

Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies

Christmas Bible Study

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Bible Studies
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Christmas Bible Study

This Bible Study has been put together for you to use either

- in your own personal Bible Study time,
or...
- to help you lead a Bible Study discussion group.

It is divided into several lessons, usually covering one Bible chapter.

Each lesson has two (2) parts:

1. Questions for you to use as you read and think through the scripture.
2. Answers to those questions with my comments and thoughts.

If you are leading a discussion group, I suggest making sure each member of your group has a copy of the next week's questions in advance so that they can prepare if they want to. Preparation for a Bible Study is one way to establish the habit of getting into the Word every day.

An online version of this study is available for free download at:
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Christmas Bible Study

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"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

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Introduction

Christmas actually started before Creation! Did you realize that? God planned Christmas even before He made the world. He knew way ahead of time what His beloved Adam and Eve were going to do. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

When they sinned in the Garden of Eden, the Lord began right away giving them little hints...promises...that some day He would send the Savior who would straighten out the mess they had made.

The first promise God gave them was in Genesis 3:16. He told them a descendant of theirs would someday crush the power of the snake – or satan.

Over the years, in Old Testament times, God gave more and more hints – promises – of what this Savior was going to be like, and what He would do, and how the descendants of Adam and Eve would know Him when He came.

By the time Jesus was born into the world, the world was divided into two kinds of people: Jews, who believed in God and knew of His promises of the Savior to come...and Gentiles, who did not believe in God. They were usually idol-worshippers. You'd think, from that piece of information, that all of the Jews would have naturally believed in Jesus when He came.

But something had gone wrong with many of the Jews. During the time they waited for the promised Savior to arrive they began to think it was up to them to clean up their lives more and more so the Savior would tell them how great they were when He came. They began to drift away from putting their faith in the Savior to come, and instead they put their faith in themselves, in their own ability to be "good".

So when the Savior finally came, He arrived amongst a Jewish people who were no longer putting their faith in God, and He arrived in a gentile world which had long ago decided to believe in idols, and had forgotten there even was a One, True God.

As we start out the Christmas story, we can't help but ask the question: "Is anyone going to be glad their Savior came?"

Luke Chapter 1:1-4 - Questions

An Orderly Account

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. :1-4 Who writes this book of the Bible, to whom is he sending it, and why has he written it? (Just read the verses – the answers are right there.)

- Who writes it?
- Who is he sending it to?
- Why has he written it?

2. Can you write an orderly account of the things you know about Jesus, and when and how you came to know them?

Here are 6 questions you can use to get your orderly account going:

1. Where are you spiritually right now?

2. When did you first start learning things about Jesus?

3. Where did you learn those things?
4. What are some of the things you have learned?
5. As you learned about Him, how did this affect you - your feelings, attitudes, actions, and relationships?
6. In this process of learning about Him, have you ever wanted Jesus to be more real to you...Have you ever wanted to just give your life to Him and let Him be the center of your life? (If you have, make this a part of your orderly account)

3. Who would you send this to if you wrote this account? (make a list)

This week, write out your orderly account and send it or tell it to one person.

Application Questions:

4. Is the Bible really word-for-word from God?
5. Why would my story be important to tell?

Luke Chapter 1:1-4 - Answers

An Orderly Account

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. (:1-4) Who writes this book of the Bible, to whom is he sending it, and why has he written it? (Just read the verses – the answers are right there.)

- Who writes it?

The answer to this question is in the title of the Book: Luke wrote this. Who is Luke?

1. First, who he's not: He's not one of the 12 apostles. (Matthew 10:2-4).
2. And, he's not Jewish: In Colossians 4:10-14, Paul names 6 fellow servants of Jesus who are with him. Three of those men are Jewish (:10-11), and three are not Jewish (:12-14). Luke is named as one of those who are gentiles – not Jewish.
3. Interesting... Luke is the one and only non-Jewish author of a book in the Bible!
4. Luke wrote one other book of the Bible: Acts (Acts 1:1)
5. Luke was a physician. (Colossians 4:14)
6. Luke was a beloved and valuable companion of Paul's as he spread the Gospel message throughout the world. (2nd Timothy 4:11)
7. And Luke was most probably the last person to see Paul alive. He alone was with him at the end of his life. (2nd Timothy 4:11)

- Who is he sending it to?

He's sending it to someone named Theophilus. We don't know any more about Theophilus, but from the warm and kind words Luke addresses to him at the beginning of Luke and at the beginning of Acts, we can assume that Theophilus is someone well-known to Luke and very cared-for by him.

- Why has he written it?

I have thought that maybe Theophilus was Luke's son or son-in-law or grandson. From these first few verses in Luke it looks like Theophilus was a believer in Jesus, and I wonder if he had already had a little personal instruction about the whole Jesus story from Luke himself.

Perhaps Luke's major incentive for writing this true account of the life of Jesus was to make sure that Theophilus would grow in His faith in Jesus and not ever have reason to doubt that all he had heard about Him was true.

Luke knew that others had also taken up the task of writing the story of Jesus. He says he had a "perfect" understanding of all things from the very beginning. The word "perfect" also means "complete". So Luke knew he had all the facts of Jesus life in a complete form.

What kind of boldness would it take to make this claim? "I have a complete understanding". I think the Holy Spirit Himself was urging and pushing Luke to accumulate all the stories of Jesus, confidently organize them into a written document, and pass the whole thing on to not only Theophilus, but also to all the believers in Jesus to come over the next 2,000+ years.

God – The Holy Spirit – Jesus....They all decided Luke was one of the 4 men who would write an account of the life, death, burial, & resurrection of Jesus.

2. Can you write an orderly account of the things you know about Jesus, and when and how you came to know them?

If Luke wrote an orderly account to Theophilus, then maybe you and I could do our best to write our orderly accounts – of what we know about Jesus – so that we can do the same thing Luke did...share it.

Here are 6 questions you can use to get your orderly account going. Think of being interviewed, with someone asking you each of these 6 questions. Write out what your answer would be. In your own words. Just be honest and just be you.

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1. Where are you spiritually right now?
2. When did you first start learning things about Jesus?
3. Where did you learn those things?
4. What are some of the things you have learned?
5. As you learned about Him, how did this affect you - your feelings, attitudes, actions, and relationships?
6. In this process of learning about Him, have you ever wanted Jesus to be more real to you...Have you ever wanted to just give your life to Him and let Him be the center of your life? (If you have, make this a part of your orderly account)

I wrote out my answers just a few days before I wrote this Bible study. Here's my orderly account:

1. Where are you spiritually right now?

"At 66, I'm a little overwhelmed at the idea that I have been a believer in Jesus for just about 50 years. How could it have been that long? I know He's with me all the time - and that He's been taking care of me for my whole life. I would like to know Him better and better as I walk into my last 20 or so years, and I'm really anxious to finally see Him when I die.

2. When did you first start learning things about Jesus?
3. Where did you learn those things?
4. What are some of the things you have learned?

Our family first attended the Catholic church, and then the Presbyterian church when I was a little girl, and into my teens. The name of Jesus was familiar to me, and of course I believed that God existed. But that was about it - I knew a few facts.

5. As you learned about Him, how did this affect you - your feelings, attitudes, actions, and relationships?

At 17 I finally began to know more than facts. I actually felt like He was communicating with me through the preaching at a new church I started attending, and through what I read in the Bible. My few facts suddenly were not enough - I wanted to know more about Him.

6. In this process of learning about Him, have you ever wanted Jesus to be more real to you...Have you ever wanted to just give your life to Him and let Him be the center of your life? (If you have, make this a part of your orderly account)

In Tucson, Arizona, 1965, in a church service, sitting in the audience, I gave my life to Jesus when I realized He had given His life for me. At that time I remember thanking Him for dying for me, and asking Him if He wanted my life. I told Him I knew it probably wasn't worth much, but I would love to be His for the rest of my life. That's when I became a Christian. Before that I would have told you I was a Christian because I went to church, but I wasn't.

Over the years, as I've read my Bible, I've learned much more of His life and death and resurrection, and I've learned that He lives in me because I believed in Him. I've learned that He loves faith most of all, and that He has a whole bunch of people in the world whom He loves but they haven't had faith in Him yet. He yearns for them to hear of Him and have faith in Him. So, because that's what He wants so much, it's what I want, too"

Now...write out your orderly account. ☺

3. Who would you send this to if you wrote this account? (make a list)

I'll tell you what I've done so far: I put it on my Facebook page. I left the questions off, and just combined the answers into the story of my coming to faith in Christ. Once I had the answers written out, it wasn't hard to make the story out of it.

I have also sent it to individual people I know, in a letter or e-mail, where appropriate. And once I included it in my Christmas cards.

The easiest way I've shared it is when I have been able several times to just tell my story in conversation with friends.

Let's join Luke in putting it out there for all the world to see – so they can decide for themselves whether or not to bow their knee to the Lord of the Universe who died and rose again.

Application Questions:

4. Is the Bible really word-for-word from God?

These first 4 verses in Luke's Gospel are a pretty good jumping off place for this question. After all, Luke felt compelled to write an orderly account of all that Jesus said and did. He felt it was important to get it all down on paper for the sake of all who were coming after him who would need to hear the story as it actually happened. God

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inspired Luke to care about the facts, gather the facts, organize the facts, compare the facts to the facts, and then record the facts, and send this record to someone who would keep it safe and help pass it on.

That's a pretty simple picture of what God has done with all of Scripture. He has inspired and compelled ordinary men to write down what happened and what was said so that all who would come after would have a true account to read and think about.

The Bible claims to be inspired by God. Accepting that means I have the very Words of God in my hands when I open my Bible. I can't ignore any of it, or minimize any of it. If I were not to accept what the Bible says about itself that would mean I can't trust anything in the Bible to be true. After all, if the Bible lies about itself in one place, who am I to decide what else might be a lie?

5. Why would anyone want to hear my story?

Luke told his story because he knew his story would help change lives. Not everyone wanted to hear his story, and not everyone believed his story. But he just kept working on it and writing it down because he was convinced Theophilus and other believers needed to know the certainty of what they had learned about Jesus.

The same is true for you. You may not have a riveting story, but that's ok. People don't need to hear your story. The story they need to hear is His story. Talk about yourself in order to get the ball rolling, but tell the story of Jesus.

Luke Chapter 1:5-17 - Questions

Zacharias

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. :5-12 In these verses, a certain Jewish priest is being introduced to us. Who is he, and what can you learn about him from these verses (start with the 1st two obvious things... he's Jewish, and he's a priest ...)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
2. :13-17 The Angel of the Lord appears to Zechariah...and tells him his prayers have been answered, and he will have a son. So...does that tell us Zachariah had been praying for a son for himself and Elizabeth?
3. :13-17 As the priest of Israel, Zacharias was supposed to be praying for the nation of Israel. Why wasn't he? Or...was he? Could this answer to Zechariah and Elizabeth's need also be an answer to Israel's need? Name the things the Angel of the Lord said would be true of the son Zechariah and Elizabeth would have:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
4. :13-17 Does this son promised to come to Zacharias and Elizabeth sound like someone whom the whole nation of Israel might have needed at that time?

5. Was there ever someone in your life who came along at just the right time and got you ready to have a close relationship with God...with Jesus?
6. Did Zechariah believe the angel?
7. Was the angel unhappy with Zacharias that he didn't believe?
8. What happened to Zacharias because he didn't believe?
9. Did Zacharias finally come to the point that he believed? (read ahead to verses 63-66 of chapter 1)
10. What did Zacharias miss out on because he didn't believe God at first?

Application Questions:

11. Have there ever been times when you didn't believe God's promises? Did God give up on you? What did you miss out on because you waited to believe?
12. I'm having trouble believing in God. Can God help me believe in Him?

Luke Chapter 1:5-17 – Answers

Zacharias

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

I’m thinking of instance after instance when people I know have had good reason to ask: “Why has God allowed this in my life?” Or, “Why hasn’t God reached down and taken this suffering away from me?”

A good, moral, religious woman named Elizabeth married a good, moral, religious man named Zacharias. Elizabeth wasn’t just religious. She had a genuine love for the Lord God and wanted to glorify Him in all she did. Zacharias was a member of the tribe of Levi – a Jewish man who was also a priest - who loved and wanted to serve the Lord God with all of his life.

The priests of Israel were organized into twenty four groups, or divisions. They lived their lives as ordinary Jews most of the time, but when it came time for their division to serve in the temple, they left their homes and farms and dedicated themselves, for the few weeks of their service, to doing their part to make the temple in Jerusalem available to every Jewish person for worship of the One, True God, and instruction in His ways.

