

The Birth of The King

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[0:00] of all time is a Frank Capra film called It's a Wonderful Life. Anybody see it? Now there are several scenes in It's a Wonderful Life that are just really powerful and every time I see it I get choked up. So you know there's the scene where everything is falling apart for George Bailey and he gets mad with his kids. You know that whole scene where he yells and runs upstairs and kind of lays into Zuzu's teacher, that whole thing. I could see myself in George Bailey. I'm wondering if you can too. And then there's the whole scene at the end where George Bailey, second least on life, he comes home, we're going to deal with the consequences and he's met by grace, met by love. Room full of people. But the scene that chokes me up the most is this one. Mr. Gower, the pharmacist, gets a telegram. His son's been killed in action. He's trying to drink away his sorrows. And as he's drinking he fills a prescription and he fills it wrongly. He actually puts poison in that jar. The young George Bailey sees it all. And when Mr. Gower gives the pills to George to deliver, George doesn't deliver it. He comes back to the shop. Mr. Gower gets a phone call. Why didn't they get their pills? Do you remember the scene? Mr. Gower yells.

He slaps George upside the head. Gives him a permanent deafness in his right ear. Remember that? The young George Bailey whimpering, crying, saying, I know you didn't mean to do this. I know you didn't mean to do this. I know you didn't mean to poison this. And there's that scene where he undoes the lid, tests it, and his countenance changes. He knows what he's done. And he knows that this boy has just rescued. This boy has just intervened. Well, these scenes are well-acted, aren't they? And so you're watching and you're believing it, right? You're affected by it. You can identify with it. They're powerful scenes. And these scenes from It's a Wonderful Life, they affect us, don't they? But here's the deal. And at the risk of popping a sentimental bubble, It's a Wonderful Life, actually did not happen. It's just a movie. It's a moving movie. Bedford Falls was actually Seneca Falls, New York. The screenplay was based on a short story that was first written on a Christmas card. Moving it is. But it never really happened. This morning, I want to show you a few scenes from a story that actually happened. The real account of the birth of Christ our King. And these scenes that you're going to see this morning are to have an effect on us. So would you turn in your Bible to Luke chapter 2? I'm going to read verses 1 through 21. And then I'm going to walk you through it. So let's hear God's Word together.

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went to his town, went up from Galilee and from the town of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in a swaddling cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn. And in the same region, there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was the angel, with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth.

[5:14] Peace among those with whom he is pleased. When the angels went away from them into heaven, and the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen as it had been told them. Verse 21, and at the end of eight days when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. This is not make-believe. This is not a Hollywood production. This isn't the creation of someone's mind. It actually happened. There really was a baby miraculously conceived in a virgin. And born in an animal stall. Who is Christ the King. The birth of this baby was announced by angels. Three titles. Savior Christ and Lord. This baby was fully God and fully man. As Odd Thomas just said, the only theanthropic one. Theos God. Anthropos man. There's only one. His name is Jesus.

He's alive and he's reigning. So there's six scenes I want you to see in this passage. We start in Rome. Then we find ourselves on a dusty road. Then we find ourselves in an animal stall. And from there we go to a field outside of Bethlehem. Then back to the animal stall. And then the last scene is eight days later. You ready? Let's go to Rome. Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 3. Luke begins the birth of Jesus' birth in Rome. He starts with a decree that went out from Caesar Augustus. Caesar Augustus was the first Caesar under which the Roman Empire began to worship its Caesar's. Caesar's as gods. A savior of sorts. And Luke begins by pointing us to who is in charge of the known world? Humanly speaking. It was Caesar Augustus. It was Caesar Augustus who ushered in the Pax Romana, the peace of Rome. An extended time of peace for the Roman Empire. But don't be mistaken.

This peace was a peace by force. A peace under threat. As if Romans, there was a common understanding. Hey, don't rock the boat and everybody will be happy.

[8:35] But if you rock the boat, you will find a Roman legion on your front doorstep before you can say Pax Romana. So look at what Caesar does. He issues a decree that everyone in the Roman Empire must register.

Register for what? Probably a tax. It takes money to run an empire. And in order to register, everybody must go to their place of birth. And so in verse 3, everybody goes.

Caesar speaks. Everybody listens. Everybody obeys. He issues a decree and everybody obeys. Caesar exerted some kind of power, didn't he?

