

(Through the Bible) Luke 2

by Chuck Smith

In Luke 2, Chuck Smith explores the humble beginnings of Jesus' birth and the fulfillment of prophecy amid the power of the Roman Empire.

Duration: 29:56

Scripture: Luke 2:10-49

Topics: "Incarnation Of God", "Redemption Through Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by providing background information on the first two chapters of the Bible. They then focus on the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus. The speaker highlights the excitement and joy surrounding the birth of Jesus, with angels appearing to shepherds and proclaiming the good news. The sermon emphasizes the significance of God taking on human form to redeem mankind.

Transcript

Now, it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And the taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, and all went to be taxed, everyone to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea and to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, who at this point was great with child.

And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should deliver her child, and she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in a swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. It came to pass in those days. Those were the days when the Roman Empire was being formed.

Originally, the Roman Empire was ruled by several generals, but gradually the power began more and more to be invested into one man until finally Caius Octavius gained control. He took the name Caesar from his uncle by adoption, and the name Augustus was given to him by the Roman Senate. When he gained power, when finally he was able to gain control and one man began to rule over Rome, the Senate determined to give him some title, and they first suggested that they call him the King of Rome, and he rejected that title.

Then they said, we'll call you the Dictator of Rome, and he didn't like that. And so finally they came up with this title Augustus, which has as its background thought of the gods. He said, I like that.

And so he was called Caesar Augustus. This man was the most powerful man on the face of the earth. It came to pass in those days that there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, and every man went to be taxed.

Think of the power. Here's a guy sitting in Rome. Gradually he has gained this position of power until he is able to issue a decree, and immediately the whole world must bow.

There's no one to appeal to. One man makes a decree. The whole world must bow to that decree.

For Rome had bludgeoned the world into submission. It came to pass in those days that the temple of Janus was closed. Janus was the god of war.

And whenever the Roman troops were out in the fields of battle, the temple gates would be open that the people might come in and pray for victory for their troops. But the gates were closed for there was peace. For 16 years the gates had been closed.

You say, oh what a beautiful time for the Prince of Peace to be born. But think again. There was peace only because Rome was such a powerful ruling force that no man dared to say that his life was his own.

Every man was a slave to Rome. World rule by one man. Hegemony.

This is what Caesar had sought to obtain. And he gave a decree. It is interesting that in Egypt we have actually found records of these censuses that were made by the Roman government.

They were made every 14 years. And we have found the records of those censuses that were taken in Egypt every 14 years in a little province of Rome, far off from the Roman capital, in a little city called Nazareth, of which hardly anybody had heard of it. There was a young couple.

They were both of the house of David. And when the decree came from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, enrolled in the census actually for taxation, they too had to submit to this Augustus Caesar. And in order for them to enroll in the census, they had to go back to their home family city of Bethlehem.

And interestingly enough, in Egypt there are records that they have discovered where it said that the people had to return to their family homes for the census to be taken, completely confirming this account in the Scriptures. And so it was necessary that at this point of pregnancy, which becomes quite miserable as in the final days awaiting the birth of the child, so many things are happening within as far as the hormones are concerned. And there are so many physical responses and reactions.

And yet, because this fellow in Rome has given a decree, Mary and Joseph, notwithstanding her pregnancy, have to make this long journey, long in those days, because of the mode of transportation, something like 70 miles or so, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, just to fulfill the commandment, just in obedience to the commandment of this fellow in Rome. And so it came to pass that Joseph went up out of the city of Nazareth there in Galilee, clear on down to Bethlehem, because he was the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled or taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child. And while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

She brought forth her firstborn son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, laid him in a manger. There was no room in the end. What an interesting thing.

If you were God, where would you have your son to be born? Interesting that when God came to visit the earth, there was no room for him in the end. Sort of a precursor of his entire life, I guess. For even today, there are people who refuse to make room for him.

They have room and time for just about everything but him. It seems that he is still consigned to a position outside of the general society. But there's something more to this.

That's looking at it now from the human standpoint. Let's go up a bit and look down. Interesting what you can see when you draw back a bit and get a little broader perspective.

700 years before this event took place, before this young couple made their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, at this critical point of pregnancy, 700 years earlier, a prophet had said, And thou Bethlehem, though you are little among the provinces in Judah, yet out of thee shall come he whose goings forth has been from everlasting. The prophet had predicted that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Messiah. So when I read in the text, it came to pass in those days that Caesar Augustus gave a decree that all the world should be taxed.

