SESSION 3

# *Savior*

LUKE 2:8-20

**JESUS, THE LONG-AWAITED MESSIAH, WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM JUST AS THE PROPHETS FORETOLD.**



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From an early age, she expressed an interest in show business. At the age of fifteen, she left high school to study drama in New York City, where instructors said she had minimal talent and little hope for success. Yet she remained determined. Her big break came when she talked executives into allowing her to star alongside her real husband, Desi Arnaz. Once considered "unlikely to succeed," Lucille Ball became one of the most famous entertainers of all time.

*HAVE YOU KNOWN SOMEONE OTHERS MIGHT HAVE WRITTEN OFF AS A "LEAST LIKELY CANDIDATE," YET WHO LATER EXCELLED IN LIFE OR CAREER? WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO THAT OUTCOME?*

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Each of the four Gospels has its own unique emphasis that runs throughout. Matthew, for example, was written with a Jewish audience in mind. Several factors give that impression. Matthew began his account by tracing Jesus's genealogy from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian captivity, and from then to Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. Also, Matthew mentioned several Jewish customs and traditions without offering an explanation, something that was unique to his Gospel. Matthew also used primarily "the kingdom of heaven" rather than "the kingdom of God" in his writing as a way of showing reverence for God's name.

Mark, with a Roman and Gentile audience in mind, focused on Jesus as both the Son of God and the suffering servant. John focused on Jesus's divinity. He spoke both of Jesus existing from the beginning and of His eternal nature. John highlighted Jesus's unity with the Father by including seven "I am" statements, such as "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). He also told about seven of Jesus's miracles, which he called "signs." Like road signs, they pointed to something beyond themselves—they spotlighted Jesus's divinity.

Luke knew both Jews and Gentiles would read his Gospel. We see that, for instance, when tracing Jesus's genealogy, Luke went all the way back to Adam. Further, Luke strongly emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit both in his Gospel and his second writing, the book of Acts.

One of the major themes in Luke's Gospel was Jesus's showing compassion and offering support to the seemingly insignificant of His day—those who were disenfranchised and considered social or religious outcasts. He emphasized that Jesus reached out to Samaritans, tax collectors, women, children, and the poor. He alone spoke of the celebration that occurs when the lost are found, even rebellious prodigals who are welcomed home with open arms. Over and again, Luke showed how God included and elevated the humble and brought down those who were proud. We see that in today's study.





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## Luke 2:8-20

**8** In **the same region**, [A] **shepherds** [B] 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** [C] shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "**Don't be afraid**, [D] for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for **all the people**: [E] **11** Today in the **city of David** [F] a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, 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** [G] with the angel, praising God and saying: **14** Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to **people he favors**! [H] **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." **16** They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. **17** After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, **18** and all who heard it were **amazed** [I] at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary was **treasuring up** [J] all these things in her heart and meditating on them. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

## Key Words

**A.** The rural fields around Bethlehem. Multiple sites in this area have claimed to be the field mentioned in Luke 2.

**B.** Many believe shepherds were not held in high esteem. If so, this makes the angel's announcement to them even more surprising.

**C.** The Greek wording indicates brightness and splendor. It also suggests weight or importance.

**D.** The shepherds were gripped with great fear. The angel addressed their terror first so their hearts could receive the good news.

**E.** The angel emphasized God's global offer of salvation through Jesus.

**F.** The Savior had to be born in Bethlehem to fulfill biblical prophecy (Mic. 5:2).

**G.** A military term that referred to soldiers in a camp. In this case, it referred to an army of angels.

**H.** "Good will toward men" (KJV); "those with whom he is pleased" (ESV).

**I.** The term is used throughout the Gospels to describe people's reaction to Jesus. See Matthew 8:27; 21:20; Luke 11:14; John 7:15.

**J.** Jesus's mother noted the experiences and continued to reflect on them deeply.



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# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## 1. A Savior is Born

(Luke 2:8-12)

We can be assured that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah whom the prophets foretold.

