

Luke 2

Luke 2:1-3 Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ² This was the first census taken while Quirinius was ruling Syria. ³ And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city.

Analysis of vv. 1-3:

- 1) Chapter 1 closed with the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist and the prophecy proclaimed by Zacharias.
- 2) Luke begins chapter 2 by moving forward in the narrative to the particulars surrounding the birth of Christ.
- 3) He states, “Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.”
- 4) “Those days” refers to a time about 6 months after the birth of John.
- 5) Bear in mind the following:
 - a) Elizabeth was in her 6th month of pregnancy with John when Gabriel informed Mary that she would conceive and give birth to Jesus (Luke 1:26-38).
 - b) Following Gabriel’s announcement, Mary made haste to visit Elizabeth (Luke 1:39).
 - c) By the time she arrived, Mary was already pregnant (Luke 1:40-44).
 - d) She stayed about 3 months with Elizabeth and apparently left just prior to the birth of John (Luke 1:56).
- 6) Upon returning to Nazareth, Mary would have been in her 4th month of pregnancy.
- 7) At some point after her return Joseph became aware of her condition.
- 8) Luke doesn’t provide details about Joseph’s thinking, impressions, or reactions.
- 9) However from Matthew’s account we learn that Joseph was a righteous and compassionate man (Matt. 1:18-21).
 - a) He desired to secretly send Mary away to spare her from public disgrace.
 - b) Joseph was discouraged from this course of action due to the particulars he received in a dream.
- 10) The author reveals that a census had been decreed.
- 11) Our term “decree” refers to an imperial declaration (*δῶγμα*, *dogma* cf. Acts 17:7).
- 12) The order was issued by “Caesar Augustus” the Roman Emperor in those days.
- 13) “Caesar Augustus” was born Gaius Octavius Thurinus in 63 BC.
 - a) He was the grand-nephew of Julius Caesar and was posthumously adopted as his son (via will).

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- b) He was one of the triumvirate that was set up to rule the Roman world in 43 BC along with Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and Mark Antony (2nd Triumvirate).
 - c) He guided Rome through the waning days of the Roman Republic.
 - d) In a series of military and astute political moves he gained sole control of the reins of power.
 - e) In 27 BC the Roman senate bestowed on him the title “Augustus” which in a basic sense means “the reverend one” (cf. Greek, **σεβαστός** , *sebastos*, Acts 25:21, 25, 27:1)
 - f) Prior to this point he was alternately referred to as Gaius Julius Caesar, Octavius, and Octavian.
 - g) The title “Augustus” acknowledged his supremacy and it signified more religious than political authority.
 - h) In Roman religion it symbolized authority over humanity and nature.
 - i) He also styled himself as “Imperator Caesar divi filius” which is “Commander Caesar son of the deified one” in reference to his “deified” adopted father, Julius Caesar.
 - j) He is considered the first Emperor of the Roman Empire period.
 - k) His rule ended at his death in 14 AD.
- 14) Census taking for the purpose of collecting taxes was a fairly common occurrence.
- 15) “All the inhabited earth” inclusively refers to all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire (cf. “the world”- Acts 17:6, 19:27).
- 16) Luke further fixes the timeframe by revealing that that this census took place “while Quirinius was ruling Syria.”
- 17) Our standard translation reads, “while Quirinius was governor of Syria.”
- 18) Although the temporal aspect of this phrase is accurately conveyed, the position of Quirinius is not.
- 19) The term translated “governor” may refer to specific administrative positions such as a governor (**ἡγεμονεύοντος**, *hegemonuontos*).
- 20) However the general meaning of this verb is “to command, to rule” which is preferred here.
- 21) In this sense, Luke indicates that Quirinius held a position of authority in the Roman province of Syria.
- 22) The mention of Caesar Augustus, Quirinius, and Herod in chapter 1 is extremely important when trying to establish a timeline in our narrative (**Luke 1:5** In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.).

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- 23) Moreover, these references are invaluable in identifying the correct timeline of Christ's birth and ministry (cf. **Luke 3:1-2** Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, ² in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness, **Luke 3:23** And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age...).
- 24) Quirinius was indeed a governor of Syria but not during this time (Latin: Quirinius, Greek: **Κυρήνιος**, Kurenios also Cyrenius).
- 25) Furthermore, he was a governor of Syria not once but on two occasions as will be shown later in our study.
- 26) Luke indicates that this was the "first" census or registration conducted when Quirinius was ruling in Syria.
- 27) This implies there were at least two registrations that were coordinated by Quirinius while he was in Syria.
- 28) The second occurred in ~6-7 AD and is also recorded by Luke (referred to as "the census" in Acts 5:37).
- 29) In v. 3 Luke provides some detail as to how the census was conducted.
- 30) He reveals, "all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city."
- 31) Everyone had to report to "his own city" to enroll in the census.
- 32) The author informs us in vv. 4-5 that Joseph and Mary were compelled to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, also known as the city of David, "because he was of the house and family of David."
- 33) By ordering the census, Caesar Augustus unwittingly contributed to the fulfillment of prophecy (Micah 5:2).
- 34) It should be pointed at this juncture that Luke's reliability and veracity has been called into question regarding some of the details in vv. 1-3.
- 35) **Alleged** discrepancies regarding the text:
 - a) There is supposedly no official Roman record of a general census during this point during the reign of Augustus.
 - b) Herod is king of Judea and Quirinius didn't become governor of Syria until 6AD well after the king's death.
 - c) In an official Roman census Joseph wouldn't have had to travel to his "ancestral" city in Bethlehem.
 - d) Additionally Mary would not have been compelled to register for the census only Joseph.

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- e) A census wouldn't have been decreed in Israel by Rome during the reign of Herod.
- f) No mention is made of a Roman census in the region by Josephus or other "credible" historians during the reign of Herod.
- 36) Many interpreters have attacked Luke's credibility as a historian and as an author of Scripture due to these alleged variances.
- 37) Scripture will always have outspoken critics, but this should not be a stumbling block for the believer or be a cause for doubt.
- 38) We must not suppose that because many may find certain portions of Scripture controversial, that there is in fact real controversy.
- 39) Many passages are deemed controversial as a result of negligence on the part of the interpreter.
- 40) Perhaps the original languages were not studied in sufficient detail or the historical background was not given careful consideration.
- 41) Perhaps and most importantly, the interpreter was not filled with God the Holy Spirit while studying a passage.
- 42) This last point alone is critical. Failing to maintain the FGHS undermines the credibility of any exegetical insight regardless of academic credentials or years in the study.
- 43) The latter explains why there are many distortions of Scripture.
- 44) Under the OSN:
 - a) Under the OSN, the believer is a spiritual "prisoner" in the Angelic Conflict (αἰχμαλωτίζω, aichmalotizo, Rom. 7:23).
 - b) Life as a prisoner is characterized by personal sin, human good, false doctrine, and human viewpoint.
 - c) The positive believer hates being a prisoner (cp. Rom. 7:15-16, 19-20).
 - d) Basic principles: The believer who is under the filling of God the Holy Spirit correctly understands spiritual information. Whereas the believer who is under the OSN is compromised (1 Cor. 2:10-16).
 - e) Various states described of those controlled by the OSN:
 - i) Dead: Death emphasizes the total inability to do anything. It is a state of utter helplessness. The believer out of fellowship is viewed as being temporally dead and unable to do anything pleasing to God (Rom. 7:9-13; James 1:15 cf. Jude 1:12).
 - ii) Sleep: Sleep emphasizes a state of inactivity. The one who is spiritually asleep is allowing the OSN to dominate and is, therefore, ineffective in the Angelic Conflict (Eph. 5:8-11, 1 Thess. 5:4-10).

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- iii) Slaves: Slavery indicates the abject state of servitude to a cruel, abusive master, the OSN (Rom. 6:16, 2 Peter 2:19).
 - iv) Drunk: One who is under the influence of alcohol manifests disorientation and inappropriate behavior. In relation to the OSN, the term describes the spiritual disorientation and inappropriate activity promoted by the sin nature.
 - v) In darkness: darkness indicates that the one who is under the OSN lacks perception and the ability to order one's steps. Those who are out of fellowship and lack the light of Scripture will blindly stumble through their ph. 2 (cf. Psa. 119:105, John 8:12, 12:35).
- 45) When the exegete encounters “apparent discrepancies” in Scripture, the text must be examined in detail in relation to the historical context.
- 46) It is also beneficial to reflect on principles of verbal plenary inspiration.
- 47) Inspiration relates to the reception and recording of God’s truth contained in the Old and New Testaments.
- 48) Inspiration must be distinguished from illumination.
- 49) Illumination focuses on the human comprehension and understanding of the truth that has been revealed by God in the Bible.
- 50) In order to fully grasp and understand God’s word, illumination is dependent on several components:
- a) Positive volition: one must desire to know God’s word and seek it (Psa. 105:4, 119:2, 45, Prov. 2:4-5, 8:17, Luke 11:10 cf. to the attitude of negative volition: Psa. 10:4).
 - b) Dependence on the FGHS and not human IQ (cf. **1 Corinthians 2:4-5** And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,⁵ that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God).
 - c) Diligence: a casual approach to the study of Scripture and the CWL is unbiblical (2 Tim. 2:15, 1 Peter 1:10, 3:14 cf. 1 Cor. 14:12, 15:58, Phil. 1:9, 1 Thess. 4:10 cf. Deut. 4:9, 30:10ff).
 - d) Consistent attendance in a local church: the local church is **the biblically** sanctioned environment for learning sound doctrine in the Church Age (**1 Timothy 3:15** ... *I write* so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth., **Hebrews 10:23-25** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,²⁵ **not forsaking our own**

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assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near).

