

The Amazing Child of Christmas

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 80-17

This morning as we consider together the wonderful reality of the Christmas story I want us to look at a text of Scripture found in the first couple of chapters of the gospel of Luke and I would invite you, if you will, to open your Bible to Luke. We're going to look at chapter 1, a portion of it, and chapter 2, a portion of that as well.

I'm sure that all parents are convinced without question that their children are the most unique children that have ever been born. And I'm also sure that no child ever comes into the world without filling the hearts of their parents with a great amount of expectation. When our four children were born we, of course, and even to this day continue to have great hopes and great dreams and great desires that they might be everything that they can possibly be for the glory of God. But at best, when a child comes in the world, what we hope for is no more than hope, what we wish for is no more than a wish because the story is not yet written. We do not know what that child will become and we wait with great anticipation, with a great degree of anxiety and concern through the years of the unfolding of the life of that child to see what in fact that child will become.

That was not true in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ for at the birth of the child of Bethlehem, all that needed to be known about the child was revealed at the very beginning. There really wasn't any need for hope. There wasn't any need for a wish, a dream, imagining, all was told as to who the child was and why He came and what He would do and how He would effect the world. So different. Two ordinary Jewish young people were faced with the most astounding child the world has ever known, a child whose life was already clearly laid out and delineated to them from the time of birth unlike any other child.

What child has his life and destiny and impact completely described before ever the life is lived? What child has all the details of character and accomplishment and effect clearly laid out before any of them ever find their place in history? A very very unique birth. The only other child who comes with prewritten credentials is a child born just before the birth of Christ, namely John the Baptist. Much was said about him, as well, which can also be found in the early part of Luke chapter 1. John the Baptist was to be born to a priest by the name of Zacharias who had a wife named Elizabeth. But though much was said about the ministry of John the Baptist, there were still questions in the minds of people, such as in Luke 1:66 where the people who heard about this unique child said, "What manner of child shall this be?" It was still somewhat unclear even in the case of John the Baptist, though much was said just exactly what that child would be.

But the child born after John the Baptist, the child whose life and history is prewritten throughout not only the initial part of the New Testament announcement of His birth, but through all the Old Testament, is far more unique even than John. And so many astonishing and astounding things were said about Jesus Christ that we read in Luke 2:33, "And Joseph and His mother were amazed at those things which were said about Him." He brought even to Joseph and Mary amazement because of what they were told by the angel about Him.

Now precisely what was said about Jesus Christ at His birth that is so astonishing, that left His parents with such amazement and awe and wonder? The answer begins to unfold for us in the announcement of the angel to Mary beginning in chapter 1 and verse 30, let's notice it. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David and He shall reign over the house of David forever and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy offspring shall be called the Son of God."

Now it was this announcement coupled with the announcement to Joseph by the angel, coupled with some things that are said of Christ at the end of chapter 2, or close to the end in verses 34 to 38, these things were what amazed the parents. And I want us to focus on six of them in our examination of the Lord Jesus Christ this morning.

First of all, in a general way, would you notice verse 32? And there we read this statement, "He shall be great...He shall be great." That same statement was made in chapter 1 verse 15 of John the Baptist, "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord." John the Baptist was to be great. Jesus was to be great. The word can mean extraordinary, wonderful, splendid, magnificent, noble, distinguished, illustrious, eminent, powerful. It is intended to set one apart from all the rest.

John the Baptist was great. He was great because he was the single greatest representative of the prophetic office, the forerunner of the Messiah. In fact, it is said of him that there had been none greater than the John the Baptist.

The Lord Jesus Christ also is great, that is surpassing and eminent and preeminent and splendid and illustrious and prominent and all of those things the word implies, for reasons other than the greatness of John the Baptist, for reasons which are explained in this very same passage. What made Him great? And what astounded and amazed His parents?

We find here six things that identify Jesus Christ in His unique greatness from the very time of His birth. First of all, noticing verse 32, "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High." Now that is to say Jesus is God, Jesus is God. And that is the unmistakable truth that I want you to deal with in your mind as we being our look at this passage, Jesus is God.

