

No Ordinary Birth

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 December 2017

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20.

! If you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.! 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. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because it was 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 clothes, and lied him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of God shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

[1 : 20] And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

And they went with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger.

And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told to them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told to them.

[2 : 35] May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? I enjoyed as a kid going to Royals games with my dad.

You guys know I was born and raised around the Kansas City area. And so we go to a lot of baseball games. And I loved it after the games when my dad would take me down to, there's an area behind the stadium where the visiting team would leave.

After they got done with the game, you know, they'd take their showers, they'd change their clothes, and then they would head out to the buses that would either take them back to their hotel, or if it was the last game in the series, they would take them to the airport.

And so I loved going down there with my dad, and there was a barricade. This was back in the early, late 90s, way before 9-11, where you could still have somewhat access to situations like that.

And so we were there. There was a barricade. There was some police, not many. And we would stand there, and we would watch and wait for the players to come out and head to their buses.

[3 : 50] And there was a lot of fans that would gather, and we were there to get autographs. We had balls. Or just some of us, we just wanted to see some of these guys. Nolan Ryan, Ken Griffey Jr., you name it.

And so I remember my dad would put me on his shoulders so that I was more visible. And he told me, now make sure when you call for them, say their last name.

Say Mr. So-and-so, and maybe that will, you know, help us get the edge in getting an autograph. So I remember doing that, and I loved doing that, and especially whenever the Baltimore Orioles came

to town, because that was my favorite team.

That was the team that my dad grew up watching, being raised in Baltimore. And Cal Ripken was the man, so I loved Cal Ripken. And I couldn't wait for the day to be able to see him and hopefully get his autograph.

Now here's the thing. When you would go down and do that, most of the time, the only autographs you would get were from the guys that you didn't want an autograph from. You know what I'm saying? The backup catcher, the relief pitchers, those were the guys who would take the time to actually come over and sign balls.

[4 : 56] Now the great players, the guys that everybody wanted, they would usually typically put their head down, and they would make it to the bus as quickly as they could. Sometimes they would smile. Sometimes they would wave. Very rarely would they actually stop and sign a ball.

And I couldn't understand that as a kid because I thought, you know, first of all, why wouldn't they do something so simple, assign their name to something? And then secondly, I was like, why is this barricade here keeping us from them?

And I'll never forget one time, the Orioles were in town, and they had a rookie who was on his way to being an all-star, and his name was Brady Anderson.

And if you know baseball, some of you may know who I'm talking about. And maybe he didn't know better. I don't know what the story was, but somehow he found himself outside of the barricade.

And he was walking over to a van that was going to take him to the hotel. I think he was late for some reason. And all of the fans, we recognized him. And so, like ants on a sugar cube, we flocked over to him.

[5 : 58] And here he was with about 20 or 30 people surrounding him. And I'll never forget, you'd think that, you know, he would run to the van in fear and trepidation of these wild and crazy people who are coming after him, but he didn't.

He stood there and he said, hey, as long as you guys give me room, I will sign each and every one of the things that you want autographed. And that, to me, was an amazing thing.

He was a great player who was willing to step outside of the barricade in order to interact with us crazy fans, we little people, and make our day by autographing his name to a baseball.

At Christmas, we celebrate more than a birth. We celebrate an incarnation. We celebrate a God who stepped outside of the barricade, so to speak, of heaven, leaving behind his glory, his privileges, and his exaltation in order to dwell among us in human form.

An incarnation means a coming in the flesh. I want you to look at me with John 1, verses 1 through 15. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[7 : 19] He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that has been made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. So here in this very complicated introductory statement, the Word is first distinguished from God.

In the beginning was the Word. And then in the next statement, it identifies the Word with God, right? It says very clearly, the Word was with God.

And not only that, the Word was God. And then John ends his prologue by saying, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

So we see that in the incarnation there is not a subtraction that has taken place here, but an addition. The eternal, second person of the Trinity takes upon himself a human nature, and joins his divine nature to that human nature for the purpose that we will later get into, but we will see and we know if it's for saving his people.

[8 : 35] There's a purpose in Jesus' coming. Charles Wesley captured this truth about the incarnation very well in his hymn, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, where it says, And so the first truth about the incarnation that we see is this, that the incarnation was not Christ's beginning.

It was not his beginning. He was and is the eternal second person of the Trinity, the Son of God. And then the second truth that we see about the incarnation is that the incarnation was not a subtraction of Christ's deity, but an addition of his humanity.