- e) Humility: we must recognize the need for Bible doctrine and then learn it in the local church (James 1:21).
 - f) Prayer: ask God for wisdom and guidance on a daily basis (James 1:5 cf. **Matthew 7:7** "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.).
 - g) Intellectual honesty: the honest assessment of God's word and its applicability to one's own life, Luke 8:15, 2 Cor. 2:17, 4:2.
 - h) The Church Age believer that rejects or neglects these components will not reach a full knowledge of God's word.
- 51) In comparison, inspiration is the supernatural process whereby God superintended the authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded completely free from error His message to humanity in the words of their original writings.
- 52) Although He superintended the process and message, God didn't set aside the individual personality, experience, or style of the authors. He used a variety of authors from various backgrounds to produce His infallible Word (cf. Jer. 1:9, Psa. 12:6-7, 119:160, 2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21).
- 53) Biblical claims regarding inspiration.
- a) Inspiration is verbal extending to the very words of Scripture (Ex. 24:4, Jer. 26:2, Rom. 3:2).
 - b) God's revelation is infallible and unbreakable (John 10:35).
 - c) Inspiration is irrevocable (Luke 16:17, 24:44).
 - d) The Scripture has final authority; Christ claimed that the written revelation was the final authority in matters of faith and practice (Matt. 4:4,7, 21:42, Mark 11:17)
 - e) Inspiration extends to every part of Scripture as well as the whole (**2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture** is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness).
 - f) God's word originates from His perfect essence, therefore His word is perfect (Psa. 19:7-9).
- 54) Inspiration does not include accommodation to error.
- 55) Inspiration does mandate inerrancy in all matters of an historical or factual nature.
- 56) Therefore let's address this general census during the reign of Augustus.
- 57) As previously indicated, the taking of censuses was a common practice by the Romans.
- 58) Censuses were typically instituted to register to taxation and to a lesser degree, to assess the number of one's armed forces (e.g. Num. 1:2-3, 1 Chron. 21:1ff).

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- 59) Luke uses the general Greek term for “census” in vv. 2-3 (ἀπογραφή, apographe).
- 60) The term frequently refers to a register of persons liable to taxation.
- 61) Nevertheless we must not automatically assume the term always refers to matters of taxation.
- 62) Additionally the registration was compulsory for every person in the Empire.
- 63) If the registration was merely for taxes this requirement is excessive.
- 64) In the case of Mary and Joseph, it would only be necessary for Joseph as the property owner to register his household for tax purposes.
- 65) Also at this time Judea was ruled by King Herod and while he was alive the Jews in Judea paid taxes directly to Herod not Rome.
- 66) The details regarding this census point to another purpose besides taxation.
- 67) If not for taxes, then there must have been another suitable reason for an Empire-wide census.
- 68) In order to determine the reason and nature of this census, we must consider the historical timeframe at this point in the Roman Empire.
- 69) We will now seek to narrow the chronological limits of our time frame.
- 70) Luke dates our context during the reign of King Herod (**Luke 1:5** In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth).
- 71) King Herod’s reign terminated with his death in 1 BC.
- 72) In his bid to kill Jesus, Herod of course is infamous for the slaughter of male children from 2 yrs. old and under as recorded in Matthew (**Matthew 2:16** Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi).
- 73) The death of Herod in 1 BC is a key date for the following reasons:
 - a) We know from Matthew’s gospel that Christ was born **before** Herod’s death (Matt. 2:1ff).
 - b) Therefore His birth occurred sometime before 1 BC.
 - c) We also see that this census in Luke 2 occurred **before** the death of Herod in 1 BC.
 - d) It clearly is not the same census referred to by Luke in Acts (**Acts 5:37** "After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of **the census**, and drew away *some* people after him, he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered).
 - e) The census in Acts occurred in ~6-7 AD.
 - f) It is also evident that Quirinius was ruling in Syria in some capacity before 1 BC.
- 74) Another key date in relation to our context is 2 BC.

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- a) This year coincided with the 750th year of the founding of Rome according to the chronological records of the Roman priests.¹
 - b) More importantly in 2 BC Caesar Augustus celebrated his 25th year of being emperor of the Roman Empire.²
 - c) 25 years previously he had been declared emperor and given the title of “Augustus” (27 BC).
 - d) As a part of this celebration the most distinguished title was conferred upon Augustus by the Roman Senate: “Pater Patriae” (“Father of the Country” or lit. Father of the Fatherland).³
 - e) Prior to the conferment of this prestigious title, Augustus declared that a census be taken whereby all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire would take an oath.
 - f) In this oath, each individual would proclaim their loyalty to Augustus as “Pater Patriae.”
 - g) So vast was the Roman Empire that such a large scale census would take some time to complete before the celebrations in 2 BC.
 - h) Therefore the universal census was initiated in 3 BC.⁴
- 75) Important events in 3 BC.
- a) The census for taking the imperial oath of allegiance to Augustus, referred to in Luke 2, is carried out.
 - b) There is further evidence that an oath to Caesar was sworn during this time frame.
 - c) Josephus alludes to a census that was required of Jews in Judea during the reign of King Herod and Augustus (“...all the people of the Jews gave assurance of their good-will to Caesar, and to the king's government...”).⁵
 - d) He also reported that 6,000 Pharisees refused to swear the oath.
 - e) An inscription was discovered in Pamphlagonia, an area in Asia Minor bordering the Black Sea, which is clearly dated to 3 BC.
 - f) The following oath was taken by the inhabitants of Pamphlagonia, “I swear by Jupiter, Earth, Sun, by all the gods and goddesses, and by Augustus himself, that I will be loyal to Caesar Augustus and to his children and descendants all my life in word, in deed, and in thought, regarding as friends whomever they so regard, and considering as enemies whomever they so adjudge; that in defense of their interests I will spare neither body, soul, life, not children,

¹Earnest L. Martin, *The Star of Bethlehem, The Star that Astonished the World*, 2nd Edition (Portland: ASK Publications, 1996), 7.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Thomas Lewin, *Fast Sacri, A Key to the Chronology of the New Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865) 135.

⁵Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVII, iv.

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but will in every way undergo every danger in defense of their interests; that whenever I perceive or hear anything being said or planned or done against them I will lodge information about this and will be an enemy to whoever says or plans or does any such thing; and that whomever they adjudge to be enemies I will by land and sea, with weapons and sword, pursue and punish. But if I do anything contrary to this oath, or not in conformity with what I swore, I myself call down upon myself, my body, my soul, my life, my children, and all my family and property, utter ruin and utter destruction unto all my issue and all my descendants, and may neither earth nor sea receive the bodies of my family or my descendants, or yield fruits to them.”⁶

- g) The Armenian historian Moses of Korene affirms that in 3 BC the census brought Roman agents “to Armenia, bringing the image of Augustus Caesar, which they set up in every temple.” This implies that the inhabitants had to go to the temples to register for the census.⁷
 - h) The 5th century historian Orosius possessed early sources that substantiated the census occurred in 3 BC.
 - i) Of taking an oath to Caesar he wrote,
“[Augustus] ordered that a census be taken of each province everywhere and that all men be enrolled... This is the earliest and most famous public acknowledgment which marked Caesar as the first of all men and the Romans as lords of the world, a published list of all men entered individually ... This first and greatest census was taken, since in this one name of Caesar all the peoples of the great nations took oath, and at the same time, through the participation in the census, were made apart of one society.”
 - j) The early Christian apologist Tertullian, ~160-220 AD, well acquainted with Roman administrative affairs, said that the census that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem was conducted in 3/2 BC.⁸
- 76) The historical evidence indicates there indeed was a census taken in order to take an oath of loyalty to Caesar and not for the purposes of taxation.
- 77) Furthermore, the evidence points to the census occurring in 3 BC in preparation for the celebration of Caesar’s 25th year as Emperor in 2 BC.
- 78) Another issue that must be examined in this context is the governorship of Quirinius.
- 79) Historians have long claimed that Quirinius wasn’t governor of Syria at this time.

⁶ N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, Roman Civilization, Sourcebook II: The Empire (New York 1966) 34-35.

⁷ Martin, 190.

⁸ Ibid, 170.

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- 80) Quirinius is not mentioned as being governor of Syria until several years later in ~6-7 AD.⁹
- 81) He is also mentioned by Josephus as conducting a census in ~6-7 AD (Quirinius is referred to as Cyrenius).¹⁰
- 82) This census was marred by the revolt led by Judas of Galilee.
- 83) Based on these points many have supposed that Luke is mistaken in his chronological details.
- 84) Yet apart from this context the writings of Luke have proven to be totally accurate.
- 85) Further, Luke parallels Josephus' account about the census administered by Quirinius and the ensuing revolt led by Judas in Acts (**Acts 5:37** "After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away *some* people after him, he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered).
- 86) One must ask how Luke could accurately report the census in Acts but be years off in his gospel account.
- 87) In actuality both Luke's gospel and Acts are completely accurate.
- 88) As mentioned previously, Quirinius was a ruler in Syria on more than one occasion.
- 89) An inscription discovered in Antioch affirms that Quirinius ruled in Syria some time before 6 AD.¹¹
- 90) We've already determined that the census occurred in 3 BC so where does Quirinius fit as a ruler in Syria?
- 91) To further complicate matters we know from historical evidence that the governors of Syria from 7 BC to 1 AD:¹²
 - a) Titius: prior to 7 BC.
 - b) Quintilius Varus: 7 or 6 BC-4 BC.
 - c) Sentius Saturninus: 4 BC- 2 BC.
 - d) Quintilius Varus (2nd time): 2 BC- 1 AD.
 - e) Gaius Caesar: 1 AD- 4 AD.
- 92) Clearly Quirinius is not mentioned as a governor during this timeframe, especially during our census date of 3 BC.
- 93) S. Saturninus was governor of Syria in 3 BC.
- 94) Tertullian further attests that the census in Luke 2 was indeed conducted when S. Saturninus was governor of Syria.

⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 19.

¹⁰ Josephus, XVIII, 1

¹¹ Hoehner, 19.

¹² Martin, 180.