Now Luke refers to God with the term "the Most High," or if you like, "the highest." Luke seems to favor that term in identifying God and so did the angel who made the announcement. In verse 35, the angel again says the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. Over in verse 76, "And thou child shall be called the prophet of the Most High," this is the testimony of Zacharias when filled with the Holy Spirit. So the angel calls God the Most High. The Holy Spirit through Zacharias calls God the Most High. This term speaks of the sovereignty of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 6:35 says, "You shall be the sons of the Most High." In Acts 7:48, Luke who writes the book of Acts also chooses to use the same term, "The Most High." There is even an occasion when the demons refer to God as the Most High, or the highest.

Now calling God the highest, calling God the Most High notes His majestic sovereignty. It is a statement of God's all surpassing supremacy. It is to say there is no one higher than He is. There is no one on His level, or above. The title in the Old Testament is el elyon in the Hebrew and it is used initially in Genesis 14:18 and becomes a very common Old Testament title for God, el elyon. And wherever it is used it gives us the feeling of God's sovereign surpassing power, His ultimate supremacy. There is no one higher than He is, He is the highest in authority and in preeminence.

Now that use of el elyon, that term the Most High, helps to point out the range of God's surpassing supreme sovereignty. For example, in Deuteronomy 32:8 we read, "The Most High divided to the nations their inheritance." In Psalm 47:2, "The Lord Most High is awesome, He is a great King over all the earth." And four times in Daniel's prophecy, he says, "The Most High rules in the earth and gives the kingdoms of men to whomsoever He will."

Now all of those verses tell us that the Most High is sovereign over nations. He is sovereign over nations. Secondly, in 2 Samuel 22:14 there is a description of God controlling the water and the clouds and the skies and the lightnings and the thunders and the seas and the rain and the text says, "The Lord thundered from heaven and the Most High uttered His voice." And there the Most High is seen in His sovereignty over nature, His control over all the created universe. So He is sovereign over nations, He is sovereign over nature.

In Psalm 7:17 and Psalm 9:2 there is a discussion of God's power over the wicked and God's power over those who rebel and disobey Him. And it says, "Sing praise to the Most High for the reason that He is sovereign over the unrighteous...He is sovereign over the unrighteous." In Psalm 21:7 it speaks

of the mercy of the Most High which is given in salvation to those who trust Him which is to say He is not only sovereign over the unrighteous but He is sovereign over the righteous as well, as He grants them the grace and mercy of salvation. In Psalm 46:4 it refers to the tabernacles of the Most High wherein God's people find protection, safety, security and comfort and that tells us He is sovereign over His own redeemed people. In fact, in Daniel 7:18 it says we are the saints of the Most High, that is the saints who belong to the sovereign God. In Lamentations 3:37 and 38 there is a totally comprehensive statement that says God is the Most High, sovereign over all evil and all good.

The title then sums up all of the elements of the sovereignty of God. He is sovereign in every dimension possible, sovereign over nations, sovereign over nature, over the unrighteous, over the righteous, sovereign over the people He has redeemed and sovereign over all that is evil and all that is good, that is to say He is the Most High. There is none as high as He is. He is God above any other gods. He is God supreme.

Now why is that important? Look back at our text in Luke chapter 1 and notice verse 32. Here comes the message to Mary from the angel and the message is, "The son you bear will be called the Son of the Most High...the Son of the Most High." In verse 35, at the end of the verse, "The Son of God...the Son of God." Now what is such a title intended to indicate? Nothing less than the obvious, its intent is to say Jesus is God. To say that Jesus is the Son of the Highest is to say that He bears the character, nature and essence of the highest. Son does not imply that God is a great God who begot a subgod, and Jesus is a subgod. It is to say that Jesus bears the same life, the same essence and the same nature as God. As Hebrews 1 says, "He is the express, or the exact, reproduction of God's image." Hebrews 1:1 and 2 says that. God speaks to us through His Son, verse 3, who is the exact replica of Himself. He is the Son of God, that is to say He bears His Father's life and nature. That is the essence of the use of that idea here.

