

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of December 21, 2008
"Jesus – God in Flesh"**

[Today let's focus on an unusual birth – the birth of Jesus, the Son of God in flesh, who brings us salvation.]

[Topics: Birth of Jesus, Son of God in Flesh, the Light of the World, Salvation]

Excerpt: Let's start with a story of an unusual birth that happened last year. "In the city of Shelehov in northern Russia, a little more than a year ago, a young woman was giving birth. Suddenly, the entire city became dark. Emergency generators kicked in, but her hospital room remained pitch black. There appeared to be complications, but doctors could not see what was going on. Hurriedly, nurses collected mobile phones from staff and patients, then used the glow from the phones displays to provide enough light to safely deliver the baby, a boy." *Today in the Word, Moody Press, Dec. 17*

Today we're going to talk about another birth that had a bright light. A birth that was needed to light up the darkness, in order for us to have salvation. There was a star that appeared to announce that Jesus had been born. This was the time where God began to intervene in an even more direct way in the affairs of mankind.

Back in early October we began a series of sermons by focusing on who Jesus Christ really is. The apostle John thought it was very, very important that we understand this. He wrote his Gospel, three epistles, and the Book of Revelation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help to help us understand who Jesus is.

He wanted us to understand the glory of God who came down to human kind. And Jesus said that he passed on the glory to the people that the Father had given him (**John 17:22**). Let's begin in **John 1:1-2**. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2) He was with God in the beginning."**

So God, as this amazing being, chose to appear to the world through what was called the "Word" in that day, which meant light and intelligence.

3) "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." So everything appeared through the "Word." He was the creator. **4) "In him was life, and that life was the light of men."** So that Life that came along and intervened in our lives became a part of who we are. When we as human beings cooperate with God, he gives us his life.

5) "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it," Jesus is that light that shines into the darkness of this world.

And in **verse 14**, we read, **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."** So the "Word" came from heaven and dwelt as a human being. He appeared in our midst as a child. Jesus experienced all of human life from a baby to a child to an adult.

"We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." So John was so enamored by this person Jesus, because the glory of God was in him. Jesus was full of grace and truth meaning that all God was revealed in Jesus. That means that when we see Jesus we see God. The fact that Jesus became flesh is the crucial factor connecting us to God.

Luke tells us the story of Jesus' birth so that we have a clear picture that Jesus was truly human. **Luke 2:1-2, "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2) (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)"** So Luke gives us a specific time frame when Jesus was born by giving us specific leaders. This was a real event in history so that we wouldn't make light of it.

3) "And everyone went to his own town to register. 4) So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David." So Joseph went to his hometown of Bethlehem.

5) "He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6) While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7) and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

So Mary gives birth to Jesus in lowly circumstances, not some five-star hotel or five-star hospital. That's because Jesus came to meet all of us in our lowest place where we experience life. Now some of us were born in lowly circumstances at a location that was pretty rough at the time.

Now the next 12 verses in **Luke 2** describe how the shepherds witnessed this glorious event of having the angels appear to them out in the field. And the angels began to sing to declare God's glory to the shepherds. We need to understand why the angels appeared before the shepherds. That's because shepherds were considered the low rung of culture. They were the people of nobodies.

This reflects on who Jesus is. He comes to meet all of us in our time of difficulties and struggles. He comes to meet us and declare God's glory to everyone. So the shepherds come and find Jesus, Mary and Joseph and give glory and praise to this newborn child. Now later on Magi also come to Jesus because he doesn't neglect the wise and the great either. And they bring Jesus gifts for a king to declare that Jesus is, indeed, a king. And so they pay him honor.

And then we come to **verse 19. "But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."** Even though Mary had been told who Jesus was, she didn't fully comprehend it. And as things unfold, Mary is getting a bigger picture as she ponders all these events that are happening.

Do you ever ponder in your heart what God is up to now concerning your life? Many times we have to ask God to make things a little more clear to us. Some of our prayers should be to ask God to show us what these things mean, or what do we do next, or where are we going as God is working in our lives and in our hearts.

