Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God, the Savior of Men
Scripture: Luke 2:11
Code: 42-24

Luke's gospel, chapter 2. We're beginning a study of Luke. I thought we would move more rapidly than we are. I knew Luke was a great historian, and that is being verified as we go...fastidious, careful with detail. And I knew that Luke was something of a theologian but the more I'm studying this gospel the more I'm impressed with the depth and breadth and height and length of his theology. And when you're going through narrative passages, you can be content with the story but not if you understand the heart of the writer...both the heart of Luke and the heart of God the Holy Spirit who inspired it. It seems as though everything Luke says on the surface has beneath it massive amounts of supportive truth and history. And that is certainly the case in the text before us today.

Let me read you Luke 2:8 to 14. "And in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terribly frightened. And the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people. For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you, you will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'"

That's a very familiar passage of Scripture. Certainly read many, many times every Christmas season. Probably the most familiar element of the Christmas story to the world at large. But there are so many things of depth and profundity in this brief story. It talks about a Savior, the Lord. It talks about multitudes of angels. It speaks of the presence of God and glorifying God in the highest. All these are far-reaching subjects in the Bible. This is the kind of passage you could spend a life time in. We'll just dust it lightly, even if we spend a few weeks on it.

Seven hundred years before this baby was born a Hebrew prophet named Micah was inspired by God to write that when the Messiah did come 700 years later He would be born in of all places an obscure small town called Bethlehem, house of bread. That's what the prophet said and it's recorded in Micah chapter 5 and verse 2. And because that's what the inspired prophet said and that is the Word of God, that is where the Messiah was born. God's Word always comes to pass. It's always accurate. It's always true. And if the prophet said He was to be born in Bethlehem, then Bethlehem it is. And that's exactly what the story tells us.

Verse 7 says, "She gave birth to her firstborn son." And verse 4 says, "She was in Bethlehem." But, you know, it wasn't the parents of Jesus that assured the fulfillment of this prophecy. Nowhere in the New Testament record does it say Joseph was concerned because he knew that Mary was having a child conceived by the Holy Spirit and he knew this child was Jesus who would save His people from their sins and he knew this child was going to fulfill the promise to David and be the son of David who would reign on a Kingdom...on a throne in a Kingdom that would last forever and ever. But because Joseph knew all of that and understood all of the prophetic truth regarding this unique child who would be the Son of the Most High, as well as the Son of Mary. Nothing says it because Joseph knew that, Joseph arranged to be in Bethlehem for the birth. We don't know whether Joseph was aware of Micah 5:2. We don't know all that Joseph thought.

Nothing in the Bible says that Mary said to Joseph...You know, the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem so it's to Bethlehem we need to go. Nothing in the Scripture indicates that either Joseph or Mary played any particular role in planning to be in Bethlehem for the birth. Human nature would be that Mary would want to be near her mother, near her family, in her hometown, certainly not in a stable in the middle of a group of strangers overpopulating a small village because they were all there trying to get through a census registration that had been demanded by the Roman government. Certainly you don't want to have your baby in a half public stable in the open air and have to put him in a feed trough. Certainly you would not want to make an 85 to 90 mile journey sometimes walking and sometimes riding on the back of a donkey when the pain of just being nine months pregnant doing nothing would be enough. Certainly the thought of a birth without medication, a birth without comfort would be enough to maybe weigh heavy on your mind and cause you to say...You know, the best place for me to be is at home.

We don't know any of those things. We don't know that Joseph and Mary played any role in being in Bethlehem other than the fact that they were there. But the reason they were there wasn't because they planned to be there, the reason they were there was because God planned to have them there. And the way God orchestrated the plan to have them there had nothing to do with them really. It had nothing to do with anybody who even knew about the Messiah. It had nothing to do with anybody who cared about the Messiah. It frankly had nothing to do with anybody who knew the prophet Micah or knew the Old Testament. In fact, it was all orchestrated by, of all people, Caesar Augustus...Caesar Augustus, a pagan. He arranged it. He was the supreme ruler of the Roman Empire. He was a powerful, formidable man. And I took you through a whole, a whole lot of information about the man himself, and the nature of his life and leadership. It was that man, Caesar Augustus, who knew nothing about the true and living God, knew nothing about the Old Testament, never heard of the prophet Micah, couldn't care less about the Messiah. It was that man who did exactly what was necessary to assure the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

