

SESSION

4

THE ANGELS' ANNOUNCEMENT

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WHAT'S
THE MOST
INTERESTING
TRIP YOU'VE
EVER TAKEN?

THE POINT > JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

▶ LUKE 2:1-14

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. ²This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

⁴Joseph 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, ⁵to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

¹⁰But 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: ¹¹Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger."

¹³Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

¹⁴Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

THE POINT JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.



THE SETTING

After the angel Gabriel announced to Mary she would have a child, Mary visited Elizabeth. Elizabeth gave birth to John, who prepared the people for Jesus' coming. Mary returned to Nazareth to prepare for the arrival of her baby, but political events happening in the region of Israel would shape the next chapter of her life. She and her husband would have to make a journey to Bethlehem, Joseph's hometown.

FACT:

BECAUSE OF THE SHAPE OF A DONKEY'S HEAD AND THE PLACEMENT OF ITS EYES, IT CAN SEE ALL FOUR FEET AT ALL TIMES.¹

My wife and I moved away from our hometown several years ago. Thankfully, because we are from the same city, we only have to go one place to visit family during holidays. However, there is one small problem—it's a 15-hour drive from where we now live!

No matter. A couple times a year, we pack the family—all eight of us—into the SUV and head south to see parents, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, and all the rest whom we see far too little. And if you were to listen to our kids, it's the most torturous experience imaginable. Can you imagine (sarcasm alert) having to spend a whole day with only unlimited movies, tablet games, and personal playlists to keep you entertained? Not to mention snacks, sodas, and stops at parks along the way. It's a tough life, I tell you.

To be truthful, the drive can get pretty long. However, this doesn't even begin to compare with Joseph and Mary's experience in the days before the birth of Jesus. Their story is of a great journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, Joseph's hometown. A week long trip, likely on the back of a donkey, which covered 90 miles through dangerous, mountainous terrain, all while Mary was nine months pregnant. Can you imagine? But even this doesn't compare to Jesus' journeying from the glories of heaven to earth, containing all our frailties and violence. He who is God became a baby to bring us salvation.



IMPART

THE POINT JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

LUKE 2:1-5

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. 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, to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. **LUKE 2:1-5**

I have a friend who planned to pursue nursing in college after we graduated from high school. She was accepted to the college of her choice, and then after taking the core classes, applied to nursing school. Soon, she received a letter in the mail—*We're sorry to inform you that you've not been accepted into our nursing school.* Things didn't work out the way she'd planned, and the journey became a lot tougher than she expected.

Leader: Describe a time life worked out in a way that was unexpected and difficult.

Caesar ordered the entire empire to be registered, and the Jews weren't happy about it. First, it required them to go to their hometowns, and traveling certainly wasn't as easy as it is today. But even worse, they saw this as an expression of Roman oppression.

VERSE 1: This particular Caesar, born Gaius Octavius, was the adopted son and primary heir to Julius Caesar. He was given the honorary title of Augustus as a sign of religious honor. Under his long reign, the Roman Empire flourished.

Because Joseph and Mary were descendants of David, they had to travel to their ancestral home of Bethlehem for the registration. This is significant because, in the Old Testament, we read one would come from the Bethlehem to rule over Israel (Micah 5:2). Micah's prophecy was intended to bring comfort to the despairing Israelites. In contrast to their broken situation, a great ruler would deliver God's people. And He did come—at another time when God's people faced outside oppression.

VERSE 4: Bethlehem means "house of bread." Ephrathah ("fruitful") was added to distinguish it from the town in Galilee with the same name. Bethlehem in Judea was known for producing grain and was chosen by God for the great honor of fruitfully bringing forth the Bread of Life.

Eight hundred years before Jesus' birth, Micah prophesied Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Messiah. In order to bring this about, God orchestrated it all—the family line, the hometown, the census, the pregnancy, and many more details. God comforted His people by allowing them to look forward to the time when He would send the Deliverer to rescue them. At times, we may feel broken and discouraged, and though we do not know all the details of God's plan, He does. And we can know for certain He's working for the good of His children.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 30)

- 1** *Based on these verses, what are some things God orchestrated to fulfill His plan?*
- 2** *When has God used circumstances to get you where He wanted you to be?*



IMPART

THE POINT JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

LUKE 2:6-7

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. **LUKE 2:6-7**

When our oldest child was born, my wife and I registered for baby shower gifts. We'd have been happy with a few onesies, diapers, and bottles, so I was blown away by some of the things parents buy for their babies—thousand dollar strollers, baby hot tubs, and designer diaper bags.

In our culture, we tend to be over the top sometimes. But when Jesus was born, Mary laid him in a manger, because there was no room available for them anywhere else. We've often heard, "There was no room in the inn," and assumed Mary and Joseph were left outside. It is possible Mary and Joseph were in a home, even a relative's home, but they were staying in a separate area where the animals were kept at night. In any case, the only available space to lay the newborn was in an animal trough. It's difficult to imagine such a humble beginning for any king, especially for the King of kings, but this was all according to God's plan and timing.

