

## Christmas Day 2022

### Luke 2:1-21

#### The Birth of Jesus

**2** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2** (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** And everyone went to their own town to register.

**4** 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. **5** He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7** and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

**8** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

**13** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

**14** "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

**15** 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."

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <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. <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.

<sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

## **Matthew 2:1-12**

### **The Magi Visit the Messiah**

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

## Responding to the King (Luke 2:1-21 and Matthew 2:1-12)

25-Dec-2022

G'Day Church Family

Please have your Bibles in front of you – we'll be looking at both Bible passages – from Luke 2:1-21 and Matthew 2:1-12

There's an **outline** for you to **take notes** – if that helps you **concentrate**.

Let me ask **God** for His **help** and **guidance** first – let's **pray**...

### Intro

Have you ever **asked yourself** – what it would have been like **if you were there** – that very first Christmas?

(pause)

How would **you** have **reacted** – if you were - **Mary** – or **Joseph** – or one of the **Shepherds** – or one of the **wise men**?

(pause)

From our two Bible readings this morning – we're going to **look at** the **responses** of the **people involved** and see how they respond to the new born King – **King Jesus!**

And as we look at their responses – hopefully we might be able to **come up with an appropriate response for us** – some 2022 or so years later!

[If you please turn to our first Bible passage – Luke 2:1-21]

## Responses from the Christmas Story

### The Shepherds

First then – let's look at the **response** of the **shepherds**.

And straight away we have a **surprise** here.

When a **king**, or any royalty, was **born** it was **common to have a proclamation sent out**. It was an announcement to **let the world know** what had happened.

But the **surprise** comes when we discover who this announcement was **first told to** – **Shepherds!**

**Shepherds** were about as **low class** as you could get in the 1st century. It was the lowliest of jobs. Shepherds **couldn't observe the regulations of the law** because of the **demands of the job**. And because they lived and slept out in the **fields** with the sheep – they were **pretty stinky too**. So, they were **social outcasts** and **not well liked**.

It was to these social outcasts that the first announcement of King Jesus comes. And not just any announcement, but an angel announcing **Good News** that will cause **great joy** for all people (v10)

The **Good News** (v11) is that a **Saviour** has been **born** in **Bethlehem** – He is the **Messiah** – God's chosen One – aka The **Christ** – the Lord.

And to emphasize this **Good News** - a **heavenly choir of angels** appear singing praise to God (v13-14)

This **Good News** that brings great joy is to counter some **Bad News** that has been plaguing humankind since Adam and Eve.

The **Bad News** that humankind can't fully obey and keep God's rules – and that **breaks their friendship with God** – and if this relationship is not fixed – it means **death and eternal separation from God!**

But the Good News is – **this new born King will** be the one to **save people from this separation from God** – this new born king can keep all God's rules – and **He's prepared to even take the punishment of death from us** – by dying on a cruel cross – to **win forgiveness of and eternal life in Heaven for all who believe in Him** – now that is something to be joyful about – isn't it?

Although the **shepherds** were stunned and scared at the sight of the angels – their **response is very impressive**

- a) They **believed God's Word** from the angels – and then the shepherds **went to check out this new born King – Jesus - for themselves** (v16)
- b) When they found Him – that was enough for them **to believe in Him**
- c) And then - **they went and spread the word about Jesus** (v17)
- d) **And praised God for all the things they had heard and seen** – which were just as they were told (v20)

Application:

What does that **mean for us** this morning?

Can we be like these shepherds?

Can we get excited like the shepherds and **check out Jesus for ourselves** – in the Bible [Luke chapters 1 to 24]?

Can we take God's Word about Jesus into our hearts and believe it?

Can we be filled with joy about what Jesus brings – so much so that we can't help ourselves but tell everyone about Him – and **spread the word to all we come across.**

Doesn't the **angel's announcement to the shepherds** – **show that no one is excluded from Jesus** – and that **EVERYONE is invited** – even the people that society has written off?

Don't we have an **obligation to share Jesus** – and **not keep Him a secret?** Isn't that what **Jesus told His disciples to do** before He ascended to Heaven (**Matthew 28:16-20**). And it was a **command** – **not a suggestion!**

And doesn't the **appearance to the shepherds** remind us that **Jesus is the Good Shepherd** – who not only looks for lost sheep like us – **but laid down His life for His sheep?**

(pause)

### The People in Bethlehem

Next - there's the **response of the people in Bethlehem** that the Shepherds spread the Good News to.

