

Title: Christmas in August

Text: Luke 2:1-14

1st Sunday

CHRISTMAS IN AUGUST! WHY NOT? Why not remember our Lord's birth at a different time of the year. A time when we don't have to worry about the pressures, and commercialization of the traditional christmas season. So, *That is why we are* ~~let's~~ celebrate Chrsitmas in August.

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke chapter 2 beginning with Verse 1. This is a truely wonderful story. The story of Christmas.

(READ LUKE 2:1-14)

PRAYER

Today, I want to look at the CIRCUMSTANCES THAT BROUGHT MARY AND JOSEPH TO BETHELEHEM. The circumstances that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.

But, before we do that, do you know, ~~dear friends~~, that the birth of Jesus had to happen in Bethlehem? Did you know that? WHY? Because of the prophecy..

(1) First of all, in the circumstance that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, God had to have it happen in Bethlehem, dear friends, because that is what the prophecies said.

Turn back to Micah, please, Micah chapter 5. For no other reason than to find it. Micah is one of those prophet that we call a minor prophet. Not minor in the sense of importance. But minor in the sense of length. Isaiah and Jeremiaiah are long books. And because of their length they are called major prophets. Micah is a short one.

*the Book of*  
In Micah chapter 5 verse 2 we have this prophecy concerning the coming Messiah, the one who would rule the world, the governor that had been promised  
*It says*  
"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."

*Do you see?*  
And you Bethlehem, out of you will come that one who will be ruler in Israel. And his going forth is from long ago, from the days of eternity. He has always existed. He is the eternal God who will be born as a babe in Bethlehem.

Now, turn over to John chapter 7 and let me show you that that *prophecy* was well known. Some people wonder whether or not that prophecy was known by the people in the days of Jesus...OH, Yes..They knew about that prophecy. It wasn't just the wise men in the situation with Herod the Great. But it was known among the people. And this text clearly teaches that.

John chapter 7 beginning with Vs 40.....(READ Vs 40-42)

So, you see, the people *knew* that prophecy in Micah *chapter* 5 verse 2.

*They know that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.*  
*like to*  
*of love,*  
Now, as we look at the circumstance that brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, if you will turn back to Like chapter 2, again,..I think I would name three of them. Three unusally circumstances that God uses to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. And thus fulfill his *prophecy* word. And thus bring joy, to our hearts. Because God will fulfill Word.

And in these circumstances I see the mighty hand of God. You know, I sometimes look at my circumstances and I wonder how God is going to use them.

I look in the past at situations, and so do you, .. And some of those situations, we would <sup>wonder</sup> wonder if they are from the Lord. But, I have watched over the years how God takes something and uses it for his glory. And many times <sup>you</sup> we wait years to find out. Many times it take a long while before you ever discover why God was doing <sup>what he was doing</sup> that in your life. The circumstances of God are amazing things.

<sup>Paul said</sup> All things work together for good to those who love God." Do you believe that? God is working them. But we do not always see that. And some times we go through painful stuff. And we wander, "Why is God allowing this situation to exist."

<sup>Well</sup> ~~now~~, I see in this story <sup>that God used</sup> ~~a reason for joy because God used~~ three interesting factors in causing all these circumstances to bring Josehp and Mary to Bethlehem.

(1) One, has to be the ruler, himself. Vs 1 says that the ruler is Caesar Augustus. Now, Caesar Augustus was one of those guys that no one thought would amount to much. But in the ~~end~~ <sup>end</sup> he ended up on top of the totem pole. This is Octavian, the grand nephew of Julius Caesar. He was a feminine <sup>type</sup> ~~chap~~. And in comparison to Mark Anthen, <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ others, was not your choice for emp~~er~~or.

But it is interesting that God used this man. Because he was like he was... He was the only one who could have brought peace. And Rome's longest ruler (Octavian ruled for 45 years) brings to the whole world for the first time.... PEACE. The entire world sat under the PAX RO'MANA...OF Caesar Augustus... from 30 B.C. to around 15 A.D.

And what a marvel that was because Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 4 verse 4 "when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law."

It was the time. It was the fulness of time. There had neever been a time in history like the Roman peace. Isn't it interesting <sup>dear Paul</sup> that in the context of the Roman peace God brought the PRINCE OF PEACE.

And it seems to me that this whole story surrounding the ruler himself, tells me that God's ability to work, <sup>my friends</sup> is not limited by whose in power.

I think that many times we wish that so and so would get out of power, so that some how something could happen that would be really good. Or, if we could get so and so elected then things would really be good. Dear friends, our God is not limited by whose in power.

And God took Octavian and made him the key ingredient to bring everybody together and caused the Roman Peace. It is just fantastic.