Leader: Invite students to discuss trends they see as elaborate or excessive, or share your own thoughts. Be sure to keep it light and not critical.

VERSE 7: Many think Jesus was born in a stable, but this is stated nowhere in Scripture. Mangers were common in a home's courtyard where animals were kept at night.

Any birth is a wondrous event in itself, yet the majesty and glory of this particular birth was masked by the "ordinariness" of it all. One of the most glorious events in all of history was also quite simple, and Luke used simple words to describe the moment. Those eyewitnesses in the small village of Bethlehem or those who may have been staying in the same place probably saw nothing more than a young mother with her first child. Jesus came to be among us, so it is fitting the moment of His birth was, in a sense, like any other.

VERSE 7: "Firstborn" implies she later had other children. Jesus, the long awaited Messiah, had finally entered the world He came to save.

Jesus came in God's way, as a picture of the great humility He would display throughout His time on earth. But the fact is, this was no ordinary birth!

Jesus came in God's way, as a picture of the great humility this special child would display throughout His time on earth. #BSFLfullpicture



DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 31)

- 3** *How do the circumstances of Jesus' birth help you relate to Him?*
- 4** *Why is it important for us to understand the historical context of the Nativity?*
- 5** *List a few ways we can intentionally make room for Jesus in our lives.*





IMPART

THE POINT JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

LUKE 2:8-14

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger." Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors! **LUKE 2:8-14**

Bethlehem was home to many shepherds who tended the sheep used in the temple sacrifices in Jerusalem about six miles away. In biblical times, shepherding was a respected occupation. Later Jewish rabbis would speak of shepherds as despised social outcasts, but that was not the case in Jesus' day. When an angel of the Lord appeared before the shepherds, they were "terrified"—isn't this how any of us would react? Just as Gabriel had responded when Zechariah and Mary were frightened upon encountering him, the angel now told the shepherds, "Don't be afraid."

No doubt, the appearance of God's holy messenger could trigger a healthy dose of awe and fear, but he came with news that would transform their fears into joy. The source of this joy was the birth of Jesus, whom the angel described using several important terms.

- **Savior:** The name *Jesus* means "God is Salvation." The reason God came to earth was to save His people.
- **Messiah:** The Greek word is *Christos*, and we often translate this as "Christ." It means the "Anointed One," chosen by God for our salvation.
- **Lord:** The title *Lord* means Jesus is the "Supreme Authority" in all things. This baby in the manger was God Himself with all power and authority under heaven.

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a multitude of the heavenly host who began exclaiming the praises of God. These words weren't addressed to the shepherds; they were praises to God, but the shepherds had a front row seat. The angels were praising God because, with the birth of Jesus, God's promise to redeem cursed creation was being fulfilled. Where man's disobedience had brought conflict with God, Jesus was bringing peace to those who would live by faith.

VERSE 13: Host is a military term that refers to an army encampment. The heavenly armies were on hand at the birth of Jesus to proclaim a message of peace.

The birth of Jesus should stir up a similar response in us. God sent the Savior to rescue us from slavery to sin, and through Jesus, we now have peace with God. His good will rests on us, and this is reason to praise Him with everything we are.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 31)

- 6** *How would you explain the angel's announcement in your own words?*
- 7** *What does it mean that God brings peace to those He favors?*
- 8** *List some ways Jesus has brought joy and peace to your life.*





LIVE IT OUT (10 MINUTES)

THE POINT JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

▶ CHRIST

The angel referred to Jesus as Savior, Messiah, and Lord. Many people have trouble fully believing and living according to these. However, in order to have a relationship with God, we have to accept Jesus as all three:

- ▶ **As Messiah, He's the only way to God.**
- ▶ **As Savior, He rescues us from our sins.**
- ▶ **As Lord, He is the master of our lives.**

How does your life align with these truths about Jesus?

▶ **Messiah:**

▶ **Savior:**

▶ **Lord:**

How do you need to change your perspectives or choices in order to know Jesus more fully?

▶ **Messiah:**

▶ **Savior:**

▶ **Lord:**



LIVE IT OUT

THE POINT JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

► COMMUNITY

God's plan to save the world was to send His Son, the King of the universe, into our sinful world where He would live as a servant, be rejected, and suffer in the greatest ways imaginable. We've been called to serve others as Jesus did.

9 What will do you do this week to serve someone in your church family?

10 How does this reflect the sacrifice Jesus made in leaving heaven and coming to earth?

► CULTURE

If the shepherds' encounter with the angel was a powerful experience (and it was), imagine what it was like when they witnessed a countless multitude of angels praising God. When we join with other believers in pursuing God's glory, it can have a powerful effect on those who witness it.

11 How can you, along with other believing friends, share this good news of great joy with those who don't have a relationship with Jesus?

