

The story of Jesus' birth is constantly rehearsed each year during the Christmas season. But often, our general familiarity causes us to miss out on the remarkable depth of the biblical text. Dr. Braudrick delves into the details of Luke's gospel to reveal rich and vital lessons for today through the theological beauty captured in the words of Scripture.

Andy Wileman

Senior Pastor, Grace Bible Church, Dallas
Former Ministry Director, Dallas Theological Seminary

This powerful and revealing book compels us to be bold in our celebration and proclamation of Christmas to a world yearning for to fill the empty holiday promises with love everlasting! It dramatically answers the question asked by every Christmas movie: What is the meaning of Christmas? This is the definitive guide to unlock the splendid story and eternal meaning of Christmas. The authentic and real Christmas, worthy of exuberant celebration, leaps to life on the pages!

Hiram Sasser

Deputy Chief Counsel
Liberty Institute

Drawing on his natural wit and engaging insight, Dr. Braudrick shines a welcome light on the heart of Christmas. With interesting stories and humorous anecdotes, this compelling book rediscovers Christmas by opening the door to profound joy in the everyday moments of our lives.

Greg Willis

District Attorney
Collin County, Texas

I have known Wayne for over twenty years as a pastor, friend, fellow elder, and humble servant. Wayne lives what he believes and teaches. You will want to pay careful attention to whatever he says. It will inform you, inspire you, and challenge you to be all that God wants of you.

Daniel Southern

Author of *The Message of Leadership*
Former Crusade Director for Billy Graham
Dallas 2015

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REPORTING THE FIRST

Advent



LUKE'S
Curious
CHRISTMAS

By WAYNE BRAUDRICK



Silverton, OR

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TO JANNA

WHO LOVES JESUS, CHRISTMAS, AND ME



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FOREWORD

In my country, Uganda, Christmas means a time for the rare opportunity for many to eat some meat and to get a new dress. Marriages are known to break up, because the husband did not buy a new dress for the wife.

On Christmas Day, churches are full and overflowing, because everybody goes to church, even those who are not church-goers. It is a social event, with people adorning their new clothes.

In Uganda, Christmas is generally a social event. It is not about Christ, the Saviour!

When I came to America with my family in November 1984 to study at Dallas Theological Seminary, things were not any different, except it was on a much, much larger scale—the shopping and gift-buying frenzy and all. I was simply blown away. My family and I joined the frenzy.

On Christmas Day, we dressed up and drove to church. Alas! There was nobody at the church! Could the rapture have occurred? No. In America, most people do not go to church on Christmas Day! This remains the most memorable cultural shock I got, when I came to America.

But the thing is, in Uganda, in America and in all countries, the meaning of Christmas needs retrieving. Christmas is simply a social event. It is not about Christ, the Saviour. Christ is in the background. In more and more countries, Christ is not even there at all.

In *Luke's Curious Christmas*, Dr. Braudrick is addressing a real need. And he has done it well, in substance and in method and style. He has

focused on some key terms to bring out the meaning of Christmas. He has given us insightful background and atmosphere to give us a feel of that first Christmas. He has used illustrations, stories, songs and poems to help drive the message of Christmas home. His style is engaging, interesting and easy to read.

I highly commend to you Dr. Braudrick's *Luke's Curious Christmas*. May God use it for a fresh impact on today's society regarding the true meaning of Christmas.

Bishop Dr. Michael Kyomya,
Jinja, Uganda



INTRODUCTION

WE NEED A LOT OF CHRISTMAS

We don't need a little Christmas. We need *a lot* of Christmas! We need Christmas in all its depth and glory. We need the joy, peace, and humility that are far too often absent from the season and celebrations of it. We need to find a way for the stuff of earth to stop crowding out our focus on God's revelation at Christmas. We need to go straight to the heart of Christmas such that we accept the Savior's revelation, joy, peace, and humility; and then delight in making Him known.

The only way to get to that heart of Christmas is through God's Word. Another party, television special, or fad diet will achieve nothing toward our real need. Neither will Grinch-inspired isolation or Crank-ish refusal to spend money on others. The Gospel of Luke was written to expressly meet our need. In some of the most brilliant literature ever penned, Luke grants us an amazingly fresh understanding of exactly what Christmas is about and how it changes our lives.

LUKE'S AMAZING ACHIEVEMENT

Luke, the author of the gospel that bears his name, uses some very curious terminology in his Christmas account—especially in describing the night of the Savior's birth. These interesting, specific, and rare word plays are dynamic. They are key to our understanding of Christmas

because they expose the depth of reality God is trying to communicate to people. About a century ago A. T. Robertson, one of the great Greek scholars of the New Testament, summarized the result:

Luke handles the data acquired with care and skill ... The outcome is what [Ernest] Renan called the most beautiful book in the world. Literary charm is here beyond dispute. It is a book that only a man with genuine culture and literary genius could write ... There is a delicate finish of detail and proportion of parts that give the balance and poise that come only from a full knowledge of the subject, the chief element in a good style ... This scientific physician, this man of the schools, this converted Gentile, this devoted friend of Paul, comes to the study of the life of Christ with a trained intellect, with an historian's method of research, with a physician's care in diagnosis and discrimination, with a charm and style all his own, with reverence for and loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.¹

Hopefully Luke's account and words will enrich your understanding of the greatest birth in history!

