

NOTES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Supplemental Texts

Gen. 48:15-16; 49:24; Ex. 40:15; 1 Sam. 9:16; 2 Sam. 5:3; 7:7; 1 Kings 19:15-16; 1 Chr. 29:11-12; Pss. 23:1; Isa. 1:3; 7:14; 42:8; 61:1-3; Jer. 31:10-11; Matt. 1:21; 14:27; 16:16, 20; Luke 1:79; 2:32, 51; 4:21; 5:26; 9:26, 32; 13:32-33; 17:17-19; 19:5; 23:43; 24:26; John 1:14; 4:42; 11:27; Acts 2:36; 5:30; 7:2, 55; 12:23; Rom. 5:1-5; Eph. 2:14-18

Study Summary

This passage begins by moving the scene away from the baby Jesus born in a manger to shepherds working outside of Bethlehem. It is these lowly shepherds who are chosen to be the first recipients of a wondrous message: a Savior is born who will bring peace for the people of God. Overwhelmed by this glorious news, the shepherds search out the baby Jesus, finding Him just as it had been told them by the angel. Overjoyed, the shepherds tell others about the good news and join their voices to the praises of the heavens.

In this passage we see the glory of God on display through the praises of heaven and earth. The host of angels and the lowly shepherds together declare the good news that God has fulfilled His promises to Israel, that, in His great love, He has not forgotten His people. The long-awaited King has come.

Historical & Theological Background

Theology: The theme of God's glory is all throughout this passage. The word "glory" has a semantic and theological importance that weaves its way throughout the entire story of the Bible. The terms "glory" or "honor" (*doxa*) are translations of a group of words in the OT based on the root *kbl*, which means "weight" or "heaviness". This word group carries the sense of "wealth," "splendor," "dignity," and "respect/reverence." Throughout Scripture glory is primarily a divine quality for ultimately God alone has glory (1 Chr. 29:11-12). As Creator of heaven and earth, who exercises His power on behalf of His people, God does not share His glory with another (Is. 42:8). God's glory throughout the OT "is His visible and active presence." It fills all creation, but specifically resides among His covenant people and is often associated with light or fire. It is His self-revelation, which comes to fullness in the revelation of Jesus who "is the ultimate and permanent expression of divine glory" (John 1:14). Though humanity forfeited their privilege to reflect God's glory, in defeating sin and death through His own sacrifice and glorified in His resurrection, Christ shares His glory with God's people. Now we await His second coming when His glory will be openly revealed and all things will be made new

DISCUSSION PRIMER

Take time this week to follow Mary's example and meditate on the promises of God and His work in your own life. Write down the prayers God has answered and the blessings He has provided. Come to group ready to share. This could be a great way to begin your discussion of the passage together.

TEXTUAL INVESTIGATION

LUKE 2:8-20

Big Idea: The Baby Born in Bethlehem is Savior, Messiah, and Lord

Fallen Condition Focus: Overlooking or Disregarding the Glory of God

- How do the shepherds initially respond to the angel (v. 9)?
- What good news does the angel bring (v. 10-11)?
- How might the angel's sign be different than expected for a coming king (v. 11)?
- What is the meaning of verse 14? How does this emphasize God's free and unmerited grace?
- What do the shepherds do in response to the angels' message (v. 15-17, 20)? How is this similar to the actions of the angels?
- How is Mary's reaction different from that of the people (v. 18-19)? What accounts for this difference?
- **Gospel Connection:** The word "Messiah" means "the anointed one" (v. 10). Who was anointed for special tasks throughout the OT? What roles did they accomplish? How does Jesus accomplish and fulfill these roles perfectly? (See 1 Sam. 9:16; Ex. 40:16; 1 Kings 19:15-16)

TEXTUAL INTERSECTION: How does the text intersect with our lives?

- Why can it be easy to miss what God is doing in the world?
- How has God revealed Himself to You in the past? Do you ever fail to recognize His work in your life? Why or why not?
- What does it mean to glorify and praise the Lord? How do you do that in your own life? How do we do that together as the church?
- What might you do to better recognize and respond to God's glory?
- How are you like the shepherds? How are you different? What would it look like to share the good news as they did?
- Mary is a window into what it looks like to respond to God's glory. How can we emulate her today?
- How often do you meditate on the love of God in Christ? How might doing so help you recognize the work of God and better respond to His glory?

REPLICABLE QUESTIONS

Read **Luke 2:8-20** and explore together what the passage reveals about:

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| 1) The character and purposes of God? | 4) Our identity in Christ? |
| 2) The fallen human condition? | 5) Our obedience to Christ? |
| 3) The gospel of Jesus Christ? | 6) Our relationship to others |

TEXTUAL APPLICATION: "So, what now?"

Have each participant identify a personal take-away in light of this study. Is there . . .

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| • a command to obey? | • a beauty to behold? | • a mission to fulfill? |
| • a promise to claim? | • a truth to believe? | • an example to follow? |
| • a sin to repent of? | • a service to render? | • a person to tell? |