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- 95) Again in the corrected translation Luke doesn't refer to Quirinius as a governor, but as a ruler in Syria.
- 96) Justin Martyr, a Christian apologist who lived in the 2nd century, affirms that Roman records showed Quirinius as *procurator* in Judea during the S. Saturninus' governorship in Syria.¹³
- 97) Moreover he dates Quirinius' political position and role to the time when Christ was born.
- 98) His position as *procurator* is significant.
- 99) A *procurator* was typically a personal advocate of the Emperor with special authority granted that was quite distinct from that of the "official" governor, who in this case was S. Saturninus.
- 100) In our context Quirinius was personally appointed by Caesar Augustus independently of the governor, S. Saturninus.
- 101) Quirinius was officially a *Legatus Augustii* whereas S. Saturninus was a *legatus*.
- 102) As *procurator* Quirinius would have the authority to conduct the census in Syria and specifically in Judea in 3 BC.
- 103) Based on this evidence Luke is correct in saying, "This was the first census taken while Quirinius was ruling in Syria."
- 104) He indicates that this was the "first census" to distinguish it from the second which occurred later during Quirinius' governorship.
- 105) The two censuses of Quirinius occurred in:
 - a) 3 BC as *procurator* in Syria.
 - b) 6-7 AD as governor in Syria
- 106) The careful consideration of the text and historical details demonstrates the veracity of Luke's account its timeframe of 3 BC.
- 107) In addition to determining the date of the census, this context also sets the stage for the birth of Christ in 3 BC.

¹³ Justin Martyr, Apology, I, 34, referred to as Cyrenius, Martin, 183-184.

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Luke 2:4-5 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵ in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child

Analysis of vv. 4-5:

- 1) Luke progresses from setting the timeframe of the census to the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ.
- 2) As a result of the census, Luke states, “And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David...”
- 3) In obedience to the Imperial decree, Joseph traveled from Galilee to Judea to the city of Bethlehem.
- 4) Bethlehem is here referred to as “the city of David.”
- 5) The title is correct as the city was David’s town of origin (cf. **1 Samuel 17:12-15** Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced *in years* among men. ¹³ And the three older sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the first-born, and the second to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. ¹⁴ And David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem. **1 Samuel 20:6** "If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem **his city**, because it is the yearly sacrifice there for the whole family.').
- 6) Again Luke makes it clear that Joseph was direct descendant of King David (cf. **Luke 1:26-27** Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was **Joseph, of the descendants of David**; and the virgin's name was Mary).
- 7) For this reason he was to travel to Bethlehem, the city of David.
- 8) Joseph is said to be “of the house and family of David.”
- 9) Our term translated “house” refers to a household (**οἶκος**, oikos).
- 10) The word “family” refers to a line of descent to a common progenitor (**πατριά**, patria).
- 11) The phrase “house of David” is frequently found in Scripture in relation to King David’s ruling dynasty (1 Chron. 17:24).
- 12) It was often used in opposition to the “house of Saul” (**2 Samuel 3:1** Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David grew

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steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually, **2 Samuel 3:6** And it came about while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David that Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul).

- 13) After David's death, the expression "house of David" was used to refer to the ruling dynasty in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, even after the 10 northern tribes seceded and formed the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12:19-26).
- 14) A point of clarification: Jerusalem was also called "the city of David." This was due to his victory over the Jebusites and capture of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:7 cf. 2 Kings 9:28, 2 Chron. 32:30)
- 15) Joseph was therefore an heir of the ruling dynasty of King David.
- 16) Hence on this fact alone his son was born a legitimate heir to the throne of David (cf. Jer. 33:15-17 also Isa. 11:1-5).
- 17) We will discuss this in more detail when we study the genealogy in Luke 3.
- 18) Luke succinctly states the purpose of the trip to Bethlehem, "in order to register" for the oath.
- 19) The author makes note that Joseph is traveling with Mary.
- 20) As previously discussed, the purpose of the census was to swear an oath to Caesar Augustus.
- 21) The imperial decree stipulated that all the inhabitants of the Empire were to register which applied to both Joseph and Mary.
- 22) Here Luke describes Mary as "engaged" to Joseph.
- 23) The word "engaged" was first used in chapter to describe Mary's relationship with Joseph ("mnesteuo"- **Luke 1:26-27** Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin **engaged** to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.).
- 24) As pointed out in chapter 1, betrothal or engagement was considered to be a part of the marriage procedure and was a binding legal arrangement.
- 25) It must be noted that our modern concept of engagement is far less rigid and formal compared to the betrothal or engagement process in Scripture.
 - a) Typically marriages were arranged by the parents (cf. Gen. 34:4, Judges 14:2-5).
 - b) Although both must remain chaste during this period, the future husband and wife were legally viewed as a married couple (**Matthew 1:18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been **betrothed** to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph **her husband**, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly).

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- c) Illicit sex during the betrothal period was viewed as adultery (cf. Deut. 22:23-24).
 - d) A dowry was customarily paid by the bridegroom to the bride's father (cf. Gen. 31:15, Ex. 22:16-17, 1 Sam. 18:23ff, Hosea 3:2).
 - e) Once a suitable dowry had been paid, the marriage took place and was followed by a celebratory feast.
 - f) The feast would be celebrated at the home of the bride's parents or the groom, to which friends and family were invited (cf. Gen. 29:22, Judges 14:10, John 2:1-11).
 - g) The feasting traditionally lasted a week (Judges 14:17).
 - h) After the marriage and feast the groom would take his new bride to his home and consummate the marriage.
- 26) Although Luke describes Joseph and Mary as "engaged" in Luke 1:27 and 2:5, one might naturally wonder why they weren't married yet.
- 27) From our context in Luke there are no obvious hindrances to their formal marriage.
- 28) One must examine the gospel of Matthew to unearth more details regarding their relationship.
- 29) It is in Matthew's gospel that we learn Joseph and Mary were indeed married prior to the birth of Christ (Matt. 1:20-24).
- 30) It is important to note however that the marriage had yet to be consummated. Mary remained a virgin until after the birth of Christ (Matt. 1:25).
- 31) Therefore Luke uses the term "engagement" not in the general sense. That is, to refer to the stage of their relationship prior to being married.
- 32) Instead the word indicates that although they were formally married, the marriage had yet to be consummated because of her pregnancy.
- 33) Clearly this was a unique situation.
- 34) Luke also points out that Mary was compelled to travel even though she was "with child."
- 35) Indeed Mary was with child; she was in the home stretch in her third trimester of pregnancy.
- 36) No details are given in our context regarding the length of trip or mode of transportation if any.
- 37) Nazareth is about 90 miles from Bethlehem.
- 38) The fact that Mary embarked with Joseph in an advanced state of pregnancy has prompted some interpreters to consider her safe journey as miraculous.
- 39) However Luke doesn't belabor the point.
- 40) More to the point, God took care of Mary so that she safely gave birth to the humanity of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem in fulfillment of His word (**Micah 5:2** " But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you

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One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity." Cf. Matt. 2:5, John 7:42).

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Luke 2:6-7 And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Analysis of vv. 6-7:

- 1) After arriving in Bethlehem for the census, Mary gave birth to Jesus.
- 2) Luke's account of this auspicious event, the 1st Advent of Christ, is rather spare in details.
- 3) He describes Christ as "her first-born son."
- 4) This of course may only be said of His humanity. His deity has been eternally pre-existent and was never born.
- 5) Nevertheless, at the point of His birth, in Jesus we have the extraordinary union of true humanity and true deity (i.e. the hypostatic union).
 - a) The hypostatic union of the human and the divine natures in Christ is given explicit treatment in the N.T. (Phil.2:6-11 also John.1:1, 14, Rom. 9:5, Gal. 4:4-5, Heb.2:14, 1 John 1:1-3).
 - b) These passages make it evident that the eternal Son of God took upon Himself a complete human nature and became a man.
 - c) The act of the incarnation was not a temporary arrangement that ended with His death.
 - d) The continuance of His humanity is reflected in other passages (Matt. 26:64, 28:9, 1 Cor. 15:5-6).
 - e) The human name Jesus is associated with the final judgment (**Philippians 2:10** "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth...").
 - f) The two natures are united without any loss of any essential attributes, and the two natures maintain their separate identities.
 - g) Through the incarnation, the two natures were inseparably united in such a way that there was no mixture or loss of their separate identity, and without loss or transfer of any property or attribute from one nature to the other.
 - h) The union thus consummated in a personal or hypostatic union, in that Christ is one person, not two.
 - i) It should be clear that the divine attributes must necessarily belong to the corresponding divine nature and that human attributes belong to the corresponding human nature. Furthermore, the attributes of both the human and the divine nature belong to the person of Christ.

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- j) The human nature always remains human and the divine nature always remains divine.
- k) Christ is, therefore, both God and man, no less God because of His humanity and no less human because of His deity.
- l) The two natures of Christ cannot lose or transfer a single attribute.
- m) In the incarnation (the phase of His hypostasis from His birth to death), no attribute of the divine nature was changed, though there was a change in the manifestation of His deity.
- n) This is referred to as the kenosis doctrine or the self-emptying of Christ.
 - i) Christ did not surrender the attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience, but He did voluntarily restrict their use.
 - ii) Christ did not exercise His divine attributes to make His way easier, but they had abundant display in His miracles (cf. Acts 2:22).
 - iii) Christ exercised His own power when He commanded the waves to be still and caused Lazarus to be raised from the tomb (Matt. 8:26, John 11:43).
 - iv) Many of His miracles were performed in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14, 18, Acts 10:38).
 - v) The act of kenosis is properly understood to mean that Christ surrendered no attribute of deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and under their limitations.
- o) In terms of manifestation, He gave up the outward appearance of deity.
- p) This union should not be viewed as deity possessing humanity or humanity being indwelt by deity.
- q) This union of the two natures was not one of sympathy alone or merely a harmony of will and operation.
- r) Everything that Jesus Christ spoke came from one of three sources:
 - i) From His deity (John 8:58).
 - ii) From His humanity (John 19:28).
 - iii) From the Hypostatic Union, His whole person (Matt 11:28, John 14:6).
- 6) The adjective “first-born” establishes for Jesus the status and privileges that were His based on the Mosaic law of the first-born child (cf. Ex. 13:2, Num. 3:12-13, 18:15-16, Deut. 21:15-17).
- 7) The term also prepares the reader for Jesus’ presentation as first-born in Jerusalem in v. 23.
- 8) It also alludes to the fact that Jesus was not an only child.
- 9) “First-born” implicitly refers to birth order and Mary’s later children fathered by Joseph (Matt. 12:46, Mark 6:3).
- 10) Micah’s prophecy foretelling of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem was now fulfilled (**Micah 5:2** " But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans

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of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." cf. Matt. 2:1-6, John 7:41-42).

