

## Week 1

# A Savior Is Born

I am thrilled that you have decided to make this pilgrimage with me as we study the life of Jesus over the next 10 weeks. God will take us on a journey to many places that we have never been. God will reveal to us many things about Himself that we never knew. God will accomplish a work in us and through us on this adventure that we could never predict.

I have prayed many times that you would pick up this study and be ready for what God wants to show you through His Word. Your willingness to start this study demonstrates your desire to seek Him. Stay strong in the Lord as you study His Word with me, beloved. Even if you have studied the life of Jesus previously, allow God access so He can teach you a fresh word. Give Him freedom to show you more about Himself. Don't let familiarity steal a new perspective from you and a new word from God.

We have thousands of years to travel in this first week. In the second half of our study, our pace will slow down as we dive into the Scriptures more deeply. You may feel like we are moving in slow motion but not this week! This week we begin in John chapter 1. It starts at the beginning of time before Jesus was ever born as a man because the story of Jesus does not start at His birth. When God threaded these Scriptures together for me, my heart was overflowing with worship for Him. His hand wove together a story that spanned from before time began to 4,000 years later. It makes me want to shout to the world, "He is God! He is the One and Only God!"

***Pray with me:*** Lord, You are worthy of all honor, glory, and praise, now and forever.

*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens (Psalm 8:1). Father, I pray that when your words come, we will eat them. They will be our joy and our heart's delight. For we bear your name, O LORD God Almighty (Jeremiah 15:16). May the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). May we tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of You, our LORD, Your power, and the wonders You have done...so the next generation will know them, even the children yet to be born...Then they will put their trust in You, God. They will not forget Your deeds, but would keep Your commands (Psalm 78:4, 6-7). We praise You that when the time had fully come, You sent Your Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law that we might receive the full rights of sons and daughters (Galatians 4:4-5).*

Bless my sister on this pilgrimage through Your Word. I pray that You *open the eyes of her heart and teach her the wonderful things of your Word* (Psalm 119:18). I pray that this writer may never get in the way of what You want to do through Your Word in my sister in Christ. May You cover my faults. Holy Spirit, be our Teacher. Teach us the wonderful things of the Word. In the wonderful, precious Name of Jesus, Yeshua, I pray, Amen.

## Week 1 Day 1

### In the Beginning

When I lived in Mississippi several years ago, a woman named Melissa turned to me in church and invited me to her ladies' Bible study group. Her invitation was the best earthly invitation of my life. The first Bible studies I did barely have marks in them. I could only answer the simple questions. I will confess I did not do my homework all the time either. Mostly, I read the study while I fed my newborn baby in the middle of the night. I attended Bible study, but I did not have anything to say because I did not know anything! From the world's eyes, I failed the "class." However, from God's eyes, I still received an "A" because I learned so much, and my desire to know Him grew and grew!

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

John 1:1



**Please write a prayer of commitment to this Bible study.** Ask God what is appropriate for you. Remember He is gentle with beginners but holds a mature disciple accountable.

---



---

When people want to learn more about Christianity, I have heard many Christians advise them to start with the Gospel of John first. The four Gospel writers are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Mark and Luke were written by dedicated believers who gathered their information from the eyewitness testimony of others. Matthew was a devout disciple and one of the chosen 12 disciples. He was a former tax collector who had been set free. John was also one of the 12 chosen disciples. Not only was he one of the twelve, but he was also in the inner circle of the three closest disciples to Jesus.

The Gospel of John was the last of the Gospels to be written. Scholars say it was written from the city of Ephesus where the disciple spent his last days. John would have read the other three Gospels. He knew that there was more to Jesus' life. Underline the words at the end of John's Gospel in John 21:25 (written in the margin) which tell us that he knew that there were many additional things to write about Jesus than were written in his Gospel. John recognized that the Holy Spirit was revealing to him the additional things that needed to be recorded. He knew the Holy Spirit was telling him to write a fourth Gospel to ensure mankind knew more about Jesus' life. John did not criticize his brothers in Christ by saying they omitted some important things. It was his responsibility to record the truth of Jesus that he witnessed.

A few years ago, I was looking for a Bible study on the life of Jesus for my small group. My pastor recommended a study that was like doing a college research paper. It was difficult for the group. After this study, I found other studies. These other authors are godly people, and their studies are very anointed. However, I felt that I needed to learn more about Jesus. Instead of criticizing the authors' works, I realized God was showing me that I must discover it, articulate it for myself, and record it for others.

Please don't misunderstand that I am comparing my writing experience to the holy magnitude of John's divine Scriptures. I am trying to contrast discernment vs. criticism. Discernment in the flesh is criticism. Criticism leads to a complaining heart and disunity in our relationships. You and I must be aware if God has given us insight into a ministry or a person's heart that we must let God use us and not let our flesh rule.

- \* **When you see gaps in another person's behavior or in a ministry, do you criticize?** Or do you realize it is godly discernment allowing you to see a need where God can use you?

---



---

Approximate Time  
Each Gospel Was  
Written

Matthew ~60 A.D.

Mark ~55-60 A.D.

Luke ~60-61 A.D.

John ~85 A.D.

*"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."*

John 21:25

Matthew directed his Gospel to the Jews. He focused on Jesus as King and the prophesied Messiah. Mark wrote his Gospel focused on the Romans and Jesus as the Obedient Servant. Luke, the only Gentile writer, wrote for the Greeks and portrayed Jesus as the Son of Man. All three of these Gospels emphasized the humanity of Jesus and are similar in their messages. They are called the synoptic Gospels. However, John wrote the Gospel, led by the Holy Spirit, for the purpose that anyone who read it, whether Greek, Jew, Roman, or other Gentile, would know that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel and the Son of God.

The four Gospels of the life of Jesus on this planet start at different points. The Gospel of Mark, which scholars say was the first Gospel written, begins with John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus. The Gospel of Luke begins with the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew begins with the genealogy through Joseph, as was required by Jewish law, through David to Father Abraham - fitting for the Jewish readers who valued the Jewish pedigree. However, the Gospel of John begins even before the generational roots of Jesus.

When I first read John 1:1-5 as an adult, this passage was such a mystery to me. Now, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit and many godly teachers, this passage is now a treasure to me. When I read it now, I no longer stumble over the words and let their meaning fly by me. I have begun to understand the bountiful riches that they hold.

★ **Read John 1:1-5. Answer these questions:**

1. **Write the first three words of John 1:1.** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Who existed in the beginning?** \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Through whom were all things made?** \_\_\_\_\_

John 1:14a tells us more about the identity of this person "the Word." Fill in the blanks.

"The Word became \_\_\_\_\_ and made His \_\_\_\_\_ among us."

These are some of my very favorite Scriptures. God has written them on my heart. (I promise I won't say every Scripture is my favorite.) John knew that the beginning of the story started before his Jewish lineage. He takes us back to the beginning. He tells us in the beginning was the Word, Jesus. Jesus is the Word. Jesus was in the beginning, Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God. Then Jesus left the glory of heaven and put on the cloak of flesh to dwell among us. He is the source of all life. This Life is the light of men. This Light shone into the darkness to destroy the darkness.

