

## Introduction

As many of you know, I spent much of my younger life living in Iran. I have many fond memories of Iran. It was a good place to live while the Shah was in power. Shah means king in Farsi. It was a monarchy when we lived there. One of those memories reminds me of Christmas. On October 26, 1967, the Shah of Iran was crowned as the Shahanshah, which means king of kings. Prior to that, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi did not feel that he deserved the title, but in 1967 he had himself crowned as Shahanshah.

It was in Iran, that Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that he was the king of kings, or Shahanshah, to whom God had given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory. God had given Nebuchadnezzar a vision of what was to come in the future.

(Dan 2:37) “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory.”

The Empress Farah was also coronated on that day as the Queen of Iran. There were parties and celebrations all over Iran. I was living in the town of Masjed-I-Sulaiman, or MIS, and there were colored strings of lights hung all over the town. All of the major streets had lights and decorations. All of this was done in advance to prepare for and announce the coronation. It was quite an event, and all the colored lights reminded me of our colored lights at Christmas.

As we make our way through the Gospel of Luke, we have come to the birth of Christ. The celebration of the coming of the real King of Kings has been announced in a most spectacular way. Gabriel made an announcement to Zacharias and Elizabeth that their petition has been heard and they are going to have a son. They are to name him John, and he is going to be great in God’s sight. He is going to prepare the way for the King of Kings. We learned that we should be persistent in our prayers. God will answer them in His time. Second, we are to believe God when He says something.

Then, Gabriel makes an announcement to Mary about giving birth to a Son. She wants to know how this is possible since she is a virgin. Gabriel tells her that the Holy Spirit will come over her and overshadow her, and she will become pregnant with the Son of God. An angel of the Lord also appeared to Joseph and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, that the child had been conceived of the Holy Spirit.

The announcements of the party celebrating the birth of Christ has been announced in most spectacular ways. Today, we move to chapter two, and the big day has finally arrived. Mary gives birth to Jesus, and there is a celebration in an animal shelter in Bethlehem. This morning we will look at the Setting, the Announcement to the Shepherds, and 3) the Shepherds’ Response.

### 1. The Setting (Luke 2:1-7)

Luke begins his account of the birth of Jesus by describing the setting. He tells us that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus to take a census. Everyone had to register for the census in his own city. Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David. Why is this significant? **The birth in Bethlehem is significant because it fulfills the plans and prophecies that God had given to the prophets.** Let’s look at the setting.

## 05 The Christmas Announcement (Luke 2:1-20)

(Luke 2:1-7) "Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. {2} This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. {3} And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. {4} 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, {5} in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. {6} While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. {7} And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Historically, as we look at Christmas, we do not know the exact date of the birth of Christ. We celebrate it on December 25, but in all likelihood, it did not take place on December 25. The date is not the important thing about Christmas. What is important about Christmas is that it sets in motion God's plan of redemption. From the very beginning of time, God had a plan of redemption of mankind. God, being omniscient, knew all along that man would sin and would need a Savior. God had a predetermined plan.

In Acts 2:22-23 we find the account of Peter preaching at Pentecost. In his sermon that day, he says that Jesus was delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. God knew before he even made man, that we would need a Savior. His goal was to have relationship and fellowship with you and I. In order to accomplish that, a perfect sacrifice would have to be made to restore that relationship. Therefore, the Father made a plan to send Jesus to pay for our sins.

(Acts 2:22-23) ""Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- {23} this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."

Part of the God's plan included where Jesus was to be born. Micah prophesies about the place Jesus was to be born. He tells us that the child was to be born in Bethlehem. Micah also prophesies that this plan had been determined from the days of eternity. This plan of God was devised from the beginning of time, from the days of eternity.

(Micah 5:2) ""But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.""

