

## The Christ of Christmas

Luke 2:1-21

The birth of Jesus is such a momentous event in the history of the world that we will always live in light of it. We do not remember and celebrate Christmas like the Jews performed their annual sacrifices (Heb. 10:3-4), but instead we are continually shaped and transformed by what happened in Bethlehem. The better we know and love this story the better we will be able to live it.

### **The Humanity of Jesus (vv1-7)**

There is nothing as mundane and humanly flawed as taxes, and so what else would men do to God when he came to earth but tax him (v1)? This was likely the beginning of a regular system of censuses, and although obviously a great inconvenience and trouble to Joseph and Mary, it providentially brought about the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy regarding the location of Jesus' birth (Mic. 5:2). The great historian and doctor Luke gives us all sorts of historical information including the reigns of Caesar Augustus and Governor Quirinius which serves to demonstrate his careful work and bolster our reasonable faith. Historical facts surround a virgin birth that happened in history, and true inquiry presents no more threat to the Bible than the decree of Augustus does to the prophecy of Micah—providence encompasses them both. Luke shows us that hard providences are not inconsistent with enormous blessings. Perhaps the entire birth of Christ could best be described as a hard providence, but we never hear Mary complaining. Sadly, in many romanticized accounts of the Christmas story we lose the realistic if unpleasant elements (Matt. 2:16-18). The incarnation meant that God became a baby surrounded by troubles.

### **The Unlikely Audience (vv8-14)**

The angels praised God at creation (Job 38:7), and now they are praising him in the new creation, the last Adam. Just as the second person of the Trinity did not become incarnate in women of wealth or worldly power, so the audience for the announcement and song of angels is shepherds working graveyard shift (vv8-9). The shekinah glory is scary to see, but they are assured that this is good news of great joy for all people (v10). God did not just visit those shepherds (and those sheep) in that field in that country; they received what would spread across the globe. This is the Christ, the Messiah, a Savior for all (Is. 9:6-7). And what would be the sign be of this miracle? An enormous army assembled by the Lord of Hosts? Fancy tablets and magical spectacles? A pilgrimage to inner discovery and healing? No, a mom and her baby (v13). This really excites the angels because they know what just happened and have probably been dying to tell a human being (v14).

### **Finding the Christ (vv15-21)**

All of this was enough for the shepherds to hurry and go see Mary and Joseph and the baby (vv15-16). Their story brought wonder and puzzle to those who heard it, but the shepherds returned to their fields worshiping (v20). In their case, we see the humble exalted, and that being found which is sought. We also see the wonderful witness of Mary who was gathering and meditating on what she had learned (vv19). Mary is more than what many Protestants make of her and far less and different than what Roman Catholics believe her to be. Both Mary and the shepherds knew some things but not all things about Jesus but they believed he was whom he and the angels said he was, and they watched him grow up and live a sinless life on behalf of sinful humanity and would save the world (v21).