

See Acts 17:11 — Be like the Bereans; “receive the word with all readiness, and search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things are so.”

Luke 2:1-20 (NKJV)

Christ Born of Mary

- 1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.
- 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.
- 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.
- 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,
- 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed ^[a]wife, who was with child.
- 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.
- 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a ^[b]manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Glory in the Highest

- 8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.
- 9 And ^[c]behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.
- 10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.
- 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
- 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a ^[d]manger.”
- 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:
- 14 “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill^[e] toward men!”
- 15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”
- 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.
- 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made ^[f]widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.
- 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.
- 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.
- 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Footnotes

- [a] 2:5 NU omits wife
- [b] 2:7 feed trough
- [c] 2:9 NU omits behold
- [d] 2:12 feed trough
- [e] 2:14 NU toward men of goodwill
- [f] 2:17 NU omits widely

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Notes on Footnotes

The KJV / NKJV is based on the received text, the version where there exist most ancient Greek manuscripts.

NU - stands for Netsle-Aland Greek New Testament /United Bible Society. These are texts based on the oldest, but not the most numerous ancient manuscripts.

The NU-Text found in the footnotes represent the text found in Alexandria / Egypt, because this text is considered to be oldest version of the new testament still in existence. However, old does not automatically mean correct. Alexandria is known to be the seat of occult teachings in ancient times. Even in the 1st and 2nd century there were already incorrect versions of Paul's letters in circulation, but the majority of the copies (i.e. the received text) agreed with each other.

M - Masoretic Text - Traditional text of the Old Testament. Often compared to the LXX (Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament.)

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Luke 2:1-20 (NKJV) Christ Born of Mary

[Christmas Message 2021]

1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

It came to pass in those days: Luke clearly tells us that he recorded actual history and real events. This is not “once upon a time.” This is real.

A decree went out from Caesar Augustus: The story of Jesus’ birth began during the reign of one of the most remarkable men of ancient history.

Caesar Augustus

- 63 BC–AD 14
- Birth name Gaius Octavius,
- Adopted by Julius and became his successor
- Adopted Name Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus, Augustus Means “of the gods”, "Majestic", "Great" or "Venerable"
- Rome's First and one of Ancient Rome's most successful emperors, 27 BC–AD 14
- Led transformation from a republic to an empire
- Brought Peace (Pax Romana) to the Greco-Roman world, in 27 BC
- Reformer, and patron of arts and literature;

2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

“This census” The registration and census described wasn’t for simple record-keeping or statistics. It was to efficiently and effectively tax everyone in the Roman Empire. —

Census — Caesar Augustus’s censuses called upon every man and his family to return to his place of birth to be counted in order to keep track of the population. It took a lot of taxes to keep the Roman army going, to build roads, and to finance military campaigns. Caesar Augustus ordered widespread censuses of Rome at least three times in 28 B.C., 8 B.C., and 14 A.D.

See [The Internet Classics Archive | The Deeds of the Divine Augustus by Augustus \(mit.edu\)](#)

“First took place” The idea in the original language is that this was “the first enrollment.” Using a census for taxation was common in ancient Rome, so Luke called this one “the first enrollment” to distinguish it from the well-known enrollment in A.D. 6 that he later mentioned in Acts 5:37.

“While Quirinius was governing Syria” This is another historical anchor, securing Luke’s account with the reign of known, verifiable historical people.

3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

all went to be registered: One man, Caesar Augustus, gave a command – and the whole world responded.

everyone to his own city: There is no record in secular history that Augustus decreed this census and commanded it be performed in this manner, but it was consistent with what we do know of him from history. Augustus was known to be very sensitive to the nationalistic feelings of his subjects, and so he commanded them to return to their cities of family origin for the census.

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,

Joseph also went up from Galilee: The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem (just outside of Jerusalem) is about 80 miles. This was not a short distance in those days. It was a significant undertaking, costing time and money.

“Bethlehem” — means House of Bread

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The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem?

The distance “as the crow flies” from Nazareth to Bethlehem is about 70 miles, more like between 80 to 90 miles on foot or by donkey. So, without too many winding roads or rough spots to traverse, people might well have been able to travel about 20 miles a day, for a total one-way trip of perhaps four or five days. However: The land of Samaria lay along the most direct route between Nazareth and Bethlehem, and at that time, there was considerable hostility between Jews and Samaritans. It would have been difficult, even dangerous for them to travel through that country. They might have been harassed and would almost certainly have been refused lodging, just as Jesus and His disciples were treated some years later. **see Luke 9:51-56.**

A Samaritan Village Rejects the Savior

51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, **52** and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. **53** But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. **54** And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?”

