

Unit I: Jesus, the Heir of David

Breaking News!

DEVOTIONAL READING: Micah 5:1-6
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-20
PRINT PASSAGE: Luke 2:1-16

Key Verse

It came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. (Luke 2:15, KJV)

.....

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” (Luke 2:15, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Consider the significance of including shepherds in the news of the Messiah’s birth.
- Become shepherds or pastors for one another by proclaiming the Good News.
- Practice proclaiming the Good News of God’s peace and what it means to you.

*Key Terms

Betrothed (verse 5)—Greek: *mnésteuó* (mnace-tyoo’-o): asked in marriage; engaged; “espoused” (KJV); “pledged to be married” (NIV).

Family (verse 4)—Greek: *patria* (pat-ree-ah’): “lineage” (KJV); ancestry; tribe; “line” (NIV).

Glory (verse 9)—Greek: *doxa* (dox’-ah): praise; honor; renown; an especially divine quality; the unspoken manifestation of God; splendor.

Manger (verse 7)—Greek: *phatné* (fat’-nay): a feeding trough; stall.

Register (verse 2)—Greek: *apographé* (ap-og-raf-ay’): enrollment; inscription in a register; registration (or census taking); “taxing” (KJV); “census” (NIV).

Watch (verse 8)—Greek: *phulaké* (foo-lak-ay’): a guarding, guard; a watching; a guard, prison.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



Overview

Luke wrote his gospel to provide an accurate account of Jesus' life based on historical research and eyewitness testimonies (see Luke 1:1-32). In Luke 2, as a historian, he links Jesus' birth to historical events, specifically a census ordered by the Roman emperor Augustus, possibly carried out during Quirinius's governorship in Syria (Luke 2:1-2). This census served military and economic purposes. Because Mary's betrothed husband, Joseph, was a descendant of David's, they had to go to Bethlehem to comply with this decree. This fulfilled the prophecy by Micah made about seven hundred years earlier (Micah 5:2). After summarizing Jesus' birth and the shepherds' visit as directed by angels, Luke includes unique details about Jesus' early life not found in the other gospels: His circumcision, dedication in the Temple, impressive encounter with teachers at a young age, and a brief account of His early childhood and growing up in Nazareth.

Life Happens

In the quiet town of Gracefield lived a couple named Daniel and Rachel, who had longed for a child. After years of prayer, a miracle happened, and they found out that they were going to have a baby. They decided to name their child Emmanuel, which means "God with us."

"Rachel," Daniel began, "our son shall be called Emmanuel—for he carries the presence of God."

Rachel's tears flowed anew. She touched her womb, feeling the flutter—a secret dance of angels. Emmanuel—the embodiment of hope, the answer to years of longing.

As winter settled over Gracefield, Rachel labored. The snow outside painted the world white, and within their home, a miracle unfolded. Emmanuel arrived—a tiny bundle of warmth and wonder. His cry echoed through the rafters, announcing his arrival.

Daniel held him, tears blurring his vision. "Emmanuel," he whispered. "God with us." And so, in that humble room, hope was reborn.

Emmanuel grew, his eyes reflecting starlight. He laughed, he played, and he listened—to the whispers of angels, to the rustle of leaves, to the heartbeat of grace.

As he took his first steps, the townspeople watched in awe. They knew that this child was no ordinary miracle. Emmanuel carried a divine calling—a purpose beyond their understanding. He would heal hearts, mend brokenness, and remind them that God was indeed with them.

And so, in the town of Gracefield, Emmanuel's name became synonymous with hope. The once-infertile couple, now parents, marveled at their son—the living bridge between heaven and earth.

Questions

1. How does the miraculous birth of John the Baptist parallel the miraculous conception of the once-infertile couple's child?
2. What common themes do you notice in both stories regarding God's intervention and fulfillment of promises?
3. How can these narratives encourage us to trust God's timing and plans?

COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Savior Is Born! (Luke 2:1-7)

KJV

AND IT came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)
3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.
7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

NIV

IN THOSE days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)
3 And everyone went to their own town to register.
4 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.
5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.
6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,
7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

The gospel of Luke presents a unique perspective on the birth and early life of Jesus. Luke, as a thorough historian, delved into the political context of the time, specifically the reign of Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, to provide a backdrop for Jesus' birth. The narrative includes the pivotal census decree that prompted Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem, fulfilling the prophecy from Micah 5:2. Luke's account underscores the customary practice of registering in one's ancestral home, explaining Joseph's trek to Bethlehem with Mary (**verses 1-5**).

