

The REAL Story of Christmas

TEXT: Luke 2:1-20

INTRODUCTION:

We all are likely to have unique Christmas memories from our childhood. Mine include cutting down the family Christmas tree, and snow - lots of snow.

Christmas time is surrounded by Christmas myths like Santa Claus, Christmas Carols and Christmas traditions which include decorated trees, stockings and gifts.

Today we want to reflect on the REAL Christmas story! From the fall of man, God had promised that He would send a Redeemer (Gen. 3:15). OT Prophets foretold the coming of the "Chosen One" (Is. 7:14,9:6).

Today we pause to look back at an event that changed the world! The birth of the Christ.

OUTLINE:

I. The Main Character in the REAL Christmas story is God (1-7)

God is bringing to pass His sovereign plan!

A. God controls rulers (1-3) (Prov. 21:1)

1. *Caesar* - Caius Octavius the grand-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar. He defeated Anthony & Cleopatra and ascended the throne after the death of Julius in 44 BC. Instituted a world-peace by brutal force.
2. *Augustus* - title given to Octavius by the Roman senate = "Exalted one" or "holy one". This was a term denoting religious adoration and one that up till this time had been only used of the gods. Octavius was a self-serving, arrogant man who thought he was god. One inscription that has been uncovered refers to him as the "savior of the whole world." What a contrast between this self-proclaimed "savior" and the real one!
3. Decreed that everyone in Roman empire must be registered. This census would take place every 14 yrs. This decree was given in @ 8 BC but not carried out until 2-4 yrs later. Jesus was born then between 6-4 BC.

B. God controls history (4) (Mic. 5:2)

1. It was a humble place - insignificant village of Bethlehem. Registration must take place in the city of family birth. For both Joseph and Mary this was Bethlehem because they were descendants of King David.
2. Joseph and Mary had to travel from Nazareth @ 128 km. Trip through the mountains. (Lka to Siavonga) This would have been a 4-7 day trip depending on how quickly Mary could travel
3. God's will often requires great personal cost and sacrifice, even danger (Jericho road - thieves)

C. God controls circumstances (5-6)

1. Virgin became pregnant - prophesied 600+ yrs before (**Is. 7:14** w/ Mt. 1:18-23)
2. It was an unwelcoming place “No Room” two sad words in a wonderful story - ILL: Travel with family, Ohio.
 - a. Herod had “no room” for this new King. He was a threat to his family’s kingdom. (Mt. 2:1-8,16)
 - b. The people of Gadara had “no room” for this one who had the power to bind Satanic forces at work in their land. Threat to their business ventures. Begged Him to depart. (Lk. 8:37)
 - c. The Pharisees had “no room” for their Messiah. He was a threat to their comfortable lifestyle, and position among the Jews. (Jn. 11:53)
 - d. How many today, like the innkeeper have put a sign across their heart that reads, “No Room.” He can stay in the stable out back but not here in the house.
3. It was a messy place - Born in a stable, laid in a manger
 - a. Stables were usually caves with feeding troughs carved into the walls. Surroundings were dark and dirty.
 - b. We must not limit God! He is at work wherever needed in our sin darkened and dirty world.
 - c. When we do God’s will it doesn’t guarantee us a comfortable life, but everything, even our discomfort has a meaning in God’s plan.

II. The main message of the REAL Christmas Story is good news (8-14)

A. It is a message that is overwhelmingly “good news”! (8-12)

Good tidings - Gr. Word from which we get “gospel.”

1. The end of fear! - fear not (10a)
2. The birth of joy! - great joy (10b)
3. The beginning of evangelism - all people (10c)
 - a. Good news is for **all** people
 - b. Good news is about a person:
 - Savior - Jesus = Deliverer, He came to save His people from their sins (Jn. 4:42)
 - Christ - Messiah = Anointed One (Is. 9:6), “God with us.” (Is. 7:14)
 - Lord - Master, sovereign ruler

B. It is a message that when understood results in our unending praise to God! (13-14)

Note: “Heavenly hosts”: army in ranks. Ranks of heavenly soldiers. “Praising God” - to sing praises

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1. Because it is a message of Peace to earth! (13)
 - a. Is there peace on earth? Caesar had given the world military peace that would last for about 40yrs, but he could not give man inner peace - of heart, soul and mind. (Mt. 10:34)
 - b. Peace is not the absence of conflict! This is the peace one has because He is right with His God and is content whatever happens knowing He is safe in God's loving care.
 - Demonstrated by Jesus sleeping in the storm (Mt. 8:24)
 - Passes all human comprehension (Phil. 4:7)
 - Rules in our hearts (Co. 3:15)
2. A message of God's good intent toward man (14)
 - a. God's kind intent toward all who make peace with Him through His Son. (Ro. 5:8)
 - b. Kindly intent of God toward man - not willing that any should perish (II Pt. 3:9)

III. The response to the REAL Christmas story! (15-20)

A. Response of Faith - The Shepherds were not content to only hear about Jesus, they wanted to know Him.

1. See - to know, to be an eyewitness.
2. Excitement - Meeting Jesus became their priority - response of faith. - "made haste"
3. They searched until they found Him
 - a. Promise of God (Jer. 29:13)
 - b. Must seek for the narrow gate/path that leads to life instead of death (Mt. 7:13-14; Jn. 14:6)
 - c. If we seek we will find (Mt. 7:7-8)

B. Response of Witness - Once the Shepherds met Jesus they had to tell everyone (17-19)

1. We can only tell others after we have seen Him (II Co. 4:18)
2. World marveled (18) To be struck with wonder and amazement. Same word used of disciples when Jesus calmed sea (Mt. 8:27). Healed the palsied (Mt. 9:8); Jesus did not answer Pilate (Mt. 27:13-14)
 - a. Not saving faith - they were not interested in meeting Him for themselves. You can marvel at this wonderful news, and yet not give place to the Savior in your own life!
 - b. Good news was for them also, peace is offered to all. (*Jn. 1:12 - But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to be called the sons of God.*)

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3. Mary kept - preserved, to keep in mind. Mary pondered - to bring together, wrestled with. (19)

C. Response of Praise - The result of the Shepherds meeting Jesus was the proclamation of His glory and praise (20)

1. Glorify - praise, magnify, celebrate. To reveal and acknowledge the dignity and worth of a person.
2. Praise - to sing praises to God. Their hearts and lips were filled with praises to God! Their lives were changed forever!

CONCLUSION:

Can you see why the real story of Christmas is so life-changing?

Have you made room for Christ in your life?

Rev. 3:20 Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and will open the door I will come into him and dine with him.

Are you joyfully telling others about heaven's wonderful gift to us?