Now no writer more clearly shows us the meaning of the Sonship of Christ than the writer John. So I would like you to turn to John 5 for just a moment. Two weeks ago I met with someone and I suggested to them that what was needed in their life was a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, this was a Jewish man. And he said to me, "I don't know who Jesus Christ is, I need to find out." I said, "Then I want you to go home this week and do one thing if you do nothing else and that is read the gospel of John, just read it. Sit down and read the gospel of John." To him the word "Jesus," the word "Christ" was either profanity or something you didn't say. Jewish people rejecting the reality of Christ.

And so he was reading the gospel of John that week. Came back and I said, "Did you read it?" And he said yes. And I said, "What is your response? What is the dominating conclusion in your mind from reading the gospel of John?" Without hesitation he said to me, who had never read the gospel of John before, he said, "Well one thing is for sure, Jesus is more than just a man, Jesus is God." That from reading the gospel of John because that in fact was John's intent in writing it. And no one better articulates who the Son of God is than John. And no place better articulates it than the fifth chapter.

Let's look at verse 16.

The Jews were persecuting Jesus and they actually sought to kill Him because He had done some healing on the sabbath day. He had violated their man-made Jewish tradition by healing on the sabbath and making a man carry his bed, which they thought to be a violation of their tradition. Now Jesus responds to them. He answers them in verse 17 and His answer is an absolutely amazing affirmation of who He is. First of all He says, "My Father works in this way and I work," therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him because He not only had broken the sabbath but said also that God was His Father, making Himself...what?...equal with God. To the Jewish mind to say "God is My Father" is to say that I'm of the same essence as God. And that's exactly what was intended to be said by the angel to Mary. Now what is so devastating to these Jewish people is that when Jesus says "My Father works and I work," He is claiming to be equal in nature with God. Did you get that? Equal in nature with God. He's really saying this, look Mark 2:27 said it, "Sabbath was made for man." The sabbath was made for man, not for God.

You say, "Well what about when God created in six days and on the seventh day He rested?" Listen, don't for a minute believe that on the seventh day God completed rested. All He rested from was the creation because it was finished. God rested from His creation but if God had gone to sleep at all, everything that He created would have disintegrated. He upholds everything by the word of His power. God rested from the creative process, God didn't rest from doing what God must do to hold everything together.

The second thing He says, not only does He claim to be equal in nature but equal in works, look at verse 19. "Then answered Jesus and said to them, Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing by Himself but what He sees the Father do for whatever things He does, these also does the Son in the same manner for the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does and He will show Him greater works than these that you may marvel." Now He claims to be equal in works. He says whatever I do is exactly what God does. And if you're going to indict Me for breaking your sabbath, then indict God, tell God He broke your sabbath because I'm only doing what God is doing. I follow God. He is the one working and I am the one working. And what He does, I do. So if you accuse Me, you accuse God. Incredible statement. I don't do anything by Myself, whatever the Father does, that's exactly what I do. Whatever He wants Me to do He shows Me to do. So your argument is with God because we're equal in works.

Thirdly He says we are not only equal in nature and equal in work but we're equal in power, verse 21. "For as the Father raises up the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life." He says I have the same power to raise the dead physically and spiritually that God does. We are equal in power. In verse 26, "As the Father has life in Himself, so is He given to the Son to have life in Himself," and repeats the same idea.

Jesus is making astounding claims. As the Son of the Highest, He bears the nature of the Highest, He does the works of the Highest and He is equal in power. Fourthly, He says He has equal authority. At the end of verse 21 He says, "The Son gives life to whom He will." He has equal authority. He can make determinations. He can do as He pleases.

You'll notice also in verse 22 He is equal in judgment. "The Father judges no man but has committed all judgment to the Son." Verse 27 says the same idea, He's given Him authority to execute judgment also because He's the Son of Man, verse 30, "I can of Mine ownself do nothing, as I hear, I judge." So God is judging, God commits the judgment to Christ so really God and Christ judge together, therefore they are equal in judgment. And then verse 23, "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father who has sent Him." The point is, that they are equal in...what?...in honor.

