

[Explain tattoos and their involvement with pagan worship from last week's lesson.]

The Firstborn Lamb of God

[Luke 2:1-14] Here, we find Joseph and Mary in the city of David. Remember, Joseph and Mary were both of the lineage of David: Joseph through Solomon on the regal side, and Mary through Nathan on the legal side. Also, remember that the lineage was divided because of the fact that none of the descendants of David could take the throne through Joseph physically, because all the descendants of Solomon were disqualified. The virgin birth assured Jesus of the throne of his father David.

There are several interesting things in this passage. For one thing, they lived in Nazareth; Nazareth was their hometown. God moved the king to cause them to move temporarily, because something needed to take place. It came to pass. Things are coming to pass here in this story, and they're coming to pass in your life, if you're called according to God's purpose. There are not accidents or uh-oh's or "gasp's!" in your life. Things may not be convenient... Obviously, it's an inconvenience to be nine months pregnant, and have to ride from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which is about 70 miles as the crow flies. They didn't have cars with luxurious interiors and nice, comfortable shocks. They had feet, donkeys, feet...

It was an inconvenience to them, but God's plan and purpose was accomplished. They went to the city of David prophecies said that the Messiah would be born in the city of David. The name "Bethlehem" is very significant; "Beth" means "house", and "lehem" means "bread"; it's "The House of Bread". Jesus was born in the House of Bread!

[1 Samuel 17:15; put a bookmark in Luke 2] David went and returned from Saul in order to feed his father's sheep. The hills where the shepherds were are the very same hills where David was feeding his father's sheep.

[Matthew 2] In Genesis 35:19, Jacob buried Rachel in Bethlehem. John 7:42 tells us, "Hath not the scripture [singular; specific scripture] said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" Bethlehem was the place where David lived, where his family lived, and where he worked as a shepherd boy. Of course, when the wise men came to find out about the birth [Matthew 2:4-6].

They knew very well of the prophet Micah, where he prophesied that the Christ child would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 says, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting." It was going to be God manifest in Bethlehem.

[Luke 2:5-7] It's significant here that it tells us she brought forth her firstborn son. It's clear that the implication is that she had no other sons before him. Obviously, she was THE virgin and she had not other children at all before him.

While reflecting upon her situation, when the angel came to Mary, Elizabeth was six months pregnant. After the angel left her, she left in a hurry to go be with Elizabeth. By the time she got there, it was announced to her by Elizabeth that she was pregnant, possible before she even knew it. When John was born and Mary went back to Nazareth, she would have been already showing. Joseph was concerned, naturally. Mary had been gone for three months, and she came back obviously pregnant. What had she been doing? The angel had to tell him, “just take her as your wife; what she’s carrying is very special.”

One think about firstborn sons is that they are special. They’re significantly special. In Exodus 13:2, it tells us, “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine.” This child that Mary was carrying was sanctified, just like all the firstborn sons of Israel. Therefore, her firstborn son was special, no matter what, but now we know just how special. [Luke 2:10; All People.]

The word “people” has the definite article “the” in front of it. This is a reference to the people of the Lord. He came unto his own, and they received him not. He came unto Israel. [Luke 2:11] Jesus was born to rule over the nation of Israel. [Luke 1:31-33]

Jesus was born to be the Christ; he was born the Messiah. When we think about kings, they usually have to wait a while after they’re born before we know they are kings. Jesus was born the King. When he was laid in the manger, he was king! One day, he would assume the throne of his father David.

In Luke 2, we find something beginning to happen in the life of the Lord. We usually think of the birth of Jesus in the tradition of the wise men standing around a crèche, and of course, the shepherds came, but there are some other interesting things that we often don’t think about.

[Luke 2:21-22] [Leviticus 12:2-4] tells us how many days for that purification to take place. It took Mary 40 days to be pure or to be cleansed, and that is significant. Do you know what the number 40 emphasizes in the Bible? It emphasizes testing and trials. How long did it rain on the earth for Noah? 40 days and 40 nights. How long was Moses up on Mount Sinai? 40 days with the Lord. How many days was Jesus in the wilderness being tested by Satan? 40 days. 40 is a significant number in the Bible, it has to do with testing and trials. And of course, Mary could not even go to the temple. She couldn’t go to the brazen altar for 40 days. If she had had a little girl, it was twice as long; it was 80 days to be cleansed for a little girl. 40 days for a boy, and 80 days for a girl.

It’s still a time of testing. Raising kids is a time of testing, and that’s all there is to it. Mary was tested, and that was not the last time she was tested; she was tested throughout her whole life because people were saying to Jesus, “we be not born of fornication!” They accused Jesus of being illegitimate, all of his life.

