

Luke 2.1-21: The Birth of Jesus

Below is the Vulgate text (St. Jerome's translation of the original Greek) of the Christmas story. Use the vocabulary in the back of Wheelock (pp. 409-442) and the notes that follow this to help you read the text. This is the full and unabridged Latin of Jerome, so you will encounter grammatical constructions we have not yet covered; these will be translated and explained in the notes that follow the text.

Factum est¹ autem in diebus illis, exiit² edictum³ a Caesare Augusto ut describeretur universus orbis.⁴ Haec descriptio⁵ prima⁶ facta est a praeside Syriae⁷ Quirino⁸: et ibant⁹ omnes ut profiterentur singuli¹⁰ in suam civitatem. Ascendit¹¹ autem et Ioseph¹² a Galilaeā¹³ de civitate Nazareth¹⁴ in Iudaeam¹⁵, in civitatem David¹⁶ quae vocatur Bethlehem, eo quod esset¹⁷ de domo et familiā David¹⁸, ut profiteretur¹⁹ cum

¹*Factum est*: “It happened,” lit. “It was done” [perf. pass. indic. 3s]

²*exiit*: “there went out” [perf. act. indic. 3s]

³*edictum*: “edict, proclamation” [nom. s. neut.]

⁴*ut describeretur universus orbis*: “that the whole world be counted/censused”

⁵*descriptio*: “census” [nom. s. f.; 3rd decl.]

⁶*prima*: “first,” here “for the first time”

⁷*praeside Syriae*: “the prefect of Syria” [abl. s. m./gen. s. f.]

⁸*Quirinus*: Quirinus is a Roman name

⁹*ibant*: “went”; the subject is *omnes* (“all people, everyone”)

¹⁰*ut profiterentur singuli*: “in order that they be publicly registered one by one”

¹¹*Ascendit*: “went up,” because Bethlehem is higher in altitude than Nazareth

¹²*et Ioseph*: Joseph is nominative; *et* means “too” here

¹³*Galilaeā*: Galilee [abl. s. f.]

¹⁴*Nazareth*: ablative, in apposition to *civitate*

¹⁵*Iudaeam*: Judea [acc. s. f.]

¹⁶*David*: genitive

¹⁷*eo quod esset*: “for this (reason) because he was . . .”

¹⁸*David*: genitive (same as above, note 16)

¹⁹*ut profiterentur*: “in order that they be publicly registered” (same as above)

Mariā²⁰ desponsatā sibi uxore²¹ praegnante²². Factum est²³ autem, cum essent ibi²⁴, impleti sunt²⁵ dies ut pareret²⁶. Et peperit²⁷ filium suum primogenitum²⁸ et pannīs²⁹ eum involvit³⁰ et reclinavit³¹ eum in praesepio³² quia³³ non erat eīs locus³⁴ in diversorio³⁵.

Et pastores³⁶ erant in regione³⁷ eādem vigilantes³⁸ et custodientes vigilias noctis³⁹ super gregem⁴⁰ suum. Et ecce⁴¹ angelus Domini stetit⁴² iuxta⁴³ illos et claritas⁴⁴ Dei

²⁰*Mariā*: Mary [abl. s. f.]

²¹*desponsatā sibi uxore*: “who had been pledged to him as wife”

²²*praegnante*: “pregnant” [from *praegnans*; abl. s. f.]

²³*Factum est*: “It happened” (see above)

²⁴*cum essent ibi*: “when they were there,” i.e. in Bethlehem

²⁵*impleti sunt*: “were finished” [from *impleo*, “fill”; perf. pass. indic. 3pl]

²⁶*ut pareret*: “for her to give birth,” i.e. the nine months of her pregnancy were complete

²⁷*peperit*: “she bore, gave birth to” [from *pario*; perf. act. indic. 3s]

²⁸*primogenitum*: “first-born” [acc. s. m.]

²⁹*pannīs*: “in swaddling clothes,” lit. “in rags” [from *pannus*; abl. pl. m.]

³⁰*involvit*: “wrapped . . . in” [from *involvo*; perf. act. indic. 3s]

³¹*reclinavit*: “lay (him) down” [from *reclino*; perf. act. indic. 3s]

³²*praesepio*: “crib, stall, manger” [from *praesepeum*; abl. s. n.]

