

Luke, the Researcher (from Transcription Notes) (with permission of Janet Crisler)

moment he does that his speech returns. In effect, he has been fully obedient to the angel and is at the level of that angelic thought that had come to him. Obviously those who had witnessed this, had never seen anything like it before.

1:66 In Verse 66 they wonder, "*What manner of child this is going to be?*" We find Zacharias himself inspired and speaking again in biblical terms in Verse 68. By that I mean Old Testament terms. Verse 70 points to the fact that the prophets had long foretold this. It is the whole definition of who the Messiah would be, and who would be introduced by the forerunner, John.

In Verse 76 he says, "*Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest.*" Verse 77, "*To give knowledge of salvation unto his people.*" In Greek this reads as "*Gnothen soterias.*"

This is subject to several meanings. The Latin Bible picks up this word "*gnosis*" and translates it with the word "*scientia*" or science. "*Soterias*" is a word that also conveys the sense of health. This is why John Wycliffe translates it using the Latin, "science of health" in his English Bible. Knowledge and science are very close in meaning, and are exactly what the Latin Bible uses to translate the Greek "*gnosen.*" In the Wycliffe Bible it says, "To give science of health unto his people."

1:79 In Verse 79, "*To give light to them that sit in darkness and (in) the shadow of death.*" This is from Isaiah Chapter 42 and several other places. The Old Testament is a tapestry and the threads composing it are all complementary.

If this is being delivered under the influence of inspiration, then they all have a divinely impelled unity to them. It would seem, very unusual to run into someone trying to manufacture a series of ideas that are linked together in such a way.

2:1 In Chapter 2 again we have a way of dating our narrative. But Luke isn't interested in giving us dates or relating what is going on in his narrative to the passing events of the Roman period. Every now and then, however, like in Verse 1, we find that Caesar Augustus is the emperor in Rome.

We know that Augustus Caesar was emperor until A.D. 14. He began somewhere between 33 B.C. and 27 and reigns until A.D. 14. Caesar Augustus is the famous Octavius that you run into in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. He boasted that he found Rome built in brick but left it in marble. He is the Great Caesar, the one who was actually deified later. Many following Caesars use his name Augustus in their own series of names that compose their title.

We're also told (Luke 2:1-5) that taxing was going on at this time and that the taxing was going to occur in the town of the birthplace of the tribal families, and in Bethlehem where David was born. Those who had links to David genealogically had to return to be counted. It was a census. That's how they get to Bethlehem.

Again, we're talking about a hundred-mile trip. With no room in the inn (Verse 7), Mary is left with a manger. One of the earliest records we have about Jesus' birth is found in an early second century document written by Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-163), an early Christian writer. He affirms that Jesus was born in a cave. This is also supported by another Christian writer a little later, Origen (A.D. 185-254), and Jerome (A.D. 340-420). They all were in a position to have had access to that information having visited the area, in some cases, lived there for several years.

The manger was simply a stone, perhaps clay trough from which the animals would take their water or food.

Luke gives us the story of the shepherds (Luke 2:8-18), those alert shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. This is going to radically change our ideas of Christmas, although I'm sure that you are probably prepared for the fact that the birth of Jesus undoubtedly did not occur December 25th. It's pretty cold out there for shepherds to be watching their flocks in the winter night of Palestine. Normally they all would be within an enclosure at that time.

However, it doesn't hold always true today. It depends, again, on the weather. If it is warm, and if there is sufficient grass on the hillsides, the shepherds could have been out there at that point.

Shepherds generally watched during the spring when the lambs were being born to protect the flocks from the marauding animals or human thieves. Shepherds had

to be alert twenty-four hours. The whole figure of shepherd received special metaphorical treatment all the way through the Bible, specifically by Jesus himself, where the title "shepherd" is used to give an indication of his own character.

There was an expectation among the Jews in one of the Aramaic Targums or interpretations of Hebrew Scriptures. There is a tradition that the Messiah would be announced at Migdal Eder, the tower of the flock. This was a place just outside of Bethlehem, identified with the shepherds' fields. So we do have an early Jewish tradition that would assign the Messianic inauguration near Bethlehem.

2:4,10

The announcement comes to the shepherds in Luke 2:9. Verse 10 begins to give us a hint of part of Luke's purpose for writing. Most scholars think that Matthew has written his gospel for Jewish readership. It also seems clear that Luke wrote his gospel with a much more universal application in mind. Verse 10 underscores that

***All that is
needed is a
changed state
of mind and
fruits, results,
follow.***

in its last line by saying, "*All people*." The universality of Jesus and his mission to the entire world is emphasized. Only Luke has this story of the shepherds. We're dealing with the most spiritually conspicuous birth in history.

That means there would have to be a sign from God. We see that consistently through the Old Testament. A sign accompanying the setting aside of human laws, rules, and traditions. A radically new deeply drawn breath from Spirit, from the Holy Ghost, accompanied by angels. "*Fear not*," the opening words again, "*good tidings, great joy, all people*."

2:11 Right here in this small city of David a sign, (Verse 11), an unmistakably unique
2:12 sign. First a virgin will conceive, (Verse 12), then a heavenly anthem or symphony
2:13,14 ends the angelic message to the shepherds, (Verses 13 and 14).

2:15 The shepherds do something with the Holy Ghost with which they have been
2:16 filled. They respond; they obey. They utilize what they have been inspired to do.
2:17 They go to Bethlehem, (Verse 15), "*find the babe lying in a manger*," (Verse 16),
and "*spread the news around*," (Verse 17) so that the story was available among
others. We don't know where Luke would have gotten it. But that gives us certainly
sufficient justification to see that it was known more than by a handful.