

JESUS, THE SAVIOR KING (I)

Luke 2:1-14

Key Verses: 2:10,11

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.'"

Study Questions:

1. What do verses 1-7 teach about the times when Jesus was born? (What do you know about the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus, etc.) What does this event reveal about the suffering of colonial people?
2. Describe the beauty and sorrow of the scene of the birth of Jesus. What does "there was no room in the inn" tell us about the people of that time? How have people past and present tried and failed to make the world better?
3. Why do men need a Savior from sin? Who is Jesus that he can be our Savior? (Jn 1:3) How does his birth in such fatalistic circumstances make him better able to be our Savior?
4. How did sin come into the human race? What are sin's consequences? (Ro 6:23a; Heb 9:27; 1Co 15:32) How did Jesus help a lonely, fatalistic tax collector? (Lk 5:27,28) Think of others he also helped.
5. How can Jesus rescue those pierced by the horn of Satan ("horn" represents power)? And those living in darkness? (Lk 1:69,78,79) Who is Jesus (Lk 1:32b,33), and what did he do about our sin problem? What does he give us? (Jn 3:16; Lk 9:25; Mk 10:45; Da 2:44-45; 2Ti 2:12)

This passage is the Christmas message to the shepherds living out in the field, keeping watch over their flocks at night. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." Bible narratives are written mostly in understatement. The Bible never exaggerates. But it says good news plus great joy.

First, the time when Jesus was born (1-7).

Luke the historian depicts the historical background of the time of Jesus' birth. Verse 1 says, "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree

that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world." The Roman Empire extended westward to England and eastward to Asia Minor and to North Africa across the Mediterranean Sea. The world was a Roman world. Rome ruled the world with the slogan, "Peace of Rome," which meant the Roman Empire rules the world with peace. But the census reveals the cruelty of Caesar's inner motive of squeezing poor colonial people. As much as the Roman Empire prospered, the colonial people suffered.

Look at verses 4-5. "So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child." This story reflects the social unrest of that time. All the people of the colonies had to stop what they were doing and go to their own town to register because they knew that Caesar was despotic and his decree was inflexible. Because of the decree, someone might have postponed the day of his wedding ceremony. There was no exception to the decree. Joseph knew that it was not good for a woman who had reached the full term of her pregnancy to travel such a long way. But there was no choice. He went to his hometown to register with Mary, traveling 100 miles on foot, risking the lives of both the baby and Mary.

Look at verses 6-7. "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." This story tells us about the distressing situation of the times. Maybe someone who made a hotel reservation wanted to give his room to Mary when he heard Mary crying with delivery pains. But for his own survival, he hardened his heart and turned deaf ears to a woman crying with birthpains. Many people might have done the same.

As a man, Joseph should provide a room in which Mary could deliver the baby. But he could not afford it. Probably, he felt like dying. So with no choice, Joseph and Mary went into the stinking stable of an animal, where many flies were buzzing around, and she gave birth to a son and placed him in a manger. To be the mother of Jesus was literally a suffering servant, and it was indeed glorious.

In view of history, people have toiled too hard to live in this world, hoping that the world would be better off, and that they would live a better

life. But the world in which sin reigns had never been better off. In the time of the Renaissance, people hoped so, but they failed to see the world become better. The communists hoped so, but they failed to see the world become better. The communists only victimized 50 million husband candidates, in order to materialize their utopian dreams. As a result, 50 million beautiful Russian women could not marry and became endlessly sorrowful, for only lucky ones could marry. The people in the democratic countries believed that they would live in a paradise if only they could enjoy unlimited freedom. But instead of paradise, they live in a restless and fearful world. In the name of human freedom, people enjoy the life of sin at random. In result, violence and immorality ruin the fibre of this nation. Without Jesus the world can never be better. The world needs a Savior.

Second, Jesus saves men from their sins.

Thus far we thought about why we need a Savior. But how can a baby in a manger save men from their sins? Even though he was laid in a manger, he is the Creator God. John 1:3 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." But in order to save men from their sins, Jesus gave up everything and was born in such a fatalistic way so that he might save all the fatalistic people. Jesus was born in such a fatalistic way so that he might be a comfort to sorrowful people. Jesus was born in such a fatalistic way so that he might be a friend to us.

There are many problems. But fatalism seems to be the worst problem and it is the source of all sin. Many American people are rancorous about the insidious influence of John Stuart Mill or Jean Jacques Rousseau, thinking that their skeptical relativism influenced most Americans not to keep the law of God. As a result of their bad influence, many American people lost the fear of God and a holy mission. They are now taking the consequences of relativism, such as moral depravity and lethal violence and so on.

But the Bible says that through one man Adam's disobedience, sin came into the world. And sin made man very fatalistic. Romans 6:23a says, "For the wages of sin is death." After death, the ungodly are supposed to stand before the judgment seat of God. After judgment the ungodly will be put into eternal condemnation. As we know well, death makes men very fatalistic. All those who have the fear of death are kind of pessimistic philosophers. Their theme is, "Let's eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1Co

15:32). They are endlessly sorrowful, living under the power of sin and death, working until their bones are cracking. In the fatalistic view of the world, they want to live an easygoing life and want to enjoy physical pleasure like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. They think that hard work does not make sense to those who are perishing. Men cannot live without dreams and vision. The Bible says, "...your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams" (Ac 2:17b). Fatalistic people have no eyes to see tomorrow.

