

# Luke 2a: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاين تاطع • LUKE 2: 1 - 24 ~ Bible Study

## Outline of the Chapter

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## Birth of Christ

<sup>1</sup>And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup>So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. <sup>6</sup>So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup>And she brought forth 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.

- St Luke begins the story of the birth of Christ with "in those days" - which days?
  - The days mentioned in the previous chapter... around the time of the Annunciation of John and Annunciation of Christ and the birth of St John
  - St Luke's Gospel uses "in those days" a lot
- Luke sets the historical time for the birth of Christ
  - During the reign of Caesar Augustus as Roman Emperor (31 BC - 14 AD)
  - During the time of Quirinius as governor of Syria
- Census of Quirinius

- The rules of a census are that each person goes back to the land of their family/tribe and where they were born. The census was used by to appropriately tax each everyone in the empire
- The journey from Nazareth in Galilee (north) to Bethlehem in Judea (south) is approximately 80 miles
- Nothing happens haphazardly but all by the economy of God in order to fulfill the prophecy of Micah:
  - "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)
- Joseph's going to Bethlehem publicly declared that both him and Mary, his wife, are from the tribe of Judah and the lineage of King David
- Mary, his betrothed wife
  - Jewish tradition had three steps in a marriage:
    - Proposal/Engagement
    - Betrothal
      - Civil marriage. The legal aspects - he provides for her and she provides for him
    - Marriage
      - Consummation of the relationship
  - St Mary and St Joseph's marriage was not consummated, but St Mary was perpetually in her virginity
- Obedience of Authority
  - St Joseph and St Mary teach us to obey the authority in their obedience of the census rules
  - "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God." (Romans 13:1-2)
  - We ought to obey the authority of the law and government unless it contradicts God
    - "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)
- Firstborn
  - Title of rank and birth order of first male child, whether there are other children or not
  - Firstborn was to be dedicated to the Lord (Exodus 13, Numbers 3)
  - St Mary's Virginity remained sealed
    - "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut." (Ezekiel 44:2)
    - St Augustine describes it as Light passing through Glass
- Swaddling & Manger
  - When a child was born they were washed and then swaddled - in this, Christ was treated like any ordinary Hebrew child
  - However, he was placed in a manger
    - Manger is a feeding trough for animals. It was filled with hay. So St Mary placed Him in there so He would be warm.

- There is a beautiful meaning here which is that He is the Bread of Life, and He was placed in a feeding trough when He was born
- We see their poverty in that they were not regarded by anyone and could not even find a place to sleep

## Praise of the Angels and Visit of the Shepherds

<sup>8</sup> Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And <sup>1</sup>behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. <sup>10</sup> Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this *will* be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

<sup>15</sup> So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. <sup>18</sup> And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. <sup>20</sup> Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

- Shepherds

- God chose the shepherds to be the first on earth to hear the glorious news of the birth of the Savior of the world
- Why?
  - As a practical example of how God "resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6)
    - In those days, shepherds were the lowest rank - they could not even give testimony in court.
    - St Mary in the Magnificat talked about how God has "exalted the lowly"
    - Christianity is not about prestige, power, money, or fame, but about humility and the lowly in heart
  - Because Christ is the Good Shepherd, the Chief and True Shepherd
  - Not just any shepherds, but these are the ones who were faithful to their sheep, watchful in the night, not idle
  - These specific shepherds in the country of Judea were the ones who cared for the lambs that would be used in daily sacrifice in the Temple... not just any sheep.

- The Angel
  - The Scripture did not reveal to us who the angel is or which angel
  - The shepherds saw an appearance that was extraordinary and unusual, so they were afraid
  - They were likely considering "who are we that the glory of God manifests in front of us"
- The Angel's Address
  - There is power in the word from the angel when he says "Do not be afraid"
  - Do not be afraid because I bring good news
  - The great joy is for all people: Both Jews and Gentiles
  - The Angel gives three titles for Christ:
    - Savior
      - The Savior Whom God appointed from the beginning of time, and Who was promised even from the time of Adam and Eve
      - People expected a Savior and Salvation
      - Salvation from sin, from Satan; Restoration of our fellowship with God that was lost in the Garden of Eden
    - Christ
      - Christened One, Anointed One, Messiah, El messiah
      - This Babe is the fulfillment of all Old Testament Prophecies:
        - The Anointed One
        - The Seed of Eve
        - The Prophet spoken of by Moses
        - The Suffering Servant of Isaiah
        - The Messiah
        - The Promised Son of David
    - Lord
      - Hebrew Jehovah
      - Lord of all creatures
      - Lord of lords
  - The angel gives a sign
    - "You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths"
      - This is not the sign - this could refer to any Hebrew child
    - "lying in a manger"
      - This is the sign - this is the unusual part
    - This is the third sign so far in this gospel
- Multitude of Heavenly Hosts
  - Thousands of thousands and ten thousands times ten thousands of heavenly hosts; angels, archangels, etc.
  - Some Church Fathers say that ALL of the angels were present at the birth of Christ to glorify and adore Him
    - "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'" (Hebrews 1:6)
- Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!
  - Zacharias' praise in Luke 1 prophesied that the Messiah would lead the people to the peace of God, and now the angels are echoing his prophecy

