

## DECEMBER WEEK FOUR: CHRISTMAS – THE TRIP

Monday

# Luke 2:1–20

Mary and Joseph were glad to reach their destination. They had traveled many days to get to Bethlehem, the town that King David was from. They had to go to Bethlehem because the Caesar had made a law that required everyone to be counted, so he would know how many people lived in his kingdom. People had to go to the home town of their ancestors to be counted. Both Mary and Joseph were in the family line of David. It was hard to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Mary was very tired. She was expecting a baby at any time.

When Mary and Joseph finally arrived in Bethlehem, they looked for a place to stay. Nobody had room. Finally, they were allowed to rest in a stable, which is a place where people keep animals. That night, Jesus was born.

Jesus and his family made another trip a few days later to go to Jerusalem to take him to the temple as was their religious custom, because they didn't have baptism yet. Months after that, after the Magi made their trip to visit Jesus, his family took another trip to Egypt to hide from King Herod, who wanted to kill Jesus as a baby. Finally, they were able to make one final trip to their home in Nazareth.

Jesus did a lot of traveling as a baby. He also did a lot of traveling as an adult, traveling from town to town preaching the gospel. Jesus' greatest trip was the journey from heaven to live as a baby inside his mother Mary, to be born in a dirty barn, and to live among us. Jesus came to take our place, so that we may go and join him in his place (heaven) forever. This is what we celebrate at Christmas.

- **What's the biggest trip you've ever taken?**
- **What traveling did Jesus do? Why?**

Close with prayer

## DECEMBER WEEK FOUR: CHRISTMAS – BIRTH

Tuesday

# Luke 2:1–20

In those days about two thousand years ago, a ruler named Caesar Augustus wanted to take a census. A census means counting all the people. Caesar wanted to count all the people whom he ruled by making them register their name in official records. Everyone would have to travel to their family's hometown to do this. That meant that Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem, the little farm town his family was from. And Joseph had to take Mary, his wife, with him on the long journey to Bethlehem, even though Mary was expecting to have her baby very soon.

When Joseph and Mary got to Bethlehem, they found it was crowded with many other people who had also come to register there for the census. Because there were so many people in town, there was no room for Joseph and Mary to stay in an inn. So Joseph and Mary had to stay in a stable where animals were kept.

While they were there, the time came for Jesus to be born. Mary wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, which is a place to put food for donkeys and cows.

That night there were shepherds watching their flocks near Bethlehem. Suddenly while they were in the fields, an angel appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone brightly around them. The shepherds were very afraid.

But the angel said to them, "Fear not. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born today in the city of David a Savior, he is Christ the Lord!"

The angel told the shepherds they would know that they had found the right baby when they found a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger

Suddenly, thousands more angels appeared in the sky, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth!"

When the angels had left, the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to find Jesus. Just as the angel had said, they found Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus lying in the manger. The shepherds spread this amazing news – the Savior has been born! All who heard the news wondered what this could mean. But Mary treasured all these things in her heart. Then the shepherds returned to their sheep, continuing to glorify and praise God for all they had seen and heard.

Jesus grew up to become a man, and he taught about the kingdom of God. When the time was right, according to God's plan, Jesus suffered and died on the cross for the sins of the whole world. Three days later, he rose in victory over sin and death and the devil. Jesus is the Savior God promised, for all who believe in him and trust him for their needed forgiveness of sin.

- Why did Joseph and Mary need to go to Bethlehem?
- Why did Mary have to lay baby Jesus in a manger, where animals eat?
- How did the shepherds react to the news of the birth of Jesus? How do you react to that news?

Close with prayer

## DECEMBER WEEK FOUR: CHRISTMAS – GIFT

Wednesday

### Luke 2:1–20

Why do we give each other gifts at Christmas? Is it because Christmas is when we celebrate Jesus' birthday, so we give each other birthday presents for Jesus? No. And it's not because God has told us that giving gifts is what he wants us to do at Christmas.

Christmas is not a celebration of hope or what we have to look forward to. Christmas is a celebration of thanksgiving and remembering what God has already done, what God has given to us. We give each other gifts at Christmas to remind each other of the gift that God gave to us all, the gift of God's Son to the world.

God gave Jesus to be our Savior. As the angels said, this gift is for all people. But also as the angels said, this gift is born to you. This gift is not wrapped in paper and lying under your tree. This greatest of gifts was wrapped cloth and lying under the noses of donkeys and cows. God planned this gift for thousands of years, and he planned it with specifically you in mind as exactly the gift you need.

