

Last wk, ~ we noted ~ that John's approach to writing about Jesus' 1st advent ~ was different than Luke's & Matthew's.

John approached Jesus' incarnation ~ from a ~ theological standpoint.

➤ As noted, ~ he wrote ~ a doctrinal essay, ~ setting down ~ crucial theological truths ~ about Jesus and his 1st advent.

➤ We asserted that ~ if we are to understand and celebrate Christmas ~ in its fullest meaning, ~ we must not neglect the truths ~ which John's prologue ~ contains.

➤ As we saw, ~ John focused on ~ amazing, ~ deep, ~ theological truths ~ that enhance ~ our understanding and celebration ~ of Jesus' 1st advent.

▷ Additionally, ~ these truths will boost ~ our understanding & praise ~ of our Savior.

Matthew & Luke, ~ on the other hand, ~ approached Jesus' incarnation ~ by reporting on the events surrounding Jesus' birth and his birth itself.

➤ In literary terms, ~ we could say that ~ they focused on ~ writing a report ~ regarding the 1st advent of Jesus.

➤ Last wk, ~ John's Christmas essay, ~ today, ~ dip into Luke's report

▷ Lk. 2: ~ 1-20.

In ~ 2: ~ 1-5; ~ Luke reports on the historical circumstances.

In these vv, ~ Lk. ~ anchors his report ~ in reality. 1/13

➤ He's showing us ~ the historical roots ~ of the Christian faith.

➤ The roots of our faith ~ are totally unlike ~ the appearance of the other "gods" of false religions, ~~ whose appearance ~ was couched in ~ "once upon a time" terms.

➤ No, ~ the coming of Jesus was ~ a real event ~ in real time ~ on a real day.

Jesus was born in a real town, ~ Bethlehem.

➤ It happened ~~ not in Narnia. ⇨ Not ~ in Middle Earth. ⇨ Not ~ in a galaxy far, far away.

➤ No, ~ the coming of Jesus was ~ a real event ~ in real time ~ on a real day ~ in a real town.

▷ Micah 5:2, ~~ But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, ~~ who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, ~~ from you ~ shall come forth for me ~ one who is to be ruler in Israel, ~~ whose coming forth ~ is from of old, ~ from ancient days.

➤ If Luke was not writing a historical account, ~ he could easily be refuted ~ by the people of his day.

▷ And he could also be easily refuted ~ by other historians down through the centuries.

➤ This is not ~ fantasy land literature. ⇨ This is ~ historically verifiable reporting.

And consider this re: Luke's historical acct. ⇨ On the surface, ~ Caesar called the shots.

➤ And his imperial order ~ led Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, ~~ where Jesus finds his first home ~ in an animal's feeding trough.

▷ But all the while, ~ we know that it was God ~ directing the action ~ from behind the scenes. ⇨ Account much like ~ Esther. 2/13

➤ So, ~ the historical description in this passage ~ is to be understood ~ not simply as ~ an accidental quirk.

▷ But rather ~ it is to be understood ~ the following way.

⇒ Luke shows us how God, ~ who rules over nations, ~ directed Caesar Augustus ~ to issue the census decree.

⇒ This divine direction ~ was in order ~ to bring about the fulfillment ~ of what God had decreed ~ centuries earlier.

→ That the seed of the woman would come ~ and crush the serpent's head.

⇒ Thus in God's providence ~ while J. & M. were in Bethlehem ~ the Savior was born.

In ~ 2: ~ 6-7, ~ Luke reports ~ on the birth of Jesus.

NIV, While they were there, ~ the time came for the baby to be born, ~ and she gave birth to her firstborn, ~ a son. ~ She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, ~ because there was no guest room available for them.

Tech note.

➤ Inn ~ is better translated ~ guest room in a private home. ☞ NIV

➤ The home, ~ probably belonging to a relative, ~ where Mary and Joseph would have stayed, ~ was full.

➤ So, ~ they sought refuge & privacy in an animal room adjacent to the home.

▷ This would be analogous ~ to an attached garage. 3/13

➤ Or, ~ they sought refuge & privacy ~ in a nearby cave ~ used for housing animals.

➤ In either case, ~ the idea ~ of the holy family being turned away from an inn ~ so Jesus would be born in a stable ~ is probably ~ not quite accurate.

With a surprising reserve and simplicity, ~ Luke described the birth of Jesus.

➤ And she gave birth to her firstborn son.

➤ Many Christmas celebrations ~ miss ~ the enormity of Christ's birth.

➤ This was not just ~ another baby ~ or ~ another birthday.

➤ God was born ~ in human likeness. ⇨ And the Word was made flesh ~ and dwelt among us.

➤ The Divine ~ took upon himself ~ the limitations ~ of humanity.

➤ As Paul wrote, ~ Jesus made himself nothing ~ by taking the very nature of a servant, ~ being made ~ in human likeness.

In all likelihood, ~ the manger Jesus was placed in ~ was an animal's ~ feeding trough.

➤ The contrast between ~ the birth's commonness ~ and the child's greatness ~ could not be greater.

➤ The promised one of God ~ enters creation ~ among the creation.

