

Heaven Explains the Manger

The Child Is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:1–14)

Series: Luke: An Orderly Account - Dr. Randy White

I. The Circumstances Place Him in Bethlehem (vv. 1–5)

An Emperor's Order Moves a Household

- Augustus's decree brings Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Luke places the birth within public history (vv. 1–5).
- The taxing involved enrollment for assessment. Rome's administrative demands supply the circumstances of the journey (vv. 1–3).
- The decree explains why they travel; God's earlier promises explain why this destination matters (Luke 1:32–33; Micah 5:2).

David's City Carries a Promise

- Joseph belongs to the "house and lineage of David." Bethlehem connects this birth with Israel's promised King (v. 4).
- God had promised Jesus "the throne of his father David" and an everlasting reign over "the house of Jacob" (Luke 1:32–33).
- The journey brings David's household to David's city. God's royal promise moves toward fulfillment under the shadow of Roman rule.
- Micah named Bethlehem as the place from which Israel's ruler would come. Its smallness did not diminish its place in God's purpose (Micah 5:2).

God's Promise Gives the Journey Its Meaning

- Augustus orders an enrollment; God has promised an everlasting kingdom. This journey connects the imperial decree with Israel's prophetic hope (vv. 1–5).
- God fulfills His word under foreign rule. David's promised heir arrives while another ruler's decree governs the household's travel (vv. 1–5).

II. The Manger Reveals His Humble Arrival (vv. 6–7)

The Promised Son Enters Human Life

- "While they were there," Mary's time came. Luke records an actual birth, with no claim that labor began upon arrival (v. 6).
- Mary brought forth her firstborn, wrapped Him, and laid Him down. The Son's humanity includes the dependence of infancy (v. 7).
- "Firstborn" also prepares for the law's claim upon Israel's firstborn sons. His birth belongs within Israel's covenant history (Exodus 13:2).
- The Son announced before conception is now born of Mary. God's promise has become an event in the life of this household (Luke 1:31, 35; 2:7).

His Accommodation Does Not Explain His Identity

- A manger is a feeding place. The child promised David's throne begins His earthly life in humble accommodation (v. 7).
- "No room for them in the inn" explains His resting place. Luke names no innkeeper and supplies no speech rejecting the Messiah.
- The manger shows where the child lies. The announcement that follows tells us who He is (vv. 7, 11–12).
- Nothing in these humble surroundings cancels the promise of David's throne. His royal identity rests upon God's word, even before His reign is publicly manifested (Luke 1:32–33).

III. Heaven Declares His Identity (vv. 8–12)

God Gives the Shepherds the Meaning

- Shepherds keeping night watch encounter the Lord's glory and become "sore afraid." The message answers their fear with "great joy" (vv. 8–10).
- The joy concerns a birth already accomplished: "unto you is born this day." God announces an event, not merely a hopeful wish (v. 11).
- "All people" first addresses Israel's collective hope in this Davidic setting. The shepherds receive news meant to extend beyond themselves (vv. 10–11).
- "Fear not" has a stated reason: the Saviour has been born. Their assurance rests upon what God announces about the child (vv. 10–11).

Three Titles Identify One Child

- **Saviour:** He is the promised Deliverer. Luke's preceding prophecy joins Israel's deliverance with the remission of sins (Luke 1:68–77).
- **Christ:** He is the Anointed One, Israel's promised Messiah. "Christ" identifies His office; it is not a surname (v. 11).
- **Lord:** The title belongs to this newborn child. His humble circumstances do not diminish the identity heaven declares (vv. 11–12).
- The Deliverer is Israel's Messiah, and the Messiah is Lord. These titles identify one child whose greatness exceeds His surroundings (v. 11).

The Manger Becomes a Sign

- Heaven directs them to a wrapped infant lying in a manger. The humble resting place becomes part of the identifying sign (v. 12).
- God's word enables them to recognize the promised person in those circumstances. The child's identity rests upon revelation.
- The sign joins the exalted titles to an actual infant. They are to find this Saviour in the concrete circumstances the angel describes (vv. 11–12).
- Verse 7 records the manger; verse 12 explains its identifying role. The same detail connects the earthly scene with the heavenly message.

IV. Heaven Announces His Significance (vv. 13–14)

Glory to God in the Highest

- A multitude of the heavenly host praises God. Heaven honors the birth that earth's circumstances make appear so unassuming (v. 13).
- "Glory to God in the highest" gives God the credit. The birth displays His faithfulness to the promises already announced (v. 14; Luke 1:32–33).
- A heavenly army appears with a message of peace. Its praise directs attention to God's gracious purpose in the birth of the Messiah (vv. 13–14).

Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men

- "On earth peace, good will toward men" announces God's gracious purpose in the Messiah's coming (v. 14).
- The promised King brings the hope of peace. His birth begins the saving work; it does not mean every kingdom promise was completed that night (Isaiah 9:6–7).
- "Good will toward men" directs attention to God's favor in sending the Saviour. The announcement gives human beings reason to praise Him (vv. 11, 14).
- Let God's announcement govern our understanding of the manger: the child born in humility is the Saviour, Christ the Lord.