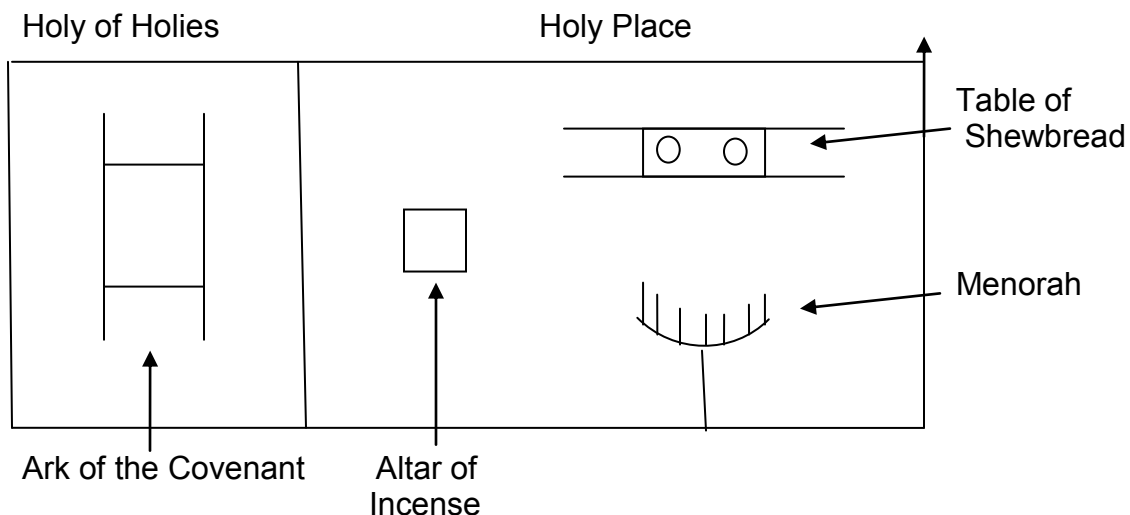
Zacharias performed his role as priest his whole life. Elizabeth put her trust in God her whole life. But the one thing they both wanted more than anything else in the world never happened for them. They could not have a child. Elizabeth was barren.

I think possibly only those who have experienced barrenness themselves can understand the depth of grief Elizabeth and Zacharias must have gone through, year after year after year.

But now these two servants of the One, True God were at the end of their lives. They truly did not think it might even be a slight possibility that a child would still

be given to them from God. But, there was still that deep longing... and hope.....

1. :5-12 In these verses, a certain Jewish priest is being introduced to us. Who is he, and what can you learn about him from these verses (start with the 1st two obvious things... he's Jewish, and he's a priest ...)
 1. Jewish
 2. Priest
 3. Man
 4. Division of Abijah
 5. Lived in the days of Herod, the Roman king
 6. Elizabeth, his wife, also of the priestly tribe
 7. Both were people of faith
 8. No child
 9. Old
 10. His job was to burn incense and pray for Israel this time
 11. While doing his job he saw an angel.
2. :13-17 The Angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah...and told him his prayers had been answered, and he would have a son. So...does that tell us Zacharias had been praying for a son for himself and Elizabeth?



The job of burning incense was actually a job of praying. Within the temple there was a large room only the priests entered. (The Holy Place) One of the things done by the priests in that room was to stand before the Altar of Incense, tend the embers and incense, and pray while the sweet odors of the burning incense rose up before the Lord.

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The prayers of the priest were echoed by the people worshipping outside the temple. It was as if the priest's job was to verbalize to God's ear the heart's cry of the people.

The priest, of course, was simply a man – a man who also had his own heart cry, his own stresses and heartaches. So, I'm guessing that as Zacharias was praying before the Lord for the needs of the people, and also praying before the Lord for his own needs, all those needs coincided in one, huge, painful ball of groaning.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were desperate for a son. And the people of Israel, although they may not all have realized it, were also desperate for a Son.

Zacharias and Elizabeth needed a son in their old age to complete their life, to give them the joy that only a child can bring, and to save them from loneliness and poverty once they could no longer work their farm and support themselves.

Israel needed a Son, the long-promised Messiah, to complete their lives, to give them the joy that only a Savior can bring, and to save them from the hopeless eternity they were heading towards if He never came.

3. :13-17 As the priest of Israel, Zacharias was supposed to be praying for the nation of Israel. Why wasn't he? Or...was he? Could this answer to Zechariah and Elizabeth's need also be an answer to Israel's need? Name the things the Angel of the Lord said would be true of the son Zacharias and Elizabeth would have:

1. His name would be John.
2. His birth would bring joy, gladness and rejoicing.
3. He would do great things for God.
4. No alcohol for him his whole life .
5. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth.
6. He would lead many Jews back to faith in God.
7. He would be the "go before", the one to introduce Messiah to the world.
8. He would be like the prophet Elijah.
9. He would get the people ready for Messiah.

4. :13-17 Does this son promised to come to Zacharias and Elizabeth sound like someone whom the whole nation of Israel might have needed at that time?

Oh, yes! The people knew they were waiting for their Messiah, their Savior. He had been promised thousands of years before. In fact, He had been promised before the Jewish people even existed! (Genesis 3:15). And then the promise of

His coming was made over and over and over again to hundreds of generations.

But He hadn't come. And like Zacharias and Elizabeth, the people had grown hopeless, joyless, and like I said, desperate for a Son.

This was the heart's cry the people standing outside the temple had been raising up to God while Zacharias was raising the same heart's cry before the altar of incense.

Now, this son of Zacharias and Elizabeth was not going to be that Messiah, but if he was going to be the one to get the people ready for Messiah, and actually introduce them to Messiah, then, Wow! Messiah was on the way! It was happening!

5. Was there ever someone in your life who came along at just the right time and got you ready to have a close relationship with God...with Jesus?

Some of us may not be sure who was praying for us before we came to genuine faith in Jesus. But many of us do remember who it was who told us about Jesus, or prayed with us as we gave our life to Him, or was preaching or teaching when we knew we must bend our knee before Him.

My Dad came to true belief in Jesus when I was 13. His testimony of giving his life totally to God burned like a brand on my heart and mind. My sister, Susan, became a follower of Jesus about that same time, and I know she prayed for me. Pastor Dick Buck, was preaching 4 years later, when I was 17, when I realized Jesus had actually died for me. That's when I became a Christian.

My Dad, my sister, my Pastor – all of them were at the right place at the right time for me, getting me ready for the relationship with God which changed me into a person who knew God, instead of just knowing about Him.

I am struck with this: My sister came to know Christ at the time He chose for her. My Dad came to know Christ at the time He chose for him. My Pastor preached the message needed to reach my heart because Jesus had gotten him ready to preach that message at that time and in that place when I was ready to hear it. Jesus worked in my life with His timing. When He called me to faith in Him it wasn't an accident of timing. He knew exactly when I needed to enter His family, so that my time of salvation would have the most impact on someone else.

Our joy in meeting and believing in Jesus is amazing...but it isn't just for us.

6. Did Zacharias believe the angel?

No. He asked for some kind of proof, because he knew that both he and his wife were past the age of bringing children into the world.

Was Zacharias wrong when he didn't believe the angel? It was impossible to believe, wasn't it? These two people were too old to have children. That was a fact.

Yes, he was wrong. In order to better understand what Zacharias did wrong, let's take a look at some other examples of people who had unbelievable promises or commands from God, and how they reacted:

- The most obvious example would be that of Abraham and Sarah. They, too, were too old to have children. Abraham was 100, Sarah was 90. To have a child at that age would probably kill Sarah, to say nothing of the baby she might miraculously carry.

So how did they react when they heard the promise from God that they would, indeed, bring a baby into the world?

Abraham heard the unbelievable and believed. In the book of Romans Paul describes it best: *"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory of God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.' "*
Romans 6:19-22

Abraham was in his mid-80's when he believed this promise from God.

About 14 or 15 years later we see Sarah's reaction: *Genesis 18:10-15*. Sarah did not believe. She laughed. She wasn't being rude about it – she just couldn't believe it and laughed without thinking about who might hear her.

- Moses had a whole lot of questions and objections when the Lord told him that it was going to be his job to come up before the Pharaoh of Egypt and demand the release of the Jews. Exodus Chapter 3. Moses did not believe. He was afraid.

- When Moses died, the LORD chose Joshua to carry on the job of leading the Jews into the Promised Land. *Joshua 1:2-9* Joshua believed and went.
- Ruth heard the call of God to leave her own people and all she knew in order to go with her mother-in-law to the land of the Jews – the land where the One, True God was worshipped. Read her story in the book of *Ruth*. Ruth believed and went.
- The prophet Hosea who married a prostitute because God told him to. *Hosea 1:2*. Hosea believed and obeyed a ridiculous-sounding decree.

What do all these stories have in common? Ordinary people heard God's words and either reacted in faith, or questioned. They either believed right away, or they did not. But the people who did not believe at first did eventually get their chance to believe. God didn't give up on them.

What is the difference between belief and unbelief for all these people? Belief, or faith, is simply hearing God's truth and acting on it. Unbelief means you don't act. Belief means you do.

7. Was the angel unhappy with Zacharias that he didn't believe?

The passage is not exactly clear about whether the angel was angry or unhappy with Zacharias. Gabriel does seem to say, though, something to the effect of "who do you think you are, Zacharias? - I'm an angel of God and you still are wondering if this is true?"

How did the angel know Zacharias didn't believe? I mean, what if he just had a few questions first? What if he was just overwhelmed?

Here's my answer – God knows whether we are just confused or overwhelmed. or whether we simply don't believe.

Confused, overwhelmed, frightened...these are a part of being human and God knows that.

But unbelief – that's a choice. Zacharias made an unbelief choice.

8. What happened to Zacharias because he didn't believe?

There is always a bad result from unbelief. The promise made to Zacharias was not taken away...but his voice was. His voice had uttered the unbelief, so his voice would be useless to him until the promise had been fulfilled.

The worst possible result from unbelief, of course, is for those who choose to not ever believe Jesus died to pay the price for their sins. That result is eternity in Hell.

But there is such a thing as a true believer in Jesus choosing not to live by faith. Or choosing to continue in a sin which he knows is hated by God. Or choosing to walk by sight, not by faith. There are results for these times of unbelief, too. Lost opportunities. Lack of joy. A slide into even more sin. Uselessness.

9. Did Zacharias finally come to the point that he believed? (read ahead to verses 63-66 of chapter 1)

Yes, he did, didn't he? He unequivocally had turned the corner and could not wait to get that praise of God out of his mouth!

And that's the good news about unbelief in the life of a Christian. God can turn it around. In fact, sometimes the very thing we must endure because of our unbelief becomes the thing which brings us back to belief. ☺

10. What did Zacharias miss out on because he didn't believe God at first?

Just think, he could have spent the whole 9 months of Elizabeth's pregnancy singing and shouting the praises of God for this wonderful answer to ! But instead he had to silently watch it all unfold, unable to do the thing a priest was supposed to do – tell people the wonders of God.

Application Questions:

11. Have there ever been times when you didn't believe God's promises? Did God give up on you? What did you miss out on because you waited to believe?

12. I'm having trouble believing in God. Can God help me believe in Him?

If you struggle with unbelief, here's the absolute best news you have ever heard:

Belief (or, faith) is a gift from God. He offers it to you because of His grace. Ask for it. Be genuine, though, and don't ask God for faith while at the same time knowing that you don't really want to exercise faith.

Ask God to help your unbelief.

"Therefore it is of faith (belief) that it might be according to grace (a free undeserved gift) ..." Romans 4:16 (words in parentheses are mine)

"Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes. Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'" Mark 9:23&24

Luke Chapter 1:26-56 - Questions

Mary

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. :26-30 Name all the things you learn about this young girl:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
2. :31-33 What did the angel tell Mary would be true of the son she would bear?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.
 - 8.
 - 9.
 - 10.
3. How many of the above things had been predicted about Jesus in the Old Testament?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

- 6.
 - 7.
 - 8.
 - 9.
 - 10.
4. How did Mary react to the angel's message? (:34-38)
 5. :39-40 What did Mary do right away which proves to us she believed what the Angel of the Lord told her? Why is this proof?
 6. :39 How long of a trip was this for Mary? Did Joseph go with her?
 7. :41-45 What wonderful things happened as soon as Elizabeth saw Mary? How did this help both Elizabeth and Mary?
 8. :42-44 How did Elizabeth know, without being told, that Mary was pregnant with the Savior of the world?
 9. :42 & 45 Elizabeth gives three "blessings" to Mary. What are they?
 10. :46-55 What else does Mary do which proves to us she believed what the Angel of the Lord told her?
 11. :46-55 Name some of the wonderful things Mary said about God in these words of praise:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.

