

# Son of Earth, Son of Heaven

As we continue in this advent season we want to take a moment to remind you of the **focus of Christian sermons** during this season. The word "advent" comes from the Latin "adventus" meaning "arrival" or "coming," particularly of something having great importance. **During Advent, the church remembers the important comings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** Our Sermons this year had the major theme of **The King is Coming.** Advent starts by **looking forward**, in hope, to Jesus' future coming in glory (11/27 Sermon = Looking and Living). Advent then considers Jesus' **continuing present coming to us** through the Holy Spirit (12/04 = Lights, Camera, Action). Advent concludes with a joyous remembering of the Son of God's **coming to us in the flesh** through the miracle of the Incarnation (12/11 = Rejoicing in our Joy). This leads into the celebration of Jesus' birth on Christmas Day. Since we want to have the GCI Beaumont and High Desert families enjoy Christmas together this year, we have canceled Worship Services on 12/25. So today, we will focus on Jesus' **past coming as a baby** with the title being Son of Earth, Son of Heaven. **Thus Advent and Christmas bring into our present awareness the future, present and past comings of the Incarnate Son of God.** Listen to this wonderful quote regarding our Savior:

**“To be the Redeemer of humankind, Jesus must identify himself with human beings and at the same time transcend the human race. Thus he was fittingly begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of a woman.”** J. Leo Garrett

The Bible never wastes words and, in just seven verses, Luke tells us a great deal. Familiarity with the account of the birth of Jesus can make us 'switch off' as we read. Yet the events as told by Luke reveal that despite the **suffering inflicted** by the Romans upon the Jews, and the **hardships endured** by Mary and Joseph, **God's unseen hand was at work in it all.**

## **THE BIRTH OF JESUS (LUKE 2:1-7)**

**Luke 2:1-5** *In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup>(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup>And everyone went to their own town to register. <sup>4</sup>So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup>He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.*

Luke shows his historical concerns by setting Jesus' birth in a **world history framework**. The circumstances of our Lord's birth are well known; a Roman census for tax purposes was commanded. **God directed even the moment in history** when Rome's continuing desire to dominate the civilized world of that time would lead to this oppressive decree. Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem, thus fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Micah 5:2). Joseph barely introduced in **Luke 1:27**, *will play a crucial role in this story*. The Roman tax would fall upon his shoulders to be paid, following his lineage, he obediently traveled the seventy-five miles to Bethlehem, David's home, where the Scriptures said Messiah would be born (**Mic. 5:2**). We see that both Joseph and Mary can trace their family tree to David. Joseph did not make the trip alone. *Mary, still only engaged to Joseph, not married but pregnant joined him.*

**Luke 2:6-7** *While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

After a long journey of some seventy-five to ninety miles undertaken by *Mary, heavily pregnant, she and Joseph arrived at Bethlehem*. The inn was full, and therefore Mary and Joseph had to go to what seems to have been a stable (because of the reference to a 'manger'), *possibly constructed from a natural cave*.

It may have seemed strange to the couple to find the inn closed to them in this way. *Angels had spoken of the glorious nature of the child they were expecting, yet there was no warm and open inn or home in which he could be born*. The Lord Jesus had 'nowhere to lay his head' during his ministry (**Luke 9:58**) and so it was at his birth. In this account we see that **God made sure that Mary and her baby were kept safe**, despite the conditions around them in the stable. Luke surprises us with the brevity of his statement, *just as the event must have surprised Mary and Joseph*. Jesus' appearance time was suddenly there, the hour of his birth had come. Luke simply reports, **she gave birth to her firstborn, a son**. Joseph and Mary, the descendants of David descended to a stable to *find a place to lay the head of the King of kings*. **This is how God used earth's lowest to bring salvation from heaven's highest.**

God made sure that the Savior of the World would be born in a place of His choosing, for His purposes. **The Father chose the place of his Son's birth**. The Father knew this place would **immediately identify** the Son with the world that the Father loves. His Son would not only be identified with the *human beings of the world whom He loves* but also *the creatures of the world He loves*. The *humblest creatures* who labored everyday to serve humanity and *shepherds who were the poorest of human beings* in that culture would be there to witness the birth of their savior. **Amazingly, God would be glorified in this most humble of circumstances, the Son of his glory witnessed by the most humble persons and creatures.**