How old was Jesus when he went to Jerusalem? He was 40 days old. He had been born in Bethlehem, and 40 days later, he's in Jerusalem. He had already left Bethlehem. Obviously, the wise men didn't have time to get there! Then, it tells us in Luke 2:39, they didn't go back to Bethlehem; they went on down to Nazareth. [Luke 2:39]

[Matthew 2] So, 40 days after birth, they went to Jerusalem, then went home. They simply did the normal thing. But, the Lord stirred them again in [Matthew 2:8]. It took them two years to get there, and Jesus was already two years old by the time the wise men came to Israel looking for the Messiah. Herod, having checked with the teachers of Israel sent them to Bethlehem. So, they departed to Bethlehem looking for the Christ Child. They found him, and gave him gifts they had for him. [Matthew 2:13]

Apparently, they moved back to Bethlehem, and lived there for some time, because when the wise men came to find them, they were living in a house; they weren't in a manger. And, when Herod was ticked because the wise men didn't bring word back to him, as he had requested, he killed all the babies two years old and younger. The Christ Child might have been a little less than two years, but Herod wanted to be sure he got him by killing all the babies two years and younger.

This was a sad time for all the families in Bethlehem. I'm sure that placed a very heavy role and price on the heart of Mary that her child was the reason behind all those babies being murdered.

So, they departed into Egypt. Why did the Lord move like he did? He had some prophecy to take care of; He wanted to call his son out of Egypt, because that's what the OT prophets said. So, in [Matthew 2:19]. The appearing of this angel unto Joseph was to tell him that it's time to come back into the land.

[Matthew 2:22-23] It looks like Joseph and Mary were coming back to Bethlehem. They were coming back into Judea, but the angel said, "don't go there, go back to Galilee into Nazareth". The lord wanted to fulfill some other prophecies, including on that said he would be called a Nazarene.

My opinion about the way these prophecies were fulfilled is that it made people pay attention. Did God have the power to simply protect this child? Certainly. Could he just destroy the enemies and fulfill everything? Of course. However, the way the prophecies were carried out made it so that people had to pay attention; it took effort to see the things of God, just as it does now, when searching Scriptures. "By the sweat of your face, so shall you eat."

I think that they may have been coming back to Bethlehem, in order to "help the Lord" fulfill prophecy. They knew the prophecies, and they knew Jesus was the Messiah. Does the Lord need our help to fulfill anything? No, and we often get ourselves into trouble by trying to help cause things come to pass by our own understanding, don't we?

[Luke 2:22-23] Obviously, the Lord Jesus Christ was holy. [Numbers 18:15] We know that Mary offered two turtledoves; one was a burnt offering, one was a scent offering, that she might be clean.

But, we don't read of any offering being made for the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no reference to an offering being made to redeem him! We know that he didn't need to be redeemed. We know that he was not unclean. He was the sinless Son of God. He was God manifest in the flesh.

In fact, it's interesting in [Numbers 18:17]. The emphasis here is on the firstling of a sheep. We know from John 1:29, when John the Baptizer said, "Behold (whom?) the Lamb of God." Jesus was the firstborn Lamb of God. Numbers 18:17 tells us, they don't need to be redeemed. They are holy. That's a roundabout way of saying Jesus didn't need to be redeemed because he was holy, but it's significant in pictures and types in the OT and the NT. Jesus was the lamb of God. He was the firstborn lamb of God. He didn't need to be redeemed!

In fact, this passage in Numbers 18:17 tells us he is qualified to ***be*** an offering! The Lamb of God was qualified to be an offering, because he was without blemish or spot, as we know.

In [John 6] is another interesting section of Scripture, knowing that Jesus was born in the House of Bread. [John 6:32-35] It was no accident that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the House of Bread, because Jesus the Christ ***is*** the Bread of Life!

In verse 35 are two words that are very significant: The word "cometh" and the word "believeth". When you see a word in the NT in the KJV that ends in "eth", do you know what that means? It means that word is in the present tense. It means continuous action.

When it says, "he that cometh to me shall never hunger", this is not talking about simply being saved, it is talking about faithfulness and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The children of Israel had to faithfully go out and gather manna every morning. If they stopped going out and getting manna, what happened? They got no manna.

"He that cometh..." Present tense; continuous action; you're not going to be hungry, you're going to be satisfied with the things of the Lord. "And he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "Believeth" had to do with being faithful as well. Believing that he will care for you and provide for you; not only that he would save you when you trusted in Him as your Lord and Savior, but that you would trust him to provide for you in your daily walk.

I hope that some of these points that we've studied will give you a new insight and perspective into the significance of his birth. May the Lord help us to rejoice in the fact that our Savior is the Prince of Peace, and he is able to give us peace in this day.