- 11) Other Messianic prophecies were also fulfilled at this point. Some include:
 - a) Gabriel's prophecy in chapter 1 (Luke 1:35).
 - b) He was miraculously born of a virgin (**Isaiah 7:14** "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel, Matt. 1:22-23).
 - c) He is the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15, Gal. 4:4, Heb. 2:14).
 - d) Blessings to the nation through the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 28:14, Matt. 1:1, Acts 3:25, Gal. 3:8).
 - e) First-born status (Psa. 89:27, Rom. 8:29, Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:6).
- 12) Luke describes how Jesus was cared for at birth.
- 13) Mary "wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger..."
- 14) Wrapping in cloths refers to the common practice of wrapping newborns in strips of cloth in order to keep their limbs straight (cf. Ezek. 16:4).¹⁴
- 15) The word "manger" in this context refers to an animal's feeding trough (φάτνη, phatne cf. Luke 13:15, Isa. 1:3).
- 16) Luke makes no mention of the presence of any animals that would normally use the manger.
- 17) Joseph and Mary were unable to secure sufficient accommodations for her to give birth (e.g. a private room).
- 18) The only available accommodations were where the animals were quartered in a stall.
- 19) Without mention of any other company, we may surmise that Joseph bore the responsibility of assisting Mary during the birth.
- 20) The humble and trying circumstances of His birth point to Christ's humiliation during 1st advent (Isa. 53:1-3 cf. Matt. 13:54-57, Luke 9:57-58, John 1:45-46, 2 Cor. 8:9).

¹⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke, A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: 1978), 106.

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Luke 2:8-12 And in the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Stop being afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² "And this *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger."

Analysis of vv. 8-12:

- 1) In v. 8 the scene switches from the birth of Jesus to a group of shepherds out in the fields.
- 2) Luke describes their location as being in the "same region."
- 3) The author is not implying that Jesus was born out in the open near the shepherds.
- 4) The "same region" which refers to the area around Bethlehem.
- 5) It was in the evening and the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks to prevent any predations by thieves or wild animals.
- 6) While the shepherds kept watch, "an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them..."
- 7) The sudden appearance of this angel is reminiscent of Gabriel's visit to Zacharias and Mary in chapter 1.
- 8) Note that an angel of the Lord is an elect angel (Matt. 28:2, Acts 5:19, 12:23).
- 9) However unlike these previous angelic visits, the "glory of the Lord" was manifested to the shepherds.
- 10) The term translated "shone around" occurs 2x in the NT both in Luke's writings (περιλάμπω, perilampo).
- 11) The other occurrence in Acts is used to refer to a great light that shone around Paul on his journey to Damascus (Acts 26:12-20).
- 12) The phrase, "glory of the Lord" is used in reference to God's person and work (Psa. 104:30-31, 138:4-5, Hab. 2:14, 2 Cor. 3:15-18, 8:19 cf. Psa. 19:1).
- 13) In other passages, including our verse, the phrase is used in reference to the manifestation of His presence to mankind.
- 14) To be clear "the glory of the Lord" was not a full manifestation of God's glory as this would have been fatal for the shepherds (Ex. 33:20 cf. 1 Tim. 6:16).
- 15) Here, the glory of the Lord was eclipsed to a degree that was observable yet not harmful.
- 16) God manifested Himself in various ways and to different people throughout Scripture. Some examples:
 - a) His glory was manifested in a cloud during Israel's wanderings in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 16:7-10).
 - b) His appearance on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:16-17).
 - c) The inauguration of Aaron's priesthood (Lev. 9:6-23).
 - d) The revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16:19).

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- e) To Abraham (“God of glory”- Acts 7:2 cf. Gen. 12:1).
 - f) To Stephen (“glory of God”- Acts 7:55).
 - g) At a future date, the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord (Num. 14:21, Isa. 40:5, Rev. 21:23-24).
 - h) The dedication of Solomon’s temple (2 Chron. 7:1-3).
 - i) Interestingly we may observe in 2 Chronicles that on certain occasions the manifestation of His glory were unable to be viewed while others could be observed (cf. 1 Kings 8:10-13).
 - j) To Paul (Acts 22:6-9).
- 17) The sudden appearance of the angel of the Lord was a shock to the shepherds.
- 18) Luke indicates that the shepherds were “terribly frightened.”
- 19) An appearance of an angel frequently elicited fear (Luke 1:13, 30, 24:4-5, Acts 10:3-4).
- 20) The anonymous angel immediately sought to allay their fears.
- 21) He directs the shepherds, “Stop being afraid.”
- a) The revised translation gives the sense of the angel’s imperative to cease an activity in progress.
 - b) The activity in this case is extreme fear.
- 22) Although fear is a common response, it was not the appropriate response; hence the need for the exhortation.
- 23) Others in Scripture had come face to face with an angel and yet didn’t react with fear (cf. 1 Kings 19:5, 7, Acts 5:19, 12:7).
- 24) The angel indicated that his visit wasn’t a harbinger of doom. Instead, he states, “I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people.”
- 25) The verb translated “bring good news” is used in its general sense “to announce or bring good news” (εὐαγγελίζω, euaggelizo, cf. Luke 1:19).
- a) In Luke’s writings the term is used extensively (25 out of the 54 occurrences in the NT are in Luke’s gospel and Acts).
 - b) Apart from the general announcement of good news, the term is more frequently used by Luke to refer to the proclamation of the Gospel of eternal salvation through Christ (Luke 3:18, 9:6, Acts 16:10 cf. Acts 8:12).
 - c) We will see in Luke 4 that Christ was appointed to proclaim the good news regarding Himself which was a fulfillment of prophecy (Luke 4:18-21 cf. Isa. 61:1).
- 26) The angel’s message was not only good news but one of great joy “for all the people.”
- 27) In a narrow sense “all the people” refers to Israel but in a wider sense the good news is for the entire world.
- 28) Jesus Christ is not merely the King of the Jews but also the Savior of all humanity (**Matthew 2:1-2** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him." cf. Titus 2:11, 1 John 4:14 also see John 1:49).

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- 29) In v. 11 the angel expresses both the content of the good news and the reason for great joy.
- 30) He declares, "For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
- 31) The angel indicates to the shepherds that this momentous birth occurred "today."
- 32) However we must recognize that the Jewish reckoning of time is different than our system.
- 33) In our current system of calculating time a new day begins at 12:00am.
- 34) However in the Jewish reckoning of time in Israel in 3 BC the new day began at sundown.
- 35) Bear in mind that the shepherds were watching their sheep at night so the new day had begun only a short time before at sundown.
- 36) The "city of David" refers to Bethlehem which was widely known to be David's "hometown" (**John 7:42** "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" cf. **Micah 5:2** " But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.").
- 37) Note that the angel declares to the shepherds that this child "has been born **for you**."
- 38) The Greek pronoun translated "for you" connotes the birth was for the benefit of interest of the shepherds.
- 39) Indeed in a larger sense the birth of Jesus Christ was for the benefit of all mankind.
- 40) The One who was born in Bethlehem is described as a "Savior" (**σωτήρ**, soter).
- 41) A "savior" is one who saves, rescues, or delivers.
- 42) In the Greek this term was not exclusively a Christian term.
- 43) The term "savior" was an epithet frequently used of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine and healing.
 - a) The cult of Asclepius was very prominent in the Greco-Roman world.
 - b) Those who were ill would flock to "asclepieia" or healing temples to be cured of their various maladies.
 - c) According to legend two of his daughters were Hygeia (Hygiene- disease prevention) and Panacea (Universal remedy- goddess of healing).
 - d) Snakes were considered sacred by Asclepius and were often used in healing rituals.
 - e) The rod of Asclepius is a snake entwined staff that is even today is a symbol of medicine.
- 44) In addition, the word was applied to the Roman emperor, other Hellenistic rulers, and used in the mystery religions.
- 45) Although not exclusively a Christian term, "savior" is clearly used without any pagan connotation by the angel.
- 46) In various passages in the OT, God describes Himself as Israel's savior (Isa. 45:21, 49:26, Hosea 13:4).
- 47) Yet the appellation "Savior" in our verse is used of the newborn Jesus Christ.