Now notice the terminology all through this passage is Father/Son, Father/Son, Father/Son, Father/Son. And what the Father/Son relationship of God and Christ intends to communicate is equality of nature, equality of work, equality of power, equality of authority, equality of judgment and equality of honor. That is to say Jesus is God...Jesus is God. And so when the angel says to Mary He shall be called the Son of the Highest, she is saying this is the Son of God who is equal in every way with God. And when Jesus claimed that the Jews knew that's what He was saying. The child is God. What an incredible, what an amazing, what an astonishing and astounding and almost unbelievable voice ringing in their ears that your child, your little baby that you bear in your womb and hold in your arms is the living God.

Matthew also records the birth of Christ and emphasizes this. How is it that God could be born in a human womb? Matthew 1:18 says, "She was found with child by the Holy Spirit." Verse 20 says, "That which is conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit." And verse 23, "The virgin shall be with child, shall bring forth a son and they shall call His name Emanuel which being translated is God with us." The child is God and the child was conceived without a human father, God planted a seed in Mary to create the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Luke 1:43 even Elizabeth says to Mary, "Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" She recognizes that her relation, her own kin, Mary, is to give birth to the Lord Himself. And in chapter 2 of Luke in verse 11 the angel announces to the shepherds that there will be born this day in the city of David a Savior who is none other than the Messiah, the Lord..the Lord Himself.

So the first amazing message that came to the parents of Jesus was that this child would be God...God, the Lord. The writers of our Christmas carols have understood this through the centuries. And every year we come around to this season we sing those songs and almost without thinking we

don't listen to what we are saying. So let me remind you of the emphasis of the Christmas carols. Listen to these familiar lines.

"Joy to the world the Lord is come." "Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning." "Come adore on bended knee Christ the Lord." "Christ by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord, veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate deity, Jesus our emanuel." "Yet in the dark street shineth the everlasting light." We sing, "O come to us, abide with us, our Lord emanuel," which means God with us. "Jesus Lord at Thy birth." We sing, "The virgin sweet boy is the Lord of the earth." We sing, "Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing." "How that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name." "God with man is now residing, suddenly the Lord descending." We sing, "Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown when Thou camest to earth for me." And we often sing, "And the Father gave His Son, gave His own beloved one." And so the writers of all the Christmas carols mark out for us the reality that the child is God.

The second and amazing thing and an equally amazing thing is that the child was also man...also man. Back to Luke 1:31 again. "And behold, says the angel to Mary, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son." Now it would be one thing for God to just come into the world, just sort of fly down and arrive and God could certainly do that. God came and went in the Old Testament without the need of a human mother, without human birth. There are many occasions in the Old Testament when God appeared. He walked and talked in the garden with Adam and Eve. God made appearances over and over again in the life of Israel. He came down to Mount Sinai. He showed Himself to Abraham. There are times and places where God put on an appearance and He did not need to be born of a woman. But that was because God never before came into the world as man. And now when He comes He comes not only as fully God but as fully man and therefore must be fully born as men are born through the womb and the birth canal of a human woman. "And thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son," is to emphasize His humanness.

By the way, in verse 36 regarding Elizabeth, it says she also has conceived a son in her old age. And this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. The parallel is obvious. Elizabeth was carrying a child to which she would give birth just like Mary was carrying a child to which she would give birth. And if John the Baptist was human, then so would Jesus be. Fully God yes, but fully man yes as well.

Look at, for a moment, chapter 1 of Matthew and verse 19. "And Joseph her husband being a just man and not willing to make her a public example was minded to divorce her." When he found her pregnant and he knew he had never had a relationship with her, she was going to divorce her thinking she'd been unfaithful to him. "And while he thought on these things an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit and she shall bring forth a son." So Matthew says the same thing. The conception took place in her and she will bring forth a son.

Now go to Luke 2:6. It says, "And so it was that while they were there the days were accomplished," or the days were fulfilled, "that she should be delivered." Now while they were in Bethlehem, the days were fulfilled. That is to say her nine-month pregnancy had run its course. The normal nine-month period had taken place. This is a very normal birth. It is not a normal conception. Jesus Christ was conceived by the work of the Spirit of God but He was born through the normal processes of the body of Mary.

