

# THE SAVIOR WHO CAME TO US

**THE POINT:**  
JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

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## LUKE 2:4-12,16-20

<sup>4</sup> Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

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<sup>8</sup> In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: <sup>11</sup> **Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.** <sup>12</sup> This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger."

**MEMORY VERSE**

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

**KEYWORDS**

**Engaged (v. 5)**—Because they had not yet consummated their marriage via intercourse, Mary and Joseph were still only engaged as months before in 1:27.

**Manger (v. 7)**—That Jesus was laid in a manger indicates that the family was forced to stay in a stable, or perhaps a cave that

served as a stable, because there was no other room available in Bethlehem.

**Lord (v. 11)**—The Greek word for Lord *kurios* was used of secular rulers, but it is also the standard translation of the primary name of God in Hebrew, *Yahweh*.

# HOW WAS THE PROMISE OF SALVATION FULFILLED?

Life is filled with decisions that can impact the rest of our lives, such as a job change or a move to another city. After serving one church for many years, my family and I answered God's call on our lives to plant a church in another city. We struggled leaving a place where God had blessed our lives with an incredible church family, friends, ministry, and life. Leaving all this was hard.

Even as we answered God's call, a pastor friend reached out to me. The Lord had called him years before to leave his hometown to plant a church. He told me how he had battled with the decision to move, but then he also shared an amazing perspective. God called his entire family, not just him. Years later, all his kids know Jesus and are now serving Jesus in that city. I, too, can now say I have also seen my kids come to faith in Christ in our new city.

Jesus made a move too. He moved from heaven to earth, coming to us as a baby. His decision impacts all of us—for eternity!

## Through Divine Circumstances

// Luke 2:4-7

The oppressive rule of the Romans fueled the expectation of the coming Messiah. God promised King David that “your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16). God fulfilled His promise to David when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, although it was not the royal event most people would have expected.

We're given few details about this important birth. Luke was inspired to tell us exactly what we need to know: “She gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them” (v. 7). Jesus was born in humble circumstances. There was no ceremonial fanfare.

**WHAT DETAILS ABOUT JESUS' BIRTH STORY ARE DIFFERENT THAN WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE EXPECTED FOR A KING?**



## THE POINT: JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

Mary and Joseph knew this was a miraculous birth because of the angels' words to both of them (Matt. 1:20-21; Luke 1:26-37). We should recognize the powerful picture of humility that surrounded the birth of God's Son. It's humbling for God to leave the majesty and glory of heaven to become like one of us. Yet in coming to earth, Jesus came to the most humbling of circumstances for any birth. Jesus was of royal lineage, but He came for all people, everywhere—the least to the greatest. No person will be denied access to the Messiah.

Jesus grew up in humble circumstances. His ministry was among the common people. He came to serve and became the ultimate Servant. No wonder so many didn't recognize Him as the Messiah. Even though Jesus was a direct descendant of King David, He was not the conquering warrior Messiah so many were expecting.

It's important for us to reflect on the birth of Christ and how He came into this world. We need to surrender our expectations to what God orchestrates in our lives. His ways are always greater than our ways, and we can trust that He has a perfect purpose for everything He does.

### Proclaimed by Angels // Luke 2:8-12

An angel of the Lord appeared and told the shepherds, "Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (v. 11). As he made this announcement, the angel was joined by more angels: "a multitude of the heavenly host" (v. 13). What an incredible experience for these shepherds to see and hear the skies filled with the praise of angels.

#### HOW HAS JESUS' BIRTH BEEN GOOD NEWS IN YOUR LIFE?

A few things stand out about this angelic announcement:

- **The announcement was terrifying.** As the angel spoke "and the glory of the Lord shone around them" (v. 9), Luke described them as "terrified." The word literally means they feared a great fear! However, the angel's first words to the shepherds were, "Don't be afraid" (v. 10). Their fear turned into amazement. To see and hear the angels proclaim the glory of God must have filled the shepherds' hearts with an awe and wonder of the Lord.



