



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

CHRISTMAS

MIDNIGHT/DAWN

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

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MIDNIGHT

Collect of the Day: O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Introit: Psalm 2:1-2, 4;6 (antiphon: Liturgical Text) — *I have set My King on Zion*

Psalm: Psalm 96 (antiphon: v. 2) — *Sing to the Lord*

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7 — *For to us a Child is born*

Gradual: Psalm 98:3b-4a, 2 — *He has revealed His righteousness*

Epistle: Titus 2:11-14 — *The grace of God has appeared*

Verse: Psalm 95:1a, 6b — *Alleluia. O come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! Alleluia.*

DAWN

Collect of the Day: Most merciful God, You gave Your eternal Word to become incarnate of the pure Virgin. Grant Your people grace to put away fleshly lusts, that they may be ready for Your visitation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Introit: Psalm 93:1-2, 5 (antiphon: Isaiah 9:2a, 6a, c) — *To us a Child is born*

Psalm: Psalm 80:1-7 (antiphon: v. 7) — *Restore us*

Old Testament Reading: Micah 5:2-5a — *The Ruler from Bethlehem*

Gradual: Psalm 118:26a, 27a, 23 — *This is the Lord's doing*

Epistle: Titus 3:4-7 — *Justified by His grace*

Verse: Psalm 93:1 — *Alleluia. The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Alleluia.*

Luke 2:1-20 ESV

Author and Date:

The Holy Spirit caused His Word to be written through St. Luke the Evangelist around 50-60 AD. This is the historical account of the birth of Jesus

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

- Though not yet married or living together, Joseph continued to prove his ability to guard and provide for Mary. Both Joseph and Mary were subject to Roman taxes and were required to participate in the census. They traveled around 90 miles one way from Nazareth, Galilee to Bethlehem, Judea because this was the hometown of their ancestor King David. Jesus' birth took place under Caesar Augustus and King Herod, according to the prophecy of Jacob (Genesis 49:10) and Daniel (9:24-25). In doing so, the direct messianic prophecy regarding Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is fulfilled (Micah 5:2).

⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

- Because all went to be registered in his own town (Luke 2:4), there was no place for them at the inn. Christ's only rest was in a manger: the feeding trough of irrational beasts and animals. Though God lacks nothing (see Psalm 50), He chose to be born in great poverty and wretchedness for our sake (2 Corinthians 8:9; see also Philippians 2:5-8 and Galatians 4:4-5).

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

- The angel states that the birth of Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6.
- “[T]he angels are deeply interested in all that occurs in the Church. Not only do they admire and adore the mystery of the Redemption (Luke 2:13; 1 Peter 1:12; Ephesians 3:10), but they also rejoice over every repenting sinner (Luke 15:10).” (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics I*, 507)

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

- “The terms . . . ‘in heaven,’ ‘in the heavens,’ ‘in the highest,’ do not restrict the right hand of God to one place, nor do they imply that Christ according to His human nature is sitting at the right hand of God in only one place in heaven; but these expressions mean that the majesty and power are not created, earthly, or lowly, but rather that they are heavenly, lofty, and divine. . . . By these terms we do not mean some human phenomenon in a fiery heaven in which the throne of Christ the man is placed in a higher position than that of the other saints, but rather that these expressions of Scripture describe the highest divine sublimity and glorious manifestation of divine glory, majesty, and power (Psalm 57:5; 108:4).” (Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 324)

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

- The shepherds are blessed hearers of the Word who believe before seeing. They believe the Word which comes to them, without knowing why or how, they take the angels words for certain (“this thing that *has happened*”).
- Were it not for the Word of God, no one would have known that the infant placed into the manger was God (see Matthew 16:17) since natural man can never accept the things of God to be true or understand them (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Lord was gracious to man by making His birth known to all.

¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

- “The most important thing for these shepherds was not their flocks of sheep, for they immediately rush out to go and see the little child, which the angels themselves had called the Lord!” (Dr. Luther, *Luther’s House Postils I*, 144)

¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

- “The shepherds also become messengers, telling everyone what they have heard about this infant. They rush to the innkeeper’s building and to other places, telling everyone what they have

heard and seen. We should follow their example: seek Christ in the Word, believe in him, and publicly confess him before all men.” (Dr. Luther, *Luther’s House Postils I*, 145)

¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

- “Mary is presented here to us as an example of those who rightly hear and keep God’s Word. . . . [S]he diligently searched God’s Word, just as all those who firmly cling to God’s Word do. They keep on searching and studying God’s Word, and the longer they do this, the greater becomes their understanding of that Word, and the greater becomes the comfort they find in it. With each passing day their faith becomes more sure. However, the wicked people who let the Word come into one ear and go out through the other ear, are the sort of people to whom you could preach as long and as frequently as you wish; they’ll remember it only as long as it takes for the waves, activated by a slap of the water, to disappear from sight. That is not what Mary does; she was intent on recalling what she had heard. So she inscribed it in her heart, that is, she kept on asking herself, What does this statement mean? . . . With reflections like these, the words of the angels sank so deeply into her heart that she could never forget them. And even if the whole world had opposed her, saying that this child was not the Savior of the world, no one could ever have changed her mind; she would have firmly insisted that her Son was indeed the Son of God and the Savior and Lord of all mankind.” (Dr. Luther, *Luther’s House Postils I*, 146-147)

²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

- Through hearing the Word of God, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and all Christians have faith—the ability to glorify and praise God. “[F]aith which unites with Christ is engendered and preserved solely through the Word of Christ. The witness of John the Baptist concerning Christ produced the faith of the believers (John 1:7). The Word regarding Christ engendered the faith of Joseph (Matthew 1:20 ff.), of Mary (Luke 1:38, 45; 2:19), of the shepherds (Luke 2:10-20). The disciples relied upon the ‘words of eternal life,’ which Jesus spoke to them (John 6:68), and Jesus cleansed them ‘through the Word’ which He spoke to them. The Word produces the faith of all Christians to the end of days. Christ testifies that those who continue in His ‘words’ know the truth and that all members of the Church to the end of days will believe in Him ‘through their Word.’ Nor does Paul know of any other genesis of faith: ‘So, then, faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God’ (Romans 10:17).” (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics II*, 115-116)