It's impressive. It's impressive. He issues a decree. It's obeyed. And one is left that he is in charge. What he says goes. Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem as a result.

Because Joseph is a descendant of David. Which means Bethlehem was his hometown. But we know there's more to this than meets the eye.

[9:51] There's someone greater than Caesar who's orchestrating all these events in order to carry out his purpose for the fullness of time.

What was to happen in Bethlehem would be of cosmic and eternal proportions. All heaven has been waiting, anticipating the birth of the Christ.

Let me just read you the prophecy I read earlier. 700 years earlier. Micah 5.2. It speaks of where the Messiah would be born.

The long-awaited king. And then it also says something about who this king is. But to you, O Bethlehem, Epapha, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.

Messiah. King. Whose origin is from of old. From ancient days. The one to be born in Bethlehem would be a king.

[11:05] And not any king. This is actually the ancient of days being born. God in the flesh. Emmanuel. There's someone greater than Caesar orchestrating these events in Luke chapter 2, 1 through 3.

What God had said 700 years earlier, He is bringing it to pass. So scene 1 begins in Rome with a guy claiming to be a God, a savior of source, who ushers in a kind of peace. He's issued a decree, but we know that it's actually God at work. God's in charge. Caesar is fulfilling God's purposes.

And the God who was reigning over the nations back then, is reigning over the nations today. Same God. So we move to scene 2.

Verses 4 and 5 of Dusty Road. Joseph and Mary are on their way. They are heeding Caesar's decree, who we actually know is God's will.

[12:11] God is getting something done. So remember, Mary conceived this child in Nazareth. And Nazareth is in the northern part of Israel.

And Micah 5, 2 says, the Messiah needs to be born in Bethlehem, which is due south. About 60, 70 miles south. And so this decree by Caesar is actually God's means by which he's getting this 14-year-old pregnant girl from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill Micah 5, 2.

Is that amazing? Well, as the crow flies, it would have been 60, 70 miles. But we learn from John 4, Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans.

And in order for Mary and Joseph to go straight down, they'd have to go through Samaria. So they probably took kind of a route that started south and they went around Samaria and back through to Bethlehem. So it was probably 80 or 90 miles all said and done.

Now, imagine. Guys, this is going to be more difficult to imagine for you. Ladies, this might be a little easier for you. Imagine a 14-year-old girl who is nine months pregnant without her mother, having to travel 80 to 90 miles, either by foot or on donkey.

[13:39] It would have been very uncomfortable, to say the least, don't you think? Physically uncomfortable, emotionally uncomfortable. Can this baby be coming today on this road?

What you need to see is that this 80 to 90 mile journey was God's sovereign plan being worked out step by step. According to Caesar's decree, they're going to go register for a tax.

According to God's decree, they're going to fulfill Micah 5-2. The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. God's making it clear that this baby boy is going to be of the line of David.

Fulfilling the promise of 2 Samuel 7 in which God promises to David, you'll always have someone on the throne. You're going to have one day a forever king reigning forever on your throne.

So this 80 to 90 mile journey on a dry and dusty road, it's essential.

[14:50] It's an essential part of God's plan for the fullness of time. God's in charge. He's bringing it to pass. He's bringing to pass His plan of salvation for all people.

Scene 3. Scene 3. Scene 3. We get to an animal stall. And when we get there, we're hearing a baby crying. Joseph and Mary arrived safely in Bethlehem.

This is verses 6 and 7. But it turns out when they arrive, a lot of other people have showed up because they've got a register too. And so there's no open rooms at the inn.

Apparently there was just one inn in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was not a big town at all. Now imagine with me, here is a modern interpretation of this event.

Joseph and Mary pull up into Bethlehem in his well-used F-150 because he is a carpenter. They pull up into Bethlehem and they see the neon light above the only inn in Bethlehem.

[15:54] And it's called the Bethleh Inn. Do you see it? And as they pull up, they're both looking at the vacancy sign in neon.

And as they pull up, there is vacancy. And as soon as Joseph puts it in park, guess what turns on? No vacancy.

Their hearts would have dropped when they heard the news. Imagine, she's nine months pregnant. They show up, there's no place to say. Mary's thinking, where am I going to have this baby?

Joseph's thinking, where's she going to have this baby? Nobody seems to care. So Joseph and Mary are left to make the most of what's available to them.

