

3. **Arrival at the Destination – By the Grace of God:**

- a. God's Word must be fulfilled – <sup>6</sup> **While they were there** [not immediately upon their arrival, but possibly after a few days], **the time came for the baby to be born,** <sup>7</sup> **and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son** [“first-born” means that no other child had been born before this one.” The term looks backward, not forward, but the references to Jesus’ brothers and sisters indicate that Mary probably had more children after Jesus. Lenski, p. 123-125, Matthew 12:47; 13:55-56] **She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn** [The manger indicates a place for animals; it was probably a shed that was connected to a small house of a relative. Since the house was small Joseph and Mary stayed in the shed, and Jesus was born there as well.].
- b. Jesus will keep His promise – John 14:2-3 – **In my Father’s house are many...**

**Conclusion:** Even as Christians we still fall into sin, *but the Holy Spirit continues to* ✦ point out our sin, ✦ make us sorry, and ✦ comfort us with the finished work of our Savior!

*May those words characterize our daily Christian lives until we are finally with* 😊 the Triune God, 😊 the holy angels, and 😊 all fellow-believers forevermore! *Amen!*

**The Names and Themes of the Advent Candles**

**Second Name: The Bethlehem Candle**

**Theme: PREPARE!**

Based on Luke 2:1-7

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of Advent

December 9, 2009 ► Wednesday at 11 a.m. & 7 p.m.



**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ, today, as we focus on the “Bethlehem” Candle of our Advent Wreath (the second blue candle), we will focus on two journeys:

- The PAST journey – *made by Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.*
- The PRESENT journey – *of our Christian lives from now until our arrival in heaven.*

1. **Getting Ready for the Trip – We Must Go:** As it was a MUST for Joseph to travel to Bethlehem, *so it is also a MUST for us to travel through this life until God calls us home to heaven!*

a. God used the census to fulfill Micah’s prophecy –

- i. <sup>NIV</sup> **Micah 5:2** “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah [Bethlehem was located in the region of Ephrathah, even as Parma is located in the region of Ohio], **though you are small among the clans of Judah** [God brings the greatest from the least; He also makes the weak and the lowly His very own children, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31], **out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times** [Remember, our pre-incarnate Savior was with the Father in the beginning; in fact, all things were made through Him, John 1:1-3].”

- ii. <sup>NIV</sup> **Luke 2:1** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world [literally “all the inhabited earth”]. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census [“first’ means... that nothing of the kind had ever been decreed in the past.” Lenski, p. 119] that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to his own town to register.

The census was *not* taken to discover HOW MANY inhabited the earth, *but to receive a tax from all the people.*

Yes, God can even use taxation to accomplish His purposes. So let’s heed the words of Jesus: “...give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.” (Luke 20:25 NIV) As God has placed us under a government which requires many taxes, *so God will give us the ability to pay!*

- b. We are not yet in heaven – *So we must continue to go through our Christian lives!* No matter when we began our lives in Christ – *as infants in baptism or much later on* – we still have a trip ahead of us. *Being a forgiven child of God is wonderful;* nevertheless, we are ✦ still in the wilderness, ✦ still eating the manna, ✦ still living by faith, and ✦ still longing for our entrance into the ultimate land of promise!

2. **The Actual Trip – Difficult but Blessed:**

- a. Present, guiding, keeping, providing, using – <sup>4</sup> **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** [“Because he came from David’s line, Joseph had to report for the enrollment at the headquarters of his family connection, at Bethlehem...” Lenski, p. 121]. <sup>5</sup> **He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child** [“Joseph took Mary away from Nazareth in order to shield her against slanderous tongues, and in order to give her all the protection and help that she needed in her condition...” Lenski, p. 122].

Depending on the route they took, they probably journeyed about 100 miles – *about the distance from Parma to Columbus* – but it was DIFFICULT with no planes, trains, or automobiles and Mary being very pregnant. Nevertheless, God ✦ was with them, ✦ guided them, ✦ kept them in the true faith, ✦ provided their needs, and ✦ used them to shine the saving truth to others! *How does God do the same in our lives?*

- b. Present – Matthew 28:20 – **And lo I am with you always...**
- c. Guiding – Proverbs 3:5-6 – **Trust in the Lord with all your heart...**
- d. Keeping – 1 John 1:9 – **If we confess our sins...** God keeps us prepared for Jesus coming *or the end of our lives* as He ✦ continues us in the Word, ✦ keeps us confessing our sins, and ✦ enables us to keep trusting in Jesus as our Savior!
- e. Providing – Romans 8:32 – **He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all...**
- f. Using – Acts 1:8 – **But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...**