

The Birth

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 December 2022

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] Well, Gaius Octavius was born a wealthy and powerful Roman family in 63 BC.

His father was a Roman senator, but more importantly, his uncle was the great Roman general turned dictator. His name was Julius Caesar.

When a few conspirators, particularly some close friends of Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius, assassinated him in 44 BC, it was discovered that he had secretly adopted Octavius, Gaius Octavius, which made Octavius the legal heir to Julius Caesar and put him in a position of potentially gaining tremendous power over Rome.

It was then that he took the name Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, which we just use in English. We shorten it to Octavian. From there, a political drama unfolds, particularly between Octavius and another senator in Rome named Mark Antony.

[1 : 15] Antony was married to Octavian's sister, but decided to divorce her in order to pursue an adulterous affair with a woman by the name of Cleopatra, who was the queen of Egypt.

This was the final straw for Octavian, which led to a war between he and Antony, which led to the defeat, I believe, at Actium of Antony and Cleopatra, who ultimately committed suicide in 31 BC. Then, through a series of shrewd political maneuvers, Octavian became the first and perhaps the most important emperor of the Roman Empire.

At this point in Roman history, it's at this point that really the republic that it had become known for was really dead at this point. With Octavian, we see the birth of the Roman Empire, and he becomes really the first emperor of that empire.

Now, his reign brought incredible prosperity to the expanse of the empire. Under his leadership, Rome excelled significantly, made significant strides economically.

[2 : 36] They made significant strides agriculturally. They made significant strides in the arts. He contributed to the incredible road system that connected all of the world together, seemingly.

And he's responsible for ushering in the Pax Romana, which we call the Roman Peace. And recognizing his contributions, the Senate conferred upon Octavian the premier title of Caesar Augustus.

Augustus, meaning holy or reverend, up until that point had been reserved in Roman culture only for the gods.

People considered Octavian to be a savior. One ancient inscription actually writes that Octavian was the savior of the whole world. One historian wrote that when Augustus died in A.D. 14, the people, quote, comforted themselves, reflecting that Augustus was a god and that gods do not truly die.

But while much of the world was lauding who they thought was a god and savior in Rome, something much more glorious than they could ever imagine was taking place in this little town of Bethlehem in Judea.

[4 : 01] It says Kent Hughes, the baby Mary carried, was not a Caesar. He was not a Caesar who was a man who would become a god, but a far greater wonder, the true god who had become a man.

That's the story that begins to unfold here in Luke chapter 2. Though his conception was a miracle unlike any other, there was nothing extraordinary about Jesus' actual birth.

In fact, we can read through these first seven verses and really there's nothing remarkable about them. It's actually quite ordinary. The circumstances aren't necessarily ordinary, but the way things began to unfold, at least at this point, is really quite ordinary.

In fact, that's kind of what's most noteworthy about it is how unremarkable it actually was. We'd be hard-pressed to think of a more difficult and demeaning circumstance in which to give birth to a

child.

Rather than in a palace surrounded by all the comforts possible, the Son of God was born amidst the filth of animals.

[5 : 15] Indeed, the contrast between Augustus in Rome and Jesus in Bethlehem couldn't be greater. In Rome was a self-proclaimed God that valued glory and power above all else.

Jesus, however, willingly set aside the glory of heaven's throne to become a man in order to save men from their sins.

It's a very different picture that we see between the two. Luke rooted his record of Jesus' birth year in a historical reality and also emphasized its prophetic significance.

We're going to talk about all of those things this morning. But of course, his purpose in all of this was not to give us a unique tale to ponder or to pass on to our children during the Christmas season.

His purpose was to give us certainty that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Son of God and the true Savior of the world. The point that Luke is getting across here is not to entertain us with a tale.

[6 : 30] His point and his purpose here is to persuade us to believe. He is giving us the good news of great joy, as we've been calling it over these last few weeks.

Three simple things I want to point out about these seven verses. The first thing I want to point out to you is that Christ's birth is fixed in history. Christ's birth is fixed in history.

Look at the first three verses with me again. 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.

Ever since the birth of Jesus, there have been efforts to deny the historic reliability of this nativity story. In fact, the people involved in these events were convinced.

