



5-Day Bible Study

The Birth of Jesus

By Christopher Reese

Throughout this Bible study are links to Bible Gateway corresponding to the Bible text with reference resource notes that open automatically in the Resources tab on your screen.





Day 1:

Setting the Stage

Sermons, songs, books, and movies about the life of [Jesus](#) typically begin with his [birth in Bethlehem](#) and all of the familiar circumstances that surrounded it—the angels, the shepherds, the manger, Joseph and Mary welcoming their son into the world and trying to take it all in. (We'll look at these aspects of the story in more detail in the studies that follow.) But to more fully understand who Jesus was and why he came, we have to travel back in time to the centuries and decades preceding his birth, and examine the world Jesus was born into, and the mission the Father sent him to accomplish. Grasping this historical and theological background shines essential light on the life and mission of Jesus our Redeemer.

Jesus' World

As the Old Testament ends, the Jews have returned from their [exile](#) in Babylon and are

rebuilding [Jerusalem](#) (which Babylon had destroyed), but they remain under [Persian](#) rule. In the fourth century BC, Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, and [Israel](#) came under [Greek](#) rule. Greek [language](#) and [culture](#) became dominant, and this is the reason the documents of the New Testament were originally written in Greek.

Following Alexander's death, the empire was divided among his generals, and a Greek dynasty emerged known as the [Seleucids](#). One of the Seleucids, Antiochus Epiphanes, enacted a campaign to wipe out [Judaism](#), and even sacrificed pigs on the altar of the temple in Jerusalem. This resulted in the [Maccabean](#) revolt, and the temple was retaken and rededicated in 167 BC. This event has been celebrated ever since as Hanukkah, which John's [Gospel](#) records Jesus celebrating ([John 10:22-23](#)).

The Maccabees reigned for several decades until the [Roman](#) general Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 63 BC, killing many priests and Jewish leaders in the process. Not long after, [Herod the Great](#) convinced the Romans to make him king of the Jews, and he ruled with Rome's support. This is the Herod who ordered the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem in order to protect his rule from a potential rival, as Matthew records ([Matthew 2:16](#)).

Herod died around 4 BC and the Romans divided his empire among his sons, but also resumed direct control of Israel. Rome was an unwelcome power in Israel, and was known for heavily taxing its conquered territories (Jesus' disciple, [Matthew](#), a tax collector, would have been despised as a Roman collaborator). A Jewish revolt against Rome that began in AD 66 eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the





temple ([as Jesus predicted](#)), in AD 70. Jesus would grow up in an Israel under Roman occupation, which would eventually bring him face-to-face with the Roman governor of Judaea, [Pontius Pilate](#).

Jesus, the Predicted Redeemer

The events that would lead to Jesus' birth began long ago in the [Garden of Eden](#). We read in [Genesis 3](#) that [Adam and Eve](#) disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thereby bringing a curse upon themselves and the rest of creation ([Genesis 3:16-19](#)).

God had promised that “when you eat from [the tree] you will certainly die” ([Genesis 2:17](#)). They did not die physically that day—though that would come later—but instead died spiritually, and this death was passed down to all of their descendants. This event is known as *the Fall*. As the apostle Paul writes, this “trespass

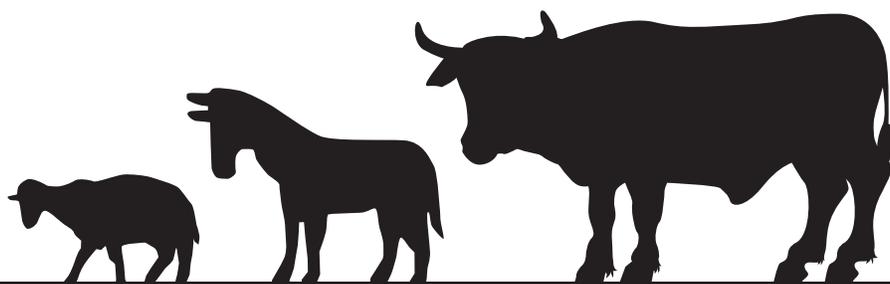
resulted in condemnation for all people” ([Romans 5:18](#)), because Adam and Eve were appointed as representatives of all mankind.

