

How Do We Keep Christmas About Jesus?

Luke 2:10: (NASB) *But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.*



So, what is Christmas about? Well, that depends on who you are. For some, Christmas is traditionally a time for family and friends. It is a time when we are more likely to put aside the stresses of our daily grind and give a little more, smile a little more and notice what is around us a little more. It is a time to slow down and have gratitude. For others, it is a time of gifts, parties, decorations and entertainment. Spending goes into overdrive and the excitement rules the day. It is a time to speed up and be everywhere. For Christians,

Christmas should be a time for gratitude as we reflect on the birth of our Lord Jesus. While we can do the family and friends things, and also be part of the excitement and entertainment, how can we maintain our focus on the most important thing?

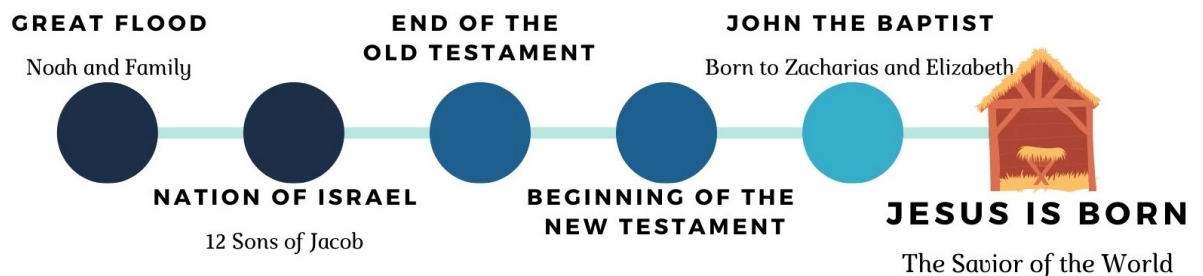
Focus needs an objective large enough and unique enough to capture our complete attention. In the case of the birth of Jesus, there are many such factors. Here is the first:



In Scripture, there are many significant transition points that changed history. The great Flood was the destruction of a world utterly corrupted by spirit beings comingling with human beings. The end result was a new beginning, a new age in which God would deal with faithful individuals.

History changed again when God began dealing with the twelve sons of Jacob. In this age, these twelve became the twelve tribes of Israel, and now there was an entire nation who would receive God's guidance.

Then the history changed again, but this change would be more dramatic and far-reaching than the previous changes. Jesus would come. His arrival would be specially marked, as would his life and death. The change he brought would affect every man, woman and child who had ever lived and would ever live.



The beginning of this change would be marked by several significant events. The first event leading up to this change was the ending of the Old Testament.

At the end of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, God prophesied what was to come:

Malachi 4:5-6: (NASB) *⁵Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. ⁶He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.*

These last words of the Old Testament essentially tell us how the New Testament would start. Before the coming of Messiah, there would be the coming of one who would prepare the people for the Messiah - even though hope might be forgotten over time, it does not mean that the Giver of all hope forgets!



It would be 400 years before God would be heard from again. His providence and presence would be felt next through the angel Gabriel who appeared to Zacharias, the soon-to-be father of John the Baptist. While we will not tell the story of this angelic visit to foretell the birth of John the Baptist today, we will use it as a reference point. Gabriel told Zacharias that his son would be the fulfillment of the last words of Malachi. This was the sign that the Messiah was now not far away. As a matter of fact, Gabriel would appear again in six months to the young virgin named Mary.

Think about being one of those people who God had chosen to use. Key in on the extraordinary faith they would have had to exhibit to follow through on the things God was putting in front of them.

As we focus on Mary and the message Gabriel delivered, let's observe how her faith was so firmly grounded and true:

Luke 1:26-29: (NASB) *²⁶Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city...called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And coming in, he said to her, Greetings, favored one! The LORD is with you. ²⁹But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was...*

In this second appearance of the angel Gabriel, we will see that the circumstances he addressed were a near polar opposite of his first visit with Zacharias. Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, was older, married for many years and childless. Mary was young and only engaged. Gabriel had spoken to the husband the first time, while here he spoke to the young bride-to-be. His greeting was one of great favor, yet Mary's reaction was confused and fearful: *The angel Gabriel? Speaking to me? An angel? For what reason?*

The angel continued:

Luke 1:30-33: (NASB) ³⁰...Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.