And what did he do? He required a census to be taken for the purpose of registering everybody in the Roman Empire with a view towards taxation. So he made a decree, according to verse 1, it was during the first tenure of a man named Quirinius having some kind of authority in the area of Judea which was part of the Roman Empire as verse 2 indicates. And as a result verse 3 says everybody had to go to their ancestral town. Now the Romans didn't require that. As I told you before, that was likely required perhaps by Herod. But apparently Herod or the Jewish leaders had decided that to do it right they needed to go back to the home of their forefathers where they kept all the records of their ancestry. So let's assume that God moved the heart of Caesar Augustus exactly the right time, exactly the right moment to get this thing in motion so that the census would be being taken...would be taking place at the very time of the birth of Christ.

And we also know that the census was authorized in 8 B.C. As you work out the chronology it would be about 8 B.C. when Caesar Augustus made the first census. Remember he had them at 14-year intervals and the second one was at 6 A.D. so backing up fourteen years would be 8 B.C. We also know that Jesus was born by all historical accounts somewhere around 6 and 4 B.C. So the census was called for in 8 B.C., it wasn't complied with in Judea till between 6 and 4 B.C. so there was a two to four year time when Judea didn't comply. We can assume that other countries who were part of the Roman Empire complied, Judea didn't comply probably because of the resistance of Herod. Herod was not a Jew, he was a despised Edomite...Idumaean, he was called, and he was a vassal king under Rome ruling in Judea or in Israel.

So Herod who certainly wasn't anxious for another king to arrive, as we well know. It was Herod, you remember, who massacred all the babies when he heard that a king had been born. So Herod wasn't trying to do anything to help the Messiah fulfill a prophecy. We can't assume that Herod even knew anything about Micah 5:2. And yet Herod put up the appropriate resistance, whatever that meant to stall off the census the necessary years to be sure that Jesus was born at the right place, the right time in God's plan.

And I've always said I can understand...I can't comprehend the power of miracles, but I can understand how God can do miracles. I can understand how history goes along, a natural life goes along in the created order and God just invades with a miracle. I can understand how God just stops the natural process and does something supernatural...that's comprehensible to me. It's even simple to me. You just stop what is natural and do what is supernatural. What I find so unfathomable in my own thinking is how God works not miraculously but providentially. And providence is a term that has to do with God not interfering with the normal processes of life but orchestrating all of those contingencies and all of those thoughts and actions to effect exactly what He wants, when He wants, with whom He wants, where He wants. Now that is amazing. But that's what you have here.

You have a decree by a Roman Caesar who knows nothing about Messianic hope and prophecy, or the Bible, the Old Testament. You have a stalling off or a delay by a Herod who is least of all

disinterested in doing anything that would bring about a new king, or give credence to His claim by being born in Bethlehem. Neither of them knew anything about it. And yet every single thing they do, every independent choice they made, every willful act ignorantly they made worked to the effect that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It is possible, we can't say dogmatic, but it is possible that the reason Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, and that would be...my tendency to believe that because the impetus of the text is they were there because of a census. It never says anything about they were trying to get there so they could make sure they fulfilled biblical prophecy. That's not there. It was the census that drove them which implies that they were up against a deadline. I mean, it would have been a lot simpler if they could have waited until the child was born at some later time, then maybe gone down and done the registration. Why would they go at such a crucial time unless they were under duress and pressure to go like an April 15 kind of deadline. So whoever was setting dates, and whoever was setting deadlines, and whoever the Romans were who were going to be there at that time to take the registration, all of that God orchestrated to effect perfectly His will.

David Gooding writes, "Of course Augustus knew nothing about this effect of the census and the last thing he or his vassal, Herod, would have done would be to strengthen the credentials of a messianic claimant to the throne of Israel. For Augustus, the taking of censuses was one of the ways he employed to get control over the various parts of his empire. But...and here is the irony of the thing...in the process as he thought of tightening his grip on his huge empire, he so organized things that Jesus, Son of Mary, Son of David, Son of God, destined to sit on the throne of Israel and the throne of the world was born in the city of David, His royal ancestor. Fulfilling all unknowingly the prophecy of Micah, Caesar Augustus established this particular detail in the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah."