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- 48) When used of Christ it is truly unique as it refers to His role as THE Savior of all mankind (John 4:32, 2 Tim. 1:10, 2 Peter 3:18).
- 49) The newborn is further identified by the angel as “Christ” and “Lord.”
- 50) The title “Christ” refers to one who has been anointed (χριστός, christos).
- 51) The word “christos” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “mashiach” meaning “anointed one” (מָשִׁיחַ, mashiach).
- 52) “Mashiach” is used of priests and the kings of Israel.
- 53) Both were consecrated into office by the ceremony of anointing with oil (cf. Lev. 8:12, 30:30, 1 Kings 1:39).
- 54) The one who was anointed was in a sense commissioned and set apart to carry out God’s purpose.
- 55) In a unique instance it is used metaphorically of Cyrus (Isa. 45:1).
- 56) It is applied to the Levitical priests as an adjective, “the anointed priest” (Lev. 4:3, 5, 16, 6:22).
- 57) The kings of Israel were considered the “Lord’s anointed.”
 - a) Saul is referred to as “His anointed” (1 Sam. 12:3, 5).
 - b) Saul’s replacement was considered the “Lord’s anointed” by Samuel (1 Sam. 6:6-13).
 - c) The fact that Saul was the “Lord’s anointed” deterred David from harming Saul (1 Sam. 24:6, 10, 26:9, 11, 23).
 - d) Following Saul’s demise, David was God’s “anointed” (2 Sam. 22:51, 2 Sam. 23:1, Psa. 18:50).
 - e) As His anointed king, David was fully relied on God for strength and protection (Psa. 20:6, 28:8, 84:9).
- 58) In relation to our context in Luke, “the Anointed One” or Messiah who was promised had now been born.
- 59) Jesus was anointed or set apart by God to provide salvation for all during 1st Advent (cf. Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38).
- 60) Although 2nd Advent He will eventually subjugate those who oppose Him and reign as King in Jerusalem (Psa. 2:1ff).
- 61) Thirdly, Jesus is referred to as “Lord” by the angel (κύριος, kurios).
- 62) The term is generally used of one who is in a position of authority (Acts 25:26).
- 63) Yet in reference to Jesus we see that He and the Lord, YHWH are co-equal (cf. Psa. 110:1).
- 64) The title of “Lord” bestowed by the angel indicates that Jesus’ authority is absolute (cf. Phil. 2:11).
- 65) It was used as a general title for Jesus during His incarnation and after in recognition of His status and authority (cf. Luke 7:6, Col. 1:10, 1 Thess. 4:17).
- 66) In v. 12 the angel reveals a confirmatory sign to the shepherds that will establish the veracity of his words.
- 67) Namely that the shepherds “will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger.”

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Luke 2:13-14 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army praising God, and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

Analysis of vv. 13-14:

- 1) V. 13 opens with a second confirmatory sign to the shepherds.
- 2) Suddenly "a multitude of the heavenly host" appeared with the angel.
- 3) Initially only one was on the scene, but immediately after the first angel finished speaking, he was joined by multitude of other elect angels.
- 4) Although the specific number is not revealed our term "multitude" refers to a large or great number of angels (πλῆθος, plethos).
- 5) It wouldn't be unreasonable to suppose that thousands upon thousands were present based on this momentous occasion (cf. Dan. 7:10, Rev. 5:11).
- 6) The multitude of angels are described as the "heavenly host"
- 7) "Heavenly" refers to the multitude as belonging to heaven.
- 8) As elect angels, heaven is their natural abode (cf. Psalms 33:6).
- 9) The word "host" literally means an army (στρατία, stratia).
- 10) In the OT, the word frequently translated "host" also means an army (צבא, tsaba-Neh. 9:6).
- 11) God is the "Lord of Hosts [Armies]" both in heaven and on the Earth; He marshals them according to His will (cf. Jer. 43:10-12, 44:11, 46:25-26, Nahum 2:13).
- 12) Only on rare occasions are the forces of God's great heavenly army visible to humanity (cf. 2 Kings 6:17).
- 13) It certainly must have been an awe inspiring display for the shepherds.
- 14) The fact that there is a "heavenly army" serves to remind us that we are in an angelic conflict.
- 15) In addition to fighting the indwelling OSN, the believer must fight and resist the stratagems sponsored by Satan and his demons (2 Cor. 2:11, Eph. 6:12).
- 16) Consequently we must "take up the full armor of God" which necessarily includes the FGHS, Bible doctrine, and biblical discernment (Eph. 6:13ff, James 4:7).
- 17) This is especially true for believers in these last days.
- 18) We face an unprecedented onslaught of evil and demonic opposition from various quarters.
- 19) Rudimentary principles and applications:
 - a) The believer who routinely misses class and allows other "things" to take precedence over learning Bible doctrine is spiritually compromised.
 - b) The reasons for regularly missing class are legion and range from the fantastical to the downright nonsensical (e.g. sports, uncomfortable chair, interruption of sleep cycle et al.).
 - c) Apathy, rationalization, and/or perpetual excuses in this area demonstrate a lukewarm attitude toward the learning and application of the Word of God.

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- d) Apathy, rationalization, and/or perpetual excuses set the believer up for a fall.
 - e) Fools do not recognize the importance of Bible doctrine (Prov. 1:7, 22, 14:16, 18:2, cf. Prov. 28:26).
 - f) Conversely wise believers recognize and embrace the importance of Bible doctrine. Examples:
 - i) Job paid tribute to the importance of wisdom or Bible doctrine (Job 28:1ff).
 - ii) Moses made it clear to Israel that one's attitude toward God's wisdom or commandments would determine blessing or cursing on a personal and national level (Deut. 28:1ff, 30:11-18).
 - iii) Moses' successor Joshua was exhorted personally by God regarding its importance (Josh. 1:7-8).
 - iv) Joshua in turn affirmed the importance of God's word to the people (Josh. 22:5, 23:6-16, 24:25-28).
 - v) David understood the importance of God's wisdom (Psa. 1:1-3, 19:7-11, 37:30-31).
 - vi) Psalm 119 details the benefits of God's word (Psa. 119:1ff).
 - (1) Obedience eventuates in great blessing (vv. 1-2).
 - (2) Instruction helps control the OSN (vv.9, 11).
 - (3) Provides inner strength (v. 28).
 - (4) Produces reverence, literally fear for God (v. 38).
 - (5) Produces confidence (v. 46).
 - (6) Gives comfort in adverse circumstances (v. 50-52).
 - (7) More valuable than material wealth (v. 72).
 - (8) Provides guidance and discernment (vv. 98-100).
 - (9) Bible doctrine is absolute truth (v. 160).
 - (10) Provides inner peace (v. 165).
 - vii) Solomon wrote at length on the importance of Bible doctrine.
 - (1) He was exhorted by his father, David (1 Kings 2:1ff).
 - (2) The knowledge of Divine wisdom is foundational to spiritual growth (Prov. 1:1-6).
 - (3) Adherence to Divine viewpoint will result in spiritual and physical blessings (Prov. 3:1-26, 4:10, 20-22, 8:32, 24:3-4).
 - viii) Ezra and Nehemiah asserted its importance to the returning exiles (Neh. 8:1ff).
 - ix) Jesus Christ (Matt. 4:4, John 14:15, 21-24).
 - x) Paul (Rom. 15:4, 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - g) Be eager like the Bereans and seek Divine viewpoint (**Acts 17:11** Now these [the Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, *to see* whether these things were so.”).
- 20) Various demonic stratagems:
- a) Promotion of false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1-2, Rev. 2:24).

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- b) Promotion of idolatry and false religion (1 Cor. 10:19-20 cf. Deut. 32:17, Psa. 106:37, Rev. 9:20).
- c) Promotion of selfishness/selfish ambition (James 3:14-16 cf. Phil. 2:3).
 - i) Satan's bid to be "like the Most High" epitomizes selfish ambition (**Isaiah 14:12-14** "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!"¹³ "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north.'¹⁴ 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.)).
 - ii) Focus on one's own interests hinders focus on God and his plan.
 - iii) For many the attainment of one's goals or desires supplants obedience to God's directive will.
 - iv) A selfish mindset is completely contrary to the attitude we ought to have as believers (**Colossians 3:1-3** If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Cf. **Romans 8:5** For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.)).
 - v) Selfishness may hamper the use of one's spiritual gift, a gift which is intended to be used for the common good of the local church (1 Cor. 12:7ff, 14:12).
 - vi) Therefore, in relation to the local church or "body," the believer that doesn't use his God-given spiritual gift is like a useless appendage.
 - vii) Selfishness will also hinder looking out for the needs of others especially those in the local church (**Philippians 2:3-4** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Cf. Rom. 14:19).
 - viii) A selfish mindset is diametrically opposed to Christ's attitude (**Philippians 2:5-8** Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.)).
- d) Influence negative and/or careless believers (cf. 1 Chron. 21:1, Matt. 16:23, Acts 5:3, Gal. 3:1).
- e) Influence of world rulers (Dan. 10:13).
- f) Continued obfuscation of the gospel to those who are -v (Mark, 4:15, 2 Cor. 4:4).
- g) General solicitation to engage in evil (cf. Matt. 4:1-3, 1 Thess. 3:5).
- h) Possession of unbelievers (Luke 22:3).
- i) Deceit (2 Cor. 11:3-14, Rev. 12:9, 20:8).

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- j) The persecution of believers (Rev. 2:10).
- 21) God and his angels oppose these forces and influences of evil.
- 22) Some titles for God's angels include:
 - a) Angel of the Lord (1 Chron. 21:15, Luke 2:9).
 - b) Angels of God (Gen. 28:12).
 - c) Angels of Heaven (Matt. 24:36).
 - d) His angels (**Matthew 4:6** and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You'; and 'On *their* hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone."").
 - e) Holy angels (Luke 9:26, Rev. 14:10).
 - f) Mighty angels ("mighty" indicates great power and strength, **2 Thessalonians 1:7** and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire).
 - g) Elect angels (trans. "chosen"- **1 Timothy 5:21** I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *His* chosen angels, to maintain these *principles* without bias, doing nothing in a *spirit of partiality*).
- 23) Various orders of elect angels:
 - a) Cherubim: messengers and guardians (**Genesis 3:24** So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life cf. Dan. 8:16, Luke 1:19).
 - b) Seraphim: attribute praise and glory to God (**Isaiah 6:2-3** Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.").
 - c) The living creatures: these beings seemingly possess similar traits of both cherubim and seraphim (Rev. 4:6-9, 14:3 cf. Ezek. 1:1ff, 10:18-22).
- 24) Indeed a primary responsibility of God's army, composed of elect angels, is to combat the forces of Satan (cf. Dan. 10:13ff, Rev. 12:7-9).
- 25) Other ministries of elect angels:
 - a) Carry out punitive actions against individuals, societies, and even nations according to God's directives (Gen. 18:16-26, 19:12-13, 2 Sam. 24:15-16, Psa. 78:49, Acts 12:20-23).
 - b) They play an active role in the judgments carried out during the Tribulation (Rev. 16:1-21, 18:1ff).
 - c) Provide guidance and encouragement to believers (Matt. 28:5-7, Luke 1:19, 2:10-11, Acts 8:26, 27:23-24).
 - d) Provide protection and deliverance for believers (Dan. 6:22, Matt. 18:10, Heb. 1:14).
 - e) Transport the souls of believers to the 3rd heaven upon death (Luke 16:22).
 - f) They obediently carry out the directive will of God (Psa. 103:19-21).
- 26) Returning to our context in Luke 2, we see the multitude of angels praising God.