Application Question:

12. The proof of belief is what you do, not just what you feel. What will you do today as a result of what you have learned in this passage?

Luke Chapter 1:26-38 - Answers

Mary

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. :26-30 Name all the things you learn about this young girl:
 1. She lived in the Galilee area of Israel, city of Nazareth.
 2. She was unmarried, a virgin.
 3. She was soon to be married to a man named Joseph (of the tribe of David).
 4. Her name was Mary.
 5. She has gotten the attention of God for a special blessing.
 6. An angel has just appeared to her.

2. :31-33 What did the angel tell Mary would be true of the son she would bear?
 1. He would be a man.
 2. He would be a Jew.
 3. He would be of the tribe of Judah.
 4. He would be the son of Mary.
 5. His name would be Jesus.
 6. He would be great.
 7. He would also be the Son of God.
 8. He would be a King like David, and would reign on David's throne.
 9. He would reign forever.
 10. There would be no end to His Kingdom.

3. How many of the above things had been predicted about Jesus in the Old Testament?

1. He would be a man – Genesis 3:15
2. He would be a Jew. – Genesis 12:3
3. He would be of the tribe of Judah. – Genesis 49:10
4. He would be the son of Mary. – Isaiah 7:14
5. His name would be Jesus. - Zechariah 9:9 “Jesus” means “Savior”.
6. He would be great. Isaiah 9:6&7
7. He would be the Son of God. Psalms 2:7 Proverbs 30:4
8. He would be a King like David, and would reign on David’s throne. Isaiah 9:6&7
9. He would reign forever. Isaiah 9:6&7
10. There would be no end to His Kingdom. Isaiah 9:6&7

4. How did Mary react to the angel’s message? (:34-38)

Mary had a question. How can I, who am a virgin, give birth to a child? She’s saying, “I believe what you are saying is true...help me understand it.”

5. :39-40 What did Mary do right away which proves to us she believed what the Angel of the Lord told her? Why is this proof?

She followed the leading of what the angel had said. She took action!

I know I’ve said this before, but it’s worth repeating: When it comes to understanding faith, you could say there are two parts:

1. Hearing something true.
2. Acting on it.

Faith is not a feeling. It’s a “do”.

James, the brother of Jesus, in the book he wrote in the Bible, says: *“But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” James 1:22.* And then, a little farther on in that same letter, James gives even more detailed illustrations of what faith really is. James 2:14-24.

6. :39 How long of a trip was this for Mary? Did Joseph go with her?

The trip from Nazareth to the Jerusalem area was about 100 miles. Generally a person could walk about 20 miles a day. So how long did this trip take Mary, one way? Almost a week. We can be pretty sure Joseph didn’t go with her, because we find out later that Joseph didn’t even know she was expecting a baby until she returned from this trip. But did she go alone. Probably not. To travel alone

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would have been exceedingly dangerous, what with robbers and violent people waiting for their prey on any road.

So why did she make such a long and arduous trip? I think it's because she needed encouragement. She believed what the angel said. She had faith in God. But she needed encouragement from a flesh and blood person – someone she knew and could pour out her heart to.

7. :41-45 What wonderful things happened as soon as Elizabeth saw Mary? How did this help both Elizabeth and Mary?

- Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, and immediately her baby, John, moved energetically (jumped!) inside of her.
- Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and then...
- Elizabeth blessed Mary with encouraging words.
- Elizabeth confirms Mary's faith reaction to the angel's message
- And Elizabeth prophesies that these very things will definitely come to pass.

How did this help Mary? Someone she loved and trusted fully believed her story. Sometimes people just don't believe your story when your life is not normal like everyone else's. Joseph will soon hear this story and, even though he loved and trusted Mary, he would not at first believe it. So Mary needed to know that there was someone who loved the Lord who believed her story. And, not only believed it, but didn't even have to be convinced of it! Elizabeth believed Mary's story before she even told it! What an encouragement!

How did this help Elizabeth? She was 6 months pregnant with John. She was too old to be bearing a child. It must have helped her tremendously to have another assurance from God that He was, indeed, working just like He said He was going to. This baby within her would be born safely and would fulfill the role God had given him. This was going to happen!!! Encouragement.

8. :42-44 How did Elizabeth know, without being told, that Mary was pregnant with the Savior of the world?

The Holy Spirit told her.

9. :42 & 45 Elizabeth gives three "blessings" to Mary. What are they?

- She is a specially-blessed woman.
- The baby she is bearing is a specially-blessed person.
- The things she has believed will come true.

Therefore, how should we, in our day, treat the memory of Mary? Not as if she was a God herself – she would hate that! And not as if she was a sinless person – she would tell us that was totally not true! But certainly with respect and a feeling of privilege to learn from her.

10.:46-55 What else does Mary do which proves to us she believed what the Angel of the Lord told her?

She speaks out in praise to God. When you believe the things God has told you, one of the first things you want to do is speak out about Him. It's like you just can't keep it from coming out of your mouth. Your heart overflows to your lips. Jesus said: *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"*. Matthew 12:34

11.:46-55 Name some of the wonderful things Mary said about God in these words of praise:

Here's what I came up with, and a few verses with each to give you a little extra digging into the Word, if you have time:

She starts out by saying her soul magnifies the Lord. Ask yourself what that means. (1st Samuel 2:1-10, Psalms 34:3, Habakkuk 3:17-19).

Then she just begins to tell the Lord everything she knows He is:

1. :47 God is my Savior. Titus 1:13
2. :48 God has loved me even though I am lowly. Psalms 138:6
3. :48 Because of what God has done all future generations are going to know how blessed I am. Genesis 12:2
4. :49 God has done great things for me. Psalms 17:17&18
5. :49 God's name is Holy. Exodus 3:14
6. :50 God has mercy on those who fear Him, from one generation to the next. Genesis 17:7&8, Exodus 34:5-9
7. :51 God is strong. Psalm 98:1
8. :51 & 52 God weakens the proud but lifts up the lowly. Psalms 33:10
9. :52 & 53 God fills the hungry, but sends away the rich empty
1st Samuel 2:4-8
10. :54 God helps His servants and has mercy on them because of the Words He has spoken, to Abraham and to everyone else of faith.
Romans 4:13-16

Application Question:

12. The proof of belief is what you do, not just what you feel. What will you do today as a result of what you have learned in this passage?

Speak words of praise today, just like Mary did. Let it flow out of the abundance of your heart. The only way to do this right is to first have an abundance in your heart. How do you get that? Spend time in the presence of God. Read His Word. Pray. Listen to music. Listen to God. Let His presence fill your heart full to the brim. Then...just go be around people. You'll be amazed at what will come out of your mouth!

Luke Chapter 1:57-58 - Questions

Elizabeth

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. :57 What is Elizabeth's answered prayer which happened here?
2. :58 What was the neighbors' and relatives' response to answered prayer?
3. When have you had answered prayer?
4. What prayers of yours are yet to be answered?
5. Has God's answer to your prayer ever been "No". ?
6. Can you think of other times in scripture when God waited a long time to answer prayer?
7. Can you think of other times in scripture when God said "No." to a prayer?

Application Question:

8. If someone you know would tell you they haven't had a certain prayer answered by God, and ask you why He isn't answering, what would you say?

Luke Chapter 1:57-58 – Answers

Elizabeth

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

The Jewish Messiah was about to be born. The birth of John the Baptist began the series of events which would introduce this Messiah to the world which was aching to meet Him.

In these two verses we see the evidence of answered prayer for Elizabeth, and answered prayer for the nation of Israel, and for the world – a prayer which had been brought over and over before God for more than four thousand years, since the world was created.

How could our loving and all-powerful God have let four thousand years go by before answering this prayer for a Savior? Why would He have promised the world a Savior, gotten their hopes up that sin would someday be dealt with, and then waited four thousand years to answer the prayers which rose from their hearts in response to that promise?

And why would he have let Elizabeth and Zacharias go their whole lives with an aching prayer for a child and only answered that prayer at the end of their lives?

As we head toward Christmas in this Bible study, we’ve already seen life suddenly interrupted for a simple Jewish priest; we’ve seen unbelief; we’ve seen belief; we’ve seen miracles; we’ve seen angels stepping into the lives of ordinary people; we’ve seen fear; and hope; and comfort, encouragement, and soaring praise.

And now, answered prayer.

Christmas was not as quiet and simple as we might think. It was actually more like a lightning bolt flashing out of heaven and splitting the old oak tree in two!

1. :57 What is the answered prayer for Elizabeth which happened here?

“But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard - and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John...and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.’ “
Luke 1:13-16

What prayer is being answered in these two verses? First of all, the prayer which quietly rose from the heart of the Jewish priest Zacharias is answered here. Nine months before this moment, Zacharias stood in the temple, praying for the people of Israel, but also crying from his own heart his own need, and his wife's need. They had no child, and desperately wanted one. Elizabeth, at home, no doubt was praying this same prayer, and had for years.

And secondly, the prayer being answered in these two verses is the prayer of the whole nation of Israel. They needed the One, True God to be the sacrifice for their sins. Two thousand years of sacrifices had not done away with sin, and they were slipping farther and farther away from God. If God did not answer the prayer for a Messiah soon, there would be no more Jewish people left to wait for Him.

And thirdly, the prayer being answered here is the prayer Adam and Eve prayed, and many of their children and grandchildren, and on and on, prayed. Lord, where is the One who will solve our sin problem forever?

God stepped in, gave this miracle pregnancy to Elizabeth and Zachariah, and Christmas was set in motion. The one who would announce the Savior was here!

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God...the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” Isaiah 40:3-5

“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me.” Malachi 3:1

2. :58 What was the neighbors' and relatives' response to answered prayer?

They rejoiced together with Elizabeth and Zacharias. Tears of joy were probably shed. There were many smiles. Food was no doubt prepared so that all could eat a meal together in celebration.

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The One, True God had shown mercy to Elizabeth and Zacharias, and, although they could not have totally understood all the implications of this answer to prayer yet, salvation was on the way!

3. When have you had answered prayer?

One huge answer to prayer sticks in my memory - the salvation of my own Mom.

My Dad became a Christian before I did, and his salvation triggered my own time to come to faith in Jesus. My siblings also came to believe in Jesus. But my Mom was a hold out. She struggled greatly with trusting Christ, and in her last few years was often antagonistic against all of us as grown children when we wanted to even talk about Jesus. She hated the mention of His name. I despaired of her ever coming to faith.

But I prayed. I would have given up praying, I think, if God had let me. But again and again I felt compelled to go back to the Lord with the heaviness in my heart. I asked the Lord to wake up her heart and let her see Him for Who He really is.

I prayed for her every time I spoke with her long distance from wherever I was living at the time to wherever she was living at the time. I prayed for her every time I visited her, ate special meals with her, or took long drives with her. I prayed for her in the middle of the night when I couldn't sleep. I designated certain verses in my Bible as "hers", and prayed those verses for her.

I thought up ways to get the Word of God in front of her. She certainly didn't want to be "witnessed" to, so I would just mention my own love for the Lord in our normal conversation times. Or I would talk about answered prayer.

When I first began to memorize scripture I asked her to listen to me recite large portions of the book of John to help me practice. She was willing to do that.

And I prayed.

Then, as if out of the blue, after years and years of dwindling hope, I got a call from my sister one evening saying Mom had broken her hip and was going in for surgery that night. Sobbing, Susan told me that as Mom was being wheeled into the surgery, she painfully propped herself up a little in the gurney, looked at my sister and brother and told them she just wanted them to know she believed in Jesus!

Wow! Did we ever rejoice!!!!

4. What prayers of yours are yet to be answered?

You'll have a personal, private answer to this question. It might be fun to write down the few prayers which are pressing on your heart constantly, put them in a safe place, and then take them out in a year or so, and be surprised then at the way God has woven His answers to your prayers in and through your life.

5. Has God's answer to your prayer ever been "No". ?

In my experience, when it seems that God is saying "No", He is actually saying "Not in the way you pictured it." We learn, I think, through a lifetime of "Not in the way you pictured it", to pray according to God's will. We slowly begin to love to pray not because we think we can force God to do our will, but because we are beginning to love His will so much.

