

The Son of God in a Stable

Luke 2:1-7

Like everything that Jesus did, His entrance into this world is full of surprises. The nativity reveals the humility of the Lord—our Maker and Master—who became as a baby in order to save us.

The Grand Miracle

The incarnation of the second person of the Trinity is greatest miracle that has ever occurred. We cannot fully comprehend what it means for eternal God to become a finite man. All of Jesus' miracles and all of His teaching depend on and flow from this. He can only say "Your sins are forgiven" (Lk. 7:48), or "I send you prophets" (Matt. 23:34), or "Before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn. 8:58) if He has authority to forgive, has sent prophets, and has existed before Abraham did. Only God does these things. If Jesus was God in His 30s, then He was God on the day of His birth. And the day of His birth tells us a lot about Him. Why does God need to go through this kind of indignity? To be sure, there's nothing undignified to being born as a man if you're mankind. But the same can't be said if you're God. How do you feel about becoming a rat? And one with no morals? C.S. Lewis: "In the Christian story God descends to reascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity; down further still, if embryologists are right, to recapitulate in the womb ancient and pre-human phases of life; down to the very roots and sea-bed of the Nature He had created. But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him." For Christ to identify with us, intercede for us, and ultimately save us, He had to enter into human life in its entirety.

Son of David

This happened at a particular time and place. Gaius Octavius was the grandnephew of Julius Caesar. When Julius was murdered in 44 B.C., Octavian discovered he was named as Caesar's son and heir. He changed his name to Gaius Julius Caesar, and later in 27 B.C. the senate bestowed the title "Augustus" upon him—the glorious, revered, illustrious one—marking the end of the transformation of the republic into an empire and Augustus as its first emperor. He was one of the greatest military commanders and honored as *Pontifex Maximus*, the highest priest. Temples were dedicated to "Rome and Augustus." People knew what a king looked like and how to treat him (v1). Quirinius was the governor who did his bidding in Syria, and everyone went to his own city to be registered (vv2-3). Joseph and Mary were from Nazareth, but the sovereign God saw to it that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem to fulfill Micah's prophecy: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (5:2-3). Augustus did exactly as he wanted, and God's purposes were fulfilled. Jesus came from a noble family, but one that had been humbled. David the shepherd boy fought and killed the Philistine giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17), but he also committed adultery with Bathsheba

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and murdered her husband Uriah (2 Sam. 11). He repented (Ps. 51), but his dynasty faltered as he refused to correct his sons (e.g. 1 Kgs. 1:6). Jesus comes into a noble but sinful family. Mary might have been required to go with Joseph by law, but they were also betrothed and more than a little pregnant. She looks like a new Bathsheba without the protections of a king; the only king in her favor is in utero, kicking her organs. If she isn't required to travel with him, he probably can't afford to leave her even if it was wise to do so. Jesus died outside the camp in an unclean place, but He also was born in apparent disgrace (Heb. 13:13). The world heaps praise on Augustus, but the eye of faith sees the true High Priest born among the lowly, His holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9).

Swaddled & Laying in a Manger

The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 90 miles. That's a little farther than from here to Cle Elem. While they are there, her days are fulfilled: God's timing is complete and so is her pregnancy (v6). Jesus is Mary's firstborn Son, and she will have at least another four boys and two girls (v7; Matt. 13:55-56). Joseph and Mary were poor but strong. A baby swaddled and warm is a beautiful picture, the kind we put on calendars. But this is not a cozy place. There's no room at the inn, so Jesus is born among the animals and laid in a feeding trough (v7). Luke tells us He is swaddled because He is cold, and contrary to *Away in a Manger*, the little Lord Jesus surely cried. Behold your God, born in a place worse than you were. Our Christmas preparations are wonderful blessings from God, given to us because Jesus chose forgo the glory and comfort of heaven. We hate being sick, but we really hate the idea of being excruciatingly sick while lacking awareness of what's happening. The Logos chose not just to be cold, but to be completely vulnerable, suffering in this fallen world as a baby, an infant, a toddler, a boy, a young man, and then to be murdered in His prime. All His life His enemy the Devil would be prowling and plotting His pain and death. Jesus was not born a little Super Baby, feeling no pain and just waiting to be old enough to say what He is thinking. He felt the full brunt of our human woe from the beginning. Would you go to Christmas, the birth of Christ, and have the worst night's sleep of your life, cold and surrounded by animals? Only if you don't have to make the trip from Nazareth? With no Advil? Christmas is not about chestnuts roasting on an open fire. It's not about children or presents or family. All these things are about Him. It's about Jesus Christ becoming a human within His in own creation—a lowly, despised, poor, wonderful man—in order to save us from death and woe. See the love of God in Bethlehem, and love others to His glory.