

Mount Olive Wednesday Night Bible Study and Prayer Meeting

December 23, 2020

Tonight we take a break from our study of the Book of John to explore some details of the Christmas Story in the Book of Luke.

Luke 2: 1 - 20

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a 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, good will toward men. 15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Just the odds of Jesus being born in Bethlehem are astronomical.

Messiah means one who would be a deliverer, Savior, Lord.

Prophet means one who God gave knowledge to.

Some seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the facts of His birth were given to prophets, telling who He would be and what He would do.

And Jesus had to fulfill every one of these 300 prophecies!

[The probability of one man fulfilling even just 8 out of the 300 prophecies in the Bible is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. This information is from The Bible2School 4th grade curriculum, Lesson 1]

Here is just one of those prophecies dealing with where Jesus was born found in Micah 5:2

In the New Testament Jesus is called Jesus of Nazareth. (meaning that He was from that town, probably being born there). But for the prophecies to be fulfilled He had to be born in Bethlehem.

In verse 4, we learn that Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth. So how do we resolve the conflict that Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem?

Pastor Tom asked Andrea Corbett, mother of triplets, what is it like in the last month or so of pregnancy? She responded simply, uncomfortable.

Mary was obligated to make a 90-some mile journey on foot or donkey to Bethlehem from Nazareth. This is probably a 9 day trip. Archeologists have found in the area where this trip would have occurred evidence of bears and lions as well as pirates of the desert (robbers). The time of year the trip took place would have been cold. Food and provisions for that trip would have been packed and carried.

Why make this journey? Because the Roman Caesar Augustus had decreed that a census be taken. Rome had conquered Judah and the dictators could make any laws they wanted. Augustus wanted to know how many people were in Judah so he could know how much to tax them. Therefore, all the men had to travel to the town of their ancestors to be counted or registered. Joseph was from David's lineage. David's city was Bethlehem.

What are the odds that this Roman, Caesar Augustus, would make this law at the same time that Mary was ready to give birth so that Joseph had to register in Bethlehem, 90 miles from their home in Nazareth.

But Mary and Joseph couldn't stay in Bethlehem forever. They must have stayed there for a couple years because when the wise men arrived Jesus was a toddler. (see the account of this in Matthew 2) The wise men came to Herod first out of courtesy. Herod probably didn't deserve that respect because he had killed his mother and children so he could remain being the king. They followed the star (Star can mean both angel and a star in the sky). So the "Star" led both the shepherds and the wisemen to Jesus. Our traditional count of 3 wise men came from the 3 gifts mentioned, gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Herod sends the wisemen to Bethlehem with the request that they return to him and tell him where to find the child so he too can go worship (in reality, kill) Jesus. An angel tells the wise men in a dream about this plot so they go home another way. An angel also warned Joseph in a dream about this plot and tells Joseph to flee, not back to Nazareth, but out of the country to Egypt. (This reminds us of how the Jews had flee from their homeland due to a famine and settle in Egypt, before the Exodus)

Fast forward some years and an angel again speaks to Joseph telling him the Herod is dead and he can take his family back to Nazareth. (Matthew 4)

When Jesus was about 30 years old, his cousin John the Baptist was in prison. Jesus goes from Nazareth to Capernaum. This area was part of the land belonging to the half-tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali and was conquered in 742 BC by the Assyrians. The region of Galilee (meaning city of gentiles, where Nazareth is located) was populated by pagan Assyrians. (see Isaiah 9)

God gave Zebulun and Naphtali a chance to repent from mixing with these pagans but they refused. Jesus was rejected by His own people just as these tribes rejected God. All this was part of God's Plan of Salvation.

Additional references: Hosea 11:1-6 Isaiah 9:1 Matthew 11:21-23
2 Kings 17:24 John 1:48 Micha 5:2

In 742 BC Assyria captured the ten tribes of Israel, populated the city of Galilee and Galilee became the City of Gentiles.