However, even in the midst of this tragedy, we see God's love and mercy at work. Addressing the serpent ([Satan](#)) who had deceived them, God promised, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” ([Genesis 3:15](#)). This verse has been called the *protoevangelion*—the first telling of the gospel—because it foretells that a son of Eve would one day destroy the serpent but sustain an injury in the process. This was fulfilled by Jesus who defeated Satan decisively on the cross, yet suffered the agony of crucifixion ([1 John 3:8](#); [Hebrews 12:2](#)).

By sending his Son to remove the barrier of sin that had separated humankind from God

since the Fall, God implemented a rescue plan that resulted in the redemption of all who will accept his free pardon. As the apostle Paul explains, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them” ([2 Corinthians 5:19](#)). Consequently, we can now have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” ([Romans 5:1](#)).

Thus, one of the primary reasons God the Son [took on human flesh](#) and was born into the world was to save humanity from the inherited guilt of the Fall and from all the sins they would ever commit. Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of a promise God made in the Garden, to save mankind from spiritual death and to ultimately overturn the curse of the Fall. As we'll see in our remaining studies, Jesus would not only be Redeemer, but also, ultimately, Lord and King.





Day 2:

Gabriel's Announcement of Jesus' Birth

([Luke 1:26-38](#))

In this and our remaining three studies we'll examine three key passages in the [Gospel of Luke](#) that shed light on the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. We'll explore what the passages mean and suggest some insights we can apply to our lives as we celebrate what C. S. Lewis [called](#) "the Grand Miracle," Christ's incarnation.

[In today's passage](#), Luke narrates the angel [Gabriel's](#) appearance to [Mary](#), and Gabriel's announcement of Jesus' birth. We recommend taking a few minutes to read through and meditate on the passage.

As we noted in our first study, one of the best strategies for understanding a passage of

Scripture is to examine its historical and cultural background. This can bring to light aspects of the passage that might otherwise be missed, and help us make better sense of the story or the message being communicated. So we'll begin with some observations on Mary's social and cultural environment.

Luke tells us Mary lived in "[Nazareth](#), a town in [Galilee](#)." Galilee was the [northern region of Israel](#), where Jesus began his ministry ([Luke 23:5](#)), and Nazareth was a small town in its southern part. Nazareth was so inconsequential that it was never mentioned in any of Israel's historical sources. For this reason, when Philip invited Nathanael to follow "Jesus of Nazareth," Nathanael replied, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" ([John 1:46](#)). Thus, Mary lived in a very small and likely tight-knit town.

We're also told that Mary was "a virgin pledged to be married" ([Luke 1:27](#)). In light of the customs of the time, Mary was likely in her mid-teens. Engagement was much more involved than it is today in the West. A legal contract would have been drawn up, and the engagement could only be broken by death or divorce.

Joseph, Mary's fiancée, was "a descendant of David" and a carpenter ([Luke 1:27](#); [Mark 6:3](#)). Joseph's lineage from [David](#) was important because this made Jesus a legal heir to the throne of Israel, which God had promised to David's descendants ([2 Samuel 7:12-16](#)). Based on the offering Joseph and Mary made when they later dedicated Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem, a pair of doves or pigeons, we also know they were impoverished ([Luke 2:21-24](#)).

Considering all of this, it's astonishing, from a human





perspective, that God would choose a teenage girl from an obscure village, living in relative poverty, to bring the King of Israel and the Savior of mankind into the world!