Of course they were. How could they not be convinced? But no one else seemed to believe them.

Have you ever thought it unusual that with all of the extravagance that went into the angels appearing to Zechariah and Elizabeth and then to Mary and Joseph and then the circumstances that lead Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and then the angels appearing to the shepherds and then the magi that traveled from so far.

[7 : 57] All of these extravagant things happening with the birth of Jesus. Have you ever thought it unusual that no one else seemed to talk about it? With something so grand, something so awesome, how was this not the talk of the town in Bethlehem?

How was this not the talk of the town in Israel and in Judea at this point? And the simple answer to that must be that though the people involved in the story were convinced of the truthfulness of it, no one else really was.

I mean, who of us would believe this story? No one had an iPhone in that day to video the angel when he comes and delivers the message.

There was, there's no way to just stop and say, hey, let me get a selfie with you, Gabriel, here before you head back to heaven. There's no way for them to provide evidence, right? It's just stories.

And it probably wasn't until the growth of Jesus' popularity as a healer and as a teacher later on that anyone really began to consider the old stories of angels and shepherds and magi and of virgin birth.

[9 : 10] Several years ago, an atheist organization ran a series of Christmas billboards in New York City to promote their particular denial. I wish I would have put a picture of it on the screen for you to see.

If you want to see it, I'll show it to you after a service. But basically, the way the billboard was, it was huge. It was throughout the city. And on the top was a picture of Santa Claus. And it said, keep the Mary, keep the Mary, M-E-R-R-Y, keep the Mary with Santa Claus.

And then just below that picture was a picture of Jesus on a cross. And it said, dump the myth. So here, this was 2014, I think, or 2013.

Here is all of these billboards throughout the city promoting this idea that all of this stuff about this nativity story, it's all mythological. There is nothing historical about it.

It's not real. And of course, people have said that for quite some time. But really, to assert that the biblical narrative is mythological is actually intellectually dishonest.

[10:18] You don't have to come to the same conclusions that we would as believers about why this was happening and exactly the extent that it happened. But to deny the historical reliability of it is actually irresponsible.

Even secular historians, both ancient and modern, though they may not arrive at those same conclusions, recognize the historical reliability of the New Testament documents.

Tacitus, the Roman from the first century. Later on, Josephus, the Jewish historian, all recognized the historical validity of Jesus' life and the things that his disciples were teaching, things that they truly believed were true about his life, including his birth and his death and his resurrection.

And then we move on through history and we see, even those who would not come to the same conclusions as us, about faith in Christ acknowledge that these documents are historically reliable, at least Luke really believed that this was true.

And Luke wrote a historical document. C.S. Lewis, who lived a lot of his life as an atheist, later in reflecting after his conversion, wrote, I have been reading poems, romances, vision literature, legends and myths, all my life.

[11:35] I know what they are like. I know none of them are like this, he says. And he's right. Some of you enjoy to read fantasy and fiction and things like that.

You know this is not that. This does not read like that. It's not intended to be like that. Leading off in verse 1 with, in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus.

That's quite a different approach than a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. That is not the same thing. It's not the same intention. It's not the same type of writing.

In fact, Luke was a Greek doctor. He's a companion of the Apostle Paul, who was particularly thorough in his writings. Flip back just to chapter 1 here.

Look at the first four verses of the book. Luke describes what he's actually trying to accomplish in writing this gospel. He says, Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

[13:04] Well, it's Luke's method here. Well, his method involved interviewing eyewitnesses, he says, in order that he might provide an orderly account, sounds like a doctor to me, provide an orderly account, that gives historical certainty, he says, concerning the things of Christ.

That's his goal. That's his aim here. He's not writing fiction. He's trying to persuade. By acknowledging Caesar Augustus, Quirinius, the census, Luke was rooting the narrative of Jesus' birth in historical reality with real people in actual places at a precise time.

Luke's readers then can recognize the circumstances that actually brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, and they're reasonable circumstances. There's no angel that lifts them up out of Nazareth and delivers them to Bethlehem just in order to try to make the stories fit.

