

The Fullness of Time and the Fullness of Glory

by Victor Maxwell

Victor Maxwell's sermon explores the miraculous and humble birth of Jesus Christ, emphasizing its prophetic significance and universal message of salvation.

Scripture: Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1, Luke 1:26, Luke 2:4, Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Incarnation Of Christ", "Divine Providence"

Description

Victor Maxwell delves into the miraculous and unique birth of Jesus Christ, emphasizing how His arrival was unlike any other in history, being God manifest in the flesh. Despite the lack of royal fanfare, Jesus was born in humble circumstances, fulfilling prophecies and demonstrating God's divine timing and control over history. The message of Jesus as the Anointed One and the able Savior is proclaimed to both simple shepherds and scholarly wise men, highlighting the universal significance of His birth for all sinners.

Transcript

Studies in Luke #5 The Fullness of Time and the Fullness of Glory Luke 2:1-11 On the 28th. July 1978 Louise Brown was born. News of the birth her in Oldham England, reverberated in around the world on television and radio. She was hailed as the "miracle baby" Louise was the first baby to be born in a test tube outside the mother's womb. She may have been the first baby born in such a way but she was not the last. There have been many on unusual births, baby to the oldest parents, heaviest baby ever born etc.

However, no one has ever had a birth like Jesus Christ. The birth of our Saviour was not only unusual. It was unique. Jesus Christ was unique. He was God manifest in the flesh. Jesus Christ of the New Testament was the Jehovah of the Old Testament. He was the only person who ever lived who could claim his mother was a virgin and yet lived before His mother was ever born. We have heard the story of our Saviour's birth so many times and yet it is like a perfect gem. It never loses its lustre nor wears out by the telling.

To delve into the story is to enter the world of wondrous miracles. He was born a King and yet none of the trappings of a Royal birth were evident at His birth. Normally a royal birth would be hailed by the blast of trumpets, the sounds of canons being fired. VIP treatment would be given to the mother and baby in a presidential suite of a top hospital. Satin attire would be provided for the baby. Dignitaries from near and far send their gifts to the royal parents. The world at large would wait for the news of the new name given for the royal child.

What a contrast to the scenario which God arranged for arrival of His Son. The birth of the most royal child ever was surrounded by events which were strangely different. Mary in the latter stages of her miraculous pregnancy travelled 85 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be counted in the national census. Joseph walked while Mary rode side-saddle on the back of a donkey. She must have felt every jolt and bump on the road. On their arrival the small town of Bethlehem was bulging with the influx of travellers and there was no room for the couple.

The inns were packed. The only available accommodation was a stable which was probably already crowded with animals of the inn's guests. The stable was dark and dirty. There were no rich tapestries other than the spider webs that hung from the stable walls. A barnyard stench hung heavy in the air. Geoffrey Bull was taken prisoner by the communists in the 1950's. During his imprisonment he was made to do menial tasks. In his notebook he recorded that on Christmas Day he had to work with the pigs.

As he squelched through the mire the stench was awful. It was then he remembered other Christmases with his family at home. The warmth of the fire and the chatter of excited children. Soon he was jolted back to the reality of the stench where he stood. It was then he realised that this is how it must have been for Mary and Joseph and the Christ child. Although this miraculous birth had been announced by an angel yet the couple made room amidst donkeys and sheep. Here they were far from home, far from their family, far from their friends.

Far from what she expected in giving birth to her first born child. It must have been a distressing place for a woman in the throes of childbirth. On that silent night while Bethlehem slept Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ. A feeding trough was used for a crib. Hay was used as a mattress. Swaddling cloths which were used to wipe the animals were wrapped around the baby. Except for Joseph no one was there to share the joy of the Messiah's birth. Amazingly, God arranged the most royal of births happen in this fashion at Bethlehem's one star hotel.

The stark truth is that without Jesus Christ in the manger there would be no Christianity. Without Him our faith would be as empty as a dry feeding trough. Jesus Christ is not only essential He is also central and absolutely sufficient simply as Saviour because He is God. 1. The Mandate From Rome. (a) The moment of his birth was prophetically announced! When you look into the Old Testament you find that are many prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus. Someone has said that there are 332 specific predictions about Christ in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the New Testament.

Several of those have to do with the birth of Jesus. (i) The procedure of his birth was prophesied. 1. The prophecy was given in: ISA.7:14 "therefore the lord himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel". (ii) The place of his birth was prophesied. The prophecy was given in: Micah 5:2 "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting".

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, it was prophesied that He would be born in Bethlehem. The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in: LUKE 2:4,6-7 "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem...and so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. and she brought forth her firstborn son..". (b) The moment of his birth was historically arranged!