We can also imagine the trepidation Mary must have felt when Gabriel told her she would soon be pregnant—a fact that she would have to explain to Joseph and her family, and that would have drawn attention and scorn from friends and neighbors. Yet, Gabriel’s message was also filled with encouragement: “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. . . . Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God” ([Luke 1:28, 30](#)). As Mary’s pregnancy progressed, her thoughts may have turned to [Isaiah 7:14](#), and she may have realized that Isaiah was ultimately referring to her: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (also see [Matthew 1:22-23](#)).

Mary learns that her son will be utterly unique and supremely exalted. In some mysterious way, he would not only be Mary’s

son, but also the Son of God. As a descendant of David, he would assume David’s throne and “reign over [Jacob](#)’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end” ([Luke 1:32-33](#)). Gabriel’s words echo another of Isaiah’s prophecies about Jesus, which we often revisit during this season:

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given, and the
government will be on his
shoulders. And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty
God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.
([Isaiah 9:6](#))

In addition to being a King, Jesus would also be a Savior and Redeemer. “You are to call him Jesus,” Gabriel said, which in Hebrew is Yeshua, meaning “Yahweh is salvation” ([Luke 1:31](#)).

Mary’s response contrasts with Zechariah’s, the father of [John the Baptist](#), when Gabriel had earlier appeared to him, promising that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son, despite their age

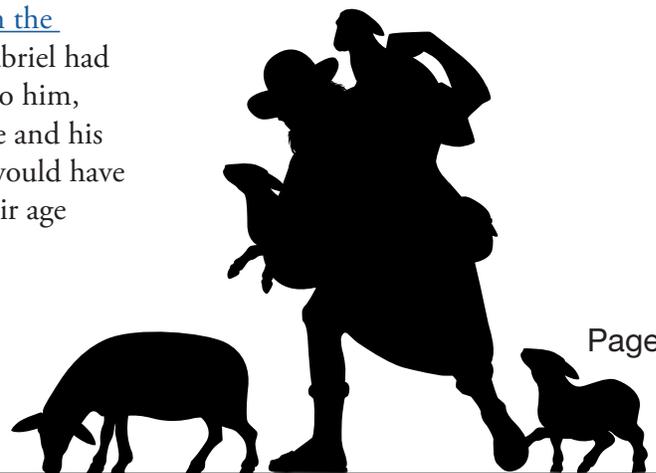
and lifelong inability to conceive ([Luke 1:5-19](#)). While Zechariah expressed doubt about Gabriel’s pronouncement, and was struck mute until John was born, Mary simply asks how it will be that she will become pregnant, since she was still a virgin ([Luke 1:34](#)). In response to Gabriel’s answer, Mary replies, “I am the Lord’s servant. . . . May your word to me be fulfilled” ([Luke 1:38](#)).

Reflections

While there are many spiritual lessons we can take away from Mary’s interaction with Gabriel, three are especially noteworthy.

First God uses those who are available and humble, regardless of their social standing.

Mary grew up in the humblest of circumstances, but the important thing to God





was her character. As God told the prophet Samuel when he was examining candidates to be Israel's next king, "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" ([1 Samuel 16:7](#)). Bible scholar Warren Wiersbe [observes](#), "Mary's believing response was to surrender herself to God as his willing servant. She experienced the grace of God and believed the Word of God, and therefore she could be used by the Spirit to accomplish the will of God. A ['servant,' [Luke 1:38](#)] was the lowest kind of female servant, which shows how much Mary trusted God." Mary's example of faith and obedience is one we should emulate.

Second, we can trust God to keep all of his promises.

As Gabriel stated straightforwardly, "No word from God will ever fail" ([Luke 1:37](#)). According to [the editors](#) of the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, "When Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to Jesus, he was proclaiming the fulfillment of a promise made 900 years earlier to King David. Jesus would be the promised Messiah, the king who would reign forever on David's throne. The Annunciation reminds us that God is a God who always keeps his promises. We can trust him for that today."