That's not happening here. Designating an exact census, I don't know if you've ever considered this, but designating an exact census, and there were a few of them that are listed in the New Testament, but this particular one meant there was a house of records somewhere to where somebody reading this narrative could go and find documentation about this particular census, there being a man from Nazareth named Joseph who came to Bethlehem to register his family, and here's the details of his family.

Here's his betrothed wife, Mary, perhaps, depending on when the census actually occurred, perhaps Jesus would even be listed on that. There would be historical documentation for the people originally reading this book.

[14:54] God had so moved the wills of human history that Jesus' birth occurred at precisely the right time for us to have certainty of its truth.

And Paul reflects on this in Galatians 4, doesn't he? When the fullness of time had come, he says, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoptions as sons.

When the fullness of time had come, in other words, at just the right time, God did this thing. This was not coincidence. It didn't just kind of happen this way, and God decided retroactively to look back on it and say, this fits pretty well.

Let's make Jesus the Son of God and Messiah. No, this was actually all God's plan. He orchestrated this whole thing. You don't know why he chose this particular time, but there's no doubt that he did.

Augustus' rule over Rome prepared the way for that census that forced Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem, which is so necessary. And how assuring it is to believers' hearts to consider the sovereign power of God in orchestrating the events of world history to accomplish his saving purposes.

[16:21] That brings assurance to me, because if God was willing to do all of this, that means that he's not only in control, but he's working all things together for good to them who love God and are the called according to his purpose.

That's what we see. Marshall Howard said, the census serves to place the birth of Jesus in the context of world history and to show that the fiat of an earthly ruler can be utilized in the will of God to bring his more important purposes to fruition.

We hear all kinds of stories that we wish were true, but we know they must not be true. The Bible, however, tells the story of salvation, written with historical certainty and reliability.

It's not a fairy tale or a myth, meaning it is truly good news that can bring great joy. And Luke's intention was to remind us of that.

So that's the first thing that we see. Christ's birth is fixed in history. It's reliable. Secondly, Christ's birth is the fulfillment of prophecy. So once we understand, according to Luke's structure here, that this is a real occurrence, this really happened, here's the time frame that it happened, real people, real places, precise time.

[17:41] Then we can start to ask the questions, well, is there any real significance that would validate Mary's story here? We know that Jesus was really born. Records would indicate he was really born in Bethlehem and all that stuff is true.

But what about the whole son of God, angels, Messiah kind of thing? Well, that's when we get to this second part. It is the fulfillment of prophecy. Look at verse four. Joseph also went up from Galilee, 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.

The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, probably 80 to 90 miles, they would have traveled. Probably took them close to a week to accomplish this, at least in Mary's condition, right?

And there's a lot that we don't actually know about this journey. There's a lot of gaps that are left wide open for us, isn't there? We often assume that Mary rode there on a donkey, but given their financial situation, there's a real chance that Mary, at this advanced stage in her pregnancy, probably had to walk the 80 to 90 miles.

The Bible never says she rode on a donkey. She could have, but it doesn't say that. This is a tough journey for her. We don't exactly know how she got there. Could have been that there was a caravan of people traveling from Galilee down to Jerusalem and on then to Bethlehem.

[19:13] Maybe they were able to tag along and ride along on some type of wagon or another animal or something like that. We don't know. That's just conjecture too. We don't even know exactly why Mary went with Joseph.

The census wouldn't have required that. Only the leader of the household would have been required to go, most likely, to the place of their lineage to actually fulfill the duties of this census. Mary probably didn't even have to go. So we're not exactly sure why she did. And of course, common sense would tell us that Joseph wanted to keep Mary close by. She's clearly at the very end of her term as far as her pregnancy is concerned.

We don't know all the stuff that's going into this journey. All we know is that they made the journey together. But we don't need to let the absence of information worry us because that's not Luke's intention.

He's not trying to tell us all of the details about the journey. His intention is to tell us the reasons why Joseph and Mary ended up in Bethlehem because the whole Bethlehem part of this is so important.

[20:18] Why were they there? The significance of these verses lies in the fact that they record the fulfillment of prophecies given by God hundreds of years before.

Two in particular are directly addressed here in these verses. The first one had to do with the Davidic covenant that this long-awaited Messiah would come through the house and lineage of

King David.

