

[About My Fathers Business] / Gospel of Luke 2:1 – 30

~ Our Spiritual Safari often challenges mainstream thinking concerning contemporary Christianity's self-professions of knowledge of the Word of God - and this report will be exactly that. The number one - and I mean number one BY FAR - problem in the church today is a total and complete ignorance of the Word of God. In our first report from Luke, I stated there is a two-fold purpose for this Gospel; one, it is a historical record as we will see in this chapter in a very definite way – directed at the Greek thinking man in particular - and two, the great spiritual purpose is to present the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God! If you have not read our previous report and, indeed, all three previous safari reports from Luke, I highly suggest you go back and do so now. In this report, we're going to examine several quotations to reinforce the statements that I am going to make; and that many people are simply not going to agree with.

Let's start with Neander, who said, "....the three great historical nations had to contribute, each in its own peculiar way, to prepare the soil for the planting of Christianity: the Jews, on the side of the religious element; Greeks on the side of science and art; the Romans as the masters of the world in the political sense...." We have already learned in both Matthew and Mark that each Gospel is written to a very definite and particular segment of humanity in the human race - and Luke brings it up again here in this Gospel. Matthew wrote to the Jewish religious man in Israel - and in Hebrew, I might add, Mark wrote to the Roman strong man and now, Luke writes to the Greek intellectual – the evidence driven thinking man.

Dr. Gregory wrote, ".... the Greeks are clearly distinguished from all other great historical races by certain marked characteristics. The Greek was the representative of reason and humanity in the ancient world. They viewed themselves as having a mission of perfecting men! The Greek was the cosmopolite of their age. They made all their gods in the likeness of men, that is, in their own likeness. Therefore, they joined the human culture of worldliness and utter Godlessness." Remember, the Greeks had the altar to the unknown god. Paul was the perfect person to go to Athens in Greece and preach this particular Gospel as Dr. Luke had penned it.

There are several things we should take the time to note concerning the Greek mission. That mission was, evidently, part of the plan and purpose of God to prepare the world for the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ. This Gospel will force the thinking man to feel and confess a total inadequacy and insufficiency of human reason. Even in its most perfected development, the deliverance for mankind is left waiting and longing for One Who could accomplish the work that Christ did - and does. Our preface and proper introduction to chapter two is the starting place where we begin to follow the Lord Jesus; and we go from His birth to His death to His resurrection and ascension and back into Heaven and into the right hand of God the Father where we are promised that He is coming again to this earth to reign and rule! Luke covers so many prophetic topics; each critical for putting all the pieces of Scripture together to attain a proper, correct and complete Gospel understanding.

Candidly, the only significant accomplishments the Greek made to mankind was to contribute their language to the world - and salad. The language became the vehicle for getting the Word of God out in that day. The original communication to the world of the Gospel was in the Greek language. God used Alexander the Great to accomplish His own will. See, friends, whether you are lost OR saved – you WILL glorify God - simply because you are in His providence. It is said that Alexander took up the meshes of the netting that were lying in disorder on the edges of the Asiatic shores and re-spread them over the entire known world during his frightful campaigns. East and west were suddenly brought together, and separated tribes were reunited under a common government. New cities were built and established as the centers of a new way of political life. New lines of communication were opened at that time as channels of commercial activity. This new culture penetrated right thorough the mountainous ranges of Pisidia, Lydia and Ionia. The Tigris and the Euphrates became Greek rivers under Alexander and the Greek language was heard commonly among the Jewish colonies of Babylonia. A Grecian Babylon was built by the conqueror in Egypt, which is called Alexandria, named for Alexander and called by that name to this day. Sir William Ramsey found Luke to be deadily accurate in his account. Every statement made is undeniable and completely correct and true; and with that background we can consider the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ within a proper context....

