

# Sermon Outline

## THE YEAR IN OUR LORD, 2012-2013

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### The Advent and Christmas Messages:

- Nov 25: Christ Jesus for the Poor (Isa 61:1) • Dec 9: Christ Jesus for the Sad (Isa 61:1)
- Dec 16: Christ Jesus for the Captives (Isa 61:1) • Dec 23: Christ Jesus for Offenders (Isa 61:2)
- *Dec 25: Christ Jesus Is Born (Lk 2:1-12)*

### CHRIST JESUS IS BORN: A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE (LUKE 2:1-12)

#### I. Who Is This Jesus?

#### II. The World of the August One (Luke 2:1, 2)

- A. Our Lord Jesus was born sometime when an imperial census was taking place.
1. “In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered” (2:1).
  2. This was “the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.”
  3. “And all went to be registered, each to his own town” (2:2, 3).
- B. Why does Luke go all the way to tell us these details?
1. It could be that Luke wants us to know that the birth of Jesus really took place in history.  
—Our Lord Jesus was born into a world that is really quite familiar—it’s a world of politics, taxation, and military conquest.
  2. It could be that Luke records these details to prepare us for the impact of Jesus’ birth.
    - a. Jesus was born under the nose of the empire of Rome.
    - b. “Augustus” means “Revered One.”
    - c. An imperial census was a way of figuring out how many people could be used to serve the empire (see Tom Wright, *How God Became King*, p. 135)

- C. But even as Rome was priding itself on its mighty power, it doesn't realize that things are going to change.
  - 1. A child is about to be born within the Roman empire.
  - 2. This child is going to rule a kingdom of his own.
  - 3. Yet, his kingdom is going to be far different than any of the other empires of the world, because it will be the very Kingdom of God himself.
  - 4. Because God is the Creator and rightful ruler of the world, his rule will finally bring the peace and the justice that we all desire.
- D. As we read the opening of Luke 2, these are the historical and religious factors that we have to keep in mind.

### **III. Caesar Is Not His Own Boss**

- A. But the Scripture has more to say about the rule of Caesar than just politics and civil administration.
- B. When we consider other facts the Scripture gives, we realize that there is a real spiritual component to Caesar's rule.
- C. In those days, politics and religion were not separated.
  - 1. The Roman emperor and his government openly worshiped the gods of Rome—Jupiter (Zeus), Juno (Hera), Neptune (Poseidon), Roma, etc.
  - 2. The Roman emperor himself had become a potential object of worship.
    - a. According to New Testament scholar David E. Aune, “From Augustus to Constantine, thirty-six of the total of sixty emperors together with twenty-seven family members were apotheosized and given the title *divus*, ‘divine’...” (*Revelation 6-16*, 776).
    - b. Augustus himself was one of those considered divine.
- D. The Bible tells us that when people worship false gods, Satan, the prince of darkness, is not far behind (1 Cor 10:20).
- E. Therefore, this is another element of the story, another layer of meaning, that we must account for—Satan himself was lurking behind the Roman empire.

#### IV. The Holy Family

- A. Having presented briefly the socio-political situation—a situation that itself has religious significance—Luke turns our attention to the holy family, to an ordinary couple of newly-weds by the name of Joseph and Mary.
- B. It's hard not to notice the great contrast.
  - 1. In verses 1-2, Luke presents the large cold world of Roman imperialism.
  - 2. And then in verse 3, he zooms in on this ordinary Jewish couple.
  - 3. The subtle truth here is that God does not despise those who are small and weak.
  - 4. Instead, when God works, God often chooses the ordinary folks to do his work. God uses the poor to overturn the rich; the weak to overpower the strong; the uneducated to instruct the educated. That is God's way of doing things.
- C. By all accounts, Joseph and Mary were truly an ordinary Jewish couple.
- D. The one thing that was really unique about their situation had to do with the child Mary was carrying.
  - 1. Mary's child was formed in Mary's womb by a miraculous act of God's power.
  - 2. Much earlier in Luke's Gospel, God sent the angel Gabriel to inform Mary that her child will one day receive the throne of Israel and his kingdom would have no end (Lk 1:33).
  - 3. So, this is the secret this couple carried.  
—They carried the future king of Israel; they carried the future Lord of the whole world, sent by God himself.
- E. In Luke 2:4, we see that Joseph and Mary are heading back to Joseph's home town.
  - 1. The Roman government had instructed all people to return to their own home towns to be registered.
  - 2. Joseph had to return to Bethlehem because "he was of the house and lineage of David" (v 4); Bethlehem being the hometown of King David himself.

