

King of Kings

a. Humblest Ground, Highest Glory (2:1-20)

2:1-5 The world finds a stumbling block here. But we should find wonder. Why? (3:1,2)

[1] Luke ... sees God as Lord of history, and the actions of the emperor in far away Rome do but set forward the divine plan and purpose. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.82

[2] Augustus imagines that he is busied in advancing the glory of his name, and the lustre of his reign. And yet his orders, by means of others more powerful and absolute than his, become subservient to the accomplishment of prophecies, of which he is altogether ignorant, -- to the birth of a king whom he will never know, -- and to the establishment of a monarchy, which will subject his and all others to itself. This is what happens in all ages, and men take no notice of it. **Quesnel** in **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* p.54

2:6-14 Contrast Caesar and Christ in their station – and company

[3] The titles of the Infant tell something of the wonder of the birth, but do not unfold its overwhelming mystery. Magnificent as they are, they fall far short of 'The Word was made flesh.' They keep within the circle of Jewish expectation, and announce that the hopes of centuries are fulfilled. There is something very grand in the accumulation of titles, each greater than the preceding, and all culminating in that final 'Lord.' **Alexander Maclaren** *Expositions of Holy Scripture: Luke* p.43

[4] [2:13,14] They are called a *host*, i.e. 'army', paradoxically an army that announces peace, as Bengel sagely remarks. First they speak of *Glory to God*, a necessary preliminary to real peace on earth. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.85

[5] [2:14,15] The phrase means 'those upon whom God's will/favour rests', and expresses the thought of God's free choice of those whom he wills to favour and save. **I. Howard Marshall** *Luke* p.112



AUGUSTUS – first & greatest of the emperors. Mentioned but **once** in Scripture – and only in reference to the birth of a Greater King

[6] [2:1-20] In two important respects the story of the birth of Jesus is differentiated from that of John. First, it is given a setting in world history by its reference to the census which brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. It is the first hint of the cosmic significance of the birth and foreshadows the universalism disclosed in 2:32. Second, the birth of Jesus takes place in lowly circumstances, a fact indicated by the use of the manger and the presence of the shepherds who represent the humble, possibly even the despised people of the land. The twin motifs of the rejection of Jesus by the world and of God's acceptance of ordinary humble and needy folk, to whom he chooses to reveal his salvation, thus come to expression in the story at the outset, and remain of decisive significance throughout the Gospel. **I. Howard Marshall** *Luke* p.96

2:15-20 Compare the shepherds' response with Mary's (Micah 5:1-5)



Johann Albrecht Bengel
(1687-1752)
The King's army brings news of peace – peace contingent upon giving glory to God on High

Contrast with John - lowly birth, cosmic significance

[9] The overruling providence of God appears in this simple fact. He orders all things in heaven and earth. He turns the hearts of kings whithersoever He will. He overruled the time when Augustus decreed the taxing. He directed the enforcement of the decree in such a way, that Mary must needs be at Bethlehem when "the days were accomplished that she should be delivered." Little did the haughty Roman emperor, and his officer

Cyrenius, think that they were only instruments in the hand of the God of Israel, and were only carrying out the eternal purposes of the King of kings. Little did they think that they were helping to lay the foundation of a kingdom, before which the empires of this world would all go down one day, and Roman idolatry pass away. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.1 p.50

b. Testimony in the Temple (2:21-38)

2:21-24 How is the lowliness of Christ's beginnings magnified here? (Lev.12)

[7] [2:8,9] It is not unlikely that the *shepherds* were pasturing flocks destined for the temple sacrifices. Flocks were supposed to be kept only in the wilderness ... and a rabbinic rule provides that any animal found between Jerusalem and a spot near Bethlehem must be presumed to be a sacrificial victim ... The same rule speaks of finding Passover offerings within thirty days of that feast, *i.e.* in February. Since flocks might be thus in the fields in winter the traditional date for the birth of Jesus, December 25, is not ruled out. Luke, of course, says nothing about the actual date and it remains quite unknown. **L. Morris** *Luke* p.84

2:25-27a Note the Spirit is still at work in Israel, despite general unbelief (1:41,67)

[8] [2:25-28] In times of spiritual degeneracy, when an official clergy no longer cultivates anything but the form of religion, its spirit retires among the obscurer members of the religious community, and creates for itself unofficial organs, often from the lowest classes. Simeon and Anna are representatives of this spontaneous priesthood. **Frederic Louis Godet** *Luke* p. 85

[10] [2:25,26] *The consolation of Israel* for which he looked is another name for the coming of the Messiah ... This was expected to be preceded by a time of great suffering ('the woes of the Messiah'), so that he would certainly bring comfort. In days when the nation was oppressed men of faith looked all the more intensely for the Deliverer who would solve their problems. The Holy Spirit *was upon him*, which seems to mean on him continually. In the old dispensation we read of the Spirit as coming upon people on special occasions, but a continuing presence is rare, Simeon's endowment was something special. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.87

