



## Lesson 210

# The Birth of Christ – Part 1

### Story Elements

- **Text:** Luke 2:1-23
- **Setting:** circa 6 BC in Nazareth and the hill country of Judea
- **Main Characters:** God, Mary, Joseph, Jesus, angels, and shepherds
- **Plot:** Christ's birth is attended by angels and shepherds.
- **Key word(s):** "unto you is \_\_\_\_\_" (v 11) This is the key phrase because it captures God's gracious plan of redemption through incarnation in four brief words.
- **Climax:** **Luke 1:34 Luke 2:11** *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* As with the key phrase, so with the climax: gracious redemption is brought to humanity through the birth of a baby; God has put on flesh to be our Savior.

## Decree of Caesar

1. (v 1) The decree of Augustus took place in 8 BC. It would have taken a few years for the decree to be fulfilled.
  - (a) The phrase "all the world to be taxed" is best understood as "all inhabitants of Roman provinces were to be registered," (i.e., a \_\_\_\_\_ was being conducted for the purposes of taxation). The vast Roman empire stretched from what modern-day Iran all the way to Britain. "*Terrarum orbis imperium—The empire of the whole earth; and here that empire is called all the world.*"<sup>1</sup>
  - (b) Jerusalem had been conquered by the Roman General Pompey about 60 years prior to Christ's birth. Consequently, Judah's subjection to a foreign power was complete when Caesar began to tax the nation.

APPLICATION→ Matthew Henry explains how this fulfilled a prophecy spoken by Jacob 2,000 years before Christ was born: "Jacob's prophecy, that \_\_\_\_\_ should come when the *sceptre was departed from Judah*, and the *lawgiver from between his feet*, Gen. 49:10. This was the *first taxing* that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude; therefore now Shiloh must come, to set up his kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

- (c) When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, the Roman Empire was portrayed as iron legs that degraded into extremities mixed with \_\_\_\_\_. Daniel prophesied that God would set up his eternal kingdom in the days of Roman kings. **Daniel 2:44** *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

APPLICATION→ Caesar made plans intending to enrich his kingdom, but God used Caesar's plan a different way. J. C. Ryle expounds: "Little did the haughty Roman emperor, and his officer Cyrenius, think that they were only instruments in the hand of the God of Israel, and were only carrying out the eternal purposes of the King of kings. Little did they think that they were helping to lay the foundation of a kingdom before which the empires of this world would all go down one day, and Roman idolatry pass away."<sup>3</sup>

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## City of David

2. (vv 3-4) The census required each family to return to their tribal town to register. Since both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David, they made the \_\_\_\_\_-mile journey to Bethlehem.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1827.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007) p 51.