And Gooding goes on to say, "When John the Baptist was conceived, God turned back the processes of nature." That was a miracle because Zacharias and Elizabeth were old and barren. "When our Lord was conceived in the womb of Mary there was introduced into nature something which nature had never known before and which nature by herself could never have produced, namely a virgin conception. That is miraculous. But when God's Son and destined ruler of the kings of the earth entered the world of men, there was apparently no interference with men's will or freedom of action whatsoever. Augustus had his own completely adequate reasons for his action and he did exactly what he wanted to do...and we could add Herod was the same way. Yet Augustus did what had he known he would not have wished to do, he established the claim of the royal Son of David. He did in fact what had been predetermined by the counsel and foreknowledge of God."

This was in anybody's measurement the greatest birth in the history of the world. And yet, so obscure. Verse 7, "She gave birth to her firstborn son and she wrapped Him in cloths and laid Him in a feed trough because there was no room for them in the inn." So obscure...obscure town in some kind of a traveler's shelter, probably not a commercial inn, as I told you last time. A commercial shelter, maybe with the four sides, kind of a lean-to with a loft so that some could sleep above and some could sleep

below in little rooms that would have thin walls between them made of wood. And in the middle, the courtyard, all the animals would stay and there would be feed troughs there. And there they were, Joseph and Mary, and there she gave birth. There was not one of those lofts, one of those guest rooms for them and so she gave birth in a half public way probably seeking some kind of privacy. And when that little child came into the world and cried its first cry of life, nobody knew who it was. Nobody realized that the eternal holy creator God of the universe had just entered the world in human form. That little child was born in utter anonymity in a busy, bustling, overcrowded little town. Nobody around even knew.

Well, Joseph knew, of course, because he had been told to name the baby Jesus for He would save His people from their sins. And he had been told that His name would be Immanuel, God with us. So he knew this was the incarnate God who was to save His people from their sins. And Mary knew because Gabriel had told her the details that this would be the Son of the Most High, the one who would sit on the throne of David and reign on that throne forever and ever. Nobody else knew.

It would have been pretty difficult to convince anybody frankly because what you have lying in a feed trough was a little Jewish baby. Not an uncommon situation, obviously. And there may have been other births in the same town that night. And that may be why the angels said, "Look for the one in the feed trough, that's the sign." Any baby born that time in Bethlehem would have been wrapped in cloths, they all did that. But there would be only one in a feed trough. Such anonymity. Not a grand entrance for God into the world.

But, the passage I just read you, our passage for today breaks the silence, ends the anonymity in a most remarkable way. As I read, an angel appears to make the announcement of who it is that has been born. A few hours after the birth, the monumental miracle, a few hours after the arrival of the Son of Mary, Son of the Most High, God there is an announcement made.

Now if you were planning the strategy for this PR campaign, you might have made sure that the main authorities got the message, certainly if you didn't want to tell Caesar because you were afraid he would see this as a threat or you didn't want to tell Herod because you knew he would see it as a threat, you might want to go to the religious leaders, you might want to go the high priest, you might want to go to the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Israel. You might want to go to the chief priests or the scribes or Pharisees or Sadducees or somebody. You might want...you might want to go to the temple, for example, and there you would surely have found Simeon and Anna and others who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem, looking for the salvation of Israel, waiting for the Messiah. You might have gone to some group of devout and righteous Jews who were waiting to hear this, some who might have a great measure of influence. But frankly, the last people you would go to to make any kind of announcement of significance would be shepherds in an open field. And that's exactly to whom God went.

The story is well known. The story of the angel and the shepherds and then the multitude of angels that follow. But that's what happened of all people, shepherds. And I'll say more about them next time, enough to say on the social ladder they were the bottom rung. To shepherds the angel goes and makes the announcement about this child.

Now the thesis of this whole passage is summed up in one statement in verse 11, and we'll discuss it all. But for this morning I just want to deal with one statement, verse 11. This is the thesis and then we'll build the outline around it. All the way down to verse 20 is one paragraph. That whole thing will build around this thesis, here it is, verse 11, "The angel says, 'There has been born for you a Savior.'" Wow! That's the heart of the entire thing, the whole event is summed up in that statement. There has been born for you a Savior.

That's the New Testament, isn't it? That's the gospel, that's the heart of everything. That's the pinnacle of redemption. There has been born for you a Savior...that's the Christian message. That's what we're still telling people, isn't it? There has been born for you a Savior. And may I hasten to add that the shepherds would understand that.