When Jesus was born and about 40 days old, his parents went up to the Temple to present him to the Lord. We read in **verse 25 of Luke 2, "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout."** Simon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is going to give a testimony about who Jesus is. And that's what we want to see today, who is this Jesus – this God who becomes flesh.

"He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him."

So the Holy Spirit was moving in Simeon's life so he could give additional information about who Jesus is to Mary and Joseph and to us. And 2000 years later the Holy Spirit has prepared us to be declaring who Jesus is at the right time and in the right circumstances to those who don't know who he is. We can declare – this is the Jesus I know.

26) "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ." So Simeon has had this great inspiration from the Holy Spirit. And he's been waiting for this event to happen. We're not told how long he has been waiting. But one day when he was at the temple courts it happened.

27) "Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28) Simeon took him in his arms and praised God," -- All of a sudden Simeon realizes this is the one he's been waiting for; this is the one! Now, we don't know who Simeon was expecting – a baby, a child or an adult. But he knew that when he saw the infant Jesus he instantly knew that Jesus was the one.

Then Simeon says some powerful words to God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit about Jesus. **29) "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace."** Simeon is saying that he could now die because his eyes have seen what God has promised to him. His life is now fulfilled.

30) "For my eyes have seen your salvation" – Simeon now has seen the Messiah, he has seen the deliverer of humanity, and he has now seen the one who will make salvation possible for all people. All human beings are invited to come to Jesus and he will offer salvation to them.

Many non-Christians ask the question today – is Jesus the only way to God? The truth is – Jesus is the only way, because it's only through him that we can get connected to God. That's not to put down other faiths that do some really good things and honor God in their way. But only one person has made the connection between man and God and that's Jesus. He opened that door. He made that connection possible, because he was fully God and fully flesh.

31) "which you have prepared in the sight of all people" – salvation is now visible to everyone, if they will look. Now a lot of people today aren't interested in looking towards Jesus, but he is still working on them, he is still caring for them, and he's still opening and softening hearts. For the next three days people are going to walk through the stores and humming songs or even singing the lyrics about Jesus that are being played there. Ironically, some of them who are doing this don't even believe in Jesus. They will be responding to Jesus in ways they don't even know.

32) "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Jesus is a light to all the nations, not just to the Jews of Israel. Jesus is available to all mankind. He can draw all to himself. God loves the diversity that's in our congregation. According to Revelation, even in heaven, we will keep our diversity. We will not look alike. We'll still be able to tell the color and culture and style of people from the various nations there, because God loves diversity. He's the creator of diversity.

So during this coming week, people from every nation will be honoring Jesus Christ. God is the light of the world and so many cities around the world are decorated in Christmas lights. Whether Jesus was born this time of year is irrelevant. We come, at this time of year, to honor the fact that God became flesh. He came and entered into our life, so that we could enter into his life.

And as we celebrate this event, it brings us to a closer relationship with God to experience his light and life in us. Too often the cares of this world get us so occupied and busy that we hardly have time for God. All of us need to put the breaks on and ask – what are my personal priorities, what are the priorities of our family? Are we letting life lead us, or are we leading life? It's easy to let life lead us.

Jesus came into this life and says to us – slow down, think it through, and make sure our priorities are right. Make sure we're living how God would want us to live, so that we are a light to the people around us; so that we are the glory of God to others, because Jesus said to his disciples that he's given them and all believers the glory God the Father has given him.

God shares his glory with us so that we can experience who Jesus is and to experience the mind and heart and nature of God, because Jesus came in flesh.

Key Scripture: Luke 2:8-20, "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9) An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10) But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11) Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12) This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'

13) Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14) 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.' 15) When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

16) So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17) When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18) and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19) But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20) The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

General Group Question: What's the significance of Jesus being born as God in the flesh for our salvation?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. Why was Jesus born in lowly circumstances?
2. Why did the angels appear to the shepherds in the field to declare the birth of Jesus?
3. What did the shepherds do when they found Jesus? Briefly explain why.
4. What desire did the Holy Spirit give Simeon?
5. What did Simeon do when he saw the 40-day-old Jesus? Why did he do that?
6. Why did Simeon call Jesus, "**a light for revelation to the Gentiles**"?
7. Why is Jesus sharing the glory the Father gave to him with us?