The problem is that both Mary and Joseph were living in Galilee, not Bethlehem. Luke records in his account of the Christmas story that both Joseph and Mary were of David's descent. The angel of the Lord that visited Mary is identified as Gabriel, and he appears to her in Galilee. Both Mary and Joseph should have been living in Bethlehem. Historians believe that they had left Bethlehem because of Herod, who was ruling at the time.

(Luke 1:26-27) "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, {27} to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary."

## 05 The Christmas Announcement (Luke 2:1-20)

God put on the heart of Caesar Augustus to take a census of all the inhabited earth. Solomon tells us that the heart of a king is like channels of water in the hand of God. He directs it wherever He wants. That encourages me to pray for our leaders. God can and will move the hearts of leaders to accomplish His will on earth. Micah prophesied about the place Jesus was to be born and orchestrated the events so that His plan was fulfilled.

(Proverbs 21:1) "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."

Because of this decree from Caesar Augustus, every family was required to go to his home town and register. Joseph had to go to Bethlehem because he was of the house and family of David. Even though this violates the doctors orders not to travel after you are seven months pregnant, Mary traveled to Bethlehem with Joseph. And, while they were there, Jesus was born.

Luke tells us that Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son; and she wrapped Him in cloths. The Greek word for cloths that Luke uses is sparganoo, which was frequently used in medical writings. This was a familiar word to Luke, being a physician, but was not a commonly used word. Mary wrapped Jesus up like you would wrap up an injury. Some commentators have suggested that He was wrapped like a dead person would be prepared for burial. It was a foreshadow of what was to come.

Luke goes on to say that Mary laid Jesus in a manger. This would be a crib or trough that would be used for feeding the animals. The animals would be typically kept in a shelter or cave. My guess is that there was an animal shelter next to the inn where the animals of those who stayed in the inn would keep their animals overnight. Since there was no room at the inn, they offered Mary and Joseph to stay there. They could obviously see that she was pretty far along, and needed some shelter for the night.

(Luke 2:6-7) "While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. {7} And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Luke has given us the exact truth about what has happened. He is giving us historical evidence that supports our faith in Christ Jesus. There is a basis to our faith. It is not just a story. God had a plan, and Luke has just told us how he has fulfilled every detail of that plan.

### **2. The Announcement to the shepherds (Luke 2:8-14)**

All the details of the birth of the King of Kings have been worked out. And now, God sends out an announcement of the occasion. Luke says that in that same region there were some shepherds staying out in the field and keeping watch over their flock by night. The Greek word for shepherd is poimen, which is also translated as pastor. Pastors are shepherds and they are to be with their sheep. They are to feed and to watch over their sheep. These were not shepherds of a congregation, but of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terribly frightened. This was not expected by them. This was out of the ordinary. This was supernatural. We do not know what the glory of the Lord that shone around them, but we can only imagine it was extremely light, perhaps even blinding to the eyes.

## 05 The Christmas Announcement (Luke 2:1-20)

(Luke 2:8-9) “In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. {9} And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.”

Why did the angel of the Lord appear to shepherds? One possible reason is found in the prophecy given to Micah that we looked at earlier. Micah had prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Now he says that “He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord.” It is fitting that God brought shepherds to witness and celebrate the birth of the Lord, who is our Shepherd.

(Micah 5:3-4) “...When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. {4} And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.”

The angel tells the shepherds not to be afraid. He is bringing them good news of great joy which will be for all the people. **Good news (euaggelizo) is normally translated as gospel.** The gospel literally means good news. What is the good news? **The good news is that in the city of David a Savior has been born.** This Savior is the Christ, the Anointed Messiah that they have long awaited.

(Luke 2:10-11) “But 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; {11} for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

**Sharing the gospel is something joyful, not something that is to be feared** or to do grudgingly. If you were the executor of an estate, and you went to the beneficiary, who happened to be a needy person, and you tell this person that he is inheriting ten million dollars, would that be a difficult and painful thing to do? No, it would be a joyful occasion for that person. It is good news to that person. The person was needy, and this unexpected provision for him is something to rejoice about.