- What is goodwill toward men?
  - It is the goodwill of God to send the Messiah to introduce peace on earth and to remove and abolish the enmity that sin has raised between us and God and restore a peaceful communication between us and God
  - If we are at peace with God, all peace will result from this. Peace is the foundation of goodwill.
  - Some translations: "And on earth peace towards men of goodwill"
    - Men of goodwill, who are willing to be reconciled with God
- The Shepherds did not doubt
  - Not for a moment
  - They did not say "Let's see if it's true" or make any discussions
  - This is another reason God sent the angel to them - they have a spirit of faith
  - They went with haste
    - Many times God gives us opportunities, but we have to accept them quickly because in delaying we may lose them
- They were the first to proclaim the good news
- Following these events is the narrative in Matthew 1-2 with the Magi
- All who heard it marveled
  - They all marveled, but none of them came to see... none of them came to worship Him. This is the attitude of many today who hear great news and marvel and wonder... but that's it.
  - When St Mary appeared in Zeitoun in the 1960s, she was seen first by the non-believers... and the news of her appearance spread around the world. For three years she was appearing on and off for long periods of time. Everyone who saw it marveled... but not all of them worshipped God. Not all of them repented. Not all of them changed their lives.
- St Mary kept and pondered
  - Kept
    - She kept detailed records of all of these events (everything in Luke 1 and 2).
    - No doubt she shared these records with St Luke (maybe while he painted her portrait)
  - Pondered
    - She continually meditated and reflected on these things
    - St Luke is calling us here to do the same: to reflect on these events and on their meaning in MY Life
      - Christ the Savior came to save ME Personally
      - Christ the King is MY King which means I am loyal to Him and abide by His law
      - Christ the Lord is MY Lord that I worship and that I love
- The Shepherds glorify God
  - Because everything the angel said came to pass
  - Because they counted themselves unworthy to be first to witness His birth

## Circumcision of Christ

**21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.**

- The Jews had a tradition of naming the child on the day of his circumcision since that was the day he becomes dedicated to the covenant with Abraham and part of the community of believers
  - Jesus was named on the day of His Circumcision
  - He is called Jesus which means "Savior" - the name given by the angel
  - See the obedience of St Mary and St Joseph to the angel
- Did Jesus need Circumcision?
  - Since He is the Law-Giver, He is not bound to the Law
  - But He was incarnate and born under the Law
    - "But when the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." (Galatians 4:4)
  - He came to fulfill all righteousness and do the things that those under the law should have been doing
  - By Circumcision He declares to us that He is the son of Abraham according to the flesh
    - God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed
    - Christ came, as a son of Abraham according to the flesh, so that we can be sons of Abraham according to the spirit
    - Children of Abraham are those who walk according to the faith of Abraham

## Presentation of Christ in the Temple

**22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."**

- Two Practices here:
  - Purification of St Mary
  - Presentation of the Lord in the Temple
- Purification of St Mary
  - Laws of Ritual Confinement are found in Leviticus 12:1-6
  - 40 days or 80 days confinement to witness to the fact that every child born in this world is born with the corrupted nature inherited after the sin of Adam and Eve
  - The waiting was unnecessary for St Mary because Christ was not born with corrupted nature or sin. Absolutely not.
  - Out of obedience to the Law, she performed it
  - Many people argue about it now, yet St Mary, the one who didn't have to do it, did it in obedience
  - The offering was a lamb and a pigeon... but there was an alternative for the poor: two doves and two young pigeons.
- Presentation of the Lord in the Temple
  - Firstborn sons had to be redeemed according to the Law

- When God struck the firstborns of Egypt (10th plague), God said to Moses that all the firstborn children who He saved from this plague, are His, so they have to be redeemed.
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