And so they probably settle down in some kind of animal stall or cave that's connected to this inn. It would have been very rough. Stale hay.

[17:01] Dirty animals. It would have been smelly. And then the time came for Mary to deliver this baby.

And remember, she's 14 and her mom's not there. It would have been tough. I mean, seriously, Joseph is there. Joseph is there. And with the baby, a new smell enters the stable. There's the stale hay. There's the dirty animals. And now the smell of birth. This was very surreal. Our king was born in the humblest of places.

He was not born into prestige, power, or privilege like Caesar. Our king was born to a peasant in an animal stall. When Christ was born, he in no way ceased to be God.

Rather, it was the eternal God who took on human flesh what he did give up was the glory that was his in heaven. He made himself nothing. He went from the glories of heaven surrounded by angels singing his praises to stale hay in a stable surrounded by lowing animals.

[18:31] It was quite a change of venue. He made himself nothing. He became one of us. Why? So that he can identify with us in every way yet without sin.

He understands. He's walked in our shoes. God became a man. God. What happened in this animal stall in one sense was very ordinary.

But it was also extraordinary. Because the eternal God for the first time took on human flesh.

We sing this song, O come all ye faithful at Christmas time. And it's got this line, very God begotten, not created. And we're singing about Jesus.

Very God. He's God. Begotten, not created. What's being said there when we sing that is this. This child is fully God and fully man, born of a virgin.

[19:42] But when Jesus was born, it's not as if the second person of the Trinity came into existence at that moment. He already existed. What we're singing about when we say very God begotten, not created, it is that the second person of the Trinity is taking on for the first time flesh.

This is unbelievable. Begotten, not created. God became a man. He took on flesh in order to be our Savior. So what we see happening in scene three is that the birth of Christ took place in the humblest of circumstances.

Which stands in stark contrast to what's going on in Rome. The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords was born in a very humble little town of Bethlehem.

And God's Word was fulfilled. Micah 5.2 Fulfilled as God said it would be. The Ancient of Days had been born that day.

Scene 4. This is verses 8-14. A field outside of Bethlehem. It's a dramatic change of scenes. We move from an animal stall to an open field.

[21:03] Shepherds are tending their flock. It's evening. Now, if you were to rank a shepherd in social standing at that time, they would have come in a click above lepers.

They were despised and looked down upon because of their occupation. They were seen as perpetually unclean because they were always with animals.

So it's very important to note that when the angel of the Lord comes to announce the birth of Christ the Messiah, he appears to shepherds. nobody's.

But God knows and loves nobody's. God is interested in the most ordinary of people. Like you and like me.

It was nighttime so it would have been dark. The angel of the Lord appears and the glory of the Lord shone around them. The shepherds, verse 9, were terrified. They didn't know what's happening.

[22:12] This came out of nowhere. They were overwhelmed. What's going to happen to us? The angel's quick to comfort.

Fear not. Fear not. This angel hadn't come to warn or destroy. This angel came to announce something wonderful.

good news. Read to me verse 10. The angel speaking to the shepherds. Fear not for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Good news. Great joy for all the people. It literally reads like this. Fear not for behold I am good newsing you with great joy for all people.

the Greek word is evangelizomai. It's the word we get the word from which we get evangelize. It's like the angel is saying hey I am evangelizing you with great joy for all people.

[23:24] I'm good newsing you guys. I'm gospelizing you. the angel has appeared to proclaim good news and what is that good news?

What is at the heart of this announcement of good news for all people? What is it? Who is it? It's all about this baby.

Look at verse 11. The angel says for he's going to point to the content of the good news. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

In a very short span this angel announces the good news and it has to do with this baby and he gives him three titles. Savior Christ Lord Savior this baby is a rescuer.

As God in the flesh he would rescue a people from the oppression and tyranny of sin death and the devil. That's what this little baby is going to do. Christ or King this baby is the long awaited Messiah the long awaited King of David God in the flesh ancient of days here today the descendant of David who would reign forever on David's throne this is the one he is the King of Kings lying in that name.

