



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

LESSON 2 - STUDY QUESTIONS LUKE 2:1-52

DAY ONE

1. What struck you from your reading of the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, the commentary pages 9-16, or last week's introductory Spiritual Reflection?

Read Luke 2:1-7

2a. Now that we have learned about the birth of John, who was to be called "the Baptist" and who prepared the way for the Savior, we will hear about the birth of the Savior Himself. Briefly summarize what Caesar Augustus decreed in verses 1 and 2 that affected "all the world."

NOTE: This decree might have called for simple registration, probably for tax purposes, or it may have called for an oath of allegiance of all non-Roman citizens of the Empire.

b. What was the result in verse 3?

3a. As a result of the decree, Joseph went up from Nazareth in Galilee, where he was living, to be enrolled in his ancestral hometown of Bethlehem in Judea. Note Bethlehem and Nazareth on the map below. How is Bethlehem described, and what is its relationship to Joseph?



b. Read the following prophecy about Bethlehem and note its relation to the Messiah.

Micah 5:2:

4a. In verse 5 we learn that Mary, Joseph's "betrothed" who accompanied him to Bethlehem, was with child. What happened in verse 6 while they were there?

b. What are possible reasons why Joseph brought the pregnant Mary with him on this 90 mile trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem?

5. The small town of Bethlehem would have been crowded with others who had returned for the census. Record verse 7.

NOTE: "First-born son" was the traditional designation for the heir, and does not indicate that there were necessarily other sons. It is important to note that in sacred scripture, the designation of Jesus as "first-born son" also applies to His being the first-born of God, first-born among all mankind.

6. CONNECTION: A new baby is the focus of the hopes and dreams of his or her whole family, and sometimes even of the whole community. The Baby Jesus in Bethlehem was the focus of the hopes and dreams of the people of Israel, who were awaiting the long-promised Messiah to restore David's kingdom. Today, Jesus is the focus of many heartfelt needs and longings of humankind. As can no other message, His humble birth in a stable brings the message of hope that our losses and failures can be redeemed by the love of God. Is there a particular hope you can discern if you place yourself in prayer with Mary and Joseph at the stable?

Read and record Isaiah 9:6 and let thoughts of the hope of our salvation born with Our Savior lead you into prayer.

DAY TWO

Read Luke 2:8-14

7a. Luke has just described the birth of baby Jesus in the stable in Bethlehem. Nearby, what was taking place according to verse 8?

b. Picture a hillside above the town of Bethlehem where humble shepherds were resting with their sheep. Imagine their shock when suddenly the skies are filled with a heavenly manifestation. Describe what the shepherds saw and their reaction.

8. The angel reassured them. What command and comfort did he give them according to verse 10?

9. The angel announced to them the good news that "to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (verse 11). Read and record 1 Samuel 17:12, which explains that King David of the Old Testament came from Bethlehem and was the youngest son of Jesse.

10a. What sign did the angel say would be given to them (verse 12)?

b. A manger is a trough used to feed animals. For what reason(s) do you think that it is appropriate (and symbolic) that the baby Jesus was lying in a manger?

11. Describe what the shepherds saw and heard from verses 13-14.

NOTE: With the song of the angels, Luke shares with us the third song in the Infancy Narrative, following the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*. It is the beautiful basis for the *Gloria*. What an amazing chapter!

12. **CONNECTION:** Luke, the storyteller, shows us a "heavyweight boxing match!" In one corner stands one Caesar Augustus, emperor of Rome. Caesar lives in a magnificent palace, proclaiming orders that are carried out over thousands of miles by legions of soldiers. In the other corner lies baby Jesus, in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes. How can Jesus win! But wait! We learn in today's lesson that Jesus also has an army: it is made up of angels forming a heavenly host. Caesar, representing worldly power and riches battles Jesus the humble Babe, Bringer of love and eternal life. The battle is set and continues to this day. For example, the desire to get ahead can cause us to trample over others. What is another example of this power struggle in today's world?

