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~ **The Journey, the Birth, and the Shepherds** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 2:1-20.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Luke 2:1-20 NASB	Luke 2:1-20 NLT
<p>Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ²This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵ in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.</p> <p>⁸In the same region there were <i>some</i> shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²This <i>will be</i> a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,</p> <p>¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”</p>	<p>At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ²(This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant.</p> <p>⁶And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.</p> <p>⁸That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹²And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”</p> <p>¹³Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,</p> <p>¹⁴“Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is</p>

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<p>¹⁵ When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds <i>began</i> saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.</p>	<p>pleased.”</p> <p>¹⁵ When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”</p> <p>¹⁶ They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, ¹⁹ but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰ The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.</p>
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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- Bethlehem was a small village numbering, probably, only about a hundred people.
- Even though Jerusalem became known as the city of David, small villages could take on the title of a famous person from there.
- Swaddling clothes was the practice of wrapping a baby’s trunk and arm and legs tightly with cloths, most likely to give a sense of security. Some may have thought that it helped the baby grow straight and strong.
- The Greek word for the place where they sought to stay is “guest room” and not an inn. Homes had main family rooms, guest rooms, and rooms where they kept animals.
- Shepherding was considered an occupation to be despised and were often considered thieves because they would often graze animals on the property of others.

*These insights were gleaned from Social Science Commentary of the Synoptic Gospel – Bruce J. Malina
Jesus through Mediterranean Eyes by Kenneth Bailey.*

Answer these reflective questions.

Why do you think God had the angels appear to shepherds who were despised by others?

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What do you think the angels meant when they said, “Peace among men with whom he is pleased?”

The passage tells us that Mary “treasured all these things in her heart”? What do you think this meant for Mary and why was it important?

Jesus is called Savior, Christ, and the Lord? What do all these titles mean and how are they important to your life?
