

A Child is Born

We have progressed through this season of Advent. Four candles now burn on our wreath. The lone white candle awaits the time we remember the birth of Jesus. Our theme for this season of Advent has been Joy to the world. We reviewed the beautiful world God crafted for His creation. We saw how every detail was planned out to provide us with everything we would need to live and prosper on this earth. When we reflect on the creation, we certainly should be filled with joy and awe at the sheer power and love that is revealed in the creation.

Later, we saw how sin entered the world. We saw that God made Satan as a beautiful and intelligent angel. We also saw that pride led Satan to believe that he should be above God in the heavenly realm. Satan was expelled from heaven. Satan, in the form of a serpent, deceived Adam and Eve into sin by misrepresenting what God had commanded.

Some may question why God made such a beautiful world would have allowed the possibility for sin. It is simple. God made mankind in His image. This includes the ability to think and use reasoning and make choices. Humans without that ability would be no more than a robot that is programmed to behave in a predetermined manner. We would not even be on the same level as other animals. Our ability to make choices is called free will. We are free to do as we decide. This opens the possibility to choose to live in harmony with God or to live in open rebellion against God. We are free to choose. However, with that freedom come the reality that the consequences of our choices are also ours. Thus, our choices often lead us to sin against God and we must face the harsh reality that the penalty for sin is eternal death as we read in Romans 6:23: **For the wages of sin is death.**

Even with the shadow of sin, we are still mindful of the beauty of God's creation. Somehow, the Joy of God shines even more brightly against the dark shadows of sin. The contrast allows us to appreciate God's gifts more and more each day.

Last week, we again focused on a brighter picture. We see that even from the time when Adam and Eve listen to Satan, God began to promise a reconciliation between the fallen man and the perfect God.

We read through several prophecies pointing to the birth of the Messiah, the Anointed One, or the Christ. The last scripture that we read last week is the introduction for this week. It is found in Isaiah the 9th chapter.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of host will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 NASB)

In other times and other messages, we have learned that Mary had a conversation with Gabriel in which he told Mary that she would conceive a child through the Holy Spirit and bear a son and the child would **be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:36)**. We may also remember that Joseph was planning to end his relationship with Mary because of her pregnancy but was spoken to in a dream by an angel and he kept her as a virgin until the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25).

The actual events of the night Jesus was born are only shared in Luke's gospel. We begin in the first verse of the second chapter of Luke,

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger (feeding trough), because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7 NASB)

Jesus is born to the young mother and we see that she is doing the best under the circumstances. She uses a feeding trough as a bed. She takes strips of cloth to securely wrap the newborn son to provide not only warmth but a sense of security. The crowning event in history of all creation that is only second to the resurrection has happened. God became flesh and lives with His creation (John 1:14).

Paul, in his letter to the church at Colossae, tells us that the reconciliation God had promised from the later days of the garden of Eden is accomplished in Jesus.

For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him (Jesus), and through Him (Jesus) to reconcile all things to Himself (God), whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. (Colossians 1:19-20 NASB)

The birth of a king should be made known to the regal household. The elites should have the news first. But God does not follow the normal convention. Yes, God makes a spectacular announcement. God sends heavenly proclaimers to tell of and to sing about this birth. Let's read on in Luke's gospel.

In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night. And an angel of the Lord *suddenly* stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. And *so* the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ (the *Messiah*) the Lord. And this *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army (or *host*) of *angels* praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased."

When the angels had departed from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem, then, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen *Him*, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it were amazed about the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them. (Luke 2:8-20 NASB)

Somehow, it is fitting for the first people to hear about the birth were shepherds. The image of shepherds and sheep runs throughout the Bible. David was tending sheep when he was anointed to be king.

We started this series with the idea that the birth of Jesus is one to bring joy to the world. We began by seeing that God designed and created the world to provide us with everything we need. His love for His creation has been evident throughout every phase of the creation. Even when sin entered the beautiful and peaceful garden, God began to unfold His plan of reconciliation. Patiently, God has led people and groups of people to the right place and the right circumstance to bring about His plan to restore those who choose to accept His offer of salvation. We reviewed a handful of scriptures that gave specific details about the anointed king who would be the Messiah, the seed of Abraham and David. The Christ whose kingdom would never end.

How do we know the child born in Bethlehem is that child? Luke does not stop with the shepherds and the angelic proclamation. We are told of the presentation of Jesus in the temple. We close out this series with the words of two people who were in the temple on that day and share what God has revealed to them as we continue our reading beginning with verse 25.

And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

“Now, Lord, You are letting Your bond-servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all the peoples: a light for revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.”

And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. And Simeon blessed them and said to His mother Mary, “Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and as a sign to be opposed— and a sword will pierce your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband for seven years after her marriage, and *then* as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She did not leave the temple *grounds*, serving night and day with fasts and prayers. And at that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak about Him to all those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:25-38 NASB)

A child is born on whose shoulders rest kingdom of God. A child is born who brings healing and salvation to all who believe in Him. What greater joy could God give the world? This birth we celebrate truly brings Joy to the World.