And Joseph had to journey to Bethlehem in order to be taxed. I realize that because the word of God had said that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, that it isn't really that little man sitting on the throne in Rome that is really in control of things. He is only a puppet.

He has not gained what he desired, world rulership. But that child that is being born in Bethlehem is the one who will ultimately experience true hegemony. You see, God had a problem.

Mary and Joseph were clear up in Nazareth. And yet the prophecy said the child had to be born in Bethlehem. Now no couple in their right mind are going to make that journey all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem at this point of pregnancy.

So God has to somehow get them down to Bethlehem. How are we going to work out this problem? God begins to pull the strings and Caesar Augustus says, Let's enroll all the world for taxing. Let it be done, the decree of Caesar.

Yes, sir. Here he thinks he is in control. But in reality, he is only responding in order that God's purposes which had been declared 700 years earlier might be fulfilled.

And Mary and Joseph might get to Bethlehem before the birth of that child. There is a lot of aloneness expressed in this. She brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.

Evidently she had no help at the birth of the child. Usually there was a midwife to take the child and to wrap it in its swaddling clothes and to take care of it. But no help, and so she herself, and you remember, probably 16 and a half, 17 years old, giving birth to a child in a manger, a stable, the place where they kept the animals.

But that child is the fulfillment of God's promise. For he is God who has come to visit man to redeem him. Oh, what a story.

Now there were in the same country shepherds who were abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Just a point, this means that he couldn't have been born the 25th of December because it gets too cold for the shepherds to stay out in the field in the winter months. And so the 25th of December was borrowed from the pagan holiday of Saturnalia.

And more and more it is becoming a pagan holiday, which it originated as. I wonder how long we as Christians can continue to even observe the sham of December 25th. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them.

The glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. It is thought that these shepherds were perhaps the temple shepherds because they offered a lamb every morning and every evening. It had to be without spot and blemish.

And so in order that they would have enough lambs for the sacrifices, they had their own temple shepherds who kept the lambs for the temple sacrifices. And it is thought by many that these shepherds were those who were watching those lambs that were to be used for sacrifices in the temple. And if so, of course, significant because they were the first ones to see the Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world.

And so they were out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. When the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid, and the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Good tidings, great joy, all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. And so it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into the heavens, the shepherds said one to another, Let's go now even to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. The angel of the Lord appeared to these shepherds.

I think the angel was Gabriel. I don't have any proof for that, just a strong hunch. Because we already know he can't keep a secret, and we already know that he had quite a bit to do with making the arrangements for the birth of the child.

And now that his job is pretty much complete, the child is there, it's safely born, wrapped in swaddling clothes, his job is over. Probably the child has had his first cry and gone to sleep there in the manger, and I've finished my task, it's over. Oh, the most exciting event in the history of the world has just taken place.

God has taken on a human form that he might visit man to redeem them. Oh, what news! Everybody ought to know. But nobody's awake.

All the lights are out, the candles are all blown out all over Bethlehem. And so as Gabriel is observing the whole scene, he sees a flicker of a fire out towards Jerusalem. Alright, and he goes over and finally got someone awake.

Hey guys, great news! Today, the city of David, he's there. The Savior, Christ, the Lord, the Messiah. You'll find him, he's wrapped in swaddling clothes and he's lying in a manger.

And then, of course, there were other angels that suddenly appeared as they were praising God, saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth. Now the possibility of peace and good will toward me. Exciting scenes, I never tire of them.

And so they came with haste and they found Mary and Joseph and the babe. And when they had seen it, they may known abroad the same which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them. And when the eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus.

They usually named the boy on the day of his circumcision, which was always eight days after his birth. And it was such an important rite that even if it came on the Sabbath, they would go ahead and circumcise the child on the eighth day. It was one of the rare things that they would be allowed to do on even the Sabbath day.

They called his name Jehoshua, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, if she had a son, she had to go through 40 days of purification. If she had a daughter, she had had to gone through 80 days of purification, sort of punishment for having a girl.

Forty days of purification were accomplished. Then they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. After the 40 days, then they were to offer a sacrifice unto the Lord.

A lamb and a dove. Or if they were poor, instead of the lamb, they could offer two turtle doves. For it was written in the law of the Lord, every male that opens the womb shall be called holy unto the Lord.

Actually, the Lord claimed the firstborn. But it came to the place where the people could redeem the firstborn. And God finally chose the Levites.

