

Honoring the Son

Luke 2:1-20

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

How will you react this year to the portrait of Jesus lying in a manger as given to us in Scripture?¹ For some Christmas is all about spending too much, opening gifts, eating food, and visiting family but nothing more. The mere thought of the Son of God being born to a carpenter's family and in a stable instead of a king in a royal palace seems utterly absurd to them, after all for



them the Bible is really nothing more than the product of a fairy tale or “how to book” on being good. Taking “Christ” out of Christmas is like being at a “football game with no football, a tennis match with no tennis ball, a golf outing with no golf ball or a basketball game with no basketball”² ... it simply makes no sense! But what even makes less sense is to be a born-again believer and yet under the guise of going to church, reading Scripture, and singing Christmas carols³ merely pretending to rightly worship our Savior⁴ while in practicality hanging a sign on our

hearts that says there is no room in the inn for God's Son! Truthfully, we love the manger scene because within this glorious story for us lies a frail baby who is dependent on us rather than we on Him! The following sermon is going to examine Luke 2:1-20, the birth of Jesus, with the goal of encouraging you to not ignore or give mere platitudes to Christ on His birthday but to honor Him by taking time to meet Him, by trading fear for joy of His righteousness and by spreading the Good News that the Babe lying in the manger is none other than the world's Redeemer come to save the people from their sins!

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 86.

² Tony Evans, *“Don't Miss Christ This Christmas,”* in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Lk 2:1-7.

³ Tony Evans, *“Don't Miss Christ This Christmas,”* in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Lk 2:1-7.

⁴ Tony Evans, *“Don't Miss Christ This Christmas,”* in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Lk 2:1-7.

Making Time for Jesus (verses 1-7)

This is how the birth of Jesus came about Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world (verse 1). Caesar August, better known as Octavian, ruled from 27 B.C. to B.C. 14.⁵ He identified himself as possessing divine characteristics⁶ and



deified his name and reign⁷ with titles such as “Augustus of God, Son of God and savior” who would bring “peace, hope and good news to the world.”⁸ Augustus issued a census for military inscription and taxation purposes. While registration did not usually require one to journey to one’s ancestral home⁹ Herod¹⁰ may have added this stipulation resulting in Joseph and Mary travelled some ninety miles¹¹ from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered to pay taxes¹² (the Jews were exempt

⁵ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:1–7.

⁶ Joel B. Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 126.

⁷ James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Luke](#), ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 68.

⁸ James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Luke](#), ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 68.

⁹ Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 49.

¹⁰ James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Luke](#), ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 69.

¹¹ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:1–7.

¹² I. Howard Marshall, [The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 98.

from military service).¹³ Upon their arrival Joseph and Mary soon found out that there were no spare rooms to rent so they had to lodge in a stable and wrap Jesus in swaddling clothes and lie Him in the animal's trough.¹⁴ While most kings were born in palaces and with great ceremony,¹⁵ the Messiah's first throne room¹⁶ was of humble circumstances¹⁷ that truly reflected His mission to offer His life a ransom for both the poor and rich alike. "The contrast between the birth's commonness and the Child's greatness could not be greater!"¹⁸

To honor Jesus Christ on His birthday one must first take the time to meet Him! Even through there was a great flurry of activity and a crowd present that was so large that all rooms were rented in Bethlehem, besides the shepherds no one else visited the Babe lying in the

DECEMBER						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 Shop	15 Shop	16 Shop	17 Shop	18 Shop Party	19 Cook Party
20 Cook Party	21 Shop	22 Cook Party	23 Cook Party	24 Service & Family	25 Party Family	26 Party Family
27 Party Family	28 Party Family	29	30	31		

Total Time with Jesus = 1/2 Hour

manger! While manger scenes often portray the wise men at the manger, they in fact did not arrive until Jesus was about two years of age. This got me thinking about our Christmas calendars. We are often quick to slot time for shopping for presents, buying food, Christmas parties, and friend and family gatherings but how much time do we "slot" to pay homage to our King? Would spending a half hour on Christmas Eve be enough for Jesus to boldly say to us "good and faithful servant"? While it is true that Christ is indivisibly present everywhere and the Spirit lives within our hearts without

taking time to be like Mary and ponder His miraculous birth, how has our spirit truly communed with He who bought us at a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)? If the wise men were willing to make

¹³ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 67.

¹⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:1-7.

¹⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 83.

¹⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:1-7.

¹⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 83.

¹⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:1-7.

a journey to meet Jesus that took about two years, surely, we can pencil in and spend the day honoring Christ on His birthday.

