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Jesus Is Born

Luke 2:1–20 · Bud · Ages 9–12

Luke begins with the most powerful man in the world: Caesar Augustus, ruler of the Roman Empire. He orders a registration of everyone under his rule, and families must enroll in their ancestral towns. Augustus thinks he is just counting his subjects. Without knowing it, he sets God's plan in motion.

Joseph is a descendant of King David, so he makes the journey of several days from Nazareth south to Bethlehem, David's home town, with Mary, who is pregnant. Centuries earlier, God had promised David that a king from his family would reign forever (2 Sam 7:12–16), and the prophet Micah had said a ruler would come from little Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). Now those promises are about to come true, in the least likely way.

In Bethlehem, Mary gives birth to her firstborn son. There is no space for them in the guest room, so she wraps him tightly in cloths, the way newborns were wrapped, and places him in a manger, a feeding trough for animals. The King promised to David arrives not in a palace but among the animals.

That night, shepherds are guarding their flocks in the hills outside town. Shepherds were hard-working but humble people, often looked down on. Yet David himself had been a shepherd boy near Bethlehem. An angel appears, and God's glory blazes around them. They

are terrified. The angel calms them and announces news that will make the whole nation glad: today, in David's town, a Savior is born, the Messiah, the Lord. The sign will be a baby in cloths, lying in a manger. Suddenly the sky is full of angels praising God and proclaiming peace to people on earth.

The shepherds hurry into Bethlehem and find everything exactly as the angel said. They spread the news, and everyone who hears it is astonished. Mary takes it all in and thinks it over deeply. The shepherds return to their flocks, giving glory to God.

Look at the contrast. Roman inscriptions praised Augustus as a savior who brought peace. Luke quietly shows that the true Savior, and the real peace, come from a baby lying in a feeding trough. Jesus is truly God, the eternal Son, and truly human, a newborn who needed his mother's care. He came to save us from sin and to keep every promise God had made.

Talk about it

1. Why did Joseph and Mary have to travel to Bethlehem, and which old promises did that fulfill?
2. Why do you think God announced Jesus' birth to shepherds instead of to kings or priests?
3. Jesus is truly God and truly man. Where do you see both in this story?

Key verse: Lk 2:11. Look it up in your Bible.