### DIGGING DEEPER BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

The first to hear the "good news" of the birth of Jesus were the shepherds. They weren't the expected recipients of the announcement of the birth of King Jesus. Traditionally, shepherds were among the lowest social classes, so the announcement going to them first wasn't likely. They were considered unclean and of poor reputation—representing the sinners and outcasts for whom Jesus came (Matt. 9:9-13). The angel announced "Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Jesus would come to save even those considered the lowest in society. Jesus was given three titles in this verse: Savior, Christ, and Lord. These titles highlight His mission as Savior, His royalty as Christ, and His authority as Lord.

**What do you think is the significance of the angels announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds first?**

- **The announcement was comforting.** Comfort would come in the angel's call to not be afraid. The shepherds would receive even greater comfort as they heard "good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (v. 10). These shepherds surely carried in their hearts the same longing and hope for God's deliverance that all the people had been yearning for, and now that longing was fulfilled: "Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (v. 11).

It's possible the shepherds had a specific picture in their minds of what the Messiah's arrival would be like. However, the angel painted a different picture: "You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger" (v. 12). This humble description would have brought comfort to the shepherds, for they were also simple men. Jesus had come just like them.

- **The announcement was inspiring.** What started with one angel now multiplied to "a multitude of the heavenly host" (v. 13). In his vision of God's throne, Daniel said, "Thousands upon thousands served him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" (Dan. 7:10). God's angels were now declaring the glory of God and peace on earth.

The angelic announcement was both amazing and terrifying ... so simple, yet so comforting ... so powerful, yet so inspiring.

### WHAT SPECIFIC PROMISES DID GOD MAKE THROUGH THESE ANGELIC MESSENGERS?

## Praised by the People

// Luke 2:16-20

After such an awesome experience, no wonder the shepherds exclaimed, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which

the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15). It's no surprise that "they hurried off" to see the very thing the angel proclaimed. The shepherds found all things just as the angel had told them. It must not have been long after Jesus' birth, for they found "the baby who was lying in the manger" (v. 16). The shepherds "reported the message they were told about this" (v. 17), adding to the wonder of all the events since Gabriel first appeared to Mary (1:26-38).



### HOW HAS SALVATION BROUGHT JOY TO YOUR LIFE?

After they told Joseph and Mary of the angelic announcement, the shepherds shared what they had witnessed and heard from the angel, and "all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them" (v. 18). The story and announcement of Jesus' birth inspired a deep level of amazement.

God was doing something new—something that brought hope for a people longing for deliverance. It wouldn't be hard to connect the birth of this baby with the angels' declaration of "peace on earth to people he favors!" (v. 14). This child, Jesus, would bring to us that which we could never give ourselves: peace. God's peace would come through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Therein lies our hope.

## THE POINT: JESUS CAME FOR OUR SALVATION.

**Peace grounded in faith.** This peace is by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ alone. It cannot be earned (Eph. 2:8-9). Instead, we receive this peace as we trust in the death and resurrection of Christ. His work of salvation for humanity was the reason He came to earth as a baby!

**Peace that frees us from the past.** “While we were still sinners Christ, died for us” (Rom. 5:8) and He alone is faithful and just to forgive us of our sin and cleanse us of our unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). In Christ we are forgiven of our sin and set free from the shackles of pain and guilt.

**Peace that fills our present.** We can experience His peace today. The peace that Christ gives us in salvation surpasses all our understanding (Phil. 4:7) and overcomes all circumstances in our lives (John 16:33).

**Peace that points to our future.** This peace sets us free from our past and fulfills our present and propels us toward a guaranteed future. Nothing can separate us from the love and presence of Christ, we can rest in His peace for eternity (Rom. 8:38-39).

## DID YOU KNOW?

Sarah Parker Remond was born free to affluent parents in 1826. Remond was a voice against racial hierarchy, gender inequality, and a woman of science and medicine. In 1856, Remond joined the American Anti-Slavery Society and lectured for a couple of years. She was an effective abolitionist campaigner and the first woman to lecture publicly against slavery in this country. While slavery in Britain was abolished in 1838, large manufacturers in Britain depended on cotton imported from Southern U.S. states, and thus upon slavery. Remond worked to influence British public opinion to support the Union cause. After slavery was abolished, she attended to the many newly freed slaves. After the Civil War, Remond worked with her brother and Frederick Douglass in the American Equal Rights Association.<sup>2</sup> Remond could've lived a life of affluence; but chose the life of a servant.

