

Poverty and Praise

Luke 2:1-20

1. Introduction.
 - a. Structure of passage.
 - i. Earthly perspective (1-7)
 - ii. Heavenly perspective (8-10)
 - b. Cosmic narrative.
2. Vss. 1-7 – The earthly perspective and birth.
 - a. Luke as biographer (the Gospels are divine bios).
 - b. The setting and events reveal divine providence.
 - i. This is the fulfillment of the great messianic promise found in Micah 5:2.
 - ii. God uses a secular government to bring about His purposes.
 1. Ancestral census meant everyone had to go to their ancestral town under Jewish tradition.
 2. The purpose of the census was taxation.
 - c. The hard reality for Mary and Joseph.
 - i. Mary is on the verge of giving birth.
 - ii. 90 miles of difficult travel.
 - d. V. 6 – The language of “completed” is the language of divine providence.
 - i. The point is that God determined who, what, and when this would happen.
 - ii. God also determined this would mean hardship for Mary and Joseph.
 - iii. The description of the birth is incredibly minimalistic and unadorned.

1. This points to the fact this was an ordinary birth—no different from any other ordinary birth.
2. Luke prefers to describe other details.
 - a. His point in doing this is to draw attention to the hardship, adversity, and poverty of the situation.
 - b. The point is that God left glory, and willingly took on weakness.
 - c. The detail about no room in the inn illustrates how creation rejected its Creator from His beginning. It also anticipates the rejection of Christ and His message in years to come.
 - d. Philippians 2: 5-8.
 - e. The point is that Christ's birth was just as humiliating and shameful as His death on a cross. This was His life and ministry. God always willingly works through weakness.
3. Vss. 8-20—The heavenly perspective and response.
 - a. The scene immediately shifts to a field 2-3 miles away (they were in the same region).
 - i. The shepherds were most likely hired hands.
 - ii. The angel is a mighty creature.
 1. Angels almost always represent divine pronouncement or war.
 2. The angel immediately gives a word not to be afraid.
 - iii. God's purpose in coming to mere shepherds is to convey the idea that God comes to the weak, not the mighty.
 1. Shepherds were despised by the Romans.
 2. Shepherds were not considered great by the Jews.

- iv. Glory coming in the midst of darkness is a theological theme illustrating the reality of what happens when God shows up to a darkened heart.
- b. Heaven erupts.
 - i. A host of angels appear, not to declare war, but to declare peace.
 - ii. The host sings.
 - 1. The Gospel of Isaiah (Isa. 57:2ff.).
 - 2. “peace” is a judicial declaration of justification.
 - 3. “with whom He is pleased” is a statement of divine election—a reference to those with whom God finds pleasure.
 - 4. All of creation is in view with the song—both heaven and earth.
 - 5. God’s peace and pleasure with a person comes only through His Son—the one with whom He is well-pleased (Luke 3:22).
- c. The shepherds’ reaction (15-18).
 - i. There’s urgency with the shepherds.
 - ii. The point is that upon hearing the good news, it always demands a response. Either a person will be filled with wonder and gratitude, or a person will remain unchanged.
- d. Mary’s reaction (19).
 - i. Treasuring.
 - ii. Pondering.
- e. The Shepherds response.
 - i. The Shepherds go back to normal life, but they go back changed and glorifying God.
 - ii. The point being illustrated is that praising God is always the natural response to seeing God for who He is—faithful to everything He says He will do.