This is something we call in theological circles the hypostatic union. This is the union of Christ's human and divine natures into one person.

And next month as we dig deeper into Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 8, we will flesh out that truth, and I think that you'll be amazed by it again.

[9 : 57] And so now that we are armed with this understanding of these two truths, we can dig into this passage and find out more truths about the incarnation that we can celebrate at Christmas.

The third truth about the incarnation is that the incarnation fulfills prophecy. It fulfills prophecy. Look again with me at verses 1 through 5.

It says, In those days, Caesar Augustus sent out a census to be taken of all the inhabited earth.

This was the first census taken when Quirinius was the governor of Syria.

And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged with him and was with child.

On the Ides of March, 44 B.C., Julius Caesar died at the hands of his friends and closest associates.

[11 : 06] Caesar's power had grown beyond their ability to control. And so, motivated by fear of his increasing authority, Caesar's closest and most trusted friends became his greatest enemies.

What makes this story even more ironic is that just two years prior to this event, these very same men who would murder Julius Caesar had declared and worshipped him as God.

Caesar's wealth and power then transferred over to his 19-year-old nephew, who was his adopted son, Gaius Octavius. And then over the next 20 years, Octavius became the unrivaled, unmatched, undisputed leader of the Roman Empire and of the world, as it was known at that time.

Over the course of that time, he bestowed upon himself several different titles. At first, he called himself Princeps, which means leading citizen.

And then later, he developed and added on to that title another, which was Pontifex Maximus, which is high priest. And then finally, he took on the title of Augustus, supreme ruler.

[12 : 31] Then in the fall of 12 BC, Caesar Augustus looked up in the sky, and he saw Halley's Comet as it lit up the evening.

And he attributed that wonder to the spirit of Julius, his adopted father. And he said that the comet was, in fact, the spirit of Julius Caesar, and it was flashing in the sky.

It was on its way into heaven. And so it's no wonder that soon after this event, Caesar Augustus began to declare himself as God too.

After all, as he said and claimed, his father was a god, so why shouldn't he be? And such was the state of things when the true Son of God was preparing to enter this world.

Augustus had ordered a census to maintain and to even extend his power over the world that he controlled. However, as we see now, there was a much greater God-ordained purpose behind this event.

[13 : 47] Over 700 years before the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the prophet Micah prophesied that the birth of the Messiah would occur in Bethlehem.

Micah 5, chapter 2 through 4 says, But you, O Bethlehem, Ephrathah, excuse me, you are too little to be among the clans of Judah. From you shall come forth for me, one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth. Then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel, and he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall dwell secure.

For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And so we see, in actuality, Augustus, supreme ruler, was merely just running an errand for God, who is the true supreme ruler of all things.

The prophecy in Micah said that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, which was the location of King David's birth. And every part of Jesus' birth, we see, was predestined.

[15 : 19] It was by God's plan that Mary and Joseph ended up in Bethlehem at that precise time in order that they could fulfill this prophecy made 700 years prior.

And oh, by the way, this is just one of many prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. Another related to the incarnation of Christ comes from Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14, Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. And not only that, there are 59 other prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament.

You've maybe heard about this study before, but it bears repeating to show just how incredible it is that Jesus fulfilled every single one of these prophecies about himself.

You've maybe heard of Peter Stoner. He's a professor of mathematics. And he gave 600 of his students a math probability problem that would determine the odds for one person fulfilling just eight of these specific prophecies.

[16:35] Just eight. Not all 61. Just eight. First, the students had to calculate the odds of just one person fulfilling all the conditions of one specific prophecy, just such as one where Judas is prophesied to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Then the students were to take all of their estimations and compile them to see how likely it would be for one person to fulfill just eight of those prophecies.

The students calculated that the odds would be one in ten to the 21st power. One in ten to the 21st power.

Now, to illustrate that number, Peter Stoner came up with the following illustration. He said, imagine that you first blanket the entire earth, all of the landmass with silver dollars, and they rise up to about 120 feet high.

Second, specifically mark one of those silver dollars and randomly bury it somewhere in this world.

[17:47] Third, ask a person to travel the earth and select that marked silver dollar while blindfolded from the trillions of other dollars. That's the probability that we're speaking about.

Not very likely, is it? For just it all to be random? For it all to just be occurrence? There's a plan in this. And that's just eight prophecies.

Remember, there were 61 specific prophecies of the Messiah that Jesus fulfilled. These prophecies were recorded by different men living in different times, living in different places.