Matthew's genealogy in Matthew chapter 1 and then Luke's emphasis here on Joseph's heritage serve to show that Jesus' birth fulfills this prophecy. So it's not just about the fact that Jesus historically was born in Bethlehem.

It's also about the fact that being born in Bethlehem means that he fits the parameters of what God said the Messiah would be. 2 Samuel chapter 7 this is where God gives his covenant to David.

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body and I will establish his kingdom.

[21 : 28] You say well that could be about Solomon. It could be but then he goes on he shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. Remember that doesn't apply to Solomon.

In fact that doesn't apply to anybody else that came in David's line. That can apply to one person alone. That's this Messiah king that Israel had longed for. And Israel understood this Davidic covenant to be a reference to this Messiah king.

And the prophets affirm this. In Isaiah chapter 11 there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse. Jesse was David's father. And a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The spirit of wisdom and understanding. The spirit of counsel and might. The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. Now remember Isaiah is writing these things long after David and Solomon and the age of the good kings that we would say.

[22 : 33] Then Jeremiah picks it up. Jeremiah 23 Behold the days are coming declares the Lord when I will raise up for David a righteous branch and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

All of these prophecies pointing toward a savior a Messiah king who would rule and be from the line of David. And his rule would be an eternal rule as the emphasis here.

And so Luke emphasizes this. He says remember and he emphasizes it greatly in verse 4.

Remember Joseph is from David's line.

Jesus' adopted father is from David's line. And so was Mary as you get to chapter 3 and as you reflect back on Matthew chapter 1. No matter how you shake it up Jesus' earthly parents were of the house and the lineage of David.

Which means that Jesus himself comes from the house and the lineage of King David. The second prophecy directly addressed here has to do with the place where this Messiah would be born.

[23 : 48] And of course this is where Micah comes in. Clementine maybe you'll remember this verse. I think you quoted it last year didn't you? But you O Bethlehem Ephrathah 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 whose coming forth is from old from ancient of days.

There's a significance to this. There's a significance to this place. Now the birth of Jesus fulfills both of those prophecies and more. The prophetic significance of Jesus' birth is about so much more than the virgin conception.

That's a vital piece of it but it's only a piece. Now I want you to consider now in the prophetic fulfillments all the things that had to have been fulfilled in order for Jesus to truly be this Messiah. Remember if only one prophecy is left unfulfilled it would be impossible for Jesus to be our Savior. Without the virgin birth Jesus is not the Son of God.

Have to have the virgin birth piece. If Mary had remained in Nazareth rather than choosing to go on the journey with Joseph to Bethlehem if Jesus had been born in Nazareth he could not have been the one who was to come.

[25 : 11] Without the ministry of John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Christ Jesus could not have been the Messiah. Even if the rest of Jesus' life happened exactly as it's recorded in the scriptures but only one of these prophecies falls short.

Jesus could not have possibly been the Messiah and the Savior and the ruler and the king. And we would be left in our sins.

Now if we were to take all of these prophecies from the Old Testament we were to lay them side by side and we would say how are we how are we going to find this to be true in a person?

We say it's impossible because this is in God's divine providence that this unfolds. It is in the divine providence of God that every single prophecy of this Savior king was fulfilled precisely in Jesus of

Nazareth down to the minutest detail of the place of his birth.

All of it. All of it fulfilled. It's not been fulfilled this way in any other person ever. Only one. And Jesus perfectly fits it.

[26 : 25] Of course the ultimate validation of Jesus' identity is his resurrection from the dead. In fact the resurrection changes everything doesn't it?

In fact if you're struggling with doubts and you're trying to see how all these pieces fit together perhaps a good method is to start at the end and work your way backwards. You start with the resurrection what does that tell us?

Well if Jesus was able to raise from the dead there is something significant about him there must be something divine about him. And you start to trace those things backwards.

The resurrection validates his crucifixion. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead means that God the Father received his crucifixion as a sufficient atonement for our sins.

It means it worked. It means the sacrifice was good. It was holy. It was perfect. It means forgiveness can actually be achieved. The resurrection verifies Jesus' miracles were about so much more than bringing goodness into the world.