Before we go further, let's understand what the name, the Word, means and why John used this name. The Greek word for the "Word" in these verses is *Logos*. A word means "a visible or audible expression of a thought. It embodies a conception or an idea."<sup>1</sup> The divine Word, Jesus, is the expression or the revelation of the thoughts in the mind of God. He is the bridge between God and us. *Logos* also had a special meaning for the Greeks. A man named Heraclitus of Ephesus decided there was an invisible force of reason that sustained everything. For the Greeks, the *Logos* was an impersonal force that steered the universe and kept its forces in balance. It gave meaning to all things. For the Jews, the Word was a way of referring to God. "The Word of God" occurs over 1,200 times in the Old Testament to refer to the message of God. John uses language understood by pagan, Jew, and Christian to say that by the incarnate life of Jesus a new revelation of God had been given to mankind. God made Himself fully known to us.

Jesus made it clear to His followers that He existed before He was born from His mother Mary's womb.

\* **Read these Scriptures.** Write down Jesus' words about Himself being God and being alive before He was born as a human.

1. John 8:57-59 \_\_\_\_\_
2. John 10:30-33, 38 \_\_\_\_\_
3. John 6:46 \_\_\_\_\_

Did you notice the crowds' reactions to Jesus' declaration in the first two passages? Twice they tried to stone Him. Twice He escaped their grasp. He had committed blasphemy in their eyes. Yet, in His Father's eyes, He was telling the truth that would save them from their sins.

\* **Let's look at the creation story to understand how Jesus is present in the beginning. Write Genesis 1:1.** \_\_\_\_\_

Did you notice that John begins his Gospel with the very same words in the Greek language as are in Genesis 1:1? He is referring to Genesis concepts.

The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew word for "God" in this verse is Elohim. El would have been a sufficient name for the creator God, but adding the ending "im" makes it plural. When I first learned this fact I felt like a person on a treasure hunt who had struck gold. There is another clue in verse 26. God says, "Let US make man in OUR image, in OUR likeness..." (Emphasis mine) God left a testimony in Scripture written by Moses to show that Jesus participated in creation. Genesis 1 occurred 4,000 years before Jesus came to earth.

This fact does not mean that there is more than one God. There is only one God. Read Deuteronomy 6:4 in the margin. He is one in character and His attributes.

Many years ago, a precious friend who says she belongs to the Christian faith explained to me why she thought it was okay for her to marry a man whose religion was Hindu. She believed his explanation that, "*Christians have three gods. In my religion, we just have a lot more. It is all the same thing. We just call our gods by different names because we have different languages, histories, and cultures.*" I had just started walking with God. I gave her my familiar deer-in-the-headlights-look with a long pause of silence. The Holy Spirit resounded in me this statement was not truth. Sadly, I was not living 1 Peter 3:15 to be prepared to give a reply to a counterfeit of the Truth. We do not have the same beliefs under different names and cultures.

The easiest explanation that I have heard to describe the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the different forms of water. Water is made of the compound of 2 hydrogen and 1 oxygen elements. However, it comes in three different forms - steam, liquid, and solid ice depending on the conditions of the environment. Each form has the same basic elements. God comes in three different forms for us depending upon the condition of our need and the mission.

Many writers of the New Testament – Paul, Peter, John, Matthew, and the writer of Hebrews - state Jesus is God and that He existed before the foundation of the world. They also tell us an important decision had been made before God created the world.

\* **Read these verses.** What was decided before the creation of the world?

- Revelation 13:8 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Peter 1:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

*"Hear, O Israel:  
The LORD our  
God, the LORD  
is one."  
Deuteronomy 6:4*

Before the creation of the world, it was decided that Jesus would die on the cross as payment for man's sins. Payment can only be rendered by innocent blood.

\* **Read Genesis 3 to understand why the Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world.**

1. **What does verse 15 say?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. **What did God do in verse 21?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

After sinning, the first thing Adam and Eve did was to use fig leaves to cover their bodies. Now, they had knowledge of good and evil. God took off the fig leaves and clothed them in garments made of animal skin. If an animal's skin is taken to cover a human, the animal had to die. Man attempted to cover his own sin with the works of his hands, but God said it was not enough: our works are not sufficient payment for sins. Only the blood of innocent life pays for sins (Hebrews 9:22). It will never be enough to be the best Christians we can be. Only through Jesus' bloodshed can we approach God.

Verse 15 is the first promise of the redemption of mankind through the blood covenant of Jesus' death. The serpent would strike His heel showing He would be hurt but not die. However, Jesus would crush the serpent's head signifying a mortal blow.

The Bible gives us a clue that Eve understood clearly the prophecy that her offspring would redeem her. Read Genesis 4:1. She gave birth to a son. She said, *"I have gotten a man-child with the help of the LORD."* (NASB) Or scholars say that it could be translated from the Hebrew, *"I have gotten the Lord."* She could be saying, *"Here is the redeemer coming from my body! He will trample satan down and mortally kill him."* She didn't realize that it would take 4,000 years to fulfill that promise.

Before Elohim, Creator God, created the world, the plan was already in place for Jesus to be the Lamb slain to redeem humans from their sins. Before God ever breathed life into man, it was decided that Jesus would die on the cross. Before Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God had made the eternal blood covenant. God was not surprised that they sinned. He expected it because He holds and knows the future. Because God foresees, God plans. Because of His great love for you and me, we are redeemed from sin's penalty, power, and presence. We have eternal life.

Leaders of other major world religions never claimed to be God through whom all things that were made were made and nothing could be made without them. They may claim to be a god but not God. Other leaders gave "good" messages. Their words became words. Jesus, the Word, became flesh to bridge us to God.

Other major world religions may say that they accept Jesus' teachings and say that He was a wise prophet. However, to focus solely on His teachings is to ignore the main message that He preached. Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of heaven and that He was the Son of God. Salvation had come. When we examine Jesus of Nazareth and compare Him to other world leaders, stark differences demand that we make a choice. We must either believe that Jesus of Nazareth is who He said He is – the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Savior of the world, or He is not. C.S. Lewis says in *Mere Christianity* in His Liar, Lunatic, or Lord summary:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be

a lunatic - on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>2</sup>

He is either Lord, who is worth serving and knowing, or He is a charlatan, a fake, who led and continues to lead fools astray.

For the miraculous change in me during the years that I have served Him, I know that He is not a fake. He gives wisdom to fools. He restores, redeems, and renews. He strengthens and secures. Oh, how I pray that you do know it, too, and the truth is manifested in your life. This Bible study's purpose is to sink those truths about Him into the deepest part of your heart and your mind so you will live them out.



Egyptian herders on Mt. Sinai, Egypt

## Week 1 Day 2

### Shekinah Glory

*“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

John 1:14



Please remember to read today's Scripture in the margin so that you will understand where we are going to end today's study. Today will be full of history from the Old Testament in order to lay a foundation for our study of Jesus. Since this study is about Jesus, you might wonder why we are studying some of the Old Testament. If you know the answer, then I hope it makes you smile.

#### \* **Read Luke 24:13-16, 25-27. Fill in the blanks for verse 27.**

“And beginning with \_\_\_\_\_ and all the \_\_\_\_\_, he explained to them what was said in all the \_\_\_\_\_ concerning \_\_\_\_\_.”

What an honor for Cleopas and his friend that day! Jesus taught them all about Himself in the Law of Moses and the prophets. I would love to have that teaching from the Great Teacher Himself who was also the One who fulfilled it! Some aspect of Jesus, either prophecy or foreshadowing of Him, is in every book in the Old Testament. There is so much treasure available for people who are willing to let the Holy Spirit reveal it to them. This fact is staggering to me. It is enriching to have a small comprehension that God included a snapshot in every book of the Bible to include His Son, who would take away the sins of the world and redeem mankind. I am in awe of His great plan, His hugeness to fulfill His plan, and His unconditional love to stay true to His plan.

