

Christmas Study 2 – Pregnancy, Birth and Shepherds

Recap from last time -

We looked at prophecies concerning Jesus' life

- A Messenger will tell people that Jesus is coming
- That Jesus will be The Son of God,
- That Jesus will be The son of David
- That Jesus will be Born from a virgin
- Born in Bethlehem
- Come whilst the temple is standing
- Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey
- We also considered what happened at Jesus' trial
- and how Jesus dies

We also noted that the Prophecies were made by several different prophets, covering a range of several hundred years in time range. Also that they were made hundreds of years before the event. Quite mind blowing really.

So we come to this evenings study, looking at the first part of Jesus' birth. We will consider passages in Luke. Probably a good idea to spend a few minutes thinking about who Luke was - A Gentile - a physician in Troas and was converted by Paul. He accompanied Paul to Philippi. He was not an eye witness to the events recorded in his Gospel, but recorded events that were told him by eye witnesses at the time

Luke 1 1-4

Q What does Luke say he has done? Investigated ie did not take things heard for granted

Luke 1 5-10

Q What are we told about Elizabeth and Zechariah?

Luke 1 11-17 ; 18-20

Q What has happened to poor Zechariah?

Q When we go to Church do we expect hear from God or is it something we just do?

Note – only two angels are identified by name in scripture – Gabriel here and Michael
Daniel 10 v13 & Revelation 12 v7

Luke 1 19-22 & 23-25 – Notice that Zechariah became mute before Elizabeth became pregnant

Luke 1 26-38

Q What is Mary's response to the angel?

The angel states the basic premise "*Nothing is impossible with God.*" - This is one of the key challenges for us. Do we believe this?

Luke 1 39-45

Q Is Mary going to check out what the Angel has just told her about Elizabeth?

Q What happens to Elizabeth?

We will now move over to Matthew and consider Joseph Mary's betrothed. -

(But before that we need to remind ourselves who Matthew was -

- One of the 12 Apostles
- largely recorded eye witness accounts (though this would have not been, as he did not know Jesus yet)
- Written around AD 50
- Written from the Jewish Perspective)

Matthew 1:18-25

Q What was his plan for their relationship?

Q The real question is - Is God's power such that he can create life and exercise sovereignty over it? This is the real question that Jesus' birth raises?

Moving back to Luke 1 46-56

This is a hymn of praise that is sometimes known as the Magnificat. (From the opening word in latin which was magnificat - Glorifies) It is a spontaneous outpouring of praise inspired by the Holy Spirit, glorifying God.

Q What does Mary say about herself and how does she compare herself to God?

Luke 1 57-66

Q Why were the neighbours filled with awe – Several reasons?

Q What do you think Elizabeth and Zechariah felt about their baby?

Luke 1 67-80

Now Zechariah is inspired by the Holy Spirit to give a hymn of praise, which is sometimes known as the Benedictus.- (From the latin – praise be)

Q How do the two hymns compare – A Mary's is personal in nature, Zechariah's is universal.

Moving back to Jesus

Luke 2 1-4

To put things into context

- The administrator of the census was Quirinius
- This census probably sought to produce a registration list for taxes
- Bethlehem is 5 miles/8 km south-west of Jerusalem It stands at an elevation of about 2,550 feet above sea level, thus about 100 feet higher than Jerusalem
- Nazareth to Bethlehem was about a ninety mile trip, assuming that Samaria was bypassed. Such a journey would have taken around three to five days. By direct line of sight it is around seventy miles

Luke 2 5-7

Here we have a distraction about where exactly Jesus was born. It was not the house that Joseph would have hoped for them, as he was forced to go to Bethlehem due to the census. So they had to find somewhere else. Verse 7 says that Jesus was placed in a manger – so the question to be asked is where was this manger. A manger is a feeding trough for animals, and could have been in a stable or for that matter could have been in a cave.

Luke 2 8-12

Q How many times has Luke recorded angels so far in this account?

Luke 2 13-15

Q V14 is often translated as peace on earth, goodwill to men – but the original text has been re translated as on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests (NIV) Sometimes called Gloria in Excelsis Deo – from the Latin. Peace is not assured to all but only to those pleasing God. The Romans had the words Pax Romana – Roman peace. This was an external Peace and Tranquillity. Ie no wars going on – law and order present. The angels proclaimed an inner deep peace. Peace of the soul and mind, which is made possible by faith in Christ.

Q So Jesus does not bring political peace to the world, but he made it possible for men and women to have peace with God. What does this mean for us in real terms nowadays?