

CHRISTMAS 2011

Open the Word of Truth this morning to Luke Chapter two. Before we begin our Christmas message you may want to take advantage of God's protocol for fellowship by silently naming your sins to God as we pray.

Our Scripture this morning is Luk 2:1-8 which I will read with brief comment:

NIV

Luk 2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

Luk 2:2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

Luke is the only one of the Gospel writers who dates his material by the reigning emperor. Caesar Augustus was the first emperor of Rome, he reigned from c. B.C. 27 to A.D. 14. All the world means all the empire, not the entire known world. Augustus had ordered a census of the empire which would serve as a basis for taxation. The decree was issued in c. B.C. 8, but probably did not actually go into effect until several years later. Luke's gospel makes determining the exact date of Christ's birth problematic. It is certainly reasonable to believe the birth of Christ took place between B.C. 4 and 6 A.D. What we do know from significant historical records is that Christ was born on that first Christmas day; it was perhaps as late as 6 A.D. or as early as B.C. 4.

NIV

Luk 2:3 And everyone went to his own town to register

Luk 2:4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

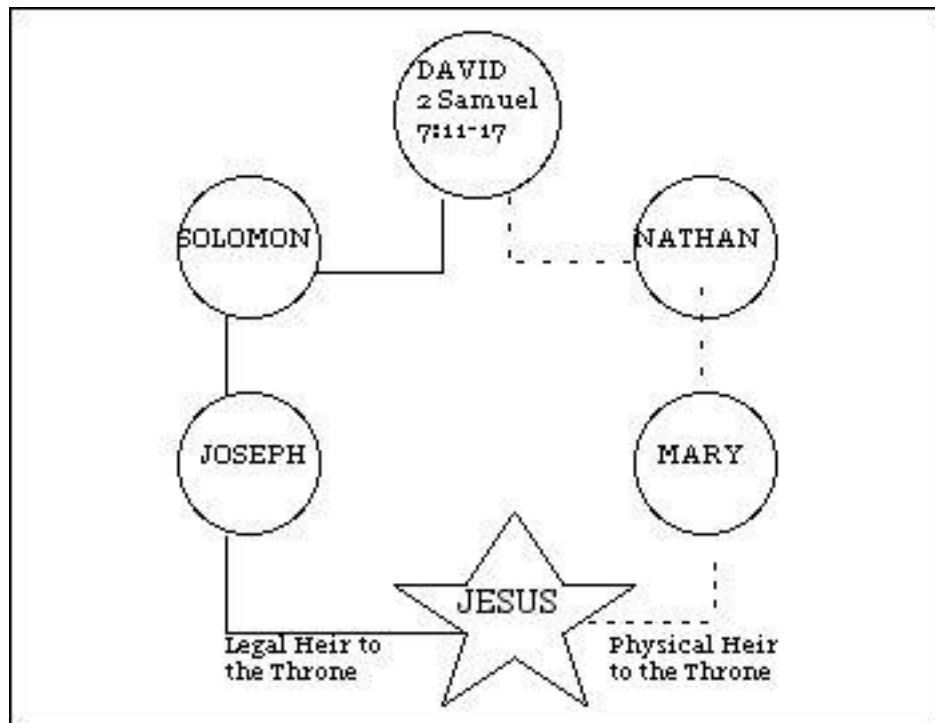
Luk 2:5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Luk 2:6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,

Luk 2:7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloth and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luk 2:8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

Joseph descended from the line of David and the tribe of Judah through Solomon. A record of his lineage can be found in Mat 1:1-17. Mary the mother of Jesus' humanity had a lineage back to David but by way of Nathan. So Jesus was a son of David and rightful heir to the throne through both Joseph and Mary. Mary's lineage can be found in Luke 3:23-38. And so a Savior was born who was both God and man sent to planet earth to save His people from their sins. That first Christmas Jesus the Christ was indeed born a King.



As I think about this Christmas, I cannot help but sadly reflect how The United States of America has blithely chosen to neglect the principles of our Lord and Savior whose birth we celebrate. And worse this blaze neglect of what the Bible demands for a national entity is all being done under the guise of our having become more civilized. More civilized than what? I would ask.

The assumption being, I suppose, that God is a barbarian and out of touch with 21st century man. I hear people talking of how religion has failed (which indeed it has) not that Christianity is a religion. Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Religion is the devil's trump card whereby people try to make themselves right with God, whereas Christianity is an act of God redeeming man from the slave market of sin thus making our so great salvation possible.