And they would then pay the Levites for the firstborn, redeeming their firstborn from being committed or serving the Lord. But they brought the firstborn holy to the Lord. And to offer the sacrifice according to the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves.

That was for the poor people. And so it would indicate that Mary and Joseph were poor. Which to me is interesting because Jesus grew up perhaps in a home filled with poverty.

And he knows what it was to have those kind of struggles that we have as we think about the payment of the bills and where we're going to get this and that and the other. And thus he can identify with us and our concerns for our needs. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.

And he was a just and a devout man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel, the peace. And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

Now here's a man who walked with God, a godly older man. And God said, look, you're not going to die until you've had the opportunity to see the Messiah. And so he was led by the Spirit at that time into the temple.

And when the parents of Jesus brought him in, in order that they might fulfill the customs of the law, he took him up in his arms and he blessed God and he said, O Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people a light to lighten who? The Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel. So here in the prophecy, it was to be a light not just to Israel alone, but to the world, to the Gentiles. And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of the child.

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also that the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed. And so he is telling Mary, look, this child is set for great blessings to the people, but it's going to pierce as a sword through your own soul, preparing her for the agony and the pain that she would experience as she would watch one day this child hanging on a cross.

Now there was a lady by the name of Anna who was a prophetess. She was the daughter of Phanuel. She was of the tribe of Asher.

She was of great age actually. She was 84 years old. And she lived with the same husband from the seven years after her period really of when a girl began her menstrual periods.

Seven years after she had begun her menstrual periods, she was married and she lived with that same man all this time is what it is saying. The way it is written, it's a little hard to understand. She was a widow.

She had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity. And so that is from the time that she had begun her menstrual period, seven years from that time, she got married and lived with this man the whole while. She was now 84 years old.

And she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. One of those beautiful godly things. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise to the Lord and spoke of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Now when they had performed all of the things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own city of Nazareth. And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit and was filled with wisdom. And the grace of God was upon him.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom to the feast. Probably the first time he was able to go to the feast because he was now 12 and getting time for his bar mitzvah.

And so when they had fulfilled the days as they were returning, that is the days of the feast of the Passover, they went every year. They were devout couple. As they had fulfilled the days, they returned and the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem and Joseph and his mothers did not know of it.

Now hundreds of people would travel together. And usually the women would take off first because they traveled slower and the men would take off later and would always catch up with them by night. And the

men would catch up with them.

They make camp for the evening. And so they took off for Nazareth with all of their friends and the families and all. And when they started making camp at night and Joseph probably caught up with him, he said, well, where's Jesus? And she said, well, isn't he with you? No, I thought he was with you, you know.

And so they looked around, they inquired from all of the relatives. No, we haven't seen him, you know. And so they thought, you know, they each thought that he was probably in the company of people.

And when they sought for him among the kinsfolk and their acquaintances, no one had seen him. So when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for him. Now here's a little 12-year-old fellow, you know, he'd think, oh my, you know, my parents are gone and he'd be all concerned and worried.

And it came to pass after three days they found him. So they didn't find him when they first got back. And when they found him, he was in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors as he was listening to them and asking them questions.

And all of those that heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed. And his mother said unto him, Son, why have you dealt with us like this? Behold, your father and I have sought you sorrowing.

Notice she said, your father and I, referring to Joseph. He's quick to correct her. And he said unto them, how is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? You see, he didn't recognize Joseph as his father at this point.

I must be about my father's business. Now, these are the first recorded words of Jesus. They're important because they express the purpose of his existence.

What is it? I must be about my father's business. Now, I hear a lot of people say, oh, I know I ought to be doing that. That doesn't carry much force because we ought to be doing a lot of things we don't do.

Oh, I know I should. I really should. That doesn't carry much force.

But when a person says, I must listen, because now you're getting close to the real heart of the life. I must be about my father's business. That was the burden of the life of Jesus.

To do the father's will. I must be about my father's business. And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

But he went down with them, and they came to Nazareth, and he was subject unto them. But his mother kept all of these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature.

Grew up strong, big fellow. And in favor with God and man. So, we, in the first two chapters, get the background now.

And in chapter three, we begin with the ministry of John the Baptist and that of Jesus. May the Lord bless and increase your knowledge and understanding of his truth. As we have this opportunity of sharing together in God's word.

Growing and learning. And may we also be increased in wisdom and in favor with God and with man. God be with you.

God bless you. Give you a beautiful week. Blessed Thanksgiving Day.

In Jesus' name.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/6/SID6523.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chuck-smith/through-the-bible-luke-2/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net