Trading Fear for Joy (8-14)

Luke continues telling the story of Jesus' birth by stating that an angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks (8-9). While there



were plenty of people around to witness the birth of our Savior ironically it would be the lowest of society the shepherds who got to worship Jesus in the manger! This is remarkable considering that shepherds in Jesus' day were considered at best persons of low estate and at worst roving vagabonds,¹⁹ thieves,²⁰ and as such were listed with gamblers and tax collectors who were "despised trades by the Mishnah and Talmud."²¹ Even though they were often subjected to suspicion and scorn²² these social outcasts were chosen to show that

Christ's Gospel message would be offered to all!²³ When the angel appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shined all around them²⁴ like all sinners who meet our holy God they were

¹⁹ Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 36.

²⁰ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 74.

²¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 74.

²² James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 74.

²³ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:8–21.

²⁴ Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 845.

terrified!²⁵ While it was understandable that the “heavenly authority would make any sinner fearful,”²⁶ the angel assured them that they and humanity at large had “nothing to fear when God moves in grace!”²⁷ The Good News is that unto them in the town of David a Savior had been born for all people, the Messiah and Lord (11)! Contrary to the imperial propaganda that tried to deify the name and reign of Augustus,²⁸ the angel of the Lord and heavenly hosts made it abundantly clear that the true and only Son of God and Savior of the world had been born to give His life a ransom for many!²⁹ Not even Augustus’ Pax Romana could come close to offering the peace of Christ that forgave based on faith³⁰ and destroyed the power and fear of death (Hebrews 2:14)!³¹ The angel told the shepherds “the sign that all this was true would be them finding a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger” (12). “Suddenly a great company of heavenly hosts appeared with the angel and praised God saying glory to God in the highest heaven, and on peace to those whom His favor rests” (13-14)! At this point in the story, I hope you the reader are on the edge of your seat wondering how Mary and the shepherds reacted to the angel’s Good News!

If we want to meet Jesus on His birthday then our knowledge of this blessed event must inspire proper worship. When Herod had heard from the Magi that Jesus had been born, he asked the chief priests and teachers of the law what prophesy said concerning the Messiah. They quoted Micah 5:2 “but you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” While the Jewish leaders knew the prophesy, they failed to make the trip to Bethlehem because merely knowing the prediction of Christ’s birth was not sufficient to convict them to want to live their lives in expectation of Jesus! In the book of James, we are told “do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says! The kind of worshippers Jesus wants

²⁵ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

²⁶ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 84.

²⁷ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 84.

²⁸ James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Luke](#), ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 76–77.

²⁹ James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Luke](#), ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 77.

³⁰ Walter L. Liefeld, “[Luke](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 846.

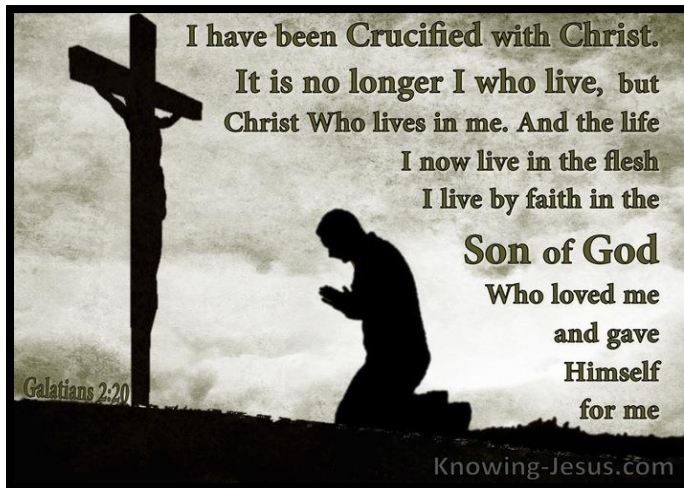
³¹ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).



on His birthday are those who worship in the Spirit and in truth (John 4:22). To do this one need not be perfect, nor rich or famous, Jew or Gentile, male, or female, for salvation is not based on our status or works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation only comes to those who believe in Christ and His atonement for our sins (John 3:16). Proper worship means offering one's life as a living sacrifice by no longer conforming to the pattern of this world whose reprobate minds have rejected God

(Romans 1:28, 12:1-2). To please Jesus on His birthday then we simply must live Scripture by allowing the words of God to teach, rebuke, correct and train us how to be right in God's sight (2 Timothy 3:16)! Jesus is not looking for sinlessness, for that would be impossible for us to attain and would make the cross unnecessary, but instead wants His people to always be confessing (1 John 1:9) and striving towards holiness (1 Peter 1:16).