➤ The secular decree of a census ~ had yielded ~ a divine event.

➤ A manger ~ was the Messiah's ~ 1st throne room. ⇨ But not his last. 4/13

In ~ 2: ~ 8-14, ~ Luke reports ~ on the visitation of the Angels to the Shepherds.

From the manger, ~ Luke moved ~ to the fields outside the village.

Vs 8 (CSB), ~ In the same region, ~ shepherds were ~ staying out in the fields ~ and keeping watch at night over their flock.

➤ Among the occupations, ~ shepherding ~ had a lowly place.

▷ They were ~ outcasts, ~ not allowed in the city, ~ and not trusted by the general public.

▷ For often ~ they were thieves.

➤ Luke gave this story about the shepherds for a reason.

➤ Jesus would come, ~ not ~ to the proud and powerful.

▷ No, ~ he came to ~ the outcasts, ~ the humble, ~ those considered last ~ on the social lists.

➤ To these men ~ God brought ~ the first news ~ of his Son's arrival.

➤ The significance of this ~ should not be lost here.

▷ Luke shows here ~ God's concern for people ~ regardless ~ of their social status or vocation.

⇒ Jesus ~ cares for all ~ and identifies with all.

As these shepherds were living in the fields under the sky, ~ suddenly ~ a bright light broke through the darkness. 5/13

➤ Vv 9-10, ~ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, ~ and the glory of the Lord shone around them, ~ and they were filled ~ with great fear. ~ And the angel said to them, ~ "Fear not, ~ for behold, ~ I bring you good news of great joy ~ that will be for all the people."

➤ An angel of the Lord appeared among them.

➤ And the radiance of the Lord's glory ~ surrounded them.

▷ **Glory** ~ refers to the majesty and splendor ~ accompanying God's presence.

➤ This display of divine glory ~ highlighted ~ the supernatural nature ~ of the event.

▷ This ~ was no ~ ordinary baby.

➤ The stunning display of God's glory ~ and the appearance of the angel ~ naturally frightened these shepherds.

▷ The angel ~ encouraged the shepherds.

He told them that ~ he had brought ~ **good news of great joy ~ that will be ~ for all the people.**

➤ The announcement itself ~ contains 2 descriptions.

▷ 1st, ~ the announcement ~ is good news.

▷ And 2nd, ~ the good news ~ causes great joy.

⇒ I.e., ~ the good news ~ causes great joy ~ for those who accept it. **6/13**

➤ This news of great joy ~ is for the benefit of ~ all the people, ~ the angel said.

▷ Not universal salvation.

▷ Salvation is universal ~ in offer.

⇒ Jn. 3:16 (NIV), ~ For God so loved the world ~ that he gave ~ his one and only Son, ~ that whoever believes in him ~ shall not perish ~ but have eternal life.

→ For all people, ~ but not all people ~ will accept it.

In vs 11, ~ the angel expressed ~ both ~ the content of the good news ~ and ~ the reason for great joy.

➤ For unto you ~ is born this day in the city of David ~ a Savior, ~ who is Christ the Lord.

➤ No newspaper ~ ever carried headlines ~ more significant than this.

▷ No more important event ~ was ever announced.

➤ Note the 3 titles ~ given the newborn babe.

▷ The 1st title is ~ Savior.

⇒ That is why ~ he was called Jesus, ~ which means Savior.

⇒ Appropriately ~ this is his ~ primary designation.

→ For the main purpose ~ of Jesus' appearance on earth ~ was the salvation of humankind. 7/13

▷ The 2nd title is ~ **Christ**.

⇒ The Greek ~ Χριστός ~ is equivalent to the Hebrew wd for ~ Messiah.

⇒ Both mean ~ the anointed one.

⇒ Jesus came ~ as the Messiah ~ who was predicted and promised ~ in the OT.

→ He was the fulfillment ~ of the Messianic hopes of the centuries.

▷ The 3rd title is ~ **Lord**.

⇒ The word ~ **Lord** ~ refers here to deity.

⇒ That this tiny baby was the "Lord" ~ means ~ that God had arrived ~ in human form.

⇒ Thus ~ the angel gave no doubt ~ as to the identity ~ of this child.

The angel completed his message ~ by giving the shepherds ~ a sign.

➤ Vs 12, ~ ~ And this will be a sign for you: ~ ~ you will find a baby ~ wrapped in swaddling cloths ~ and lying in a manger.

➤ This would help them ~ recognize the right baby.

▷ But ~ it would also ~ demonstrate the truth ~ of the angel's words.

➤ In Bethlehem that night ~ there might be 1 or 2 babies wrapped in swaddling cloths.

▷ But surely ~ there would be only one ~ lying in a manger. **8/13**

➤ This shows the extent ~ to which the Creator of the universe went ~ to save us from our sins.

The angel was then joined ~ by a great company of other angels ~ engaged in praising God.

Vv 13-14, ~~ And suddenly there was with the angel ~ a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ~~ "Glory to God in the highest, ~~ and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!.

➤ Here the ~ highest ~ refers to the ~ highest heavens, ~~ not ~ to the highest degree.