## **V. The Birth of the Lord (Luke 2:6-7)**

- A. While Mary and Joseph were in Jerusalem, “the time came for her to give birth.”
- B. Since they were unable to find a place at the inn, Mary and Joseph had to put their newborn baby in a manger (v 7).
- C. The humble birth of Jesus foreshadows all that would come later in Jesus’ life.
  - 1. Luke 9:58: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Lk 9:58).
  - 2. This teaches us that God does not want us to despise the poor or the weak.
  - 3. By coming to the poor; in fact, by making himself one of the poor, God dignifies them.

## **VI. The Visitation (Luke 2:8, 9)**

- A. If money and position were the only things that mattered in life, then human existence would be most depressing.
- B. Thankfully, we live in a universe made by a good, loving, life-affirming God.
  - Because of this—because the heart of all reality is God, who is goodness and love in himself—exclusion and loneliness do not have to be the end of the story.
- C. In verse 8, Luke takes us out of the city and brings our attention to a group of shepherds who were out in the fields.
- D. The Scripture tells us that the shepherds were “out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (v 8).
- E. But as they were doing their job, they are visited by a delegate from heaven: “And an angel of the Lord appeared to them...”
  - 1. Angels are heavenly beings who serve as messengers for almighty God.
  - 2. In the Old Testament, angels often appear just before God is about to do something important in history.
  - 3. The angel was accompanied by “the glory of the Lord.”
    - a. The glory of the Lord is the visible majesty of God.

- b. The Bible tells us that God himself is invisible (1 Tim 1:17).
- c. The glory of God takes the form of a brilliant light and blazing fire (Ezek 1:27, 28).
- d. While we're not exactly sure how the glory of God appeared to the shepherds in this instance, we know that it must have been a powerful, awe-inspiring appearance because Scripture says that "they were filled with fear."

## VII. The Good News (Luke 2:10-12)

- A. But the glory of God has not come to terrify the shepherds, or reduce them to dust. Instead, it has come to give them something good.
- B. The angel offers words of kindness and friendship: —"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.'"
- C. The good news is related to Isaiah 52:7-10.
  - 1. In Isaiah 52:7-10, the good news that Israel longs to hear is the return of God and his appointed King.
  - 2. If God has come in glory with his angel, and the angel says that he has good news, we can only suspect that this good news must have some connection with the good news Isaiah had promised long ago.
- D. The good news the angel brings: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
  - 1. First, Mary's child is called "a Savior."
    - a. A savior is someone who saves people.
    - b. But when it is used here, "savior" has much larger meaning than just any rescuer.
    - c. When the prophet Isaiah spoke long ago to Israel, he revealed that God will bring salvation when he returns to his own.
      - Isaiah 52:10: "The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the *salvation* of our God."

- d. If a Savior has come, it implies that God himself has returned to his people.
  - e. The Savior is the Great One who has come to heal the sick, restore the poor, raise the dead to life, and bring about the new age of peace and harmony in the world.
2. Secondly, Mary's Child is called "Christ."
- a. "Christ" is a title of royalty.
  - b. The word "Christ" is a translation of the Hebrew word *moshiach*, which means "Anointed One."
  - c. The Anointed One is the special human being whom God has chosen to bring his peace into the world.
  - d. The Anointed One is both king and prophet.
    - i. As a prophet, he receives the word of God and reveals God's will to his people.
    - ii. As king, he leads brings God's rule into the world.
  - e. The Christ Child is God's prophet king.
3. Third, Mary's Child is called "the Lord."
- a. This too is a title of royalty—but also of divinity.
  - b. In the Old Testament, the title "the Lord" was often used of God himself.
  - c. To say that Mary's Child is "the Lord" is to say that he is divine; that somehow, and in some mysterious way, he really is God himself in human flesh.
  - d. The birth of Jesus Christ represents the long awaited return of almighty God to his people.
- E. To help the shepherds locate the divine Child, the angel describes how the Child will be found.  
 —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."

## VIII. Let Earth Receive Her King

*Who is Jesus to you today?*

*Do you acknowledge him to be the Christ?*

*Do you trust him to be your Savior?*

*Do you bow to him as your Lord?*

**God is speaking to each of us through the Scripture account that we've just read. Even though Jesus was a Jew and is the King of the Jews, God has also made him the rightful King of the world. In Psalm 72, God calls all the nations to bow to the King of Israel. He says,**

**May he have dominion from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth!**

**And then in verse 11,**

**May all kings fall down before him,  
all nations serve him!**

**The scope of Jesus' rule is clearly universal. The King of the Jews is also the King of the world. To those who receive the King of Israel, God gives peace and protection. To those who receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, God grants forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Jesus is the Gift of Christmas. Jesus is the only hope of the world.**