Third, we can accomplish whatever God has called us to do because of his presence and power.

The [apostle Paul](#) declared, God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is

at work within us" ([Ephesians 3:20](#)). Commenting on Mary, New Testament scholar Darrell Bock [writes](#),

Mary's response reveals her character. "Let it be to me as you have said." This was no simple matter. She is being asked to bear a child as a virgin without being married. In standing up for God and his power, she will probably become the object of much doubt and ridicule. But Mary knows she is God's servant, so she will allow God to work through her as he wills. He can place her in whatever difficult circumstances he desires, for she knows that God is with her.

Be encouraged today that God is with us and that we can do all things by the grace and power he supplies.





Day 3:

Mary's Song

([Luke 1:46-55](#))

In our previous study we looked at Gabriel's visit to Mary and all of the wonderful things he foretold would happen in relation to Jesus' conception and identity. The last detail Gabriel shared with Mary was that her relative, Elizabeth, would also be having a child, and was already six months along. Gabriel mentions Elizabeth's advanced age and also her previous inability to conceive ([Luke 1:36-37](#)). This would be another confirmation to Mary of the trustworthiness of Gabriel's message, and was perhaps a subtle suggestion that Mary should visit Elizabeth.

Mary was apparently anxious to talk to Elizabeth and share everything that had happened. When Mary arrived at Elizabeth's home and greeted her, Elizabeth's baby, who would grow up to be John the Baptist, "leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Elizabeth then blessed Mary, referring to her as "the mother of my Lord," and praised her for her trust in God's promises ([Luke 1:41, 43, 45](#)).

Elizabeth's affirmation of Mary seems to open a floodgate, and Mary proclaims a hymn of praise. These verses ([Luke 1:46-55](#)), the focus of today's study, are known as Mary's Song or the Magnificat. The term *Magnificat* comes from Luke 1:46 in the [Vulgate](#) version of the Bible, written in Latin, and means "magnify" (the Vulgate version of 1:46 reads, in English, "My soul magnifies the Lord"). The church has used the Magnificat in various ways since the sixth century AD. Some have referred to it as the first Christmas carol. It's been set to music by composers like Bach and Mozart. We'll examine it here to see what it reveals about God, Jesus, and Mary.

Mary's Song is similar to many psalms of thanksgiving in the Old Testament, and also brings to mind the Song of Hannah in [1 Samuel 2:1-10](#). The Song describes what God has done for three recipients of God's blessing: for Mary ([vv. 46-49](#)), for his people generally ([vv. 50-53](#)), and for Israel ([vv. 54-55](#)).

First, Mary extols what God has done for her.

She offers praise from the depths of her being ("my soul," "my spirit"). She glorifies the Lord, "which means her words acknowledge his goodness and bring attention to him like a huge neon light shining out from a building" ([IVP New Testament Commentary](#)). She recognizes her own humble circumstances, but rejoices that in spite of them "from now on all generations will call me blessed" ([Luke 1:48](#)).

Numerous terms and phrases that Mary uses echo the language of the Old Testament. Thus, Charles Spurgeon [exhorts](#), "Notice how Mary quotes Scripture. Her mind seems to have been saturated with the Word of God, as though she had learned the books of Scripture





through and had them ‘by heart’ in more senses than one. . . . Let us soak in [God’s Word] until we are saturated with scriptural expressions.”

Second, Mary praises God for his mercy, mighty deeds, and for overturning the way human society tends to work.

Her proclamation that “his mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation” echoes [Psalm 103:17](#): “from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children.”

Biblical scholars point out that Mary is not only describing how God has acted in the past, but especially how he will act in the future as Jesus inaugurates the [kingdom of God](#). An example is how God will overturn the forces and patterns in human society that run contrary to his will. He will scatter the proud, bring down rulers, and send the wicked

rich away empty ([Luke 1:51-53](#)). Jesus proclaimed this reversal during his earthly ministry, saying things like “the last will be first, and the first will be last,” and, to the religious leaders, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you” ([Matthew 20:16](#); [21:31](#)). All of this will ultimately unfold when Jesus returns, but in the meantime God’s people model this new society by living like citizens of heaven in the here and now ([Matthew 6:33](#); [Philippians 3:20](#)).