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

~ The Greek word for 'all the world' is "oikoumene" and means "the inhabited world." Apparently, there was knowledge of, or at least suspected to be, parts of the world that were not inhabited at that time. This means the Greeks knew the civilized world was not the entire earth at that time. Most of us had the most heathen and uncivilized ancestors in Europe and they aren't even included in this Greek word at this time. Caesar Augustus would have taxed everybody if he could have gained rule over them somehow. Caesar Augustus was the adopted son of Julius Caesar. His historical name was Gaius Octavius. He took the name of Caesar, which is somewhat like a brand name that had prestige; and Augustus is nothing but a title. The senate submitted to him certain titles, such as king and emperor and dictator. Well, I guess he didn't like any of those names, so he chose the title Augustus.

Interestingly, the title Augustus has a lofty implication of significance; and contains a note of inherent religion to go with it. This is a blatant attempt by this pagan heathen man to deify himself and usurp the role of God in the world. So, here we have a man who signed a tax bill saying the world must be taxed. Of course, the tax money was used primarily to keep his army out there operating in the field. The rest of it went to living in filthy luxury while many of his countrymen lacked for a morsel of bread in their mouth most of the time. Well, what we have here is an accurate and completely historical record....

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

~ The journey of Joseph could not be recounted more succinctly or definitively. Mary was required to go because she was of the house of David, also. This simple historical statement is one of the true thrills of teaching the Bible. It is exactly accurate in history; and it contains the greatest of all spiritual truths. We see a man ascribing himself a name designed to take the place of God Almighty in the eyes of his subjects. If you look at the statue of Augustus, you will see it has a man roughly a quarter the size of Augustus with wings and appear to be grasping at Augustus skirt. Augustus wanted to be worshipped by every man, woman and child that he could bring under his rule, you may be absolutely certain. Well, this all prompted a pair of peasants from Nazareth to travel to Bethlehem to be enrolled in the taxing program. The woman in that pair was pregnant and carrying the True Son of God! This historical record is tremendous. No one pays taxes to Caesar Augustus today and no one reverences him at all. No one names their son Caesar – that name is reserved for pet dogs! The world has all but forgotten him.

In stark contrast, the little baby that the peasant woman was carrying at the time in which we are studying is known by all men today – even those who refuse to worship Him know Who He is. Many of us revere Him as our Savior, in fact. If that isn't remarkable to you then I don't know what would be. Augustus didn't care that a pregnant woman would be put in danger by being forced to travel like this. He would demand ANYTHING to get that tax money; and he sure didn't care about women and children! He was ONLY interested in armies and luxury and spending cash! That's all gone now, and Augustus has been reduced, in modern memory, to a piece of carved out rock! Most people remember the one that carved the rock more than the subject of the bust – and what a "bust" his life really was, after all. Be not deceived, my beloved, God is not mocked; the soul that sinneth, it shall die....

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

~ Of course, God is arranging all of this and, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son as a little baby that was born in Bethlehem. Luke is going to take us down where the mop meets the kitchen floor now; and he just lays it on the line regarding exactly how things were at that time. Some people don't like the implications here - and some cannot handle thinking about it all the way through - but I see this as a borderline incomprehensible statement that must be considered completely. The little baby that Mary puts clothes on just happens to be the Son of God! Let's not miss either point....

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

~ It was most definitely NOT the dead of winter at this time or the shepherds would not have been out there keeping sheep at night. The time of His birth is not relevant to our safari, so we don't go into that too much. Jesus was born – period – or exclamation point! The same is true of which day He was crucified on – unimportant. I don't really CARE what day that happened because I know that what is important is that He was crucified according to the historical record. The Bible doesn't say Christ died for our sins on Monday or Thursday – we just don't know, and we weren't told because it's irrelevant to our belief. What IS relevant and all important is that Christ died for our sins, was buried and raised again! In THIS account what is important is that He was born. I, personally, would guess this was in the springtime judging by all the information available to us. But again, be that as it may, we do not argue, and we do not even defend our thoughts on these points in the Spiritual Safari....