55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. **56** For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village

5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed [a] wife, who was with child.

with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child: We often think that Mary was close to delivery when they made this journey, but this may not have been the case at all. Joseph may have been anxious to get her out of Nazareth to avoid the pressure of scandal. Luke tells us that it was while they were in Bethlehem, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.

According to the Roman law, Mary didn’t have to go with Joseph for the tax census; but it made sense for her to go with Joseph, especially because she was in the latter stages of a controversial pregnancy – surely the subject of much gossip in Nazareth.

Micah 5:2 — The Messiah Will Be Born at Bethlehem

1 Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; He has laid siege against us; They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.

The Coming Messiah

2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From [Lit. the days of eternity] everlasting.” **3** Therefore He shall give them up, Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; Then the remnant of His brethren Shall return to the children of Israel. **4** And He shall stand and feed [shepherd] His flock In the strength of the Lord, In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; And they shall abide, For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth; **5** And this One shall be peace.

See John 6:35 The Bread from Heaven (22-40)

22 On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except [NU omits that] that one [NU omits which His disciples had entered] which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone— **23** however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the



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Lord had given thanks— **24** when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. **25** And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?” **26** Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. **27** Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” **28** Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” **29** Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” **30** Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? **31** Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” **32** Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” **34** Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” **35** And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” **36** But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. **37** All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will [*certainly not*] by no means cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. **39** This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. **40** And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

John 14:1-5 The Way, the Truth, and the Life

1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. **2** In My Father’s house are many [*Lit. dwellings*] mansions; if it were not so, [*NU would I have told you that I go or I would have told you; for I go*] I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. **4** And where I go you know, and the way you know.” **5** Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” **6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

“His Story is History”

A. T. Peters

“History is but the unrolled scroll of prophecy.” President James A. Garfield

Jeremiah 1:12

11 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see a [*Lit. rod*] branch of an almond tree.” **12** Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am [*Lit. watching*] ready to perform My word.”

6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a [*b*] manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

she brought forth her firstborn Son: Luke’s narrative is so simple it contrasts with how great the events are portrayed in our modern age. Small events are often inflated with over-description and presented as more important than they are. Yet under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke presented this most amazing event in an understated manner.

she brought forth: This phrase is filled with wonder. We are not told that anyone assisted Mary in the birth, though someone may have. This young woman was completely separated from all her family and friends, who lived back in Nazareth, when she was giving birth.

her firstborn son: This invites the conclusion that Mary had other children after she had given birth to Jesus, despite the Roman Catholic teaching of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

wrapped Him in swaddling cloths: These are snugly wrapped strips of cloth. More remarkable than the swaddling cloths is the fact that He was laid in a manger – a feeding trough for animals.

— **Swaddling Clothes:** In the of the Greek Word “swaddling clothes” is from the root word “sparganoo”. It appears in only twice in the New Testament, both times in Luke 2. First, in verse 7, and the second in verse

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“Sparganoo” means “to wrap a child in long strips of cloth” or “to clothe in strips of cloth, to wrap up in strips of cloth, to wrap in cloths.”

There was no room for them in the inn: The birth happened in a public place, with other travelers and residents. Men were traveling, little children playing, and women were ‘at the well’; and the kingdom of heaven was among them

“That there was no room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus. The only place where there was room for him was on a cross.” (Barclay)

Genesis 35:16-21 — Death of Rachel

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to **Ephrath**, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor. **17** Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, “Do not fear; you will have this son also.” **18** And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name [*Lit. Son of My Sorrow*] Ben-Oni; but his father called him [*Lit. Son of the Right Hand*] Benjamin. **19** So Rachel died and was buried on the way to **Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)**. **20** And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day. **21** Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. **22** And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard about it.

Micah 4:8 — Zion’s Future Triumph

6 “In that day,” says the Lord, “I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast And those whom I have afflicted; **7** I will make the lame a remnant, And the outcast a strong nation; So the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on, even forever. **8** And you, O tower of the flock, The stronghold of the daughter of Zion. To you shall it come. Even the former dominion shall come. The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.” **9** Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? For pangs have seized you like a woman in [*childbirth*] labor. **10** Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, Like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city, You shall dwell in the field, And to Babylon you shall go. There you shall be delivered; There the Lord will redeem you From the hand of your enemies.

