

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz production
Week 3
Matthew 2 & Luke 2

As we celebrated Christmas a few weeks ago I hope we had some special moments to ponder on our Savior and His birth in the midst of all the holiday traditions. This week we get to review His birth. The most important event in our history, an event which changed everything. I believe that to truly honor Him who came to save, we should probably remember that night as it was and not as we hoped it would be. The world and the movies have depicted this event to be somewhat peaceful. When in reality it was anything but. Let's look at a few verses so we can get a true idea of the events that brought the greatest man to ever live into this world.

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all [the world](#) should be [taxed](#).” (Luke 2:1)

This decree was not just for tax purposes. This could also be translated as a census. The Roman government wanted their taxes but also wanted to know how many military aged males were able to be drafted for war. So Gaius Actavius (which was his real name) called for this Census. However it wasn't a call from the Romans that “everyone went into his own city” (Luke 2:3) But a Jewish tradition. Joseph and Mary were living up in Nazareth and traveled down to Bethlehem which was called the city of David because that was his lineage, he was of the tribe of David. A distance of about 90 miles. This was not a day of fast cars and easy transportation. In those days they walked. An average person would walk about 20 miles in one day. But Mary was “great with child.” (Luke 2:5) so a trip that would normally take them 5 days would be more of a 2 week journey to go to Bethlehem. So why go? Why would Joseph take his very pregnant espoused wife and make that treacherous journey to Bethlehem? It was not to fulfill a Roman decree or even a Jewish tradition. He had to go to fulfill a divine prophecy that Jesus the Son of God would be born in Bethlehem. The only decree that really mattered was the divine decree that was predicted by God.

“6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her [firstborn](#) son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the [inn](#).” (Luke 2:6-7)

There is a lot to understand in these 2 verses. In our minds we think of an inn as a motel or a hotel, a place where we could go to have a private room. This was not the case in those days. These inns were more for large caravans that would pass through. They were big courtyards where these caravans would gather inside, animals and all, and at night the animals would sleep in the middle of this courtyard and the guests would have a small room on the side that would line the perimeter of the courtyard. It was loud and smelly. So when it says that there was no room for this in the inn it meant that there were no rooms available for them to stay in and so they would either have to sleep in the courtyard with the animals or they would have to go out to the fields or find a cave to stay in. We don't know exactly what they found to stay in that night but we do know that when He was born they laid Him in a Manger. Which is not a wooden basket as depicted in so many movies but rather a large rock that had a trough carved out of the top of the rock that they would put animals feed in. And they wrapped him not in a warm baby

blanket but swaddling clothes. These were like an ace bandage that was about 6 inches wide and they would wrap the babies tight so their limbs wouldn't move. They believed that if you wrapped a baby tight that their arm and legs would grow straight.

The reason this is so important to understand is what we talked about a few weeks ago. Truth is the key when studying the scriptures. Not how we imagine it or what movies tell us it's like. We need to have a clear view of things as they really were and this will help us to see things as they really are and are they really will be.

This next verses tell us of Shepherds who were in the same country "abiding in the fields" and "keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8)

This is really the only verse that gives us a clue that Mary gave birth at night. And it does not definitively tell us that. We assume that Jesus was born at night. We sing "Silent night, Holy night". But what we do know is that Angels came to these shepherds at night and delivered a message that would change the world.

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the **glory** of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you **good tidings** of great **joy**, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is **born** this day in the city of David a **Saviour**, which is Christ the **Lord**." (Luke 2:9-11)

"**13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 **Glory** to God in the highest, and on earth **peace**, good will toward men." (Luke 2:13-14)

So why Shepards? I'm sure there were other people that were closer to the manger that God could have sent. Perhaps a doctor to make sure everything was good with the birth. To make sure that Mary was okay. We read over in Matthew about the wise men or Kings that were sent to Jesus. We will come back to this in a second but These kings represented royalty, the highest of the high who would go to this Baby and honor Him. The shepherds were on the opposite side of the spectrum. Shepards in that day were considered the lowest of low. They live out in the fields with their sheep, smelly, dirty. These 2 groups were a symbol for all of us. From the greatest to the least we all need the Savior. We all must humble ourselves and honor Him who came to save.

But there is more. Before the time of Christ blood sacrifices were offered as an offering for their sins. These shepherds were an important part of this process. They would keep these sheep and care for them, but they would also certify them. The sacrifice of a lamb had certain parameters. It had to be the first born, had to have a pure blood line, had to be perfect, without blemish of any kind. Only those that were there at the birth of the lamb would know this. So the priests of that day required the shepherd to witness that the lamb was worthy of sacrifice. I hope you were listening with your spiritual ears. This was why it was so important for these shepherds to go to the place of Jesus's birth on the night He was born, because He would be the ultimate

blood sacrifice for all of us. The shepherds were fulfilling their duty to certify this perfect first born sacrificial lamb for the ultimate sacrifice that would come upon Him.

It is believed that the wise men didn't come to Jesus right away but a few years after His birth. The significance of this event is astounding. These men would perform such a profound offering to Jesus that anyone that would doubt His divinity would be considered a fool.

We assume that there were three wise men, but the scriptures don't actually tell us this. The account is recorded as follows:

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 ¶ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and [frankincense](#), and myrrh.”

(Matthew 2:10-11)

These gifts have great meaning. They weren't just treasures that would usually be given as a baby gift. The Gold was a representation of royalty. Only Kings had gold, and Jesus was the King of Kings. The Frankincense was a special oil used in the holy temple. Before entering the holy of holies they would burn Frankincense and it would leave a thin cloud of smoke ascending to heaven, and symbol of their prayer reaching to God. Myrrh was used in their medical practices. It was a bitter oil that they believed would heal them. So in their offering to the Son of God these three gifts they were declaring Christ to be their King, High Priest, and the Great Healer. All three rolls he fulfilled in His earthly ministry.

This is what I found fascinating about these gifts. Each one not only was a symbol of what He was to do but also they were a symbol of what He had to go through.

Gold as you know was refined in the refiner's fire. A symbol of the pressure, temptation, and trials he endured. This one I was aware of. What astounded me was when I heard how Frankincense and Myrrh were harvested.

Both Frankincense and Myrrh come from trees. They are both aromatic tree resins. At harvest time the trees are whipped causing gaping wounds in the flesh or the bark of the tree. After the whipping, sap would seep out of the wound in the shape of a tear. Thus they called them: tears. These tears are collected and processed for oils or other purpose.

These gifts given to Jesus were not just happen-stance. It wasn't by chance that these symbols fell into place. This was all part of the plan. A plan that rolls forward every day even to this day. The mission and role of Jesus Christ was prophesied and fulfilled.

I testify that He is the great redeemer. The Savior and Lord of us all. That no man can come to the Father but by Him. And He stands ready with open arms to accept and forgive all of us no matter who we are or what we have done. I testify that we can not fall lower than the light of Christ shines. He is our only hope, and the only true way. He is the way, the truth and the light.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.