



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Genesis 1 – 19 Sermon Series
Supports Session 4: The First Christmas
Sermon Title: “Unfit for a King” (Luke 2:1-7)

Connection to Session 4

As the session focuses on the first Christmas, this message will place an emphasis on the first seven verses of the studied text where Luke describes the birth of Jesus.

Introduction/Opening

Between Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the coming New Year, it certainly is a busy time of the year! Throughout the hustle of the holidays, often, major tasks need to be done. There are places to go, family members to visit, guests to feed, not to mention the many travelers on the road and crowded places to stay. Yet this hustle and bustle has much in common with what occurred in the first century, Roman-controlled Judea. In this case, the Romans decreed a census to take place, disrupting the normally mundane life in the region. Our text focuses on a certain young pregnant woman who was forced to travel in very difficult and even dangerous conditions.

Yet Mary and Joseph had to press on to get to Bethlehem to take part in Caesar’s required census. They arrived, only to find an incredibly cold and crowded city. No one took them into their home, despite her obvious pregnancy. Where were they to go? What would they do? This was no place to have a baby, let alone a baby who would be revealed as the King of kings!

Today, we are going to look at the conditions that existed as Jesus came into this world.

Outline

1. Unfit Preparation (2:1-5)

- a. The census of Caesar
 - i. Quirinius of Syria was the local authority to implement the census.
 - ii. The census involved counting people for taxation purposes.
- b. The many travelers

- i. It was customary to return to one's original home for such a census.¹
- ii. Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem, the City of David.
 - 1. Joseph and Mary were in the lineage of David.
 - a. They were engaged to be married, yet she was with child through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-21; Luke 1:35).
- iii. The crowded and dangerous journey
 - 1. It was a dangerous journey due to bandits and road conditions.
 - 2. The length of the journey was a little under 100 miles in rough terrain.
- c. Pregnancy discomforts
 - i. There is no textual evidence that Mary took a donkey. She most likely walked.
 - ii. She was at least three months pregnant. (She stayed with Elizabeth for three months prior to the trip.)

2. Unfit Location (2:7)

- a. There was no room in the inn.
 - i. Upon arrival, no lodging was found in anyone's home, even though this is at a time when it is customary to welcome travelers.
 - ii. Sometimes a village would have these large halls or rooms for travelers on the second floor or upper room (like the place for the last supper) with a first floor for animals. If this is the case, the second floor was full.
- b. The only place to go, then, was where the animals were, and it was obviously not fit for giving birth to a baby.

¹ W. L. Liefeld, "Luke," in F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 843.

- i. Only the animals would be on the bottom floor or in a cave close by where animals were kept.
- ii. The feeding trough (manger) was most likely a carved-out piece of wood or rock. Either way, it was hard, dirty, and cold.
- c. While today we worry about the sterilization of everything, we see none of that here.

3. Unfit Reception (2:7,16)

- a. The birth of Jesus was met with no dignitaries.
 - i. There were no politicians, no religious leaders, and no officials of any sort.
 - ii. There were no influencers, no one from the “A” list, if such a list existed then.
 - iii. Jesus’s birth was a simple one.
- b. Yet there were others at His birth. The “unfit” were there.
 - i. A simple, poor father and mother
 - ii. Some shepherds, those impure, unclean caretakers of sheep in the fields, were there. Shepherds were regarded as the lowest of people, people to be avoided.
 - iii. But this baby was received by those simple people.
 - 1. People who would have much in common with others who would receive Jesus when He began His ministry, people such as:
 - a. Fishermen, tax collectors, or prostitutes.
 - b. Humble people who saw the depth of their sin and the amazing grace of an amazing Savior.
 - 2. This is the irony of the birth of King Jesus.
 - a. God chose not a royal bed and royal robe, but a hard manger and strips of cloth.
 - b. Jesus’s birth was not met with pomp and circumstance. It was a small reception.
 - c. Jesus was not received by the nobility but by the needy.

3. Jesus was needed. His birth was necessary for a world in need of a Savior.

Conclusion

Amid busyness, selfishness, and self-preservation that night in Bethlehem, God brought calmness in the place of Jesus's birth. This child, this wonderful child, this Emmanuel, was wholly, miraculously, and humbly born to be our Savior. Not by human hands, but by the hand of God.

Yet isn't it appropriate that out of the worst of conditions came the greatest news? Isn't it also appropriate that the unfit conditions are a comparison to the unfit conditions of our heart? We are sinners in all ways, unprepared on our own for the coming of Christ, possessing of cold, hard hearts no different than the surface of that manger. We're not rich in spirit but poor in spirit, only to be changed by the touch of the Messiah Himself.

None of us are righteous. None of us deserve Him. And yet, in the middle of the dirtiest, coldest, poorest, and darkest of places, the light of the world shone forth.

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