

You Will Find

Jesus is the promised Messiah who came to save His people.

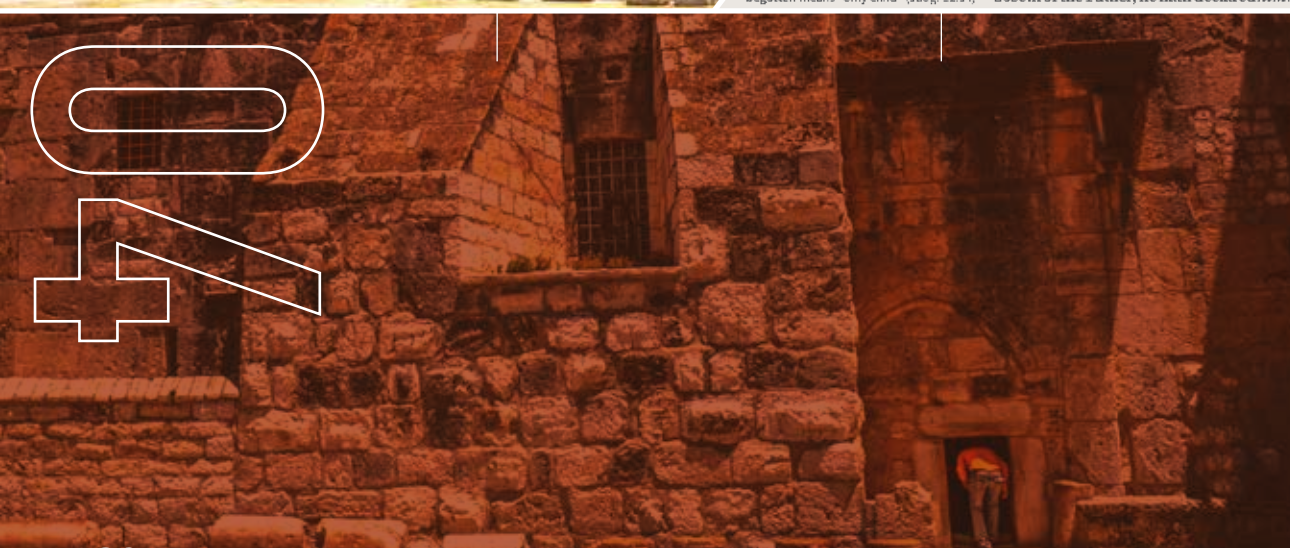
LUKE 2:1-15



with
without
as made.
re was the
darkness; and
ed it not.
from God, whose
or a witness, to hear
t, that all men through
of that Light.
of that Light,
the true Light, which lighteth
that cometh into the world.
as in the world, and the world was
y him, and the world knew him not.
ie came unto his own, and his own
eived him not.
¹² But ¹³as many as received him, to them
gave he power to become the sons of God,
even to them that believe on his name:
¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of
the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,
but of God.
¹⁴ And the Word ¹⁵was made ¹⁶flesh, and
dwelt among us, (and ¹⁷we beheld his glory,
the glory as of the only begotten of the
Father,) full of grace and truth.

JOHN'S WITNESS OF CHRIST

¹⁵ John bare witness of him, and cried,
saying, This was he of whom I spake, ¹⁶He
that cometh after me is preferred before
me: ¹⁷for he was before me.
¹⁸ And of his ¹⁹fulness have all we received,
and grace for grace.
¹⁷ For ¹⁸the law was given by Moses, ¹⁹but
²⁰grace and ²¹truth came by Jesus Christ.
¹⁸ ¹⁹No man hath seen God at any time;
²⁰the only begotten Son, which is in the
bosom of the Father, he hath declared ²¹him.



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What images come to mind when you envision the place where Jesus was born?

The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is the oldest church in the world. Justin Martyr, an early church father, wrote in about AD 160 that Christians were visiting the site to honor where Jesus was born. In 325, Emperor Constantine ordered a church be built over the site. After the original structure was destroyed by fire, Emperor Justinian constructed a larger church, which is still in use today. Steps near the altar lead down to the spot Christians have visited for centuries.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Luke began his account of Jesus's birth with the phrase, "In those days" (2:1). Those days began when Mary's father entered the contractual agreement with Joseph's father for Mary and Joseph to be married. The families had gone through the legally binding betrothal ceremony and, according to social customs of the day, the two were waiting several months to wed.

Seemingly unrelated at the time, Zechariah, a priest in the temple, was chosen by lot to burn incense in the sanctuary. While Zechariah was there, the angel Gabriel appeared and explained that his wife, Elizabeth, was going to have a son. Gabriel also appeared to Mary and explained that the Lord had chosen her to be mother of the Messiah. This Son would be supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit.