Luke 2

- 27) Offering praise to God is another ministry of elect angels (Isa. 6:1-3, Psa. 103:20-21, 148:2, Rev. 4:8, 5:11-12).
- 28) In v. 14 the multitude of angels declare, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."
- 29) The elect angels are ascribing "glory to God."
- 30) Our term "glory" is used differently in our verse than in v. 9. (δόξα, doxa, **Luke 2:9** And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the **glory** of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.).
- 31) Luke's use of "glory" in v. 9 refers to an observable aspect of God's glory (i.e. radiant light).
- 32) That is, a limited physical manifestation of His presence.
- 33) Whereas "glory" is used here in recognition of His perfect essence and plan.
- 34) The angels assign honor, renown, and status for bringing to fulfillment what He had promised. Namely the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
- 35) Indeed God fulfills all His promises (Psa. 132:11, Rom. 4:16ff, James 2:5).
- 36) He can do nothing less as He is absolute truth (Psa. 31:5, Titus 1:2).
- 37) His veracity and faithfulness should engender confidence in the believer (cf. Psalm 9:10, 40:4).
- 38) "The highest" is a synonym for the third heaven, God's dwelling place.
- 39) The "peace" which is said to be present on earth among men" doesn't refer to an inner disposition or the absence of conflict among mankind (εἰρήνη, eirene).
 - a) Roman legions continued armed conflicts throughout the Empire at this time.
 - b) An inner disposition of peace and harmony certainly didn't characterize the general populace in Israel or elsewhere.
- 40) The "peace" referred to in our context generally refers to the whole sum of blessings associated with the coming of the Messiah.
- 41) Yet of the many blessings "peace" is especially related to ph. 1 peace with God.
- 42) This also known as reconciliation.
- 43) Logically some type of conflict or disharmony precedes reconciliation.
- 44) Man in his natural unregenerate state is hostile toward God and is an object of His wrath due to his sinful state (Eph. 2:1-3, Col. 1:21-23).
- 45) Therefore we may say that unregenerate mankind's relationship with God is marked by an absence of peace and a plentitude of animosity.
- 46) However the angels refer to a "peace among men."
- 47) This peace or reconciliation was effectively secured through the perfect person and work of Jesus Christ.
- 48) At this point Christ is a newborn so the angelic declaration foretell of His successful 1st advent ministry.
- 49) From the timeframe of the angelic announcement the Messiah has just been born and God's plan is progressing to fruition.
- 50) He would reconcile or secure peace between mankind and God by bearing the penalties of our sin (Eph. 2:13-16, Col. 1:19-20).
 - a) Peace with God is only gained through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1-2).

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- b) It is a potential for all mankind based on Christ's work on the cross but it is only realized when one believes in Jesus (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-19).
- c) Saving faith makes the potential for peace a reality.
- d) The good news of salvation is referred to as "the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15).
- 51) It is God's desire for all mankind to realize this "peace" through faith in Christ (1 Tim. 2:4 cf. Ezek. 18:23, 32, 2 Peter 3:9).
- 52) Nevertheless He allows every individual to choose his own path.
- 53) By and large the Jews during 1st advent and after were antagonistic to Christ and rejected the offer of "peace" (**Luke 19:41-44** And when He approached, He saw the city [Jerusalem] and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ "For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." **John 1:11** He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.).
- 54) However there were exceptions with the result that Paul speaks of a positive remnant that did accept Christ in Romans (Rom. 11:1ff).
- 55) Those that accept Christ are effectively reconciled to God and are viewed as children of God (**John 1:12-13** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.).
- 56) Furthermore, in connection with last phrase in v. 14, those who are at peace with Him through faith in Christ are those "with whom He is pleased."
- 57) He is favorably disposed toward those who believe in His Son.
- 58) Again free-will is an intrinsic trait of every human.
- 59) The individual volition of every person is allowed to operate without coercion.
- 60) God doesn't arbitrarily select some and not others to be saved as Calvinism asserts (i.e. Calvin's concept of predestination).
- 61) An individual's volition will be manifested in either a positive or negative sense in response to the Gospel.
- 62) Regrettably most members of the human race will be negative to the Gospel (cf. Matt. 7:13-14).
- 63) These are classified as the wicked. These types frequently lead a life filled with angst and strife as a by-product of their unbelief (**Psalm 10:4** The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*. All his thoughts are, "There is no God. Cf. Job 27:13, Psa. 1:4, 11:6, Prov. 4:19, Isa. 57:19-21).
- 64) In contrast to the wicked, those who are positive will be objects of blessing (Psa. 32:10, Prov. 3:33).
- 65) Those "with whom He is pleased" are also referred to in other passages as "the chosen" or "elect."
- 66) Both terms are related to God's choice in eternity past of who would become His children through faith in Christ (1 Peter 1:1-2).

Luke 2

Luke 2:15-20 And it came about when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds *began* saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. ¹⁷ And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Analysis of vv. 15-20:

- 1) Following their sudden appearance and astonishing announcement to the shepherds, the elect angels departed.
- 2) Luke indicates that the angels went away "into heaven" ("ouranos").
- 3) This would be natural as "heaven" is the dwelling place of God and His elect angels (**Matthew 18:10** "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven., **1 Peter 3:21-22** And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him).
- 4) The shepherds, no doubt still utterly amazed at what they had just experienced, hurriedly decided to travel to Bethlehem.
- 5) They did so with haste in order to see firsthand what the Lord had revealed to them.
- 6) Once in Bethlehem they eagerly searched for the baby that had been born that day in the city.
- 7) They had been told by the angel in v.12, "this *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger."
- 8) Their search was rewarded.
- 9) They found Mary, Joseph, and most importantly, "the baby as He lay in the manger."
- 10) The eagerness of the shepherds is commendable.
- 11) They had a genuine interest in discovering the identity of the Savior.
- 12) Upon seeing the child in the manger, they made known what the angels had said about Him (vv. 10-14).
- 13) From the context their immediate audience was Mary and Joseph and any others who happened to be present.
- 14) Those who heard their report reacted with amazement.
- 15) Yet Luke indicates a different reaction on the part of Mary.
- 16) She kept in mind and gave careful consideration to the details revealed by the shepherds.
- 17) Their report provided additional details about Jesus given to her previously by Gabriel (Luke 1:26-38).

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- 18) It provided further confirmation to Mary about the unique identity of her newborn child.
- 19) Luke indicates, “Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.”
- 20) In our verse “treasured up” is to protect or hold in one’s memory, hence to treasure up (“*suntereo*”).
- 21) The verb in the Greek text indicates that Mary continued over a period of time to “treasure up all these things.”
- 22) “All these things” refers to all of the details that had been revealed to her about Jesus from Gabriel’s announcement, to her stay with Elizabeth, and finally to the shepherd’s report.
- 23) Luke also states that Mary was “pondering” these details in her heart.
- 24) The term translated “pondering” gives further emphasis that Mary was giving very careful thought to all these things (“*sumballo*”).
- 25) Mary was not only being careful to remember all the things revealed about her son, she was also thinking very seriously about the ramifications of His birth.
- 26) Of course His birth and His life were exceedingly significant to all of mankind.
- 27) He was the Son of God incarnate; deity and humanity in union with one another (i.e. the hypostatic union).
 - a) The Scriptures also testify that His body possessed flesh and blood (Heb.2:14; 1 John 4:2, 2 John 1:7).
 - b) However as the Son of God, He was also deity.
 - c) Christ’s human and the divine natures are given explicit treatment in the NT (Phil.2:6-11 cf. John.1:1, 14, 1 John.1:1-3).
 - d) The two natures are united without any loss of any essential attributes, and the two natures maintain their separate identities.
- 28) In all fairness, the essential nature of her son was difficult to comprehend (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16).
- 29) In v. 20 Luke reports, “And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.”
- 30) What they had heard and seen made a significant impact on the shepherds.
- 31) As they returned to their flock, the shepherds were glorifying and praising God for the birth of the Savior.
- 32) They were given proof of all that the angel had foretold (i.e. the baby lying in a manger).
- 33) Furthermore we may infer that Mary and Joseph shared some of the details regarding the extraordinary events of the previous 9 months.
- 34) This provided the basis for their praise.
- 35) They were overjoyed at the birth of the Savior and gave a good witness to all in their presence.

Luke 2

Luke 2:21-24 And when eight days were completed before His circumcision, His name was *then* called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.²² And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every *first-born* male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"),²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Analysis of vv. 21-24:

- 1) Following the departure of the shepherds, Luke brings the focus back on the newborn Savior.
- 2) Eight days after the birth, the child was circumcised in compliance with the Mosaic Law (Lev. 12:1-3 cf. Phil. 3:5).
- 3) Luke doesn't reveal the location of the family at this point.
- 4) They intended to present Christ in Jerusalem so there would be little point in returning to Galilee when Jerusalem was in such close proximity.
- 5) We may presume that they remained in Bethlehem or its environs until their trip to Jerusalem.
- 6) Circumcisions were not required to be performed at the temple, but could be done in one's home.
- 7) Biblical significance of circumcision:
 - a) Divine mandate first instituted by God with Abraham (Gen. 17:12, 21:4).
 - i) Circumcision entails the surgical removal of the male foreskin as a religious ritual.
 - ii) It served as an overt sign of God's Covenant with Abraham.
 - iii) Abraham himself was circumcised when he was 99 yrs. old.
 - iv) From that point forward all Jewish male children were to be circumcised on the 8th day after birth.
 - b) The ritual was later mandated in the Mosaic Law.
 - c) Compliance with this command was a very serious matter in the Age of Israel.
 - i) Moses failed to circumcise his son and it nearly cost him his life (Ex. 4:24-26).
 - ii) The Exodus Generation, a generation of spiritual malcontents, failed to have their sons circumcised in Egypt or in the wilderness (Josh. 5:3-7).
 - iii) Failure to be circumcised resulted in excommunication from Jewish society (**Genesis 17:14** "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.").
 - iv) Gentiles or "foreigners" were not permitted to celebrate the feast of Passover unless they were circumcised (Ex. 12:43, 48).
 - d) Despite the requirement of physical circumcision during the Age of Israel, "inner" or spiritual circumcision was of primary importance.