So there couldn't have been any type of collusion between them all. The odds against one person fulfilling all 61 prophecies would be beyond mathematical possibility.

Statistically speaking, it could never happen. One mathematician's estimate of those impossible odds is this. One chance in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion.

[18:59] That's a lot. That's a lot. This is overwhelming evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was a real person who fulfilled these real prophecies.

You can't intellectually deny the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was here. That Jesus of Nazareth lived among us.

And that he was crucified. He was a real, living, and breathing person. Those facts are undeniable. We have secular historians who testify to the fact that Jesus was here. That Jesus said that he was the son of God.

He was and is a real person. Not made up, not the figment of some person or some group's imagination. He was here. There's overwhelming evidence for this.

[20:11] Again, I spent time as a youth pastor, and I would tell my students that the one, the most important question that they could ever have to answer in this life is this.

Who do you say Jesus is? There is no more important question than that question. Because all of your eternity, your entire life, rests on how you answer it.

The incarnation wasn't random. It wasn't accidental. It was predicted in the Old Testament in accordance with God's plan that was from eternity.

So the fourth truth now that we see about the incarnation is that the incarnation reveals the humility of Christ. Look at verses 6 and 7 with me again. 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 room for them in the inn.

And so now here's my question. If God, as we believe, rules the world, and as we've seen, he's able to use entire world empires to bring this census about in order to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, then could he not at the very least provided a decent room for them to stay in?

[21:39] You ever wonder that? Certainly God could have done that. You know, that wouldn't be outside of his ability. And Jesus could also have been born in a palace.

He could have also turned those stones into bread when he was being tempted in the wilderness.

He could have called on legions of angels to aid him as he hung dying and bleeding from the cross.

In fact, he didn't even need their help. He could have easily released himself from the nails that were buried into his flesh. He could have saved himself from us.

But he didn't. Humbly, he came to the world he created, setting aside his rightful entitlements of deity in order to become the least privileged of all people.

He was born among the poorest of the poor and among the least of the least. And that humility characterized all of his days on earth.

[22 : 51] God's sovereignty is not limited by motel vacancies. He rules all things. God, again, he could have seen to it that Mary and Joseph had a room for the birth of Jesus.

But in doing so, that would have been a detour from the path that would lead him to Calvary and to the cross.

He didn't come to experience the comforts of life on earth. And get this, he didn't come to create heaven on earth for his followers either.

You know, one of the things I think people will fight most harshly to preserve is their name. You know what I'm saying?

There are things that will make you mad, but if anybody says or does anything that makes you feel like you're being belittled, that your name is being tarnished, that your name is being diminished, there are few things that will make a person more angry than that.

[24 : 02] Having a bad reputation or being spoken of unkindly or unfairly. It wasn't all that long ago, in fact, in U.S. history where men were willing to fight to the death over an insult.

You know what I'm saying? Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, they got in a duel because of the insults that they had given to each other, remember? And Alexander Hamilton died as a result of that.

That's crazy to think, but we see the extremes that men are willing to go to in order to preserve their name, in order to preserve their honor. Jesus didn't fight to keep His divine prerogatives.

Jesus didn't come to be served, but to serve. And His humility was on full display from the very beginning being born in such a place like Bethlehem, in a stable, in a manger, all the way to the point where He's on Calvary on a cross.

He didn't fight to avoid the scorn. He didn't fight to avoid the shame or the scoffing that He would endure. He was born in a stinky barn filled with stinky animals, later surrounded by stinky shepherds.

[25 : 25] Jesus' incarnation began in humility, and He died in humility. As He became obedient, as the Word says, to the point of death, even death on such a humiliating thing as a cross.

And we must not forget what He said to us. Right? You know, here's some verses that you won't hear preached in any health and wealth church.

Let's look at these together. Matthew 16, 24-25. Then Jesus told His disciples, If anyone would come after you, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Forget this. For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Then in John 15, 20, Jesus says, The servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Matthew 8, 20. Jesus says, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.

[26 : 37] And so we see the incarnation reveals the humility of Christ. There would be no detours to the cross. Why would Jesus lower himself to such a humbling position?

Well, here we see the fifth. Primary reason for the incarnation is that the incarnation is necessary for salvation. salvation.

And we see that this message is first given to shepherds. Why these people? Of all the important people that were living in the world at this time, why in the world would this message be given to people who were so unimportant?

