

- I. Intro
 - A. Open to Luke 2.
 - B. Power is such an intriguing concept. What it is, how you get it, how you wield it.
 - 1. There are different forms of power and greatness. Each form has a unique path and way of achieving it.
 - 2. History is full of the stories of those who have acquired great power through cunning and force.
 - a. Alexander the Great: vast empire from Greece to India through violence.
 - b. JD Rockefeller: vast oil empire through legal posturing, bullying competitors, manipulating business structure (controlled 95% of oil market in USA!)
 - C. But there's another kind of power, another version of greatness that is achieved in a much different way than force.
 - 1. Telemachus was a 4th century monk who traveled to Rome.
 - a. Victory celebrations (gladiatorial games, fighting to the death) after Rome's defeat of the goth King Alaric in 403AD
 - b. Telemachus climbed into the arena and got in between the gladiators.
 - c. "Do not requite God's mercy in turning away the swords of your enemies by murdering each other!"
 - d. Kept fighting each other, he kept getting in between; stabbed him to death.
 - e. Emperor Honorius, horrified, banned the gladiatorial games forever
 - 2. Telemachus' way of power and greatness, though not unique, is very rare in history.
 - a. But I would argue that this way is the most powerful kind of power, the greatest kind of greatness, because it is an echo of Jesus' way of greatness in His birth, life, and death on Earth.
 - b. **The beauty of Jesus' birth is seen in the contrast between the world's and Jesus' definitions and ways of greatness.**
- II. *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world [this was a typical way to say "the whole Roman Empire] should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. (Luke 2:1-3)*
 - A. Caesar Augustus: Emperor of the Roman Empire, cunning military leader, and very brutal in his quest for power. In this story, we see another power grab with the census.
 - B. Roman Census (registration): not just about counting the population, but about accurate records for the sake of increasing taxes
 - C. Context of Jesus' birth: a powerful Roman Emperor using force to fund his occupation over the Jews and using their own money to do it
 - D. And we find this to be the way of the world over and over again through history:
 - 1. Power in the kingdom of this world: greatness through might and force.
 - 2. But we'll see that God used EVEN THIS to accomplish His will:

- III. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem [this is in Southern Israel, near Jerusalem], because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. (Luke 2:4-5)
- A. 90 Mile trek from N. Israel to S. Israel for Joseph to register his family for taxation
- B. Important details about Joseph's lineage: fulfillment of prophecy about the Messiah
1. Joseph's family is from Bethlehem.
 - a. The prophecy of Micah 5:2 promises that the coming Messiah King would be connected to Bethlehem: *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*
 - b. So Caesar Augustus' power grab in demanding a census plays right into God's hands in fulfilling prophecy. The only reason Jesus was born in Bethlehem was because of this census!
 2. Joseph is not only from the house of David (same tribe: tribe of Judah), but he is also a direct descendant of David, the King of Israel.
 - a. We see this in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 where God promises to King David through Nathan the prophet that one of David's descendants will be this Messianic King who will reign forever: *Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you [David] a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish His Kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever.*
 - b. Now some of you are saying, "Wait a minute! Jesus was not physically related to Joseph. So was Jesus actually a physical descendant of David?"
 - 1) Matthew's genealogy: traces throne of David through his adoptive father, Joseph. Joseph's dad is Jacob, descendant of David's son, Solomon
 - 2) Luke's genealogy: traces Jesus' blood lineage to David but through David's son, Nathan.
 - a) Joseph's "father" named as "Heli."
 - b) This is actually Mary's bloodline traced back to David. And it lists Joseph as Heli's son through marriage. Heli is Mary's dad.
 - c. Jesus is a DOUBLE-DESCENDANT of King David, both by kingly succession through His adopted father Joseph AND His blood lineage through Mary.
- C. Why does all of this matter?
1. Because it confirms Jesus' identity as Israel's long-awaited Messiah. God had set up signs all along the way that would point to Jesus when He came.
 2. So in this passage God confirms Jesus' identity as Messiah through past prophecy but also through current circumstances of His birth.
 3. Almighty God used the power-hungry Roman Empire to place Jesus' birth exactly where it must be to confirm His identity as true King of Israel.