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

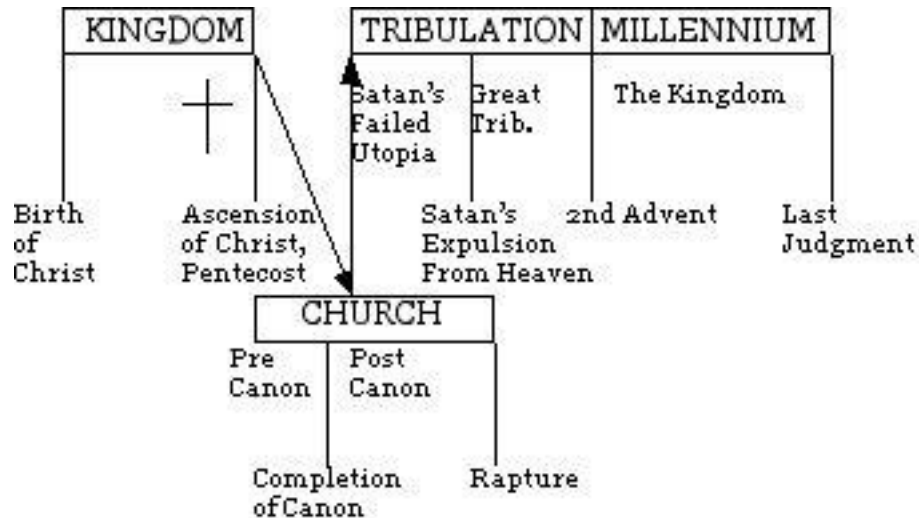
Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2Co 5:21 For you see the Father made Christ to be sin for us, yes He who knew no sin became sin for us in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

I once listened to a young man speak of our Lord's failure to bring about world peace. He said something like, "Oh there is no peace on earth good will toward men so how could I believe in such a failed deliverer." Little did the "young turk" know that peace on earth was not a part of our Lord's First Advent protocol. Quite the contrary, Jesus said until I return and establish my earthly Kingdom at the Second Advent, there will never be world peace. Indeed the Scripture tells us there will always be wars and rumors of wars until the Prince Ruler of Israel comes again to deliver Zion.

There are two advents of Jesus taught in Scripture, they are usually referred to as the First and Second Advents. It is the First Advent we celebrate at Christmas. The Second Advent will not take place until the completion of the Church Age and the Tribulation.

Our intercalation chart provides an illustration of the two phenomena, one has occurred and the other is a future event.



That Jesus recognized His two roles early-on in His ministry is clear; for when He opened His public ministry in Galilee in a synagogue in his home town of Nazareth, the Lord astounded the Scribes by reading Isaiah making application of several verses describing Himself; but subtly noting the two fold nature of His advents. Luke 4:18-20 is a quote from Isa 61:1 and 2, at least in part.

Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Luk 4:19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Luk 4:20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

Isa 61:2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, **and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;**

You will note the Lord left out that portion of Isa 61:2 which says "and the the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;"

The execution of the day of vengeance of our God when He will also comfort all that mourn His First Advent rejection, must await the return of our Lord to deliver His people Israel from total destruction. Most Christians however could care less about the differences between the two advents, they are too busy rewriting the Bible to fit their own personal desires and needs; open blasphemy seems to be the order of day!

And so as I think about this Christmas I can't help but wonder, how long will the United States of America be blessed of God and yet there have been darker days. There was the trauma of Christmas in the snows of the Ardennes fighting the Hun. The news some 63 years ago read:

"On Christmas day Field Marshal Model launched again another supreme effort against the heroic frozen garrison at Bastogne only to be thrown back to the Sauer ... frozen men and equipment, many of the men having not used a weapon since basic training were cooks, bakers, supply sergeants and corpsmen. Although greatly undermanned but fully aware of their duty to serve ... many suffered a frozen death at the hand of a desperate enemy ..."

Then there was Christmas in the frozen mountains of North Korea fighting the Chinese and North Koreans. Of these gallant men historians would later write:

"On 25 Dec 1950 there were 130,000 enemy reinforcements training in Manchuria from where they occasionally made cross border attacks. The Air Force begged unrequitedly for permission to attack. Army and Marine infantry units held the high ground north and along the 38th parallel in frost bitten mountain redoubts piled high with frozen enemy dead protecting lonely icy fox holes dug in the frost smitten mountains all along a defensive perimeter ... the conditions of each mountain fortress housed men who knew their job was to die for their country with one hand tied behind their back while the other hand gripped a frozen trigger on a mountainside somewhere on a cold and barren Korean hillside ..."

And there was a Christmas in Viet Nam from where a returning infantryman wrote of his experience in that foreign land: "Many men returned from months of bloody success and failure to find an American public more interested in combing their long hair, smoking pot and singing "hell no we won't go ..."

In contrast to the war protestors, there was Charles Gadd of the 501st Infantry of the proud 101st Airborne, he remembered the plane ride home from Viet Nam but a certain memory continued to play upon his mind. He kept hearing the voice of Chaplain Auten leading the tired and shaking voices in off key harmony deep in the boonies where men tried to survive the unexpected Tet Offensive:

God be with you till we meet again

By His counsels guide, uphold you

With His sheep, securely fold you

God be with you till we meet again.

On the cab ride from the Airport to his home Charles Gadd wondered, "How many of those shaky voices made it?" And then he heard the cabbie say: "Thanks kid and Oh yeah Merry Christmas" Charles Gadd grabbed his duffle bag and turned to see his parents at the front door. "Hey Momma Hey Daddy I'm Home."