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

~ One man asked another, ".... have I shown you a picture of my children?" And the other man replied, ".... no, and thank you for that!" I was asked recently what a man feels at childbirth. Well, there is a sympathy that goes out from a man to a newborn baby and the Lord Jesus just happened to arrive that same way and under those circumstances! Jesus could have entered this world the same way He will next time, in power and glory, but this time He came into this world the most vulnerable and weak way one possibly can enter the world. As George McDonald said, ".... He came to this world as a little baby thing that made a woman cry." Man was looking for a King to lift them high. Christ came into this world a human being, touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Christ knows you today and He knows me, too!

So, that's the account of the Savior of the world coming into the world - and it all means we can know something about God, too! Christ laid aside his glory but NOT His deity and He took upon Himself our humanity. All of creation should have been there in Bethlehem at that time; not just a few shepherds and angels. Caesar Augustus should have been worshipping God instead of himself; but he was too busy with his covetousness and greed. Christ could have forced all of this to happen, but Christ laid aside His PREROGATIVES of deity - but NOT His deity - and He showed up this way at this time. I just can't think of a much lovelier picture than that which we are looking at....

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

~ Because we are considering the birth of Jesus, we might as well sing another Christmas carol now. This is often misunderstood, so let's not misquote Luke as the world does; this does NOT mean peace and good will toward all men – what this means is – peace on earth towards men of good will. It is perfectly asinine to say let's have peace on this earth. Isaiah said there was no peace for the wicked; and Jesus Himself says, "think NOT that I have come to bring peace; but DIVISION!" We need to think about beating our plowshares into swords today – NOT the other way around! This is a mean, nasty and wickedly evil world we happen to occupy tonight, and Satan dominates it right this moment. There is no peace in this world but there IS peace with men of good will! If you have turned to Christ to trust Him, then you can also know the peace of God that passes all understanding. Of course, that means that while we realize peace in our lives, we will not understand it at all. Being justified with God, we have peace through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let's also realize here that when Christ returns, He is returning as the Prince of Peace; whereby He will put down all unrighteousness and rebellion in this world. So, until Christ returns, there will be no peace established upon the face of this earth – you can just write that down....

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

~ The shepherds arrived rather early, historically speaking. As we know, from Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus, the wise men did not get there until much later. By the time the wise men show up, Jesus was in a house. I am sure several months, at least, had elapsed. Let's also remember the wise men brought gifts to Jesus – not Mary – and they fell down and worshipped HIM – NOT them! Pondering and keeping all these things in her heart is exactly what a wonderful mother would do. Mary was a magnificently wonderful mother of a woman! Our other records are where we discover that they all go down to Egypt at this time and then, later, they returned to Nazareth. Well, absolutely nothing took place after this until He was thirty years of age and His ministry had begun! And with that in mind, they are going to follow the Mosaic Law concerning a male child....

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

~ Remember, there were forty full days after giving birth that a woman was declared unclean due to having brought a sinner into the world. Christ was not a sinner, but Mary was! She has already said she needed a Savior in chapter one. Friends, it's so easy to get all of this confused, but it isn't that difficult. We really need to learn what this Book of the Bible is saying to us now – today – and we really need to act on it. Of course, we examined all of this law as it was presented in Leviticus, which our safari has recently completed. This would be a great time for the sincere student of Scripture to go back and read all thirty-one safari reports from Leviticus....

23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24 And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

~ The offering was two turtle doves for Mary according to Levitical Law, but there was no sacrifice made for Jesus, which indicates His sinlessness - and her dire poverty. Even so, she offered properly according to the Mosaic Law. There is no record of any sacrifice for the Lord Jesus on record in the World of God, by the way! He is our sacrifice. So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with Simeon singing the solo for us; and we have the night diminuendo. Simeon says his eyes saw salvation. We have seen it on safari. I've seen it. What did Simeon see? Simeon saw a little baby, that's all! Friends, salvation is a Person – not a thing; it's not something you do - it's something God has already done for you! That thing that God did was send His Son as a Person; and you either have Him or – you don't! You either trust Christ or you do not trust Christ. Do you have Him? Do you REALLY and HONESTLY trust Him today? ~

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation ~

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