

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of December 22, 2024

THEME: "Birth of Jesus"

THE TAX DECREE

Sunday **Read Luke 2:1-3**

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." Tax increases are never good news for people. But our God can use what we might consider bad for good. If there was ever an illustration of that truth, it was a detail about the birth of Jesus. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Joseph lived in Nazareth, and the prophecy of Micah stated that the Jewish Messiah would come from Bethlehem. Because their taxes had to be paid in their town of origin, they had to go to Bethlehem. The fact that her time to deliver a baby was about up. That seemed to be a problem. But the trip confirmed Micah's prophecy! An example of the truth of Romans 8:28: *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* God used a tax increase to fulfill prophetic truth. Centuries before, God through the prophet said the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. God chose a woman from Nazareth to be the mother of the baby. They had to get there to deliver the baby. Little did the emperor realize that his tax decree would result in the fulfillment of prophecy. It worked for good.

THE TRIP

Monday **Read Luke 2:4-5**

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David." Trips always provide great memories and are a real plus for any family heritage. God has many times used trips to accomplish His plans. Think of Joseph and his trip to Egypt; it turned into a life saver for the Israelites. There was the trip of the Israelites to the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses. The wise men from the East came to worship the one they understood to be the real King. But of all the trips ever in human history, it was the trip of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. When we think of trips, we have to consider the greatest trip ever is yet to happen. That is the trip to heaven made by believers at the appearing of Jesus in the air to take His people to heaven. We read of that in Revelation 4:1: *"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."*

THE MANGER

Tuesday **Read Luke 2:6-7**

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Can you imagine a newborn baby being placed in a bed of straw in a barn! Because there was no room in the inn for the travelers, Joseph and Mary, they had to find a place for the delivery of Mary's baby. There was no time to search for accommodations. They had to do the best they could. A manger was better than nothing. Yes, the most important birth in human history occurred with the simplest of accommodations. God can and does use the most humble to accomplish the greatest things! Our Father in heaven is not looking for the rich and famous to do His work on His earth. Humility is a must to qualify to do the work of God! To be used of God to accomplish His business on earth requires a supernatural power as we are told in Acts 1:8: *"But*

ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

GOD'S GIFT

Wednesday Read Romans 6:20-23

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Of all the gifts exchanged at Christmas, the most valuable one is God's gift to all humanity. It is the gift of eternal life, a home in heaven. If someone received a house at a vacation resort for Christmas, that would be considered special. That does not even come close to receiving a home in heaven. It is the most expensive gift ever purchased. It cost Jesus His life, a death by crucifixion. When He arose on the third day, He gave all His followers the hope and the assurance of eternal life! Receiving that gift is the best gift a person could ever get.

THE MEADOW

Thursday Read Luke 2:8-10

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." On that night of the birth of Jesus, there were shepherds in the fields just outside the town. Little did they know when they went to work that day, that an angel from heaven would appear with an important message from God! How interesting that God would choose shepherds to share the greatest message ever! Does that not tell us that all believers, whatever their social or economic status qualify to be God's messengers. He did not send His angel to the universities for people with an impressive resume, although God can use such people. The only requirement for serving God is to have received Jesus as personal Savior and a desire to have Him to be Lord of our lives. Those who have believed themselves to be sinners and received Jesus as Savior qualify to do God's work. If they have a love for the souls of others, they qualify to share God's message as did the shepherds in the meadow!

THE MESSAGE

Friday Read Luke 2:11-13

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." That most important message ever was that the Savior of the world was born in Bethlehem. As sinners, people are headed to eternal death in hell. God will not allow sin in heaven. But His love for humanity compelled Him to come up with a way to cleanse sinners from their sin. His law in Leviticus 17:11 states that blood was the only cleansing agent for sin. He sent His sinless Son to be born of a virgin and live a sin-free life to become that Savior. The shepherds were entrusted to deliver that message! That is now the responsibility of all believers!

COMING AGAIN

Saturday Read Titus 2:11-15

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The followers of Jesus are living in anticipation of Jesus coming again. This time it is to be the King of kings. Biblical prophecy emphasizes that Jesus will be the long-anticipated King of the earth, the hope of the Jewish people who are looking for their Messiah. That is the final event on God's prophetic calendar. The removal of the Church must occur first, what we call the Rapture! When Jesus appears in the air, all Christians, dead and alive

will go to heaven. We read of that in I Thessalonians 4:16-17: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* After a seven-year tribulation on earth, Jesus and His followers will return to earth for the one thousand year Kingdom Age. That will be followed by the new creation described in the last book of the Bible.