Think about the questions this young and faithful woman would have had! Have a son? He is to be called the son of the MOST HIGH? He is to be a king - FOREVER? His kingdom will have NO END? These were BIG questions, and they had no context in the reality of her life.

There was an obvious immediacy to all of this, for the angel was addressing her right here and now. This could not be about some future time. Faith could accept some of what Gabriel said, for Mary undoubtedly looked forward to having children and would see a profound blessing in a son of hers being instrumental in God's plan sometime down the road. But this was now! The question that needed answering above all else had to be asked: *How can this be, since I am a virgin?*

Gabriel answered:

Luke 1:35-37: (NASB) ³⁵...The holy spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child shall be called the son of God. ³⁶And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.

Mary asked and the angel had answered. But this answer was so unexpected and so out of the ordinary that for most, it would have been unfathomable. But Mary was a remarkable young woman of extraordinary faith. She listened intently to this messenger of the Most High God.

Gabriel's last words must have rung true in the deepest recesses of her young heart - *for nothing will be impossible with God:*

Luke 1:38: (NASB) And Mary said, Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.



Mary's great faith opened the door for God's *world-changing miracle* to take place.

ARE WE ATTENTIVE TO SEE GOD'S LEADINGS IN OUR LIVES?

Am I willing to be a servant of God like Mary was and go wherever I am pointed to go?

There was a practicality that needed to be solved with this miracle, but God had that all well in hand, and we will touch on that soon.

For now, let's follow what Mary did soon after the announcement:

Luke 1:39-42: (NASB) ³⁹Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the holy spirit. ⁴²And she cried out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

God's spirit touched her, and Elizabeth knew what was happening. She knew that her baby, who would be named John, would pave the way for Mary's baby Jesus, who would save the world.



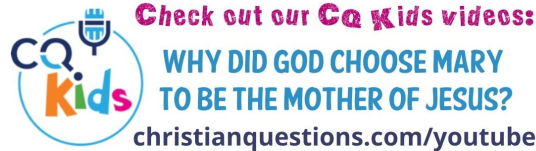
Elizabeth's humility was plain:

Luke 1:43-45: (NASB) ⁴³And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.

Mary's response was one of faith, humility and praise.

First, she recognizes her own honored position:

Luke 1:46-49: (NASB) ⁴⁶And Mary said, My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. ⁴⁹For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name.



Then she recognizes the power of God's mercy upon all men, especially Israel:

Luke 1:50-55: (NASB) ⁵⁰And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him. ⁵¹He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. ⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. ⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich empty-handed. ⁵⁴He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, ⁵⁵as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever.

These two blessed women encouraged each other, until right about the time John was born:

Luke 1:56: (NASB) And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.



MAKING JESUS OUR FOCUS

When we realize that the birth of Jesus was preceded by prophecy, angelic visits and miracles, it reminds us of God's focus on the event. Whenever God is that focused, we also should give our best attention to what He has done.

What are we going to do throughout this Christmas season to make Jesus real? Let's be a witness of God's goodness in providing a Savior for all men. A Savior from what? From this sin-sick dying world to a future life of peace, love and joy. How can we hold it back?

It really is startling to see the incredible foresight and actions that God has put into fulfilling His plan.



We have watched God's hand working with Zacharias, Elizabeth and Mary. What about Joseph?

We have now been reminded of what it takes to make a plan work. Mary's extreme faith saw and grasped extreme hope. Extreme hope brings extreme peace, and peace for all is really what Christmas is all about. For Mary's husband-to-be Joseph, this extreme peace needed a whole different kind of attention.

Focus needs details. The more we know about what makes something work, the stronger our attention will be.



Miracles are amazing things, but they are not God's only way to unfold His will. God's providence plays a major role as well. For His providence to work, there needs to be those who are willing followers.

Joseph was such a man. In many ways, he is an unsung hero of this story:

Matthew 1:18: (NASB) *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the holy spirit.*

God saw fit to have a virgin conceive, and He chose the young woman Mary. She is a truly faithful worshipper of God who is betrothed to an older man by the name of Joseph. Mary had God's messenger Gabriel tell her that she would miraculously conceive before she was married. Now, how would she tell Joseph?

For Joseph, this would have been a completely unexpected, unique and horrifying dilemma. What should he do? He could have sent Mary away in public shame, but the Scriptures tell us that he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her. Joseph's decision was to send her away discreetly because he deeply respected Mary. This was an extraordinary and life-changing decision that he had to make, so he would sleep on it to be sure.