## How can life as a servant honor and bring glory to Christ our Lord?

## LIVE IT

### How will you live out your hope in Jesus?

The path of our lives is shaped by personal decisions we control and world events over which we have no control, such as the economy, wars, and pandemics. However, the greatest impact on our lives comes from two events that happened long ago: the birth of Jesus and His resurrection. When God came to earth as an infant, He made our salvation possible. Jesus gives us hope for a future filled with peace.

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- **Reflect on your life.** Reflect on how God's plans for you turned out to be better than what you expected. Share your reflections with someone who is currently disappointed about his or her life.
- **Share Jesus' birth.** Follow the example set by the shepherds. Commit to sharing the news of Christ's birth with someone at work, at the store, or in your community.
- **Aim for peace.** Do an honest evaluation of the things that you are currently struggling with. Ask God to direct you in those areas so you can experience His peace.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. HUMBLE BEGINNINGS // LUKE 2:6-7

Swaddling your newborn infant is not unusual. It helps the baby sleep by making them feel like you are holding them. It helps them to be calm while resting. It also helps them not to scratch themselves during the night. It was customary for Mary to wrap her newborn infant in cloths; in biblical times it was to straighten and strengthen their limbs, so it was not unusual that Mary wrapped Jesus in cloths. However, Jesus being placed in a manger is not what we would expect for the Messiah. The humility of Jesus began at the beginning of His life. He gave up His divinity to live a humble life so we could receive salvation.

**Jesus' birth makes Him approachable and reveals God's love.**

## 2. AMAZING DECLARATION // LUKE 2:16-20

The gospel of Luke highlights unique things about the birth of Jesus. Although Jesus is the promised Messiah, His birth, life, and ministry were not like what would be expected of a King. His birth announcement came to shepherds who immediately sought out the Messiah (v. 16). Jesus caused amazement at birth and later by His teaching and ministry. "After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them" (vv. 17-18). While others were amazed, Mary held these things about Jesus in her heart and continued to think about them (v. 19). The shepherds left rejoicing about Jesus.

**We, too, should rejoice over the amazing declaration—our Savior Jesus was born!**

## 3. PEACE OFFERING // LUKE 2:13-14

The peace lily is a popular plant often given to bereaved families at funerals. The white flower looks like a flag of surrender seeking peace. The plant thrives and grows better in light. A peace lily may

have a calming effect, but it can't give true peace. We can seek peace in various places, but the true Source of peace is Jesus. When the angel of the Lord announced the birth of Jesus, heavenly beings joined the angel to praise God (v. 13). They were worshiping God because of Jesus who brought peace. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors" (v. 14). Through Christ we have peace with God.

**Praise God for the peace that Jesus gives.**

## 4. WISE COUNSEL // LUKE 9:6

These days there are a lot of TV shows featuring counselors who claim to be able to fix your problems. Iyanla Vanzant has a popular show on the OWN network called "Iyanla Fix My Life." Iyanla has a Juris Doctor degree and a master's degree in spiritual psychology. She is also an ordained New Thought minister. Her show focuses on self-help and forgiveness in dealing with crises, trauma, and broken relationships. But Iyanla falls woefully short when compared to the true Counselor. In Christ is indescribable wisdom. His amazing teaching, knowledge, and wisdom fills us with wonder. In Jesus, we have the only Counselor we need. If it's counsel you need, seek Jesus.

**He is the answer for any problem in the world.**

## 5. REAL PEACE // JOHN 14:27

Over the past several years racial incited violence and discrimination has been a topic in and across the U.S. Historically, racial violence and discrimination against African-Americans had been blatant and tolerated by people who had the ability to change it. African-Americans and others participate in demonstrations and organizations that stand against racial discrimination. People are looking for peace, but that kind of peace can't compare to the peace we have in Jesus. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful" (John 14:27).

**The Prince of Peace restores our hope.**



# You've Got Jesus All Wrong

JUSTIN LESTER

Some say Jesus quoted the Old Testament because all of the prophecies had already come true before Jesus came. For example, Isaiah's prophecy about the coming of a baby (Isa. 7-9) was about Josiah or Hezekiah and the hope for the kingdom of Israel more than it was about Jesus ... right?

