

Narratives about the birth of Jesus are only found in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. Manger scenes or creches that we are familiar with include elements from both gospels. St. Francis of Assisi is attributed with creating the first Christmas creche in 1223. He did this to make the miracles of Christmas come alive for the common people. While the people gazed upon his live nativity scene, St. Francis chanted the Gospel and then preached about the birth of the “poor king”. St. Bonaventure wrote about St. Francis’ first Christmas creche. He reported that people saved the hay from the manger and that when cows ate the hay, they were miraculously cured of any ailments. At that time of St. Francis, the bible was only available in Latin and most people could not read Latin.

- 1. How is the Christmas story a demonstration of God’s love for us?**
- 2. How does Luke attempt to put the events in this chapter into historical context? Did he have some difficulties doing this? See Luke 1:5, Luke 2:1-5 and *footnotes*.**

Luke 1:5 ⁵In the days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

Luke 2:1-7 ¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. ²This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

- 3. Read Luke 2:4-7 above, Luke 2:22-23, Ex 13:1-2 and Ex 22:28-29 and *footnotes*. What is the significance of Jesus being Mary’s ‘firstborn son’?**

Luke 2:22-23²²When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, ²³just as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord,”

Ex 13:1-2 ¹The LORD spoke to Moses and said: ²Consecrate to me every firstborn; whatever opens the womb among the Israelites, whether of human being or beast, belongs to me.

Ex 22:28-29 You shall not delay the offering of your harvest and your press. You shall give me the firstborn of your sons. ²⁹You must do the same with your oxen and your sheep; for seven days the firstling may stay with its mother, but on the eighth day you must give it to me.

- 4. Read Luke 2:8-14 and Luke 1:52-55. What is significant about the Lord’s messenger appearing to some of the lowest and poorest members of society? What is the connection between 2:8-14 and Mary’s prayer in 1:52-55?**

Luke 2:8-14 ⁸Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. ⁹The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. ¹⁰The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Luke 1:52-55 He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly.

⁵³ The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy,⁵⁵ according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

5. How does the angel describe Jesus to the shepherds; what titles are use? See Luke 2:8-14.

6. Read Luke 2:15-20. What was the response of the shepherds to the message from the angel of God? How did their appearance affect Mary and Joseph?

Luke 2:15-20 When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

7. Read Leviticus 12:1-4 and Luke 2:21-24. Why did the circumcision of Jesus and the presentation of Jesus at the Temple occur on two separate occasions?

Lev 12:1-4 ¹ The LORD said to Moses: ² Tell the Israelites: When a woman has a child, giving birth to a boy, she shall be unclean for seven days, with the same uncleanness as during her menstrual period. ³ On the eighth day, the flesh of the boy’s foreskin shall be circumcised, ⁴ and then she shall spend thirty-three days more in a state of blood purity; she shall not touch anything sacred nor enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled.

Luke 2:21-24 ²² When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, ²³ just as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord,” ²⁴ and to offer the sacrifice of “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,” in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

8. Read Luke 2:25-32. Who is Simeon? Why was he able to recognize baby Jesus as the Messiah?

9. Read Luke 2:36-38. Who is Anna? What do you suppose she told people who were coming to the Temple with sin offerings?

10. Read Luke 2:41-52. How do you suppose the words of Jesus were received by his parents? Consider how the words of the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and Gabriel would have helped to prepare them.