

December 25, 2022 -

Luke 2:1-14 - "Christmas, a time for Going Home"

Introduction

AAA estimated that over 102 million people endeavored to journey home for Christmas. Some folks traveled 50 miles or more despite the roller-coaster gas prices. This holiday season an additional 2 million drivers took to the road compared to 2021. This doesn't include the thousand traveling by plane if their flight had not been cancelled due to the weather. The FAA reported that over 4,844 flights had to be cancelled. That is a lot of disappointed people who wanted to be home for Christmas. Traveling home this year was not an easy task for thousands of dear folks. Yet, in spite of the difficulties with their travel it cannot compare to the first family of Christmas. They too traveled home that first Christmas not because they desired too but because it was mandated to do. So traveling home for Christmas goes back to the first family of Christmas; Mary and Joseph and it has been a wonderful tradition.

However, it must have been heart breaking for Mary and Joseph when they arrived in Bethlehem with a baby on the way. There were people looking for rooms they too had gone home, people waiting for a place to stay all because they had to sign up for Rome's new taxes. When it came to Mary and Joseph there were no rooms available! The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem is about 80 miles. This was not a short distance in those days. It was a significant undertaking, costing time and money. I can imagine Joseph pleading with the manager of the inn, telling him of Mary's condition and their desperate need for a place where she could give birth to her child. But "there was no room for them in the inn.

Today, over 2,000 years later, millions of people go home for Christmas. Although they participate in the festivities of the Christmas season, what makes Christmas special is going home. What was the climate of the world like when Mary and Joseph traveled home for what would become the first Christmas? Let's consider it's...

I. The Significant History vv. 1-3

1. The then known world wasn't thinking about preparing for the king of kings. This virgin born son of God but rather a human Emperor named "Caesar Augustus". He was the great nephew of Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar came to adopt Octavian as his son, and he was made his official heir in 45 B.C. With a year Caesar was murdered. His name was really Octavia. In Julius' Caesar's will Octavia was to succeed him in leading the Roman Empire.

2. He was actually the First Roman Emperor of the World Empire and usually the first is the greatest like "Washington" etc. Many historians believe that he was the greatest of all Roman emperors. He brought Rome to a period of peace uniting the empire together. However, to do that you need money and lots of it. So the people of that time were being heavily taxed, and faced every prospect of a sharp increase to cover expanding military expenses. To do this Caesar Augustus called for a census "that all the world should be taxed". "

3. History confirms this taxation and the timing in history. (The Works of Josephus) Scripture confirms this taxation and history reaffirms this. (Acts 5:33-37) It was a busy time in the Judean village, but the excitement had nothing to do with the upcoming birth of Christ. The crowds had gathered to take part in this unwanted census. They didn't know that Mary was about to deliver the Savior of the world.

In such a time, and amid such a people, a child was born to a migrant couple who had just signed up for a fresh round of taxation, and who could not find a room anywhere. Is not the God of the universe able to provide a place for His own Son? God gave it all to man and man could not find a place for Him. Certainly the God who created it all could of. During the busy Christmas season, it is always a joy to be able to go home and spend time with loved ones while celebrating the birth of our Savior. For so many there is a special and significant connection with family so let's consider...

II The Signification Connection vv.4-7

1. Going to Bethlehem was Mary and Joseph's family connection to King David. This was where "David" was tending sheep when "Samuel was told by God to go to "Jesse, the Bethlehemite as he pronounced, "for I have provided me a King among his sons (I Sam. 16:1) Christ our Lord was born in this small town of Bethlehem. Jesus was not born in the house of royalty, nor in the house of riches, nor in the house of celebrity. Jesus was not born in Jerusalem, or in Rome or in Athens or Alexandria. Jesus was not born in any political, commercial, cultural, educational, or socially significant city of the day. When Micah, the Old Testament prophet, foretold the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, he emphasized its lack of significance to the world.

"But thou, Bethlehem, Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

2. Christ family connection was that of royalty that was and is the true family connection but his cradle was a manger, an animal's feeding trough in a lowly stable. Christ was born in Bethlehem to satisfy our spiritual hungry.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger." (John 6:35) (John 3:16)

There is no human so low that he or she is outside the reach of the love of God. He as God in the flesh was born in the lowliest of places to reach a lost world and to make us all family to give us all and eternal home. That is why there is...

III A Signification Purpose vv. 8 -11

1. We see a signification purpose in these verses "Shepherd" in the same country watching over their flocks. His birth was announced to shepherds, the common man, but not to King Herod. The simple men were the humblest and meekest. Note these were first to hear the greatest news! Shepherd cares for "Sheep" and the Lambs".

2. Many of the "shepherds of Bethlehem raised the sheep or lambs for the temple sacrifices at "Jerusalem". They were preparing the most precious spotless lamb for the coming sacrifices. Remember God called for the "Passover Lamb Exodus 12:5 "Without spot or blemish a male of the first year. God was depicting his son born on the fields of the "Passover Lambs" as His Lamb His own precious son. Remember "John the Baptist declare Behold.

3. I believe it was significant in the fulfilling of the messianic prophecy. The Lamb "Jesus Christ" God's own son was born in the confines of the Passover lambs. The Lamb prepared before the foundation of the world and declared by God's marvelous messengers (read v10)...Jesus was born to die. He became the supreme sacrifice to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind. It was all in Gods' timing for He would sent His son to redeem the world. **And the child who was born was called, among other things, Emanuel God with us.** The purpose is that all men would be saved and an Angel was dispatch to proclaim the great news.

4. After the single angel's announcement vv. 12-14; a whole group of angels appeared. This was a heavenly host that proclaimed peace. Not as the world gives but only as He could.

*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.--- John 14:27 ---*The world needed this then and needs now peace. Even the pagans of the first century world sensed this need for peace and a savior. Epictetus, a first century pagan writer, expressed this: "While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy; he cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearns for more than even outward peace."

Conclusion:

Advent is about the joy of longing for home – the kind of home that will complete us, the kind of home that will transform the world. It is about helping us remember that we have a mission and a hope. We are people who see God at work in this world, and we are partners in that restoring. We are the disciples who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Advent is an invitation to come home...home to our heavenly Father's Kingdom. It should be for us who are Christians about the longing for the coming kingdom our future home. That's the home for which we long. That's the invitation for this Advent season to you and the world: "Come home for Christmas."