The words of an old song by Marvin Gaye, "I heard it through the grapevine," details how a simple story can become so much more than its original intention. Often, the story is false. In today's society, the same applies to the story of Jesus. The beauty within the story of faith, salvation, redemption, reconciliation, and restoration through Jesus has been studied so much that, at times, Jesus has been written out.

He did not gift us His life for us to question it. He gifted us His life for us to share it.

As you study these lessons on the prophecies of Jesus, you will learn that the entirety of the Old Testament points candidly to Jesus. Along with the Father and Holy Spirit, Jesus is intricately intertwined in the narrative of the Old Testament. It can be challenging to navigate all of that information, especially in our Google world.

A considerable amount of people are falling away from the faith and from attending a local church. Churches have turned to technology to assist in sharing Jesus' story, but so has the enemy. In that process, so many questions about what is or is not true about the gospel are placed on

the table. Couple that with conspiracy theories, fallen leaders, the questionable character of historical writers, and new scrolls and gospels found yearly, which present several ways for us to question the infallible Word of God. In the same manner, though, there are more reasons to trust the infallible Word of God.

Let's place a few questions on the table.

1 – Did Jesus ride two animals on Palm Sunday with a colt and foal of a donkey? (Matt. 21:1-3) Does that affirm Zechariah (Zech. 9:9) or Jacob (Gen. 49:9-11) or both?

2 – Was Jesus a black man? How tall was he? Did he have locs? (Rev. 1:9-18)

3 – Was Joseph really in his elderly years and Mary a teenager?

4 – Did Jesus die or faint? Is that why the tomb was empty?

5 – Insert your question here:

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Consider the common thread in our questions: engaging with myths is a desire to know Jesus fully. The mistake is such a desire can cause more questions. It can distance us from the redemptive nature of the cross (1 Pet. 1:3-9), the power of a relationship with Christ (John 15:9-17), and the goal for us as Christians to go! (Matt. 28:16-20). How powerful would it be for you to end this study on the prophetic nature of Jesus with a more engaged life in Scripture and Jesus, instead of seeking ways to impress someone with new knowledge. Here are three suggestions on how to approach Scripture as a means to build a relationship with Jesus instead of offensively trying to show how much we know.

### **Be honest about why you are reading Scripture (Col. 3:17)**

Anything without an intention is wasted time. What is your intention when you approach Scripture? Paul challenges the believer to do all things in Jesus' name, and in the process, you will be giving thanks to the Father. Time with Jesus has a goal for us to leave with a greater understanding and practice of thanksgiving.

### **Read Scripture, seeking to hear from God, not to affirm your voice (Rom. 10:17)**

Along with approaching the gospel with an honest intention, we are also challenged to ensure that we understand Jesus through God's voice, not our own. Paul challenged the people in Rome that, "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ" (Rom. 10:17). The message of Christ spoken by Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit is what gives flesh to our faith. An easy way to be distracted from a relationship with Jesus is looking for Jesus' story to affirm your story, instead of trying to be a part of Jesus' story.

### **Let Jesus unveil Himself (John 6:63)**

The myths and stories about Jesus often leave Jesus out. Jesus told his disciples and tells you, "The Spirit is the one who gives life. The flesh doesn't help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). Jesus knows how much of Himself we can handle as we continue to understand what He is calling each of us to do to build his kingdom. Walk-in step with Jesus and allow His pace to be your pace.

Allow me to let you in on a secret. Easter for preachers is our Super Bowl. We love searching for new information to strengthen how we preach on Holy Week and Easter. One year in conversation with some colleagues, we discussed our Good Friday sermons. Each of us had found a new piece of information about a biblical character, and we were excited to shock the system of the congregation. An older sage preacher looked at us and said, "Preachers, the people need to see Jesus, not you." As simple as that is, I want you to apply that to your engagement of God's Word. When you read and study the Word of God, remember you are seated at the table with the Author. He knows the story! Let Him tell you the truth. Let God invite you to reflect. Let God challenge you to become.

Justin Lester serves as the Pastor of Congdon Street Baptist Church in Providence, RI. Justin has an extreme love for coffee, fitness, and all things Marquette Basketball and Green Bay Packers. Most importantly, Justin is married to the most beautiful woman in the world, Courtney Lester, and is the father to his "little man," Camden.