Third, Mary gives thanks to God for keeping his promises to Israel.

God chose [Abraham](#) to be the father of a nation that would uniquely represent God to the world, and through whom he would bring the Savior of the world (e.g., [Genesis 12:1-3](#); [Exodus 19:6](#)). God promised Abraham, “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you” ([Genesis 12:3](#)). This was fulfilled in Abraham’s descendant Jesus dying for the sins of the world in order to save it ([Galatians 3:8](#); [Romans 5](#)). Mary herself would play a key role in bringing this Savior into the world.

Reflections

Mary’s Song is a hymn of praise to God, and the [Psalms](#) are filled with calls to give thanks to God (e.g., [Psalm 106:1](#)). Looking back at this year, what has God done in your life and the lives of your family or friends that you’re thankful for? What aspects of Christ’s salvation cause you to give thanks?

Spurgeon observes that Mary’s heart and mind were “saturated with the Word of God.” What are some practices or habits that will allow your own heart and mind to soak up God’s Word?

In a Christmas sermon, pastor Timothy Keller makes an insightful observation about the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth: “Mary doesn’t really break into joy until she gets into fellowship with another sister. She comes in, and Elizabeth says a couple of things, and it all clicks. It all comes together. This is extremely important. We find the Lord mainly in community. . . . So often, the word from God we need comes through a brother or sister.” Do you have Christian friends you can share your joys and troubles with? This is one of the great gifts of the Christian life.





Day 4:

The Angels' Announcement and Jesus' Birth

([Luke 2:1-20](#))

As we ended our last study, Mary was visiting with her relative Elizabeth and we're told Mary "stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home" ([Luke 1:56](#)), probably remaining until John the Baptist was born.

Our study today picks up with the very next chapter of Luke, where we learn the Roman emperor, [Caesar Augustus](#), decided to conduct a census of the empire, and this required Joseph to [travel to Bethlehem](#), and Mary accompanied him ([Luke 2:1-5](#)). The census was for the purpose of taxation.

Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary were still betrothed, and with Mary probably visibly pregnant, this would have invited scorn from most who became aware of it.

While in [Bethlehem](#), Mary gave birth at a location that some Bible versions describe as an "inn."

Consequently, many Christmas stories and songs imagine an American-style inn, like a motel, that had run out of room for the couple. But as the editors of the *Bible Backgrounds Commentary* [helpfully point out](#), "The 'inn' was probably not an ancient hotel with rooms to rent and an innkeeper, but either a guest room in a private residence or an informal public shelter where travelers would gather for the night."

There was no regular room for them at this location, so Mary "wrapped [Jesus] in cloths and placed him in a manger" ([Luke 2:7](#)). The "manger" was some type of enclosure used to shelter or feed animals (rather than the usual sense in English of a feeding trough), and some early Christian traditions suggest that it was a cave. The "cloths" were "swaddling cloths" that were used to keep an infant's limbs straight, and were a symbol of motherly care and affection.

Luke then tells us "there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night" ([Luke 2:8](#)). Some scholars hold that since the shepherds were outside, it was probably during one of the warmer months. Others point to evidence that shepherds kept flocks outside year-round. In any case, we're not able to determine from Scripture exactly what time of year Jesus was born. The church in Rome began celebrating Jesus' birth on December 25 in 336 AD, but the choice of date doesn't seem to be connected to an earlier tradition. It may have been chosen to overshadow an existing pagan celebration on the same day.