6. Can you think of other times in scripture when God waited a long time to answer prayer?

What strikes me is that most of the time God does wait a long time to answer! Waiting seems to be the rule, not the exception.

That's why Isaiah 40:31 speaks so directly to each of our hearts. *"But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."*

Waiting is normal.

7. Can you think of other times in scripture when God said "No." to a prayer?

God said "No." to the people of Israel when they longed for the bread and meat pots of Egypt. Learning to live as free people had turned out to be very, very hard, and they just wanted to go back to their old lives of slavery and quit trying to fight for their freedom. God said "No." (Exodus 16)

God said "No." when a money-loving little prophet named Balaam wanted to do the wrong thing. He asked God to bless him as he went about his greedy little business. God actually spoke that "No!" to that prophet by the voice of a donkey! (Numbers 22:22-34)

Naomi, I'm sure, prayed for the Lord to spare the life of her husband, but God said "No". He died. And then I'm positive she also prayed for the Lord to spare the lives of both of her sons. But God said "No." They died. Her bitterness rose up in her at what seemed to be the unfaithfulness of God. But He wasn't, was He? His "No." was actually "Not in the way you pictured it." (The book of Ruth)

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Jeremiah prophesied and prayed for his whole lifetime for the children of Israel to repent and live wholeheartedly for the One, True God. In Jeremiah's lifetime they never did. God said "No"...not yet. Jeremiah, but they will someday." (The book of Jeremiah)

Habakkuk pleaded with God to not send a horde of bloodthirsty Assyrians down to conquer Israel. God said "No." And then God said "Stop asking, Habakkuk. I am God. I will do things My way." Habakkuk 2:10

What do we learn from just these few examples?

- God always says "No." to sin.
- Sometimes God says "No", "Not in the way you pictured it".
- Sometimes God isn't saying "No", He's saying "Wait".
- And sometimes He says "No". Just trust Me.

We are called to pray. And as we pray we grow in our faith. Even when God says "No" we grow in our faith.

What else can I add to my prayer life to enrich it? Here are a few ideas – you'll have your own probably:

- Prayer at odd times, unusual moments.
- Prayer at more disciplined times.
- Fasting.
- Prayer partners.
- Prayer calendar.
- Answered Prayer notebook.
- Books on prayer.
- Listen to sermons on prayer.
- Memorize scripture and pray it.
- Specific scripture for specific people.
- Prayer positions.
- Prayer songs.
- Prayer walks.
- Prayer for geographical areas.

Application Question:

8. If someone you know would tell you they haven't had a certain prayer answered by God, and ask you why He isn't answering, what would you say?

Here's the answer: He is.

Luke Chapter 1:59-80 - Questions

Prophecy

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. :59 Why were they going to circumcise the baby? Why on the 8th day?
2. :59 What name was the logical name for the baby?
3. :60 How did Elizabeth know John was to be the baby's name?
4. :61&62 Why do you think the Lord chose a name for the baby which was so different than what tradition would have expected?
5. :63 & 64 What finally gave Zacharias his speech back?
6. :64 When Zacharias could once again speak, what were the first things he wanted to say?
7. :65&66 Even though Zacharias' unbelief was initially displeasing to God, what good things came out of it?
8. (:67-80) Read through these words of Zacharias at the birth of his son, John, and ask yourself: What has Zacharias been learning all this time when he could not speak?

9. (:67-80) Which of these prophecies hadn't happened yet at the time Zacharias spoke the words?
10. (:67-80) Which of these prophecies haven't happened yet, in our time?
11. (:76-80) What things did Zacharias prophesy about his son, John?
12. Can you think of any other Old Testament prophecies about the Savior?

Application Questions:

13. Are you and I, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, part of some bigger plan of God's?
14. How would you answer this question someone might have for God: "Since You are all-powerful, why do You need us to praise You or prophesy or tell others about You? Couldn't you just do anything You needed to to get the word out to people? Angels? Words written in the sky? Why do You need us?"

Luke Chapter 1:59-80 – Answers

Prophecy

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

Zacharias started out not believing the message of the angel in the first part of Luke Chapter 1, but in today’s passage we see that he has definitely come to a point of belief.

When did that happen? And how did it happen? At what point does anyone go from unbelief to belief? What makes that belief become a reality?

We all start out in unbelief. In Romans 3:11-18, as Paul quotes Old Testament verses, the Lord accurately describes each one of us. We do not start out believing in God or believing in the truth. We start out life loving sin, ignorant of God, full of foul things to say and think, and willing to make others suffer.

So how does that change? Do we change ourselves?

1. :59 Why were they going to circumcise the baby? Why on the 8th day?

In Genesis 17 we find the One, True God giving a covenant to Abraham. The LORD promised Abraham He would be God to Abraham and to his descendants after him. In other words, God promised He would be available for relationship with Abraham and his descendants.

God did not promise that each and every descendant of Abraham would automatically be a person of faith simply because they had Abraham for their father, but He did promise that He was there, ready for relationship if each person chose to have faith in Him,

God didn't say Jews were the only people He wanted to have a relationship with. No, instead, they were chosen to show the rest of the world how to have a relationship with God.

In this covenant found in Genesis 17 God also promises the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, as an everlasting possession. He makes this promise after Ishmael was born, but before Isaac was born. In other words, God gifted the land forever to the Jews (the descendants of Abraham through Isaac).

Later on, Abraham would have other children, and Isaac would have 2 children: Jacob and Esau. But only those descendants who came from Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob were included in this promise. (That's why He is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

After this covenant was made in Genesis 17, Abraham was given a way to confirm that he heard and accepted it. Abraham and all his future descendants were given the outward sign of circumcision in order to remember all God had promised. Abraham was circumcised as an adult at the time of the covenant, as were all other adults part of Abraham's family at that time. Future generations were to be circumcised at birth, on their 8th day of life.

The sign of circumcision did not guarantee a place in the family of God...because the family of God was a family of faith. (Genesis 15:6) Faith in the One, True God had to be chosen by each individual in order for anyone to be a child of God. (Romans 2:28&29)

The sign of circumcision was accepted by Abraham and given to newborn Jewish boy babies so the world would know the Jewish people heard the covenant promises of the One, True God, and knew what God was asking of them.

If you ever need a proof that circumcision did not "save" anyone in those days, just consider the fact that only boy Jewish babies were circumcised. If circumcision was necessary for salvation, then only Jews could be saved (scripture denies this) and of the Jews, only males could be saved. (definitely not true).

Why is this important for us to know? Because the desire to be good enough for God by doing good works slips into each of our thinking so easily. The Bible is clear. We are all saved by God's grace – even those in Old Testament times. And faith is always what makes us righteous in God's sight...never good works. (Ephesians 2:8&9)

The newborn baby of Elizabeth and Zacharias was an inheritor of all those promises God made to the Jews, and was circumcised to show the world he

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would be taught them by his parents. His circumcision did not convey salvation. That could only come as this baby grew and decided to believe in the One, True God.

2. :59 What name was the logical name for the baby?

According to what every other family did at this time in history, the baby would be given the father's name (Zacharias), or the name of a family member.

3. :60 How did Elizabeth know John was to be the baby's name?

The only way she could have known was if Zacharias had told her his story of the encounter with the angel in the temple, right? Because no one else was a witness of that meeting with the angel – no one else knew the facts besides the angel and Zacharias.

And, of course, in order for Zacharias to tell Elizabeth the story, he would have had to have written it out. He couldn't speak, even to her.

So, can't you just picture quiet nights in the priest's home – Zacharias doing his best to get across the wonder of that angel meeting, and the words spoken – but only able to write them down. And Elizabeth wonderingly reading those words, watching her husband's face, and coming to belief in this message simply because she saw the written words and then felt the new life begin to grow within her. She knew, through the written word, that the baby's name would be John.

With confidence and faith in the One, True God she told her neighbors. His name was John.

4. :61&62 Why do you think the Lord chose a name for the baby which was so different than what tradition would have expected?

As soon as I wrote out this question, I knew the answer was obvious. John was going to have an entire life totally different than what tradition would have expected. His name simply began the process.

5. :63 & 64 What finally gave Zacharias his speech back?

When the angel told Zacharias he would be mute until "the day these things take place", he meant it. John was born, but Zacharias was still mute. John was 1 week old, but Zacharias was still mute. But on the 8th day the baby was circumcised and named. Once the name was given, everything had taken place that had been predicted, and Zacharias' time of silence was ended.

6. :64 When Zacharias could once again speak, what were the first things he wanted to say?

What came out of this mouth which had been stopped up for 9 months? Praise and Prophecy. Praise to His God that had wanted to come out for some time just couldn't be silenced any longer. And prophecy of the future, given to him by the Holy Spirit.

7. :65&66 Even though Zacharias' unbelief was initially displeasing to God, what good things came out of it?

God takes what starts out as evil and turns it to good, right? Remember Joseph, in the last part of Genesis? Joseph's brothers intended to kill him because they were jealous. But God intended to save the whole nation through Joseph. And it happened just like God wanted it to.

The enemies of Jesus intended to silence Him forever by hanging Him on a cross, but God (Jesus) intended to save the world by His dying on that cross and then rising from the dead. And it happened just like God wanted it to.

Evil never wins. The end result of evil is never what the evil one intends. Incredibly, many times the end result of evil is belief in the One, True God!

When did Zacharias step from unbelief to belief? Was it when the angel told him he was going to have a son in his old age? No. Was it when he was immediately struck dumb at the angel's word? Perhaps. Was it when he realized Elizabeth was truly pregnant? Maybe.

Here's my answer: Scripture doesn't tell us when it happened, but we know beyond the shadow of a doubt, as we read today's short passage, that at some point he moved from unbeliever to believer in this promise from God.

The moment of belief is a miracle for any of us. Belief is a true gift from God. He gives us His Word, the Bible, so we will know what the truth is. (Romans 10:17) And then He offers us the gift of belief, too. He offers us the gift of opening up our eyes and our minds so we can understand what He is doing. All we need to do is reach out and accept it. Thank Him for it. We can't work it up within ourselves, and we can't make someone else believe, either. It's a gift. (Ephesians 1:7-9)

8. (:67-80) Read through these words of Zacharias at the birth of his son, John, and ask yourself: What had Zacharias been learning all this time when he could not speak?

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When I read through these verses I thought I saw a Zacharias who had ceased thinking of himself, or worrying about his wants and needs, or even worrying about the wants and needs of his people, Israel. His thoughts had been centered on God Himself, and Zacharias sounded free and excited about the future because of it.

Zacharias had spent 9 months thinking more about God than himself. The results of that focus were peace and strength and hope for the future. I don't see any fear in Zacharias' words, do you?

Zacharias, the old priest who had been full of fear, full of need, and bound by religion, now blossoms before our eyes into Zacharias, the passionate no-holds-barred believer in the One, True God, bursting forth with praise for His God and prophecy for the future!

As we read through this passage I think we see three basic things true of all prophecy:

- 1) Prophecy only comes by the Holy Spirit. No man is ever the source of prophecy. Look at verse 67. Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit in order to speak these words of prophecy. See also (Joel 2:28 and 2nd Peter 1:20.)
- 2) Prophets have been in the world since the world began. That's right. The One, True God has made sure His Words of prophecy were there for the first man and first woman, and have been there for every human being since then. Look at verse 70. "As He spoke by the mouth of His Holy prophets, who have been *since the world began*". This is repeated in Acts 3:21.
- 3) Prophecy is always about Jesus. Even when the prophecy has to do with people and events, it is always pointing to something about God, about Jesus. All the verses in our passage teach us that. From verse 68 through 79, Zacharias keeps bringing us back to the goodness and purpose of Jesus. Think also of the book of Revelation, and how we see many, many things happening to men in that prophecy, but it always is mainly and only about Jesus and what He is doing, what He is accomplishing, and the glory that is coming to Him. See also Romans 1:1-4.

9. (:67-80) Which of these words were prophecy at that time? In other words, things which hadn't happened yet at the time Zacharias spoke the words.

In verses 68, 69 & 70, Zacharias tells of things God had already done. These are not prophecies. They are statements of accomplished fact. (:68) God had come among His people and begun their redemption. (:69) God had brought us

great strength by raising up a King for us once again (he knew Jesus was already in the womb of Mary). (:70) God had been telling us this was coming since the world began.

Then, in verses 71-75 Zacharias begins prophesying of things which had already been prophesied before, but which hadn't come true yet. (:71) Someday the Jews would be saved from all their enemies. (:72-75) Someday the Jews and all the world would be able to serve God forever.