2:27b-32 What does the Spirit reveal to Simeon as to the sequence of salvation? (a revolutionary thought in Israel – but see Isaiah 41:1-4; 42:1; 49:6,7)

[11] [2:30,31] The Gentiles are here placed first. Did Simeon already perceive that the salvation of Jews could only be realized after the enlightenment of the heathen, and by this means? We shall see what a profound insight this old man had into the moral condition of the generation in which he lived. Guided by all that Isaiah had foretold respecting the future unbelief of Israel, he might have arrived at the conviction that his people were about to reject the Messiah (ver. 35). The idea of salvation is presented

under two different aspects, according as it is applied to the heathen or to the Jews. To the first this child brings light, to the second glory. The heathen, in fact, are sunk in ignorance. In Isa. 25:7 they are represented as enveloped in a thick mist, and covered with darkness. This covering is taken away by the Messiah. **Frederic Louis Godet** *Luke* p. 86

2:33-35 How is this 'blessing' mixed with pain? (v.32 - cf. Isaiah 8:14)

[12] [2:33-35] ... *behold*, announces the revelation of an unexpected truth. In Isa. 8:14 the Messiah is represented as a

rock on which believers find refuge, but whereon the rebellious are broken. Simeon, whose prophetic gift was developed under the influence of the ancient oracles, simply reproduces here this thought. The words, *is set for*, make it clear that this sifting, of which the Messiah will be the occasion, forms part of the divine plan. The images of a *fall* and a *rising again* are explained by that employed by Isaiah. **Frederic Louis Godet** *Luke* p. 87

[13] [2:35] The hatred of which Jesus will be the object (ver. 34), and which will pierce the heart of Mary with poignant grief (ver. 35), will bring out those hostile thoughts toward God which in this people lie hidden under a veil of pharisaical devotion. Simeon discerned, beneath the outward forms of Jewish piety, their love of human glory, their hypocrisy, avarice, and hatred of God; and he perceives that this child will prove the occasion for all this hidden venom being poured forth from the recesses of their hearts. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p. 88

Messiah's melody

Luke's heavenly octave...

1. Zacharias
2. Elisabeth
3. Joseph
4. Mary
5. Simeon
6. Anna
7. John

... 7 inspired notes – and One more

8. The Lord Jesus Christ

2:36-38 A second witness at the temple

[14] Her presence provides the second of the witnesses required to testify to the significance of Jesus (Dt. 19:15). **I. Howard Marshall** *Luke* p.115

[15] [2:21-39] Notice the representatives of that past economy which we have seen. What a wonderful group. Zacharias, the priest; Elisabeth, a daughter of Aaron; Joseph, a son of David; Mary, a daughter of David; Simeon, a citizen of Jerusalem; Anna, a Temple devotee; John, the child of Zacharias and Elisabeth; and now completing the octave, Jesus, the final flower and fruitage of all the Hebrew economy. Gathered round about Him that little group of devout souls. Wonderful ending of the Old, and beginning of the New. **G. Campbell Morgan**, *Luke* p. 43

'Wealth ruins far more souls than poverty' - Ryle

[19] Let us beware of despising the poor, because of their poverty. Their condition is one which the Son of God has sanctified and honoured, by taking it voluntarily on Himself. ... it is no disgrace to be poor. A mean dwelling place, and coarse food, and a hard bed, are not pleasing to flesh and blood. But they are the portion which the Lord Jesus Himself willingly accepted from the days of His entrance into the world. Wealth ruins far more souls than poverty. When the love of money begins to creep over us, let us think of the manger at Bethlehem, and of Him who was laid in it. Such thoughts may deliver us from much harm. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.1 p.52

c. Family Snapshot of the Royal Family (2:39-52)

2:39-41 A glimpse of the religious environment of the only Perfect Child!

[16] [2:41] Passover was one of the three annual festivals which Jewish men were required to keep in Jerusalem, the others being Pentecost and Tabernacles; in practice only the Passover was strictly observed. **I. Howard Marshall** *Luke* p.126

2:42-52 The point of this record?

[17] [2:42-45] It was at thirteen years of age that a Jewish boy could become a 'son of the law' or full member of the synagogue (*cf.* Mishnah, *Aboth* 5:21; *Niddah* 5:6). He would then assume all the responsibilities implied in his circumcision. For some observances at any rate the Mishnah provides that a boy should be taken to the observance a year or two before he turned thirteen so that he might be prepared (*Yoma* 8:4), and there may have been something of this on the present occasion (though it is equally possible that Jesus went up every year; we do not know). **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.91

[18] [2:49,50] The expression *my Father* is noteworthy and no parallel appears to be cited (the Jews added 'in heaven' or used 'our Father' or the like). The first recorded words of the Messiah are then a recognition of His unique relationship to God and of the necessity (*must*) of His being in the Father's house. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.92