

# Luke

Carefully Investigating the Gospel . . . Together

SSBC Luke Bible Study #02

Passage: Luke 2:1-20

Sermon Date: Sep 25, 2005

## Introduction:

This lesson challenges us to look more closely at a very familiar passage to find the new fruit (insights, encouragement, correction, etc.) that God likely has waiting there for each of us. The scene begins with one king, Caesar Augustus, counting his “flock” via a census. That sends Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, fulfilling a number of prophecies as another king is born.

In this study, you’ll again practice your skill using the inductive approach to bible study. It is essential that each follower of Christ learn first-hand how to hear God’s voice, read his Word, and know his love and his counsel.

**Prayer:** Always take time to invite God to guide you and shape you as you enter into a time of bible study. He will.

1. Start by making your own observations. Use the table on the following page to make observations & notes as you read through the passage. Ask yourself “Who”, “What”, “Why”, “Where”, “When”, and “How” questions. Write down what you notice, what you wonder about, what patterns you see. Pay particular attention to what you notice about God, such as his nature & character, his conduct, his promises, etc.

*This bible study was developed by South Shore Baptist Church in conjunction with our weekly sermon series. To hear a sermon on the same scripture passage covered in this bible study, come to one of our Sunday worship services (8:30am or 11:00am) on the date listed on page 1. Or after that date you can hear it by logging on to [www.southshorebaptist.com/sermons/](http://www.southshorebaptist.com/sermons/)*

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Scripture	Your Observations & Notes
<p><sup>1</sup>In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup>(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup>And everyone went to his own town to register.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup>He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.</p> <p><sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup>and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.</p> <p><sup>8</sup>And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.</p> <p><sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.</p>	<p><u>Sample:</u> I wonder who Augustus was?</p> <p>Wow! Mary went about 85 miles (uphill!) while 8-9 months pregnant.</p>

Scripture	Your Observations & Notes
<p><sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."</p> <p><sup>13</sup>Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,</p> <p><sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."</p> <p><sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."</p> <p><sup>16</sup>So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.</p> <p><sup>17</sup>When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.</p> <p><sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:1-20 – NIV)</p>	<p>In a manger, as predicted in verse 2:12</p>

2. Next, use this chart to **interpret some key observations**.

- a. Complete the first two rows of questions. Then add a few of your own observations from pages 2-3 that you find most interesting or important. Rewrite these below, and interpret and apply them using the columns to the right.
- b. For each observation, begin to interpret by asking yourself these kinds of questions:
- What does it mean?
  - Why is this important?
  - What does this tell me about the Father? About Jesus? About the Holy Spirit?
  - Are there other scriptures that could help me understand this?

<b>Observation</b> What does it say?	<b>Interpretation</b> What does it mean?
<i>Caesar Augustus' census caused Mary &amp; Joseph to go to Bethlehem.</i>	<i>God used a Roman emperor's decree to fulfill His plan. God is sovereign. "Nothing is impossible with God" (1:37)</i>
<i>Jesus was born in Bethlehem.</i>	<b>Cross Reference Challenge:</b> Can you find the Old Testament verse where God's prophet predicts Jesus' birth in Bethlehem?  <i>(HINT: Try looking at the other Gospel accounts for clues, such as Matthew Ch. 2 or John 7:42)</i>  _____

*Use another sheet of paper if this space is too limiting for you.*

3. Finally, consider how you can **apply** the Word to your life. Look for:

- **Sins** you need to avoid
- **Promises** you want to believe
- **Examples** you'd like to follow (remember "SPECK")
- **Commands** you'll try harder to obey
- **Knowledge** you'd like to share

Don't just write things to write them – listen carefully to God's Word and what he seems to be teaching you, and look for relevant things that you're truly stirred to do. Then as you do them, God will help you learn, grow, and help others grow.

<b>Application</b> How do I apply what it means?
3.a How is God using governmental decisions to affect your life & world, and how should you respond to them?
3.b. God keeps his promises. How is this relevant to your life today?

*Is there somewhere else you should write these so you'll actually do them?*

**His Faithfulness → Great!  
Our Circumstances → Humble**

4. God's promise to Mary in Luke 1:32-35 is so grand, while the conditions of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:4-7 are so austere. If we didn't know the eventual outcome of the story, we would be very likely to deem it unlikely, even hopeless, that this humble child would indeed rule the world.

a. Why do you think God had Jesus be born in such humble circumstances?

b. Check out a few cross-references that may help:

Mark 10:45

Luke 6:20

Luke 9:58

Luke 22:27

2 Cor 8:9

c. Where do things look hopeless or unlikely in your life right now?

d. How does this story of God's faithfulness and his use of humble servants facing daunting odds shed light on your seemingly hopeless circumstances?

**No Room at the Inn**

When Palestinian rooms were filled and the animals were at pasture, an inn or lodge would improvise quarters for the poorer people in the animal courtyard.

(Pate, Luke Commentary, p. 81)

**Where Have All the Shepherds Gone?**

In Jesus' day, "Shepherds were classed with prostitutes and tax collectors ... because 1) they could not keep the ceremonial law, which restricted, for example, touching of dead things; and 2) they traveled around with loose habits, no fixed residence, and few scruples about other people's property." (*Luke Bible Study*, NavPress Lifechange Series, page 34. Question 5 also adapted from same, p. 35.)

5. Read Ezekiel chapter 34 (especially verses 2, 8-11, 23) and consider this question: Why do you think God chose to reveal his Son's birth to real shepherds rather than to the religious leaders of the day (who were supposed to be His people's shepherds)?

**Seeing December 25 from September 25**

6. Look back for a minute:

a. What Christmas memory makes you smile?

b. What Christmas memory makes you sad or mad?

The passage we are studying is of course the Christmas story. When we read a familiar passage, we must be careful to listen for what God is teaching us this time. Just like our expectations of the Christmas season – that it be like a favorite Christmas past – our expectations often interfere with our fully experiencing the present.

It seems to me that we often, almost sulkily, reject the good that God offers us because, at that moment, we expected some other good. Do you know what I mean? On every level of our life—in our religious experience, in our gastronomic, erotic, esthetic, and social experience—we are harking back to some occasion which seemed to us to reach perfection, setting that up as a norm, and depreciating all other occasions by comparison. But these other occasions, I now suspect, are often full of their own new blessing, if only we would lay ourselves open to it. God shows us a new facet of the glory,

and we refuse to look at it because we're still looking for the old one. And of course we don't get that. You can't, at the twentieth reading, get again the experience of reading *Lycidas* for the first time. But what you do get can be in its own way as good. (C.S. Lewis, The Joyful Christian, p. 88)

With these insights in mind, now look ahead toward next Christmas:

c. How might you start to pray and plan to more fully experience Christ's joy this coming Christmas?

- *Perhaps you could "spread the word concerning what you've been told about Jesus" like the shepherds did in verse 2:17.*
- *Perhaps you could foster healing and freedom from past hurts and lingering expectations that seem to surface at Christmas.*

### **Your Key Take Away from This Study**

7. What key **insight(s)** or **application(s)** are on your heart as you come out of this study?

*(If you don't have any right now, leave this blank for now and come back to it, perhaps after participating in a small group discussion and/or the sermon.)*