

## Luke 2:1~20, part 1

Tonight, I want begin part one of a two part message on this passage which is more commonly known as the “*Christmas Story*,” and is traditionally the focal passage around Christmas time. And the reason for that is, as we all know, that Christmas is about the birth of Christ. Very rarely (if ever) will you hear this particular passage being preached during any other time of the year, *as let’s say August*. But I have found, from looking at this passage this week that by looking at it in the middle of summer, may well be the best time to study it.

Beloved, it goes without saying, that Christmas as we know it in our day, has all but lost it’s true meaning. The Christmas being celebrated today bears little or no resemblance to what Christmas is all about...the birth of Christ. And tragically, I’m not just talking about those outside the church, but a large number of those inside the church. Listen, I expect those outside the church to miss the true meaning and purpose of Christmas, they are lost, they don’t know the Lord. But the church is an entirely different thing. But the sad truth is, the celebration of Christmas for MANY within the church, bears little or no difference than those outside the church. If and honest study was done, (not including going to church on Christmas Sunday to hear the annual Christmas story,) I wonder how many church folks would be found celebrating Christmas differently than the world. They have a tree, we have a tree, they Christmas lights, we have Christmas lights, they have presents, we have presents, they are in the hustle and bustle of the hectic rush, so are we, they have the dinners, so do we...and on and on. I have a question, Where’s the difference? The difference should be obviously clear...there should be no comparison. Christmas is all about ONE THING...the birth of Christ! That’s it, Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ...so where did all the trees come in, the lights, the presents, etc...and where did the focal point of worshiping God and praising God for His gift of His Son go to?

Tonight, I want to say, that I am very grateful to God for leading me in the study of this book, during the middle of August. It has been so refreshing to me to look at this story, with no distractions, no glitter, no lights, no trees, no gifts, no hustle and bustle...nothing but that of the precious birth of His Son...

As we look to the first seven verses here, seeing them without all the distractions, we are able to see the “*Mighty hand of God*” at work...

Here in this passage we see the sovereign hand of God in full force, manipulating and orchestrating the events of history to bring about His divine will and plan. I’m referring to the issuing of the decree by Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. Rome took a census every fourteen years for both military and tax purposes, and each Jewish male had to return to the city of his fathers to record his name, occupation, property, and family, for both military and taxation purposes. Here we find, that God used Caesar’s decree to move Mary and Joseph eighty miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill the Word that He had spoken hundreds of years earlier, through the mouth of his holy prophet Micah...

(Micah 5) <sup>2</sup>*But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

The description given here of the ruler that was to come out of Bethlehem, is clearly describing the promised Messiah... whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Through Micah, for centuries, the nation was aware of the fact that the Messiah would come forth out of Bethlehem. What an incredible prophecy, that God would narrow it down, as He says “*though thou be little among the thousands of Judah,*” God specifically chose Bethlehem to be the place that the promised Messiah would come forth from.

The most amazing part of it all, was how this was to come about... The wisdom that is seen in the fulfillment of this prophecy, I mean the series of events that transpired in order to make it happen are overwhelming. Tonight I want to look at a couple of those...

The first thing deals with the obvious, that of how God sovereignly orchestrated the events leading up to Christ birth, by working through ruler, Caesar Augustus, to bring about the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy. Let me put it this way, *Caesar Augustus was ruling...but God was in charge*. Seeing that Mary and Joseph were of Nazareth, no doubt, they had no intentions of traveling during the time she was close to delivering. In short, if it had not been for Caesar's decree, Jesus would have been born in Nazareth, thus disqualifying him as having any possibility of being the promised one. But in God's perfect timing, by God's sovereign hand, He orchestrates the events to bring Mary and Joseph to the city of Bethlehem, during the exact time she was to give birth. Remember what Luke had said earlier back in 1:27...

<sup>27</sup>*To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.*

Being of the house of David was crucial in the sense that, the promised Messiah was prophesied to come through David's lineage. Thus here, he is linked with David's line. But not only that, Joseph "*being of the house of David*" meant that when Caesar declared the decree for taxation, it required that all those of David's line would have to come to David's house or David's hometown to register, which is Bethlehem. I will say it again, there's no doubt in my mind that Mary and Joseph would not have traveled during this close to time for her to give birth, and that if it had not been for the decree given by Caesar, which required them to come to Bethlehem, Jesus would have been born in Nazareth, thus disqualifying him of being the promised Messiah. But God is His sovereign plan, orchestrates the events in perfect timing!

The other thing that I want to point out, that is amazing, is the wisdom behind God's choice in choosing the parents of the Christ, to live in Nazareth. He could have chosen among hundreds if not thousands of couples, and He could have chosen a couple who lived in Bethlehem...but He didn't. The reason He didn't is glorious, and reveals the magnitude of the wisdom of our God.

One reason he may have chose Nazareth, was for the fact that no one would ever think of looking there. The testimony of Nazareth (*according to Nathaniel*) was that anything of any significance would never be associated with it. "*Can there be anything good thing come out of Nazareth?*" The reason this is important is for the fact that Satan and his servants have sought since the beginning of time, when the promise was given of a Messiah, to destroy the seed. They have tried time and time again to stop the coming of God's Messiah. By choosing Nazareth, you might say it was a genius military ploy deceiving the enemy, leaving them oblivious to the where about's of the coming King. No doubt, they thought this coming "*King of the Jews*" would be born of royalty, and live in or around Jerusalem, being that he was going to be the King of Israel. None would have ever imagined Nazareth; it would have never entered their mind...genius!

Add to that, the fact that Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth, meant that they would not dwell in Bethlehem, the place that Satan was watching, given the prophecy of Micah. We all know the story of how Herod tried to kill the Christ child, when he heard that the promised "*King of the Jews*" had been born.

Review (Matthew 2:1~23)... Prophecy after prophecy...was fulfilled at the birth of Christ... There's no doubt in my mind, that for years after the slaughtering of the babies, they kept their eyes on Bethlehem to make sure they got rid of the threat. Little did they know, in accordance with prophecy, the child was in Egypt (being warned of an angel), and would return to unsuspecting Nazareth, growing in wisdom and in strength...