



## SESSION 4

# JESUS SAVES

### ***The Point***

Jesus was born to bring us into a relationship with God.

### ***The Passage***

Luke 2:4-20

### ***The Bible Meets Life***

The story of Christmas—the birth of Jesus—is a familiar one to so many. Familiarity may cause some people to lose sight of what God accomplished with that event and the reason Jesus came. Unfortunately, many people leave Jesus in the manger, and they fail to look beyond His birth to discover that God came to earth to bring us to Himself.

### ***The Setting***

Luke began his Gospel account with the angel Gabriel's annunciation of the coming births of both John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25) and Jesus (vv. 26-38). After recording the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist, who would be the forerunner of the Messiah (vv. 57-80), Luke wrote of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah (2:1-20).

## What does the Bible say?

**To be registered** (v. 5)—Roman emperor Augustus required a mandatory census of all people in the empire (Luke 2:1). Male Jews returned to their ancestral homes to register (v. 4).

**Messiah** (v. 11)—This term is the transliteration of the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek term *christos*, meaning “anointed one.” It refers generally to anyone set apart for God’s service; it also refers specifically to God’s Messiah, Jesus Christ.

### **Luke 2:4-20** (CSB)

<sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>5</sup> to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> 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: <sup>11</sup> Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!”

<sup>15</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

# GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

Notes



**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** Bring a selection of Christmas cards and allow everyone to choose a card. Instruct group members to write in their own words an announcement concerning the birth of Jesus. After a few minutes, invite volunteers to share what they wrote. *(Want to foster more interaction? Place group members into small groups for this activity.)*

**DISCUSS:** Invite your group members to discuss **Question #1** on page 37 of the

PSG (Personal Study Guide): **“What’s something you’d love to add to your celebration of Christmas?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

**SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGE 38):** People who have visited Hawaii would agree on its description: beautiful. Given that description, many are surprised to learn that, during the 1800s, one of its islands housed a leper colony. Hawaiians who contracted Hansen’s disease were sent to the island of Molokai to be quarantined. But one Roman Catholic priest named Damien still saw beauty on this island because he saw the beauty in these diseased, forgotten people. Father Damien made Molokai his home for sixteen years, choosing to live among the lepers, preach the gospel, and serve them. Father Damien lived so closely with these people that he eventually contracted the dreaded disease himself. He continued to minister, but now he said, “We lepers.”

**SAY:** “God did the same with us; He came to earth to live among us and say, ‘We humans.’ Jesus became one of us. That is what Christmas is about.”

**GUIDE:** Call attention to **The Point** on page 38 of the PSG: **“Jesus was born to bring us into a relationship with God.”**

**PRAY:** Transition into the discussion with prayer.

**TIP:** As you lead, keep in mind that everyone in your group may not yet be a Christ-follower. Pray for your group members and be ready to talk one-on-one when the opportunity arises to share Christ.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- PACK POSTER:**  
Pack Item #2  
“Map of Jesus’ Life” poster  
Pack Item #5  
“First-Century Home” poster
- PLAYLIST PICK:**  
“How Far”  
By Matt Redman



---

## **Luke 2:4-7 Commentary**

**Verse 4:** Luke's account of Jesus' birth begins with a simple man from a simple town. Joseph was a carpenter by trade (Matthew 13:55). Nazareth, his home, was a humble village tucked away in lower Galilee. Even Bethlehem, the city of David, where Joseph had to travel, was little more than a small village a few miles outside of Jerusalem.

Joseph was "of the house and family line of David." In his Gospel, Matthew provided a detailed genealogy of Joseph's family lineage through King David and all the way back to the Old Testament patriarch Abraham (Matthew 1:1-16), affirming what Luke recorded about Joseph's connection to David (Luke 1:27,32-33). Luke's only previous mention of Joseph appears in the context of Joseph's relationship with Mary (v. 27).

**Verse 5:** Joseph and Mary made the trip to Bethlehem so that Joseph could be registered for the mandatory census decreed by the Roman emperor Augustus (Luke 2:1-3). The journey covered approximately 85-90 miles and would have taken several days to complete on foot. The trip apparently took place sometime after God spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him to move forward with his plans to take Mary as his wife—even though she was pregnant (Matthew 1:20-25).