And notice what it says in an almost off-handed way, in verse 7, "She brought forth her first-born son." Now it just hits me that the phrase "her first-born son" says something very significant. She brought forth her first-born son implies that she also brought forth what? Some more. And that is to say that her first born and all the rest were born in the same way. In the normal process she brought forth her first-born son. If you read the gospel of Matthew you will find that the testimony of Matthew 12:46 and 47, the testimony of Matthew 13:55 and 56, the testimony of John 2:12, John 7 verses 3, 5 and 10 is that she had other children. Jesus had brothers and sisters. In terms of her womb, she carried many children. In giving birth, she brought forth many children. This was only the first. The point being that Jesus was born in a normal human manner. And so this is fully man.

And the amazing and astounding thing is, how can a woman bring forth one who is totally human without the aid of a human father? That's as profound a mystery as how the child could be God...for it demands the infinite miracle as well. This is a real human being.

Look at chapter 2 and verse 12, the shepherds are told that they'll find a real baby wrapped in strips of cloth lying in a manger. Notice verse 21, "When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called Jesus." Just like any other Jewish baby they wanted to be sure this one had the sign of the covenant, circumcision, the cutting away of the foreskin. That would be done to the little baby Jesus just like any other baby. This is not some bizarre, some strange weird creature that's come into the world, this is fully God yes, but fully man yes as well. And the circumcision which was commanded from Genesis 17:12, reiterated in Leviticus 12:3 as the law of God for the covenant people is upheld in the case of this little one as well.

You will notice also in chapter 2 of Luke and verse 40 it says the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him. That is very similar to what is said in chapter 1 verse 80 about John the Baptist. It says of John the Baptist, "And the child grew and became strong in spirit." As John the Baptist grew, Jesus grew in a very normal process of human growth. Jesus, it says in John 1:14, was the Word made flesh that dwelt among us. In Hebrews, several places the Scripture delineates things about Christ that are essential. For example, in Hebrews 2:17 it says, "Wherefore in all things it was fitting for Him to be made like His brethren, in all things made like His brethren." "He was in all points, Hebrews 4:15, tempted like as we are yet without sin."

In Galatians 4:4, that wonderful testimony says, "In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." That is to say He was born like everybody else. He came into the world like everybody else, from a woman...from a woman. Obligated as all human beings are to keep the law of God, made like His brethren in all things. If He was to substitute for man on the cross, He had to be man. If He was to rise from the dead for men, He had to be man. That's why Paul so wonderfully says, "We have one mediator between God and man...1 Timothy 2:5...the man Christ Jesus."

His parents were astounded that He was God. They were astounded that He was man, fully God and fully man. A miracle child. And I remind you again of what you sing every year, this too is a salient and essential theme of all the songs we sing, "Holy infant so tender and mild, word of the Father now in flesh appearing. See Him in the manger lay. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see. What child is this who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping," just like any other baby. "The babe, the son of Mary." One writer says, "But of lowly birth didst Thou come to earth in greatest humility." Another says, "He was born of David's line, offspring of the virgin's womb, pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our emanuel." Fully man, we sing it, we give testimony to it.

The third amazing aspect of this child, back in chapter 1 of Luke again in verse 35 is the fact that He was not only God and man but He was sinless. He was holy. He was perfect. The angel said the Holy Spirit shall come upon you, the power of the Most High overshadow you, and that's really all we know about how the virgin birth conception took place. Therefore also, follow this, that holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. This is a holy child. Oh, what a remarkable statement. Think about it. There has only been in the history of the human race reproduction process one holy child born...only one. No one has ever produced a holy child except Mary by the power of the Spirit of God. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit, Luke 1:15 says. And that's a remarkable thing but he was not holy. He was not sinless. He was not perfect. He was not without flaw.

What a child. Imagine being told that the child you will bring forth will be absolutely perfect. That presents no challenge at all to your parenting process...none whatsoever. There was never a moment in the life and experience of that family where Jesus produced any unhappiness caused by something that He did that wasn't as it ought to be. There was never a disobedient word, thought, act. There was never a bad attitude. There was never a thoughtless or unkind or selfish act. He produced only awe and wonder and respect and worship. There's no other such child.