As he slept, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream:

Matthew 1:20-23: (NASB) *...Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the child who has been conceived in her is of the holy spirit.*

This certainly was an explanation in harmony with how Mary had tried to explain her dilemma, though it still seemed far-fetched. It did, however, carry with it clear direction and a godly purpose.

The angel continued:

²¹*She will bear a son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* ²²*Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:* ²³*Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means, God with us.*

Imagine being Joseph and waking up with this vivid message in your mind! This was NOT some wildly contrived explanation; rather, it was a fulfillment, a direct fulfillment of prophecy! And not just any prophecy, but THE prophecy of the Messiah! Mary, his espoused, was carrying the Savior of all.



*Joseph would have the
opportunity and privilege
to raise this Savior to manhood.*

Glory to God in the highest! He woke up, enlightened by the grace of God, to see what his mission was to be. Joseph was willing to accept what was emotionally implausible and physically impossible. He now understood that God's plan was not only unfolding before him, but making him an integral part of its accomplishment. Joseph rose to this mighty challenge.

He knew people would talk, but he chose to be a godly man in the face of sure misunderstanding and persecution. Joseph took the reins given to him by God and forged ahead with courageous humility.

At this point of the story, we usually begin to forget about Joseph and relegate him to being a background player, because the story becomes all about Mary and then all about Jesus. However, Joseph continued to show his courage, humility and leadership as he continued to receive and follow direct instructions from God. These instructions, this providence from God, enabled him to best protect his baby son, the baby boy who would become the future Savior and protector of the world.

For the next few minutes, let's jump ahead in the story and track this strength, faith and leadership that Joseph displayed. Through these next experiences, his example teaches us about what being a man really means.



Traditional depictions of the nativity scene show the three wise men there in the stable with Joseph, Mary, Jesus and the animals. In reality, the wise men (the "Magi") came around to Bethlehem much later. The Scriptures say that they found Jesus and his family in a house, and it was there that they worshipped him and gave him gifts.

The Magi's visit was also a trigger for Herod, who was going to have nothing to do with any Savior being born and raised in his jurisdiction.

This meant danger was looming:

Matthew 2:13: (NASB) Now when they (the Magi) had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Get up! Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.



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WHO WERE THE MAGI?
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Joseph knew how to listen, and he knew how to act. All the angel had to do was to tell Joseph the what, the where and the why, and Joseph's response was immediate and complete. Remember, they had not yet gone home but were still in Bethlehem since the birth of Jesus. This was their second instruction to relocate, but this time to another country.

God's faith in Joseph was well-placed, for he again courageously walked his family into the unknown. God had also provided the gifts of the Magi as a way for them to sustain themselves while in Egypt. God's providence was in play, and Joseph responded by obediently providing for his family according to God's direction. This is life and death. His responsibility went to a higher level, as his son is being threatened!

Joseph unmistakably led his family by following God's will and direction. We can assume Joseph would have been content to stay in the foreign land of Egypt until otherwise instructed, for to move without instruction would have been to run ahead of God.



Soon enough he received his directions:

Matthew 2:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, ²⁰Get up, take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the child's life are dead. ²¹So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

Again it was time to relocate and lead his family to another place for their protection and well-being. Remember, the world then was not the way it is now - there was no 24-hour news for him to check. Nobody texted him to say that Herod was gone and all was well. He was going back into Israel on just the word of the angel, and most likely heading back to Bethlehem.

As he drew closer and discovered the current political landscape, his fatherly instincts caused him great concern:

Matthew 2:22-23: (NASB) ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, ²³and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: He shall be called a Nazarene.

Joseph again stood strong in the providence of God's guidance and changed course to finally settle in Nazareth. Other than a brief mention when Jesus was twelve and left behind in Jerusalem, this is pretty much all that we know about Joseph. What may we conclude?

Joseph was chosen as a critical early support for the young and tender Jesus. He was strong as a man, courageous in his decisions, daring in his actions and most importantly, humble in his obedience to God's will.

God's plan is a plan of hope. For that hope to be sure, it must not only be built upon the firm foundation of prophecy, but it must also be built with the sturdy and enduring materials of strong character. We know that Jesus' character was thoroughly competent and pure, but we do not often think about the strength of character necessary for the supporting cast.

Think about Jesus growing up as a boy, looking at the example of the character of Joseph. The man he looked up to has been saying: *God will guide us.* Joseph always waited for God's providence and then jumped to do His will.



