

## From There to Here

Luke 2:1-7 & John 1:1-5

Read Luke 2:1-7 & John 1:1-5 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. 4 And 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. 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 swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

### HERE

Think about your home town. It doesn't matter if it was a big city or a little town. As children, we tend to think of our home town as the center of the universe. By it, we develop our definitions for home, normal, HERE.

- ? Do you recall some of your earliest ideas about HERE?
- ? What was your home town like?
- ? What aspects of your definition of normal or home remain deeply rooted within your psyche?

The great wonder of Christmas is that we celebrate the truth that God came HERE, to this world, our world, our town, and our time. Skim the Christmas account as told by Matthew (Mt. 1:1 – 2:12). Note anything that you find interesting in how Matthew tells his account.

- ? What are your thoughts?
- ? How would you describe Matthew's narration?

Notice how Matthew begins with a long genealogy beginning with Abraham. Matthew makes a point to highlight Abraham and David. Matthew also talks candidly about the circumstances of Mary and Joseph's private life together. He tells how Joseph considered divorcing Mary, but he listened to the angel and took Mary as his wife.

Now consider the birth narration that Luke provides (Luke 1:5 – 2:21).

- ? What are your thoughts of Luke's account?
- ? How is Luke's account different, literary-wise, than Matthews?
- ? What does Luke focus on that is missing from Matthews's account?

Notice how Luke begins with a minidrama of some key players: Elizabeth, Zachariah, John, Mary, and Joseph. Luke, the physician, talks about biology, obstetrics, travel, and logistics. All in all, Matthew and Luke are gospels of HERENESS. They speak to how Jesus fulfills the required genealogical requirements of the Christ; they speak to Jesus's fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy; and they speak of how Jesus fulfills God's purposes for this galaxy, solar system, planet, continent, country, county, and town. Jesus came down to a town, a stable, a mother, a manger, The Savior was born right HERE!

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 the ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.  
Micah 5:2

## **THERE**

In stark contrast to the birth accounts in Matthew and Luke, we have the narrative in the gospel of John. If Matthew and Luke are gospels of HERENESS, John is the gospel of THERENESS!

- ? How does John introduce the birth of Jesus (John 1:1 – 5)?
- ? Compared to Matthew and Luke's accounts, what does John leave out of his narrative?
- ? As opposed to the familiarity of HERE that we can find in Matthew and Luke, how does John's narrative make you feel or think?

John offers no birth narrative. There is no genealogy, no decree from Caesar. John rips us away from the familiarity of HERE and hurls us into the murky mystery and incomprehensibility of THERE! John takes us beyond our horizons and our imagination. We see the majesty, perfection, and immensity of God's redemptive plan! It is incredible, not only that God came HERE, but that He came from THERE!

## **Jesus came from THERE to HERE**

Consider the contrast! There could be no greater contrast or greater distance to travel!

- ? What attributes of Jesus are described in John 1:1-5?
- ? Describe how John's account makes you aware of the THERENESS of Jesus.

The great theologian, J. I. Packard, said, the hardest fact of Christianity for most people, “lies not in the Good Friday message of atonement, nor in the Easter message of the resurrection, but in the Christmas message of incarnation. The really staggering Christian claim is that Jesus of Nazareth was God made man, and that he took humanity without loss of deity, so that Jesus of Nazareth was as truly divine as He was human.” Packard also states, “Here are two mysteries for the price of one—the plurality of persons within the unity of God, and the union of Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus.”

? We must ask: what was the purpose for Jesus’s birth? Was it simply to prove He could do this? Share your thoughts.

? According to Luke 2:11, what would Luke reply to this question?

? What does the Apostle Paul say in 2 Corinthians 5:19?

### **Rescue from THERE to HERE**

The Savior came all the way from glory to HERE to give you the gift of a life beyond this dark winter of lockdown, job loss, distance learning, health crisis, loneliness, and loss. Jesus came to demonstrate hope by His intervention. HERE is not big enough to fill my longings.

? Why do you think our longings never seem to be fully satisfied?

? What does Ecclesiastes 3:11 tell us is our problem? What does the author of Ecclesiastes mean when he says, God “put eternity into man’s heart?”

Jesus did NOT remain isolated and regal; He became humble and touchable. He knows what it is like to be alone, misunderstood, to face conflict, to face temptation, and to feel sorrow! Your life is not too plain or too small and unimportant for Him. He is HERE, Immanuel, God with us!