

## The Birth of Jesus

December 24, 2017

### Luke 2:1-7

1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Our journey through the Bible brings us to the birth of Jesus. This is very significant. All of the steps in our journey have led us to this moment - this very special moment - the advent of Christ.

The Scripture story is one that we all know. A ruling came from the Roman Emperor that a census was to be taken and everyone had to travel to their hometown to be registered. Mary and Joseph had to travel a considerable distance to get to Bethlehem at a time when she was about to deliver a child. There was no room for them at the inn. It wasn't because they were poor and didn't have enough money to rent a room for the night. They arrived late (probably because traveling was slow due to her physical condition) and all the rooms were rented. In a small town there are not many inns and they are very small. The consequence of these factors results in the birth of Jesus in stable. She wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger. That's the story.

There is more to the story. There is always more to Scripture than the story. We are in the season of Advent. This is a time of preparation for the coming Christ - where God intervenes in human life. God takes action for our benefit. It is not just a thing that is happening. It is God is doing this for us!

Advent is not just a season. It is a season of anticipation and preparation. We anticipate the arrival of the Savior. We prepare for the one who dies for the restoration of the world. Advent is a season of worship. Advent is not about getting ready for Christmas celebrations. Advent is a matter of worship that brings us into a time frame where we wait for the redeemer, the Savior, the coming Lord. It is a time to get ready. Readiness is more than a feeling; readiness is moral and spiritual preparation. Advent has a penitential characteristic - it is an act of penitence - an action that expresses sorrow and regret for past wrongs. It is about repentance.

The advent characteristic of repentance is not reflected in our culture. We live in a culture that is profoundly pagan. Due to commercialization our society is not about advent. Since advent is not noticed by our culture many churches become secularized to the point where to most churches advent is a matter of celebration.

If you take the time to read and study the Bible you may notice that the path way of the Lord is prepared by repentance. The coming Lord is connected to John the Baptist. John's mission was to prepare the way for the Lord - to get people ready to receive the Lord. The message of John the Baptist was repentance. So, to get ready to receive the Lord requires repentance. **Matthew 3:2** Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord by repentance. Christ preached repentance. **Matthew 4:17** From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Throughout the

ministry of Jesus is a call to repentance. So, Christmas is about the coming Lord who calls us all to repentance. Christmas is not about all of the celebrations.

The Christmas conflict is social, it is due to our society, our culture. The conflict is the same as it always has been it is a conflict between the world and the people of faith who are called to be separate from the world. The Christmas conflict is between what society wants and the will of God. It is a conflict between celebration & rejoicing. I encourage you to take notes and read this on the web site. It is extremely difficult to avoid the Christmas conflict because of the impact our culture has on us. The Christmas conflict impacts us all, everyone, everywhere. It impacts the family, the church, the community, and the individual self. This is because of the overwhelming power and influence our culture has on us. Again, the Christmas conflict is between celebration and rejoicing.

Celebration is the party. Celebration is what our society does, all of the holiday stuff, the festivities, feasts, and parties. Celebration is the secular myths that have been implanted into the Christian holiday, the things we fall in love with as a child and hold onto as an adult. Celebration becomes our cultural identity and celebration is how we view Christmas in our culture which mixes up what is secular with that which is religious.

Rejoicing is the praise. Rejoicing is thankful praise; it is thanks and praise - a joyous exaltation. Rejoicing is what Mary did. Mary's praise is not celebration; it is rejoicing in justice. She thanks and praises God and proclaims "he has put down the mighty, exalted the lowly, filled the hungry, and sent the rich away empty." Rejoicing is reflection on who God is, what God does, and what God has done for us. It is appreciation of that special gift of love. Rejoicing is an act of admiration of an awesome God. Rejoicing is expressed through acts of praise such as Christmas hymns and the cantata. Rejoicing is heartfelt.

Advent is a time of preparation. A time to get ready for the coming redeemer. Who will come to save us. It is up to us to do the necessary soul searching; to reflect on our own lives and get ready to live a Godly life. Let us repent and rejoice for the time has come for the Lord to appear. Let us rejoice in the birth of Jesus.