

HOLIDAY MESSAGES 2020
STUDY THREE

Let's Hear God's Voice in a Baby's Cry

Luke 2:1–20

In appearance, Jesus looked like any other Jewish baby. The truth is—and talk about surprises—God who came to earth to live among us did not come as a raging whirlwind or in a devouring fire or to inhabit Caesar's halls, commanding the world to bow down and worship. No. What stands out is a term that no mighty king ever used: HUMILITY. What stands out is the humility, the obscurity, of it all.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

REMARKING on Christ's first appearing, Paul's words capture its significance perhaps better than anyone else:

Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Another version translates Paul's Greek exclamation in this way:

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (9:15 NASB)

Pondering the incarnation of God in Christ led Paul to rapturous praise. The incarnation truly astonishes no matter the angle of your gaze upon it. For this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we will look at the birth of Jesus our Savior from the angle of Luke 2:1–20.

Here, we find a nice juxtaposition of God's humility and humanity's pride. Juxtapositions often help us appreciate a subject. Dark is darkest when compared to the brightness of day. The strong appears strongest compared to the weakest of the weak. Below, we'll appreciate undiminished deity as He arrives in complete frailty and obscurity.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Luke 2:1–20



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll emphasizes how your heart must be in the right condition before studying. A right condition includes upholding personal integrity, an overarching desire to follow Jesus, and a burning passion to learn God's Word.¹

Quiet yourself inwardly now and search yourself before God. Open your heart to Him. Express how you depend upon Him fully to set your heart in the right condition. Pray for His abundant blessing on your time in His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

When you study biblical narrative, remember that the authors often convey their key ideas indirectly through the events of the story, the statements of key characters, or the mention of small details that would be considered irrelevant if not included.

Every detail, however small, has something to tell.²



Observation: A Baby's Cry

Take time now to read [Luke 2:1–20](#) in your two favorite translations. Pastor Chuck's favorites are the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible.



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What details in this passage signal the obscurity of the whole event? Note especially Luke 2:4, 6–7, 8–10, 15–17.

God did not come to Jerusalem with all its hustle and bustle to be born among the powerful and prestigious. Instead, Jesus was born in little Bethlehem. No earthly fanfare accompanied His arrival. He first laid His head in a feed trough stationed in an animal shelter reeking of all the common smells of a dirty barn.

It took an angel for humanity to learn the significance of the moment. But governors, centurions, or priests didn't hear heaven's praise. Instead, God's messengers went to shepherds . . . people who talked more with animals than humans. These lowly men would become some of the first to gaze upon undiminished deity in true humanity.



Interpretation: God's Voice

Jesus' birth occurred in obscurity. Luke juxtaposed that obscurity with the angelic pronouncement regarding Jesus' exalted identity. This pronouncement conveys key historical and theological points which Luke wanted to make clear from the outset of his gospel.

Remember that God acts in human history *and* uncovers the intentions of His actions. The Bible—God's revelation—teaches us what happened as well as the meaning of what happened. Therefore, the Bible teaches history and theology. Interpretation seeks a clear understanding of any given passage's history in order arrive at its theology.

Use your Bible study resources like netbible.org and the Tyndale New Testament Commentary or *Luke* by Darrell Bock, offered freely at biblegateway.com.



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First, to history. Reread *Luke 2:4, 8–14*. To what person is Jesus linked, and what titles was Jesus given by the angels in these verses? Also, look especially at the use of “Lord” (*Luke 2:9, 11*). What is the historical, Old Testament significance of that person and those titles?

Second, to theology. What do these titles teach us about Jesus' identity? What specific traits do each of these titles speak of? What is the theological significance of these titles?

Third, to relevance. Biblical authors don't teach theology to satisfy idle curiosity. The author's tone (how he or she feels) and the author's mood (the emotional atmosphere of the author's subject) help relay relevance in biblical narrative. What is the tone and mood in *Luke 2:1–20*? Based on the tone and mood, how did Luke relate the story to his readers?



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Luke 2:1–20

My pleasure in this Christmas message is to make you aware of the Savior. Not that you won't enjoy your Christmas celebration. Enjoy it, delight in it. Have fun and sing and dance and rejoice together. But somewhere along the way, pause and let the wonder in and thank Jesus for coming and dying for you. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: From the Beginning to the End

Luke used details from the setting of Jesus' birth to testify to God's humility. Near the end of the apostle John's life, as he was exiled on the island of Patmos, he received a vision of the glorified Lord and recorded it in what we call the book of Revelation. To convey the gravity of his vision, John detailed Jesus' appearance.

John's depiction of Jesus contrasts nicely with Luke's. Luke wrote of the Lamb of God. John of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Read [Revelation 1:12–17](#). Note the elements of Jesus' appearance as well as other descriptive characteristics and what they teach us about Jesus' identity.

In Jesus, God's attributes hold together. Meek and almighty. Holy and near. Just and merciful. The vision of John in Revelation 5:4–8 states it perfectly. The conquering lion conquered by becoming a slain lamb. At the cross, God's attributes converge. Through the resurrection, they're unleashed.



Application: Maker of the Universe

Application takes form in many ways. It involves doing and speaking, thinking and feeling, willing and longing. God seeks to transform our whole selves. Not just part of us. It all begins where many might least expect it—simply in beholding. Paul wrote:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.
(2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB)



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We just took time throughout this study to gaze upon the beauty of Christ and reflect upon His excellencies. For now, we'll continue in more of the same. Consider something new you learned about Jesus or something you already knew but have come to appreciate more deeply this Christmas season. Write it down below and state why it's personally significant to you.



A FINAL PRAYER

End this study by savoring the hymn below that celebrates how undiminished deity came to dwell with us in frailty and obscurity. Let your heart sing of the wonder of the true meaning of Christmas.

The Maker of the Universe

The Maker of the universe
As Man, for man was made a curse.
The claims of law which He had made,
Unto the uttermost He paid.

His holy fingers made the bough
Which grew the thorns that crowned His brow.
The nails that pierced His hands were mined
In secret places He designed.

He made the forest whence there sprung
The tree on which His body hung.
He died upon a cross of wood,
Yet made the hill on which it stood.

The sky that darkened o'er His head
By Him above the earth was spread.
The sun that hid from Him its face
By His decree was poised in space.

The spear which spilled His precious blood
Was tempered in the fires of God.
The grave in which His form was laid,
Was hewn in rocks His hands had made.

The throne on which He now appears
Was His from everlasting years.
But a new glory crowns His brow.
And every knee to Him shall bow.³

ENDNOTES

1. See Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 58–59.
2. To review Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org or grab a *copy* of the book for your library. Pastor Chuck also uses *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.
3. Frederick William Pitt, "The Maker of the Universe," *hymnal.net*, <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/100>.

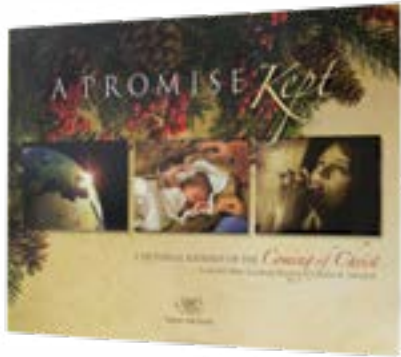


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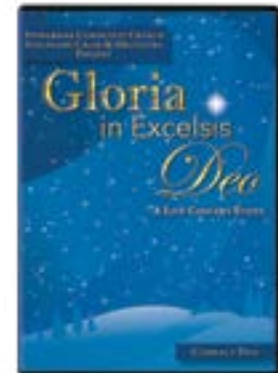
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Studies, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Pastor Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