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- i) The inner circumcision was synonymous with obedience to God's directive will (Lev. 26:41, Deut.10:16, 30:6, Jer.4:4, Ezek. 44:7).
 - ii) Although the rite is not a requirement in the Church Age, Paul affirms the prominence of "spiritual" circumcision over the physical (cf. Phil. 3:3).
 - iii) The "true" circumcision is composed of both Jews and Gentiles who believed in Christ apart from the observance of any physical ritual.
 - iv) Furthermore, in Col. 2:11 Paul refers to it as "a circumcision made without hands."
 - (1) It is a feature of our spiritual union with Christ.
 - (2) Note that every Church Age believer is circumcised in Christ.
 - (3) In contrast to the physical ritual, it is completely unseen and doesn't result in an external, visible mark.
 - (4) God the Holy Spirit performs the inward circumcision at the point of faith in Christ (Rom. 2:28-29).
 - (5) The circumcision is nonphysical so the statement "removal of the fleshly body" may appear to be enigmatic.
 - (6) However, it must be understood that "the fleshly body" is a reference to the OSN.
 - (a) Scripture demonstrates that the OSN resides in the genetic code of the human body (Psa. 51:5 also see Job 14:4, 15:16, 25:4-6).
 - (b) The "flesh" and "body" are frequently cited as the place of sin and lust (Rom. 8:1-9, 12, Gal. 5:16, Eph.2:3, 2 Pet. 2:10, 18).
 - (7) The "fleshly body" or OSN is analogous to foreskin which is removed during circumcision.
 - (8) In the spiritual circumcision, the "removal" of the OSN is accomplished at salvation.
- 8) We must continue to bear in mind that the birth of Christ and the events of His life transpired during the age of Israel.
 - 9) Therefore Christ was subject to the various rituals of the Law.
 - 10) In Christ's case, He was born under, raised up, and perfectly obeyed the Mosaic Law (Gal. 4:4 cf. Matt. 5:17).
 - 11) In addition to being circumcised the child was officially given a name (cf. Luke 1:59).
 - 12) The child was named "Jesus."
 - 13) Luke affirms the name "Jesus" as "the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb."
 - 14) The name was given even before His divine conception.
 - 15) We see that Gabriel's words to Mary have now been fulfilled (Luke 1:31).
 - 16) "Jesus" is the Greek form of the name "Joshua/Jeshua" which is derived from the Hebrew יֵשׁוּעַ, Yeshua and the earlier form יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Yehoshua.
 - 17) The Hebrew forms are based on יְהוָה, YHWH and יֵשׁעַ, yeshu: salvation, deliverance.

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- 18) Ergo, the name “Jesus” means “YHWH saves” or “YHWH/Lord is salvation.”
- 19) The name was common among the Jews (cf. Luke 3:29, Acts 7:45, Col. 4:11).
- 20) However there was only one Jesus the Messiah (Matt. 1:16).
- 21) The gospel of Matthew reveals that Joseph was also instructed to name the child, Jesus (Matt. 1:21-25).
- 22) As the account in Matthew points out, the name Jesus was appropriate because He would provide salvation from sin.
- 23) V. 22-24 recount the presentation of Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem.
- 24) The first element that arises is the issue of purification.
- 25) Luke indicates, “When the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.”
- 26) The days of purification refer to the purification of the mother of a newborn child.
- 27) Under the Law various circumstances could occur that would render a person ritually or ceremonially unclean, child birth being but one circumstance.
- 28) A state of uncleanness symbolized the contamination of sin, whether through the OSN or personal sin.
- 29) Therefore, for the one who was unclean it was necessary to be purified.
- 30) Basic categories of ceremonial uncleanness and required purification in the OT:
 - a) Uncleanness in regard to food (Lev. 11:1ff).
 - b) Uncleanness in association with death (Lev. 21:1-4, Num. 5:2, 19:11-22).
 - c) Uncleanness in association with leprosy (Lev. 13:1ff, 14:1ff).
 - d) Uncleanness in connection with bodily discharges (Lev. 12:1ff, 15:1ff).
- 31) The priesthood was responsible for making distinctions between the clean and the unclean (Lev. 10:10 cf. Ezek. 22:26, 44:23).
- 32) According to the Law, Mary had to wait 33 days from the time of Jesus’ circumcision before she and Joseph were able to present Him in Jerusalem.
- 33) Interestingly, Luke uses a plural pronoun when he states, “The days for **their** purification.”
- 34) This implies that Joseph had somehow become unclean.
- 35) Yet in Leviticus, the Law stipulated only that the woman was unclean from child birth.
- 36) Within our text it’s problematic to determine the cause of Joseph’s uncleanness (Lev. 5:2-7).
- 37) The emphasis here is that the required time for their purification had been completed in obedience to the Law.
- 38) The purpose of bringing Jesus to Jerusalem was to present Him to the Lord.
- 39) This alludes to the requirement of presenting the first born to the Lord according to the requirements of the Law.
- 40) Luke states the requirement in v. 23, “Every *first-born* male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.”
- 41) His statement is a paraphrase derived from Exodus and is not an exact quotation (cf. Ex. 13:2, 12, 15).
- 42) The law pertained to both man and animals.

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- 43) The first-born of animals were set apart to God and then consumed by the owner and his household (Deut. 15:20).
- 44) God set apart the nation of Israel as His first-born (Ex. 4:22).
- 45) Although there is no mention in our context, the presentation of the first-born male involved paying a redemption price (Num. 18:16 cf. Num. 3:40-51).
- 46) The process of consecration and redemption commemorated God's redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 13:13-16).
- 47) It also conveyed the principle that whether man, beast or produce, the first or best parts were dedicated to God (Neh. 10:35-36).
- 48) Yet many of the rituals under the Law portrayed the future work of the Christ (Heb. 10:1).
- 49) Symbolically the process taught that God would send Christ to redeem humanity from enslavement to sin.
- 50) Redemption focuses on the deliverance of the individual from a "futile way of life" under the domination of spiritual death and the OSN; our freedom was purchased by Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).
 - a) Mankind is viewed as slaves to the OSN.
 - b) As slaves, we are totally incapable of gaining freedom apart from Christ's work.
 - c) As the freeman, Christ was willing, able, and qualified to purchase our freedom.
 - d) Christ purchased our freedom by bearing the sins of humanity on the cross (Gal. 5:1, Col. 1:14, Heb. 9:12, 15 cf. Rom. 6:22).
- 51) In regard to the first-born, "to be called holy" is to be dedicated or set apart to God.
- 52) Our term "holy" connotes being dedicated or consecrated to the service of God (*ἅγιος, hagios*, cf. Mark 6:20, Eph. 3:5, 1 Peter 1:15-16).
- 53) Our context provides a unique situation where the newborn God-Man is to be dedicated to His heavenly Father.
- 54) In Colossians Paul asserts that Jesus Christ is "the first-born of all creation" (Col 1:5).
 - a) "First-born" relates to the tradition of primogeniture or the rights of the first born son.
 - b) The eldest son, by virtue of being born first, was given a birthright which accorded to him a double portion of inheritance. In addition, he would assume family leadership upon the death of the father (2 Chron. 21:1-3 cf. 1 Chron. 5:1).
 - c) First-born is a term that would be well known to the Colossians and Paul applies it in an exclusive sense to Christ (*πρωτότοκος, prototokos*).
 - d) In relation to Christ, His "first-born" status is applicable in the following areas:
 - i) He is eternally pre-existent. As eternal God the Son, He has always been the "first-born" (John 10:30, 17:5).
 - ii) His humanity, via the virgin birth, became first-born in hypostasis. At birth, His humanity and deity were perfectly united (Matt. 1:25, Luke 2:7).
 - iii) As the glorified God-man, He achieved first-born status at His resurrection (Psa. 2:7, Rom. 8:29, Col. 1:18, Rev. 1:5).
- 55) As firstborn, Christ has been appointed the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2).

Luke 2

- 56) After a concise explanation of the law of the first born, Luke reverts to the purpose of Mary and Joseph's visit to Jerusalem.
- 57) The mandated period of time for purification from childbirth had been fulfilled.
- 58) As previously discussed Mary's (and apparently Joseph's) ritual defilement portrayed contamination from sin.
- 59) Therefore according to the "Law of Lord" a sacrifice was required.
- 60) Typically this would involve the sacrifice of a lamb with a young pigeon or turtledove.
- 61) The former for a burnt offering and the latter for a sin offering (Lev. 12:6).
- 62) Yet the Law allowed for an alternative sacrifice for the one who had insufficient means to procure a lamb (Lev. 12:8).
- 63) Luke mentions only "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons" in reference to Mary and Joseph's sacrificial offering.
- 64) We may infer that they could not afford a lamb for the burnt offering.
- 65) If Joseph had somehow been defiled in the childbirth as the language suggests, he would also be required to offer a sin offering (Lev. 5:3-10).
- 66) If one became unclean in the manner of Joseph and was unable to even afford two turtledoves or two young pigeons, he was permitted to offer a measure of fine flour (Lev. 5:11-12).
- 67) The burnt offering:
 - a) It was consumed by fire (Lev. 1:1-17).
 - b) The sacrifice portrayed Christ's perfect work on the cross.
 - c) It also depicted God's acceptance of Christ's work which is also referred to as a "fragrant aroma" (Eph. 5:2).
- 68) The sin offering:
 - a) The sacrifice taught that Christ died for all sin, intentional and unintentional (Lev. 4:2-3, 1 John 2:2, 4:9-10).
 - b) He was the substitutionary sacrifice for the sin of humanity (Rom. 8:3, Heb. 7:26-27, 10:10-12).
- 69) The different options for sacrifice illustrate that the plan of God is accessible to all regardless of socio-economic status (cf. Luke 21:1-4, Rom. 12:1).

