**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 4** Luke 2:1-20 A Savior is Born!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture, and how does it apply to your life?
2. Skim Wiersbe chapter 2 and read Wiersbe pages 31-35.
   1. What new details about Jesus’ birth did you learn from reading the commentary?   
      List ways that Jesus’ birth was a fulfillment of divine prophecy.
   2. Why did the angels announce the birth of Jesus to the shepherds first? How do the shepherds serve as good examples for us to imitate?
3. Read Luke 2:1-7. The birth of Jesus is based upon God’s Providential Sovereignty!

Before we look at the text, it is necessary to consider some background material. As you recall, Luke’s Gospel is historical and written primarily for the Greek and the thinking man. It also has a great spiritual purpose which is to present the Son of God. Neander, one of the great saints of the past, made this statement: “The three great historical nations had to contribute, each in its peculiar way, to prepare the soil for the planting of Christianity—the Jews on the side of the religious element; the Greeks on the side of science and art; the Romans, as master of the world, on the side of the political element.” The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were each directed to a particular segment of humanity. Matthew was written to the Jew, Mark was written to the Romans, and Luke was written to the Greeks.

Dr. Gregory wrote: “The Greeks are clearly distinguished from the other great historic races by certain marked characteristics. They were the representatives of reason and humanity in the ancient world. They looked upon themselves as having the mission of perfecting men” (*Key to the Gospels*, p. 121). They were the cosmopolitans of that age. They made their gods in the likeness of men, as well as in their own likeness, and therefore joined to human culture utter worldliness and godlessness…

The mission of the Greeks was thus evidently a part of the preparation of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. It forced the thinking men of that age to feel and confess this insufficiency of human reason (even in its most perfect development) for the deliverance and perfection of mankind. It left them waiting and longing for one who could accomplish this work.

The Greek language became the vehicle for getting the Word of God out. The gospel   
was communicated to the world in the Greek language. God used Alexander the Great to make it possible.

Of Alexander the Great, it has been written: “He took up the meshes of the net of civilization, which were lying in disorder on the edges of the Asiatic shore, and spread them over all the other countries which he traversed in his wonderful campaigns. The East and the West were suddenly brought together. Separated tribes were united under a common government. New cities were built, as the centres of political life. New lines of communication were opened, as the channels of commercial activity. The new culture penetrated the mountain ranges of Pisidia and Lycaonia. The Tigris and Euphrates became Greek rivers. The language of Athens was heard among the Jewish colonies of Babylonia; and a Grecian Babylon was built by the conqueror in Egypt and called by his name: (Conybeare and Howson, *Life, Times, and Travels of St. Paul*, vol. 1, p. 9).

That city was Alexandria; it still bears this name.

Keep this background in mind as we look at the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. [Challenge Questions] The Providence and Sovereignty of God!
2. Use Webster’s dictionary and the verses below to provide a sound definition   
   of these two words:

* **Providence** (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17; Eph. 1:11; Prov. 16:33; Job 12:23;   
  Ps. 22:28; Acts 17:26; Dan. 4:34-35)

Quotes from Vance Havner regarding the providence of God:[[2]](#endnote-2)

“I thank God for the Unseen Hand, sometimes urging me onward, sometimes holding me back; sometimes with a caress of approval, sometimes with a stroke of reproof; sometimes correcting, sometimes comforting. My times are in His hand.”

“All my days I have been aware of One going before me and with me, of doors ajar that   
I never could have opened.”

* **Sovereignty** (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17, 27; Ps. 24:8; 115:3; Prov. 21:1;   
  Job 42:1-2; Eph. 3:20)

Various quotes:[[3]](#endnote-3)

“God does not stop to consult us.” David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

“The Lord’s presence is infinite, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awe-full, his dominion boundless and his sovereignty incontestable.” Matthew Henry

“Nothing that is attempted in opposition to God can ever be successful.” John Calvin

“I have lived a long time, Sir, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men.” Benjamin Franklin

1. In your own words, explain how God’s providential hand and His sovereign power work together.
2. Read Psalm 121 and Philippians 1:6. Why should these two attributes of God, His providential hand and sovereign power, give us comfort as we live in this fallen world as followers of Christ?
3. Read 2 Samuel 7:11-16; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; and Micah 5:2, along with Luke 2:1-7. Explain how God’s providence and sovereignty worked together in Caesar   
   Augustus’ census.
4. How did God use Caesar Augustus to accomplish His will?
5. Both Mary (Luke 3) and Joseph (Matt. 1) were of the house of David.   
   Why is this significant?

