

## *The Birth of Christ in Luke 2*

### *Translation and Notes*

by  
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2:1 Now it happened in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus for all the inhabited world<sup>I</sup> to be registered.<sup>II</sup> <sup>2</sup> This first registration happened while Quirinius<sup>III</sup> was governing Syria.<sup>IV</sup> <sup>3</sup> And all were going to be registered, each one to his own city.<sup>V</sup> <sup>4</sup> And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of *the* city of Nazareth into Judea, into the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered with Mary,<sup>VI</sup> his betrothed wife,<sup>VII</sup> who was pregnant. <sup>6</sup> Now it happened while they were there that the days for her to give birth were completed. <sup>7</sup> And she bore her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in cloth strips,<sup>VIII</sup> and laid him in the feeding crib,<sup>IX</sup> because there was no place for them in the inn.

2:8 And there were in the same region shepherds living in *the* fields, guarding over their flock at night. <sup>9</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood with them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they feared greatly. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, Stop fearing, for behold, I am announcing good news *of* great joy<sup>X</sup> which will be to all the people,<sup>XI</sup> <sup>11</sup> because *a* savior, Who is Christ<sup>XII</sup> *the* Lord, was born for you today in the city of David. <sup>12</sup> And this *is* the sign for you: You will find *a* Baby having been wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a feed trough. <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel many of the heavenly army praising God and saying: <sup>14</sup> Glory to God in *the* highest places, and upon earth peace among men of goodwill!<sup>XIII</sup> <sup>15</sup> And it happened *that*, when the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this matter that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. <sup>16</sup> And they came hurriedly and located Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a feeding trough. <sup>17</sup> And after they saw *Him*, they made widely known the statement which was spoken to them concerning this young Child. <sup>18</sup> And all the *people* who heard *it* wondered about that which was spoken to them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept<sup>XIV</sup> all these matters considering *them* in her heart.<sup>XV</sup> <sup>20</sup> and the shepherds returned,<sup>XVI</sup> glorifying and praising God for all the things which they heard and saw, just as it was spoken to them.

2:21 And when eight days to circumcise Him were fulfilled,<sup>XVII</sup> His name was called Jesus, *which He was* called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. <sup>22</sup> And when the days of her<sup>XVIII</sup> purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled,<sup>XIX</sup> they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord<sup>XX</sup> <sup>23</sup> (just as it has been written in *the* law of *the* Lord,<sup>XXI</sup> “Every male opening *the* womb shall be called holy to the Lord”,<sup>XXII</sup> <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

## *End Notes*

- <sup>I</sup> οἰκουμένη, commonly referring to the Roman empire.
- <sup>II</sup> An enrollment in a registry book, of which this was the first of several, for the ultimate purpose of taxation, which immediately followed. According to WP several minor Jewish revolts took place during the earliest registrations (see notes in WP on Acts 5:37).
- <sup>III</sup> For a discussion of Quirinius see ISBE (Orr) article “Chronology of the New Testament” and ISBE (Bromiley) article “Quirinius”. SA W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the NT* (4th ed 1920), pp. 222–300.
- <sup>IV</sup> Not the modern country called Syria, but the Roman province of Syria, which covered virtually all of the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, perhaps including as far south as Sinai (*The New Bible Dictionary*, “Syria”).
- <sup>V</sup> This was probably in accordance with Jewish practice, not Roman.
- <sup>VI</sup> If we take “with Mary” to go with “registered” then Mary also was of the house and family of David “There is no real reason for doubting that Mary herself was a descendant of David, and that is the obvious way to understand Luke’s genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23–38” (WP).
- <sup>VII</sup> CR omits γυναῖκα, wife. *Betrothed* is the same verb as in 1:27. Here it means “married” or “espoused” as Matt. 1:24f. shows. Otherwise Mary could not have traveled with Joseph.
- <sup>VIII</sup> Wrapping a child in cloth strips was a common practice thought to keep the infants limbs straight. These were not “rags” as some have thought, but strips of cloth brought along for the purpose.
- <sup>IX</sup> The word indicates either a feeding crib, as here, or a stall, as in Luke 13:15. It does not refer to the stable proper, and the English word “manger” has dropped out of the language except for the seasonal use.
- <sup>X</sup> Literally, “I am evangelizing great joy.”
- <sup>XI</sup> The phrase “all the people” is regularly translated “all people” as though it refers to all humanity. However, Luke is quoting the angel, who undoubtedly meant by “all the people” all the Jewish people.
- <sup>XII</sup> The angel is using messianic language which the shepherds would have understood from a Jewish perspective. One might translate the phrase χριστὸς κύριος (*christos kurios*) “Messiah Lord.”
- <sup>XIII</sup> The statement, a Hebraistic parallelism, is not of universal application. The contrast between God being glorified in high places with the peace on earth is to be taken in the sense of the messianic message inherent in the birth of the Christ. Peace on earth in the sense meant here is to be associated with the coming of the messianic kingdom to the earth. Anyone who lived during the twentieth century must realize that peace on earth has not yet been accomplished!
- <sup>XIV</sup> Literally, “was keeping” as it is in the imperfect tense. The intention is to indicate the on-going pondering concerning the appearance of the angels and the visit of the shepherds into which Mary entered. It undoubtedly occurred to her that those on the lowest rungs of society, mere shepherds, were the first to observe the incarnate Christ, and that at the invitation of the heavenly army.
- <sup>XV</sup> Another clear use where the word “heart” refers to mental activity.
- <sup>XVI</sup> That is, they returned to their fields and sheep after they had announced what they had experienced.
- <sup>XVII</sup> Awkward in English translation, but an accurate representation of the Greek statement. One of the Abrahamic Covenants required an eight day period before the circumcision of a male child could take place. See Genesis 17:12. In John 7:22 Jesus tells us that circumcision was given by Moses not because of he himself, but as a reflection of the practice of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, primarily). The Mosaic injunction is found in Leviticus 12:1-3.
- <sup>XVIII</sup> Some manuscripts read “their” rather than “her” probably referring to the mother and child.
- <sup>XIX</sup> See Leviticus 12:1-8. The law required that a mother not perform holy duties for 40 days in the case of a boy baby and 80 days in case of a girl baby. She had to bring a burnt offering and a sin offering.
- <sup>XX</sup> This presentation was only performed in case of the first born male. See Exodus 13:2ff.
- <sup>XXI</sup> Concerning the phrase “in *the* law of *the* Lord,” Darby states, “In the law of the Lord” (*en nomoi kuriou*). No articles, but definite by preposition and genitive.” Vincent notes that “law” occurs in this chapter five times. Paul (Gal 4:4) will urge that Jesus “was made under the law” as Luke here explains.... The purification concerned the mother, the presentation the son.”
- <sup>XXII</sup> Exodus 13:2. Only the first born can rightly be said to open the womb. The firstborns were separated unto the Lord (holy), and therefore went through the purification rites.