You say, "Well wait a minute, isn't Savior a New Testament idea? Isn't Savior a New Testament concept that Jesus came to save and He's the Savior and how would those shepherds know?" Being a Savior is not a New Testament concept. It's an Old Testament concept. Shepherds would know what that meant because all who were in Israel knew God as Savior. That is a Jewish concept. Oh I know there are liberal theologians who want to put a great gulf between the New Testament and the Old Testament and they say that the Christ of the New Testament is a compassionate, loving, saving personality. But the God of the Old Testament is an angry, vengeful, envious, vitriolic, hostile, punishing kind of deity. But that is not accurate by any stretch of the imagination.

The God of the Old Testament was known to His people as a Savior. Israel knew God as a Savior. Now that was not the way it was with gods, the gods of men's making. There's only one God, the one true and living God, the eternal God, and He is by nature a Savior, He is a saving God. To use another word, a synonym, He is a Deliverer. He delivers people from threatening things. He is a rescuer, that's another synonym. And He is that by nature and that's not how it is in the science of ethnology and the world of religion and deities. In fact, you can study religions and you're not going to find gods who are by nature saviors. You're going to find in every religious system in the world a means by which somehow man can do something to appease the god and somehow by his own efforts and his own works save himself. But you're not going to find any God who is by nature a Savior, a rescuer.

For example, if you were living in Israel you would be exposed to the god Baal. And you read the Old Testament, Baal is a very dominating deity among the Canaanites. Baal meaning lord, Baal...that was

their lord. But the god Baal, if you read through the New...the Old Testament you find to be a god who is certainly not interested in saving his people. In fact, he had a perfect opportunity to do that on Mount Carmel with Elijah. And Elijah said, "Look, we'll decide who's God, you've got Baal and I've got Jehovah and let's decide. You build an altar, put a sacrifice there. I'll build an altar, put a sacrifice there. You pray to Baal and I'll pray to Jehovah and we'll see who sends fire down to burn up the sacrifice. Whoever sends fire down, He's God."

So in a classic characterization of Baal, these priests of Baal are trying to get Baal to react. Well there is no Baal so he can't do anything because he doesn't exist. And even the demon impersonators who might want to impersonate Baal are unable to effect this miracle. So in classic fashion Elijah identifies the nature of Baal by saying this to them, "Maybe he's...what?...sleeping." Now the best that could be said about Baal...and that was...that was a mockery but it really was a kind one because that's the best that can be said about any deity, he's indifferent. And then he went on to say, "Maybe he's on vacation." Now that would be the best that could be said about the deities that demons concoct or that men invent. The best that could be said is that they are indifferent and somehow they just don't pay attention. This is the god of the deists, you know, in our country we have deists in our background, Benjamin Franklin and others, the god who wound the world up and set it off in motion and then went away and couldn't care less. That's the god of apathy, the god of indifference. And somehow you're screaming and hollering and yelling at this god to do something to save you and deliver you and rescue you from your plight, but he really isn't that interested in it.

The spectrum swings all the way over from indifference on the one hand, to hostility on the other hand. And you have a classic illustration of that in the land of Canaan in the god Molech. Molech was so vicious and so hostile and so angry and had to be appeased so that he didn't obliterate people to the degree that in order to pacify Molech you took your newborn baby or your little child and you put your little child on the altar and incinerate it and torched your baby. That to pacify this otherwise hostile deity. Somewhere on that spectrum from apathy to vicious hostility are all the gods of the world. None is a Savior. And what set Jehovah apart, the one true and living God, is that He is by nature compassionate, merciful, tender-hearted, filled with loving kindness and seeks to save people.

The Jews knew this. That was distinctive. They knew God to be wise. They knew Him to be powerful. They knew Him to be understanding. They knew Him to be just and all of those things. But they also knew that by nature in contra distinction to all other deities He was a Savior. They would know that if they read the book of Genesis because in Genesis God said, "In the day you eat of the fruit of the tree you'll...what?...you'll die." They ate, they lived. And what does that tell you? That's called mercy. God didn't deliver the consequences of their behavior that they deserved because it's His nature to be patient. It's called in Romans 2 the patience and forebearing of God which is meant to lead you to repentance. I mean, God by nature is that way. Now God in Egypt says, "I'm going to send the angel of death and he's going to kill all the firstborn but I just want to let you know that if you'll hold the Passover and take the Passover lamb and sacrifice the lamb and eat the lamb, take the blood and

put it on the doorpost and lintel, I'll pass by and the angel of death won't touch your house if you do that." Because it's God's nature to deliver men from the consequence of sin, that's His nature. The Jews understood that.