A LITTLE BIT OF BACKGROUND

Before we dive into Luke's curious Christmas terminology, there are a few critical textual issues that bear particularly on the passage where we will camp—Luke chapter 2. These issues can be grouped as historical, stylistic, and grammatical in nature. (Some of this material will be covered in the chapters, but it seems helpful to gather it together here as an easily-accessible introduction to Luke, his time, and his style.)

1. History

The nineteenth century was quite unkind to Luke. He was the favorite whipping boy of the German “higher” critics of New Testament studies who claimed the text to be the most historically inaccurate work of all time. The impact of this slanted and assumptive onslaught was so

1 A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol. II *Luke* (Nashville: B&H Books, 1973), xiii.

powerful that even evangelicals diminished their use of the book. Some even refrained from preaching and teaching Luke at all. Thankfully, the twentieth century brought a powerful reversal. Archaeology was predominantly responsible for Luke's re-elevation, as find after find demanded a framework that supported Luke's validity. With the finding of the Pontius Pilate stone in Caesarea, Luke's critics were at last forced to capitulate. Even early in the twentieth century Sir William Ramsey noted in his *Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, "So many items, where Luke once stood alone, have been confirmed by recent discoveries that the burden of proof now rests on those who challenge Luke."² Today, dating discussions continue, but they do so on a more rational footing. We are wise to use Luke as an authoritative guide for understanding Christmas.

2. Style

Luke was a physician, and he writes like one—a truth that needs a bit of explanation for a modern audience. Through the influence of Aristotle and Ptolemy and via the free market of learning in the first century, physicians were well-educated and becoming more "scientific." However, we mustn't think of them like a modern scientifically-trained doctor. Medicine was still centered on the cult of Asclepius and a-religious medicine would have made no sense to a physician of that era. This has bearing on our text in that Luke teaches us how to scientifically approach a supernatural Lord. Luke, completely content with the reality of miracles, is a trained observer who relates miraculous happenings as true because they are. While refusing to dabble in non-scientific superstition, he does not feel the modern embarrassment that tries to explain away the miraculous.

3. Vocabulary

Luke is rather like Shakespeare. He tells a story that is simply grasped yet demands a great deal from the reader who wants to dig deeper. For example, Luke's Greek draws from a wide array of authors, lifting terms of great import and specific meaning and then placing those terms in

2 Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1915), 47.

his gospel. Guided of the Holy Spirit, Luke invites us to gain even more understanding about the Christ through mining these terms. Further, Luke uses Hebrew, with which he has more than mere passing knowledge. We are uncertain how Luke gained his skill with Hebrew, though speculations range from reading the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) to his time spent with the Apostle Paul. Luke's sense of humor is wonderfully transcultural, but is especially founded on the Hebrew love of the unexpected. He also uses special Hebraisms that deepen the text and display his capacity with that tongue.

Of course, Luke is a Gentile and is writing for a Gentile audience. That is clear in his facility with Greek. In fact, this remarkable man was obviously well-read as he borrows words from ancient Greek authors writing in what we call "Classical Greek" while also taking terms from his contemporaries using a different form of Greek termed *Koine* ("common"). Many of these are rare terms appearing nowhere else in Scripture. Some are compound words formed by Luke. He brilliantly crafted these unique words to be accessible to his audience while giving great specificity about his subject. These special terms will be the heart of our Advent study.



THE JOY AND PEACE OF CHRISTMAS

CHAPTER SUMMARY: The joy of Christmas is the good news that God has reached toward people. The peace is a deep calming that comes from thinking on the truth that God brings peace to us in Jesus.

LIFE CHANGE OBJECTIVE: That we find joyful peace in Jesus.

IMAGINE YOU ARE A GUARD ON DUTY AT A LITTLE FORT.

Further, suppose that you are on guard duty because your small kingdom is in rebellion against the mighty Emperor. Your people have refused to pay any taxes because the Emperor's taxes were beyond your ability to pay. So, your little nation just settled into a kind of passive aggression, taking solace in your location far away from the Emperor. You're expectantly hopeful that he won't even mess with your little world, anyway. But people still draw guard duty, just in case.

It's late at night. You're just sitting at your post ... got the picture? When suddenly flares go off all around and everything is lit up. And in that light, you see a massive army is gathering all around you. Thousands upon thousands of soldiers suddenly appear, voicing a marching chant in unison. It's awesome! And horrifying, because you are sure why they have come: to judge and enslave you and your people. Then, the mouthpiece of the Emperor steps up and to you, the little guard at the gate, he says:

Peace. We have come to tell you that your taxes will be paid in full by another. You have the Emperor's love.

Doesn't that sound like something from a Monty Python skit? Who uses a mighty army to bring a message of peace? It's ironic to the point of hilarity! Armies are for killing and breaking; they are not a messenger service. Who uses a giant army to bring a peace message? God does.

Look at the remarkable true story in Luke 2:

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough."

Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people He favors! (Luke 2:18-14 HCSB)

Here's is God's holy Word about Christmas, delivered through the human author, Luke. And Luke enjoys exposing the unexpected, marvelous humor of God. God has a formidable heavenly army appear and, in a wild twist, they come to bring a message of peace.