Many of Gadd's fellow warriors never got to say "Hey Momma, Hey Daddy I'm Home." -- The freedoms we have today were bought with the blood of good men and not the feckless elected officials who go to Washington as servants of the people only to be mysteriously transformed into lords and masters of the political dance, oblivious to the needs of those who chose them.

So as we pause to celebrate this Christmas we must ask ourselves the question "are we taking the time to transform the mind or are we like the Israel of Hosea's day, dead wood in a forest of national potential?"

Our job as patriots and royal family of God is to take in Bible doctrine and grow in God's Grace. And by doing this seemingly mundane act of learning we become the source of national blessing.

It is our job to continue that wonderful long royal crimson line of spirit-filled believers full of doctrine who form the pivot which sustains our client nation status. Listen to Hosea's warning to Israel and note the reasons for their future discipline. I think it prudent for us to ask about ourselves, are we helping the cause of our client nation? or are we part of the spin off which may be assisting in the demise of our once great country?

Hos 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel: for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

Hos 4:2 Swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery are rampant, and murder is common place.

Hos 4:3 As a result the land mourns, and every one that dwells therein shall languish, and suffer economic disaster ...

Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because they have rejected knowledge, I will also reject them ...

I'm reminded of something Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Oh if you would lift me, you must be on higher ground." As I thought about his quotation (though I doubt that Waldo had our Lord in mind), I could not help but think of the truth of this profundity as it relates to the birth and life of our Lord.

Little did Emerson know how close he came to capturing the true meaning of Christmas and the coming of Christ. Only Deity could lift fallen man for He and He alone holds the higher ground. Christmas didn't begin in a manger in Bethlehem with the birth of baby Jesus. Christ wasn't just a baby born a King to bring peace; not just a baby who would so profoundly affect our history, but rather, Jesus was "uncontemplatable" Deity agreeing to be and to do the unthinkable; Deity shedding His divine essence, the Alpha and Omega becoming spatially and chronologically limited. Spatial to the extent that Jesus Christ the Son of God agreed to be in one place at one time, occupying a volume of ambient air, a spatial captive in an alien kingdom belonging to Satan himself. And so He was born uttering His last words as Deity in a tribute to the plan of God, totally in compliance with the Father's authority.

Heb 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Heb 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

Jesus agreed to deprive Himself of Deity and leave the indescribable perfect environment of the Third Heaven. Paul spoke of that deprivation in Phi 2:7.

Phil 2:7 But in contrast to an equality with the other members of the Trinity, He Himself became less than divine; in fact He robbed Himself of His rightful prerogatives taking the form of a slave in the likeness of humanity.

In the 2nd verse of the 12th Chapter of the Book of Hebrews we are commanded to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who instead of the joy of the third heaven endured the cross, despising the shame, ..." The Godman took on the limitations of humanity in order that He might become the Savior and the source of our salvation.

For the very first time, Jesus agreed to become limited by physics - physics a body of science He invented in eternity past. The all-knowing Creator of all things agreed to learn, to hope, to anticipate and to wonder if all was well - truly a miracle in the making. **Omniscience** beginning to learn, **Omnipresence** occupying a volume of space and **Omnipotence** depending on God the Father and God the Holy Spirit for protection. By choice His very own historical influence became unknown to His Omniscience.

Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered;

The problem, given man in his sinful condition, was how could that which is higher lift that which is lower without hint of compromise or hypocrisy? Mankind must know that God truly understands, if there is to be, divine empathy. The Incarnate Christ understands - why? Because He became our point-man and led the way across the no-mans land of pain and suffering.

Edmund Burke said, "Example is the school of mankind, wisdom which lasts can be learned no other way." So Christ became our Divine Prototype taking on the limitations of mankind and thus was born the divine confluence when Deity met mankind on Planet Earth. We call this, in theological terms the Hypostatic Union. The Hypostatic Union when the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Because of his example and our encounter with Him we must cherish His words and if we be wise we will think on them forever. The Bengal Lancers had a tradition fitting to our context. As they arrayed themselves in preparation for the charge, their officers with prim British propriety would step forward and turn to their loyal subalterns and say: "Want you join me?" "want you join me?" and then to the drum role which has marked battlefields the world over a line of bright blue jackets and black britches striped with the red of the Union Jack would move to the conflict to claim another victory for God and King. So also does our Lord ask us "want you join me and follow the colors to the high ground."

The first Christmas was simply a step in the plan of redemption completed by the Creator of all things.

Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God ...

Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

When God repeats a point, which He certainly has done in above five verses, there is a reason, and no doubt God wants us to know that Christ has always been, and even today is. Christ waits from Heaven where He serves as our ultimate mediator. Won't you accept Him today as your Savior?

“As many as received Him, to them gave he power to become Sons of God even to them who believe on His Name.”

Let us pray.