Luke 2

Luke 2:25-28 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸ then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

Analysis of vv. 25-28:

- 1) The phrase, “And behold” serves as an attention grabber.
- 2) Luke introduces a new character and event to the narrative.
- 3) At the same time that Mary and Joseph were visiting the Temple to redeem Jesus and offer a sacrifice for purification, Simeon is introduced.
- 4) Simeon was a common name among the Jews and was commonly rendered, Simon according to the Greek (Gen. 29:33, Joshua 19:1, Luke 3:30, also Acts 13:1, 15:14, 2 Peter 1:1).
- 5) Luke provides the only mention of Simeon in Scripture.
- 6) Although little is known about his personal circumstances, we may conclude from Luke’s description alone that Simeon was a God-fearing Jew.
- 7) Simeon is described as “righteous and devout.”
- 8) Our adjective “righteous” indicates that Simeon was diligent to live in obedience to God’s directives (**δίκαιος**, *dikaios*- cf. Luke 1:5-6, Eph. 6:1).
- 9) The second adjective, “devout,” describes Simeon’s attitude of reverence toward God and His Law (**εὐλαβής**, *eulabes*- cf. Acts 22:12).
- 10) The term also carries the nuance of being “cautious” and so “careful in religious duties.”¹⁵
- 11) Fitting synonyms to “devout” include God-fearing, pious, and reverent (Acts. 10:22, Heb. 5:7, 12:28).
- 12) Although Simeon was a spiritual stalwart being “righteous and devout,” he like every other believer had to fight the indwelling OSN (Rom. 13:13-14).
- 13) The fact that he is described in this manner indicates that he took a serious approach to God and his plan.
- 14) It began with having the proper mind-set and was followed by the appropriate application of God’s word.
- 15) Living in the Church Age, it is also incumbent upon believers to be both righteous and devout in our Christian lives.
- 16) We are to be serious about implementing God’s will in our individual niches (cf. 1 Thess. 5:6, 8, 1 Peter 4:7).
- 17) In the Church Age this will not be accomplished apart from a doctrinally sound local church (1 Tim. 3:15, Heb. 10:25).

¹⁵ Marshal, The Gospel of Luke, 118.

Luke 2

- 18) It is a further testament to Simeon's devoutness that he was "looking for the consolation of Israel."
- 19) The phrase translated "looking for" means to look forward to something or to wait with expectancy concerning a future event (προσδέχομαι, *prosdéchomai*- Titus 2:13, Jude 1:21).
- 20) The object of Simeon's expectation is "the consolation of Israel."
- 21) "Consolation" denotes help, encouragement or comfort (παράκλησις, *paraklesis*- 2 Cor. 1:4).
- 22) The consolation of Israel was brought about by the birth of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 40:1ff).
- 23) This is what Simeon, the righteous and devout Jew, eagerly expected.
- 24) Furthermore, the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon which enabled him to recognize the newborn Messiah.
- 25) Note that Luke indicates that the Holy Spirit was "upon" Simeon and not indwelling or filling him.
- 26) This is consistent with the typical "abiding" ministry of the Holy Spirit during the Age of Israel (Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 14:19, 15:14, 1 Sam. 16:13, Luke 3:22, 4:18).
- 27) Unlike in the Church Age the filling of God the Holy Spirit was the exception during the Age of Israel (Ex. 35:31, Luke 1:67, John 14:16-17 cf. Acts 9:17, 13:9, 52, Eph. 3:18, 2 Tim. 1:14).
- 28) It had been revealed to Simeon that he wouldn't die before seeing the Messiah.
- 29) The term "revealed" in our verse means to impart a divine revelation or warning (χρηματίζω, *chrematizo*- Matt. 2:12, 22, Acts 10:22, Heb. 8:5, 11:7).
- 30) We see that this revelation came through the direct ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- 31) He had been waiting presumably for many years to see the Messiah and now he would be an eyewitness.
- 32) In Simeon we see a believer that was cognizant and adjusted to the particulars of the Messianic era of the Age of Israel.
- 33) In contrast, most of his countrymen were ignorant of the timing of the birth of Christ and even His identity.
- 34) The prophets had spoken, but few listened with discernment (cf. Micah 5:2, Zech. 9:9).
- 35) For Simeon this was a great comfort and blessing especially as his life was winding down.
- 36) In His dealings with Simeon we see the general principle that God blesses the righteous in various ways (Psa. 112:1, Prov. 15:9).
- 37) The English translation falls short in conveying the contemporaneous timing of Simeon's encounter as indicated in the Greek text.
- 38) Simeon came into the temple by the guidance of the Holy Spirit at precisely the same time that Joseph and Mary brought in Jesus. Perfect timing!
- 39) They were in the temple to fulfill their obligations under the Law.
- 40) The "Spirit-led" Simeon picked up Jesus into his arms and immediately blessed God in prayer for His faithfulness.

Luke 2

Luke 2:29-32 "Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word; ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, ³¹ Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² A light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Thy people Israel."

Analysis of vv. 29-32:

- 1) Luke records Simeon's prayer that expresses his praise and thanks to God.
- 2) The opening adverb, "Now" is in emphatic position.
- 3) Holding the newborn Christ in his arms, Simeon is "now" ready to die, having seen the fulfillment of God's promise.
- 4) God had been absolutely faithful in keeping His word to Simeon as revealed by the Holy Spirit in v. 26.
- 5) There was really nothing left for Simeon to see; his phase was essentially complete.
- 6) He praises God for allowing His bond-servant to depart in peace.
- 7) The verb "depart" means to permit someone to leave, to let go (*ἀπολύω*, *apoluo*- Acts 17:9).
- 8) Here, the term is used euphemistically in the sense of God permitting Simeon to die in peace.
- 9) He was a righteous and devout believer who had successfully finished his course and now waited to go his eternal life niche.
- 10) His words are reminiscent of Paul's words to Timothy in regard fighting the good fight and facing death (2 Tim. 4:6-8).
- 11) Like Paul and Simeon, we ought to each have as our goal to be faithful to God and His plan until the end of our lives (1 Cor. 15:58, Col. 1:22-23, Phil. 2:15-16, Rev. 3:11).
- 12) Simeon addresses God as "Lord" which is the Greek term, *despotes* meaning one who possesses authority over someone such as a slave (*δεσπότης*- 1 Tim. 6:1-2, 1 Peter 2:18).
- 13) Simeon also refers to himself as the Lord's "bond-servant" or slave (*δοῦλος*, *doulos*).
- 14) He properly viewed himself as slave or servant of God, his Master, and was in his life, a slave to righteousness (cf. Rom. 6:16-19).
- 15) The reason for Simeon's expectation of death is stated in v. 30, "For my eyes have seen Thy salvation."
- 16) The phrase "my eyes" stresses the reality of seeing God's salvation, and therefore the fulfillment of God's promise.
- 17) God's salvation refers to Jesus Christ Himself (cf. Isa. 40:5, Luke 3:6).
- 18) Simeon affirms that God prepared this Salvation "in the presence of all peoples."
- 19) Jesus Christ is the Messiah for all peoples not just Israel (1 Tim. 4:10).
- 20) "Your salvation," a reference to Christ in v. 30 is in apposition or related to "light" and "glory" in v. 32.
- 21) He is both "A light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Thy people Israel."

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- 22) To the nations or Gentiles, He is the light that draws them out of their pagan darkness to God's plan of salvation (cf. 1 Peter 2:9).
- 23) Israel as God's chosen people are destined for glory according to His grace (Jer. 3:17, Rom. 11:25-27).
- 24) Jews and Gentiles are mutual beneficiaries of salvation which is available through faith in Christ (cf. Acts 9:15, 11:15, 19:10).

Luke 2

Luke 2:33-35 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.³⁴ And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed--³⁵ and a sword will pierce even your own soul-- to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Analysis of vv. 33-35:

- 1) Simeon's words leads to amazement on the part of Joseph and Mary.
- 2) The term "amazed" conveys a sense of utter astonishment (*θαυμάζω, thaumazo* – Matt. 8:27, Gal. 1:6).
- 3) Consider that a complete stranger provided an additional testament to the identity and future role of their son.
- 4) Yet again God provides confirmation of the Messiah:
 - a) The angel in Joseph's dream (**Matthew 1:20-21** But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.²¹ "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.)).
 - b) Gabriel to Zacharias (Luke 1:17).
 - c) Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:31-33).
 - d) Elizabeth to Mary (Luke 1:43).
 - e) Shepherds to Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:17).
 - f) At a later date, the Magi to Joseph and Mary (Matt. 2:11).
- 5) Moreover, for the first time the significance of Jesus to the Gentiles is revealed to them.
- 6) After offering praise to God in v. 28, Simeon now blesses Joseph and Mary.
- 7) The content of his blessing is not revealed, but we may presume that he prayed for God's blessing upon them in light of what lies ahead as they fulfilled their parental responsibilities.
- 8) Although Simeon blesses the parents, he singles out Mary in a prophetic pronouncement ("And Simeon blessed **them**, and said **to Mary** His mother...").
- 9) The reason for the exclusion of Joseph is unclear.
- 10) It's plausible that his exclusion is motivated by the fact of the virgin birth and/or the probability that Joseph died prior to the crucifixion, thus being spared from the grief experienced by Mary.
- 11) In our future context following the incident at the temple when Jesus was twelve, there is a dearth of references to Joseph (Luke 2:41ff).
- 12) Joseph appears to be absent when Jesus began His ministry (cf. Matt. 12:46, John 2:1-2).
- 13) Simeon declares to Mary, "Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed..."