Glory in the Highest

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

“**shepherds**” — Surrounding Bethlehem grazed flocks of sheep tended by shepherds trained by the Levitical priesthood to provide the lambs for temple sacrifices. Temple sacrifices used only perfect lambs. The sacrificial system needed lots of lambs; two lambs a day for the daily sacrifices, and many thousands more for holidays, individual sacrifices, etc. It appears that Bethlehem was a special place for raising sheep, unlike other areas where they were raised in the wilderness.

— “As a class shepherds had a bad reputation. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law courts.”

shepherds were unclean because of their duties of birthing the lambs; they were prohibited from entering the Temple.

“**keeping watch over their flock by night**” —The Bethlehem sheep stayed in the fields at night under the guard of shepherds, rather than being moved into a sheepfold. When the ewes were ready to deliver, they were moved to a manger. The place these Temple sheep used for delivery of lambs was the ‘tower of the flock’, in Hebrew, the name of the tower is “Migdal Eder”. Which is close to the road between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

—**Migdal Eder** the ewes delivered in a clean environment the lambs were sorted and immediately inspected for ‘spot or blemish.’ Clean cloths cleaned off the lambs, after which they were wrapped in cloths to keep them warm. This special manger, Migdal Eder, that Jesus was possibly born after Mary and Joseph could not find other lodging

9 And [*c*] behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

“**an angel of the Lord stood before them**” Interrupting this quiet, dark night was the shining presence of an angel and the **glory of the Lord**. This first angel brought **good tidings** (literally it means that they preached the gospel) to these shepherds, who were regarded as social outcasts.

The first preacher of the gospel was an angel. God hath now taken this honour from the angels, and put it

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upon the ministers, who in Scripture are called angels, Revelation 2:1 To the [*Or messenger*]angel of the church of Ephesus write, . . .

10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

“**the angel said to them**” — When the shepherds heard the announcement by the “**multitude of heavenly host praising God**” See verse 13.

11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

“**For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior**” They announced the birth of a Savior, which was (and is) exactly the need of mankind. We don’t need another advisor, a reformer, or a committee, but a Savior.

Genesis 3:15

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed: He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

who a16 To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be [e]for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a [d]manger.”

“**swaddling cloths**” — This cave was kept clean for the arrival of newborn sacrificial lambs. The newborn lamb was immediately wrapped in clean swaddling cloths to protect them and keep them from blemish and danger.

— **wrapped Him in swaddling cloths**: These are snugly wrapped strips of cloth. More remarkable than the swaddling cloths is the fact that He was **laid in a manger** — It wasn’t to see a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, but it was strange to see a baby lying in a manger — a feeding trough. If the angel had not told them to look for such a specific sign, they would never have believed it.

You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger” — The shepherds knew exactly where to go to find the baby, wrapped “in swaddling cloths,” just like the newborn Temple lambs.

— In fact, the angelic message did not say, “You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger” as in our English Bibles, but rather, “lying in THE manger.” To these shepherds, “the manger” meant a specific place “The Tower of the Flock”.

— See “**Swaddling cloths**” under verse 7

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

Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God: After the single angel’s announcement, a whole group of angels appeared. This was a heavenly host (a band of soldiers)

14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will^[e] toward men!”

Let God have all the glory, so we may have the peace.

“**peace, good will toward men!**” (Who are in God’s will).

See John 6:28

26 Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

28 Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”

“**Let us now go**” This shows a genuine urgency. They didn’t hesitate at all.

“**And see this thing that has come to pass**” The angel told them to look for a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. It wasn’t an unusual sign to see a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, but it was

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strange to see a baby lying in a manger – a feeding trough. If the angel had not told them to look for such a specific sign, they would never have believed it.

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

— This was a strange sight, and the specific sign they were told to look for. — They no longer heard or saw angels, but they had the abiding encounter with Jesus. Angels may go, but Jesus remains.

— The shepherds who looked after the Temple lambs were the first to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

17 Now when they had seen Him, they made [f] widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

The shepherds — Spread the Word

“They made widely known” The combination of the angelic announcement and the sign of a child in a feeding trough inspired the shepherds to tell as many as they could of what they heard and experienced.

18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

The shepherd’s good news amazed all who heard it. Even if they didn’t really understand it, they recognized that something significant had happened.

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

Mary’s reaction was different than the shepherds or those who heard them. She calmly took it all in and meditated over it in her heart, seeking to understand the deep meaning of it all.

Mary had good reason to meditate. A Roman emperor’s decree and perhaps gossiping tongues in Nazareth brought her to Bethlehem. God works through all kinds of people and all kinds of events to accomplish His plan.

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

The shepherds had such happiness and praise to God because the word was fulfilled just as it was told them.