And at the time of the birth of Christ, we have common language, common culture, roads going to all major cities. Amazing circumstances to bring the Messiah to the whole world.

(2 ) But there is a second factor and that is the census. There is no doubt about it. Anyone who reads the story knows that that is how Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem. But, *Do you know the story behind the story?* *if you have studied this in any detail you can't help but be amazed at the circumstances.* *It is amazing*

We know a little bit today, in this generation, that we did not know in the last generation about this matter. Now, I do not want to lay all the detail details on you, but I want to show you the amazing correctness of scripture in dealing with prophecy and the promises of God.

For example, we know *that* Luke 2 tells us that *Quirinius* was governor of Syria. *By the way* This is what the critics of the past have used against those of us who believe that the Bible is literal. The critic of the past have said that fact(*Quirinius* governor of Syria) is obviously false...WHY?

If you would read Jo'se'phus, The history of wars of the ancient Jews. If you would read Jo'se'phas, you would find that he has a detailed discription of a lengthy census taking place under Caesar Augustus that happened in 6 A.D. As a matter of fact, I believe that is the *same* Census referred to in Acts chapter 5 verse 37.

But, this census happened in 6 A.D. And so the critics say that since Jesus was born around 4 B.C., Luke is wrong because *Quirinus* was governor of Syria in 6 A.D.. And this is proven by Jo'se'phus in his writings. And therefore Luke has his facts all mixed up. And then the critics go on to say that it isn't the historical facts that are important, it is the meaning of the story that is important. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THAT BEFORE?

A man once said, "It is the moral and spiritual truth of the Bible that counts. And <sup>we</sup> you shouldn't worry too much about the historical details."

Let me respond to that statement. I know you are not asking. But I want to respond anyway...I would answer that person by saying that if I could not trust the Bible in its historical details, I refuse to trust it in its moral and spiritual teachings.

What are you saying...That <sup>it</sup> is only the truth of the story. <sup>that counts</sup> Just get the heart of the Christmas message and forget the details. Are you kidding... If I knew that one of these details was incorrect, it would begin to undermine my confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>himself</sup>.

You say, "Oh, what a shame. It shouldn't cause that." WHY NOT? Dear friends, you need to understand something. <sup>on</sup> My faith is resting solidly upon the historically reliability and truthfulness of this book...TOTALLY..

<sup>So, what is the answer? It is reading</sup> Now, ~~it is interesting to read~~ the Greek correctly. In the Greek it does not say that Quirinius was the governor. In Vs 2 the word translated "governor" is really the word "governing". So, it does not say that he was "THE GOVERNOR". It says that "he was governing".

And you know, dear friends, it just thrills me no end to find out in <sup>over</sup> my generation and ~~years~~, we found the answer to this problem.

First of all, from Egyptian records we have discovered that Rome had a census every fourteen years. It is true that they had one in 6 A.D.. And it was true that Quirinius was governor of Syria at that time.

However, we have, also, discovered that Quirinius was "governing" the affairs of Syria under FAR'US AT 8 B.C. We know that now. He was there. And he was in charge of everything. And he was running the whole show even though he was not named officially as "the governor." That didn't happen until later.

<sup>But he was governing for Far-us'</sup> We are, also, told by Luke in verse 2 that "this was the first census taken." And of course that is true. It was the first census taken by Caesar Augustus some where around 8 B.C. down to 6 B.C. Because it would take a good two years to accomplish it.

Now, another interesting thing. We know that the Romans when they took a census, they required the people to enroll at there place of residence,



Now, if Joseph and Mary had enrolled at their place of residence <sup>it would</sup> ~~which~~ <sup>have been</sup> was Nazareth, <sup>and</sup> the prophecy would not have been fulfilled. <sup>Right?</sup>

You see, I have great joy in my heart today because the promises of God are being fulfilled. The Prophecy said Bethlehem. Now, how are we going to get Joseph and Mary to Behlehem?

Well, <sup>God Used</sup> ~~you know that~~ Herod the Great ~~was in power.~~ We know, from history, that Herod died in the spring of 9 B.C. We also know from the Bible that <sup>Jesus</sup> ~~Josis~~ was born before the Death of Herod. That means that Jesus had to be born around 4 B.C.

Now, as I look at this whole thing it is amazing to <sup>me</sup> ~~be~~ the details of the scriptures. Because Herod the great was in trouble, politically. He was very concerned over the political upheaval of Judea. And so what he decided to do, and boy what a master stroke this was, he decided to get the Jews to enroll, now remember that the purpose of the census was to tax people, the Jews hated the tax. They had revolted before over the tax issue. So, in order to trick the people, Herod the Great <sup>ordered</sup> ~~was~~ the people to return to the home of their tribal ancestors. He appeals to their Jewishness. And instead of having them enroll at their place of residence. He has ~~been~~ them go to their place of birth. We want to continue the genealogical tables of the Jews and to ~~make~~ <sup>honor</sup> them. So, please go to your home of birth. And so all the Jews are going along with this nationalism not really knowing what is behind it.