- **Why do you think God chose to tell the good news of His Son to lowly shepherds? What implications does that have for today?**

## 2. Peace is Available

(Luke 2:13-15)

We can experience peace through saving faith in Jesus Christ.

- **What message did the angelic host proclaim? What are the greatest needs for peace today?**
- **What are some proper responses for believers who have heard the gospel message?**

## 3. Jesus's Birth Proclaimed

(Luke 2:16-20)

Believers should tell others of all God has done.

- **What do you think the shepherds were thinking and feeling on the way to Bethlehem?**
- **What would you like others to know about Jesus and the difference He makes in your life?**

## Apply the Text

What can you do to focus on the humility and humanity of Christ's birth this Christmas season? What obstacles might you face? Discuss your responses with your Bible study 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 Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23.)

**BIBLE SKILL:**
**Read and reflect on the emotions felt by people in the Bible.**

Consider the reactions of the shepherds to the appearance of the angel. Read Luke 2:9-11 and respond to these questions: What was so significant to these Jewish shepherds in the words of the angel? What part of the event would have produced fear? What part of the angel's announcement would have brought joy? What words of the angel would create questions in the shepherd's minds? What is significant to you from the words of this announcement? What emotions and questions does this account create in your own heart and mind?



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# TALK IT OUT

**Focus on Luke 2:11. What is the best news you've heard lately? How does it compare to the news the angel announced to the shepherds?**

Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, Joseph's ancestral town, to register for the census. While they were there, the time came for Mary to give birth. Nearby, an angel appeared to a group of shepherds and announced that the Savior—the Messiah and Lord—had been born.

**What does the angel's message reveal about who Jesus is? How do you think the shepherds responded emotionally when they heard this news?**

Luke 2:11 reminds us that Jesus is not just a historical figure, but our Savior—"born for you." This calls for more than acknowledgment; it invites a response of trust and surrender. Consider what this means for your everyday life. This week, live with that awareness. Let His role as Savior and Lord shape your decisions, give you peace in uncertainty, and move you to share that same hope with others who need to hear it.

**Pray together that you would not take the truth of Luke 2:11 lightly, but would receive it personally and live in response to it daily.**

Place Luke 2:11 on your phones or on cards and memorize it together.

## Prayer Requests / Notes



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# DAILY EXPLORATION



## **Day 1:** Luke 2:8-9

***Consider the unexpected way God announced the birth of Jesus.***

Whereas shepherding in David's day had been a respectable profession, this was not necessarily the case in the first century. Shepherds were generally looked down on in society and considered unclean, uneducated, and unsavory. Often, they were looked on as unreliable and dishonest.

Gabriel had earlier appeared to Zechariah, John the Baptist's father and to Mary, Jesus's mother (Luke 1:19,26-27). Although not identified by name, this was likely the angel who had appeared to Joseph (Matt. 1:20-24) and here, to the shepherds.

God's "glory" refers to His radiant majesty. His glory appeared when He provided the Israelites with manna, established His covenant at Sinai, and descended at the consecration of the tabernacle and the temple (Ex. 16:6-15; 24:12-18; 40:33-35; 1 Kings 8:1-11; 2 Chron. 5:1-14). Habakkuk declared that God's glory will fill the earth in the end time (Hab. 2:2-20). Here, God's glory appeared in an open field, beheld by lowly shepherds. This showed that God would be working in an unexpected way. The shepherds were certainly not expecting anything like this. Fear would be a natural response.

**When has God showed up in your life in an expected way?**



## **Day 2:** Luke 2:10-12

***Underline the three titles the angel used in announcing Jesus's birth.***

The angel had come to "proclaim . . . good news." These three words are one word in the Greek. From this Greek word we get the word "to evangelize." This good news would bring "great joy." In establishing His covenant with Abraham, God promised that "all the peoples on earth will be blessed" through him (Gen. 12:3). This good news going to "all the people" was evidence that God honored His promise to the patriarch.