The more important point, however, is the glorious message the [angels proclaimed](#) to the shepherds:





“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Shepherding was considered one of the lower occupations in Israel, so it’s appropriate that the angels would appear to them first in light of a theme we’ve seen in our previous studies—that God remembers and honors the lowly and humble. Bible scholar Warren Wiersbe [notes](#), it was also “fitting that the good news about God’s Shepherd and Lamb be given first to humble shepherds.”

The angels came proclaiming the good news of the gospel, and it’s noteworthy that this message came with great light and glory against a backdrop of nighttime darkness. After the Fall of Adam

and Eve in the Garden, and centuries of the nation of Israel turning away from God, finally, at long last, salvation had come! As we saw in our first two studies, Jesus would be both Savior (Redeemer) and Lord (King). The Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah foretold both of these roles (e.g., [Isaiah 53](#); [Isaiah 9:6](#)).

Following the initial announcement, a great multitude of angels appeared, singing what was later called the Gloria in Excelsis Deo (meaning “glory to God in the highest,” from its first words in the [Latin Vulgate](#) translation of the Bible). This is also well known, of course, as the chorus of the Christmas carol, *Angels We Have Heard on High*.

The angels declare peace. Isaiah predicted that Jesus would be the “Prince of Peace,” and this peace is primarily peace with God, the only basis for true peace in our lives ([Isaiah 9:6](#); [Romans 5:1](#)).

The shepherds hurried off to find Joseph and Mary, and displayed two natural responses to witnessing a work of God—they spread the word about what they

had seen, and they gave God praise and glory ([Luke 2:16-20](#)).

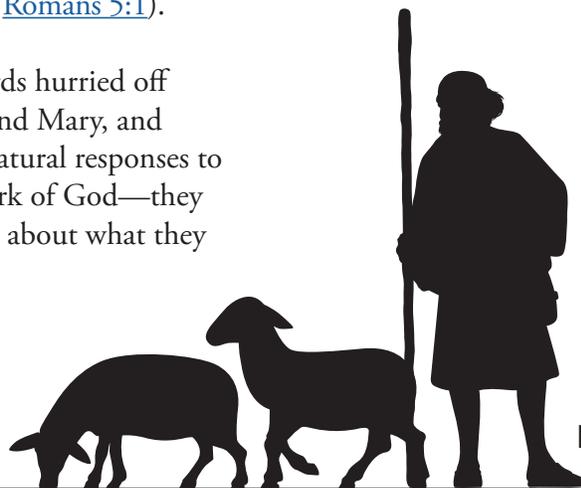
Reflections

Were you surprised by anything you learned in this study? Does it change how you think about the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth?

If you had been one of the shepherds, how do you think you would have responded to the angels and their message?

In what ways have you seen Jesus at work in your life in his roles as Savior and Lord?

Jesus told his disciples, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” ([John 14:27](#)). How do you think Jesus’ peace differs from the way the world understands peace?





Day 5:

The Song of Simeon

([Luke 2:22-35](#))

Our final study brings us to the end of Luke’s account of the events surrounding Jesus’ birth. We’ll take a deep dive into the prophetic words about Jesus spoken by Simeon and consider what we learn from them about Jesus’ identity, mission, and destiny.

Joseph and Mary were still staying in Bethlehem when it came time to go to Jerusalem to do what the Mosaic law required [for newborn children and their mothers](#). Bethlehem was about six miles from Jerusalem, so they were relatively close to the city and temple. A woman who gave birth was considered ceremonially unclean (because of contact with blood), and after 33 days (for a son) was required to offer a sacrifice to be restored to ceremonial purity ([Leviticus](#)

[12](#)). In addition, every firstborn son was required to be dedicated to the Lord ([Exodus 13:2, 12-13](#)). By means of an offering, the son was, in effect, “bought back” from God. This was a reminder to the Israelites that their children ultimately belonged to God, the giver of all life.

As noted in our previous study, Mary offered a sacrifice of doves or pigeons, indicating her and Joseph’s lack of financial resources. Their commitment to make these sacrifices shows their faithfulness to God’s law.

