

"Do not be afraid - Fear Not!" Luke 2:1-14 Christmas Eve 2024

Grace and peace in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And Merry Christmas!

The time has come when we begin our celebration of the birth of our Lord. Our text is the story of Jesus in the manger, with his mother Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and many animals. Luke begins his account with some historical data, "And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Quirinius was governor of Syria." We know these men from accounts outside the Bible. Rome had been a republic for over 700 years before Christ, but it became an empire. Augustus was the first Roman emperor. And what did he command? Everyone had to be registered to be taxed. So. "Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, unto Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to be taxed with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child."

Why did St. Luke wish to establish that this story happened in real time? Because it is a wonderful story, a story of a miracle more wonderful than we can truly understand. But it's more than a story, it's history. The whole Bible is testimony of miracles and signs of God, when God revealed His will directly to us. His plan of salvation

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culminated in Jesus Christ, so, all the miracles and signs of the Old Testament pointed to Christ. The Old Testament prophets prophesied of the Savior of the world, that God would send to rescue us from our sins. And an angel of the Lord announced to the Virgin Mary that she would be the mother of the Savior and Jesus was conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit.

However, when the birth of our Lord took place, the world did not notice. The Savior was born in a small town to an ordinary family, Joseph the carpenter and his wife, Maria. Only the shepherds noticed. "And there were shepherds in the same country fields, keeping watch by night over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about." But what happened? The shepherds were terrified. Why? It was a supernatural event. Nature is all that we can understand, measure and predict. Every morning the sun rises in the east and sets in the West. Each time I drop my phone, it falls to the ground. This is the law of gravity, which also governs the movements of the earth, moon and planets. We like gravity because it makes sense - we can understand it. There's nothing supernatural about gravity.

Every night the shepherds cared for their sheep. They worked, slept, ate. Every day and every night the same thing happened. But

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something different happened one night, something supernatural. A choir of angels! But the angel said unto them, "Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. "

This was supernatural, because it was beyond the possibilities of nature. This is the story of our salvation. The shepherds went to Bethlehem and found the baby Jesus in His manger and worshiped Him. The story continues with the growth of Jesus, many more miracles, His death on the cross and, finally, His resurrection, an even more wonderful miracle than the Incarnation in Bethlehem. We cannot understand how Almighty God could put aside all His power, His omniscience, to be a baby at the breast of his mother. Nor can we understand how a man could rise from the grave after three days. But it happened. He did it for us. God be praised!

This season we celebrate Christmas with our families with many gifts. But above all, we have the best gift in this most wonderful miracle, the promise of eternal life in Christ. It is good at this moment to think about the future, our work, our studies, our lives. But more

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importantly is our future in eternity. We give thanks for the gift of eternal life and peace that passes all understanding. Amen.