And those shepherds out on that field at the bottom of the intellectual pole, at the bottom of the educational ladder, as it were, on the very bottom, the very lowest class people there were would understand that God was by nature a saving God. And they would also understand this, they would understand that there never had been a sacrifice that really did it. They of all people, because what I'm going to point out to you in a couple of weeks is the fact that they were very likely shepherding sheep headed for temple sacrifices. They of all people along with the priests who were bloodied up to their ears the whole time they were in the temple, slaughtering all the animals that had to be slaughtered to say nothing of what happened when they slaughtered a quarter of a million of them in a few days at Passover, they were used to unending sacrifices trying to deal with sin in order to rescue the nation, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. In order to rescue individuals from the consequences of their sin they brought offerings to God and they were saying...God, we're sorry for our sin, here's our sacrifice, forgive us. They knew God to be a saving God but yet that salvation had never finally been effected by one sacrifice.

So when the announcement came there's been born today a Savior, they understood it. They didn't even ask a lot of questions, those shepherds. The Jews understood it. In the Old Testament God is a Savior and over and over again His salvation is spoken of. I'm going to resist, I'm not going to call it a temptation, I'm going to resist the opportunity to point out innumerable scriptures...Deuteronomy 20 verse 4, "The Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to save you...to save you." I mean, by nature God did that. That's just in the very fabric of His eternal being. God is called the God of His salvation. Psalm 25:5, "The God...Thou art the God of my salvation." I mean, they knew Him as a Savior. In fact, David in Psalm 51 was praying to God and he lost the joy because of his disobedience and he says to God, "Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation." They knew God as a Savior God. And the Old Testament is just filled with indications of that.

Isaiah 63 is one worth mentioning. Verse 8 and 9, it says when God chose Israel, "So He became their Savior." What a great statement. Isaiah 63:8, "SO He became their Savior." What did that mean? "In all their affliction...verse 9...He was afflicted. In His love and His mercy He rescued them, He redeemed them, He brought them back. He lifted them. He carried them all the days of old but they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit, therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy." He fought against them. He started out as their Savior and they fought even that. How sad. He was their Savior.

Take righteous Mary. Go back to chapter 1 verse 47. She knew that. This is a 13-year-old girl, a sweet and meek and righteous young girl. And she hears from Gabriel that she's going to be the mother of God, the mother of the Son of the Most High and she says in verse 46, "My soul exalts the

Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." She knew that Jehovah God was her Savior.

Take Zacharias. Zacharias, it says in chapter 1, was a righteous priest. He was righteous, verse 6 of chapter 1, in the sight of God and walked blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. Here was a godly priest and in his great praise at the birth of John, the forerunner of the Messiah, verse 69 Zacharias realizing the Messiah is going to be born, Mary has just spent three months at that house and she's already pregnant with Messiah, he knows what's happening and he says, "God has raised up a horn of salvation for us." Here comes the Savior, the great power of salvation. And down in verse 77 he tells you what kind of salvation he's talking about. "To give to His people the knowledge of salvation that comes by the forgiveness of their sins." He even knew that the truest salvation came when sins were forgiven.

The prophet had said in the Old Testament, the prophet Micah, "Who is a pardoning God like You?" The Old Testament says that God is a forgiving God who removes your sins as far as the east is from the west, buries them in the depths of the deepest sea and remembers them no more. They knew God was a saving God. They knew God as a forgiving God.

There were many of them in that nation who had experienced personal, spiritual and eternal salvation from God. You say, "Did they get that in the Old Testament?" Yes they did. They would measure themselves against the law of God, find themselves disobedient, falling short, realize their plight...they couldn't keep the law of God therefore the Bible says if you break the law of God you're cursed. They were under a curse. The curse meant death and punishment. They would therefore feel the burden of that, they would go to God, they would say, "God, I've broken Your law, I can't keep it, I'm cursed, please be merciful, be gracious, forgive me." That's the penitence of the Old Testament. That's like the man beating his breast in Luke 18, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." When a person in the Old Testament came to a true assessment of their sinfulness, a true recognition that they had failed to keep the law of God and were therefore cursed and knew they couldn't gain salvation, they disdained self-righteousness but threw themselves on the mercy of God...God then forgave their sins. That's what Isaiah says in chapter 54 and 55. Mary was such a person, so was Zachariah and he was recognizing the salvation of God that is personal, spiritual and eternal that would come.

