

BaptistWay Bible Series for Christmas: The story of Christ's birth is a story of love

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The story of Christ's birth is a story of love

- Luke 2:1-20

By Jeffrey Lee

Logsdon Seminary, Abilene

"It's a boy!" "I got the promotion!" "I'm getting married!"

These all are wonderful things and good news, but the greatest news of all is, "Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (v. 11).

That truly is the gospel. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God, Prince of Peace, Emmanuel was born in a stable with shepherds and livestock as the only witnesses, and was placed in a manger.



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We have an account of the birth and infancy of our Lord Jesus: having had notice of his conception, and of the birth and infancy of his forerunner, in the preceding chapter. The first-begotten is here brought into the world; let us go meet him with our hosannas, blessed that he came to save us.

If ever there was an opportunity for God to enact his plan with a majestic flourish, it was at Jesus' birth. But God did not presume upon humanity when he stepped in to redeem it. There was no pretense in this arrival.

Rather, God chose to identify in the humblest way with those made in his image. The story of Jesus' birth in the book of Luke mixes praise with simplicity. Its contrast to the birth of John the Baptist is remarkable. John's birth was announced in the capital, at the temple, in the center of the Jewish nation. But Jesus arrives in rural anonymity. John is the child of a priest and his righteous wife; Jesus belongs to Jews of average social status.

Yet it is Jesus' birth that draws an angelic host. Once again, appearances are deceiving. As humble as the setting is, his birth is accompanied by the attention of the heavenly host. The shepherds who are privileged to share in the moment become bearers of a story full of wonder. Jesus' birth is more than a cosmic event; it is the arrival of divine activity that should provoke joy, reflection and attentiveness. That is why Mary ponders these events and the shepherds return glorifying God.

Jesus' birth sparks joy, surprise and wonder. All these emotions flow from

the experience of the shepherds, who observe with amazement as heaven confesses the child's identity (vv. 10-11). The major offices of Jesus are confessed in one sentence: he is Savior, Lord and Christ—that is, deliverer, master and anointed king.

As unbelievable as it may seem, the one with authority over salvation spends his first nights not in a palace but in the open air among simple people like the shepherds. Born in the ancient equivalent of a tent village, Jesus arrives to fulfill God's promise.

All the imagery shows God's concern for people regardless of their social status or vocation. He cares for all and identifies with all. The praise of the heavenly host offers honor to God and peace to "men on whom his favor rests" (v. 14).

In addition, there is the shepherds' "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen" (v. 20). This birth is no mere arrival of a new life, as poignant as each such event is.

The story is not told so that hearers can identify with the new mother and father or enjoy a story of hope, of a touching birth in humble surroundings. This birth has value because of whose birth it is.

The shepherds have found the angel's words were true, that events have transpired "just as they had been told" (v. 20). God's word is coming to pass; his plan again is strategically at work. They break out in praise to God because he has sent Jesus, the Savior, Lord and Christ.

When Mary came to be "with child" it was before Joseph and she were married. According to Jewish custom, this was very inappropriate, but Joseph married her even though it was not his child. This is an incredible portrait of family. Jesus was born into a wonderful loving family that shaped his childhood and had an integral role in His ministry. It is a blueprint of family and ultimately the family of God.

When we become members of God's family a miraculous transformation occurs in us. We move from selfishness and being selective on who we care about to loving others fully and unconditionally.

We are to love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Family is a meaningful thing that should not be broken easily. Friends come and go, but family is constant.

We know many people come from difficult family situations. We, the church, are Christ's family. We may disappoint each other—and Christ, but Jesus does not disappoint us. He loves us with an unadulterated and unconditional love.

This love we find in Jesus is the greatest gift: "For God so loved the world ..." (John 3:16). Christmas is a story about God's love for us, his children. And he offers us a chance to join his family. It is he who brings us into the family of God.

We are to love as Christ loves, with every breath that we take. This is how we spread light into a dark world. Christ's love shines through us and we proclaim as the angels did, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests" (v. 14).

Discussion questions

- Why does Christ's birth bring such joy?
- How should we as Christians live as family and community with one another?

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