

Audio Transcript of Sermon
March 14, 2020
Jesus-The Early Years-Part 2

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. Last week, we started a study looking at the early years of the life of Jesus Christ, and we got up just to about the point where Jesus was born, but we weren't quite there yet. So, we'll continue on from that point today, and today we'll start with Luke chapter two beginning with verse one.

Luke 2:1-39

- 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.**
- 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.**
- 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.**

These first few verses are verses that are commonly read around the holiday of Christmas, and for those of us who are first-century apostolic Christians, we know that there is no Biblical basis for the holiday of Christmas. Instead of looking at the evidence from the Bible, and determining how to celebrate holidays, people have taken a look at holidays that people observe, and find evidence to support that from the Bible.

We know from the account that there was taxation, in other versions and translations of the Bible, might use the word census of the people. And, when did this time of taxation and the census normally occur? That normally occurred during the warmer, summer months, not during the cold month of December that is commonly celebrated with the holiday Christmas. So, looking at historical

accounts, how things were traditionally done, we know that the time of taxation, the time of census, would have been something that most commonly, nine hundred ninety-nine times out of a thousand, would have been done during the warm summer months. That's the historical record. Verse eight.

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

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.

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.

And again, people look at these verses we've just read and because these verses have been taken and applied to a holiday that is already observed, people see these as verses that show the validity of the Christmas observance. And, that's an incorrect way to look at evidence and to process information. Here, we know we have shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. Sheep were typically kept close to the farm during the colder winter months. They would have been kept in pens near where the shepherd lived. The shepherd would have not been living out in the field at night with his sheep during the cold winter months. That kind of activity, again, was something again reserved for the warmer summer months. So, again, the time frame, that the Biblical evidence points to is not a Christmas observance in December, but the birth of Jesus Christ during the warmer summer months. Verse fifteen.

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.

So, Mary heard what the shepherds were saying. The shepherds were simply sharing with the people what the angel had shared with them, that on this day in the city of David, a savior which is Christ the Lord, was born, and Mary kept that quietly in her heart. She was probably overwhelmed, with what had happened, and the responsibility that she felt as a mother. And, any mother, would have a very high level of responsibility for a newly born child. And, here coupled with that normal motherly level of responsibility, is this responsibility to be the mother of the Lord and Savior of mankind. That's a pretty incredible level of responsibility to have. And that was the responsibility that was given to Mary. Verse twenty.

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.

These shepherds became the initial "evangelists" of Jesus Christ, telling everyone that the Lord and Savior had been born in Bethlehem. And, they came back, they were excited, they kept on sharing that information. And how many days did they share that information? Verse twenty-one.

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.

So, this "evangelizing" by these shepherds went on for many, many days. And we finally got to the point like so many Jewish boys, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. Verse twenty-two.

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;

So, after Mary was ready to travel to the temple, they brought Jesus to the temple. Why? In verse twenty-three,

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

Jesus was the child that opened the womb of Mary, and therefore, Jesus was holy to God, solely for that reason. Of course, we know that Jesus was fathered through the Holy Spirit, and that incredible act also made Jesus holy in the sight of God. Verse twenty-four.

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.

And so, just because the Lord and Savior was born did not do away with the temple sacrifices, and the parents still went ahead and offered what was expected as a sacrifice. Verse twenty-five.

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 Ghost was upon him.

The consolation of Israel was the savior Jesus Christ.

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

So, Jesus Christ was the Messiah, and it was revealed to Simeon that he would live to see the Messiah.

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:

30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

Here's a religious man who was promised by God through the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. And, when Jesus was taken by his parents to the temple, this man Simeon was led by the spirit to also go to the temple at the same time. When Jesus was just a few weeks old, Simeon held Jesus in his arms like many people would hold a small baby when visiting with the parents. Verse thirty-four.

34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35. Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

And then, sadly, Anna became a widow, and how long had she been a widow? Verse thirty-seven.

37. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years,

That's eighty-four years. That's a long time. Add to eighty-four years seven and you get ninety-one. Well, we haven't even added in how old she would have been when she got married. So, she was probably well over a hundred years old. Maybe, a hundred five, a hundred and ten. That would about have been her age to be married. And so, here is this very elderly woman, at a time when today most people would be doing very little. Most people would be keeping around the house, likely in a nursing home, but they would not be serving as a prophetess, and they would not be active to the degree that Anna was in the temple. And what did Anna do with the temple, and how did she serve? Going back to verse thirty-seven, "*...she was a widow of about fourscore and four years,*"

which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

There are many different ways how we can serve God. And Anna is recorded through serving God through fastings and prayers. So, fasting is when we deny ourselves food and water for a period of time, to devote to our reflection and meditation on God, and prayers can be given at any time under any circumstance. Having that prayerful contact with God is one way how we can serve God. There are many other ways, but that's definitely one way how we can serve God. Verse thirty-eight.

38. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

We can't tell clearly from the scriptures if Anna shared with other people that the Baby Jesus was the Lord and Savior who was prophesied of in the Bible. That's something that is very hard to determine from this passage, but, we know that she spoke of him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So, we can extrapolate that she did likely speak of the baby Jesus to those in Jerusalem. It's just not very clear from the context of the way verse thirty-eight is written. Verse thirty-nine.

39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

So, here is the baby Jesus, a few weeks old, and he's finally returning to his hometown, the city of Nazareth. And, at this time, you would think that his fame and notoriety would go away. But for Jesus, that was not the case. People had their eyes and attention glued to Jesus from the time of his birth because people understood the importance of the Messiah to the people of Israel. Let's take a look at Matthew two verse one to continue the story. Matthew two verse one.

Matthew 2:1-23

1. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

For those who observe Christmas, you might think that what was just said was that there were three wise men who came to see Jesus. But, Matthew two verse one doesn't give us any number of wise men. It just says wise men. So, men is plural, we know that it is at least two. It could have been three, it could have been

four, five, six, seven, eight, a hundred. The number of wise men is not given to us in the Bible because the number of wise men is not that important. Why the number three especially tying in to the Christmas story? A lot of that has to do with the trinity. The number three ties in nicely with the trinitarian concept. That's why the number three is tied in to the story of the wise men at the time of Christmas. Of course, looking at the previous passages we've looked at, we know that Jesus was likely born during the summer months, not during cold December. So, these wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and in verse two what did they do, they said,

2. Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

So, imagine these are wise people coming to the capital city. In the United States, it would be like people coming to Washington, D.C. To the country to our south in Mexico, it would be like going to Mexico City. And so, imagine the power of wise people showing up in a group at your capital city and they are asking, "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" That statement alone would be a threat to the established party because at this time when Jesus was born, Israel was not an independent nation. It was under Roman occupation, and any talk of *the King of the Jews* would have been seen as a direct threat to the ability of the Roman governor to rule the province of Judea. The fact that these wise men came to also worship him would be concerning to the governor of Judea because if anyone was to be worshipped in his province, it would have been the governor, and not this baby. Verse three.

3. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

If you are the ruler and people come to your city, the capital city, to see the king and they are not talking of you, that's generally bad news for you as the ruler. And, people in Jerusalem were also troubled because of this. That status quo looked like it was going to be up ended. Verse four.

4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

He wanted to know where this Messiah would be born, so that he could effectively neutralize this Messiah.

5. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And so, these chief priests knew that the Messiah according to scripture would be born in Bethlehem just like the Bible records that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Verse six is what was written by the prophet.

6. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

So, they knew what the passages said in scripture, they shared that with Herod, and what action did Herod decide upon hearing all of this? Verse seven.

7. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

So, Herod had an audience with the chief priests and the scribes, and then he dismissed them like a ruler typically will do, calling in just a small group of people into the office, if you ever see the President or a prime minister visiting with people in the office, it's generally a smaller group in the office. They're there for a short time, and then when the meeting is over they leave. Very similar what was happening with Herod the king. And so after dismissing the chief priests and the scribes, Herod brought in the wise men, and he asked them a very basic question, "When did you see the star in the east that caused you to come to Jerusalem?" We don't know from the passage here in Matthew if the wise men told Herod when they saw the star appear. What we do know in verse eight is that Herod sent them on their way. Verse eight.

8. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Politicians are commonly known to lie, and here, Herod, no different than many politicians, lied to the wise men. In verse nine,

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9. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When I go out and take a look at a star in the night sky, it doesn't move for me. It stays in one place. But here, this star, led the wise men to where Jesus was. Verse ten.

10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

They knew that something miraculous would be there for them to see. Verse eleven.

11. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Gold is a gift we still understand to this today. Gold is a very valuable and precious metal used in jewelry, it's used in coins, and it's even used in gold bars to store huge amounts of wealth. The frankincense and myrrh though we understand a lot less. Frankincense itself is a resin. It comes from a few different kinds of trees, mainly the Boswellia tree that is known to produce true frankincense. The Boswellia tree, like many trees that grow in the desert, and I have a few desert varieties around my house, is a scraggly and hardy tree. And the way that you get ahold of the frankincense, or the resin inside, is simply by stripping or slashing the bark. And what happens is very similar to what happens if you cut your skin. You bleed, the tree bleeds. And, when the tree bleeds with the resin, eventually that resin hardens and reseals the tree. Just like any kind of agricultural item, changes in climate and soil can change the quality of the resin. So, different kinds of climates and soils produce better qualities of resin. And like some desert plants and trees, this particular tree seems to have the ability to grow almost out of a solid rock. That makes it an incredible desert living plant. Now, how this tree starts growing eventually in the rock, most people can't quite figure that out, but they think somehow the seed establishes a taproot into a hole in the rock and that's sort of used to anchor the tree into the rock, and, by growing in this

manner, the tree becomes anchored into the rock, and in some of the more violent desert storms, the tree is very steady, and does not fall over. So, that's an incredible point of strength for a tree that grows in the desert.

The trees that produce frankincense don't do it from the very youngest ages. The tree has to have been growing for about eight to ten years old. And, when they are pulling the resin, unlike maybe the maple tree in the northern part of the United States and southern Canada, the resin for frankincense can be drawn many different times during the year, and it's often thought that the later taps, to draw the resin out later in the season, produce the better quality resin that generally has a more pleasant smell. And if we are looking when Jesus was born in the summer months, well, this would have been later during the season.

So frankincense because of its resin and its aromatic qualities is something that was and continues to be used in perfumery and aroma therapy. Aroma therapy is the use of different kinds of smells and aromas to calm the human body and to heal the human body. Some use it as an alternative method. I've heard people say that the most calming smell out there is the scent of chocolate chip cookies. It's also used sometimes in skincare. So, the resin is added into some kind of ointment that is used on the skin.

Myrrh is also a resin that is taken from another tree. And throughout its history, it's been used as a perfume, as incense, and as medicine. Sometimes myrrh was mixed with wine, and it was used basically to relieve the body of pain. Like frankincense, myrrh is bled from the tree many different times during the year, and each time the bark has to be cut into and the resin itself is what seals off the myrrh tree.

Myrrh has many different uses. It had the same similar uses thousands of years ago as it is used today. Myrrh can be used as an antiseptic in mouthwashes, gargles, and toothpaste. So, there are some dental properties that myrrh has. It can be used to also be used on minor skin abrasions, bruises, aches, and pains. In the Bible, myrrh is mentioned as a rare perfume, very precious, and it was probably this purpose, the rare perfume, that the wise men gave it as a gift to Jesus. It's strange for us to think, "Why would you give a baby perfume?" Keep in mind that people back at that time did not have access to the same level of cleanliness that we would have had today. And perfumes were used and given as

gifts to those people who had money. So, a rare perfume, myrrh, was used in many different places. Myrrh was mentioned when Jacob was sold by his brothers into slavery. And it was also used as part of the purification ritual recorded for us in the Book of Esther. Myrrh was used to purify the queen before she would go into see the king. So, it must have been a very pleasant perfume, and that reputation of being a very pleasant perfume, was why the wise men presented it as a gift to the baby Jesus. Returning back to the story in Matthew two verse twelve, the wise men had just given the baby Jesus gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and if you recall, they had been instructed by Herod to return to him to let him know exactly where he could find the baby Jesus. Here's what happened in verse twelve.

12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

So, these wise men saw this vision, this warning from God through a dream and they snuck out of the country where they couldn't be seen. They went back to where they came from. And in verse thirteen,

13. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

So, here's Joseph, a person who would want to take care of his family, who married a young lady who ended up becoming pregnant by the Holy Spirit, and here another set of instructions is given to Joseph, to flee immediately to Egypt, not the following week, not the next day, not in the morning, but right then and there. He said, "Get up and go." Verse fourteen.

14. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

God has prophecy written down for our benefit, and it's very easy for us to misinterpret what is written in prophecy. Before this time, if people would have

looked at the phrase “...out of Egypt have I called my son”, they would have thought that this was talking of somebody who had left Egypt during the Exodus. It’s very easy for us to misunderstand Biblical prophecy because we apply our knowledge and understanding to the prophecy instead of letting that prophecy interpret itself. Going back to Bethlehem, imagine how Herod would have felt. Verse sixteen.

16. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Herod was angry. He took vengeance because as the ruler, the governor of Judea, he was not about to be mocked because that would be seen very bad by the people back in Rome. And so, he went out and killed not only all the baby boys that were two years and under, but all the children that were two years and younger. Herod took in his mind, absolutely no chance, he left no stone unturned. He killed all children two years and younger. Verse seventeen.

17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18. In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

19. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20. Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

We have no idea the length of time that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph spent in Egypt. But we do know that it was until after Herod died. And again, did Joseph question the vision that he saw, the direction of the angel? The answer was no. He followed the directions. Verse twenty-one.

21. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

So, Jesus would grow up in the city of Nazareth, because Joseph wanted to stay clear of Judea. He wanted to avoid any run-in with the rulers. So, here is Jesus, he is growing up in Nazareth, and we have no idea how much time Jesus spent growing up in Nazareth since he returned from Egypt. We don't know if Jesus was in Egypt for a few months, a few years, or almost a decade. We have no idea how much time Jesus spent in Egypt from the Biblical record. In Luke, We have additional information given to us about the story of Jesus. Let's take a look at Luke chapter two, verse forty, Luke chapter two, verse forty.

Luke 2:40-52

40. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

Twelve year old children in 2020 probably do not have the wisdom that Jesus Christ had, they probably do not have the grace of God with them that Jesus Christ had with Him. Twelve year old children tend to be pretty silly in some of their actions. They're still kids, they're growing into adult bodies, they're trying to make sense of it all. And so, there's a lot of silliness and immaturity that goes with being aged twelve, but, not for Jesus, because he waxed strong in the spirit and was filled with wisdom. And so, at age twelve, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast, and in verse forty-three,

43. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

I don't know necessarily how a child could be left behind, I think Joseph and Mary headed back to Nazareth and told Jesus, "Make sure you come," and Jesus stayed back in Jerusalem. And in verse forty-four,

44. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

So, Jesus they thought was somewhere in this big group of people who were heading home, turned out they were wrong, and so like any concerned parent would do, they returned to Jerusalem to find their son. And in verse forty-six,

46. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple,

So, they got back to Jerusalem probably after a day. It took them an additional two days to find Jesus in the temple. So, imagine what your reaction would be as a parent if your child went missing three days, because the child didn't follow the direction that you gave them. As a parent, you would probably be pretty angry, after first being relieved that the child was OK. And so, they found him in the temple,

sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

And so, here is Jesus, hanging out with people who were the educated and religious elite at the temple, and he was keeping up with them both asking questions and responding with his own thoughts, or in the case of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was letting Him know what to speak. And in verse forty-eight,

48. And when they saw him, they were amazed:

So, Joseph and Mary were amazed.

and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

Any parent would be horribly afraid for their child that was missing for three days. It was no different for Mary and Joseph, and what did Jesus say as a defense? Verse forty-nine.

49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

He said, "Why are you looking for me? Didn't you know I had to do my Father's business?" If that was my child, maybe if that was your child, the child would probably get into a whole lot of trouble with that kind of response, but not Jesus Christ. Verse fifty.

50. And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

They didn't quite understand what this Father's business that he was there to do because Joseph hadn't given Him anything to do in Jerusalem except come home. So they didn't understand it. They were discrete enough and aware enough of the unique situation of Jesus Christ, not to take action on that because they didn't understand what Jesus Christ was saying. Verse fifty-one.

51. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

So, Jesus when He left with Joseph and Mary, He obeyed Joseph and Mary. He wasn't snarky, he listened to them, he obeyed them. But Mary didn't share what she saw Jesus talking with the elders and religious elite with everyone around town. She kept that all again to herself, because it was probably one, hard for her to understand and two, like any parent, she wouldn't want to draw undue attention to her child. And, in verse fifty-two,

52. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

When we continue this study of the life of Jesus next week, we will transition from Jesus as a child to an adult, and so next week, we will continue this study of the life of Jesus Christ in preparation for the Christian Passover which is coming

up in early April. Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.