From Abraham to David, the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are almost the same, but from David on, they are different. Some scholars suggest that this is because Matthew traces the legal descent of the house of David using only heirs to the throne, while Luke traces the complete line of Joseph to David. A more likely explanation, however, is that Matthew follows the line of Joseph (Jesus’ legal father), while Luke emphasizes that Mary (Jesus’ blood relative). Although tracing a genealogy through the mother’s side was unusual, so was the virgin birth. Luke’s explanation here that Jesus was the son of Joseph, “so it was thought” (v. 23), brings to mind the explicit virgin birth statement (1:34-35), and suggests the importance of the role of Mary in Jesus’ genealogy.[[4]](#endnote-4)

It is common knowledge that the genealogies contained in Matthew and Luke differ. Most conservative Bible commentators explain the difference by holding that Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew 1:1–16 is traced through Joseph’s line to show Jesus’ royal right   
to the Davidic throne; correspondingly, the genealogy in Luke 3:23–38 traces Jesus’ ancestry through Mary’s line. This means that Mary’s lineage is recorded in the Gospel of Luke.

Mary’s lineage, as recorded by Luke, does not mention Mary, but that’s to be expected—including women’s names in genealogies was not standard practice. It begins this way: “[Jesus] was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli” (Luke 3:23). This comment affirms the truth of Jesus’ virgin birth (see Luke 1:29–38). Joseph was a “son” of Heli by virtue of his marriage to Mary, who would have been the daughter of Heli (Matthew 1:16 lists Joseph’s biological father as Jacob).

Some notable points in Mary’s lineage are that she was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Luke 3:34); she was specifically of the tribe of Judah (verse 33). She was also a descendant of Boaz (verse 32) and David (verse 31). Significantly, Luke traces Mary’s lineage all the way back to Adam (verse 38). This fits with Luke’s purpose as he wrote to Gentiles and emphasized that Jesus is the Son of God who came to save all people (cf. Luke 2:10–11).[[5]](#endnote-5)

1. How does the fulfillment of prophetic Scripture impact your view of the Bible?
2. Read Luke 2:8-20. A Savior is born!
3. The word ‘gospel’ means “Good News!” What is the gospel message found in   
   verses 10-11?
4. Verse 14 states: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.” This brief hymn is known as the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. Take each phrase and explain what it means to you:
5. Glory to God in the highest (Luke 19:38)
6. On earth peace to men (John 14:27; Rom. 1:7; 5:1; Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 1:20)
7. On whom His favor rests (Prov. 3:5-6; 2 Chron. 16:9)
8. [Personal questions] Do you have peace with God? Do you sense (know) that   
   God’s favor rests upon you? If you don’t have peace with God, what should you do (Rom. 10:9-10, 13)?
9. What did the shepherds do after seeing the baby Jesus lying in a manger?
10. Read John 4:1-30. What did the woman at the well do as soon as she realized who Jesus was? What did she have in common with the shepherds?
11. What lessons do you learn from this (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:7-8)?
12. Verse 19 states, “But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in   
    her heart.”
13. Do you think Mary fully understood who Jesus was (Mark 3:20-21, 31-32;   
    John 7:5)?
14. Like most people, Mary’s faith probably took time to develop. What do you think happened to her faith over time?
15. What about your faith? Do you truly believe Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world? Is your faith sure and certain (Heb. 11:1)? If you are not sure yet, what should you do? Consider Mary’s response in verse 19.
16. What is the most important lesson/truth you have learned in your study of the gospel of Luke so far this year?

1. J. Vernon McGee, THRU THE BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES: LUKE, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 36-37. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Robert J. Morgan, Preacher’s Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), 649. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Martin H. Manser, The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 142. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Edwin H. Palmer, *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 1543. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. https://www.gotquestions.org/Mary-lineage.html [↑](#endnote-ref-5)