

Birth of the Son of God

Luke 2:1-20

I have a question or two for you. Have you ever met Caesar Augustus? The answer is, of course not. Then how do you know he existed? Trustworthy historical sources, right? Here is some historical information that, of course, you must take by faith since you did not see any of these people:

The Caesars were a series of Roman emperors who ruled the Roman Empire from 27 BC to 476 AD. The term “Caesar” was originally a title given to the Roman dictator Julius Caesar, but it eventually became a hereditary title for the Roman emperors.

The Julio-Claudian Dynasty

The first Caesar was Julius Caesar, who was assassinated in 44 BC. He was succeeded by his adopted son Octavian, who became Augustus Caesar and founded the Principate, the system of government in which the emperor held supreme power but was also responsible for the welfare of the people.

Augustus was followed by his adopted son Tiberius, who ruled from 14 to 37 AD. Tiberius was succeeded by his grandnephew Caligula, who was known for his extravagance and tyranny. Caligula was assassinated in 41 AD, and he was succeeded by his uncle Claudius, who ruled from 41 to 54 AD.

Claudius was followed by his great-nephew Nero, who ruled from 54 to 68 AD. Nero was known for his artistic and cultural achievements, but he was also notorious for his tyranny and extravagance. He was assassinated in 68 AD, and the Roman Empire was plunged into a period of civil war.

In a moment Luke is going to establish the historical setting of the birth of Christ. Caesar Augustus unknowingly played an important role in that history as his decree all the world should be taxed, compelled Joseph to take Mary to Bethlehem. Of necessity Jesus must be born in Bethlehem to fulfill Micah 5:2. Consequently, the

providence of God moved the mind of the Caesar at just the right time to issue his edict.

Now I have another question for you. Do you accept the history of the world as contained in Scripture from Genesis through the book of Revelation? If not, why do you accept history at all? Do you trust the history provided by secular sources and then turn around and deny the history of the world provided by God the Holy Spirit in his written Word? I trust you see my point.

I trust Luke's history as he had perfect knowledge from above as he states in chapter one, verse three.

Now look with me at Luke 2, verse one. The Word of God says:

1 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.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

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

14Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15And 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.

16And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Most of you are familiar with these words as we revisit them during each Christmas season. In this study I simply want to turn your focus to the manger scene.

END BY 11:25

The Word of God says in verse seven that Mary the mother of our Lord wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger.

Can you picture a new-born baby boy sleeping quietly under the watchful eyes of Mary and Joseph? Look a bit closer and let the wonder of his person grip your heart. This is the eternal Word, God himself, come in the person of Jesus the promised Messiah.

The apostle John states in 1 John 4:9, *“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”*

Luther captured the mystery of the incarnation in his advent hymn, "All Praise to Thee, Eternal Lord" which reads:

Once did the skies before thee bow;

A virgin's arms contain thee now:

Angels who did in thee rejoice

Now listen for thine infant voice.

Look again into the Bethlehem manger. The helpless child lying there wrapped in swaddling clothes was heaven's child. Although he was God from all eternity past, he humbled himself. He made himself of no reputation, took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7).

But why—why did our Creator humble himself in this way?

****PLEASE TURN TO HEBREWS CHAPTER TWO AND READ: 2:1-18.**

Look again at v9: *“he was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man”* (Heb. 2:9).

END BY 11:25

This passage in Hebrews goes on to say, *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil”* (Heb. 2:14).

This is the good news of the gospel for the whole world. The Son of God died unto sin once and in so doing he carried our guilt and shame for us. Now his precious blood provides a covering of all our sin and guilt in the sight of God. Now Satan no longer holds the power of death over mankind because God has once for all dealt with the enmity of sin. He did so at the cross where Jesus died providing a just and holy means by which God can wash us and forgive us of all sin.

Look again at the manger scene. Heaven’s child was born in the shadow of the cross. This was his purpose in coming. Amen. (For additional study read Hebrews 10:5-10).