Peter's mother had no holy child. The mother of James and John had no holy children. The mother of Paul had no holy children, he who was the chief of sinners, he who battled the body of this death till he escaped into the presence of Jesus Christ. You see, since Cain and Abel, all children have been unholy. But the Holy Spirit in a miraculous way produced a child of the substance of Mary and strained out the sin creating a holy child. He entered holiness at birth which we will not know until

death. He starts where we end. He begins in a holiness we wait for. He is in the fullness of His holiness long before us. He entered into the full liberty on the same day we enter into our great bondage. He began by being fully sanctified, and we by God's grace will end by being fully sanctified. No child ever like Him.

Hebrews says He is separate from sinners. He is undefiled. He never needed discipline. He never needed correction. He never needed forgiveness. He never needed salvation.

Alexander White, the most notable preacher in Scotland at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century who was pastor of Free St. George Church in Edinburgh wrote of the Christ child's holiness in relation to us in some very very beautiful terms. Listen to what he said. "I will say this, that if you would have your child not ceremonially and conventionally holy only but personally and really and everlastingly holy, and if you yourself know what holiness is, you must set before yourself for your child no less a holiness than that of the holy child Himself. And as often as you see the heartbreaking proof that your child has not been born as Mary's child was born, when you cannot but see and feel in your innermost heart your child's fretfulness and quarrelsomeness and rudeness and sulkiness and impudence and pride and anger and unbroken will, take him apart and like Thomas Haliburton's(?) mother, pray both with him and for him. Pray that your child also may be made of God both to him and to you a twin brother of the holy child Jesus. Pray without ceasing that your child may be sanctified with the self- same sanctification as Mary's child. And if that may not be perfected all at once as His sanctification was, pray that at least it may be begun as long as you are here to see it and to have a hand in it. Take your child apart as long as he is docile and will go with you and ask on your knees and in his hearing something like this: O God, the God and Father of the holy child Jesus, make this my dear child a child of God with Him and after I am gone, make Him and keep Him a man of God like Him. Take no rest yourself and give God no rest till you see a seed of God not only sewn in your child's heart but till you see him as Mary saw her firstborn son subject to her and everything in her house at home and growing up every day in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man," end quote.

What a challenge...what a challenge. The holy child, unlike any other child and the model for every child. And don't we sing of that? Isn't that part of our Christmas hymnology? Don't we sing: O morning stars together, proclaim thy holy birth? Don't we sing: Holy infant so tender and mild? Don't we sing: Radiant beams from Thy holy face? O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray. Don't we sing: But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room for Thy holy nativity? Yes, we are still amazed that the child was sinless.

Not only God, man and sinless, but fourthly, His parents were astonished because they were told the child would also be the sovereign Lord, that He would also be King. Back again, please, to verse 32. "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, of His Kingdom there shall be no end." He will have an eternal Kingdom. The Lord will

give Him that throne.

This, of course, fulfills the prophecy of 2 Samuel 7:11 to 13 which said David someday would have a greater son, one who would come centuries later out of his loins who would take up the throne and reestablish the Kingdom and then it would be a Kingdom of righteousness and an eternal Kingdom. And that is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born into the Davidic line. You read the genealogy of Joseph in Matthew 1, you read the genealogy of Mary in Luke's gospel chapter 3 and you will find that this is one born of parents who come from David's loins. Both Mary and Joseph come in the Davidic line. And they therefore carried royal blood which comes together in Christ and He indeed is the rightful heir to the throne of David. He is not born as was John the Baptist to the house of Levi, the priestly house. He is born to the royal house, the house of kings, the house of David. And He has the right to the throne of Israel which becomes the throne of the world which becomes the throne of the universe, which becomes the throne of the eternal new heavens and new earth. He is sovereign Lord.