³³*quia*: “since”

³⁴*non erat eīs locus*: “they did not have a room,” lit. “there was not to them a place”

³⁵*diversorio*: “inn” [from *diversorium*; abl. s. n.]

³⁶*pastores*: “shepherds” [nom. pl. m.]

³⁷*regione*: “vicinity” [abl. s. f.; 3rd decl.]

³⁸*vigilantes*: “guarding,” i.e. protecting their flocks [nom. pl. m.]

³⁹*custodientes vigilias noctis*: “keeping the night’s watch” [nom. pl. m.]

⁴⁰*gregem*: “flock” [from *grex, gregis*, m.; abl. s. m.]

⁴¹*ecce*: “behold!”

⁴²*stetit*: “stood” [from *sto, stare, steti, statum*; perf. act. indic. 3s]

⁴³*iuxta*: “next to” [preposition + acc.]

⁴⁴*claritas*: abstract quality of *clarus*, i.e. “the state of being *clarus*”

circumfulsit⁴⁵ illos et timuerunt timore magno. Et dixit illīs angelus: Nolite⁴⁶ timere: ecce⁴⁷ enim evangelizo⁴⁸ vobis gaudium magnum, quod erit omni populo⁴⁹: quia⁵⁰ natus est⁵¹ vobis hodie Salvator⁵², qui est Christus Dominus, in civitate David⁵³. Et hoc vobis signum⁵⁴: invenientis infantem⁵⁵ pannīs⁵⁶ involutum⁵⁷, et positum⁵⁸ in praesepio⁵⁹. Et subito facta est⁶⁰ cum angelo multitudo⁶¹ militiae caelestis⁶² laudantium⁶³ Deum et dicentium⁶⁴:

⁴⁵*circumfulsit*: “shone all around” [from *circumfulgeo*; perf. act. indic. 3s]

⁴⁶*Nolite*: “Don’t” (+ infinitive), lit. “Be unwilling (to . . .)”; a polite way of making a command

⁴⁷ see above (note 41)

⁴⁸*evangelizo*: “I announce,” lit. “I bring good news (of . . .)”; a direct borrowing of the verb used in the Greek original text (*eu-* “good” + *-angel-* “report” + *-izo* “I”)

⁴⁹*quod erit omni populo*: “which all people will have (i.e. share in),” lit. “which will be to all people,” cf. above, *non erat eīs locus*)

⁵⁰*quia*: see above (note 33)

⁵¹*natus est*: “there has been born”

⁵²*Salvator*: “the Savior”

⁵³*David*: see above (note 16)

⁵⁴*hoc (erit) vobis signum*: cf. above, *non erat eīs locus*

⁵⁵*infantem*: “baby” [acc. s. m.]

⁵⁶*pannīs*: see above (note 29)

⁵⁷*involutum*: “(having been) wrapped in” [acc. s. m.]

⁵⁸*positum*: “(having been) placed” [acc. s. m.]

⁵⁹*praesepio*: see above (note 32)

⁶⁰*facta est*: “there arose, there appeared”

⁶¹*multitudo*: abstract quality of *multus*, i.e. “the state of being *multus*”; here, a “multitude” [nom. s. f.; 3rd decl.]

⁶²*militiae caelestis*: “the heavenly host,” lit. “the celestial army” [gen. s. f.]

⁶³*laudantium*: “praising,” refers to the heavenly host

⁶⁴*dicentium*: “saying,” refers to the heavenly host

Gloria in altissimīs⁶⁵ Deo,

Et in terrā pax in hominibus bonae voluntatis⁶⁶.

Et factum est, ut discesserunt⁶⁷ ab eīs angeli in caelum, pastores⁶⁸ loquebantur⁶⁹ ad invicem⁷⁰: “Transeamus⁷¹ usque⁷² Bethlehem⁷³, et videamus⁷⁴ hoc verbum⁷⁵ quod factum est, quod Dominus ostendit nobis.” Et venerunt festinantes⁷⁶ et invenerunt Mariam et Ioseph⁷⁷ et infantem positum in praesepio⁷⁸. Videntes⁷⁹ autem cognoverunt⁸⁰ de verbo quod dictum erat illīs de puero hōc. Et omnes qui audierunt⁸¹ mirati sunt⁸², et de

⁶⁵*in altissimīs*: “in the highest (things)” [substantive; abl. pl. neut.]