Yesterday, we spent some time in Genesis. Today we will zoom forward to the time of Exodus. Jacob, called Israel, was the father of twelve sons whom God prospered and multiplied to become the nation of Israel that we know today. God sent Moses to be His instrument to free the people of Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. The children of Israel went into the desert traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They came to the Desert of Sinai and camped in front of the mountain. Moses went up to God on the mountain. On this mountain, God gave Moses the 10 Commandments. **Read Exodus 25:8-9, 21-22**, and answer these questions.

1. What did God tell Moses for the Israelites to make? \_\_\_\_\_
2. God told Moses to build the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant because:
  - a. God wanted them to prove that He is worth giving your treasures.
  - b. God wanted them to demonstrate He is worth your hard, long labor.
  - c. God wanted them to follow the detailed instructions to show that they could obey His every command no matter how small or trivial.
  - d. God wanted to meet with them and give His instructions to His chosen people. He would dwell with them, and they could fellowship with Him.
3. Where would God meet with His people? \_\_\_\_\_

The Hebrew word for “dwell” in verse 8 is *shekan*. It means “*the idea of lodging, to reside or permanently stay. Abide, continue, dwell, have habitation, inhabit, remain, lay, place, rest, set.*”<sup>3</sup> It includes the idea of abiding in a neighborhood or a community. From the verb *shekan* is derived the word “*shekinah*,” the noun form. It means “*the dwelling presence of God.*”<sup>4</sup> Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia says it is “*the visible divine presence.*”<sup>5</sup> God is omnipresent, but this presence indicates the fullness and the richness of His presence.

The Hebrew word for “glory” is *kavodh*. It means “*to be heavy or weighty.*”<sup>6</sup> During that time period, the worth of an object was measured by its weight. In the figurative sense, it means importance or worth. God's glory is the way that He shows His

importance, His worth, or His might. God's glory is the way that He makes Himself known. God wants to reveal Himself to us! His glory should invoke worship from us.

God desired to have a place where He could dwell among His people. God desired to be able to speak with them in that place. Read Hebrews 8:5 in the margin. This passage tells us that God showed Moses the holy pattern on the mountain. It was a shadow of the real thing in heaven. We saw in yesterday's lesson that God desired to be with man in the garden. He still desired to be with man even though sin had come between The Holy God and His beloved, prized creation - mankind. God planned a way for the fellowship to begin again.

Moses came down from the mountain and presented the Law to the Israelites. If they followed God's instructions, then God would manifest Himself before them. They built the tabernacle according to the pattern God showed Moses.

★ **Read Exodus 40:34-38 about the glory of God.**

1. **What happened after the tabernacle was set up?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. **How did the Israelites know that it was time for them to set out for a new place?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What a divine confirmation to Moses and the people that they had followed His detailed instructions for setting up God's dwelling place! God's glory settled upon the tabernacle as their reward. By the way, the word for "settled" in verse 35 is also *shekan*.

The Shekinah glory signified God's presence, protection, and guidance. The covenant people were fully conscious of their distinctiveness among all people on earth. God's presence was what set the Israelites apart from other people. It marked them as His chosen people. The glory of God had protected them from the Egyptians when it stopped the Egyptian army in full pursuit. The Shekinah glory was their guide in the wilderness. It indicated when they should move out and when they needed to stay.

The presence of God was so important to Moses that when God told him in Exodus 33:2-5 that He was not going with them that Moses pleaded with Him to not do such a thing. Moses did not want to go somewhere if God was not going to be there with them (Exodus 33:15-16). God was pleased that Moses cherished His presence so much that he refused to go anywhere that He did not lead him.

★ **How important is it to you to not go somewhere if God is not there?  
Are you surrendered to His leading?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Exodus 33:18-23.** Moses had the boldness to ask God if He could see His glory. Although God answered with a "yes," He included an exception. God let His glory pass by Moses while He covered Moses with His hand. Then He removed His hand and let Moses see His back. Moses or any other man could not see the glory of God and live. This fact will be so exciting to us by the end of this day of study.

Moses knew he was intimate with God, but he desired to be closer to God. He was hungry for more of God. Since Moses did not settle for a mediocre relationship, he boldly asked for more of God. Moses didn't desire prosperity and blessing; he desired God. You and I should take Moses' example and let it be the example by which we live.

*"They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: 'See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.' "*

Hebrews 8:5

When the Israelites had the opportunity to go into the Promised Land, they listened to the 10 spies' report that their enemy was stronger and more powerful. They were small like grasshoppers in comparison (Numbers 13). They focused on the size of their enemy and not the power of their God. Their rebellion resulted in God's judgment. They wandered in the desert for 40 years before entering the Promised Land. After that entire generation had passed away, except for the two spies who believed God, the next generation entered their Promised Land.

Now let us study what happened to the tabernacle, Shekinah glory, and the Ark of the Covenant in the Promised Land. When Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land, the priests carried the Ark of God in front. We know that the Israelites possessed the Ark of the Covenant until the time of the priest Eli. In 1 Samuel 4:11, the Ark was captured by the Philistines. Eli died when he heard the news. When his daughter-in-law was dying during childbirth, she heard the news that the Ark of God had been captured. In 1 Samuel 4:21, she named her son "Ichabod," which means *"the glory has departed from Israel."* It is the last mention of the Shekinah glory until the time of Solomon.

In 1 Chronicles 28, King David became burdened for the mobile tabernacle to become permanent. His son Solomon was given the honor of building the temple. After 7½ years of constructing the elaborate temple, it was finished - including regaining possession of the Ark of the Covenant. They held a weeklong ceremony of thanksgiving and prayer. The Israelites carried the Ark of the Covenant into the temple and placed the Ark in the inner sanctuary. **Read 2 Chronicles 5:13-14**, and fill in the blanks.

"Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a \_\_\_\_\_,  
and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the  
\_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ the temple of God."

As Solomon prayed in consecration of the building, fire fell from heaven and consumed the burnt offering. The Shekinah glory returned to Israel.

In the Promised Land, the nation of Israel rebelled. The prophets of Israel and Judah preached messages of judgment or doom for the people's rebellion against God and for turning to idols. God had made it clear. Isaiah 42:8 says, *"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols."* There was a cycle of rebellion against God followed by discipline from God. The cycle started when the people departed from Him and turned to weak substitutes for His guidance, presence, and ways. Then, God disciplined the people. If the people cried out to God for help and repented, then God restored their relationship and revived them. If the people did not repent, then judgment came to the land. The people continually insisted on having their own way. They did not listen to the prophets of God who warned of their destruction. They committed the worst act they could do by worshiping the idols of the pagan gods like their neighbors did. God was longsuffering and patient for many years.

After hundreds of years of this cycle of rebellion, the prophet Ezekiel while in captivity in Babylon had a vision of God's glory departing the temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10:1-19, 11:16-25). Read each Scripture below. Then choose from the multiple choices, a-d. Write the bolded words in the blanks. Draw a picture for each step of the departure of God's glory.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
Exodus 25:22      Ezekiel 9:3a, 10:4      Ezekiel 10:18-19      Ezekiel 11:22-23  
Ezekiel 9:3a, 10:3

- Glory moved to the entrance at the **East Gate**.
- Glory enthroned upon the cherubim over the **Ark of the Covenant**.
- Glory stood over the **mountain** east of the city.
- Glory went up from the cherub to the **Temple threshold**.

When Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon in 586 B.C., Solomon's temple was plundered of its wealth, and the building was burned to the ground. The Shekinah glory of God left as Ezekiel had prophesied.

In 536 B.C., God moved the heart of the King of Persia to command that the temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt (Ezra 1:1-2). The second temple lacked five items that had been in Solomon's temple: The Ark of the Covenant, the Urim and Thummim, the sacred fire, the Holy Spirit, and the Shekinah glory. Haggai 2:3 says of the second temple, *"Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?"* Haggai was asking, "Who remembers the glory of the first temple?" Some of them did remember indeed. Read Ezra 3:12 in the margin that tells us of their reactions. The old men who were young boys before captivity remembered the Shekinah glory of Solomon's temple. They knew that the new temple did not have the splendor of Solomon's temple. The young men cheered unknowingly while the old men wailed. The old men had experienced the difference between having God's presence and the void without Him. It grieved them.

In 19 B.C., Herod began to renovate the temple. It is Herod's temple that existed in the time of Jesus. There was no Shekinah glory though. There was still no evidence of the presence of God. Read again today's verse, John 1:14, in the margin.

The Greek word for "dwelling," *skenoo*, means *"to tent, or encamp, to occupy or to reside, to tabernacle."*<sup>7</sup> This word choice differs from other words that mean to dwell by implying to live in a community or neighborhood. It means that Jesus came not merely to dwell but to live in the community. He came to connect with the people.

Let's compare this Greek word to the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament for tabernacle, *shekan*. In ancient Hebrew there were no vowels, only consonants. The letters "e" and "a" were added later as pronunciation aids. Notice the Greek word's consonants (S-K---N of *skenoo*) were included in the Hebrew term. What does all this language study mean? A Hebrew would immediately recognize the significance of John's choice in words. He would realize John was making a play on words and was referring to the Exodus tabernacle.

In the second part of verse 14, the Greek word for "glory" is *doxa*. It means *"to seem, signifies an opinion, estimate, and the honor resulting from a good opinion."*<sup>8</sup> This glory came from the Father - God's glory. It means because they saw His glory, they saw the correct opinion or estimate of the Father. Jesus had explained the Father to them and to us.

Do you see in this verse what we have been talking about today? Is John saying what you think he is saying? Oh my, yes, he is! John is drawing from their Jewish history from Exodus. He used these two terms to say the glory of God seen in the tabernacle and the temple had come back to dwell in Israel. God sent the fullness of His glory once again. Only this time instead of being wrapped in a cloud or a pillar of fire, the glory was wrapped in flesh and bone. God's glory was covered by humanity. Do you remember Moses who could not see God's glory and live? They had SEEN HIS GLORY!

I must tell you that explaining this story makes the hairs on my arms stand up. I am amazed at the cohesiveness of the Bible. The stories in the Bible span a time period of 4,000 years of life on earth. I am astounded at God's perfect plan to dwell with people until we could dwell with Him in heaven. The Holy, All-powerful God of the universe reaches down from His throne to mankind. For me, above all, it proclaims in a loud voice for those who are willing to hear it - God's loving heart.

God did not send only a prophet to proclaim His words. He did not send a book so we could read His words. He did not send a miraculous, physical representation on a mountainside so we could see His word. God sent His Word clothed in flesh so His Word could be demonstrated. His Word could be the teacher and the exhibitor of God's glory. Then, the Word unveiled and explained God to us so we might know Him. This Word lived among people because God wanted to fellowship with man. Oh, how He loves us!

*"Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' household, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy."*

Ezra 3:12

*"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

John 1:14

*Week 1    ∞    Day 3*  
*Promised Messiah*

*“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*

Galatians 4:4-5



Yesterday we saw that God removed His protection from the people after He had suffered from their infidelity for hundreds of years. He repeatedly told His prophets that judgment would come. Yet, the people scorned the prophets. They sometimes even murdered the prophets.

However, there was a constant message of hope from God through the prophets. There was a promise of ultimate deliverance that would come from God. This deliverance was the work of an anointed servant of God called Messiah (Daniel 9:25). Centuries of unrest and oppression fueled the Jewish longing for their Messiah.

The word “Messiah” is from the Hebrew term *masiyah* which means “*anointed one.*”<sup>9</sup> Messiah was first prophesied by God in Genesis 3:15, as we discussed on Day 1. Throughout the years, God gave the people more clues about the Messiah. The Old Testament was written over a fifteen hundred-year period and contains nearly three hundred references to the coming Messiah. We can’t possibly study all of them in one day. We will only brush the surface of the prophecies regarding the Messiah’s three primary offices and His birth. In the remainder of the study, we will point out some of the major prophecies fulfilled throughout His ministry and death.

The Messiah was portrayed as holding three offices.

1. Deuteronomy 18:15-19 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Psalm 110:4 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 2 Samuel 7:13 & Jeremiah 23:5 \_\_\_\_\_

**Read these Scriptures.** Write down what God said about the Messiah and His birth.

1. Isaiah 9:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Isaiah 7:14 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Micah 5:2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Genesis 49:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Many Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Through the centuries, the Jewish people were persecuted by Christians in efforts to convert them to Christianity. Evil deeds are not part of the Great Commission. Yet, when they examine the Old Testament prophecies compared to what is written about Jesus’ life, many Jews become believers.

In the book *Betrayed*, based on a true story, Stan Telchin is a devout Jewish father. When his daughter became a Christian, he was crushed. He says in his book for a Jew “*to believe that Jesus is the Messiah is to betray our people, to join the enemy and to desecrate the memory of all of our ancestors over the last 2,000 years.*”<sup>10</sup> He had to prove to her that she was wrong. He began to investigate Jesus’ life to show He was a fraud. He could not be the Messiah. However, through his search, God showed him the truth. The unthinkable was true. He believed, too, that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah.

The evidence is overwhelming. Many prophecies were beyond human control. No man could have connived to fulfill prophecy in order to substantiate his claim to be the Messiah. A man can't control where he would be born. A man could not control from which tribe he would be born or that he would be a descendant of David. A man could not control the manner of his betrayal and death or the timing of it. A man could not manipulate the soldiers to cast lots for his garments as he was dying or to pierce his side after his death. For Jesus to fulfill only eight of the major prophecies, the probability is 1 in  $10^{17}$ . My mother gave me Josh McDowell's book *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* for my birthday a few years ago. Yes, it's a strange present, but I loved it. McDowell quotes Peter Stoner in Stoner's book *Science Speaks*:

We find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in  $10^{17}$ . [That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (17 zeros after the one). In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that] we take  $10^{17}$  silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them according to their own wisdom.<sup>11</sup>

★ **Read these Scriptures to learn why God reveals things to His prophets.**

Amos 3:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 44:8 \_\_\_\_\_

One reason why God told His prophets what was going to happen is because God wants to be unmistakable. He desires to be clearly identifiable to His people. God is not a firefighter reacting to the situation at hand. Contrarily, He is the one moving things into motion and setting the stage for the events. God does nothing without revealing it first to His prophets, His servants. He leaves no room for us to mistake His work for coincidence or the scheme of man. He proves He is the one and only God.

