

Luke 2:1-7

Introduction: This parallels the account of John's birth in 1:57-80. While John's birth is described in 2 verses (1:57-58), Jesus' birth occupies 20 (2:1-20).

God rules over politicians, who sometimes presume they rule the world—2:1-3

- 1) ¹ *Now it happened ...in those days (cf. 1:80) a decree went out from Caesar Augustus (Julius Caesar's nephew Octavian; ruled from 27 BC to 14 AD) that all the inhabited earth should be registered.*
 - a) This decree [δόγμα] was passed by the Roman Senate.
 - b) A painful reminder that Israel was under Gentile rule.
- 2) ² *This was the first registration taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.* (Quirinius seems to have ruled in Syria 2 different times)
- 3) ³ *And everyone was traveling to register themselves, each to his own city.*

God enables Joseph to be obedient to a corrupt government—2:4-5

- 1) His actions: ⁴ *Now Joseph also went up ...*
 - a) It is "up" because they will travel from @ 1,500' to 2,550'
- 2) His location:
 - a) *from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth,*
 - b) *into Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem,*
 - This was at least a 100 mile journey
 - i) Why? *because he was of the house and family line of David,* (through David's son Solomon and grandson Rehoboam; whereas Mary seems to be a descendent of David through his son Nathan);
 - ii) Significance: Caesar Augustus is the unknowing agent of God (cf. Proverbs 21:1), bringing Jesus' parents to Bethlehem to fulfill prophecy (cf. Micah 5:1-2)
 - iii) Remember the statements of 1:32-33, 69
- 3) His submissive choice: ⁵ *to allow himself to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was pregnant.*
 - a) Remember 1:56. Cf. Matthew 1:18, 25
 - b) Culturally unacceptable to be pregnant during betrothal
- 4) The government, though corrupt, was not asking him to do anything contrary to the revealed Word of God.

God initially fulfills His promise to Mary and Joseph—2:6-7

- 1) ⁶ *And it happened the days were fulfilled for her to give birth.*
 - a) *that while they were there,* (in Bethlehem)
- 2) ⁷ *And she gave birth to her firstborn Son,*
 - a) Mary gave birth to at least 7 other children, including: 4 more boys (James/Jacob, Joseph, Simon, and Judah), and at least 3 unnamed girls (Matthew 13:55-56).
 - b) This gives Jesus all the rights and privileges of a firstborn son, including any rights to royalty.

- 3) *and wrapped Him in strips of cloth*, (swaddling clothes) (cf. 2:12)
 - a) Strips of cloth wrapped around the arms and legs of the baby for comfort and protection. They also provided support for their backs and bones. It indicated that the mother cared. The rank of the child was indicted by the splendor and costliness of these strips of cloth. (Rogers & Rogers, *Linguistic Key*)
- 4) *and laid Him in the feeding trough, because there was no space for them in the lodging place*.
 - a) Most likely Joseph and Mary sought lodging in the public accommodations in the city of Bethlehem, which would have been crude shelters for people and animals. However, it has been suggested by various scholars that Joseph and Mary were staying with relatives in Bethlehem; if that were so the term would refer to the guest room in the relatives' house, which would have been filled beyond capacity with all the other relatives who had to journey to Bethlehem for the census. (NET Bible notes)
 - b) There is no drama in how this is told. There is no search for a variety of places to stay or a heartless innkeeper. (Such items are later, nonbiblical embellishments.) Bethlehem was not large and there was simply no other place to stay. The humble surroundings of the birth are ironic in view of the birth's significance. (NET Bible notes)

Take-home truth:

- Psalm 31:15a—“My times are in Your hand”
- Philippians 2:3-11—humility to allow yourself to be mistreated for the benefit of others, while trusting that God will ultimately set things right