And then in verses 76-79 Zacharias has specific prophecies for his son, John. He sees and proclaims the job John will perform for God, and the Man John will introduce to the world.

10. (:67-80) How much of these words are still prophecy right now as you read this?

Everything in verses 71-75 is still to come true. The Jews have not yet been saved from all their enemies, and the world has not yet been set free to serve God forever. That day is still coming.

Verses 76-79 were fulfilled already in John the Baptist. He introduced Jesus to the world, and Jesus gave light to all who are in darkness, and continues to do that, and He also is even now guiding people's feet into the way of peace.

11. (:76-80) What things did Zacharias prophesy about his son, John?

- a) John would also be a prophet.
- b) John would prepare the way for the Messiah.
- c) John would open up people's understanding of what salvation was, and how much they needed it.
- d) John would speak of the mercy of God for people, and His love for them.
- e) John would lift up Jesus, point to Jesus, describe Jesus, and then fade away.

Application Questions:

12. Are you and I, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, part of some bigger plan of God's?

My answer? "Yes, we are. We all are." Just like Zacharias and Elizabeth were. They, even with very weak faith at first, brought into the world the tiny baby who

would grow up to be the one who introduced the long-awaited Messiah to the world.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” Ephesians 2:10

13. How would you answer this question someone might ask of God: Since You are all-powerful, why do You need us to praise You or prophesy or tell others about You? Couldn't you just do anything to get the word out to people? Angels? Words written in the sky? Why do You need us?

The Psalmist asked this question, too.

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” Psalm 8:3&4

We can't always know the “why” of things when it pertains to understanding the mind of God. All of us have many, many “why”s which may never be answered in our lifetimes.

But here's what we can know: God has made it obvious that He does care about man. And He does choose to use men in His plan for the earth. He lets us praise Him. He lets us prophesy. He lets us pray. And He chooses to use all those things to spread His truth. He could use any number of other spectacular displays of His glory, or methods of communication, and sometimes He does, but mostly, He chooses to use men.

Why? Just put that on your list of things to ask Him someday when you are kneeling at His throne.

Over 25 prophets, in over 300 prophecies, covering a period of 1,500 years, predicted the Jewish Messiah in the Jewish scriptures.

We're not going to look at all 300 of them – but let's look at the ones on the following pages, just so we know what Mary, Joseph, shepherds, kings, and wise men might have been wondering about as they witnessed the birth planned before the creation of the world:

Old Testament Prophecy	What was Said About Messiah?	Was it True of Jesus?
Genesis 3:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be a man • He would destroy the curse of sin 	Galatians 4:4&5 John 3:16
Genesis 12:3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be a descendant of Abraham – A Jew • All peoples of the world would be blessed through Him 	Luke 3:34 Matt. 1:2 Acts 3:25 Romans 9:24
Genesis 49:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be of the tribe of Judah 	Luke 3:33 Matthew 1:2
Deuteronomy 18:18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be a prophet like Moses and would speak the Words of God 	John 6:14 Acts 3:22-26
Jeremiah 23:5,6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be a King • He would be a descendant of David. • He would be THE LORD • He would save Israel 	Matthew 1:6 Romans 1:3 Romans 9:5 Romans 11:25-27 Acts 2:30 Acts 2:36
Psalms 2:7&8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be the Son of God • He would possess the world 	Luke 1:32 Matthew 3:17 1 st Corinthians 15:24&25
Psalms 72:10,11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Kings would come to worship 	Matt. 2:1-11
Isaiah 7:14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be born of a virgin 	Matthew 1:18-25 Luke 1:26-35
Micah 5:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be born in Bethlehem 	Matt 2:1, 5, 6 Luke 2:4-6
Isaiah 35:5,6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would perform miracles 	John 11:47 Matthew 11:3-6
Psalms 41:9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would be betrayed by a friend 	John 13:18,21

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Old Testament Prophecy	What was Said About Messiah?	Was it True of Jesus?
Psalms 118:22,23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would be rejected but still be the Savior 	Matt 21:42,43 Acts 4:11&12
Isaiah 8:14&15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Israel would not believe in Him 	Romans 10:1-4
Isaiah 42:1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would be meek & mild 	Matt. 12:18-20 Matt 26:62,63 Matt 12:21
Isaiah 50:6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would be beaten 	Matt. 26:67 Matt 27:26,30
Psalms 22:16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would be pierced 	John 19:34,37
Zechariah 13:7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would be forsaken by His disciples 	Matthew 26:31,56
Psalms 69:21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would be crucified 	Matthew 27:34-50 John 19:28-30
Psalms 22:18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would have his garments parted & cast lots for 	Luke 23:34
Psalms 68:18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would ascend to heaven 	Luke 24:51 Acts 1:9
Isaiah 25:8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would have victory over death 	John 20:1-10, 19-25
Isaiah 11:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gentiles would seek Him 	John 12:20&21 Romans 11:25
Isaiah 53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He would suffer & bring salvation 	The 4 Gospels

Matthew Chapter 1:18-25 - Questions

Joseph

Memory verse for this study:

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

We are stepping away from Luke for a week in order to not miss a detail of the Christmas story. Matthew tells us the story of when Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, Luke does not.

It's sweet and a little sad to watch these two young lovers grappling with the reality of an impossible and probably humiliating situation not of their own making, isn't it?

Mary and Joseph have been asked to believe the impossible. Mary deals with the news first for 3 months as she stays with Elizabeth. She returns to her home to tell Joseph and face the unbelieving stares of her family and neighbors.

What will Joseph do as he is at first shocked and then heart-broken to hear that Mary is pregnant?

1. (:18) Why did the Lord make sure Matthew included the words "before they came together" in this verse? How significant is this detail in the salvation of people's souls?
2. (:18) Had any other baby in history been fathered by the Holy Spirit (God Himself)?
3. What name of Jesus stems from this fact?

4. (:19) What was Joseph's first thought as he tried to figure out what to do about Mary's out-of-wedlock pregnancy?
5. (:20-21) What changed Joseph's mind?
6. What other proof did Joseph have that Mary didn't do anything wrong?
7. (:20) Why does the angel call him "Joseph, son of David" ?
8. Do you think the fact that Joseph knew he was a "son of David" helped him in any way to accept the angel's words?
9. (:21) Just like Zechariah, Joseph was directly given a name for the child. What was the name to be?
10. Why "Jesus"? What does "Jesus" mean?
11. (:22-23) What prophet spoke these words?
12. Why does the prophecy say His name would be "Immanuel", but the angel told Joseph to name Him "Jesus"?
13. (:24) Had Joseph been sleeping all this time the angel was speaking to him?
14. (:25) What did Joseph do as a result of this visit from the angel? What does that prove to us?

Application Question:

15. Could there be another Savior besides Jesus?

Matthew Chapter 1:18-25 - Answers

Joseph

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

Jesus has many names. In the Old Testament there are many, many verses which describe our Lord Jesus, with varied and sometimes mysterious names. The people who waited for the coming of their Savior would have known so much about Him just from the names which preceded Him.

For instance, just a few:

- Son
- Wonderful
- Counselor
- Mighty God
- Everlasting Father
- Prince of Peace
- (all the above came from just one verse in Isaiah! Isaiah 9:6)*
- Maker
- Lord of hosts
- Redeemer
- Holy One of Israel
- God of the whole earth
- (all of these came from Isaiah 54:5)*
- I Am *(Exodus 3:14) (John 8:24)*

1. (:18) Why did the Lord make sure Matthew included the words “before they came together” in this verse? How significant is this detail in the salvation of people’s souls?

It had to be crystal clear that Jesus was not the son of Joseph. If He had been the son of Joseph He could not be the Son of God. There cannot be two actual

fathers, right? If He was the son of Joseph He would not have been able to live a perfect, sinless life. If He was the son of Joseph He would not have been able to raise Himself from the dead. If He was the son of Joseph you and I would not be trusting in Him for our salvation. Instead, we would still be waiting for the Savior of the world.

2. (:18) Had any other baby in history been fathered by the Holy Spirit (God Himself)?

No. This birth was totally unique. It had never happened before, and it would never happen again.

3. What name of Jesus proves this fact?

Son of God. The Only Begotten Son of God.

Now, you might ask, aren't we (believers in Jesus) also called "sons of God"? Isn't it said in Romans 8:15-17 that *"...we are children of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus?"*

So are we "sons of God" the same way Jesus is?

The answer is: Yes, in that we, as believers, are part of the family of God.

But, no, in the sense that we were not physically fathered by God. We are not equal to Jesus, but we are related to Him. Jesus is God Himself. No person anywhere at any time has ever been equal to Jesus, nor ever will be. We have been adopted into His family through faith in Him, but we are not the same as Him.

Jesus is God. We do not become exactly like Jesus, in other words, become "Gods" when we believe in Jesus.

4. (:19) What was Joseph's first thought as he tried to figure out what to do about Mary's out-of-wedlock pregnancy?

His first thought was actually a kind, loving thought. He did not want to publicly disgrace her, even though he had the right to do that. If she had been unfaithful to him with another man (after all, that did happen in those times just like it does now) then he could have shouted it to the housetops and totally humiliated her and caused her to be shunned by her whole community.

But Joseph didn't want to do that. He assumed that Mary had been unfaithful. He was no doubt deeply hurt and confused by what he thought her actions had

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been. He knew he didn't want to marry her after learning of her immorality – or what he thought was immorality. He wouldn't marry an impure woman. But he didn't want to destroy her. He loved her. He just figured he'd have to put her away – or send her away to have this baby. He'd cover it over, protect her as much as he could, and then get on with his life, alone.

5. (:20-21) What changed Joseph's mind?

An angel changed his mind. There's just something about an angel appearing with a message from God that totally gets your attention, right?

We don't learn the angel's name here, so we don't know if this was Gabriel again. But no matter who the angel was, there was apparently no doubt in Joseph's mind that this was an angel from God, and that the message was true.

The angel told Joseph he could believe what Mary had said. The baby had been fathered by God Himself, the Holy Spirit.

The baby was a boy. And when this baby boy would be born, Joseph was to give him the name, "Jesus". This baby was going to save His people from their sins.

That was enough for Joseph. He knew then that Mary had spoken the truth, and that the actual long-awaited Messiah was on the way – being carried safely within the womb of his sweet little wife-to be, Mary.

6. What other proof did Joseph have that Mary didn't do anything wrong?

If hearing the true story of the baby's conception from an angel was not enough, the angel Joseph is also helped along by his memory of: *Isaiah 7:14*. The Word of God, spoken through Isaiah 500 years previously, sealed the deal in Joseph's mind and heart.

7. (:20) Why does the angel call him "Joseph, son of David"?

Because Joseph was a direct descendant of King David. Genealogical records were meticulously kept in the temple in Jerusalem just for this very reason. The Old Testament scholars knew that a Messiah/King would be coming and that King would be a direct descendant of King David. All along they had kept records of who "begat" who so that when the Messiah appeared it could be proved He was who He said He was. They wanted to be sure there were no fakes. They wanted to recognize their Savior when He came.

8. Do you think the fact that Joseph knew he was a “son of David” helped him in any way to accept the angel’s words?

My guess is that it helped a great deal. This would take some thinking it through, but surely Joseph figured out that although the baby was not going to be his own physical son, the baby would still be legally able to claim all the privileges of the fact that Joseph was a son of David. The baby would be, so to speak, adopted by Joseph, and therefore have a position in the line of King David.

But Joseph knew something else, too. He knew that Mary was also of the line of David. He knew that the physical mother of the baby/Savior was qualified to pass on the physical right to inherit the throne of David.

So, through both Joseph and Mary, legally and physically, Jesus was, indeed the son of David.

9. (:21) Just like Zechariah, Joseph was directly given a name for the child. What was the name to be?

Jesus.

10. Why “Jesus”? What does “Jesus” mean?

The name means “Savior”. It was not a unique name, though, in that time. In fact, it is not a unique name in our time, either. It was a common name then, and is a fairly common name now.

So Jesus was to be given a common name, almost hidden amongst his culture because it was so common.

But it meant “Savior”. And Savior He was.

Why such a common name? Why such a common Mom? Why such a common Dad? Why such a common place to grow up? (Nazareth)

I think it was because Jesus needed to grow up and live to about 30 years old before He became famous in the world. His name and his parentage gave him the opportunity to live a private life, unknown and hardly even suspected by the world of who He really was until it was time.