MAKING JESUS OUR FOCUS

Let's pause and consider that God's providence not only enabled Jesus to be born but also enabled him to be protected throughout his childhood. His protection was named Joseph. Joseph's great acceptance, obedience and persistence opened the door for God's world-changing miracles to grow and develop to maturity.

Joseph waited and never ran ahead of the Lord. He always waited for the next instruction from the angel. Joseph was the caretaker and not the decision-maker. We know his profession was a carpenter/craftsman. In his profession, he needed detailed instructions before taking on a project. This is how he thought. No wonder he was the perfect man for the job!

It is thoroughly inspiring to remember what kind of man Joseph was and how he always followed God's instructions.

**Now we get to the core of the story, the birth of Jesus.
What do the hidden details tell us?**

For an event as momentous as the birth of the world's Savior, the Bible describes it with very few words. That simple fact in and of itself speaks volumes, for God's word is not so much flowery as it is factual. We are told the story simply so we can study it, appreciate it and apply it to changing our lives.

Focus thrives on drama. The unfolding of an unexpected circumstance in an unusual way keeps us attentive!



Think of the greatest joys of life that humanity has ever heard of or experienced and inevitably, you will think about the birth of a child. This is an event that marks an end and a beginning: it is the end of a nine-month pregnancy that literally has a physical attachment needing to be cut, and it marks the beginning of a new, viable human life, whose attachments can now grow exponentially and in all directions. Any birth can be seen as a miracle, but the birth of Jesus was the result of a miracle of biblical proportions. Even the heavens would come alive with joy and celebration.



Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (Verse one), The Skit Guys

Come, thou long-expected Jesus
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

Such a big event and such a humble process:

Luke 2:1,3-4: (KJV) ¹And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ³And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem...



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WHAT IS THE STORY OF JESUS' BIRTH?

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One wonders if Joseph and Mary were aware of the prophecy in Micah and if they used that prophecy as motivation for their journey:

Micah 5:2: (NIV) *But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.*



This journey is said to be about 90 miles by way of the winding roads of the day. Traveling at the “speed of donkey,” this meant it would probably take five days or so. It would have been a grueling trip, especially for a woman ready to give birth.

Once again, we see Joseph taking the lead as they traveled to the city of his ancestors to pay their taxes. Why didn't God's providence make this easier? Perhaps this shows that those who serve God and his purposes are willing to take the many small steps necessary to be where He wants them to be and do what He wants them to do.



GOD'S HUMBLE SERVANTS QUIETLY GO ABOUT

THE SOMETIMES-DIFFICULT BUSINESS OF DOING HIS WILL.

HIS PROVIDENCE DOES NOT TAKE THEIR BURDENS FROM THEM,
BUT IT SEES THEM THROUGH THOSE BURDENS.



**MARY AND JOSEPH CAME FROM NAZARETH AND
EVENTUALLY RESETTLED THERE WITH JESUS.**

**What can we learn about Jesus coming
from this small town far north of Jerusalem?**

**Jumping ahead to Jesus' ministry, we get a
sense of Nazareth in relation to other cities:**

John 1:43-46: (NASB) ⁴³The next day he purposed to go into Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, Follow Me. ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael (also known as Bartholomew; one of the Twelve Apostles) and said to him, We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see.

Nazareth did not have a good reputation.



(Source: Biblical commentary by Matthew Poole) Any good thing seems to be meant, the Messiah, or any prophet, or (more generally) anything which is noble and excellent, and of any remark. So prone are we to think that the kingdom of God comes with observation, that we know not how to fancy how great things should be done by little means, and great persons should arise out of little, contemptible places.

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? This reaction was a typical judgment, just like we all make: *Oh, he came from THAT place...* Such stigma can dramatically influence how we respond to other people.

For Jesus the stigma meant nothing, as we can see by his response to Nathanael approaching him:

John 1:47: (NASB) *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!*

For a man who came from a city where nothing good comes from, Jesus is certainly welcoming.



THE NAZARETH LESSON

God's plan unfolds according to specific principles.

One of those principles is that of humility.

God purposefully chooses those least esteemed to deliver that which is most highly valued.

Out of little - through God's grace and will - can come great, wonderful and big things.

Let's get back to the story of the birth of Jesus and the reason for their journey.



Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus (Verse two), The Skit Guys

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
Come, thou long expected Jesus.