The circumstances of their journey were unusual, especially given that Mary and Joseph were not yet married. Nevertheless, their journey was not just motivated by the requirement of the census; they were mindful of the timing of Mary's pregnancy and anticipated that she would likely give birth while they were away from Nazareth. Most importantly, their actions were guided by divine purpose: It was God's plan for Jesus, a descendant of David's, to be born in Bethlehem.

Mary gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem, signifying Him as her firstborn and hinting that she may have other children later (**verses 6-7**). The humble circumstances of His birth—in a manger and wrapped in cloths—starkly contrast with the profound significance of the event. While some may focus on the simplicity of His birth surroundings, the primary message of Luke's narrative is the profound importance of Jesus' birth. He came as the promised Savior to redeem humanity, the perfect sacrifice for the world's sins. This profound truth is fundamental to celebrating His advent and should inspire us to proclaim it now and in the future.

 **What Do You Think?** Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem required humility and obedience. How can we cultivate a similar attitude in our lives?

The Savior Heralded (*Luke 2:8-16*)

KJV

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

NIV

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

11 “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

12 “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”


15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

“Breaking news” refers to new and urgent information about a developing event. The birth of Jesus was such an event. First one angel and then other angels appeared at night to shepherds, announcing the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem. These ordinary men were the first to learn that the promised Messiah had come. Bethlehem was near Jerusalem, and many temple sacrifices’ sheep came from the surrounding hills’ prime grazing land. Because shepherds worked around the clock, it was not unusual for them to be on the job at night (**verse 8**).

The sudden appearance of the angel, accompanied by God’s radiant glory, terrified the shepherds, but they were comforted by the angel’s message of great joy for all humanity: A Savior, Christ the Lord, had been born (**verses 9-11**). This news was for all people, not just the nation of Israel—hinting that the Savior had come to benefit all humankind.

The angel's "breaking news" included specific details about identifying the Baby (**verse 12**). Although they were not told to go to Bethlehem, the angel's explanation implied that they would go and see what God had done. Additionally, the shepherds witnessed many angels praising God and celebrating the peace that the Savior would bring (**verses 13-14**). As anticipated, the shepherds went to Bethlehem, becoming the first to herald Christ's birth to the world (**verses 15-16**). This shows that God chooses to use ordinary people to do extraordinary things for His glory and honor. It reminds us that one of the greatest gifts we can give to others is to become "breaking news heralds" like the shepherds by proclaiming the hope of salvation that Jesus brings to all who accept Him as Savior by faith.

 **What Do You Think?** The angels introduced Jesus as the "Lamb of God." What does this title mean, and how does it impact our understanding of Jesus' mission?

Your Life

The fact that God chose ordinary shepherds to announce the news of the Savior's birth serves as a reminder that He can use anyone, regardless of our human limitations or societal status, to fulfill His plans in remarkable ways. Therefore, this season, consider making yourself available to Him to share the Good News of the Savior's birth by showing kindness and compassion to others.

Your World!

Sin's darkness covers our world, and it needs God's radiant glory, just as the shepherds experienced. While we are not the Light, we serve as the world's light, allowing us to spread that light by renewing the message of hope and peace (that the angels and shepherds proclaimed) to those in our homes, communities, and congregations during this Advent season.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we are grateful for the chance to spread the joyful news of our Savior's arrival to save us from sin. Please guide us in sharing this message with everyone, without any discrimination. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, December 23	"Mercy for Those Who Suffer"	(Luke 4:14-21)
TUESDAY, December 24	"Show God's Mercy to All"	(Luke 6:27-36)
WEDNESDAY, December 25	"God Delights in Compassion"	(Micah 7:14-20)
THURSDAY, December 26	"Remember Your Mercy, O Lord"	(Psalm 25:1-10)
FRIDAY, December 27	"God Relieves a Troubled Heart"	(Psalm 25:11-22)
SATURDAY, December 28	"Mercy for Sinners"	(Luke 18:9-14)
SUNDAY, December 29	"Lord, Let Me See Again"	(Luke 18:35-43)