

# 4

## *Jesus Saves*



*What's something you'd love to add to your celebration of Christmas?*

**QUESTION 1**

#BSFLjesus

## THE POINT

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



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

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. He taught and preached, organized the people into choirs and bands, and helped them build homes and churches. He gave them a reason to live. Father Damien lived so closely with these people that he eventually contracted the dreaded disease himself.

He continued to minister and love them, but now he said, "We lepers."

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: a God who loved us enough to put on our flesh and die our death so we might live forever with Him.

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# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

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## **Luke 2:4-7** (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.**

For the Jews, one of the most important people in their history was King David. He was the ideal example of a God-fearing king. He was a fearless warrior who trusted the Lord to protect him, even against staggering odds (1 Samuel 17:40-52; 18:5). Most importantly, he was called a man after God's own heart (13:14; Acts 13:22), and God later promised him, "Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16). The eternal King—the Anointed One from God—would come from his lineage.

So, we should pay attention when we read in Matthew 1:1-16 that Joseph was a descendant of King David. David's lineage was important because the Messiah would come from it! Imagine being taught as a child: "Just wait. Our Deliverer is coming, and He's coming from King David's lineage." Generations had waited—as far back as a thousand years—for this special King to come to power.

Because Caesar Augustus wanted a census taken of his entire empire, Joseph had to report back to the town of his ancestors, and David was from Bethlehem. Making the approximately 90-mile trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem would certainly be no challenge for us today, but Joseph faced several challenges:

- » Joseph was engaged to be married to Mary. In their culture, an engagement was binding; even though they did not live together until the wedding ceremony, they were viewed as husband and wife. This meant Mary would need to take the trip with Joseph—and she was very pregnant. Travel in the first century was difficult, and Mary would have to endure it in her delicate state.

*What do you find most surprising in these verses?*

### QUESTION 2

- » Having a baby *before* being married was a good way to get alienated from the community. It surely was deeply humiliating for both parties; Old Testament law even allowed for death in cases of infidelity (Leviticus 20:10). Joseph could have walked away with the full support of the community behind him—and considered doing so—but God sent an angel to explain to Joseph that the child was from God (Matthew 1:20-21).
- » Joseph and Mary were not the only ones traveling because of the census. They found Bethlehem teeming with others so that no convenient place was available for them to stay—much less to have a baby!

The timing just seemed to be “off.” The circumstances appeared to be working against Joseph and Mary, but all this was right in line with God’s plan and timing. “When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

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

**<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!”**

Being a shepherd was a decent way to earn a living, but it was not necessarily easy work. Shepherds were on guard 24/7, had to have a wide range of skills to be able to care for and protect the flock, and probably became weary of constantly counting the sheep to ensure they were all accounted for. Many

*What do these verses teach us about the purpose of Jesus’ birth?*

### QUESTION 3



***What can we learn from the names the angel used for Christ in these verses?***

#### QUESTION 4

shepherds were responsible for a good number of sheep (which meant being in charge of considerable wealth), but their job was regarded as lowly. Shepherds were once prominent in Israel—Abraham, Moses, and David had all been shepherds—but over time shepherds lost their social standing. By the time of the New Testament, shepherds weren't even allowed to testify in legal hearings because their testimonies were considered invalid.

Yet it was this very group—men low on the social scale doing menial, dirty jobs—to which God chose to announce the arrival of Jesus. When the angel of the Lord appeared to them, they were “terrified” (v. 9). I'm sure we can't fathom the depth of that fear in these exhausted, smelly, and cold shepherds as the dark night suddenly lit up like brightest day and an angel began to speak.

The angel that appeared to the shepherds, though, spoke a message that was far from fearful. In fact, he told them he had good news: the Savior had been born. This Savior is the Messiah, the promised One from long ago. The glory of God Himself was wrapped in human flesh; He was now “wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger” (v. 12). Creation could do nothing but rejoice! To these men who tended the lambs, the angel announced salvation had come into the world.

The news was too good for just one angel to be excited about. He was suddenly joined by a multitude of angels. Praise filled the sky as they proclaimed, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!” (v. 14).



**Luke 2:15-20** (CSB)

**What steps can we take to glorify God during the Christmas season?**

**QUESTION 5**

**<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.**

What is the most extraordinary thing you’ve ever seen? Now, imagine the most extraordinary thing you’ve ever seen increased in impact because of something it communicated. What if that avalanche thundered *words* at you as it went crashing by? Or what if the flames howled some profound *message* to you as they roared through the trees? This was the situation of the shepherds. These men lived their lives in a strict routine that had just been miraculously disrupted by something so extraordinary they were surely never the same afterward.

The angels’ news was truly extraordinary. When the shepherds arrived at the manger, which was exactly where the angels told them Jesus would be, they were unable to contain their own excitement for what they’d seen and experienced. The shepherds eagerly retold the story, and “all who heard it were amazed” (v. 18). Mary’s reaction was more subdued. Rather than making loud proclamations, she simply “was treasuring up all these things in her heart” (v. 19).

Mary treasured and meditated, and the shepherds proclaimed. These are actions we need to take as well. Our task is simple: proclaim all that we’ve seen, heard, and experienced to whoever will listen. The birth of our Savior is worth proclaiming.

"The Son of God became a man to enable  
men to become the sons of God."

C. S. LEWIS

## THE PROMISED KING



***Listen to the song "How Far" by Matt Redman.***

What phrases or images most stand out to you from this song?

Jesus was born to bring hope to mankind. In the space below, write out two to three ways Jesus' birth has impacted your life.

## LIVE IT OUT

What will you do with the good news of Jesus' birth?

- » **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.

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!**



*My thoughts*