Today, God speaks to our hearts through the Holy Spirit and His Word. God knows the future because He holds the future in His hand. It is completely under His control. God will sometimes reveal to us His plan for our lives. He desires that we reach out to Him to seek guidance. One of my favorite verses to pray when I am seeking direction for an important decision is Psalm 32:8. I pray, "Lord, *You will instruct me and teach me in the way I should go. You will guide me with your eye.*" God, show me Your vision for my life."

God has purpose in matters that we do not know yet as He is purposeful over what we do know. If there is something that you and I do not know yet, we must first seek an answer through prayer, His Word, and possibly fasting if medically appropriate. Sometimes He does not tell us things so that we will seek Him (Acts 17:25-27). If we diligently seek God and He does not reveal to us an answer, it is because you and I have no need to know right now. There is a difference between need to know and want to know! We have to trust Him until that time comes. God does not say, "Oops, I forgot to tell you something." He is not forgetful, absent minded, or distracted! We should not treat Him like He is such. He is the opposite. He is intentional and precise.

★ **How do you react when God does not tell you what your future holds but only tells you to trust Him?**

---

---

I am beginning to be more comfortable with the fact that I do not know what tomorrow will bring. I am putting my trust in my God who has brought me thus far. If I knew how the rest of my days would be, then it would be like reading the last chapter of a novel first. It takes away the mystery and the fun.

Think about it. Lottie Moon did not know when she died in poverty in China that an international mission offering would be collected every Christmas in her name. David was not looking too much like a mighty king when he was cowering in a cave as a fugitive hiding from King Saul. When Paul was approving Stephen's stoning, he would never have guessed that he would become a mighty apostle for Jesus. As I have learned, the journey can be equally as important as arriving at the destination. Additionally, the journey can make the destination sweeter. My independent, controlling, and planning self is learning to depend on Him.

God created us with a need to have some adventure and some thrills. The key to God's great adventure is to walk in obedience to His ways. Some of us confuse the drama that we have created through the consequences of sin with the adventure of Him. Creating drama in our lives through our continuous poor choices is not the same as the adventure of faith in Him. Yes, He can rescue us from our consequences. Yet, sometimes He does not rescue us entirely. When we walk in obedience to Him, we eliminate the need for the dramatic rescue.

There is one more important prophecy to set the stage for the coming Messiah.

★ **Read Amos 8:11-12. What does God declare that He will do?**

---

Amos' prophecy period was 767 to 755 B.C. He warned that there would be a famine of hearing the LORD's words. The Israelites had already lost God's protection and presence through their rebellion. God stopped talking. Hearing God speak set them apart from other nations. Since they lost the security of His relationship, the religious leaders clung to the security of legalism and burdened the people with religious rules.

Imagine the questions of people in the market place, in the fields, and at the dinner tables. The people envisioned political greatness, a world conquering Messiah, and an eternal King with divine power. *When would Messiah come? When would He throw off the Roman rule over the people? When would He raise up His kingdom? When would the "Son of David" restore the splendor of the Jewish throne? When would God speak again to the people? How long would He keep silent? Why was He waiting?*

★ **Read Galatians 4:4-5. Fill in the blanks.**

"But when the time had \_\_\_\_\_, God sent His \_\_\_\_\_, born of a \_\_\_\_\_, born under \_\_\_\_\_, to \_\_\_\_\_ those under law that we might receive the full rights of sons."

The word "fully" is from the noun *pleroo*. It means "fullness, full measure, full end, abundance, completeness as in reaching the intended goal."<sup>12</sup> It implies "gestation." God used time to do what only time could do. It caused the people to be

starving for a Word from Him. Although the nation of Israel rejected Jesus, pockets of Jewish people received Him well. They were hungry for a fresh Word from God. An empty stomach enjoys an all-you-can-eat buffet much more than a full stomach or even a partially full stomach. After 400 years without hearing one word from God, God sent the entire all-you-can-eat buffet of His Word and His presence. How much a person eats depends on how much she desires to have of Jesus. What a dream - a buffet with no limits!

God used time to prepare the earth. The preparation period is very important to God. Preparation impacts the fruit of the tree called destination. He prepared the way by:

1. **Universal language** – Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, thus ruling over the Jews in 333 B.C. He conquered the “known” world and made Greek the common language, the second language for all. It was the language of commerce and writing. The New Testament was written in Greek, and the Old Testament was translated into Greek making it easy to disseminate and understand.
2. **Universal peace** - In 63 B.C., the Romans conquered the Greeks. They ruled with an iron-fist, but there was peace. The temple doors of their god of war were closed.
3. **Established road system** – The Roman army built a road system allowing them to reach a place quickly if there was an uprising. The road network established a working postal system, protection for travelers, and opportunities never before seen.
4. **Death penalty by the Roman cross** - The Roman government’s form of capital punishment was the cross. It was a brutal, torturous, and humiliating death for criminals and a deterrent for future criminals. The Hebrews stoned people to death.

God may have been silent, but He was not asleep. The first three things allowed the disciples to bring the Gospel to other countries. An earthly army may have established it, but the army of God used it for His purposes. The fourth point prepared God’s chosen way for His Son to die for you and me.

When God declared it was time, He sent His angel Gabriel to declare the news. Luke begins his Gospel with the story of Gabriel visiting the priest Zechariah to announce the birth of the forerunner to Jesus, John the Baptist. We will talk more about John the Baptist later. Six months later, Gabriel went to a young Jewish girl named Mary.

★ **Read Luke 1:26-38, the announcement of Jesus’ birth.**

1. **Gabriel went to visit a woman from Nazareth. Write down in order the three things that verse 27 tells us about her.**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

2. **What was Mary’s reaction to the angel’s presence in verse 29?**
  - a) Ecstatic – she had always wondered what an angel of the Lord looked like and could not wait to tell all her friends.
  - b) Embarrassed – her home was not clean. She was preparing to clean it!
  - c) Welcoming and hospitable – she had been expecting the angel.
  - d) Greatly troubled – wondering why and what was happening.
3. **Use the margin to write down what the angel told Mary about the Son she would bear in verses 31-33.**
4. **Write down Mary’s final response to the angel in verse 38.**

\_\_\_\_\_

Everything happened in God's perfect timing. He chose the right time on the kingdom calendar centered on the Jews, and to all races and religions: The Incarnate Deity, Immanuel, God with us.

I understand God's perfect timing in my life. It was seven long, hard years from the time God put it on my heart until I finally held my adopted daughter in my arms. God placed the idea of adopting a Chinese baby girl on my heart when I moved back from Guam to the United States. I met a couple in the Tokyo airport who explained to me the social circumstances of baby girls in China. A few years later, my husband and I started the adoption process. We have one of the longest times from beginning of paperwork for adoption to the actual placing of our daughter. My husband's uncertainty combined with his job loss bogged the process in the mud. We hit a minor speed bump with the 9/11 tragedy. When we heard our referral was finally on its way, a contagious and deadly disease called SARS hit China. Referrals immediately stopped being sent. *How much longer, O Lord, until I have my daughter in my arms?* God gave me a personal Scripture to comfort me and to sustain me through each roadblock. My favorite was Psalm 78:1-7 (in the margin) that He gave me through my husband's indecision. I knew that I would tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds the LORD had done to bring our daughter into our lives so they would know God and trust Him.