[27 : 32] It was about more than that. It was about his identity and who he was. It was more than just a gift for a particular people at a particular time.

The resurrection gives us confidence in the truthfulness of the scriptures. If Jesus rose from the dead that means there must be something significantly divine about him and Jesus said that the scriptures were God's word.

So then surely they must be God's word. resurrection brings certainty to the fact that Jesus' birth was indeed the fulfillment of these messianic predictions.

It means that the baby in Bethlehem has the power to forgive sins and give eternal life to all who will believe and follow him. It's good news of great joy.

So we see the birth of Christ is fixed in history. It is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, every one of them being fulfilled and proven in him. Thirdly and finally, Christ's birth is characterized by humility.

[28 : 43] It's characterized by humility. Look with me at verse 6. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

Now, this is where unusual circumstances come into play. The birth itself, there's nothing really extraordinary about that. Mary felt every contraction.

She felt every pain. She went through all the processes that you women who have given birth have gone through. She went through all of those things. There wasn't anything extraordinary about that part of it. But this is an unusual circumstance.

They've traveled to Bethlehem. We don't know how long they were in Bethlehem before the time came for her to give birth. But all the indications of the passage say this was fast and sudden.

[29 : 43] They had not even yet found a place to settle in to stay for however long it was going to be necessary for them to stay. Accommodations, from what I understand in reading, accommodations for travelers in Bethlehem and in places like it would have been quite primitive especially during seasons of crowdedness as this would have been.

The word that's used for in is not a typical Greek word for a hotel what would be used as a hotel in that sense. More like a campground is really the idea that would match what we would think of it as. From what I've read the situation would be something like an enclosure that had different stalls around the perimeter. Stalls where these travelers would come and then whoever owned the property or ran the property whatever it was would have in the middle of these enclosures had a courtyard!

A common courtyard where they would have the animals that were necessary for them to bring as they traveled. The responsibility of what we would say is an innkeeper or whoever's running the deal here the responsibility that they had was to provide fodder for the animals and then some type of fire.

Really that's it. So when Mary and Joseph get there they find that these stalls are full there's no stall that's actually available to them. Our decorative nativity sets portray a cozy kind of quaint even private stable but there really was no such setting available to this young teenage couple who's just

made this 80 or 90 mile journey.

[31 : 29] Customary doors of hospitality were shut in their face. The young virgin was forced to give birth in the middle of a communal courtyard meant for livestock and you can only imagine what that must have been like.

People talk about all the time you know the birth of your child is something that you never forget. It's entrenched in your memory and surely even for us men it's entrenched in our memory maybe for different reasons but it's there.

It's one of the most bizarre experiences of my life. A good experience but bizarre. And when Julie gave birth to our girls it was in a comfortable hospital there was heat very high heat.

I don't know why they cranked the heat up so high in those rooms when this happens and there's not just a doctor or a midwife there's lots of them. There's people everywhere and they're all coaching you and there's all the machinery and there's all the stuff all the stuff that they have you do.

Mary has none of that. You can imagine it's just her and Joseph. She's 12 13 14 years old. Joseph probably wasn't much older maybe a little but probably not much.

[32 : 47] She has no idea what this experience is going to be like except for however it's been described to her by other women in her life. Perhaps she was there for John's birth and was able to experience at least in that extent.

And now she's forced into a not so private communal courtyard Filled with animals. Kent Hughes says it was wretched scandalous.

There was sweat and pain and blood and cries as Mary reached up to the heavens for help. The smell of birth mixed with the stench of manure and acrid straw made a contemptible bouquet.

Trembling carpenter's hands clumsy with fear grasped God's son. The baby's limbs waving helplessly as if falling through space.

His face grimacing as he grasped in the cold and his cry pierced the night. There's no comfort of a mother. There's no assistance from a midwife.

[33 : 53] There's no Clorox wipes to clean out the feeding trough that she had to lay the baby in. Unlike Caesar Augustus Jesus was the king that everybody needed but no one seemed to want.

No one makes room. No one helps them. The birth of this Messiah could not have been more lowly. It could not have been more humble which of course is the point of it all.