Taking time to be holy and worshipping Christ in Spirit and truth on His birthday can only be done by giving lordship of one's life over to Him! Herod missed out on Christmas because the Bible states he was troubled at the news of Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:3-4). It is not



that Herod believed Jesus was the Messiah that made him fearful but that there was another person that the Jewish people might see as their king!³² If we are dreadfully honest with ourselves then we as Christians must admit that sometimes the King lying in the manger insights fear because He rightfully is to be the ruler of our hearts! Going to church, reading Scripture, and singing Christmas carols are only proper worship when not focused on "self" but on He who gave His life a ransom

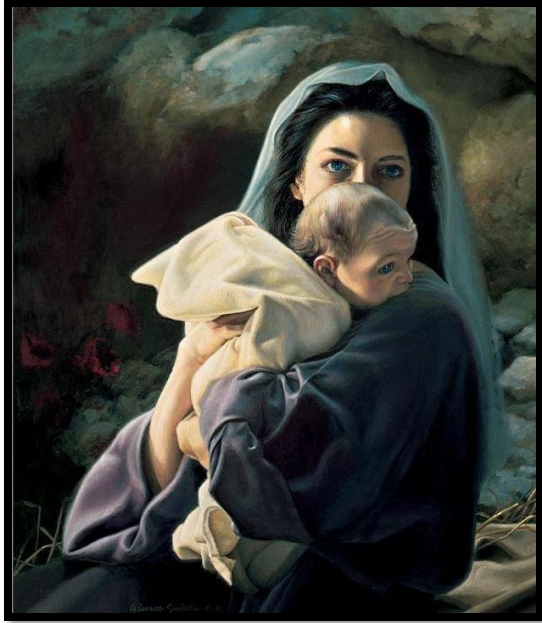
for many! Apostle Paul understood this well when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me" (Galatians 2:20a). To worship Jesus in Spirit and truth this Christmas instead of first slotting on our calendars time for shopping for presents, buying food, Christmas parties, and friend and family gatherings let us out of reverence and

³² Tony Evans, "[Don't Miss Christ This Christmas,](#)" in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Lk 2:1-7.

complete submission to Christ on His birthday allow Him to fill our calendars with His will in our lives. This does not mean that Christ will remove spending time and sharing our love with family and friends but merely that taking time to be holy and offering cups of cold water to the poor, windowless and oppressed will have priority on our calendars on His birthday!

Response to the Birth (15-20)

The two responses to the birth of Jesus given in the final verses of this story are ones in which we as God's children ought to have on His birthday.³³ When the angels left the response of the shepherds was to GO "to Bethlehem to see this see this thing that had happened, which the Lord had told them" (15). When they arrived, they found the angel's words were indeed true³⁴ for with their own eyes they saw Jesus lying in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. In amazement and with grateful and faithful hearts³⁵ the Shepherds became "the first evangelists of the Christian era"³⁶ by going out, glorifying, and praising God to all who would listen that the Babe who was the Messiah and Lord had finally come!³⁷ Ironically the very ones who "were disqualified from serving as witnesses in legal cases in Judaism, were the very ones chosen to be the first witnesses of the Gospel."³⁸ The second response we find in this story comes from Mary. Scripture



states she pondered the events of the first Christmas morning for their significance would later be

³³ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:8–21.

³⁴ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:8–21.

³⁵ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 89.

³⁶ Walter L. Liefeld, "[Luke](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 847.

³⁷ Walter L. Liefeld, "[Luke](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 847.

³⁸ James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Luke](#), ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 79.

revealed as the inbreaking of God into the affairs of humanity.³⁹ Praise be to God that it is by grace and faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Son that anyone regardless of race, sex, social status, or financial condition is offered the most incredible gift ever given, salvation and adopting into God's family!

Christmas is almost upon us and like the shepherds and Mary what stands before us is a choice on how to respond to the Babe lying in the manger. We could choose as we have done in so many Christmas' pasts to fill our calendars with spending, opening gifts, eating food, and



visiting family and friends but without Christ in Christmas why would God ever say to us "good and faithful servant?" We could choose to slot maybe a half hour in church and read Scripture, sing carols and warmly greet one another but would that truly be an honourable offering for God' one and only Son? I want to finish this sermon with the challenge to make room on your calendars and within your hearts to not just be hearers but doers of the word! May we as God's children celebrate Jesus' birthday by taking time to worship His holy name. May we truly surrender that which we cannot

keep, our very lives, to obtain what we cannot lose, a close personal relationship with He who bought us at a price. May we this Christmas still choose to make time for our family and friends, but in doing so may we truly share our love with them by pointing them to their Savior who loved and died for them. Above all may we be like the shepherds and GO and tell the whole world that over 2,000 years ago the Messiah of all humanity came to offer His life a ransom for many!

³⁹ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 2:8–21.