11. (:22-23) What prophet spoke these words?

Isaiah.

12. Why does the prophecy say His name would be “Immanuel”, but the angel told Joseph to name Him “Jesus”?

Remember how many names Jesus had even before He was born? Immanuel was one of them. But “Jesus” was His given name. It was His personal name. When Jesus was a toddler, Mary didn’t cry out, “Immanuel, come in for dinner!”. Or... “Prince of Peace, time to do your chores!” And when Joseph taught him how to be a carpenter, he didn’t say, “Almighty God, put these two pieces of wood together like this.”

They called Him Jesus.

13. (:24) Had Joseph been sleeping all this time the angel was speaking to him?

Yes, it looks like it, doesn’t it?

14. (:25) What did Joseph do as a result of this visit from the angel? What does that prove to us?

Joseph “did as the angel of the Lord commanded him”. He went to Mary and said, “Mary, I’m so sorry I didn’t believe you! You were right. This baby you are carrying is going to save the world from sin. I’m not sure what this all means, but I do know we will marry and I will protect you and our son the best I can.”

And when the baby was born, Joseph told the world His name was Jesus.

What does that show us? Joseph was a man of faith. He believed what God had said, and acted on it.

Application Question:

15. Could there be another Savior besides Jesus?

Good question. Let’s look at the facts: The Savior promised by God all through the Old Testament was going to be His Son. “You are my Son, today I have begotten You.” (Psalm 2:7) . So what we’re asking is: could God have fathered more than one Son?

We know the answer to this question from one simple phrase: Jesus is called the “*only begotten Son of God*”. (*John 1:14*) There are no other begotten sons of God. Jesus is and always will be the only Son who was physically fathered by God.

One Savior/Messiah/Son of God was promised all through the Old Testament. Only One.

If there had been or could be other begotten Sons of God, then there would be many Saviors. But there was only One.

What are the implications of this, then?

- That means Jesus is the only way to salvation. There is no salvation in any other person, or in any other name. *John 14:6*, Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me."*
- And it means if anyone else ever comes along saying they are the Savior of the world, run very fast in the other direction. *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we may be saved."* *Acts 4:12*

Luke Chapter 2:1-7 - Questions

The Stable

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

Before we look at today's passage, take a few minutes and make a list, in the first column below, of all the things you remember which are a part of the story of the birth of Jesus (like: born in a stable, animals all around...etc.):

Everything I remember to be a part of the story of the birth of Jesus:	Everything Luke 2:1-7 tells me about the birth of Jesus:

1. When verse 1 says “in those days”, what days is it talking about?
2. (:1) Who is Caesar Augustus? What does it mean when it says “all the world should be registered”?
3. (:1) Did this “registration” involve the Jews only?

4. (:2) Why is it important this verse be in the story of Jesus' birth?
5. (:3) What does it mean when it says "everyone went to his own city"?
6. (:4) How far was Bethlehem from Nazareth? Why did Joseph have to travel so far? What do you think the trip was like for them?
7. (:5) Who else went with Joseph to Bethlehem? Why Mary, too?
8. Why did God want Joseph and Mary to be in Bethlehem and out of Nazareth when the baby was born?
9. Why didn't God just choose someone to be the mother of Jesus who already lived in Bethlehem?
10. (:6) Do you think there's any chance Mary ever in her life imagined she would give birth to her first child in a stable?
11. (:7) Why weren't Mary and Joseph safely and comfortably lodging in an inn when it was time for the baby to be born?
12. (:7) What is a "manger"?
13. As Mary and Joseph took this trip, then saw their own first child born in a strange city, in a strange birthplace, surrounded by strange people, what do you think they could have remembered from the Bible or from their growing-up experiences to give them comfort and courage?
14. If Mary were scrapbooking, what pictures do you think she would paste in her scrapbook of this trip?

Application Question:

15. Why didn't God have His Son arrive in the most beautiful and glorious place on earth, with the whole world watching? Why a quiet and lonely manger, with two young uneducated parents, and animals and filth all around?

Luke Chapter 2:1-7 - Answers

The Stable

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

Before we look at today's passage, take a few minutes and make a list, in the first column below, of all the things you remember which are a part of the story of the birth of Jesus (like: born in a stable, animals all around...etc.):

Everything I remember to be a part of the story of the birth of Jesus:	Everything Luke 2:1-7 tells me about the birth of Jesus:

1. When verse 1 says “in those days”, what days is it talking about?

The days surrounding the actual time of Jesus’ birth.

Caesar Augustus was the overall Roman ruler at that time. The Roman empire was huge, so Caesar’s reign affected a very large part of the world.

2. (:1) Who was Caesar Augustus? What does it mean when it says “all the world should be registered”?

What do we know about Caesar Augustus? He was the founder of the Roman Empire (which included the area we know as Israel), ruling from 27BC to 14AD. He came into power right after Julius Caesar died. Although the government of Rome reigned over Israel with a heavy hand during this time, the Jewish people were allowed to maintain their religion and culture. The empire was peaceful and prosperous under his rule. Yes, there were uprisings and cruel military might was held over the heads of ordinary persons, but overall this was a time of growth and wealth for the empire.

This peace, maintained by future Roman government even after Caesar Augustus died (when Jesus was about 14 years old), was actually key in the spread of Christianity after Jesus’ resurrection. Crime was controlled enough, and the roads were good enough, for the Good News of Jesus to spread throughout the Roman world shortly after Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Apparently what had happened as we start Luke Chapter 2 is that Caesar ordered a general taxation over all the Roman empire, requiring all citizens to travel to their place of birth, register there, and pay their taxes.

Was Caesar the same man who is called “Herod the Great” in Matthew Chapter 2? No. Caesar was the main ruler over all of the Roman empire. Herod the Great was allowed to rule under him as king of the Jewish part of the empire. Herod was answerable to Caesar.

3. (:1) Did this “registration” involve the Jews only?

It looks like this taxation was empire-wide, involving many other areas besides Isarel.

4. (:2) Why is it important this verse be in the story of Jesus' birth?

This verse gives a definite historical context to the birth of Jesus. It's hugely important to realize that Jesus' birth was a true historical event, not just a story made up to teach a lesson. Why is that important? Because Jesus was a real, flesh and blood person, born to a real, flesh-and-blood mother, in a real, flesh-and-blood place. Jesus was 100% man, not just a vision or a spirit-being or even an angel. If He had not been a 100% man He would not have qualified to pay the price for the sins of men. It took a human man to lay down his human life in order to redeem the human lives of other men (and women).

5. (:3) What does it mean when it says "everyone went to his own city"?

Everyone travelled to the city where their ancestors began. In Joseph's case, he was a descendant of King David, and the beginning of King David was in the city of Bethlehem.

6. (:4) How far was Bethlehem from Nazareth? Why did Joseph have to travel so far? What do you think the trip was like for them?

The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 100 miles. A traveler could undertake about 20 miles a day, so it would have been about a 4-5-day trip for a healthy man and woman. Because Mary was so far pregnant, they no doubt traveled a little slower, so a good guess for this trip is a week to ten days.

Why travel so far? They had no choice. They had to go to the city of their registry.

We can only imagine that the trip was exhausting for them both, but especially for Mary. Tradition says that Mary rode on a donkey and Joseph walked. The Bible actually never mentions a donkey – that's a tradition which was added on to the story later.

7. (:5) Who else went with Joseph to Bethlehem? Why Mary, too?

Mary probably had to go, too, because she also was of the lineage of King David. With the vantage point we have of looking back over the whole plan of God, we can see that Mary and Joseph needed to be together for this birth. So, the big picture answer to this question is that Mary had to go along with Joseph on this difficult journey because God decreed that she should.

8. Why did God want Joseph and Mary to be in Bethlehem and out of Nazareth when the baby was born?

- a. Well, first of all they needed to be in Jerusalem because the scripture had already prophesied that they would be there.
- b. In addition to that, Jesus was the King of the Jews. He needed to be born in the city of King David.
- c. Also, this baby was going to challenge the authority of religion in Jerusalem. For Jesus to be born right under the noses of the religious elite without them even being aware of it, was a huge sign to the Jewish people that religion had stopped listening to God.
- d. And finally, Bethlehem was so close to Jerusalem that the lambs who would be slaughtered as sacrifices in Jerusalem were raised in Bethlehem. Jesus was going to be the Lamb of God, sacrificed for the sins of many.

(As an interesting side note, take a peek at *Micah 4:8*. “*And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.*” The tower of the flock referred to here could easily refer to the watchtower built to keep an eye on the flocks of sheep being raised for sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem. Tradition tells us there was a special field just outside Bethlehem, set aside for only these temple-sacrifice-sheep. They had to be watched over carefully by their shepherds, from birth on, so that they did not get hurt or blemished in any way. Some people guess, from this verse, that the “stable” we usually think of in the Christmas story, could actually have been this “tower of the flock”, the bottom floor of a watchtower - a safe place for the new baby lambs to be born, and perhaps the very place where Mary and Joseph finally found a place to give birth to their “Lamb of God”, after being turned away from every inn in Bethlehem.)

9. Why didn't God just choose someone to be the mother of Jesus who already lived in Bethlehem?

Because God wasn't looking for just any woman in the right geographical location. He wasn't looking for convenience, either. He was looking for the woman who would walk by faith in Him through every moment of the life of Jesus. The only woman for the job was Mary.

10.(:6) Do you think there's any chance Mary ever in her life imagined she would give birth to her first child in a stable?

I would say no. But I would also say that I could never have imagined at 17 years old where my life would lead. I had it pictured, yes. But in no way has my

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life for the last 50 years been what I pictured it to be at 17. God has a much bigger and much better picture for all of us. Someplace far greater than where our imaginations could have taken us.

Don't believe it when you hear that you should encourage young people to "dream big" and "believe in themselves". Don't make the mistake of pointing a teenager in that direction. It will limit them. Always point them towards placing their future in the hands of God. His dreams will be much bigger than they could ever think up on their own.

11.:(7) Why weren't Mary and Joseph safely and comfortably lodging in an inn when it was time for the baby to be born?

The plan of God was bigger than their plans. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord.*" Isaiah 55:8

12.:(7) What is a "manger"?

Wikipedia says: "A manger, or trough, is a feeder that is made of carved stone, wood, or metal construction and is used to hold food for animals."

13. As Mary and Joseph took this trip, then saw their own first child born in a strange city, in a strange birthplace, surrounded by strange people, what do you think they could have remembered from the Bible or from their growing-up experiences to give them comfort and courage?

Of course they could draw on their most recent encounters with angels. They could talk over and over with each other their remembrances of what the angels said to each of them, recalling their own reactions, and looking back at the ways they had each grown spiritually as they accepted what the angel said and obeyed.

And they also could have remembered their own ancestor, King David, who knew he was going to be king of Israel, but had to run from King Saul for many years, trying all the time to remain faithful to God.

There were so many other stories from Old Testament times they could have remembered.

And the remembering and talking with each other would have calmed them down, slowed their frightened heartbeats, and given them courage to go on just another step, another day, trusting God.

14. If Mary were scrapbooking, what pictures do you think she would paste in her scrapbook of this trip?

A long road ahead. Belongings piled on a donkey's back. Bedding down at night in a grove of olive trees. Making a fire and roasting some meat. Meeting up with other travelers and singing songs as they walked along. Their first view of the city of Jerusalem. Their first view of the little village of Bethlehem. Doors closed in their faces as they sought a room for the night. The look of tiredness and pain on Mary's face. The tired and sore feet of Joseph. Their first view of the stable, or of the "tower of the flock". The manger. The animals. The straw. The newborn baby, cuddled up to Mary. The Savior, sleeping in the manger. The bright stars outside in the black night. Joseph, arms settled around his sleeping wife and baby, trusting the Lord God to lead them tomorrow.

Application Question:

15. Why didn't God have His Son arrive in the most beautiful and glorious place on earth, with the whole world watching? Why a quiet and lonely manger, with two young uneducated parents, and animals and filth all around?

If I could ask this question I think God would say: "There is no place on earth beautiful and glorious enough to merit the birth of My Son. There is no number of people great enough to fully appreciate His arrival. I carefully chose the place and the time and the people and the surroundings. That's all you need to know."

That would be enough for me.