That's the point. The creator of the universe enters our world taking true humanity with all of its brokenness. He faced every heartache every temptation every struggle of life in a sinful world but he did so without ever sinning himself.

This makes him a savior and a mediator according to Hebrews that is perfectly able to sympathize with our weaknesses while maintaining his power to rescue us from those weaknesses.

King of heaven now the friend of sinners humble servant in the father's hands filled with power and the Holy Spirit filled with mercy mercy for the broken man.

[35 : 11] Yes he walked my road and he felt my pain joys and sorrows that I know so well yet his righteous steps give me hope again I will follow my Emmanuel.

That's the whole point of the thing. It was his divine love and desire to save sinners that led Jesus to so willingly humble himself in this way.

But the surest sign of his humility wasn't his birth in Bethlehem it was his death in Jerusalem.

Philippians 2 you know the passage well have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself and taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

You see this characterization of humility the humble nature of the Messiah is the entire point that the God of heaven endured so much out of his love for man out of his desire to save us the pinnacle of that humility being a criminal's death the perfect son of God nailed to a cross by the people he came to save Luke's telling of the birth of Jesus is intended to give us certainty that God has provided salvation through him we get the certainty through the historical existence of Christ we see the prophetic fulfillment we see his divine humility but God doesn't desire for us to gain mere intellectual certainty there's a difference here we can sit down with our neighbor and we can go through the notes that I've given you today and you can highlight all the things and you can win

them intellectually maybe to your perspective but intellectual agreement with the facts is not the same thing as saving faith in

Christ as Lord and Savior he doesn't call us simply to agree with the facts he calls us invites us to repent of sin and trusting Christ alone as the only means of reconciliation with God you see that's where people get tripped up they're not so opposed to the things of Jesus as far as the stories are concerned and even in our particular age they're fine to listen Amy mentioned last Sunday night at our fellowship co-workers even that she has who are introducing their kids to Christianity at Christmas not because they're Christian but because they just want them to have a well-rounded understanding of religions and cultures and things like that it's a whole different thing those kids can go through and learn all the facts and give assent to all the facts and still go to hell because it's not about giving intellectual assent to the facts it's about coming to a place where you see the exclusivity of Christ

[38 : 42] Christ alone brings salvation Christ alone can save me from my sins Christ alone reconciles me to the Father so Luke writes this not just to say here's the stuff here's the facts he gives the facts in order that he can say now believe believe and follow Christ believe turn from your sin because the message is good news it's gospel news but it's only good if it's received by faith that's the only way it brings great joy and you say well what are we what is it exactly what we're supposed to do with this with these things and well it depends on who you are if you're a believer be confident in the truth of the Bible it's sometimes we get this idea that the things that God has given us in the word are just kind of like barely hanging on by a thread that if one atheist just pulls just the right thread it's all going to fall apart and you need to remember that for thousands of years now they've been trying to pull those threads and the

Bible has stood the test of time it cannot be defeated your greatest doubts will not be able to defeat the truth of God's word and when you come to a passage like this you can use logic and the reason that God has given you to develop the confidence necessary in the truth of the Bible and then the confidence of those factual things produces worship that's what these Christmas services are about that's what that nativity set on your counter is about it's to bring you to a place of worship if you're a believer that's your response have confidence in the truth have confidence to share the truth and then allow it to drive you to worship maybe you're a sufferer here today and perhaps when you come to this passage you are reminded that Jesus knows your suffering that there's no suffering you've experienced that he did not also experience he knows he sympathizes with your weakness receive his comfort maybe you're a doubter and if you're a doubter

I just beg you to consider the evidence there is abundant evidence consider it if you're a sinner I invite you to turn to Jesus today only he can save your sin and that's exactly what he came to do we read it in John 3 God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world not this time that time comes at the end where he will come to condemn the world that time has not yet occurred God sent his son into the world in order that he might save them and he says the way that you receive this salvation is through faith he that believes is not condemned but he who does not believe he's condemned already you say what am I supposed to do cry out to God for mercy acknowledging that only in Jesus

Christ in his crucifixion and resurrection is that mercy even possible repent from your sin trust in him faithfully follow for reason aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to aspire to