Luke 2:5-6: (KJV) *⁵To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.*

Outside of the miraculous conception, the angelic visit and the dreams of angels giving direction, the experiences of Mary and Joseph were very unremarkable. There were no special provisions, no special exemptions, no special circumstances.

They were required to do what everyone else did, travel where everyone else traveled and pay what everyone else paid:

Luke 2:7: (KJV) *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

He was laid in a feeding trough for animals.



To be born in a stable and laid in a manger among the animals was in fact the most fitting of places for the Lord of men to enter the world. After all, Jesus would live these humble beginnings each and every day for 33½ years, for it was through this humility that he would be able to pay the ransom price.

From this humble beginning came the humble adult life of Jesus living with the power of God's spirit when he starts his ministry.



MAKING JESUS OUR FOCUS

Humility brings God glory. Nazareth was undesirable, Bethlehem was small, Joseph and Mary were ordinary people and Jesus was born in a stable. As we review all of the humble things that surrounded the birth of Jesus, we realize how God can build magnificence out of the smallest and most insignificant things!

Not only do these little things turning into big things inspire us, they remind us that God can work with us as well.

**We have focused on the events leading up to the birth of Jesus.
What about the events that followed?**

God's providence works well through humility and ordinary things. As we have seen, He has a way of drawing the spectacular out of what appears unexceptional. However, when the time is right, He will allow there to be a display of outward, life-changing evidence when His will takes major steps forward. Such was the case on the night Jesus was born.

Focus thrives on majesty. When we are shown something breathtaking and lofty, we tend to just stop, look and listen. Allowing majesty to sink in keeps us riveted to the glory of God. The birth of Jesus is all about the glory of God.



As Mary is going through the pains of delivering her child, shepherds tending their flocks are not far away. These men were just humbly going about their own business.



Their lives were about to take an unexpected turn:

Luke 2:8-12: (KJV) ⁸And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

When an angel of God appears out of nowhere, being afraid is not only natural, it is healthy. It shows respect and awe for that which is bigger and greater than we are.

The next step is to listen and learn:

¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

The fulfillment of prophecy was witnessed - in this case, it required an angelic announcement to a most humble audience of shepherds. How fitting an audience, as the baby Jesus was just born in the city of David, who was once a shepherd himself.

Here is a “modern day” depiction of the reactions of a shepherd from that time:

The shepherd's wife part 1, *The Skit Guys*

- *He and I have a rhythm and a routine here in our humble home, and that morning he was messing it up. See, he comes in at 7:12 every morning on the nose. I hear his boots hit the floor. I make the coffee, he washes the pasture off of him and we take our toast to the patio. That's our thing. He's a quiet man, likes the one-word answers that one, and then he's off to bed. He keeps the herd at night. Oh, how my parents looked at me when I told them that I'd fallen in love with a shepherd boy, but that's a story for another time. Or never! But that morning there were no boots, only quiet. Quiet like my husband. Before I can get to the front door, it slammed. It was loud. It was different, as if the front door knew something I didn't know. My husband yells for me, he yells for me! Maybe he's hurt? Maybe he's lost the herd? He's out of breath. He's saying my name as he takes my face in his big hands. His eyes are full of...fear? No, awe? Tears are running down his face, and he can't stop talking. Ranting about this bright light that fell out of the sky and angels. Yes, that is what I said, angels. Hundreds of them, all over the field proclaiming good news. But what did he mean? Good news?*



We know that Jesus would grow and eventually assume the throne of David in God's future kingdom.

Imagine the fear, thrill and hope instilled in those shepherds! In the still of the night, under the vast expanse of the star-lit heavens, comes this glowing message. It was a message full of light, full of prophecy fulfilled and full of expectation!

And then it was full of music - the thundering chorus of heavenly angelic voices singing praise:

Luke 2:13-14: (KJV) ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Humility does not preclude heavenly celebration; rather, it provokes it! These were just lowly shepherds being rewarded for their humility with this incredible message.

It was in this manner that our Lord Jesus was born and announced.



You are a shepherd and have just heard this amazing message. What do you do now?

Luke 2:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us. ¹⁶So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as he lay in the manger.

These shepherds knew they were part of something much bigger than they had ever conceived to be possible. They acted in faith right away and found Mary and Joseph. The baby lay quietly in a manger. Think of the tranquility and peace of the moment as they cast their eyes on their future Savior and played the chorus of the heavenly host again and again in their minds. This was Jesus, the one who would save the world.