Luke Chapter 2:8-20 - Questions

The Shepherds

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. (:8) What were the shepherds doing just before the angels appeared to them?
2. (:9) What do you think it means when the verse says “the glory of the Lord shone round about them”? What did this actually look like?
3. (:9) Why were they afraid when they saw the angel?
4. (:10) Why did they not need to be afraid? What emotion could replace fear?
5. (:10) Was this joyful news just for the shepherds?
6. (:11) What was the joyful news?
7. (11) What did the angel call this one who has just been born (four names)?
8. (:12) How would they find this baby?
9. (:13& 14) What happened next?

10. (:14) What was the song of the angels?

11. (:15 & 16) What happened next?

12. (:17&18) Why would such joyful news destined for the whole world be given to the scruffiest and poorest group of men to be found on planet earth?

13. (:19) What did Mary do with all these events?

14. (:20) Did life just go back to normal, then, for the shepherds?

Application Question:

15. What will give me real joy?

Luke Chapter 2:8-20 - Answers

The Shepherds

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. (:8) What were the shepherds doing just before the angels appeared to them?

It was night. They were living in the fields and keeping watch over the sheep entrusted to them. Just an ordinary night. Perhaps they had been living in the field for weeks. Maybe they hadn't had a bath in that long, either. I picture them sitting on and around a circle of large rocks, their flocks well bedded-down for the night within the canyon or oval of bushes they had chosen to keep them from wandering. Maybe they were talking to one another, or some may have already fallen asleep. They might have been missing their wives and families. Some might have not had a lot to eat, and they were already feeling the hunger pangs which wouldn't get taken care of until morning.

Just an ordinary night for the lowest level of society. Another ordinary night in a whole lifetime of ordinary nights for the shepherds of Bethlehem.

2. (:9) What do you think it means when the verse says “the glory of the Lord shone round about them”? What did this actually look like?

I'm so curious about what the shepherds actually experienced! Was it all of a sudden explosively bright everywhere they looked? Or did the light and the sense of majesty grow slowly around them? Did the hair stand up on the back of their necks? Or did a sense of peace envelop them even as they reacted in fear to the unknown thing happening?

The glory of the Lord usually is blinding! In the book of Exodus the Lord allowed Moses, his faithful servant, to see His glory, but only after He had passed by him. To have seen His glory straight on would have killed Moses! (Exodus 33:18-23).

But this awesome and brilliant light did not blind the shepherds, did it? It surrounded them, and it was the background which framed the angel which stood before them.

They were afraid, very, very, afraid. But they kept on breathing even when their eyes told them something unbelievable was happening. They didn't die. They had never seen anything like this before, and they never would see anything like it again...at least not in the remainder of their lives on this earth.

3. (:9) Why were they afraid when they saw the angel?

Because they had nothing to compare this to. Nothing in their lives up to this point had prepared them for what their eyes were seeing. They say nobody likes change, and I think this change from ordinary night to Glory of God night was very definitely in that category. They were awestruck and drawn to this glory, but, oh my, they also didn't like it! It scared them!

We can think of this moment as a brief, blinding look at what all of eternity is going to be like for those of us who believe in Jesus. If we allow ourselves to think about it, we might admit it's frightening! Like nothing we've ever experienced before.

Yes, when we someday enter heaven ourselves, the Lord Jesus will be there and we will feel safe with Him. But also, at first we might just be so scared, because the glory of God will be more than we were ready for! It's going to be so much more than now!

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 1st Corinthians 2:9

4. (:10) Why did they not need to be afraid? What emotion could replace fear?

First, they didn't need to be afraid because the angel said so. The angel was speaking the words of God, so the shepherds were hearing from God the good news that He was not going to overwhelm them with His Holiness. They didn't need to be afraid.

And second, they didn't need to be afraid because there was another emotion which was going to replace the fear. Joy!

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They were about to see the Lord Himself, in the form of a tiny baby, lying in a manger, fully able to save the world! Joy was about to take over.

5. (:10) Was this joyful news just for the shepherds?

No. The news of this Savior was for “all peoples”. Not just the shepherds. Not just Mary & Joseph. Not just Israel. Not just the known world at the time. The news was for the whole world before that moment in time, for the whole world then, and the whole world from that point on. The baby they were about to see was going to break down every barrier that ever existed between men of different backgrounds and races and times. All were in need of a Savior, and that Savior had just arrived!

6. (:11) What was the joyful news?

A Savior King had just been born! The Christ (or Messiah) had arrived! And He was not just a person/a man/a baby....He was also God Himself!

And here was the proof that He had actually arrived, and was actually a human person – they would find Him wiggling and gurgling and wrapped in swaddling cloths, just like any other newborn real, genuine baby.

7. (11) What did the angel call this one who had just been born (four names)?

Savior
Christ
Lord
Babe

8. (:12) How would they find this baby?

They were to go into Bethlehem and look around for a newborn baby. Was there more than one newborn that night? Maybe. So how would they know where to look and which baby was the Savior? They would look for the newborn in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling cloths (all newborns would have been wrapped in swaddling cloths), *lying in a manger*. (so, look in a stable or on a farm, or in anyplace which had animals needing to be fed from a manger)

Only one Bethlehem newborn was lying in a manger that night. ☺

9. (:13& 14) What happened next?

The heavens exploded! A “multitude” of angels probably means there was no way of counting them. They were innumerable! And they were all singing and praising God. They were shouting out how Glorious He is. And they were speaking the blessing of peace and goodwill to men.

10.(:14) What was the song of the angels?

Their song was all about God and they couldn't praise Him enough. They were shouting out how Glorious He is. And they were speaking the blessing of peace and goodwill to men.

Notice what the angels' song was not about. It wasn't about them. It wasn't about how beautiful they were, or how magnificent they were. It wasn't about what great music they were making, or how comfortable they were, or how all their needs had been met. It wasn't about how much they loved their lives. It wasn't about what they were going to do tomorrow. Their song wasn't about themselves at all.

It was about God.

When we sing and talk and think about God, and not about ourselves, wow!, perfect!

11.(:15 & 16) What happens next?

The angels left. The glory faded. The still black night and stars reappeared. The shepherds looked at one another and said “Let's go!”

12.(:17&18) Why would such joyful news destined for the whole world be given to the scruffiest and poorest group of men to be found on planet earth?

Because they had network! They told it to everyone they saw. That's exactly what the Lord wanted to happen.

13.(:19) What did Mary do with all these events?

When Mary first heard the news from the angel that she was to be the mother of the Savior, she said, “Let it be”. (Luke 1:38). She didn't know what to expect at that point. She was simply willing.

Now that the baby Christ was born, she still didn't know what to expect next, but she just found a safe place in her heart and stored her memories and her

questions there. It wasn't a place of worry or fear or doubt. It was a small place to go and review all that had happened and wonder if she would ever understand all of it. In Luke 2:51 we see again that Mary was still taking all the events of Jesus' life and placing them in her private safe place in her heart. She didn't have to have all the questions answered. She trusted that the God who had brought her this far would someday explain it all.

14. (:20) Did life just go back to normal, then, for the shepherds?

It looks like they walked back to their fields and their sheep in the middle of the night, skipping, talking, laughing, and rehearsing every moment of that totally not-ordinary night!

Normal? Never again.

Application Question:

15. What will give me real joy?

We all deeply desire joy. We search for it everywhere.

When we're little we think the newest toy or the best candy will give it to us. But even if we get all the toys and candy we want, the joy is brief.

When we're teens we crave relationships which will bring us joy. And even if we're surrounded by friends the happiness doesn't last long enough.

When we begin our working lives we find fulfillment in working and buying homes and paying our bills and having relaxing moments of entertainment. But joy is elusive. There's always next month's bills.

When our children leave home we look forward to the joy of retirement, of enjoying life more as we don't have to work so hard. But the joy of retirement fades as our bodies tell us the not-to-be-avoided truth: we are heading toward the end of our lives.

And when we've come to accept the aging, the fading, the goodbye's, we still long for the joy of knowing one more good year...one more great meal...one

more day of laughter with friends. And even when we are fortunate enough to end our lives in peace, we know the joy of this life never did fulfill the original longing.

The only thing which will ever fulfill that deep longing for joy is to know God.

And we can't know God until we come to the Savior and accept the gift He brought on Christmas Day so long ago. He came to give us His life. When we accept His gift we know God for the first time in our lives, and then the joy grows and never, ever, ends.

Luke Chapter 2:21-38 - Questions

The Temple

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

1. (:21) Eight (8) days after Jesus' birth:
 - Why did they name Him Jesus? (Luke 1:310)
 - Why did they circumcise Him? (Genesis 17:1-14)
2. Why did Jesus have to obey laws which were laid down in the Old Testament? (Hebrews 4:14-16, 1st Peter 1:18&19, John 1:29)
3. (:22-24) Thirty-two (32) days after He was circumcised: (which was 40 days after His birth)
 - Why did they have to go to Jerusalem 40 days after His birth? (Leviticus 12, Exodus 13:11-16)
 - What did their sacrifice (a pair of turtledoves) tell you about Mary and Joseph?
4. (:25) Who was Simeon? What was he like?
5. (:26) What promise did Simeon have from God about the coming Messiah? Why would God have given him that promise?
6. (27) Why was Simeon in the temple at exactly the same time Mary and Joseph entered with Jesus?

7. (:27-32) Simeon prophesied about Jesus and what He was going to do. What did Simeon prophesy about Him?
8. (:33-35) What did Simeon prophesy just for Mary?
9. (:36-37) Who was Anna? What do you think she was praying for all those years?
10. (:38) What did Anna prophesy about Jesus?
11. Why would God have wanted Mary and Joseph to know these things from these two prophets? What purpose could it have served?

Application Question:

12. God warned Mary and Joseph, through Simeon, of the heartache that was coming for them. Will He also warn me when something tragic is about to happen in my life? Would I want Him to?

Luke Chapter 2:21-38 - Answers

The Temple

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

Do you ever have a sense of doom approaching? Do you ever think God is warning you of something about to happen? Does He even do that? Has He ever done it before? Is there such a thing as a “premonition”? If so, how can you know whether a “premonition” is from God to lead you and guide you, or from Satan, to give you fear?

1. (:21) Eight (8) days after Jesus’ birth:

- Why did they name Him Jesus? (Luke 1:31)

They were told to.

- Why did they circumcise Him? (Genesis 17:1-14)

It was the Old Testament law that a Jewish boy baby should be circumcised on the 8th day of his life.

2. Why did Jesus have to obey laws which were laid down in the Old Testament? (Hebrews 4:14-16, 1st Peter 1:18&19, John 1:29)

Jesus needed to be obedient in everything the Bible ever said to do. He needed to be totally sinless. He couldn’t do anything evil. And He couldn’t leave out anything good. Jesus was a Jew, so He needed to do all things the scripture said the Jews should do. He obeyed all the laws of the Old Testament. He couldn’t pay the price for the sin of the world if He was even the least bit tarnished Himself.

3. (:22-24) Thirty-two (32) days after He was circumcised: (which was 40 days after His birth)

- Why did they have to go to Jerusalem 40 days after His birth? (Leviticus 12, Exodus 13:11-16)

The Old Testament law required that Mary and Joseph, as the parents of a first-born son, offer a sacrifice in the temple. The first-born actually belonged to the Lord, according to the Old Testament, so Mary and Joseph would have given an offering to the Lord, in essence saying, "We know our first-born son belongs to You, but instead would you please take this offering in his place?"

- What did their sacrifice (a pair of turtledoves) tell you about Mary and Joseph?

They were very, very poor. They offered the smallest sacrifice allowed by law. That didn't make their sacrifice any less valuable, though. It was just God's way of making sure everyone could obey the law if they wanted to, no matter how rich or poor.

4. (:25) Who was Simeon? What was he like?

He was a Jewish man who totally loved the Lord, and knew of the Old Testament prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, and had waited all his life for that Messiah.

5. (:26) What promise did Simeon have from God about the coming Messiah? Why would God have given him that promise?

God had promised Simeon at some point in his life that he would someday actually see with his own eyes the promised Messiah.

6. (27) Why was Simeon in the temple at exactly the same time Mary and Joseph entered with Jesus?

God was about to fulfill a promise to Simeon. No detail gets ignored when the Lord moves. There are no happenstances with God. The timing is always perfect. The Holy Spirit Himself led Simeon into the temple at the right time and the right place in order to "bump into" Mary and Joseph, also led of the Spirit into the temple at the right time and the right place. ☺

7. (:27-32) Simeon prophesied about Jesus and what He was going to do. What did Simeon prophesy about Him?

I love this picture of the elderly Simeon lifting the newborn Lord of all Creation up into the air! He prophesies that this baby is actually the Messiah Israel had been waiting for, and that He would be not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. That was the good news.

