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, and I am going to read it from the King James Version. Many of the newer Bible translations have wording that differs quite a lot from the old KJV, making the text more understandable to the modern reader. But when you come to this portion of Scripture, Luke 2, they often try to retain as much of the KJV rendering as they can. Why? Because this account of the birth of our Lord is one of the most, if not THE most, well-known and loved passages in the entire Bible. It is still a bit difficult for me, for instance, to read Luke 2 aloud

from later translations because I grew up in the church memorizing Luke 2 for countless Christmas programs and plays. So here we have it from the KJV and as I read, note in particular the various *persons* mentioned-

### **Caesar**

Luk 2:1-39 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.

### The Shepherds & the Angels

(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. (16) And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying

in a manger. (17) And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. (18) And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. (19) But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart. (20) And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

### The Jews

(21) And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. (22) And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord; (23) (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) (24) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which 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 the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. (26) And it was revealed unto him by

the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. (27) And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, (28) Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, (29) Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: (30) For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, (31) Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; **(32) A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.** (33) And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. (34) And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (35) (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

(36) And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; (37) And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. (38) And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all

them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (39) And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

### The Wise Men

Now, in addition to these groups of people, we also know from Matthew's Gospel that there was still another:

Mat 2:1-2 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, (2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Mat 2:11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

All religions, except Christianity, are what I suppose we could call "localized." Their "prophet's" revelations fundamentally deal with a specific nationality of people. The Bible, on a first superficial reading, seems as if it is headed the same way:

Gen 12:1-3 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. (2) And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. (3) I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The Jews, you see – or so it seems. This is how the Jews of Jesus' day took it:

Joh 8:33-40 They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" (34) Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. (35) The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. (36) So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (37) I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. (38) I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." (39) They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, (40) but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told

you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.

These Jews believed that THEY were what God's plan of redemption was all about. That same kind of Judaism (also supported by many Christians) is still with us today. But such a religion is nothing more than any other man-made religion. It focuses the blessings and rewards promised by its "god" upon those who belong to a particular special group. And if we are not careful, we can end up fashioning a Jesus and a Christian church that is exclusive – offered to and consisting only of people like us. Religion then becomes one of the worst contributors to the evil of racism and class culture: economic separation (rich and poor), ethnic separation (nationality), racial separation (skin color), gender separation (Christ is for men). While some forms of separation are good (God separated the nations at Babel), here is the truth when it comes to Christ and the gospel:

Gal 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

THIS is what God's promise to Abraham always was – to his *seed*.

Not to the physical descendants of Abraham, but to all who are his seed by faith in Christ.

Rom 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (29) But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

The Jews as we have just read, boasted of their physical lineage from Abraham. But in fact their lineage was from the devil. It is the new birth, as Christ told Nicodemus, that makes a person a true Jew and heir of the Promise.

And all of this is to say that at the birth of Christ, we see the announcement of Christ as Savior of the *world* given plainly and in many ways. It was a cosmic event, not a mere localized happening for a localized people who happened to be of a specific nationality. No, Christ came as Savior of *mankind*. He came as the second and last Adam, representing fallen sinners from every nation. And more – He came to even redeem the entire creation, removing the curse:

Rom 8:18-22 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (19) For the creation waits with eager longing for

the revealing of the sons of God. (20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Christ is the Savior of ALL creation. He came to establish a new Heaven and Earth, and sure enough we see this cosmic salvation in the Gospel accounts of His birth. Let's move in for a closer look:

- You have the mention of Caesar Augustus. And yet his very decree is subject to Christ. It is Caesar Augustus' command for all to be taxed that sets in motion the events that resulted in Christ being born in Bethlehem, the very place Micah the prophet announced centuries before. Christ the King is set in stark contrast to Caesar.
- Mary and Joseph. Poor commoners. Christ is a King and yet born into this family and in conditions very non-royal.
- The shepherds out in the fields. The Great Shepherd, son of

David the shepherd-king, is announced as Savior of all men to these insignificant tenders of their flocks.

- The wise men. These are “kings” from the east. Great men from a different nation, yet it is plain that Christ is for them as well.
- And then of course the angels. Listen to Luke again:

Luk 2:8-14 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.

This passage is so familiar to us, but what would it have been like to be there? *The glory of the Lord shone*

*round about them.* It was enough to make them “sore (very, intensely) afraid.” Notice that this is not the glory of an angel, but it is said to be “the glory of the Lord.” The shining, bright glory of God. Heaven, it appears, was opened. Then if that were not enough, the one angel is joined by “a multitude of the heavenly host.” This was the original hallelujah chorus for sure. These shepherds were very, very privileged and I am sure radically changed. You can bet that they had their eye on this Child for the rest of their lives and they would have told this story over and over to their children and grandchildren.

You even see in this account that same consistent imagery and message that Christ is the Light of the world coming into the darkness to be the Light and Life of men. Notice that Luke says the shepherds were “keeping watch over their flock *by night*.” And suddenly there was this blinding, brilliant glory shining. People sitting in darkness have seen a great light, you see.

Finally, notice Luke 2:14 carefully again-

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*

Once more you have it. God’s announcement is not to just Jews. This

gospel is for the EARTH and for ALL MEN. For God so loved *the world*.

So Christmas, as we consider the birth of Christ, is a time for us all to enter into some serious and honest examination of ourselves, of our ministries, of our churches...of that which we claim to be the gospel of Christ. Is the Christ we profess to follow for all people? Is our concept of the Christian church one that includes people from, well, listen to Peter:

Act 10:28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.

We are to be separate from the world. We are not to be conformed to the world. We are to come out from among the wicked and not be bound together with them. We do not belong to this world. But when it comes to the offer of Christ, when it comes to His invitation to sinners to come to Him and be saved, there is no discrimination. Everyone is welcome who will repent and believe in Him no matter who they are.

And the birth of Christ announced that message loud and clear. So must we.