

THE ARRIVAL SERIES
STUDY FOUR
“THE ARRIVAL OF THE KING”
DECEMBER 23, 2007

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 2:11, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,
who is Christ the Lord.”

INTRODUCTION

The story of Jesus’ birth is the greatest event in human history. Luke 2:1-21 gives us a vivid account of the virgin birth of Jesus, who came to take away the sins of the world and offer us the hope of eternal life. The story begins with Joseph and Mary traveling to Bethlehem to participate in the census ordered by Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus. Because Joseph was a descendent of David he had to return to his family’s hometown. When Joseph and Mary arrive in Bethlehem, there was no place available for them to lodge and they had to spend the night in a stable. Later that night Mary gave birth to Jesus in what we can assume were extremely uncomfortable circumstances. She laid the baby in a manger, which was normally used as a feeding trough for animals. These humble beginnings reflect the pattern of how Jesus would live the remainder of His life here on earth. After His birth, an angel appeared to a group of shepherds telling them that a Savior had been born. The shepherds hurried off to Bethlehem, just as the angel had told them, and they returned “glorifying and praising God.” The coming of Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, is why we celebrate Christmas. It is a time for us to turn our hearts and minds toward Jesus and reflect on who He is and why He came to earth.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. While she was pregnant and very close to giving birth, Mary made the long, hard journey to Bethlehem to participate in the census. This journey took between three to seven days. Why do you think this journey might have been very difficult for her? What might Mary have been thinking about during the journey? What might Joseph have been thinking?

2. The birth of Jesus is described very matter-of-factly in Luke 2:7. Why do you think God had His son born under these humble circumstances?

3. Beginning in Luke 2:8, an angel of the Lord appeared to a group of shepherds near Bethlehem. In those days, shepherds were generally considered untrustworthy, apt to steal and sinful. Of all the people the angel could have visited, why did God send them to these shepherds? Why do you think God did not first announce the birth of His son to the priests and national leaders of the day?

4. What good news does the angel proclaim to the shepherds in Luke 2:10-11? What signs in Luke 2:12-14 did the angels give to confirm the bold proclamation they had just made? What did the angels mean by proclaiming peace to those whom God has favored?

5. When the shepherds discovered Mary, Joseph and the baby, they began to joyfully spread the word concerning all that had happened. How did the other people react to the shepherd's stories? How did Mary respond to all of this? What do you think is meant by Mary's reaction in Luke 2:19?

OUR WALK WITH GOD

1. What do you like best about Christmas? What role does the "true" Christmas story play in your traditions and attitudes regarding Christmas? How can you make this more of your heart focus this year?

2. What was the shepherd's reaction as they returned to their jobs in the fields (Luke 2:20)? Don't let the world take away the awesome wonder of this turning point in human history. In this regard, how should you retain and nurture this holy wonder?

3. The Son of God was born in a stable. What implications does this fact have for the way you view your own situation? What do we normally think that we are entitled to? Why do we have this kind of attitude? How might this story of Jesus' birth help to change your perspective concerning this matter?

4. How does God take your "hopeless" situation and use it for good? What does that teach you?

5. God appeared to Zechariah, Mary and the shepherds when they were just doing their jobs and going through the routine of their everyday lives. What does that imply concerning what it means to be "spiritual?" How has God spoken to you in the ordinary flow of life? What are you going to do with this leading from God?

GOING DEEPER

Read Isaiah 9:6-7, 11:1; Jeremiah 33:15; Ezekiel 37:24; Hosea 3:5. How do these Old Testament prophecies help to confirm and establish Jesus as the Messiah?