

## International Conversation Cafe

New Testament: The Birth of Jesus Christ, Luke 2

In the year of 589-7 BC, the nation Israel was taken captive by the ancient kingdom of Babylon. Most of the people were marched out of their homeland into present day Iraq. By 539 BC, the Persians overthrew the Babylonians and allowed Jews to return to Israel. At this time, the Jews rebuilt their temple. For the next 500 years Israel was ruled by Egypt, Greece, and finally Rome. While they suffered under the domination of other empires, they longed to be free. They looked for the king promised by the prophets. The story of Jesus begins around the year 3 BC.

An angel appeared to a peasant Jewish girl, announcing that she would bear a baby who would be called the Son of God. Mary is confused as to how this would happen because she was a virgin. The angel promised her, "Nothing is impossible with God."

But Mary is engaged to Joseph. He would not understand her pregnancy. In fact, he is about to divorce her when an angel appears to him in his sleep assuring him that the baby was from God. Joseph married Mary, but did not have sexual relations with her until after Jesus was born.

### Luke 2 Jesus Is Born

<sup>1</sup> In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. <sup>2</sup> It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be listed.

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby.

<sup>6</sup> While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. <sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. There was no room for them in the inn.

1. *Discuss any unfamiliar words or concepts.*
2. *Retell the story in your own words.*
3. *What do you think are the good and bad things about Mary and Joseph being away from their village for the birth of Jesus?*
4. *Do you think it fitting that a king be born in such humble circumstances? What might this kind of birth suggest?*



Caravaggio, Michelangelo. Oil on canvas, 1595/97. 133.5 x 166.5 cm. Doria Pamphilj Gallery, Rome

### Who are the Shepherds?

The shepherds kept night watches to protect sheep from robbers and wild animals. They represent the lowly and humble segment of society though shepherding was a respected profession. Abraham, Moses, and David were all shepherds at some point during their lives. The New Testament uses the shepherd as a metaphor which describes the role of a pastor over the church and even describes Jesus as "The Great Shepherd."

Bock, Darrell L.

Luke 1:1-9:50, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996

## Angels Appear to the Shepherds

<sup>8</sup> There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were looking after their sheep. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified.

<sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said,

<sup>14</sup> "May glory be given to God in the highest heaven! And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!"

<sup>15</sup> The angels left and went into heaven. Then the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem. Let's 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. The baby was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After the shepherds had seen him, they told everyone. They reported what the angel had said about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

<sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things like a secret treasure in her heart. She thought about them over and over.

<sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned. They gave glory and praise to God. Everything they had seen and heard was just as they had been told.

1. *Tell the story in your own words.*
2. *Read the box about shepherds. Why do you think God initially announced the birth of the Savior to common people and not kings?*
3. *What did the angels say about the baby that Mary thought about again and again?*
4. *How did the birth of Jesus change human history?*
5. *How does the birth of Jesus affect us personally?*



Honthorst, van Gerard. The Adoration of the Shepherds. 1622. Oil on canvas, 150 x 191 cm. Eallraf-Richartz Museum. Cologne, Germany