In proclaiming this news, the angel used three titles. The first was "Savior." The angel also called the One born "the Messiah." This Hebrew word meant "anointed one." The Greek word is *Christos*, transliterated as "Christ." Jews were looking for a deliverer, one whom the Father had chosen to reign as David, except He would be greater. He would have pity and rescue the poor and vulnerable; thus, they prayed for Him and for God's blessing to be on Him (Ps. 72:11-15). Finally, the angel referred to Him as "the Lord." This was the most common name for Yahweh in the Old Testament. Using it to refer to Jesus affirmed His divinity.

These shepherds—dirty and distrusted social outcasts—were being invited to visit the Savior, Messiah, and Lord. They would find Him not in a palace but lying in a feeding trough in "the city of David."

**Why do you think God chose to tell the good news of His Son to lowly shepherds? What implications does that have for today?**



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## **Day 3:** Luke 2:13-15

***Note both the heavenly and earthly reach of the praise of the angels.***

At Jesus's birth, this multitude of the heavenly host came to offer praise and worship for what God had done. Their proclamation pointed in two directions, to the "highest heaven" and to "earth." The focus in heaven would be "glory to God"; the focus on earth, "peace . . . to people." The heavenly host's proclamation pointed back to the promise of Isaiah, that the One who would reign on the throne of David was coming as the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6-7). That peace was made possible because Jesus came as the embodiment of the One who is "a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love" (Neh. 9:17).

Their message delivered, the angels "returned to heaven." Without waiting or wondering what to do, the shepherds decided to go straight to Bethlehem. They did not go there to be convinced that the angels' message was true. They went because they already believed what they had been told.

**How would you describe the peace that comes from faith in Jesus?**

**What are some proper responses for believers who have heard the gospel message?**

## **Day 4:** Luke 2:16-18

***Circle the words that describe the shepherds' response to seeing Jesus.***

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and "found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby." The baby Jesus was lying in the manger. The manger was likely a stone trough. This meant that Jesus was born in a stable or in a cave that functioned as a stable.

Throughout this story, Luke was clear to speak of multiple shepherds. Verse 17 highlights the significance of that detail. Hebrew law required two witnesses for establishing a believable testimony (Deut. 19:15). For the message to be believable, more than one shepherd was required, thus "they reported the message." They, whose testimony was considered unreliable for court, were exclusively given the privilege of proclaiming the greatest news ever told. They, the least-likely candidates, were the first evangelists of the good news.

The news was too good and the events too miraculous to keep to themselves. Those who heard were amazed. This Greek word means to marvel in admiration. What specifically amazed those who heard the shepherds' story? It may have been that the angels appeared. It may have been that the long-awaited Messiah had finally been born. It may have been because of the humble location of the Messiah's birth. It may have been that the news was told to shepherds rather than royalty, or maybe all of the above or something else. Scripture does not say.

**What amazes you about the birth of Jesus?**



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## **Day 5:** Luke 2:19-20

***Compare the reactions of Mary and the shepherds.***

Rather than talk about the events, Mary treasured them, keeping the details in her heart. Part of what she must have been pondering was the news the shepherds had told her, about the angels' appearing and the revelation about her Son's identity as the Savior, Messiah, and Lord.

The Greek words translated "treasuring" and "meditating" show that these were continual actions. Mary kept mulling over the details, trying to get the full picture of all that had and was occurring.

For these shepherds, life would never again be as it was before. The Greek verb tense says the shepherds were continually praising and glorifying God. Although never again mentioned in Scripture, what began that night certainly became the pattern for their lives. They continually reported the events of this night. Their story continually amazed those who heard it. They were always offering praise and glory to God.

The shepherds' response foreshadowed an event that occurred during Jesus's ministry years later. Luke recorded the people's reaction after Jesus raised the widow's son back to life, "Then fear came over everyone, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen among us,' and 'God has visited his people'" (Luke 7:16). The shepherds knew that God had visited His people—and specifically, them.

**What would you like others to know about Jesus and the difference He makes in your life?**

### APPLY THE TEXT

Examine your own life and see if there are areas where you are lacking humility. What changes might you need to make in order to demonstrate Christlike humility? Who do you know that needs to hear the good news? What actions will you take to prepare yourself to talk to them?

JOURNAL



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