We are all needy people. The Scriptures say that all of us like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. **All of us have sinned and are in need of forgiveness.**

(Isaiah 53:6) “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

Paul tells us in Romans that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. What we have earned, or our wages for our sins, is death. Our souls are eternal and because of our sins, we are eternally separated from God. There is a chasm between us and God, which is our sins. The gospel or good news is that God sent His Son to be our Savior. This Savior was going to bear our iniquities or sins. This Savior was going to forgive us of all of our sins. This Savior was going to restore our relationship with God the Father. We can now have eternal life with God the Father. This is good news of great joy for all the people. This good news is available to all people. This good news that was announced to the shepherds is now being announced to all people.

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(Rom 6:23) “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**The shepherds were given a sign.** The angel tells the shepherds that they will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. This was the sign that the angel gave to the shepherds so that they would know that this was the Christ. God gives us many signs. In fact, there are over ninety signs given by God to you and I. For example, the rainbow is a sign from God that He would never destroy the earth again by a flood.

(Luke 2:13) “This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

God gave the shepherds a sign so that they would know that this was the Savior. God has given all of us a sign. In Isaiah 7, Rezin, the King of Aram, came against Jerusalem. Ahaz is the King of Judah and he was terrified. Isaiah records that his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.

(Is 7:2) “When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.”

The Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, “ask for a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” Ahaz says that he will not ask for a sign nor test the Lord. But the Lord wanted to give a sign anyway. Isaiah prophesies, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.” **All of us have been given a sign.** Mary was to give birth to a son while still a virgin. That is what we celebrate at Christmas. It is a sign that Luke, who wrote so that we would know the exact truth, records the virgin birth of Christ.

(Is 7:10-14) “Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, {11} "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven." {12} But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" {13} Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? {14} "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

Suddenly, after giving the shepherds a sign about the baby being in a manger, a multitude of heavenly host appear praising God and saying, “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” The birth of the Savior is good news, and something to rejoice and praise God about. The birth of Jesus, the King of Kings, is something to celebrate. While we may not know the date, the celebration of the birth of Jesus, or Christmas, is a wonderful occasion.

(Luke 2:13-14) “And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, {14} "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

### 3. The Shepherds' Response (Luke 2:15-20)

When the angels had gone away, the shepherds began to discuss what they were going to do about this announcement from God that they had just been given. They said, "let us go straight to Bethlehem, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So, they went in a hurry and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby in the manger, just as they had been told.

(Luke 2:15-16) "When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." {16} So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger."

Then, the shepherds relayed the statement that the angel had told them about Jesus. That statement was the good news. That statement was that this baby was the Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This baby was the anointed Savior and Messiah that they had been waiting for. This baby was the Lord. **When we encounter the Lord Jesus Christ, it is normal to share the good news with others.** These shepherds had just met the Lord, and they immediately began to tell others the good news.

(Luke 2:17) "When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child."

(Luke 2:11) "...there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

The shepherds did not just tell Mary and Joseph. Luke goes on to say that all who heard it wondered at the things that were told to them by the shepherds. These shepherds were excited about meeting the Messiah and continued to proclaim the good news everywhere they went.

(Luke 2:18) "And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds."

Luke tells us that **Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.** Mary has been visited by Gabriel. She has been impregnated by the Holy Spirit while yet a virgin. She has just given birth to her Son, and now she is visited by shepherds who tell her that her baby is the Savior, Messiah, and Lord. She takes all of this in and treasures these things. She also pondered them in her heart. She continued to think about and meditate on all that had happened and been shared with her. The shepherds went back to their field and were glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen.

(Luke 2:19-20) "But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. {20} The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them."

### Conclusion

This morning, we have looked at the birth of the Christ. It was prophesied in advance. All the details of the prophecies had been worked out and fulfilled. After the birth, the announcement was made to the shepherds and then to other people. A sign had been given, which was also fulfilled.

