SESSION 3

Savior

Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, was born in Bethlehem just as the prophets foretold.

Luke 2:8-20

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**, Ⓓ 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, 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**! Ⓘ 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** Ⓛ at
what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary was
treasuring up Ⓜ 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.

Exploring 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 The angel offered proof to validate his words. The "sign" also implied the shepherds should go looking for the Messiah.

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

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

J The shepherds grasped the significance of the message and immediately responded to the angel's direction.

K The shepherds became the first "evangelists" to share the good news of the Messiah.

L "Wondered" (KJV; ESV). 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.

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

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NOTES

A Savior is Born (Luke 2:8-12)

- Joseph and Mary had traveled to Bethlehem to register for the census in Joseph's ancestral home. While there, the time came for her to give birth (Luke 2:1-7).
- In the same region, an angel appeared to a group of shepherds, proclaiming the birth of the Savior, who is the Messiah. The angel also gave the shepherds a "sign" to validate his words and to give them direction on finding the baby.

Peace is Available (Luke 2:13-15)

- Next, a multitude of angels appeared, praising God and giving Him glory. Their praise professed the peace God had brought to His people through faith in Jesus.
- When the angels left, the shepherds decided to go to Bethlehem to see the newborn Savior.

Jesus's Birth Proclaimed (Luke 2:16-20)

- Upon finding Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, the shepherds reported what the angels had proclaimed. Everyone who heard this was amazed. Mary treasured these things in her heart.
- The shepherds returned to their flocks outside Bethlehem, praising God for what they had just seen and heard.

Summary Statements

Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, was born in Bethlehem just as the prophets foretold.

- We can be assured that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah whom the prophets foretold.
- We can experience peace through saving faith in Jesus Christ.
- Believers should tell others of all God has done.

Memory Verse

Luke 2:11

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.)

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at **goExploreTheBible.com.**

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ENGAGE

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? (***PSG, p. 28***)

- 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.

Bonus: How do people tend to define success? Why might those definitions come short of what really determines success?

EXPLORE

A SAVIOR IS BORN (LUKE 2:8-12)

Bonus: When have you been surprised by good news? Who shared that news with you?

- Whereas shepherding in David's day had been a respectable profession, shepherds in the first century were considered insignificant at best and dishonest at worst. Yet, God sent angels to announce the birth of His Son to a group of shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem.
- God's "glory" refers to His radiant majesty. It implies weight and importance, along with brightness.
- The angel's proclamation involved "good news" for all people. Jesus was born to be the Savior of the world, not just Israelites. The angel called Him the Messiah and the Lord. Both names emphasized Jesus's deity.

Why do you think God chose to tell the good news of His Son to lowly shepherds? What implications does that have for today? (***PSG, p. 31***)

PEACE IS AVAILABLE (LUKE 2:13-15)

Bonus: What does "peace" mean to you? Why is it such a prominent theme of Christmas?

- At Jesus's birth, a multitude of the heavenly host offered praise and worship for what God had done. This proclamation pointed in two directions, to the highest heaven and to earth. The focus in heaven emphasized God's glory, while the focus on earth involved peace from grief, anger, jealousy, resentment, and hurting hearts.

How would you describe the peace that comes from faith in Jesus? (***PSG, p. 33***)

- Without hesitation, the shepherds left for Bethlehem, the hometown of David, Israel's great shepherd-king. They did not go to Bethlehem to be convinced that the angels' message was true. They went because they already believed what they had been told.

What are some proper responses for believers who have heard the gospel message? (***PSG, p. 33***)

JESUS'S BIRTH PROCLAIMED (LUKE 2:16-20)

Bonus: What's a happy story you've heard in the news lately? What makes it so great?

- Throughout his narrative, Luke emphasized the presence of multiple shepherds. This passage highlights the significance of that detail. Hebrew law required two witnesses for establishing a valid testimony (Deut. 19:15). For the message to be believable, more than one shepherd was required, thus "they reported the message."
- The news was too good and the events too miraculous for the shepherds to keep to themselves. Those who heard were "amazed." This Greek word means to marvel in admiration. They eventually returned to the flock, but life probably was never the same for these shepherds.
- Rather than talk about the events, Mary treasured them in her heart. The Greek words translated "treasuring" and "meditating" show that these were continual actions. She continued mulling things over time.

What would you like others to know about Jesus and the difference He makes in your life? (***PSG, p. 35***)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss ways adults can focus on the humility and humanity of Jesus's birth during the Christmas season.

What obstacles might you face? (***PSG, p. 36***)

Examine your life for areas where you lack humility. What changes should you make to nurture 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? (***PSG, p. 36***)

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

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BONUS IDEAS

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 35)

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?***

Encourage adults to read and reflect on the questions from the Bible Skill activity on page 35 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their thoughts on the questions from the activity.

OBJECT LESSON: NATIVITY SET

Prior to the session, secure a Nativity set and place it on a table in your meeting space. During the session, allow volunteers to share briefly about Nativity sets around their houses.

Point out the set on the table. After reading Luke 2:16-20, encourage adults to identify the characters in the scene and to share what they think those people were doing and thinking that night. Mention that adults could do this same activity with their families, especially children, as a way to focus attention on Jesus during the Christmas season.

Challenge adults to spend time reflecting on the events of Bethlehem during this holiday season. Affirm that the pace of Christmas and the familiarity of the story can make it harder to focus on the significance of the narrative. Encourage them to slow down and to ask God to show them something new and meaningful as they celebrate Christmas this year.

DIG DEEPER

FIRST-CENTURY SHEPHERDS

It is surprising to many that shepherds were the first people to receive the good news (gospel) that the long-awaited and greatly anticipated Savior had been born. Many scholars contend that first-century shepherds were despised and rejected by most in Jewish society, though others are less dogmatic about the claim.

What is clear is that shepherding was one of the more insignificant and humble occupations in the first century. These men spent a great deal of time in the field with the sheep. They also had to defend the sheep from predators, while leading their flocks to areas with ample food and water. The task was tedious, dangerous, and difficult. Additionally, it would have left them feeling isolated. Shepherding was unlikely to be on the bucket list of many first-century schoolboys!

However, God's view of shepherds seems to be vastly different. In fact, throughout Scripture, God revealed a proclivity toward them. He chose David, a young shepherd, to serve as king over His people (1 Sam. 16). Later, Jesus referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). Going further, God inspired biblical writers to compare the leaders of the church to shepherds (Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 5:2).

Though shepherds may have been viewed as humble, and possibly rejected, they were loved by God. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that He would chose these men to be among the first to hear about Jesus! This angelic announcement outside the village of Bethlehem should not come as a surprise to us at all.

Shepherds would represent the friends Jesus had and the disciples He would call during His ministry on earth. While none of them were shepherds, the apostles were just as ordinary (Acts 4:13). Rather than rejecting such people, God pursued them! In some ways, the shepherds foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus and serve as a beautiful reminder of God's love toward simple people, both in the first century and today.

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