**Verse 6:** Luke does not indicate whether "the time came for [Mary] to give birth" to Jesus immediately upon the couple's arrival in Bethlehem or if the event happened some time after their arrival. Either way, the timing was no coincidence.

From a prophetic perspective, the location of Bethlehem as the place for Jesus' birth was imperative. Micah had predicted that the Savior would be born there (Micah 5:2), a fact known by those who studied the Old Testament Scriptures at that time (Matthew 2:3-8). So, the timing of the census and Joseph and Mary's journey were both part of the fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus' birth occurred at the appointed time according to God's plan (Galatians 4:4-5).

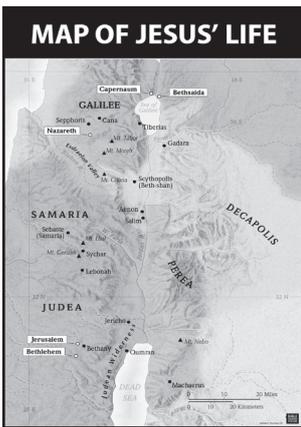
**Verse 7:** Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son. As was common with newborn babies in the first century, Mary wrapped Jesus tightly in strips of cloth (a practice also known as swaddling). A manger (feeding trough) served as a cradle. Scripture does not identify the location of this manger, noting only that "there was no guest room available" for Joseph, Mary, and their newborn baby.



# STUDY THE BIBLE

## NOTES

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**ALTERNATE QUESTION:**  
*What promises are included in these verses?*

.....  
.....  
.....

### Luke 2:8-14 (CSB)

***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!"***

**LEADER PACK:** Bring your group members' attention to **Pack Item #2**, "Map of Jesus' Life" poster, to locate Bethlehem and the surrounding region.

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 2:8-14.

**SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGES 40-41):** Being a shepherd was not easy work.

Many shepherds were responsible for a good number of sheep (which meant being in charge of considerable wealth), but their job was regarded as lowly.

- » Once prominent in Israel, shepherds had lost their social standing over time. By the time of the New Testament, shepherds weren't even allowed to testify in legal hearings because their testimonies were considered invalid.
- » When the angel of the Lord appeared, the shepherds were "terrified" (v. 9).
- » The angel had good news: the Savior had been born. The promised One had come and was "wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger" (v. 12).

**DISCUSS: Question #3** on page 40 of the PSG: **"What do these verses teach us about the purpose of Jesus' birth?"**

**DISCUSS: Question #4** on page 41 of the PSG: **"What can we learn from the names the angel used for Christ in these verses?"**

**TRANSITION:** In the next verses we see the shepherds response to this great news: Jesus' birth must be proclaimed.

## **Luke 2:8-14 Commentary**

**Verse 8:** In the fields outside Bethlehem, shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. It was the practice that several shepherds would bring their flocks together for pasturing in the same area. Shepherds were among the lowest members of Jewish society. Many were known to be dishonest, and they were unclean in respect to the Jewish ceremonial law.

**Verse 9:** The shepherds were visited by an angel of the Lord and “the glory of the Lord shone around them.” The angel brought a message from God (see Luke 1:11-20,26-38). The “glory of the Lord” describes the manifestation of God’s presence (Exodus 16:7,10; 24:17; 40:34), the One who had both sent the angel and brought the events to pass. The shepherds were “terrified,” a common response to the appearance of an angel (Luke 1:12,29).

**Verse 10:** In an effort to calm the shepherds, the angel addressed them, “Don’t be afraid” (see Luke 1:13,30). The angel brought them “good news of great joy.” What’s more, this good news would be for all the people. Jesus’ birth (and subsequent life, death, and resurrection) would be good news of great joy for the people of every nation and culture (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; 15:1-29).