One must imagine that sometime after Gabriel's visit Mary had an exciting yet difficult conversation, telling Joseph she was pregnant. Surely she explained the angel's visit, that she had not been with a man, and that the conception was a miracle of the Holy Spirit. Joseph found this explanation difficult

to believe. He decided to divorce her as privately as possible.

An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and explained that Mary had told the truth. The child she was carrying was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Further, the angel instructed Joseph to name the child "Jesus," the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name "Joshua," which translates as "Yahweh saves" (see Matt. 1:21).

Mary left Nazareth to visit Elizabeth. She stayed for three months. After Mary left, Elizabeth had a son, whom Zechariah named "John," according to Gabriel's instructions.

Joseph received notice he had to go to Bethlehem. The Roman government was requiring all men to return to their ancestral home in order to be counted for the census and taxed accordingly.

LUKE 2:1-15

1 In those days a decree went out from **Caesar Augustus**^A that the whole empire should be registered. **2** This first **registration**^B took place while **Quirinius**^C was governing Syria. **3** So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. **4** Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, **5** to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. **6** While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. **7** Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a **manger**,^D because there was no guest room available for them. **8** In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. **9** Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, “**Don’t be afraid**,^E for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: **11** Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the **Messiah**,^F the Lord. **12** This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.” **13** Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: **14** Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to **people he favors!**^G **15** When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

Key Words

A. The first Roman Caesar (31 BC–14 AD). His given name at birth was Gaius Octavius.

B. “Census” is used in some translations. Everyone had to travel and register for the purpose of paying taxes and military service.

C. Some translations use the Latin “Cyrenius.” He served two terms as governor, and it was during his first term that Jesus was born.

D. A feeding trough for animals that could be made from wood or stone.

E. The angel came to share a message of peace and hope. As such, he calmed the shepherds’ fears so they could focus on the truth of Jesus’s birth.

F. Hebrew for “anointed one.” In the Greek, it is translated “Christos.”

G. “With whom he is pleased” (ESV); “good will toward men” (KJV); “on whom his favor rests (NIV)

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

1. THE BIRTH

(LUKE 2:1-7)

The location of Jesus's birth fulfilled prophecy about the Messiah.

How do the details point to God's plan for salvation being established since the creation?

2. THE ANNOUNCEMENT

(LUKE 2:8-12)

Jesus is the Savior to all who believe in Him.

Why might God have wanted to share Jesus's birth with shepherds?

Why does God often deliver His message to people we might not expect?

What is the significance of the titles used by the angel when referencing Jesus?

3. THE SONG

(LUKE 2:13-15)

Peace comes through faith in Jesus.

How does Jesus bring peace in our world?

Where in our nation and the world could we use God's peace?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss as a group ways the truth that Jesus is the promised Messiah impacts how your Bible study group functions and its purpose.

What actions does the group need to strengthen to demonstrate this truth more fully within the group?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son

In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. (See Luke 1:35; John 1:14.)

BIBLE SKILL: Read a Bible dictionary article to gain insight.

Read an article about angels in a Bible dictionary. Note the different nature and functions identified. Review Bible passages included in the article, especially passages that point to the Angel of the Lord. What relationship do angels have to Christ? What powers and limits exist for angels? How does the appearance of angels in Luke illustrate the purpose, powers, and limits?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Luke 2:11. When you were a kid, what was Christmas all about for you?

One of the most interesting aspects of the nativity story is the angelic announcement to the shepherds. In first-century Palestine, shepherds were on the lowest rung of the social ladder. Isn't it amazing that God chose to announce the birth of the Messiah first to shepherds?

The angels first told the shepherds, “Don’t be afraid” (v. 10). Why did the shepherds have nothing to fear?

The word “Savior” refers to Jesus’s status at birth while also implying the future fulfillment. He wasn’t born as One who “would become” the Savior—He was born as the Savior. In prophecy in the Old Testament, God promised a coming Messiah. Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise—and the shepherds were the first to hear. And they were amazed.

How can you stop during this busy Christmas season and reflect on the amazing fact that God has provided a Savior for you—and everyone else?

Post Luke 2:11 on your various social media accounts and explain what Jesus the Savior means to you. Use the opportunity to memorize the verse.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Luke 2:1-5

Focus on the details.

Roman mythology declared *Caesar Augustus* to be the son of a god (Zeus), a god himself, and the people's savior. One ancient inscription states the "birth of the god Augustus was the beginning of good news for the world." Thus, Luke's mentioning Caesar Augustus in the birth narrative sets up a stark contrast between the ruler of the Roman Empire and the Savior whose humble birth was the beginning of good news for the world. A *registration*, essentially a census, occurred when *Quirinius* was governor of Syria. Although Joseph lived in Nazareth, he traveled to Bethlehem because he and/or his family had come from there. Luke called it *the city of David* because it was the boyhood home of Israel's most famous king. Joseph's *family line* extended back to this royal house.