*Bethlehem* means "house of bread," *the ideal birthplace for the Bread of Life* (**John 6:35**). Its rich historic heritage included the death of Rachel and the birth of Benjamin (**Gen. 35:16-20**; also see **Matt. 2:16-18**),

the marriage of Ruth, and the exploits of David. It is worth noting that the name *Benjamin* means “son of my right hand,” and the name *David* means “beloved.” Both of these names apply to our Lord, for He is the *Beloved Son (Luke 3:22) at God’s right hand (Ps. 110:1)*.

**In chapter 2, Luke ties the earthly and the heavenly natures and missions of Jesus closely together while continuing his theme of God using earth’s lowest to do God’s highest.** Heaven’s angels **join** earth’s shepherds to announce the birth of the One who would change history for Jew and Gentile alike. *Life was difficult at that time just as it is today.* Taxes were high, unemployment was high, morals were slipping lower, and the military state was in control. *Roman law, Greek philosophy, and even Jewish religion could not meet the needs of men’s hearts. Then, God sent His Son!*

### LIGHT IN OBSCURITY (LUKE 2:8–20)

Along with Mary and Joseph, ordinary shepherds were to be the first human beings to see Jesus. The wise men in **Matthew 2:1–12** saw the Saviour in a ‘house’ (**Matt. 2:11**), which may well have been where the family moved to shortly after the birth. A group of shepherds would become the first people outside of Jesus’ family to know of his arrival (**Luke 2:8–20**).

*<sup>8</sup>And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, **keeping watch** over their flocks at night.*

We often think in our society that to have an impact we must harness the forces of earthly power. If only Christians controlled TV! If only Christians ruled the nations! Yet God’s way is often very different. **The Gospel of Luke teaches us that God can take obscure and poor people and use them to transform the world.** The secular history of Jesus’ day took no notice of his birth but the birth of Jesus far exceeds any secular recorded events of that day. The recorded events of Jesus birth overwhelm all other events of that day. The dark night is suddenly unveiled.

*<sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord **appeared** to them, and the glory of the Lord **shone around** them, and they **were terrified**. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I **bring** you good news that will **cause** great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior **has been born** to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This **will be a** sign to you: You **will find a** baby wrapped in cloths **and lying in a manger**.”*

Shift the spotlight once more from earth’s lowly shepherds enduring a dark night to heaven’s most glorious messenger. With the angel came **God’s glory, his shining majesty**, *the side of God humans cannot see but to which they can respond in confession, worship, and praise.* How joyfully the angel, and later the ‘multitude of the heavenly host’, **celebrates the birth of Christ!** Jesus, the one who would usher in the ‘glad tidings’ of the gospel, **was born.**

Gazing at God’s glorious angel terrified the shepherds and brought quick reassurance: **Do not be afraid.** The Gospel is here, the **good news.** The Gospel elicits **joy**, not

fear. **Joy** bursts forth in rejoicing and praise. **Joy** comes not just for lowly shepherds or isolated parents far from home. **Joy** comes to all people. In the most unlikely place amid the most unlikely spectators, God brushed aside the world's fears and provided the world with reason for **joy**.

**Joy** centers not in something you earn or possess. **Joy** comes from God's gift, a tiny baby in a feed trough. **But what a baby!** The child born in David's town now clasps heaven's greatest titles in his small fist. **Savior**, God's title (1:47), now becomes the baby's title. **Christ** or Messiah, the promised Anointed One, the king who would sit on David's throne and deliver oppressed Israel and the world. The birthplace of the king who first united the nation now births the king who offers unity to the world. **The Lord** is the title Luke uses most often for Jesus. This title refers to the holy, unspeakable personal name of God himself. This baby in the manger was God himself (cf. 1:32, 35), with all power and all authority under heaven.

*<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

An angelic chorus **burst** on the scene, **confirming** the original angel's message and **singing** heavenly praise to God. God **revealed** his glory in brilliance that shepherds **could recognize**. Angels **recognize** the great majesty of God's presence **and praise** him for it. God receives praise. **People receive peace**. God is in heaven; people, on earth. All this **happens** because God's favor, his good will, **rests** on people of goodwill.