V18 says the **people** who heard the shepherds **were amazed** (*literally they marvelled and were full of admiration for the birth of this new born king*)

And why wouldn't people be amazed?

A **Virgin** has a **child** - and the **child is God** coming to live with His people. And this **news** is **delivered by angels**. And the new born King is God's chosen one and a **Saviour**. It's the **most amazing news**.

Application: For us this morning – we've heard the Christmas Story so many times – that we **might just gloss over these amazing miraculous details** and miss their impact.

Perhaps **we need to ask** – what would have happened if Jesus – hadn't have come that first Christmas? Then where would we be?

**We'd still be dead in our sins** –with **no forgiveness** – and no offer of eternal life in Heaven – and **no hope!**

(pause)

## Mary

Next, we look at **Mary's response** –

See v19 – Mary **treasured up** all these things and **pondered** them in her heart.

Application:

The **Greek** word used for *treasured* literally means **to keep something from perishing or being lost** – in other words – **Mary's NEVER** going to forget the **events of that first Christmas** – AND **NEITHER** should we!

And the **Greek** word used for *pondered* here – literally means **bringing everything she's seen and heard together** – putting the pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle.

Mary's perhaps thinking: how can she have a baby as a **virgin** – thinking about what the angel said about this baby – thinking about what the angels told the shepherds about this baby – and thinking about the shepherds' reaction.

For us this morning – it's like the whole of the Bible from Genesis to Luke/Matthew is all coming together – Jesus is the last piece of the puzzle that fulfils all the promises that God has made – and Jesus completes God's rescue plan for human kind.

Maybe we could think about all that when we're full from our Christmas lunch this afternoon!

(pause)

### Mary and Joseph

Next let's look at Mary and Joseph's response as a couple...

In v21 – **Mary and Joseph** took Jesus to be **circumcised on 8<sup>th</sup> day** – according to **God's law** (Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3) and **they named their baby boy – JESUS** – just as the angel Gabriel had told Mary before she conceived (Luke 1:31)

Application:

Mary and Joseph were **completely obedient to God's Law and completely obedient to God's Word** given through the angel Gabriel. In fact, **Mary and Joseph, believed everything God and His angel said in this whole Christmas story** – without doubting – even if it seemed bizarre – even if it seemed unlikely – even if it seemed impossible.

Remember how Mary said earlier in Luke 1:38 – *"I am the Lord's servant – may your word to me be fulfilled"*

Shouldn't our response to God be "whatever you say Lord, that's good enough for me"

(pause)

[If we could now, please turn to our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading from Matthew 2:1-12]

## Herod

Next there's King Herod's Response – he's **disturbed** – it says in v3 – when he finds out about this new born King – in fact – **all of Jerusalem are disturbed** – they know what Herod's like – if he's disturbed and angry – it's not going to be good for them either.

**Herod pretends** to be interested in worshipping this new born King – telling the Magi to report back to him when they find Jesus – so he can worship the new born King too! **Yeh right!**

We only have to read to v16 – to find out Herod is really disturbed and gives an order for all baby boys under two in the vicinity of Bethlehem to be killed!

You see Herod – has no room in his life for King Jesus. He's rejected King Jesus before he's had any opportunity to get to know him

Application – there are many like Herod today – who have made themselves their own King – and have no room for King Jesus in their life. They foolishly think they can do without Jesus in their life?

They are basically lost from God!

Perhaps we know people like this?

They're the people we need to be having conversations with – about why we believe in Jesus.

Our testimony of why we believe in Jesus – is **our story** – and there's **nothing more powerful** – we need to pray for boldness and bravery – to share our testimony with those lost from God.

## The Magi (Wise Men)

Next there's the **response of the Magi** – aka the **wise men** – from the East (v1) We're not exactly sure where in the East but **we are told they followed a star that they knew was important** and that **the star indicated that a new King had been born.**

It's **amazing that God manipulated the cosmos**, flinging a star into space to guide the Magi, like a **cosmic GPS system.**

But the star is only half the story of how the Magi found Jesus.

**Matthew 2 – verses 3 to 5** – tell us that when King Herod in Jerusalem – heard that the Magi had followed a star and were looking for a new king who had been born – Herod gathered together his chief priests and teachers of the law and asked them where God's promised Messiah was to be born

And these Bible experts found **the answer in the Bible (from Micah 5:2)** – the Messiah was to be born in **Bethlehem in Judea.**

The **Magi had come a long way, following the star**, but that star could only take them so far. **It's the Bible that pointed them the rest of the way.**

The Magi had to go to great lengths to meet Jesus. They had to **look out for the star, pack their bags and travel a long way.** They **expected a newborn King to be in the capital city of Jerusalem** - so when they reached the city, they had to look for him, asking around if anybody know where the new King is. They end up **having to meet with King Herod**, who was a rather **ruthless and feared ruler**, the kind of person you'd try to avoid. Even after they met Jesus, they had to travel the long way home. In short, the Magi had to go a long way to meet Jesus.