Joseph took Mary with him. Although women were not required to be present for the census, Joseph likely wanted her to be with him since she was *pregnant*. The phrase *was engaged* does not render the full import of their relationship. In Jewish custom, a couple initiated an espousal, and for a year they were considered to be husband and wife but without conjugal relations.

How do the details point to God's plan for salvation being established since the creation?

Day 2: Luke 2:6-7

Note the humble circumstances surrounding Jesus's birth.

The time came for Mary to *give birth* while they were in Bethlehem. Following Jewish custom, Mary wrapped the child *tightly in cloth*. This referred to a single piece of cloth that fit firmly around the infant to restrict movement and provide warmth. Without a proper place to lay the child, Mary placed him in a *manger*. This feeding trough met an immediate need because there was *no guest room available for them*.

Many first-century houses had a room for guests called a *kataluma* in Greek. The upper room where Jesus and the disciples shared their final Passover was a *kataluma*. Evidently, the *kataluma* in the home where Joseph and Mary had planned to stay was full by the time the couple arrived. The census filled Bethlehem with travelers. Many strangers arrived earlier and secured available lodgings. At least the proprietor made such arrangements as he could instead of leaving the young family out in the street.

Why do you suppose the Savior of the world was born in such humble circumstances?

Day 3: Luke 2:8-9

Take note of the shepherds' reaction.

News of the Messiah's birth was proclaimed to the least likely—*shepherds*. These shepherds were watching their flock *in the same region*, near Bethlehem. The location is significant. People within a certain distance from Jerusalem raised livestock with the understanding their animals were to be sacrificed at the temple. The outer distance of that perimeter was a location known as Migdal Eder, which translates from Hebrew as “Tower of the Flock.” Migdal Eder is located just outside of Bethlehem (see Gen. 35:16-21). Thus, the shepherds were tending sheep that were likely to be offered as sacrifices. The scene foreshadowed the sacrificial death of “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Luke earlier used the phrase *angel of the Lord* to describe Gabriel, who had appeared to Zechariah (1:11). This angel who appeared to the shepherds, though, did not give his name. Absence of a name places the focus on the message rather than the messenger. When Zechariah saw Gabriel, he was terrified; when the angel stood before the shepherds, they too *were terrified*. When the angel appeared, God's glory *shone around them*. In the Old Testament, God's glory was the manifestation of His presence (Ex. 16:10; 24:17; Ps. 63:2).

Why is fear always the proper response to the glory of God's presence?

Day 4: Luke 2:10-12

Circle the titles used for Jesus.

The angel said to the shepherds, *Don't be afraid*. The angel's purpose was to bring *good news*. The good news was *for all the people*. Jesus came for all; none are excluded. The angel used three titles for Jesus: *Savior*, *Messiah*, and *Lord*. The angel told Joseph to name the child “Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). *Messiah*, from the Greek word *Christos*, means “anointed.” The Jews, who in the first century were under Roman rule, were expecting an anointed king from the line of David who would rescue them from their oppressors. Although *Christos*, which was Anglicized as “Christ,” was a title, by the time Luke wrote his Gospel, it had essentially become an accepted part of the Nazarene's name—Jesus Christ. Jesus was also *Lord*, the master with the right of ownership. *Lord* referred to the supreme authority, master, or ruler. Seeing the resurrected Jesus, Thomas declared, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). It was not the resurrection, though, that earned Him this status; He was, as “Silent Night” says, “Jesus Lord at Thy birth.”

Of special note, He *was born for you*. No one gave much notice to this rag-tag bunch of sheep herders unless it was negative. But the angel's message gave them hope. Jesus had come to be their *Savior*, their *Messiah*, and their *Lord*. It was personal for them, just as it is personal for us.

What is the significance of the titles used by the angel when referencing Jesus?

Day 5: Luke 2:13-15

Contemplate the source of peace on earth.

The angelic pronouncement came because God's salvation had now been revealed. This called for His *glory* to be proclaimed *in the highest heaven* and *peace on earth to people he favors*. The word *favors* refers to God's saving pleasure. The peace of God comes to those who have been saved (Rom. 5:1). One of the Old Testament titles for the anticipated Messiah was the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). Just as unexpectedly as they had arrived, the angels left. The shepherds knew the source of the angel's message—the *Lord* had *made it known* to them.

One must wonder, as the shepherds made their way to Bethlehem, did they talk excitedly or were they silent and in awe because of what they had seen and heard? How would you have been?

How does Jesus bring peace in our world?

How does He bring you peace?

APPLY THE TEXT

Jesus came as the Messiah, Savior, and Lord. Who do you know that needs to have a personal relationship with Jesus? How can you use the passage examined today to share with them?