You ever think about that? Shepherds in this culture and in cultures today are the low men on the totem pole. I had a seminary professor of Old Testament.

He was my teacher in Old Testament and he would show us slides as we would go through the books of the Bible and he would talk to us about his experiences there. And he stopped on one of a shepherd boy and this kid looked like he stepped straight out of the Old Testament if you know what I mean.

[27 : 54] He was dirty. He was filthy. His clothes were raggedy and torn and our teacher told us that you could smell him within ten feet. He reeked because that was the job of a shepherd.

They were out in the fields all day, all night. They were working with animals who smelt. Their job was dirty. Their work was hard.

And you didn't need a high school diploma to have a career like this. So they weren't very intelligent at least in the eyes of community. While the rich powerful fat cats of Jerusalem were forming

factions, while they were playing politics, while they were sucking up to the Roman government for favors, they were completely unaware of this momentous occasion that was taking place in Bethlehem and out in the fields as the angels declared this great news to these lowly shepherds. Imagine, you're one of these shepherds, a social outcast, and you're hearing from angels this news that there has been a king who has been born, not in a palace, but in a stable, whose cradle was a feeding trough.

You'd think, at last, here's a king. who shares my lowly station in life. Here's someone who will care about me.

[29 : 32] Here is someone who will see and think and tell me that my life matters. Here was a king that they could identify with.

Why? Because he was willing to identify with them. he would not subject them into laboring for his acquisition of greater power.

He would instead subject himself to the tortures of the cross for the sins of his people.

He would give his life so that they could have life. And then when the angels had gone away, the shepherds came and they shared this great news with Mary and Joseph after they found them in the place where the angels told them to look for.

And the Bible says that everyone was in a state of wonder and that Mary was treasuring these things and pondering them in her heart. The Greek word for ponder literally means to throw together or to bring together.

[30 : 45] So imagine like a jigsaw puzzle. Somebody has the box of pieces and dumps it out on the table and then you're sorting through all the pieces and you're trying to see how they all fit together.

And this is what Mary is doing in this moment. She's got all the pieces and she's trying to figure out how they all fit together. Everything that had happened to her.

The angel who announced that she would conceive a child by the Holy Spirit. the crisis that then this caused within Joseph her betrothed husband.

Then the timing of the census and then the birth of God in the flesh in the stable of all places. And then the worship of these strangers these shepherds who she'd never met before.

And the message that the angels declared to them all these pieces of the puzzle were coming together and she was trying to fit them together in her mind.

[31 : 49] We're blessed to have all the pieces of the puzzle. We're blessed to have those pieces put together for us in God's word. We see how God intended from as early as Genesis 3 to redeem mankind.

and we see how every moment of history every person every nation had been used by him coming together to this point when the time was right for Jesus to be born for what purpose though?

Let's look at Galatians 4 4-5 But when the fullness of time came God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law so that he might redeem those who were under the law that we might have we might be able to receive adoption as sons for what purpose?

To redeem his people from their sins by dying on a cross in their place and from the death that he that he was he gave his life that he gave to the resurrection as proof that the wrath of God towards our sins had been satisfied that we are in fact able to become sons and daughters of our Lord he lived sinlessly he obeyed perfectly and by putting our faith in him as Lord and Savior our sins are imputed to him and get this his righteousness is imputed to us God credits it to our account and so as a result of that we have peace with God we can have peace with men because we know God personally as the good father that he truly is

I want to conclude by sharing a portion of a hymn written by Henry Baraclaw this man back in 1915 heard a sermon preached on Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 8 about how Jesus humbly came how he took on the flesh to become obedient to the point of death even death on a cross and he wrote this hymn he ran home and he penned these words the hymn is out of the ivory palaces and this is what I want to share with you he wrote out of the ivory palaces into a world of woe only his great eternal love made my savior go his life had also its sorrows sore for aloes had a part and when I think of the cross he bore my eyes with teardrops start his garments too were in casia dipped with healing in a touch each time my feet in some sin have slipped he took me from its clutch in garments glorious he will come to open wide the door and I shall enter my heavenly home to dwell forever more thank God for the incarnation of Jesus Christ this is good news and it's available to all who will receive it that you too can become a son or daughter of God that you too can have your sins forgiven wiped away you can have eternal life you can experience the hope that

comes in knowing Christ as Lord and Savior that your life has purpose that your life has meaning
that your life can have joy
[35 : 40] Jesus came so that you could have life and he paid the price for your sins thank God for
this great news you