Someone has correctly called history "His Story". The fingerprint of God is found in all the events that surround the birth of Jesus. In fact, the historical context of the birth of Jesus was appointed and arranged by God. i. The hour that was divinely chosen. Go back to Gal.4:4, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law". The phrase "fullness of the time" refers to the completion of the period of preparation in God's timetable of redemption.

The phrase indicates that Jesus Christ came not only, exactly AS God planned, but also, exactly WHEN God planned. When you consider the hour Jesus was born you find that everything was right for His coming. The time was right POLITICALLY. The ruling powers of Rome had brought economic and political stability. One could travel safely through-out the empire and could do so on the magnificent systems of roads built by the Romans. The time was right CULTURALLY. Alexander the Great had thoroughly established Greek culture throughout the then known world.

The time was right SPIRITUALLY. The religions of the day were flickering like dying embers. They offered little attraction or benefit to the needy. Many religions were widely discredited and spiritual leaders were scandalously corrupt. (ii) The happenings that were divinely controlled. I want you to look closely at the Gospel record of the birth of Jesus. We read in LUKE 1:26, "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth".

Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth. If you recall, the prophet had declared that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. So the time is drawing near for Mary to give birth to her child and she is still living in Nazareth. But the God that is in control of all things set things in motion. Notice LUKE 2:1, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed". This decree required that each person return to the city of their lineage to pay this tax.

Since Joseph was of the lineage of David, then he had to go to Bethlehem to pay his taxes. Luke 2:4, "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David)". Suddenly, without any choice, pregnant wife or not, Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. Do you think that Caesar Augustus just woke up one morning and said, "I am going raise taxes". Absolutely not. God put it in his heart.

Why He was arranging things so that Jesus would be born just as the prophet had declared. LUKE 2:6, "And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered". The hour of His birth was not only Divinely chosen but was also Divinely controlled. His birth was historically arranged. When I look at how God controlled the events surrounding His birth, it confirms my faith in God's providence. It greatly strengthens my heart to know that I am in the hands of a God that has all things under His control. 2.

The Message from Heaven - and the Miracle in the manger (a) He is the Anointed One! . The angel called the Saviour "Christ". Christ is the most familiar title given to Jesus. This was His official designation. - "The Anointed One". It was the title that expressed the fact that Jesus was the Prophet, Priest, and King of whom Moses and the prophets gave witness to. The angel was declaring that the baby born in Bethlehem's manger was indeed the One that had been prophesied and promised.

In short, the angel was saying, "This is the Anointed One." I find it interesting that it was to shepherds that this message was revealed. These were not ordinary shepherds and this was not an ordinary flock. These were the shepherds that had the responsibility of watching over the lambs that would be used for sacrifices. In the Old Testament, the offering of a sacrifice was symbolic of the Lamb of God that would

come to take away the sin of the world. The shedding of blood and the giving of life spoke of an innocent one giving its life for the guilty one.

The angel was declaring, "This is the One that every sacrifice illustrated and illuminated. This is the One, the Anointed of God, to be our Saviour!" (b). He is the able One. 1. The angel not only called the Saviour, "Christ", but he also called him "Lord". This title is used of Jesus some 650 times in the New Testament. Of these, there are 160 occurrences of this title identified with God's name, "Jehovah". Among the Jews, there were said to be seven names of God which were so sacred that they required special care, and a scribe, when writing them, was not to stop after once beginning the name until completion.

If an error was made when writing one of these names, it was not to be erased. Jehovah was one of those seven names. When applied to the Saviour as Lord, it made Him equal with God exercising all power. The angel was not only declaring that this was the Saviour that would save his people, but could save His people from their sins. The writer of Hebrews declared in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." 3.

The Men in the fields. (a). The message was sent to simple people. . Again I refer to the shepherds in Luke chapter two. We read in Luke 2:8, "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night". Shepherds were despised by the orthodox people of that day. It was a role and profession that was looked down on by others. Yet to these simple people the message of the birth of Jesus was revealed. (b) The message was sent to scholarly people. 1.

We read in Matthew 2:1-2, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, [2] Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him". (c) The message was for sinners. I read the story of a man named Edwin Rushworth. Rushworth had been a skeptic all his life. But he resolved to read for an hour a day the book that he had so long derided.

"Wife", he said, as he looked up from his first perusal, "if this book is right, we are all wrong!" He continued his readings for another week. "Wife", he exclaimed at the end of that time, "if this book is right, we are lost!" He went on reading with more avidity than ever. "Wife!" he said earnestly a few nights later, "if this book is right, we may be saved!" And they were!

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