⁶⁶*bonae voluntatis*: “of good will,” genitive of description referring to *hominibus*; the inferior Greek variant εὐδοκία (*eudokia*; nom. s. f.) is the origin of the familiar but undoubtedly less likely to be correct ‘and good will towards men’.

⁶⁷*Et factum est, ut discesserunt*: “And (so) it happened that they departed”; the subject (“they”) is *angeli* mentioned after *ab eīs* [from *discedo, -ere, discessi, discessum*; perf. act. indic. 3pl]

⁶⁸*pastores*: see above (note 36)

⁶⁹*loquebantur*: “said” [3pl]

⁷⁰*ad invicem*: “to each other,” lit. “in turn”; i.e. not just one shepherd said the following speech

⁷¹*Transeamus*: “Let’s go”

⁷²*usque*: “to” + acc.

⁷³*Bethlehem*: here, acc.

⁷⁴*videamus*: “let’s see”

⁷⁵*verbum*: “report,” lit. “word”; i.e. what the angel said

⁷⁶*festinantes*: “in a hurry,” lit. “hurrying”

⁷⁷*Ioseph*: here, acc.

⁷⁸*infantem positum in praesepio*: see above (notes 55, 58, 59)

⁷⁹*Videntes*: “Seeing (the baby)”

⁸⁰*cognoverunt*: here, “they made known, broadcast, went public,” though the usual meaning of *cognosco* is “learn, recognize”

⁸¹*audierunt*: = *audiverunt* [from *audio*; perf. act. indic. 3pl]

⁸²*mirati sunt*: “were amazed,” hinting at the public’s general disbelief in the miraculous

hīs quae dicta erant a pastoribus ad ipsos⁸³. Maria autem conservabat⁸⁴ omnia verba haec, conferens⁸⁵ in corde suo. Et reversi sunt⁸⁶ pastores⁸⁷ glorificantes⁸⁸ et laudantes⁸⁹ Deum in omnibus quae audierant⁹⁰ et viderant, sicut dictum est ad illos⁹¹.

Et postquam consummati sunt⁹² dies octo⁹³, ut circumcideretur⁹⁴, vocatum est nomen eius Iesus, quod vocatum est ab angelo priusquam⁹⁵ in utero⁹⁶ conciperetur⁹⁷.

birth-story, as does also the subsequent *et* (“*even* when they heard for themselves these things from the shepherds,” n.b. Jerome has added the *et* which has no equivalent in the Greek original), all in a clear attempt to explain why the story was not more widely known prior to the publication of the Book of Luke, n.b. no other gospel includes this story.

⁸³*ipsos*: i.e. the people who heard about the angels and the birth of Jesus from the shepherds

⁸⁴*conservabat*: here, “kept to herself,” another attempt to explain why this story was not more widely known: Mary for some reason did not tell the story to anyone but kept it to herself

⁸⁵*conferens*: “discussing (them), debating (them),” lit. “bearing (them) with her”; the King James version says “pondering”

⁸⁶*reversi sunt*: “they returned”; i.e. the shepherds went back to their fields

⁸⁷*pastores*: see above (note 36)

⁸⁸*glorificantes*: “glorifying” [nom. pl. m.]

⁸⁹*laudantes*: “praising” [nom. pl. m.]

⁹⁰*audierant*: = *audiverant*

⁹¹*ad illos*: = *illīs*

⁹²*consummati sunt*: from *consummo* (I), “complete”

⁹³*octo*: “eight” [nom. pl. m.]

⁹⁴*ut circumcideretur*: “in order that he (i.e. Jesus) be circumcised,” i.e. they waited for eight days before circumcising and naming Jesus because Mary needed to be purified after giving birth

⁹⁵*priusquam*: “before”

⁹⁶*utero*: “womb” [from *uterus*; abl. s. m.]

⁹⁷*conciperetur*: “he was conceived”