You say, "Well what part did Messiah have?" Well Messiah would come and offer the sacrifice upon which all this forgiveness had always been given. They were forgiven in the Old Testament because God would take their sins and later place them on Christ, just as you're forgiven because God takes your sins and places them on Christ. The same. Christ bears the sins of all who believed in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament age.

They knew God as a Savior. Mary knew that. Zacharias knew that. Look at verse 25 and meet Simeon in chapter 2. Simeon was a righteous and devout man looking for the consolation of Israel who's another believer. Here's another true penitent. Here's somebody who has been forgiven by

God. Here's somebody to whom God is a Savior. He realizes that. He picks up the little baby in this account, down in verse 30, "My eyes have seen Thy salvation." Finally the Savior has come. He understood that there was salvation from God, that God was a Savior. But he also understood that there was one who had to come, there had to be a final lamb. God had to provide that final sacrifice. And when he saw that little baby he said, "This is it...this is it." Don't underestimate these people. These devout people looking, as it says, for the consolation of Israel in verse 25, the comfort of Israel, the salvation of Israel, if you will. Down in verse 38, "Looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." They knew what they were looking for, they were looking for a final sacrifice that was pictured by all the sacrifices that had been given by the millions through the history of that system. They knew God to be a Savior.

Now let me take it one step further. God showed Himself a Savior to Israel two ways. First, He showed them that He was a Savior by nature, temporally..that is in time...and physically...that is in this life. You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean by that that God showed to the nation Israel His saving nature by saving them from Egypt, by saving them, rescuing them out of the Red Sea and drowning Pharaoh's army, by rescuing them, delivering them, as it were, out of the 40 years of wilderness wandering into the promised land, be delivering them from a myriad of enemies that hated them and tried to obliterate them. Throughout their history God showed how He delivered them. He delivered them from hostile nations. He delivered them from sickness. He delivered them from trouble. He delivered them from danger. He delivered them from death...over and over and, folks, it's still going on. God delivered the nation Israel from massive attempts at genocide by Joseph Stalin and Adolph Hitler. And here they are, Jews still there, still alive. They've been delivered through all these millennia. There they are independently functioning as a nation of their own in their own land. Testimony to the fact that even an apostate people who reject God, turn their back on God, reject their Messiah, execute the Savior, still are being delivered by God. That's His nature.

That's why Paul in Romans says, "Can't you see this? This deliverance, this salvation on a temporal, physical level as the patience and forbearance of God meant to lead you to personal repentance? Can't you see if God is so gracious to the nation that He will also be gracious to the individual sinner?" God is a Savior by nature and He has saved that nation through the years because it's His nature to deliver temporally and physically from the immediate and just consequence of sin, which would be instant death and hell. But His nature is not to give sinners what sinners deserve, even in this life.

And that's still true. That's true outside of Israel. The world is predominantly populated by non-Christians, is that true? Massively populated by non-Christians who flourish to one degree or another in this life. They enjoy life. They smell the flowers. They see the sunrise and the sunset. They drink the cool water. They eat a good meal. They fall in love. They kiss a baby. They see a mountain. They enjoy the richness and the fullness of life. They breathe the air. Why? Cause God by nature delivers them from the immediate consequence, the just and immediate consequence of what they deserve.

That's why 1 Timothy 4:10 Paul says, "God, the living God who is the Savior of all men." The whole world of people today exist because God is a saving God. He has delivered them from what they deserve, is that not true?

People ask me this a lot. Why do bad things happen to good people? Are you ready for this? They don't because there are no good people. The question is, why do good things happen to bad people? Now that's a book that I need to write. They happen because God is by nature...what?...a Savior, He's a deliverer, He's a rescuer.

Now especially...1 Timothy 4:10 says...Especially of those who believe...especially of those who believe. What does that mean? Well He delivers all men from the just and immediate consequence of their sin, temporally and physically, but He delivers those who believe from their sin spiritually and eternally. That's what really matters, isn't it? You can look at the Old Testament and you'll see God delivering Israel temporally and physically and you'll see God delivering individual Jewish people and even Gentile believers spiritually and eternally. You look at the world today and God delivers sinners from the just and immediate consequence of their sin and you also see all over the world those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, they've been delivered from the consequence of their sin spiritually and eternally. God is by nature a Savior.

Titus 1, Titus 2 and Titus 3 refer to God our Savior. God our Savior. God our Savior. There's no discrepancy between the God of the New Testament and the God of the Old Testament. God is by nature a Savior, that is why Jesus is a Savior because Jesus is God. That's a syllogism you can work with.