The experience of receiving my daughter Victoria in the hotel conference room that day was one of the most extraordinary moments of my life. The first time I saw her, I knew that the Almighty God had lavished His love upon me and fulfilled His promise to me. Who could ask for anything more in life than this fulfillment of a promise by God? It was one of the most intense times that I have spent with Him. Additionally, God placed us in the right group of other families traveling to China together. We became like family. Before our daughters were brought to us in the hotel, we had the most special praise time. I don't know fully why God chose that time. However, I will treasure this seven-year journey for the rest of my life. I thank Him for not responding to my impatience. I thank Him for letting the events happen in His perfect timing.

*"We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done...so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands."*

Psalm 78:4, 6-7

**\* Do you have an experience that was against your patience and flesh, but you later realized it was all in God's timing? Are you having one right now? \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Week 1  Day 4  
*Immanuel's Chosen Parents*

Yesterday we read the Bible's first introduction to the mother of our Lord. Today we will start there again. **Please reread Luke 1:36-38.**

God had chosen Mary before she was born. Mary would have been just a young girl; scholars estimate that she was 14 years old. God waited until the time was right. He chose the time after her betrothal so her husband would be preparing for her. Yet, if she had been fully married, then she would not be a virgin. The virgin birth was the only possible way that God could become human and at the same time remain God. Mary gave Him His human flesh and human nature.

Instead of reacting with a counter plan including a few "tweaks" to God's plan to make it more convenient for her, Mary reacted with worship. Sadly, many times, God has told me to do something, and I have purposely tweaked it or have had a casual attitude toward total obedience. Remember, partial obedience is not what God requires.

*"When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife."*

Matthew 1:24



**\* Have you ever tried to tweak God's plan for your life? On a scale from 1 to 10, mark which one you usually practice.**

Rejection of God's plan											Full acceptance and total obedience
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

The Greek word for "handmaiden" in verse 38 is the female version of the word *doulos* which means "slave, bondswoman. One who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another. One who gives service to be used by Jesus to advance His cause among men. One who gives herself up to another's will. Devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests." <sup>13</sup> Mary was able to give her interests to God knowing that He had something much better for her. We will know we have finally accepted this fact when we submit to God's will fully and live like God's interests are for our good.

**\* Read Luke 1:39-45. Answer these questions.**

1. Who did Mary first visit? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Describe Elizabeth's greeting to Mary. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Write verse 45. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**God gave Mary a friend for support.** In verse 36, Gabriel mentioned Elizabeth's pregnancy to Mary. Verses 39-40 say Mary hurried to the town where Elizabeth was staying. Gabriel's words planted a seed which revealed to Mary a person who could support her. God gave her Elizabeth to share her joy. He gave her someone to share in the unusualness of her life. You and I may feel that we have unusualness in our lives at times but nothing quite like these two women. Mary had a more unique situation than any other woman in the history of mankind. She is the only woman to ever become pregnant while still a virgin. Elizabeth was the only woman who could

possibly relate to Mary. Her son's coming was also proclaimed by an angel and part of God's redemptive plan. He was the forerunner to Mary's Son, the Redeemer.

We can't underestimate the importance of godly friendships. You and I need to be surrounding ourselves with godly women in our lives.

\* **Read Titus 2:3-4.** Fill in the blank. "Then they can train the \_\_\_\_\_ women..."

When I wanted to improve my time for running the mile and a half test in the military, I ran with people who ran faster than I did. They set a pace that challenged me. My college coach Buddy made me run before dawn. Calvin, my partner in Guam, made me run during lunch in the heat of the day on a tropical island 900 miles north of the equator. Steamy! I thought both were maniacs, but they made me a better runner.

The same is true spiritually. Spiritual mentors and accountability partners are critical for our growth. When we walk spiritually with people who already have a steady, strong walk with God, we strive to match their pace. Our walk improves.

If you and I know the truth of God's Word, then He commands that we teach it to others. You may feel like I did at first. I thought that the only person who knew less than I would be a toddler to whom I could teach to sing "Jesus Loves Me." The only requirement for being a mentor is to be more mature spiritually than the other person.

When I moved to Kentucky, I prayed for a mentor for a year before God brought her to me. If you are lacking a mentor, then pray for God to bring her to you. Be on watch though. Someone else may be praying for a mentor, and it may be you!

\* **Read further in the passage.** Luke 1:46-56 is Mary's song, the Magnificat. Write down the phrases that she used to describe the characteristics of God.

---

---

---

Mary's song refers to several Old Testament Scriptures. She knew her Old Testament. Mary spoke with a growing understanding of the greatness of God. Oh, that you and I may learn the fullness of her descriptive words of God in our lives.

**Joseph of Nazareth** - Now we will shift to Jesus' father, Joseph. Dust off the familiarity with the story of Jesus' birth. **Read Matthew 1:18-19 only.** Pretend you do not know what happens in the next verses. There was a gap in time between Joseph finding out that Mary was pregnant until he knew the child was from God. He didn't know we would be talking about him 2,000 years later at that point in his life. He just knew his betrothed was pregnant. What thoughts do you imagine were going through Joseph's mind right then? \_\_\_\_\_

---

Here are my ideas of Joseph's possible thoughts based on Jewish culture:

*Joseph agonized over the circumstances of the situation. His betrothed...He had already been to her father's house to ask to marry her. The marriage contract was written and signed. She had already drunk from his cup that he offered to her signifying her consent to the betrothal. He was building a home for them. She was supposed to be preparing herself for him along with her clothes and her jewelry. How thankful he was to be saved from the final act of marriage. He might have never known that Mary was not carrying his child. He might have never known that he was marrying such a*

*loose woman...Loose woman? Mary? She seemed so innocent and sweet. What should he do with her? This could mean death for her. She had slandered his name, but he would not expose her to the community. Yes, he would divorce her quietly.*

**Read Matthew 1:20-25.** Let's share a few points of application from this passage.

**1. God corrects the righteous man (v.20-21).** The angel delivered to Joseph a message from God that changed Joseph's decision. I have heard women say so many times, "God gave me a brain. I should use it." Our brains can get us in so much trouble. In Joshua 9:14-15, the Israelites made a covenant with a people based on their appearance. It led them into a battle to defend their covenant partner that God never wanted them to fight. **Write Isaiah 55:8-9:**

---

We should always go to God first in prayer before we make a decision. We should not make a move without His direction. We do not have the full picture of how decisions affect other people and the lasting impact.

When we are on the wrong road, God corrects the righteous. In the margin, circle what Isaiah 30:21 says about God's voice. I love the assurance that God gives. *"Whether we turn to the left or to the right we will hear a voice saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"* God sends a warning to tell us that we are on the wrong road. He also sends assurance when we are on the right path. We must have ears that are willing to hear Him and not radio jammers that block out something that we don't want to hear!

**2. The meaning of Jesus' name was His most important reason for coming (v. 21).** The angel said to call Him Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. Mary and Joseph would have pronounced the Son of God's name as Yeshua which means salvation and deliverance. Jesus is the English derivative from the Greek. The English derivative from the Hebrew is Joshua. It is a contraction of Jehovah the Savior.

What is in a name? Hebrew names were rich with meaning. A person's name characterized him. The angel did not say He would save His people from Rome or other governmental oppression. The angel did not say to give Him a name related to His kingship. The primary name of God's Holy Son is Jesus because He came to save us from our sins and redeem us to fellowship with the Holy God.