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When the shepherds heard the announcement, they wanted to go and see for themselves. They went seeking the baby in the manger. Some of you have been seeking. You have heard things and are seeking to find out for yourselves. God says that those who seek Him will find Him. The shepherds had been given a sign. We have also been given a sign. The sign was that Mary was born of a virgin. Luke investigated everything carefully and wrote all of this so that we would know the exact truth of what had happened. This sign for us has been fulfilled. Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus Christ is Lord.

The shepherds found Jesus. When they found Jesus they were filled with joy and began proclaiming this good news to others. Others of you have found Jesus. Like the shepherds, you can rejoice and share the good news with others. You can help others find the Christ.

Mary treasured this good news in her heart. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” Paul had found the treasure of Christ. On the road to Damascus, where he was going to persecute Christians, he met this Christ. He had an encounter with the Lord. He received that treasure in his heart and was forever changed.

(2 Cor 4:7) “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.”

This morning, how are you going to respond? Have you been seeking God in your life? Have you been searching for answers? Have you been looking for forgiveness and peace with God? A sign has been given to you, that Jesus was going to be born to a virgin. That good news has been shared with you. Are you going to receive this treasure in your heart?

I remember my own story. I was pursuing my dream to play golf. I had no use for God. I had been turned off by hypocrisy and vain religion. Then, I met a man named Don in Fort Worth. He was going to Southwestern Baptist Seminary. I could see the love of God in this man. I could see it in his eyes. This man had this treasure in his earthen vessel, and I could see it in him. I listened to what was shared with me by this man and pondered them in my heart. A few months later, I was in Duncan, Oklahoma, getting ready to play a tournament. I was all alone in my hotel room and I read a devotional about how I could have the peace of God in my life. I got on my knees by that bed and received Jesus Christ, the Savior and Lord, into my heart. Now, I had this treasure in my heart. I was a changed man.

What about you? Have you made that decision? Have you received this treasure in your heart? This morning, if this is your desire, I ask you to pray this prayer with me.

Father, thank You for this good news. Thank You for giving us a sign at Christmas time. Thank You for sending Your Son to take away my sins. I believe that Jesus is the Christ and I confess Him to be Lord. Jesus, I ask You to come into my life and forgive me for my sins. I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I ask You to fill me with Your joy and peace this morning. Amen.

The Bible says that “he who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” If you received Christ into your life this morning, you have eternal life. God does not want you wondering about your salvation. If you received Christ, you now

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have this treasure in your heart. Like the shepherds, go and tell others that you have found the Christ. Let me know. Let someone else know this morning that you have received Christ. There are things that you should know about how to grow in your relationship with Christ. We want to help you grow and mature as a believer.

(1 John 5:12-13) “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. {13} These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”



**Introduction**

**1. The Setting (Luke 2:1-7)**

- The birth in Bethlehem is significant because it \_\_\_\_\_ the plans and prophecies that God had given to the prophets. (Luke 2:1-7, Acts 2:22-23, Micah 5:2)

**2. The Announcement to the shepherds (Luke 2:8-14)**

- Good news (euangelizo) is normally translated as \_\_\_\_\_.
- The good news is that in the city of David a \_\_\_\_\_ has been born. (Luke 2:10-11)
- Sharing the gospel is something \_\_\_\_\_, not something that is to be feared.
- All of us have \_\_\_\_\_ and need \_\_\_\_\_. (Is 53:6, Rom 6:23)
- The shepherds were given a \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 2:13)
- All of us have been given a \_\_\_\_\_. (Is 7:10-14)

**3. The Shepherds' Response (Luke 2:15-20)**

- When we encounter the Lord Jesus Christ, it is \_\_\_\_\_ to share the good news with others. (Luke 2:17-18)
- Mary \_\_\_\_\_ all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)

**Conclusion** (2 Cor 4:7, 1 John 5:12-13)

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