[24:53] he is the Lord there is coming a day in which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that this baby is Lord of all master of all you know the in Matthew's account the wise men got it right remember they bowed before this baby at the heart of the gospel is not a math equation at the heart of the gospel is a person it's all about Jesus Savior Christ Lord Emmanuel Paul talked about it this way Colossians 1 28 Him we proclaim and that's exactly what this angel is doing this angel is proclaiming Christ Jesus is the Christ the gospel is all about the person work of

Jesus Christ there's more going on here notice that this good news about Jesus brings great joy for those who receive it it's the great joy of salvation those who would put their faith in this baby and trust him they would experience the joy of rescue the joy of redemption the joy of adoption salvation and this great joy can be found in no one else but Jesus salvation is found in no one nowhere else other than Jesus no other name under heaven by which man can be saved Jesus is that name this great joy of salvation found in Christ is for all people Jesus is the Savior the King the Lord of all nations and he's gathering for himself a people from every tribe tongue and nation a people that see him for who he is and joyfully turn from sin and joyfully trust in him alone for salvation well let's go back to the field the angel says in verse 12 hey go see for yourself

I'm not making this up this baby which I'm telling you about you can go see right now he's wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a feeding trough at the Bethlehem in if that had not been enough look at verses 13 and 14 the angel of the Lord that brought this good news is then joined by a multitude of heavenly hosts don't think barbershop quartet of angels we're not singing glory to God in the highest here in four part harmony what's going on here is all of the heavenly host has emptied heaven to declare and mark this day this is monumental this is historic for the fullness of time had come when God sent his son born of a woman born under the law to redeem those who were under the law what the angels knew and what they were singing about is that this baby is bringing with him a cosmic eternal change they sing glory to

God in the highest and on earth peace among those whom God is pleased they're saying praise God for his glorious plan of salvation that brings real peace to real sinners praise God for all who willfully bow their knee and experience fullness of peace a full and lasting peace not by threat but a peace by grace the Savior is God's gift to sinners and the angels knew it they knew that God is changing the course of eternity with this baby and they glorify God for it now Jesus wasn't born so that we can have a holiday Jesus wasn't born so that you can get out of school Jesus wasn't born so that we can boost our economy with all sorts of purchases Jesus was born in order to rescue sinners from their sins that's why he was born scene for this baby born and it's marked with this angelic host singing

God's praises the first Christmas day it's historic God has arrived on the scene as a man right according to plan scene five back to the animal stall at the Bethlehem Shepherds are breathing heavy because verse 16 they run there they're obeying what the angel told them to do go check it out and so they go and check it out they're very aware that God has revealed this to them they're very aware that this is monumental they arrive at the animal stall and find the baby in the manger just as the angel said and still trying to catch their breath they're just saying to anybody who would listen what the angel had made known to them what is that that this baby is descended of David and he is savior he's the Christ he is the Lord this is the Messiah what I want you to see here is this

the response verse 18 they wonder verse 19

[30:55] Mary treasure verse 19 again Mary pondered verse 20 these shepherds go back to their fields glorifying and praising God it's a worshipful response to this news this newborn king brings about worship in our hearts for who he is so what should characterize your heart this Christmas worship wonder that God would become a man treasure that God became a man to save you ponder that this was God's plan from before the foundation of the world it's huge glorify and praise rejoice that this Christmas God has revealed himself to you and that you have bowed your knee to him the king of kings and if you haven't bowed your knee to him what a great Christmas it would be if you did if you're not a

Christian would you receive the greatest gift ever given would you receive salvation in Christ by faith alone you just need to say I'll take it scene five we see this worshipful response scene six eight days later were finally told this baby's name Jesus Joseph and Mary had obeyed what the angel had told Mary to name this child Jesus literally means Savior Jesus the Savior Jesus the Christ Jesus the Lord and just in case you've forgotten Jesus is no longer lying in the manger he lived a sinless life he died on the cross for sinners like you and me he was raised on the third day defeating sin death and the devil and he's ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the father awaiting the day in which he returns and when he comes back you know what he's bringing with him fullness of justice completeness of peace he wipes out all leukemia no more war no more tornado tsunamis cleans it up this baby whose birth we celebrate this Wednesday he would be great because he's the great

I am six scenes of a real story not produced by Hollywood this is God's plan and our response is worship the birth of Christ our King has changed everything so we with the angel proclaim Jesus as Savior King Lord and we say glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to all men who bow their knee to him Merry Christmas let's pray thank you for the can't see you here in the highest game what said y a kind