Read Joshua 24:15, noting that he challenges the Israelites to "Choose this day whom you will serve ... but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Write a prayer today reaffirming your own commitment to the Way of the Lord.

DAY THREE

Read Luke 2:15-21

13a. As today's lesson begins, the angels, having declared the birth of the Savior, left the shepherds and went into heaven. What did the shepherds say to each other according to verse 15?

b. According to verse 16, the shepherds "went with haste" to Bethlehem. What beautiful scene did they find there?

14a. When they saw the Holy Family, they shared what the angels had told them concerning this Child (verse 17). What was the reaction of all who heard it?

b. Christmas is truly a time of wonder, especially for children. Is there a special memory of something that inspired wonder in your childhood about Christmas?

15a. How did Mary react to what the angels told the shepherds, according to verse 19?

b. Luke included the statement that "Mary treasured these words and pondered them in her heart." Do you agree or disagree that Luke could only have known this if Mary had told him these things?

THINK: We learned this week that Mary treasured the words of the shepherds in her heart. In our daily Cornerstone lessons, we are encouraged to enter the "classroom of silence," to take time out of our busy lives to ponder the events of our lives in light of God's word as Mary did.

16a. The shepherds returned to their fields. What did they do as they returned (verse 20)?

b. How wonderful that the Father chose David, a lowly shepherd boy, to be a great king, and in today's lesson, simple shepherds to announce the birth of the Savior, our Shepherd! Find and record another reference to shepherds in the Gospels or the Old Testament that is particularly meaningful to you.

17. At the end of eight days, the Baby was circumcised. What else did He receive and why, according to the second half of verse 21?

18. **CONNECTION:** In this chapter we learn that the first to hear from the angels the good news of Christ's birth were not royalty or officials, but shepherds. Shepherds were looked down upon in Jesus' time. They lived outdoors, were transient, following their herds around so they could not take part in regular community life. They probably smelled like sheep! Yet these humble people were the first to be brought into the flock of the Good Shepherd. What quality do you think God valued in them? Explain to your small group.

Read and record [John 10:11](#) and begin your prayer today thanking God for his loving care for each of us.

DAY FOUR

Read Luke 2:22-32

19. As today's lesson begins, we read that the Holy Family brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord according to the law of Moses. Record the quote from [Exodus 13:2](#) (in Luke 2:23) concerning the Mosaic covenant.

20. Joseph and Mary were faithful Jews. What did they offer as a sacrifice, according to the law of the Lord, in verse 24?

21a. Luke tells us about a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. Describe four things we learn about Simeon in verse 25.

b. What had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit (verse 26)?

NOTE: The "consolation of Israel" represented the time when the Messiah would rescue Israel. In spite of Israel being conquered again and again by Gentile nations, many faithful Israelites did not lose hope that the glorious kingdom of David would be restored.

22a. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple. When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to fulfill the law, what did Simeon do (verse 28)?

b. Simeon then thanked and glorified God in a prayer which is repeated each night throughout the Church in the Liturgy of the Hours. He began by saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word ..." Record the rest of his words from verses 30-32. (Good memory verses)

23. What salvation had Simeon seen and was holding in his arms?

24. CONNECTION: Since the early centuries of the Church, priests and religious have prayed Simeon's beautiful canticle before bed. Is there a particular prayer you say before you go to sleep at night, knowing that each day is a special gift? Please share that prayer with your small group and your reason for choosing it.

Perhaps you may choose to read aloud this beautiful prayer of St. Augustine before you rest this evening, and spend a few moments with each line praying for the special needs of different members of your family or friends.