▷ (NIV) *Glory to God in the highest heaven.*

➤ Through the angel choir's behavior, ~~ they demonstrate ~ the appropriate response ~ to God's gracious intervention ~ to bring a Savior.

➤ Not the time or occasion ~ for detailed study of these 2 vv.

▷ Suffice it to say, ~ in summary, ~ the angelic praise contains ~ 2 basic ideas.

⇒ 1st, ~ Phrase ~ *Glory to God* ~ focuses the praise on the One ~ who set these events in motion.

→ The One ~ who controls ~ all events on earth.

⇒ And the 2nd basic idea the angelic praise contains.

→ The people ~ to whom God draws near through Jesus ~ will experience the harmony & blessings ~ that God bestows on his own.

⇒ Here Luke narrows the focus ~ from the offer to all people ~~ to those who benefit from Jesus' coming. 9/13

In ~ 2: ~ 15-20, ~ Luke reports ~ on what happens ~ after the angels returned to heaven.

(15-16) As soon as the angels left, ~ the shepherds immediately decided to go to Bethlehem.

► They knew ~ there was not a moment to waste.

▷ The Savior was born ~ and they were determined to find Him.

▷ So they hurried to the village ~ and found Mary and Joseph.

⇒ And there was the baby, ~ lying in the manger.

▷ They came with ~ great speed, ~ urgency, ~ and expectation.

▷ They were not about to ~ ignore such good news ~ and neglect the Lord.

► Wouldn't it be wonderful ~ if all shared the passion of these shepherds for coming to Jesus?

▷ Many have heard of Him, ~ especially at this time of year.

▷ But sadly, ~ most never take the time to come to Him.

▷ Jesus entered this world clothed in humanity ~ for a purpose.

⇒ He came ~ to die ~ for the sin of humanity.

⇒ He came ~ to provide ~ the means of our salvation, ~

→ The righteous One ~ dying for the unrighteous. 10/13

⇒ He came ~ to give life eternal and abundant ~ to all ~ who come to Him ~ by faith.

▷ Sadly, ~ most are content ~ to simply hear the good news, ~ but never have a desire ~ to draw near to the Savior.

(17-18) After seeing Jesus, ~ the shepherds told everyone ~ what had happened ~ and what the angel had said to them about this child. ~ All who heard the shepherds' story ~ were astonished.

► The shepherds were unable ~ to remain quiet about ~ the good news they had heard ~ and their miraculous discovery.

▷ They shared the good news of Jesus' birth ~ with everyone they encountered.

▷ In essence, ~ they were the first missionaries ~ to share the good news of the gospel.

▷ They were so moved by this encounter, ~ they couldn't ~ keep it to themselves.

► If the shepherds were willing to share abroad the good news of Jesus' birth, ~ ↓

▷ surely ~ we believers here @ North Hartland CC ~ ought to be willing ~ to share the good news of the Gospel.

▷ We know more ~ than the shepherds did ~ that first night.

⇒ We know of Jesus' ~ sinless life, ~ atoning death, ~ resurrection, ~ & the promise of his return.

▷ Let us do ~ as the shepherds did ~ that 1st Christmas ~ and widely share ~ the good news about Jesus. 11/13

▷Let's pray ~ that we won't ~ keep it to ourselves, ~~ but that we share ~ the greatest gift ever given.

(20a) The shepherds went back to their sheep, ~ glorifying and praising God ~ for all they had heard and seen.

►This should come ~ as no surprise.

▷The shepherds had encountered Jesus, ~ the Messiah and Lord.

▷He had come to earth, ~ just as was prophesied.

▷The means of our salvation ~ had invaded the darkness.

▷When the shepherds comprehended ~ the enormity of this encounter, ~~ they were moved ~ to offer praise and worship to the Lord.

▷They had seen the Lord. ⇒ And as a result ~ they were led to praise God.

⇒I believe ~ this is the normal reaction ~ of those who accept the good news about Jesus.

►It's easy ~ to become ~ so busy and consumed ~ with all the activities of Christmas, ~ that we fail to worship the Lord during Christmas.

▷While many of us have probably been guilty of this, ~ it's a great tragedy.

⇒To forget ~ the One ~ Christmas is all about.

▷Christmas ought to stir ~ an attitude of thankfulness ~~ which leads us ~ to offer praise and worship to our Lord ~ for the gracious gift we received. 12/13

➤ And consider gifts for a moment, ~ my

▷ We no doubt ~ have received countless gifts over the years.

▷ But probably, ~ the majority of them ~ have long worn out and been thrown away.

▷ However, ~ through the coming of Jesus as our Savior, ~ we have received a gift ~ that we still possess.

▷ And it will never ~ wear out or be thrown away.

▷ We will carry it with us ~ beyond the grave.

▷ This gift ~ is eternal life.

▷ That ~ is definitely ~ worth praising the Lord for!

Have you received this precious gift of eternal life from the Lord?

If so, ~ we ought to offer praise to God for our salvation.

➤ If not, ~ if you have not yet received this precious gift, ~ in this life the gift of salvation ~ remains available.

➤ All you have to do ~ is come to the Lord by faith, ~ as the shepherds did, ~ and receive the gift of salvation. 13/13