This little child, they hear, will receive the throne of His father David and reign in an eternal kingdom. What an announcement. I mean, it would be enough for some of us if the Lord just said your child will grow up to believe, your child will grow up to be a great missionary, your child will grow up to be a great teacher, but the influence of this child is absolutely astounding and staggering. And His parent's minds find it hard to even grasp the sweeping statements being made about this small infant. The king of the universe, King of kings and Lord of lords, and Matthew sets out to show the significance of this in the second chapter of his gospel. Verses 1 through 8 he describes the Magi, or as we call them, the wise men. The Magi were a hereditary group of priests who had risen to great prominence in the Orient, in Babylon and Media and Persia. And they were the official king makers of the east. They were the ones who knew the laws of the Medes and the Persians. They had risen to such power that no king would be appointed over the east in opposition to the great kings of the west and the Roman Empire unless he was trained, approved, and appointed by them.

Now these Magi grew up in Babylon and even though they were Gentiles and pagan for a while, the influence of Daniel and the Jews in captivity had brought about among them some God-fearing Magi who truly sought this Messiah, this great King who would come. And the king of recent years was deposed and the time for seeking a new king had come, the star appears, they follow the star seeking to see the fulfillment of prophecy, no doubt, related to them by Daniel and other believing Jews in captivity and they go. These are generations after the ones who were there when Daniel was there but the message is fresh with them passed on. They go to find this king. And the point that Matthew wants us to note is that the non-Jewish Gentile world, the official king makers of the east come to affirm that this indeed is the king.

Furthermore, Matthew also confirms that the Jewish world recognized Him as a king in a very unique way...through Herod's hostility. If He wasn't a king He wouldn't have been a threat to Herod. By the

very fact that Herod massacred all the babies who were young in that region and created a holocaust of massive proportions predicted by the prophet Jeremiah, Matthew is showing us that Herod also representing the hostile Jewish people affirmed the kingliness of Jesus Christ in an effort to stamp Him out so that He poses no threat to Herod. So whether from the positive worship of the Magi, or the negative hostility of Herod, it is affirmed by the people that Jesus is indeed a king. He had the right to rule. His genealogy says it through Joseph. His genealogy says it through Mary. And all the things going around say it as well. And the Scripture carries it out obviously, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only potentate, the one who will reign forever and supreme...Scripture is full of statements to that effect. Philippians 2 says every knee will bow to Him, of things in the earth, under the earth, all creatures will bow in submission to the kingliness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what an astounding thing. I mean, it would be wonderful if when you received your baby you were told your child would be the President of the United States, or even the president of a corporation. I mean, that would be wonderful to some of us. A great leader...but to be King of kings and Lord of lords is more than Mary can contain and it may be well why when we read of her musings she pondered all of these things in her heart, unable to bring resolution because they superceded her capacity to conceive.

And the hymn writers celebrate this as well. We sing it all the time, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive...what?...her king. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns, come and behold Him, born the king of angels, come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord the newborn king. Hark the herald, angels sing, glory to the newborn king." And one writer says, "Born a king in Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown Him again, King forever ceasing never, over the world to reign." "This this is Christ the King." "The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him. Born to reign in us forever, rule in all our hearts alone, raise us to Thy glorious throne, come and worship, come and worship Christ the Lord the newborn King. For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King. Peace on earth good will to men, from heaven's all gracious King." And so they go.

And the amazement continues. Not only God, man, sinless, sovereign but fifthly, His parents were told that He would be the Savior...the Savior. Verse 31, "And you shall call His name Jesus." And to Joseph it would was said, recorded in Matthew 1:21, "Call His name Jesus which means God saves, for He shall save His people from their sins." I mean, it would be enough for anyone to know they were going to bear God and then God who is fully man and who is absolutely holy and who is the sovereign Lord of the universe. And now to find also that He is the Savior of all the human race who come in faith. Incredible child.

Chapter 2 verse 11, the angel announcing to the shepherds says, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord." By the way, that's the only place in the synoptic gospels...Matthew, Mark and Luke...where Jesus is called a Savior in that very term, although it appears elsewhere in the New Testament. He is born a Savior. In chapter 2 verse 30, Simeon

rejoices, he says, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," as he holds that child. In verse 38, Anna the prophetess who is a widow of many many years and has been in the temple serving God with fasting and waiting for the coming of redemption rejoices for the redemption that has arrived in Jerusalem and spreads the word to all who are looking for that redemption. Yes He came as a Savior.

