

# The Savior is born

Luke 2:1-7

*Pastor Tim Melton*

In our house our 5 year old daughter is going through the process of discovering what exists and what really doesn't. Spiderman doesn't, zombies don't, Dora the explorer doesn't, and Santa Claus doesn't. Because of their close connection to Christmas and Santa Claus she was a little uncertain about *Los Reyes* (the Wise Men), but we sorted that out and she now is confident that the Wise Men truly existed. She knows that Mary and Joseph existed and is certain that Jesus exists. Many agree that Jesus existed, but is this not the key question? The key question is who was He?

In Luke 1:1-4 we read that Luke wrote his book to help answer this question. He compiled the details of Jesus' story in an orderly and credible manner:

***“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup> it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”***

Luke was a doctor (Col. 4:14). Because of this we find his writing very detailed, almost written in a scientific manner based on the facts. He first wrote the book of Luke, which was the story of Jesus' life and ministry. He then wrote the book of Acts, which documented what happened in the early years of the church after Jesus returned to heaven. Luke was a Gentile, a non-Jew. That is in contrast to Matthew, who specifically wrote for the Jews. The books of Luke and Acts are some of the best Greek in the whole New Testament.

As we look at Luke's writings we see meticulous details of place, time and persons. This allows the reader the ability to test the credibility of the writer. There was no calendar in those days, so the dates were often referenced by the emperor or political leader who was in power at that time. We see these examples in the following verses:

- Luke 1:5 – *“In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah.”*
- Luke 3:1-2 – *“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar -- when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene -- during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.”*

Luke included hundreds of places, people, events and times. This opens one up to countless ways of being questioned or proven wrong, especially since the original readers had been alive during many of these events. If one was trying to convince others of a lie, he would never give this much prove-able detail. But Luke did. Time and again Luke's writings have been found to be true through archaeology and other historical means. It proves that we can rely on his research and the accuracy of his narrative accounts. If Luke has shown himself to have integrity and excellence as he recounts these details about places, people and times, then we should also trust him with the details of Jesus' life that he also writes about. In some ways, these are the purposes of Luke's details. Not that details can make one believe, but that the details will help someone take the writer seriously and to consider his claims of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done.

Do all of these details prove that Jesus is the Son of God? No. Do these details prove that Jesus rose from the dead? No. But they prove that the author is historically accurate and trustworthy in his writings. He is trustworthy in his research and his accounts of persons, places, time and events. He is writing of fact, not fiction. This is not a made up legend or figment of one's imagination. We must never forget that even Luke's details and logic will never be enough to grant a person saving faith in Jesus Christ. Through His Word (Romans 10:17), God is the one who grants faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2). Faith is received when the Spirit of God intersects with the Word of God in the heart of a man or a woman. That is why, we as believers in Christ, must keep telling the story of Jesus.

- Romans 10:17 - *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”*
- Ephesians 2:8-9 - *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

Knowing that we are reading a factual, true story, we encounter the Christmas story in Luke 2.

In the beginning of the book of Luke we read about the miraculous birth of John the Baptist. We then read about the angel Gabriel's coming to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus. In Luke 2:1-7 we come to the birth of Jesus:

***“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town.”***

Caesar Augustus was considered the first Roman emperor. His real name was Gaius Octavius. Caesar was more of a title. The name Augustus was a term reserved for the gods. He was the great nephew of Julius Caesar. At the time of Julius Caesar's assassination, it was found out that Julius Caesar had recently adopted Gaius Octavius and that he was Caesar's choice to be his heir. Gaius Octavius' eventual name became *Imperator Caesar Divi Filius Augustus*. This was after the deification of Julius Caesar. *Divi Filius* means “son of God.” At that time in the Roman Empire some even referred to him as Caesar Augustus, “savior of the world.” This savior, supposed son of god, was being worshipped in Rome, while the true Savior of the World and Son of God was being born in a manger in a small town named Bethlehem.

Caesar Augustus had no idea that his decision to register the people was being moved by the Spirit of God to do exactly what needed to be done in line with the messianic prophecies.

The verses above tell how it was the first registration when Quirinius was the governor of Syria. This implies that there were more than one census or registration. Historians confirm that this is true. Caesar Augustus put in place a system where a census would be taken every 14 years. This continued in the Roman Empire until 270 AD. Luke is just clarifying which census he is referring to. This clarification adds credibility to the historicity of the story that Luke is presenting.

The Romans registered the people for two reasons. The first was to find those who could serve in the military. The Jews however were exempt from military service. The second purpose was that of registering their names, properties, jobs, etc., for the sake of taxation.

The Jews hated the Roman taxation and intrusion into their personal lives, but at the same time this particular census was bringing about the sovereign will and timing of God. How many times have we been angered by something that we later found out was a tool in God's hand?

***“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”***

Joseph was a descendant of King David, so they had to register in the city of Bethlehem, the city of King David. From Nazareth to Bethlehem it is 156 kilometers. That is about as far as it is to Toledo and back, or even to Cuenca. That is a long walk, especially with a wife that is expecting a child.

While they were in Bethlehem, Jesus was born. He was Mary's "firstborn" son. The Bible tells us there were more children born later. Mark 6:3 says, "Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" Mary was not a perpetual virgin as some would have us believe. There is no biblical support for this belief and no theological reason to not take the words of Mark 6:3 literally.

Mary gave birth to Jesus, but we must realize that the Son of God was not created in that moment. Yes, at that moment He took on the form of man as we see in the scriptures, but the Son of God had always existed.

**John 1:1 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."**

Christmas does not celebrate the beginning of the Son of God. It is the celebration of the eternal Son of God, becoming a man, so that we could be saved. The Father, the Son and the Spirit have always been and will always be. The birth of Christ is the entrance of the Son of God into our world as a man.

These verses end with Luke recording that Jesus was laid in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn. This is only fitting for a God who does not value the superficial accolades of this world. When many expected a prince and a palace, God gave them a babe in a manger. How many have missed the Savior because they were looking for something totally different?

Are we really that different than those at the inn who turned away the Savior because there was no room? May we take the opportunity to slow down, to pause, to pray, to wait, to confess, to return and make room for the King of kings and Lord of lords who has drawn near us and seeks to save.

As we hear this story once again, may God give us eyes to see and ears to hear the wonder of the Christmas story and the simplicity of the Savior who invites us to come and follow Him. May we see that this gospel took place in the real world for sinners and saints who live in a real world. Jesus came to save the sick and reconcile us to God. Regardless of your life circumstances, this Christmas may you draw near to our Savior and find salvation in Him.