**3. Godly men wait to make love until they are married (v.25).** *"Joseph had no union with her until she gave birth to a son."* They were married, but he waited until the right time. There is great importance in marrying the mate whom God has selected for you. If you are unmarried, then may this point be stapled across the way you live your life and the way that you think. God's man for you will wait for you. If he won't wait, he is not God's man for you. Restrain yourself. Don't give up the higher goal - God's blessing on your marriage - for what your flesh desires today. Don't be like Esau. When he was hungry, he gave up his birthright (Genesis 25:29-34). He relinquished his most valuable right to gain immediate but temporary physical satisfaction. Your purity is valuable. Treat it that way. The consequences are high when you disobey God. It is not that God is mean or vindictive. It can have more than physical repercussions, like pregnancy or disease. Frankly, there is a guarantee for a person who has premarital sex that she will bring much emotional baggage into marriage. God has a purpose for us following His design for intimacy. It is for our own good!

Some of you may never marry a man, but it is God's will that you marry some cause for the kingdom. There is a blessing in singleness. God becomes your husband.

If you are waiting for your husband to come, pray for him. Pray mightily for him. Pray he pursues God, worships Him, and grows as a man after God's own heart. Or perhaps your future husband is trapped in a chokehold of sin's power. Regardless if he is walking in righteousness or not, there has never lived a man who doesn't need prayer.

*"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"*

Isaiah 30:21

\* **Dust off the familiarity again. Read Luke 2:1-7 until at least one point strikes you. Write down what God shows you from this passage.**

---

---

Joseph and Mary barely knew each other months ago. Now they were quickly learning about each other. The 90-mile journey through the hills and over the mountains aided that process - nothing like a road trip to get to know someone. I imagine Joseph was patient and gentle with Mary as she was full with child. Since they were both trusted by God with an unprecedented, huge responsibility, they had to trust each other.

Let's share some points from this Scripture.

**1. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the city of His birth.** In order to fulfill prophecy, the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem. God who holds the future willed for the Roman ruler Caesar Augustus to call a census that required each man to return to the town of his ancestors. Joseph was from the line of David. David's hometown was Bethlehem, which means "house of bread." The Bread of Life was born in the city of bread.

**2. The glory of heaven entered the world through a lowly stable.** His birthplace was not a palace...No designer clothes for a King here...No bassinet from the best store in the village...He was born into the rough, calloused hands of a Jewish carpenter. His first smells were animal manure. Nothing looked to human eyes to be divine here.

It makes me wonder how many times I have experienced the majesty of God's hand in my life in the mundane days of my life. Today in my Bible study group we had a time of summary for a Bible study that we had finished. The ladies shared the Scriptures that God had taught them and His personal word for their lives. I realized that within the drab walls of a Fortune 500 company in a typical conference room on an ordinary workday, the divine had happened. God spoke to His children. The Word watered the tilled soil in these ladies' hearts. I had the honor to witness the growth of their intimacy with God and see lives transformed. Their lives are impacting their families and friends.

I have experienced God in the commonness of my life - not with angels proclaiming the way or a holy glow to settle in the room that is visible to my eyes. God has never worked in the grand way of a Hollywood movie in my life. I've had to train my spiritual eyes to see Him. The little bit that I have seen makes me long for more of His presence in the ordinariness of my life. I pray that you and I are willing to worship Him in our daily lives. I pray that we grab hold of all the time available to spend with God - while we vacuum, drive, wash the dishes, apply our make-up, bathe the children, or mow the yard. May we be willing to let the divine come into our simple daily routines.

**3. Jesus' birth and childhood were similar to ours.** Jesus did everything a baby does and children do. Mary carried the responsibility for His physical needs just like any other mother. What an honor, but oh, what pressure to be mother of the year! When He cried to communicate a need, she tended to His cry. When she kissed His face, she kissed the face of God. When she held His hand, she held the hand of God. When she bandaged His boo-boo, she bandaged the wound of God. She was likely the first one to hear the voice of God speak in the natural realm as a Man.

At the birth of our daughter Sophia, my husband was so proud he lost all sanity. He went out on our steep sloping roof to post the "It's a girl" sign. It stayed there for two years because he regained his sanity and would not go back out to take it down! I have a hunch that God was doing the heavenly and holy equivalent of earthly fathers. Perhaps, He high-fived Gabriel or posted pictures from the earthly realm on His heavenly webpage. He was a proud Father. Conversely, we don't have to guess how He celebrated with planet earth because Scripture tells us the splash that God made. He let a bit of heaven break through to the earthly realm for His Son's birth announcement to a group close to His heart. We start here tomorrow.

Week 1  Day 5  
*Holy Infant's Visitors*

Jesus' birth was the most important event since the creation of the world. Yet, the people thought the census was the biggest news of that time. Innkeepers and merchants were filling their money pouches with the travelers' money. Most people did not know the Son of God had left heaven to become the Son of Man. The Bethlehem news team didn't report His birth in the 6:00 news. The biggest news of all time was not immediately reported. Yet, we are still talking about it 2,000 years later. I wonder how often I have been oblivious to what God is doing in my time. Secular reporters will not understand the significance of God's current activity on earth. They won't capture it for the evening news or the front page of the newspaper. I want to know what God is doing in my day. Let's search the Scriptures to discover to whom God revealed Jesus' birth and see what we can apply to our lives so we can be positioned to hear God's news reports.

*“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’ ”*

Luke 2:13-14



★ **Read Luke 2:8-20. Answer these questions.**

**1. What were the shepherds doing in verse 8?**

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Write down the 5 things the angel said to the shepherds.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What did the heavenly host say in verse 14?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. What did the shepherds say in verse 15?**

a. "Let's go in the morning in the daylight when we can see as we travel to town."

b. "Let's form a committee to explore this announcement."

c. "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that the Lord has told us about!"

**5. Circle True or False –** When the shepherds returned from seeing the baby in the manger, they returned to business as usual in the field and never spoke about it again.

Unlike when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and Zechariah, when this angel appeared to the shepherds, the visible manifestation of the glory of God appeared, too. It shone around the shepherds, not the angel. They were strong men. They defended their sheep from a lion, a bear, or any wild animal. Yet, they were terrified. We also should not take it lightly to read about the glory of God appearing. We forget our God is holy and all-powerful, stronger than any force we have ever seen. These men had a good reason to recognize the inferiority of their own power to the glory before them.

Shepherds were at the bottom of the social ladder. Their work made them ceremonially unclean. They symbolized ordinary people. David, Jesus' ancestor, was

called from a shepherd's life as the youngest son. Typically the youngest son in the family was the shepherd. These shepherds probably were not old men with long, gray beards. David also called God his Shepherd symbolizing God's loving care. Additionally, God promised to send a Shepherd to take care of the people (Ezekiel 34:23).

The shepherds did not delay. They did not hesitate or plan their journey properly. They were so excited that they quickly ran to see the baby lying in a manger. Scripture does not record the conversations between the shepherds and Joseph and Mary. However, verse 19 tells us of Mary's reaction to their visit.

"But Mary \_\_\_\_\_ up all these things and \_\_\_\_\_ them in her heart."

God's Word does not record the many details between Joseph's dream and this holy day in Bethlehem. I am looking forward to the heavenly version of the DVD to answer some questions. *Did her parents support her, or were they ashamed? Was her labor quick and easy? What was Joseph's reaction when they arrived in Bethlehem to find there was no room for them in the inn? Did he berate himself for not taking better care of his family? Was he sulking in self-pity thinking he could not do anything right since he allowed the Son of God to be born in the animals' quarters with a cattle feeding trough for a bed? Or was he full of faith knowing that every part of the journey was as God had planned it?* Either way, they had the baby in their arms. There was no news from God yet. How emotional for them when the shepherds arrived. Until the shepherds arrived, they thought no one else knew the Savior of the world had just been born. The shepherds shared in their joy. Their spirits must have leaped with joy listening to the story of the angels in the fields praising God for the Savior who had been born. It must have reassured them that God was pleased with the circumstances of His Son's birth.

