

Portraits of Christ: A Child Is Born (Luke 2:8-12)

I. Christ Is Come

Luke 2:8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. *9* And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. *10* Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. *11* For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. *12* And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

1. Jesus' birth and childhood is an essential part of who He is. Most of our consideration goes into Jesus' years of ministry, which is reasonable since that's the bulk of the Scriptural coverage, but again, if we don't consider where He's coming from we can come away with a distorted view.
2. When the Word is lying in the manger as an infant, unable to speak, He is by no means silent. Neither is He silent for the 30 years that He disappears in obscurity.
3. Looking at the work of Christ, we can begin to justify why God had to come. Looking at how He came we have very little means to explain it away as anything other than the wonders of His heart toward us. Outside of meditating on His birth and childhood we are likely to define Christ by His ministry and what He did, and miss the wonders of who He was – God become flesh.

II. Unto Us

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given...

1. Jesus didn't just come to earth, He came to us. God visits humanity, assuring us that He is mindful of us.
Psalm 8:4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?
2. When we were unable to come to Him, cut off by the weight of sin, He came to us.
Ephesians 2:11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— *12* that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. *13* But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
3. When man was wandering in darkness, blinded by our own sin to the goodness of God, ever accusing Him in our hearts, God came to show us what we could not see. The Pharisees searched the Scriptures, but they lacked what we have in Christ – the key to unlocking it all.
John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.
John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.
4. As Jesus lies in the manger, a helpless infant unable to speak a word, the Word of God is nonetheless speaking volumes. The accusation of the enemy that God does not see and does not care is forever crushed by the cry of a baby in a manger.
Psalm 8:2 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

5. No more was there to be any doubt as to where God stood. The deistic belief of a God who created and then stood by dispassionately can't stand up to Jesus' simply lying there screaming "God is with us."
Matthew 1:22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."
6. The testimony of the incarnation is that God is for us. Who then can be against us?
Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?
7. God joins Himself to the story line of humanity, choosing to become a Son of Man, that we might become sons of God.
John 1:12 ...as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...
8. His coming to us and joining Himself to us is our assurance that He is one day coming for us to join us to Him.
Ephesians 5:31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

III.A Child Is Born

1. The dignified God, too high and lofty to be willing to deal with our mess and involve Himself in our issues, lies on grass in a barn, crying and screaming.
2. He knows our frame, not just knows of it, He knows it. He is well acquainted with our weakness.
Psalms 103:13 As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. 14 For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.
3. Jesus chose to come as the weakest of all humanity – He chose to enter as a baby, unable to do anything of "significance." In doing so, He bestows unbelievable dignity on the significance of our insignificant lives. At what point did Jesus' life have significance to the Father?
John 17:23 [You] have loved them as You have loved Me.
4. The birth of the Baby is somehow far more difficult to explain away than the ministry of the Man. Did Jesus come as the sacrifice to save us from our sins? Absolutely. Did He come to show us how to live in the kingdom? Absolutely. What was Jesus doing in that manger though? Was He saving us from our sins? Not yet. Was He teaching us how to live? Not really.
5. God chose to come as a baby because He had work to do in that manger. From the manger Jesus is once and for all settling the question of whose side God is on, and He is joining Himself to man in our weakness forever.

IV. This Will Be a Sign to You

Luke 2:12 *And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.*

1. What a contrast to what these shepherds had just experienced. Here was something altogether different than the cloud of glory – something awesome, yet approachable.

Luke 2:9 *And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.*

2. His entourage testifies of His rightful estate in glory, and yet He is to be found wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

Luke 2:13 *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 “ Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”*

3. The birth of Christ is divinely orchestrated to display the wonders of the incarnation – this great and sudden contrast between the heights of the glory of God and the multitude of worshiping angels that had forever been the home of the pre-incarnate Christ to the utter humility of His newly chosen state.

Philippians 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

4. More than an unfortunate series of unfortunate events, Jesus' humble birth was a divinely arranged sign – a witness of His nature. God's strength is displayed in weakness, His glory in humility.

Isaiah 52:10 *The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God. ...53:1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.*

5. What was it like for these shepherds to hold the baby Jesus, knowing what they knew? Instead of the God with whom you tread carefully for fear He might crush you, here is the God with whom you tread carefully for fear you might crush Him.

6. Here is the God who rests His hopes and dreams in the hands of a father and mother of no remark, and chooses a bunch of shepherds as His witnesses.

7. Here is a God who is gentle and lowly – so far from the gods of our own imagination and from the wisdom of the world.

Matthew 11:25 *At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. 26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*