Watch, oh Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight
And give your angels and saints charge over those who sleep.
Tend your sick ones, Oh Lord Christ, And rest your weary ones, Bless your dying ones,
Soothe your suffering ones, Pity your afflicted ones, And all for your love's sake. Amen

DAY FIVE

Read Luke 2:33-40

25. Today's lesson continues the story of Jesus' presentation in the Temple. According to verse 33, Mary and Joseph were amazed at what Simeon said about Jesus. Simeon blessed them and then addressed Mary about Jesus' future, saying that some will reject His ministry. What were the first three things he told her (verse 34 and the beginning of verse 35)?

26. Simeon goes on to prophesy regarding Mary. Record the end of verse 35 and comment on the sorrows she will experience.

27a. Luke tells us of a prophetess named Anna. Briefly describe her from the end of verse 36 and verse 37.

b. How would you describe Anna in terms of today's vocations?

28a. At that moment (presumably while Simeon was blessing the Child), Anna came over to them. What did she do (end of verse 38)?

b. After the parents finished everything required by the law of the Lord in Jerusalem, what did they do (verse 39)?

29. Record the beautiful verse describing Jesus' growth as a child (verse 40).

30. **CONNECTION:** Imagine waiting your whole life for the Messiah to come and then recognizing that He is right there in front of you as a small child! How amazing that Simeon and Anna were blessed by God with not only seeing His Son, but sharing with Mary their prophecies. How faithful is God! To paraphrase another Luke verse: blessed are they who believed that what the Lord said to them would come true (from Luke 1:45). What are some ways in which God has been faithful to you in your life?

Read and record Psalm 89:14, and write a prayer today thanking God for His faithfulness that lasts forever.

DAY SIX

Read Luke 2:41-52

NOTE: Today's lesson begins with the familiar story of the boy Jesus in the great temple of Jerusalem. Nazareth is about 60 miles north of Jerusalem, and men and women usually traveled separately. Passover was a festival defined by Jewish law requiring all males 12 and over to travel to the temple in Jerusalem.

31a. As required, Mary and Joseph went up every year to the temple in Jerusalem for the festival of Passover. Today's lesson begins in the year when Jesus was 12 years old (verses 41-42). What happened on this trip (verse 43)?

b. The crowds in Jerusalem were massive. Jesus' parents assumed that he was in their group of travelers during the first day. What did they do when they found out he was not in the group (second half of verse 44 and verse 45)?

32a. Where did they find the boy Jesus and under what circumstances (verse 46)?

b. Imagine Jesus as a young man sitting with rabbis who have studied the Torah all of their lives and who were amazed at His understanding and His answers (verse 47). Read Isaiah 11:6, record the last phrase and consider its significance.

33a. When his parents found Jesus they were astonished. What did his mother ask him (verse 48)?

b. Relate Jesus' answer and consider its significance for His future.

NOTE: USCCB* [2:49] I must be in my Father's house: this phrase can also be translated, "I must be about my Father's work." In either translation, Jesus refers to God as his Father. His divine sonship, and His obedience to His heavenly Father's will, takes precedence over His ties to His family.

34a. Mary and Joseph reacted much as parents of today would. From your reading of verse 50, what do you think their feelings were?

b. Then Jesus returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and He was obedient to them. Once again, at the end of verse 51 Luke shares a special insight into the heart of Mary. Record the end of verse 51 and comment on what you imagine Mary must have been thinking.

35. What do we learn about Jesus after he returned to Nazareth (verse 52)?

36. CONNECTION: We see in this passage something we know very well ... that the roles of parents and children are seemingly at odds with each other. Every mother, father and relative knows that the precious small child who listens to their every word will someday grow up and leave them. Although our children's missions are not as awesome as that of Mary and Joseph's Son, they also must forge their own way, sometimes breaking their parents' hearts. We all understand that God has a plan for them separate from that of their parents and loved ones. Can you relate this dilemma to an experience you have shared?

As our lesson ends, so does the infancy narrative. Read and record 1 Corinthians 13:11 and, like Mary, ponder these things in your heart.

After completing this lesson, read pages 16-23 in the *The Gospel According to Luke* by Michael F. Patella, O.S.B. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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