

Luke 1-2: the Savior is Born

Leader Guide- 12/13/09



Small Group Study – Each week our small groups team works alongside Pastor J.D. to create a small group study which corresponds to his sermon that week. The study examines a related passage of scripture to the text he preaches through with the goal of challenging small groups to grow both in their confidence in studying the bible and in their application of the truths brought out in the sermon.

Context: In Luke 1-2, the name “David” is mentioned 5 times (1:32, 69, 2:4, 4, 11). In Luke 3, David’s line is prominent in Jesus’ genealogy. David’s name had long been associated with the expected king and savior known as the Messiah (Hebrew for “anointed one,” which also was David’s title). Here are some of the key texts from the Old Testament that link David with the future Messiah:

Genesis 49:10 The scepter will not depart from Judah- which is the line that David and Jesus come from.
2 Samuel 7:5-16 God promises that David’s kingdom will continue forever.
Psalm 2, 110 Songs of David describe another King of Zion.
Isaiah 9:7 **The Prince of Peace will reign on David’s throne in righteousness.**
Jeremiah 23:5-6 God will raise up “to David” a King who will reign wisely and save Judah.
Ezekiel 34:23-24 God will bring David to shepherd the people after bad shepherds have neglected them.

The use of David’s name in association with the birth of this child called to mind the greatest hopes and expectations that the oppressed Israelites had. The Jews in the 1st century were under the rule of a) governments that taxed them heavily and b) Jewish religious leaders who were excluding many from worship. A return to David’s reign harkened back to Israel’s golden age: freedom, joyful corporate worship, no fear of enemies, and just leadership. On the level of calling John Wall or Harrison Barnes the next Michael Jordan, claiming Jesus to be the next David would have been laughed at heartily had there not been real substance behind the claim.

Luke 1-2 is brimming with other Old Testament references, particularly in the songs of Mary and Zechariah. Most notably, Luke makes reference (In chaps. 1-2 and elsewhere) to Malachi 4, Zechariah 9, and Isaiah 42 and 59. These texts vividly describe the OT expectation that the Messiah would establish peace, righteousness, justice, and healing (physical, social, and spiritual) for Israel and all nations.

Theme: The tone of Mary and Zechariah’s songs is one of hope for people who describe themselves as “living in darkness” and in a “humble state.” These are praises lifted up from a desperate people. The angels’ announcement provides real hope that their circumstances will change. Jesus’ miraculous birth was proof that when no one else seemed concerned about their plight, God acted on their behalf. Mary and Zechariah expect that Jesus will redeem, save, forgive sins, establish righteousness, guide to peace, and raise up the humble.

As we have seen in our series on chapter 18, Luke gives particular attention to the gospel being an advantage to the poor and the humble. Luke 19:10 states the purpose of Jesus coming: “the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.” Jesus eats with the sinners, tax-collectors, and prostitutes while instructing others to invite only those who can’t pay you back to your banquets (the lame, the crippled, the poor, the blind).

In contrast to the people’s humble state, the name for God that is repeated throughout Luke 1-2 is “Most High.” In 2:14, the angels saw fit to announce the birth of this baby by declaring “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” Of all the times and circumstances that the Most High God could have chosen to incarnate Himself, to be born of an unwed teenager in 1st century Bethlehem, lying in an animal’s food trough, to the poorest parents of an oppressed nation is indeed an unimaginable contrast. Nevertheless, this is the wonder that Luke and the 1st Century Christians had about the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The great Salvation that this King would bring about was nothing short of bringing hope and light from *within* the darkest circumstances that man can endure.

Aim: To be transformed by the hope that the Righteous King’s incarnation brings.

- Prayer:
- Pray that great hope would be spread to those in most need during the Christmas season.
 - Pray that our church would model Jesus' teaching and example to reach out and be present among the poor and humble.
 - Read Isaiah 42:1-9 and pray that we would resemble this servant in our personal ministry.
 - Give praise to Jesus for the incredible miracle of the incarnation. Use Philippians 2:4-10.

Study Questions:

What part of this weekend's sermon had the most impact on you?

[1:26-33] Why is it important that Jesus' parents be in the line of David?

Prophecies, according to the standard set in Deuteronomy, needed to be 100% accurate. God's promise to Judah and David was that a king from their lines would reign forever. This is one part of the fulfillment of the Old Testament expectations in Jesus, which indicate that Israel's history is unfolding according to God's plan. Despite Exile and years of prophetic silence, this fulfillment confirms for the Jews that God was still working in history for their good.

What expectation did the Jewish people have concerning the Messiah who would rule on David's throne?

Based mainly on Old Testament texts, the Jewish people were expecting a king like David who would restore God's favor on the people, restore righteousness among the people, and establish justice among all nations.

In what ways was Jesus' ministry different from Jewish expectations?

Refer to last week's discussion, where the people try to make Jesus their king in John 6. The people were more focused on the darkness brought on them by unjust rulers than on the spiritual darkness that led them into Exile in the first place. Looking for the political leader to subjugate all nations, they were shocked that Jesus also fulfilled the role of suffering servant (Is. 53), born to poor parents from a poor town. It's through this suffering that Jesus set about bringing peace to all nations and conquering people from every nation for His kingdom.

[1:46-55] What did Mary realize about God through this experience?

Mary learns firsthand that the Most High God lifts up the humble. Though Mary is poor, young, and in difficult circumstances, God will enter into her life to raise her up.

[1:67-79] What does Zechariah prophesy that Jesus will do?

Jesus will provide forgiveness of sins, healing (see Malachi 4:2 about the sunrise), light, and peace.

Describe the darkness that Zechariah's people are living in?

The problem of unrighteousness pressed in upon Zechariah's people from several sides. The unjust rulers made life very difficult by taxing heavily and not stopping the corrupt tax collecting methods. The religious leaders put heavy burdens on people and provided no solace. The nation's sin led them into Exile centuries before; a situation that still plagued the nation. Finally, Jesus, in His ministry, explained that there was a spiritual darkness inside us all that was our greatest enemy. Jesus would provide light in that darkness.

[2:1-14] From what you know of Caesar Augustus, compare Jesus as king with Caesar.

Caesar conquered through military strength, Jesus by suffering. Caesar deified himself, Jesus is the true deity.

Caesar brought peace by conquest, Jesus by putting sin to death. Caesar's kingdom only lasted centuries. Etc.

Why will Jesus birth mean peace for people on earth?

Forgiveness of sins will bring peace with God. This peace could lead to political and social peace as well, but not everyone turns to it. This will eventually be the source for world peace when Christ returns.

How does Jesus' life and ministry fulfill the expectations of the OT and the songs of Mary and Zechariah?

Talk about stories from the Gospels that demonstrate Jesus' mercy, righteousness, and concern for the humble.

What does the Incarnation teach us about God's character?

God's response to our suffering was to be and suffer WITH us. The implications of this for God's character and for our personal ministry are huge! Discuss these implications in the next few questions:

What is meant by the phrase "incarnational ministry"?

Where and how can the people of Summit bring the light of Jesus into RDU?

When has God brought unexpected hope into your life?