Your Christmas list is covered, because God gave you Jesus with his perfect life as a substitute for yours and his innocent death as a sacrifice for yours. As God's gift of love inspires us to love and give gifts to others, let us remember and celebrate what has already been done, what has already been given. Unto you a Son is given. He is Christ the Lord. Thanks be to God!

- **What do you want for Christmas?**
- **What do you do more often: thank God or ask God for something?**
- **What distracts you from remembering and celebrating this time of year the greatest gift God has given?**

I thank you, Lord, for giving us Jesus and for humbling yourself to forgive and save us. Amen.

## DECEMBER WEEK FOUR: CHRISTMAS – SHEPHERDS

Thursday

# Luke 2:1–20

Bethlehem was the hometown of King David. Before he became king, he was a shepherd boy. Hundreds of years later, there were still a lot of shepherds living in the plains of Bethlehem with their sheep. The shepherds seemed like unimportant men who always did the same thing day after day, night after night. Then one night, that changed when angels appeared to them and sang songs to them. The angels told the shepherds that the promised Savior had been born. They were happy to hear about Jesus, the newborn Savior. The angels told them where they could find the baby.

“Here he is!” shouted the shepherds, as one by one they all came to see him as fast as they could. Mary and Joseph kneeled next to baby Jesus. The baby rested in a manger. The shepherds were the first to see God's Son. They were so excited! On their way back, they told other people about Jesus.

This was a great day! People had waited for Jesus for many, thousands of years. God had promised that the Savior would take away their sins. God wanted the world to know about Jesus. God wanted people to be saved from their sins. That is why he sent Jesus.

How could such a little baby help us, we may wonder. But Jesus was no ordinary little baby. Even though he was born like any other human baby, he is also God the Son. He grew up like other children grow up. He knew times of happiness and sadness. He felt hungry, wet, cold, and tired, just as we sometimes do. He lived life in our place, without sin. He also died for us, taking our place on the cross to pay for our sins.

Jesus' birth in a lowly stable was a surprise to many people. Here was the long-awaited Son of God lying in a feeding trough. His parents were poor, not rich or important. There were smelly animals all around him. Why, there weren't even any baby clothes to put on Jesus!

As an adult, Jesus didn't always do what others expected either. He spent much time with people who weren't liked very much. Many of the important religious leaders opposed Jesus. Even his own disciples wondered when Jesus would set up his kingdom on earth. That's what they expected, but he never did. Instead, he died like a criminal. Jesus' existence from birth to death was humiliation.

Still, Jesus' death accomplished the most important thing of all time. By it, our sins are forgiven. Our relationship with God is restored. Who would have ever expected this baby to turn out that way? The shepherds did, because that is what they had been told. And that is what they couldn't wait to share with others. May God give us the strength and joy of faith to follow their example and tell others of what we have seen and heard.

Close with prayer for the strength and joy of faith to share the news of Jesus with others.



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## DECEMBER WEEK FOUR: CHRISTMAS – ANGELS

Friday

# Luke 2:1–20

The Bible tells us that there are both good angels and bad angels. The bad angels serve Satan. They lead us to disobey God. But good angels serve God, and there are many of them. Good angels protect people from harm. The Bible also tells of many times when God sent his angels to bring messages to his people. We see that a couple times in the Christmas story.

The coming of the Savior had been foretold by the prophets throughout the Old Testament. But when the time came for the Savior to come, for Jesus to be born, God sent his angels with important messages for those who would play important parts in God's plan of salvation for all people through the life and death of this Savior.

This is how the birth of the Savior came to be: The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth who was engaged to be married to a carpenter named Joseph. The angel told Mary that she would have a child, and that her child would be the Son of God.

God also sent an angel to tell Joseph about this miraculous event. Both Joseph and Mary listened to the angel and believed the message from God the angel brought them. Joseph took Mary with him when he was required to go to Bethlehem, the town from which their ancestors came.

While in Bethlehem, Mary's baby, Jesus our Savior, was born. Because there was no room in the inn, baby Jesus was born in a place where animals were kept. His mother laid him in a manger. An animals feed box was the first bed for the Savior of the world.

Then angels appeared again with an announcement. Angels announced the Savior's birth to some shepherds and proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest and peace, goodwill toward men, on whom his favor rests." The angels were joyous with the privilege of sharing the gospel. But they appeared to the shepherds to give that privilege to them.

The shepherds went to worship baby Jesus. When they left, they told everyone the good news the angels had told them, that the Savior had been born! Glory to God! Peace on earth!

Dear God, thank you for your angels. I know you will always watch over me. Protect me in all my ways until I live with you in heaven. Amen.