**It was only fitting for the skies to ring out:** 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!' (v. 14)

*<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told.*

Angelic presence does not last forever. Angels leave. People must respond. How would shepherds respond—these tough men whose theological education came from the heavens and meadows rather than the synagogue and its rabbis? No quibbling or quarreling! Rather, they made an immediate decision—to go to Bethlehem to see what God had reported to them. **The shepherds rushed to see the infant Christ.**

Seeing the baby Jesus was not enough for the shepherds. **They had to share the story. They made known what they had heard and seen concerning the**

**child. Shepherds became the first New Testament evangelists!** Everyone they met heard from them about angelic visits, angelic songs of praise, and a trip to a manger to find the baby of God's glory. Most important, they shared **what had been told them about this child.** The child was good news to be told, to be shared. Shepherds found in a manger the **Savior**, the **Messiah**, the **Lord** himself. **They let everyone in hearing distance know.**

One word characterized their audience: **amazed.** Surprise and astonishment greeted the first testimonies about Jesus. Surprise soon gave way to wonder and marvel at what God had done. Everyone in Bethlehem began talking about God's mysterious surprise. But Mary, the mother responded differently. She *had incubated* amazement for nine months. Now she *incubated* experiences in her mind, experiences that gradually became treasured memories, each memory would confirm Gabriel's promise of greatness for this **Son of Heaven** and NOW this **Son of Earth.** Surely nothing was impossible with God (**1:30–37**).

Shepherds came. They saw what God told them to expect. They proclaimed their findings to all who would listen. They turned back toward their jobs, a new song of praise in their hearts. **What God had said, God had done.** They returned to the sheep, never to be heard of again, but never to be forgotten.

All of this occurred just as the Scriptures said, and Caesar and the shepherds unknowingly played an important part. **A.T. Pierson** used to say, "History is His story," and **President James A. Garfield** called history "the unrolled scroll of prophecy." If God's Word controls our lives, then the events of history only help us fulfill the will of God. "I am watching over my word to perform it," promises the Lord (**Jer. 1:12, NASB**).

Since we are not having GCI Worship Services in Beaumont of High Desert next week, let's consider some homework: please read Luke chapters 1 and 2 this week. What you will find is that at the end of two chapters into Luke, **we know what to expect from Jesus. He is** son of his parents and Son of his Father. **He is** good news, gospel, joy, Savior, Messiah, Lord God, cause of amazement and wonder, the **one** who fulfills every clause of the Law, and full-fledged member of the covenant people Israel. **He is** the source of comfort and consolation for which Israel waited, the promised bringer of salvation, the light giving revelation to the Gentiles and glory to Israel, the fulfillment of God's promised redemption. **He is Son of Heaven and Son of Earth!** Let us rejoice!

## **PRINCIPLES**

- Jesus' role as Savior was proclaimed before his birth.
- Jesus' salvation is intended for all people.
- Jesus' salvation comes to us through the dedicated lives of the "insignificant people" of the world who choose to serve God in obedience and trust rather than carve out a niche in history for themselves.

- Jesus' salvation comes to us in the midst of world history and even through the unsuspecting actions of unbelieving historical rulers.
- Jesus' salvation does not come automatically. People retain the freedom to reject him.
- Jesus' salvation often brings pain to those closest to him.
- Jesus' salvation was accomplished only because a human baby faithfully accomplished the growth tasks of a child in order to enter a heavenly mission.

## **APPLICATIONS**

- Extend the ministry of the church to all people whom Jesus came to save.
- Expect pain and opposition as you learn from and serve Jesus.
- Model one self as the “insignificant people” of life, like a priestly couple from the hills, unappreciated shepherds toiling alone through the night hours, a righteous man doggedly following the Holy Spirit and waiting for God to fulfill his promises, and an aged woman living in God's house occupied with worship and prayer until God blesses her.
- Expect to find God at work in places where people would never think to look, even in animal feeding troughs.
- Live each day in obedience so God can use you when his time comes.
- Tell everyone you meet the good news that God has shared with you.