But he also prophesied that the child would not only be the Savior of many, but also the stumbling block for many, and would be a sign to the whole world that the Lord knew exactly what they were thinking and doing. That was the bad news.

8. (:33-35) What did Simeon prophesy just for Mary?

And he spoke directly to Mary and Joseph, warning them that their sweet baby boy would someday cause them to feel like a sword was piercing them!

9. (:36-37) Who was Anna? What do you think she was praying for all those years?

Anna actually lived in or near the temple grounds. She had spent her life, since becoming a widow after 7 years of marriage, serving God in the temple. The scripture says she eighty four years old. She could have been serving the Lord in the temple for over 60 years! And how had she served Him? She was a prayer warrior. She fasted (an important part of prayer), and she prayed, day and night.

What was she praying for? The promised coming of the Messiah.

10. (:38) What did Anna prophesy about Jesus?

She just simply saw the baby held by Mary, and proclaimed to everyone within hearing that the answer to her 60 years of prayer was right before her!

11. Why would God have wanted Mary and Joseph to know these things from these two prophets? What purpose could it have served?

The prophecies of Simeon and Anna would have been encouraging to Mary and Joseph, for one thing. They would have been reminded again that this whole series of events was definitely from God, and thus they would have been renewed in their faith that He was going to do everything He said He would.

And these prophecies would have gotten the attention of at least a few in the crowded temple. Some others who might also have been yearning for a Messiah could have heard them and responded in faith, too.

And...who knows what else the Lord accomplished through this simple and perhaps a little confusing day in the temple. He always has a purpose.

Application Question:

12. God warned Mary and Joseph, through Simeon, of the heartache that was coming for them. Will He also warn me when something tragic is about to happen in my life? Would I want Him to?

This part of the Christmas Story is definitely a warning of what the future would hold for Mary and Joseph. I wouldn't define the warning from Simeon as a "premonition". It was not spooky or creepy. But it was a prophecy from a Godly man who had a message from God. It was going to come true.

Mary and Joseph had to decide what to do with this news. The scripture says (:33) they marveled at what was spoken about Him. I imagine Mary did the same things with the prophecies of Simeon and Anna as she had done with the visit of the shepherds, and as she would do with the many other things she saw and heard as Jesus was growing up. (2:19, 2:51). She "kept", or "treasured" these facts in her heart. In other words, she put them into a treasure chest in her heart – a place where she could think about them later. She probably didn't understand everything that was happening. She needed time to think about events and "look" at them over and over again, over the years beginning to fit all the pieces of this giant puzzle together. After Jesus' death and resurrection and the start of the fledgling church, Mary's treasure chest would have been a source of much joy and comfort to those who did not know Him during His earthly life.

"Treasuring" is the key, I think, for us to know whether or not our feelings of warning, or "premonition", are from God or not. Never does the scripture say Mary was filled with fear. And never does it say she worried about these things. She simply treasured them. If feelings of doom or premonition cause us fear, they are not from God.

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I think most of the time God does not warn us about things in our futures. And, quite honestly, I'm glad He doesn't. But if God does see fit to warn us about things to come in our lives, there are five (5) things I think we can learn from Mary & Joseph, Simeon & Anna:

- He has never promised us we will be warned of things in advance. We know He can give those warnings, because we've seen Him do it in scripture. But we have no right to demand it – no reason to assume He will. Most of the time we are told in scripture to simply trust Him for whatever comes in the future. *“And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.” Psalm 9:10*
- 2. If He does forewarn us of something, He has a reason why we need to know, or be warned. We may not fully realize His reasons, but we can know He has them. And we need never fear He has anything but His plan and our good in mind. *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28*
- 3. His warnings won't produce fear. On the contrary, they will probably be accompanied by peace and a renewed trust in the powerful workings of God. . *“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31*
- 4. His warnings don't come from anything or anyone evil. They will come from genuine people of God, or from events which are bringing people to a saving relationship with God *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil” Proverbs 3:5-7*
- 5. If a warning, or “heads-up” comes from God, it will never, ever, be in disagreement with scripture. God will never direct anyone to do what is evil, or to sin in any way.

Matthew Chapter 2:1-23 - Questions

The Wise Men

Memory verse for this study:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

Traditionally the Christmas story includes the arrival of the Three Wise Men at the stable, worshipping the baby Jesus in the manger. But it's more likely Jesus was no longer a baby, but closer in age to a toddler when they arrived.

Here's why:

- Matthew 2:9 and 11 call Jesus a “young child” (not a babe).
- And Matthew 2:11 says they arrived at a “house” (not a stable).
- When Herod questioned the wise men about when the star had appeared, he found out it had been within the previous 2 years. It might have taken that long for the Wise Men to assemble their entourage and travel to Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:7)
- When Herod tried to eliminate his completion (or so he thought) by killing all the babies in and around Bethlehem, he ordered all boy children under the age of 2 murdered. (Matthew 2:16)

The age of Jesus doesn't change the importance or impact of this true piece of the Christmas story.

1. (:1) Who were the Wise Men and when did they come?
2. (:2) Why did they come?
3. Why would important men who were not Jews want to come and worship the newborn baby Jesus, King of the Jews?

4. (:3) Why was Herod troubled when he heard these men had arrived from the east? Why would all Jerusalem have been troubled, too?
5. (:4) What did Herod want to learn from the Jewish priests and scribes?
6. (:5&6) Where did the Jewish priests find the answer to Herod's question?
7. (:7, 8) Why was Herod interested in when the star had first appeared to the Wise Men in the east?
8. (:9-11) What was the Wise Men's reaction to finally arriving at their destination?
9. (:12) Who was directing this trip of the Wise Men?
10. (:13-15) How did the Lord warn Joseph to flee?
11. (:15) What Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled because Joseph, Mary and Jesus had to flee to Egypt?
12. (:16-18) What does this horrific event tell us about the coming of Jesus to Bethlehem?
13. (:19&20) By now, what is Joseph used to in his relationship with the Lord?
14. (:21&22) Where did Joseph go first when he returned to Israel? Where did he finally end up? Why was it safe to raise Jesus in Galilee instead of Judea?

Application Question:

15. How did you feel, God, when you saw those innocent little boys being murdered by that maniac, King Herod, all because of the birth of your Son?

Matthew Chapter 2:1-23 - Answers

The Wise Men

Memory verse for this study:

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The age of Jesus doesn't change the importance or impact of this true piece of the Christmas story.

1. (:1) Who were the Wise Men and when did they come?

They arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They were from Asia, or perhaps Persia, or maybe what is present-day China. They were not Jews. They were Gentiles. They came while Herod was still king in Israel. The rest of this story lets us assume they arrived within two years after the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Apparently they had been following a star in the heavens. The star seems to have appeared when Jesus was born, and then kept moving through the skies as they travelled, getting them closer and closer to Jerusalem. They knew they were seeking the birth of the baby who would be the King of the Jews, the Messiah. How would they have known that? They must have been familiar with the Jewish scriptures. How would that have happened? Possibly Daniel, 600 years before this, had left copies of the Jewish scriptures in Persia after his death.

2. (:2) Why did they come?

They wanted to worship the King of the Jews.

3. Why would important men who were not Jews want to come and worship the newborn baby Jesus, King of the Jews?

Why would rich and powerful men who were not Jews make such an arduous and dangerous trip simply to worship a King of another country? I would say they had faith in the One, True God!

4. (:3) Why was Herod troubled when he heard these men had arrived from the east? Why would all Jerusalem have been troubled, too?

Well, the reason all Jerusalem was troubled was because when Herod was troubled, everyone was troubled. He was a madman. Why was Herod troubled? Pretty simple, I think. He saw this "King of the Jews" as a threat to his own reign. He had a simple rule in his life: kill anyone who might take away what I have!

5. (:4) What did Herod want to learn from the Jewish priests and scribes?

He wanted to know where this King would have been born, according to the Jewish prophecies.

6. (:5&6) Where did the Jewish priests find the answer to Herod's question?

Of course they found it in the Old Testament scriptures. In the book of Micah it was clearly spelled out: the King would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem. The most interesting part of this to me is: why weren't the Jewish priests and

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scholars looking for Him? If it was so obvious to Wise Men from thousands of miles away, why didn't the religious Jews in Jerusalem realize the Messiah had come?

Why didn't they? They weren't all that interested. They had their own comforts and power-bases to be concerned about. Religion was a part of their lives...God was not.

7. (:7, 8) Why was Herod interested in when the star had first appeared to the Wise Men in the east?

He was especially interested in how old the new King might be.

8. (:9-11) What was the Wise Men's reaction to finally arriving at their destination?

Joy. And worship. Their hearts leaped into their throats as they saw the very God Who had made them, toddling around a small, poor house in Bethlehem! They knew at that moment that the prophecies they had read were true! They knew at that moment that their eternity was all wrapped up in this little boy! They knew at that moment their purpose in life had been to learn the truth, travel to this far-away land, and worship their God!

Isn't this just the most awesome illustration for us that Jesus was not just for the Jews? He was, and is, for the whole world!

9. (:12) Who was directing this trip of the Wise Men?

God Himself. God made sure they arrived. And He made sure they safely departed – so that they could return to their gentile friends share the Good News.

10. (:13-15) How did the Lord warn Joseph to flee?

Another angel in another dream. Run, Joseph! Herod is going to try to kill your son. My Son. I will always be right with you, helping you keep your boy, My Boy, safe until He can do the things We have planned for Him to do.

11.(:15) What Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled because Joseph, Mary and Jesus had to flee to Egypt?

Numbers 24:8, Hosea 11:1. Jesus was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem, Israel. But He was also prophesied to come out of Egypt? How could this be? Simple. Born in Bethlehem, flee to Egypt, then return. God's Word is always true.

12.(:16-18) What does this horrific event tell us about the coming of Jesus to Bethlehem?

Christmas was not what we have made it. It was not twinkling and peaceful and soft music and calm. It was violent! The Lord of all the Universe was about to wrench His world away from the one who stole it! All the evil in the world was going to try to come crashing down on this moment in history.

13.(:19&20) By now, what is Joseph used to in his relationship with the Lord?

Dreams. Angels. Obedience to the command of God. Faith. Moving. Being flexible and willing to go and stay. Stay and go. Joseph was such an obedient man of God!

14.(:21&22) Where did Joseph go first when he returned to Israel? Where did he finally end up? Why was it safe to raise Jesus in Galilee instead of Judea?

When he first came back to Israel it looks like he assumed he should return to Bethlehem, where Jesus had been born. But he was warned again in a dream to stay away from that area because another madman was reigning, so he travelled further north, back to the area he and Mary had first come from – Galilee. Nazareth. Nobody would be looking for the King of the Jews in Nazareth! No good thing ever came out of Nazareth. The perfect hiding place.

Application Question:

15. How did you feel, God, when you saw those innocent little boys being murdered by that maniac, King Herod, all because of the birth of your Son?

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I think I know how He felt, just from seeing other times in scripture where He reacted to the ugliness of death and sin. He wept. He groaned (John 11:33-35) He wanted very much to just wipe out the evil human race! (Exodus 32:9&10)

But to wipe out the evil he would have had to destroy them all...and He didn't want to. There were people in the midst of the evil of our world who believed in Him, who clung to Him in faith. And there were people yet to come who would do the same.

He wanted to see this thing through, because He knew He was going to make it possible for those dying baby boys and their grieving parents, and you, and me to be in a place of peace and joy forever! (1st Peter 1:20&21)

Have you heard the Christmas story but never opened your arms wide to the One who was born as a baby for one purpose: to grow up, live a perfect life, heal, teach, reach out to His world, and then be nailed on a cross, die, and miraculously raise Himself from the dead...because of love?

If you have not ever bowed your knee to Jesus, telling Him you believe He died for you and thanking Him for His gift of salvation...please don't wait a day longer. Do it today.

He's waiting for you.

Need a suggestion for your next Bible Study?

How about continuing on in the book of Luke?

*Find out what Jesus said and did in His three
Years of ministry on earth.*

*Ask yourself,
“What did He do which made so many people
Angry enough to want Him dead?”*

*Then watch as He was condemned to die on Thursday,
Nailed to a horrible Roman cross on Friday,
Died, and then was buried in a borrowed tomb....*

But...He rose from the dead on Sunday!

Studying His life will change your life.

Christmas Bible Study
www.kathleendalton.com

Additional copies of this Bible Study can be ordered online,
at www.lulu.com,
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