When we read in 2 Peter 1:11, "Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," we're not surprised He's our Savior because He's our Lord. If He's God the Lord, then He's a Savior because God is a Savior. It's not, as some people say, that God is the bad guy and Jesus is the good guy and that, you know, Jesus gets up there and really, really pleads with God, trying to soften Him up. It's not that. As much as Jesus is a Savior, so much is God a Savior and so much is the Holy Spirit a Savior. There's no diminishing of that saving nature in any member of the trinity.

God shows His goodness, His kindness to all. He restrains evil in the world. He provides families. He maintains social order by government. Provides beauty and joy. Shows compassion. He calls sinners to repent. He offers the gospel, salvation in Christ is offered to all sinners. He is by nature a saving God. And, folks, I'll say it again, there isn't any other God in the spectrum of deities who is by nature a Savior.

So when the angel said, "There has been born for you a Savior," boy, this was just loaded with significance. The Savior they had all been looking for, they've all been waiting for. And this was consistent with God. And that's why Joseph was told, Matthew 1:21, "You shall call His name Jesus,"

that means Savior, "For He will save His people from their sins." And that's why Luke records the words of Jesus later in Luke 19:10 who said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Of all things, He's a Savior. He's the Savior.

You see, He can't be our King until He's our Savior, right? So He can't fulfill the Davidic Covenant, as we saw in our study at the end of one...chapter 1, He can't fulfill the Davidic Covenant with all of its kingly features. He can't be our blesser and fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant with all its blessings until He fulfills the New Covenant and becomes our Savior. All Davidic promise, all Abrahamic promise is predicated upon Him as Savior. He can't be the blesser and He can't be the King until He's the Savior. And so the covenant that dominates everything, the covenant that opens the door to Abrahamic promise and Davidic promise is the New Covenant in His blood because it is in His blood on the cross that He takes the wrath of God, the fury of God, pays the penalty for sin, satisfies the justice of God and therefore rescues us from sin and death and hell. And once He is our Savior then He opens to us all the promises that come in His Kingdom and through Abrahamic blessing.

Well, one little phrase in there, I'll close with this, "There has been born for you." Isn't that good? For us? I mean, if I had been out there with those shepherds, are you kidding? You don't know much about us. And I'll tell you about them, you're going to be amazed. But they were the least likely of all to have received such a promise.

You know, there's another thought here. The pagan world, they also understood this idea of a Savior. They understood that. The Greek word soter, Savior, they understood that. In fact, remember what I told you? Caesar Augustus, what was he called? The savior of the world. That was the title that Caesar Augustus had. It's inscribed in some ancient monument, savior of the world. They also gave that title savior to philosophers who delivered them from ignorance, to doctors who delivered them from death and like Caesar, to great leaders who delivered them from their enemies. And certainly Jesus as Savior would speak to the Greek mind that the one who delivers us from death, the one who delivers us from ignorance, the one who delivers us from danger, that word was loaded with significance in the Jewish world and even in the Gentile world. And certainly Caesar Augustus wouldn't have willfully set up the credentials for the true Savior of the world to whom Caesar Augustus, by the way, is eternally bowing. This is what God does because He controls history.

In the end, what does it matter if you don't take the words "for you" personally? "Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if He's not born in me, thy soul is still forlorned," said some poet. What does it matter? It matters not. But there was a Savior born for you.

Father, we thank You for this great gift. What can we say? What can we render to You for the gift of gifts? The Savior, the Savior, One who came to save His people from their sins. O we thank You, O God, for the Savior, Son of the Most High, Son of Mary, Son of David, Son of Abraham, Son of God, Son of Man, all of that who came into the world to be our Savior, to deliver us because that's what

You desired. You are God our Savior who sent Jesus Christ our Savior to deliver us from sin and death and hell. We thank You for that. You are the God who has visited, as we read earlier in the Psalm, visited His people with redemption. You have rescued us, redeemed us, saved us, delivered us. And You have given us eternal life, the complete forgiveness of sins and we are rich beyond description and shall inherit an inheritance laid up in heaven for us incorruptible that fades not away which we will enjoy forever and ever in a world of peace and joy beyond comprehension. We thank You for the gift of Christ, the unspeakable gift, the gift for which there are no words. You don't want words, really, You want our hearts. May there be no one here who has not given his heart to the Savior. Amen.

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