There was a man named Levi. He did not want to live a poor life like his father. So he decided to become a tax collector in order to make money, thinking that he could buy happiness with money. In order to become a tax collector, first he sold his conscience, next he betrayed his people suffering under the Roman yoke. He made some money. But his people isolated him like a leper. People's isolation made him too sorrowful to work any more. He was perishing. One day Jesus visited him and said to him, "Follow me." Suddenly, Levi felt that the power of darkness disappeared from his heart and the bright heavenly sunshine smeared in his soul. He was happy. So he cried many tears quietly and loudly. After crying, he bought a ton of groceries and invited his tax collector friends and had a heavenly feast. When Levi followed him, Jesus helped him and raised him as the best teacher throughout history. Levi later became Matthew, who quoted Jesus' words, "You are the light of the world." There is no fatalism in Jesus.

Jesus can destroy the power of sin and death. Luke 1:69 says, "He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." Zechariah nicknamed Jesus the horn of salvation. Zechariah understood the power of sin. Satan has seven heads and ten horns (Rev 12:3). The horn of Satan is the symbol of sin and it is the most powerful on earth. There is a story about Pedro, a very handsome and popular bullfighter. One day he didn't feel like fighting. But because of his people's nagging and for the sake of his own popularity, he went out to fight. When he saw an angry bull paw the ground several times and dash toward him, suddenly, he became blank. The angry bull pierced his ribs on the left side. Pedro was badly injured and was popular no more. Likewise, there are many young people who look nice outwardly, but inwardly each of them has incurable wounds caused by the horn of Satan. One young man was pierced by the horn of Satan when his mother divorced. His wound is so deep that he cries endlessly.

There are so many young people whose souls were pierced by the horn of Satan while enjoying the darkness of sins. But Jesus saves them. Luke 1:69 says, "He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." To rescue us, Jesus destroyed the horn of Satan through his crucifixion and resurrection. As a matter of fact, we wanted to serve God. But we could not serve God because we were fearful of everything, even a dog Mike. Now we can serve God freely without fear in holiness and righteousness.

Sin is compared to leprosy. Sin is incurable like cancer. Most importantly, sin makes man meaningless. There was a very handsome young man. He studied hard and obtained fame and wealth in his twenties. Before obtaining fame and wealth, he was good. But after obtaining a Sanhedrin seat and a golden chariot, he felt empty. Whenever he fought against political opponents and won to keep his honor and position, he felt a sadistic joy, not a real joy. But whenever he wanted to get some sleep he always felt uneasy. Finally he could not sleep well. He could not eat well. The townspeople envied him, but he felt he was falling down from the peak of a mountain to a bottomless abyss. He confronted human limits comparatively earlier. So he disguised himself and visited Jesus at night secretly with his several bodyguards. As soon as he saw Jesus, the heavenly sunshine shone in his soul. He was saved from his life of darkness. Jesus could save him because he is the rising sun. Luke 1:78,79 says, "because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Man cannot obtain true happiness with money and fame. One must come to Jesus to rescue him from the shadow of death.

Third, Jesus gives us eternal life.

What is the most important to anyone in the world? We agree that each one's life is the most important. We can trade many things with others. But we cannot trade our lives with others. Jesus said, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?" (Lk 9:25) John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." To save us from our sins, God crucified his one and only Son Jesus Christ, and made him a ransom sacrifice. Jesus gave his life to give us eternal life.

Fourth, Jesus is the Savior King.

The baby Jesus was wrapped in cloth and was placed in a manger. The Bible teaches that Jesus' life began in a manger and ended on a cross. Humanly speaking, Jesus was born and lived the most tragic way. But Luke the evangelist and historian says Jesus is a sign of the Savior King. Look at verse 12. "This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." The baby Jesus is the sign that God came to this world to save men from their sins. This baby laid in a manger is a sign that God's will for world salvation is fulfilled. This baby is a sign that Jesus is the Savior King. In order to become a Savior King, Jesus gave up his heavenly glory and humbled himself, and came to this world. Without knowing humbleness, we cannot come to Jesus, the Savior King. Humble Jesus became a friend to a lonely tax collector. Humble Jesus became a father to a smelly Samaritan woman. Finally Jesus took up all our sins and shed his holy blood on the cross as a criminal. Jesus gave his life for us.

Fifth, Jesus gives us the kingdom of God.

As history attests, the kings and kingdoms of the world are temporal. There is nothing eternal in the world. The agony of the kings of nations in history is that they wanted to keep their kingdoms forever. Only the kingdom of Jesus is forever. There are many stories about nations and kingdoms in the Bible. Among them, the kingdom of Christ is uniquely eternal (Dan 2:44-45). The Bible says that this kingdom is the climax of God's will for world salvation. And all Christians' ultimate destination is the kingdom of God. The purpose of our Lord Jesus' coming to this world was to bring us back to his eternal kingdom. The Bible says that we will reign with Jesus forever (2Ti 2:12). When we have faith in the kingdom of God we can live a life of holy pilgrims with no anxiety for our future security. When we have faith in the kingdom of God we can have hope to raise 10,000 Bible teachers in America. The world is too sorrowful to live in, but we can have joy and hope when we have faith in the kingdom of God. Luke 1:32b,33 says, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

The birth of Jesus is glory to God and peace to men (14). God tried to fulfill his will for world salvation. But his people disobeyed God's will for 42 generations. At last, through the birth of Jesus, God reveals his love for his

lost children. Also, the birth of Jesus is peace to men on earth because Jesus, the Savior King, sets us free from the power of sin and rules us with love and peace. The baby Jesus gives eternal life and the kingdom of God to those who believe in him.