Paul said, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." Jesus said in Luke 19:10, "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost." And Hebrews 10:5 to 7 says that since the blood of bulls and goats and all the animal sacrifices couldn't take away sin, God formed a body for Christ that He might come into the world to take away our sin, to sanctify us, to remove our sin, to destroy our enemy, to bring us to spiritual perfection, to make us new creations. And we are complete in Him, he says. For by one offering He has sanctified us forever. Yes, this is the Savior, this is the one born to die for the sins of the world. There is over the manger the shadow of a cross and that shadow remained all His life long until He went to that cross. For this reason, He said, I came into the world. I am come to die because from the very start He was to be the Savior. The only way to save men from sin is to pay the penalty of their sin which is death, and Jesus comes to die. Is it any wonder when we sing the Christmas carols we hear lines like these: "Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born?"

I wonder sometimes what the world thinks they're saying when they sing these songs. I wonder what they think when they hear them being sung. It's as if all the truth in the goes right on by. And I personally believe that I suppose by God's design, Christmas carols have maintained great theology integrity that surpasses many other familiar hymns. They have profound truths. "To you in David's town this day is born of David's line the Savior who is Christ the Lord. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns. Peace on earth and mercy mild...why?...God and sinners...what?...reconciled. Born...why?...to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth. Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord who hath made heaven and earth of naught and with His blood mankind hath bought." Another carol says the King of kings salvation brings. Another one, "Good Christian men rejoice with heart and soul in voice, now ye need not fear the grave, Christ was born to save. Christ was born to save." Another one says, "Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas day to save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray." "Thou comest, O Lord, with the living word that shall set Thy people free, but with mocking scorn and with crown of thorn, they led Thee to calvary."

Yes, there was astonishment at the birth of Christ because of who the child was. And His parents were amazed at what they were told. Finally, they were told by Simeon in chapter 2 verse 34 and 35 that this child would be the determiner of every human being's destiny. He is the determiner of every person's destiny. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel and a sign which shall be spoken against...yea, a sword shall pierce your own soul also that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." He is a revealer of the heart and He is a determiner of destiny. It is what you do with Jesus Christ that determines

whether you fall or rise again. Your eternal destiny, your falling into a pit of hell, your rising into the glories of heaven depends upon Christ.

I mean, it's one thing to have an influential child. It's one thing to say, "Well, my child has made a great impact on the world....My child has had influence in this area or that area or the other are." But imagine being told that your child is the greatest influence in the world, so influential that the destiny of every living human being is dependent on their relationship to that child. Incredible statement. This is no ordinary child. "He that hath the Son hath...what?...life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." It's that clear cut. He is the determiner of every human being's destiny. Anyone who ever enters the heaven...anyone who ever enters into heave does so because of the work of Jesus Christ in gracious provision for his sin. Anyone who ever goes to hell goes to hell because that work is not applied to them because of their unbelief.

You say, "What about Old Testament saints before He died?" The Old Testament saints before He died had their sins covered by the death of Christ. If Jesus had never died, they would never have gone to heaven. You say, "Well, it hadn't happened yet." Well it had in the mind of God because there's no time with God. Everyone was redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You say, "Well, they didn't even know about that." That's right. They believed God and in believing God, God applied that sacrifice to them because of their faith. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. But it is the work of Christ that paid the penalty for sin. It wasn't the work of bulls and goats, that's for certain. So every person's destiny is bound to Christ.

And don't we hear that? Think of the Christmas carols again. They're filled with invitations. "Come let us adore Him." "Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord." What ever your response is to Jesus Christ determines your destiny. "Come rich and poor to own Him, the King of Kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him." "O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today." "O come with us, abide with us, our Lord Emanuel." "O come to my heart, Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for Thee." And I love these two, "Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, and take us to heaven to dwell with Thee there." Those are proper responses to the birth of Christ.

Yes, the most astonishing child that ever lived. Little wonder verse 33 of chapter 2 says, "And Joseph and His mother were amazed at those things which were said about Him." I trust that same wonder and amazement is in your heart as you hear those great realities again.

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).