- IV. *And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7)*
- A. While in Bethlehem, Mary goes into labor and, because of the census there's tons of travelers there and no room is available.
 - B. This humble beginning of being turned away, even to have a proper place to be born, foreshadows the rest of Jesus' life and experience. This would not be an easy or privileged mission for Jesus. It would be full of rejection and sacrifice.
 - C. Power in the Kingdom of Jesus: greatness through humble service, sacrifice, and obedience to God.
 - D. What an amazing contrast: Roman Emperor repeating the age-old pattern of power by force, while a baby shows the new way of leadership and power through humility.
 - E. The birth of Jesus demonstrates the WAY of Jesus.
 - 1. In His birth, life, death, and resurrection, Jesus defines a new way to be powerful. A new way to be important. A new way to lead and to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - 2. Even in His birth, Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:3. *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.*
 - 3. This way of greatness through humility is also shown in the first people God announced Jesus' birth to:
- V. *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. (Luke 2:8)*
- A. Shepherds not highly regarded. Their work made them "unclean."
 - B. The King of kings born in a stable, and the first announcement of His birth is given to those of very low status.
 - C. But there is a second connection: King David, Jesus' royal descendant, was called out of the shepherd's life to become a king.
 - 4. David, the least of his brothers, least likely to have status—God chose him.
 - 5. Jesus, too, was a humble boy with a lowly social placement who would grow into a man who would be King of kings.
- VI. *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news [same root word as "Gospel"] of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:9-11)*
- A. Biblical scholar Darrell Bock says this: "The major offices of Jesus are confessed in one sentence: He is Savior, Lord, and Christ—that is, deliverer, master and anointed king. As unbelievable as it may seem, the one with authority over salvation spends His first nights not in a palace but in the open air among simple people like the shepherds. Born in the ancient equivalent of a tent village, Jesus arrives to fulfill God's promise. All the imagery

shows God's concern for people regardless of their social status or vocation. He cares for all and identifies with all."¹

- B. The King of all kings comes humbly, taking on human form of the lowest status so that there would be not one person on this planet with which He couldn't identify.
- C. And now the angel gives even more specific detail both about Jesus' identity AND His humility (let's reread v.11 and keep going):

VII. *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.* (Luke 2:11-12)

- A. The angel fuses together the signs told long before in the Hebrew Scriptures with a current concrete sign that would identify the Messiah now:
 - 1. Detail 1: newborn baby
 - 2. Detail 2: wrapped in cloths
 - 3. Detail 3: in a manger
- B. Even in ancient times, it was not the norm to give birth in the stable and then lay your newborn baby in an animal feeding trough and much less in the barn!
- C. The placement of Jesus' birth made Him both easily identifiable AND easily accessible. The shepherds didn't have to knock on doors. He was accessible from the outside!
- D. And now, what does God have to say about this birth?

VIII. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host* (Luke 2:13a)

- A. "Host" here does not mean someone who's hosting a party.
- B. It refers to one of the names of God: "Yahweh Tzevoat." Lord of Hosts: God of ARMIES
- C. This is a heavenly army that shows up. While Caesar's army is in Bethlehem exacting a tax by force, the heavenly army is in Bethlehem announcing the birth of the King of kings with WORSHIP.

IX. *Praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"* (Luke 2:13b-14)

- A. *Glory to God in the Highest:*
 - 1. Caesar's name "Augustus", means "exalted one."
 - 2. While Caesar Augustus is announcing his exalted status in Israel by forcing their obedience, the armies of God are announcing the birth of the HIGHEST King that this so-called "exalted" Caesar could never hold a candle to!
- B. *On Earth peace among those with whom He is pleased:*
 - 1. Rome was well known for claiming to have brought peace to the known world through force and violence. This is a sham claim. Never peace, only subjugation through fear.
 - 2. Jesus, the true Son of God would bring ACTUAL peace, not by might and violence but by sacrifice and upon those who would be humble enough to receive Jesus as their King.
- C. Jesus' humility in coming to Earth to sacrifice and serve brings glory to God and peace to mankind.

¹ Bock, Darrell L. 1994. [Luke](#). The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

1. We celebrate Jesus at Christmas because He is the singular being Who will bring the highest glory to God the Father.
2. And we celebrate Jesus at Christmas because He is the singular being Who will bring peace between people and God, and people and other people.

X. Conclusion

- A. How might I join Jesus in bringing glory to God and peace to men?
 1. What conveniences or privileges might I lay down to embrace an opportunity to sacrifice for the sake of others?
 2. Jesus' incarnation was not about good intentions. He acted. He sacrificed. He brought Himself low to serve those helpless to save themselves.
 3. How do I gain Jesus' heart for those He came to save?
 4. The first step is always "being with." I can't care for people I don't know. And I can't know people I'm not with.
 5. Who is God asking you to be "with"?
- B. What entitlements might I give up to embrace an opportunity to serve those for whom Jesus died?
 1. A neighbor who bothers you. Instead of complaint, how might I bless?
 2. A coworker who seems to take and take and take. Instead, how might I beat them to the taking by giving willingly?
 3. A person at school who only has mocking and hurtful words for you. Might I be a person who God uses to heal the wounds they have with words of life and kindness?
- C. We serve and sacrifice and abandon our entitlements because we carry the Gospel of Jesus by which people are saved. It is very hard to carry the Gospel when I'm holding on to my entitlements.
- D. We spend our whole lives being shown how to go higher and get more. What if we spent our time from here until our last breath figuring out how to go lower and GIVE more?
- E. What if the way we lived matched the Gospel we preach?