We do not know how many shepherds there were, but their lives changed. Normally they would keep to themselves, but they stepped out of their occupation and into the role of God's messengers. Shepherds were not on "the people to listen to" list, but they shared the miracles anyway. And that is a beautiful thing.

To go and see him was one thing, but to take this miracle and publish it amongst the people, well, that was on another whole level! These were just shepherds, but they were emboldened to speak out about the stunning event and the miraculous announcement that they had been a part of.

Luke 2:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

They not only went to see the baby; they told people about what they had witnessed.



THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHANGED PEOPLE.
Does it change me?

The shepherd's wife part 2, *The Skit Guys*

- Now I know my husband, the shepherd. He will never hold the scepter of a king, never sit with dignitaries to solve the world's problems, never even be invited to a meal where he has to wear a suit. But he was given the greatest edict in all the land - all the world. Actually called to the front lines by God Himself to proclaim this good news: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ our Lord. And this will be a sign unto you that you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." **Luke 2:10-12** (ESV) I can say it in my sleep now. I can see it sometimes, too. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, among those with whom He is pleased." **Luke 2:14** (ESV) God was pleased with my husband, the shepherd. His boots hit the floor a little later on these days, and that's okay because he is telling anyone who will listen the good news.

The birth of Jesus is not just some ancient story; it is a real event that we also have the privilege of being a part of. How about you and I? Are we emboldened to speak out about the good news of Christ?



We, too, have seen the grandeur of the gospel message. We, too, have been invited to be a part of that message. How do we keep Jesus at the center of Christmas? When we delve into the details, we get the courage and strength to move forward and share the goodness with others.

Luke 2:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹*But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.* ²⁰*The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.*

For Mary, this was a time of awe-struck wonder. She had been living in faith for the last nine months and now that Jesus was born, her faith would begin to take on new meaning.

Zacharias and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, the wise men and shepherds - God gave all of these people the opportunity to be a part of this incredible event. They all displayed humility and the desire to serve God, which is the essence of the account of the birth of Jesus.



MAKING JESUS OUR FOCUS

Godly and glorious displays remind us of the most important things. As we observe the glitter, lights and music of Christmas, let us always remember the glory, the light of the gospel and the music from heaven that proclaimed that **salvation had arrived, and his name was Jesus!**

Salvation has been with us for 2,000 years. We have the opportunity to be reminded of it because the world focuses on Christmas. We have been given more, so what do we do with that? Let's take this account and its details, bringing them deep in our hearts with the enthusiasm for what Jesus stands for, what he did for us and what the gospel means for every man, woman and child who ever lived. May Christmas be about the birth of Jesus.

*May the Lord bless and keep you
as we celebrate the greatest gift ever given!
For Jonathan, Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on December 27, 2021
Ep. 1210: Whose Voices Are You Listening To?

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1209: How Do We Keep Christmas About Jesus?

<https://christianquestions.com/inspiration/1209-christmas/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. What are some examples from the Bible of transition points that changed history? How does Jesus' birth fit into this category? What is predicted at the end of the Old Testament? How much time was there between the Old and New Testaments? (See Malachi 4:5-6)
2. What was Gabriel's message to Mary? How did Mary respond? What can we learn from her experience for our lives today? Are you willing to be a servant of God? (See Luke 1:26-38)
3. How did Mary and Elizabeth react to the blessings they had received? What character traits shone in their reactions? How can we adopt their spiritual attitudes during the Christmas season? (See Luke 1:39-56)
4. How did Joseph react to Mary's pregnancy? How was his attitude exceptional? What was his role in Jesus' birth and infancy? (See Matthew 1:18-23, 2:13,19-23)
5. What can we learn from Joseph's actions during the time surrounding the birth of the Messiah? How far did Joseph have to travel before Jesus' birth? What does this teach us about how God's providence works in the lives of His servants? (See Matthew 2:19-23, Luke 2:1-4)
6. What was the stigma surrounding the city in which Jesus grew up in? What lesson does this teach us about God's plan? (See John 1:43-47, Luke 2:5-7)
7. What message was given to the shepherds near the manger where Jesus was born? How did they respond to the message? How can we emulate their enthusiasm for God's plan in our daily lives, especially during the Christmas season? (Luke 2:8-20)
8. What will/do you do to keep your focus on Christ during the Christmas season?