Isn't it interesting that God takes the plans of a ruler <sup>Like</sup> ~~like~~ Herod the Great and fulfills the prophecies. Man! I just love it. The promises of God are being fulfilled. And these factors are exciting to the Believer. As we see all the details that actually brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. And I say HALLELUJAH....That is so exciting.

Now, some of you heard me say that Jesus was born in 4 B.C. And you thought it was zero, right? And then you count it up and say it would be impossible for Jesus to die in 33 A.D. at the age of 33. RIGHT?...RIGHT!....

That would be impossible. Actually, I know exactly when Jesus died. Isn't that exciting! I know exactly when he died. HE DIED ON PASSOVER...

*Bible SAYS That Jesus died on Passover*

*Then* You say..."Wait a minute..wait a minute..Was it Wednesday or Thusaday, or Friday?" A lot of people argue over which day of the week Jesus died. I believe it was Thursday. And my reason is very simple. Thusday was the day of the Passover in 29 A.D. There was not a PASSOVER on Wednesday, or Thursday, or Friday in 28 A.D., 30 A.D., 31 A.D., 32 A.D., or 33 A.D.

But there was a PASSOVER on Thursday in 29 A.D. So, you see, in that framework, and the Jews keep track recorders very carefull, the death of Jesus happen in 29 A.D. If that is true, and you back it up, then Christ really was born in 4 B.C. And he died in 29 A.D. at the age of 33, *as The Bible says*

Dear friends, it is very fasinating. And the details are exciting. Plus, if all of this is true, then an ancient prophecy in Daniel is fulfilled to the last detail. I wish I had time to develop that prophecy with you.

You see, I believe that God fulfills his word to the very letter. With every detail important. To bring to fulfillment His promises and that in turn should cause our hearts to rejoice. WHAT A WONDERFUL LORD. WHAT A MARVELOUS MESSAGE WE HAVE IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY,

Oh, dear friends, God is not limited by who or who is not in power. God fulfills His promises, I believe, when we least expect it. And what a wonderful thing was happening here as Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem. (3 ) Now, there is a third factor in this story that I want to mention. We looked at the ruler..We looked at the census. But, third, I want you to see the promise of God being fulfilled in the very CHARACTER OF THE BABY Jesus.

Look at Luke chapter 2 verse 7..."And she gave birth to her first-born son." You say, "Why is that important?" Dear friends, who has all the rights in a Jewish family? Who is the heir under Jewish Law? THE FIRST-BORN SON.

Look down, please, at Vs 23.."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."

Did you know that Jesus had to be the first born son? He had to be. That is the issue of inheritance.

But, there is more to the CHARACTER of the child then that. Look at Vs 11.."For today in the city of David there has been born for you a saviour."

You see, the whole plan of redemption is here. The inheritance..YES... FIRST BORN SON. REDEMPTION.....YES. He is the saviour.

In Matthew 1:21 it says "to call his name Jesus." WHY? "Because He will save his people from their sins. The word "Jesus" means "Jehovah saves." Jehovah is salvation.

What else? Vs 11 says, "a saviour who is Christ." The Messiah. That is the whole issue of the Jewish hope. We have an inheritance in the first born son. We have redemption in the saviour. And we have the hope of Israel in the very word "CHRIST". This is the Messiah. This is the deliverer. The hope of Israel and the hope of the whole world. THIS IS THE ONE..RIGHT HERE...THIS BABY.

But, there is more...Vs 11 says, "in the city of David there has been born for you a saviour, who is CHRIST...THE...LORD."

And now we see the issue of authority. Christ is Lord and He demands our obedience.

O.K. I mentioned the four issues that are involved in the character of that <sup>in the Circumstances of his birth</sup> child..INHERITANCE..REDEMPTION...HOPE...AND AUTHORITY. All four issues are wrapped up in the CHARACTER of that son called Jesus.

And dear friends, that fulfills one of the greatest prophecies of Christmas. Isaiah chapter 9 verses 6 and 7 say: "FOR A CHILD will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, ETERNAL FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom.

PRAISE GOD! Can you understand why the angels sang: GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST."

Dear friends, do you know this Jesus that was born? Can you rejoice in the circumstances of His birth? You can, when you ask Jesus into your life.

Shall We close in Prayer