The Greek word for "ponder" is *sumballo* which means "*to throw or put together, casting many things together and considering them as one.*"<sup>14</sup> Mary was recounting the many events of the past year and considering them as one. She mulled over everything that had happened to Joseph and to her. She was pondering what Almighty God had done. I think it was a moment where God took Mary's breath away. She might have said, "*Who is this God? So this is how God operates in people's lives. You did it, God. You did it in style. You amaze me.*" In my Bible study group, my friend Wilma described this verse as Mary crafting her mental baby book of Jesus. Mary was collecting her mental snapshots from the angel's first appearance to the shepherds' visit.

★ **When was the last time you pondered what God Almighty has done in your life?** \_\_\_\_\_

The shepherds spread the word to others; they shared all that they had been told about this child. Although they were common, unclean, and young, their occupation of shepherding was close to God's heart. They gave praise to God for His activity that they had witnessed.

★ **Read Luke 2:21-35. Answer these questions.**

1. **What happened on the eighth day of Jesus' life?** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Why did Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to Jerusalem? (v.23)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. How is Simeon described?**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus was circumcised like any other Jewish baby boy on the eighth day of His life. Genesis 17 tells us of the first circumcision. Read verses 3, 10-12. God confirmed His covenant partnership with Abraham. Abraham would be a father of many nations. Every descendent would bear the marks of this covenant, including Jesus, God's Son.

Scripture also records Jesus' parents following the rite of purification according to the Law of Moses in Leviticus 12:1-8. **What does Leviticus 12:8 and Luke 2:24 tell us about Jesus' parents' finances?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

They could not afford the lamb; they brought the least sacrifice to the temple for the purification of Jesus' mother. Now let's focus on the two people they met.

The Greek word for "consolation" in verse 25 is *paraklesis*. It means "*the act of exhortation, encouragement, comfort...The title of Messiah, "the consolation of Israel," is eschatological pointing to Messiah as the one who brings the predicted and long-awaited comfort to Israel.*"<sup>15</sup> God had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. Did you notice Simeon was not already in the temple courts? He was led by the Holy Spirit to go to the temple courts that day. He let God call the shots on his activity that day. He did not get trapped into his normal tasks that he may have thought were so pressing and so important.

Simeon's prophecy to Mary was not something a mother wants to hear. My flesh might have been saying, "*You could have stopped before that last sentence.*" His words were so very true though. One day Mary would endure the agony of seeing her baby whom she rocked to sleep in her arms hanging on a cross. How it would pierce her soul!

**\* Read Luke 2:36-40. Answer these questions.**

- 1. **Who is Anna? (v.36)** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. **What was Anna's reaction to baby Jesus?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In contrast to the shepherds, Scripture tells us both Simeon and Anna were watching for the promised Messiah. They waited expectantly. They devoted themselves to God and lived righteous lives. They fasted and prayed. Anna was an aged prophetess, and Simeon was a man with a promise for his life.

**\* Read Matthew 2:1-12. Answer these questions.**

- 1. **What did the Magi call Jesus? (v.2)** \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. **Who was consulted to determine the city of Jesus' birth?** \_\_\_\_\_

Scholars tell us Magi were scientists, mathematicians, historians, and astrologers. They were the most powerful group of advisors in the Babylonian empire. As a teenager, Daniel was taken to Babylon when Jerusalem was conquered. He became an influential leader in the kingdom. Daniel wrote his prophecies about 500 years before Jesus was born. In Daniel 9:25-26, he prophesied 483 years would elapse from the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the birth, life, and death of the Messiah. This complete length of time was fulfilled. The Magi from the east knew to search for the King of the Jews through this prophecy in Daniel. Their forefathers had taken the proper measures to record and testify of the one true God.

Although the Magi were men of great wealth and means, their pride and riches did not stop them from traveling from far away to kneel down and worship a baby. They traveled approximately 700 miles to visit and worship Jesus. Contrast that distance with that of the Jewish leadership. It was only 7 miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem; they did not even know the time had come! They possessed the Scriptures which told the time (Daniel 9:25) and the place (Micah 5:2) of Jesus' birth. Yet, they were not even looking for the Messiah. How tragic to be so thoughtless about God's Word with it so available.

The Magi's three gifts had their own significance. Gold is a gift for a king. Incense is a gift for a priest. It signified worship and atonement for sins. Myrrh was probably the strangest gift since it was used to embalm the dead. It signified His death. All three were tangible symbols of Jesus' mission for mankind.

God warned the Magi in a dream not to return to Herod. Joseph was also warned to take his family and flee to Egypt. Herod had killed sons, wives, and any impending threat to his throne. The only "homage" he would pay to this child was at the hand of a sword. His evilness resulted in actions that fulfilled two other prophecies.

We see age, societal status, gender, and wealth were not determining factors for the people who received revelation of Jesus' birth. A cross-section of people knew of the Savior's birth for He had come to all people – both Jews and Gentiles.

**\* *Read Galatians 3:28. What does it say about this cross-section of people?*** \_\_\_\_\_

Clearly, Jesus came for all people. However, we see two contributing factors to God's selection of people to whom He announced His Son's birth: God's sovereignty and being positioned closely to Him. How did they position themselves closely to Him? By knowing Scripture, looking at His activity in their day through scriptural lenses, praying, living righteously, and expecting Him to show up in their lives. Lastly, they were willing to go where He led.

My pastor Butch told an analogy of a carpenter building a house. When a carpenter reaches down to grab the next nail to bind two boards together, which nail does he choose? He doesn't choose the prettiest nail. All nails look the same. He doesn't choose the nail with all the abilities. The nails have the same abilities. He chooses the closest nail. His hand grabs the first available nail. Unlike a nail, God can use you and me repeatedly.

Beloved, this is the desire of my life. I hope you are saying "Me, too. Me, too." I want to be the closest nail because I want to be near God. I want to be clenched in His hand. Frankly, I don't care to what degree He chooses to use me. I want to be close to Him because I love Him.

**\* *Have you decided to be "the closest nail" available for God's purposes?*** \_\_\_\_\_

Below is a chart of Jesus' approximately three and one-half years of public ministry. This chart helps me to understand the sequence of the events in Jesus' life. At the beginning of each week, we will use this chart to see the timing of the events we will study that week. The chart divides Jesus' ministry into three periods:

- a. **First Period – Obscurity.** Not much public attention during Jesus' opening year of ministry. It spans from the opening events at the Jordan River to the wedding feast at Cana to the Passover Feast in Jerusalem.
- b. **Second Period – Popularity.** Peak of His popularity. Most of this period was spent in Galilee. If there had been tabloids at this time, Jesus would have been on every cover. He was the hot news of the day.
- c. **Third Period – Opposition.** Increasing opposition by the Jewish religious leaders. He turned His face and His resolution to Jerusalem and the cross. Knowing His death was soon, He narrowed His focus to train the disciples.

Next week we start at the beginning of the first period. We will dive deeper into the book of John and study the personal relationships of Jesus. We start with Elizabeth's baby boy John shouting in the wilderness loud enough to wake up the spiritually dead.