Application – yet today – **we have the means to meet Jesus in the palm of our hands.** We don't have to go on a long journey – we just have to open the Bible or use a **Bible App** on our device. The Bible leads us straight to Jesus. But as the saying goes *“A Bible in the hand is worth two in the bookcase!”*

(pause)

Once the Magi were pointed in the right direction by the Bible – the **star reappeared** in v9. And when they saw it – v10 – **they were overjoyed!**

Application – when we read the Bible and get to know and love Jesus, we too can experience great joy. If we don't read the Bible or don't apply it to our lives – we can miss out on the great joy of knowing Jesus – just like the chief priests and teachers of the Law – who knew what the Bible said about the birth place of Jesus – but they didn't want to discover who He was/is – or get to know Him – how sad is it that some Gentile foreigners like the Magi want to know about Jesus – but Jesus' own Jewish people aren't interested?

Having found Jesus – v11 – the **Magi bowed down and worshipped Him** – like a King.

And they brought **three expensive gifts**

1<sup>st</sup> gift was **Gold** – to show Jesus is a **King** and to **acknowledge** that **Jesus was born to rule all the Earth**

2<sup>nd</sup> gift was **Frankincense** – Frankincense should remind us that the priest burnt incense in the Temple as a **sweet-smelling offering to God** (Exodus 30:34). In presenting this gift – the Magi were pointing to **Jesus as our great high priest** who mediates between humans and God.

3<sup>rd</sup> gift was **Myrrh** – myrrh was used to anoint the priests in Old Testament – **this should remind that Jesus is God's Anointed One – the Messiah.** And myrrh

was often used when someone dies to anoint their body – **showing that Jesus' will one day die as a sacrifice for sin** – and **myrrh** was used to **anoint Jesus body at His death** (John 19:39)

Application – **God has given us Jesus as a gift of love** – **Jesus lovingly laid down His life** – to bring about **peace and reconciliation** in the relationship between God and humans.

What gift can we give Jesus this Christmas? Can we not show that **same sort of love that Jesus did** – **a sacrificial** – **nothing in return sort of love** – to others. And **can we bring the peace of Jesus into other people's lives**. Perhaps we may have a broken or fractured relationship with someone – perhaps there's someone we haven't spoken to for some time – **can we not reconcile with them this Christmas– as a gift to Jesus** – didn't Jesus commands us to love God and love one another as He loves us – and didn't Jesus say that's how people know we are Jesus followers by the fact that we love one another? **Is there someone we need to make peace with?**

(pause)

## Conclusion

To finish up then – I'd like to leave us with **3 take home truths** from the Christmas Story

1. 1<sup>st</sup> - God is **with** us – God not only reveals Himself in the story in the Bible – He goes far beyond that and writes Himself into the story – **so He can relate to humanity**
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> – As well as being **with** us - God is also **for** us – God is not waiting for us to screw up so He can punish us – and say gotcha – **He desires a**

relationship with us – and He sends Jesus to make sure that relationship is restored – and He sends Jesus to show us the way to live a life that pleases God

3. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – The Christmas story shows us that God was prepared to enter into our story – **enter into our messy sinful lives and restore us.** God wants us to enter into other people’s stories and do the same for them. Jesus was willing to leave Heaven in pursuit of lost people – and He expects us to leave our comfort zone to enter into the stories of people lost from God.
- We shouldn’t see this as too hard – and perhaps object that we don’t have all the answers – **we don’t need to have all the answers - we just need to be present in people’s lives** – and point them to Jesus – the **Saviour King!**

Let’s pray...

*Father God, thank You that You Yourself stepped into human history – and sent Jesus – the Messiah Saviour King.*

*Help us to respond to King Jesus – with the wonder of Mary, with the obedience of Mary and Joseph; with the joy of the angels; with the amazement of the people; with the eagerness to share the good news, of the shepherds; and the determination of the Magi.*

*In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.*

### **Benediction**

*Let us go from this place proclaiming that we have seen the glory of God  
Believing that there is a light that shines in the darkness - which the darkness  
shall not overcome*

*And may the love of the Creator*

*The joy of the Spirit*

*And the peace of the Christ-child*