As Mary and Joseph were going about their business around the temple, they encountered a man named Simeon. Luke tells us Simeon was “righteous and devout” and “was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him” ([Luke 2:25](#)). He had been led by the Spirit to go to the temple courts that day where he saw Jesus and his parents. Simeon was not a religious leader, just

a devout Israelite who was hopefully expecting the arrival of the Messiah—called here the “consolation of Israel” because he would bring joy and comfort (e.g., [Isaiah 52:9](#)) to the nation. The Lord had told Simeon he would not die until he had seen the Messiah ([Luke 2:26](#)).

Taking Jesus in his arms, Simeon erupts into poetic praise, similar to the way Mary did when she visited Elizabeth (Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah, spoke similar hymns of praise in [Luke 1](#)). This song of Simeon’s is also known as Nunc Dimittis (“now dismiss”), from the translation of [Luke 2:29](#) in the [Latin Vulgate Bible](#).

Simeon first acknowledges that God has kept his promise, allowing him to see the Messiah. He tells the Lord that he can now “dismiss [his] servant in peace,” probably meaning that Simeon is prepared to die now that he has seen Israel’s Savior ([Luke 2:29-30](#)).





Simeon also proclaims that the Messiah will not only minister to and deliver Israel, but will be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles” ([Luke 2:32](#)). As we saw briefly in our study of Mary’s Song ([Luke 1:46-55](#)), it was God’s intention from the beginning to make his salvation available to the whole world. God told Abraham that through him “all peoples on earth will be blessed” ([Genesis 12:3](#)). This was one of the earliest prophecies of the Messiah’s future work (as Paul notes in [Galatians 3:8](#)). In the Psalms, David predicted that “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him” ([Psalm 22:27](#)). Simeon’s dual reference to Israel and the Gentiles reflects Isaiah’s description of the Messiah as “a covenant for the people [Israel] and a light for the Gentiles” ([Isaiah 42:6](#)). Thus, in heaven, there will be followers of Christ “from every nation, tribe, people and language” ([Revelation 7:9](#)).

Mary and Joseph were amazed at Simeon’s words, and he blessed them. He also had a final word that he addressed directly to Mary: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too” ([Luke 2:34-35](#)).

This is the first foreshadowing in Jesus’ life of the opposition he would face, and of his future suffering, which would also deeply wound Mary. How people responded to Jesus revealed “the thoughts of [their] hearts.” Those like Simeon who were devoted to God embraced him, while the arrogant and the wicked rejected him. As Peter explains, Christ is for believers “a chosen and precious cornerstone,” but for “those who do not believe” he is a “stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall” ([1 Peter 2:7, 8](#)).

Early in our series, we alluded to the fact that Christmas is the celebration of the incarnation, what C. S. Lewis [termed](#) the Grand Miracle of the Christian faith; the God of eternity entering our world as a human being.

Not only did the Son of God come to save us—sent by the Father and empowered by the Spirit—but he lived a human life and encountered the full range of human experience. As a result, as the author of Hebrews tells us, “we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are” ([Hebrews 4:15](#)). English novelist, playwright, and poet Dorothy Sayers so aptly summarizes:

He himself has gone through the whole of human experience—from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat,





despair, and death.... He was born in poverty and ... suffered infinite pain—all for us—and thought it well worth his while.

Reflections

What is one insight from Simeon's interaction with Joseph and Mary that helps illuminate your understanding of Jesus?

Have you ever encountered someone like Simeon, a mature follower of Christ who was able to speak God's truth into your life? Are you a Simeon to someone in your own life?

What have you learned about how the Old Testament describes the Messiah? What have you

found to be new or surprising?

What do you find to be encouraging about the fact that God became a human being and lived a human life? What are your thoughts about Hebrews 4:15 and the quotation from Dorothy Sayers?



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