**Verse 11:** The term “today” indicates the dawn of a new era, inaugurated by the birth of the Messiah. That Jesus’ birth occurred in Bethlehem, the city of David, the foretold birthplace of the Messiah, emphasized Jesus’ role as the promised Messiah. The angel identified the baby Jesus by three titles. First, He is the Savior. Joseph had been commanded by an angel of the Lord to name his and Mary’s son “Jesus” (“God saves”) because “he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus Himself said He had come “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The angel also said Jesus was the Messiah (“anointed One”), the king from the line of David promised by God who would deliver His people. Finally, the angel called Jesus the Lord, a title that highlights Jesus’ divine authority.

**Verse 12:** The angel gave a specific sign as to where in Bethlehem the shepherds could find this baby. “You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.” The angel’s words touched on the irony of the situation. While Jesus is Savior, Messiah, and Lord, the shepherds would not find Him in a palace. Instead, He would be wrapped up in cloth and found lying in a feeding trough.

**Verses 13-14:** The sudden appearance of a “multitude of the heavenly host” was yet another indication to the shepherds that something miraculous and life-changing had happened. These angels were praising God. The highest heaven is the heavenly realm where God and the angels reside. The heavenly host gave God praises for both who He is and what He has done.



---

## **Luke 2:15-20 Commentary**

**Verse 15:** After the angels left, the shepherds decided to make the trip to Bethlehem. Luke paid special attention to the shepherds' immediate obedience—"Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened." The shepherds recognized that even though the news of the events was announced by the angels, it was a message directly from God—"which the Lord has made known to us."

**Verse 16:** The shepherds "hurried off" to Bethlehem and found everything exactly as the angel had told them. Mary and Joseph were there with the baby Jesus, who was wrapped in cloth and lying in a feeding trough. The accuracy of the angel's words likely served to confirm both the truth and the importance of the event in the minds of the shepherds.

**Verses 17-18:** As the angels had shared the good news of Jesus' birth with the shepherds, now the shepherds "reported the message they were told about this child." They told others about what they had experienced—likely beginning with the message of the angel and including their encounter with the new Messiah. Just as they had been quick in seeking out the newborn Messiah, they did not wait to begin sharing what they had seen and experienced.

**Verse 19:** Luke painted a contrast between the joyful enthusiasm of the shepherds and the quiet contemplation of Mary, who "was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them." While she had been told about the special nature of Jesus' conception and purpose in life (Luke 1:26-38), she may not have had a full understanding of the meaning of those events. However, the words Luke used indicate that she wanted to remember the events she was experiencing. The Greek term translated "was treasuring up" has the meaning of keeping something close to one's heart or purposefully preserving events in one's memory. It suggests Mary meditated or deeply reflected on the events in an effort to better understand their significance. This verse may also serve as an indication that Luke relied on Mary for eyewitness testimony for his Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

**Verse 20:** Earlier, the shepherds had witnessed the angelic host praising and glorifying God. Now the shepherds followed their example as they returned, "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard." The veracity of the events is indicated by Luke noting what the shepherds had seen and experienced was "just as they had been told" by the angel.

1. Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 110.



5 minutes

# LIVE IT OUT

## Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

**SAY:** “What will you do with the good news of Jesus’ birth?”

**GUIDE:** Lead group members to consider the responses to the Bible study listed on page 44 of the PSG.



- » **Treasure.** Think on the things you’ve seen or heard that have confirmed God’s reality and power for you. Spend time reading and rereading Luke 2, allowing yourself time to reflect on the birth of Jesus.
- » **Write.** Write out your testimony—what Jesus has done in your life—and pray about who might need to hear this good news. Be ready to share what you’ve learned about Jesus with someone in need of hope.
- » **Celebrate.** As a group, determine one or more ways you can proclaim what Christ has done for you. Whether it’s volunteering to serve your community, meeting a need in your church, or finding ways to invite new people to your Bible study, do something to celebrate with others what God has done in your life.

## Wrap It Up

**SAY:** “The news of Jesus’ birth was life-changing for the shepherds who hurried to Bethlehem. But the impact of this event doesn’t stop there. **Jesus was born so that we too might have a relationship with God. There is no better news!**”



**MINISTRY GRID**  
training made simple

Get expert insights on weekly studies through the Ministry Grid.

[MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife)