

# SALVATION'S SONG

Songs of the Messiah from the  
book of Luke: Mary, Zechariah,  
the angels, & Simeon

## Good News of Great Joy

Luke 2:8-21



## Introduction

“You’ve got mail.”

You might remember these words from the early days of the internet. These simple words notified you that an email was in your inbox. For many early internet users, these words almost always signified a message from a friend or family member who was reaching out to you (email SPAM, mass-marketing schemes, and internet scams were not as common in those early days—people actually used email to send messages and news to one another).

Before email grew in prominence, people frequently sent letters and even telegrams. In days of old a person could write a letter and send it via horseback to another person and depending on the distance needed to travel (and the reliability of the courier) these letters could take weeks or even months to be delivered. As human beings, we have definitely progressed in our ability to share news in a timelier fashion than our forbearers had decades and centuries ago. But we have not learned how to properly share truly earth-rattling, heaven-exalting news. This is work that only angels can do.

The greatest news ever delivered did not come with an announcement of, “You’ve got mail.” The greatest news ever delivered came to unsuspecting shepherds one night 2000 years ago. Heavenly emissaries shared the biggest news the world could hear.



## Study

*Context:* Luke 2:1-7 gives the account of how Mary and Joseph ended up in Bethlehem (Joseph’s ancestral home and the promised birthplace of the Messiah). God used a census that had been ordered by Caesar Augustus to lead Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Once they arrived in Bethlehem for the census, Mary gave birth to the baby Jesus. Our passage begins with the events that unfolded immediately after the birth of Jesus.

*Structure:*

- I. An angel and a multitude appear to the shepherds (vv. 8-14)
- II. The shepherds go to Bethlehem to see the child (vv. 15-20)



## Reflect

*An angel and a multitude appear to the shepherds (vv. 8-14)*

1. Luke previously recorded two instances in which an angel appeared in order to tell people of a birth (Zechariah and Elizabeth with their son John the Baptist (1:11-17) and Joseph and Mary with Jesus (1:26-38)). In both of these accounts, an angel appeared to those who would be the parents of the child. This third instance in which an angel appeared to announce a birth, the angel appeared to shepherds who had no ties to Mary and Joseph and were not even in the city in which Jesus was born. Why do you think God now went beyond immediate family to announce the birth of Jesus and what did this signify?
  
2. Read vv. 10-11 a few times. In your own words, summarize why this birth announcement was so incredible and what it meant for the world at that time and what it means for the world today.
  
3. The angel gave three names (in v. 11) that describe this baby and what He will do: Savior, Christ (or Messiah), and Lord. What do you think each of these names communicates about this newborn baby?

**APPLY →** Sometimes the message of the coming of Christ and its significance can be overcrowded by many other factors that press in upon us in the holiday season. What are practical steps that you can take to not miss the wonder of the coming of the Christ amidst the hustle and bustle of today and even amidst the familiarity of the Christmas story that you may have heard many, many times before?

4. Looking at v. 14, why do you think an angelic multitude sang these words? How does peace come through Jesus? Who are “those with whom he is pleased”?

5. Read Luke 19:28-40. This account is on the other end of Jesus’ life as he enters Jerusalem only days before his crucifixion. Look specifically at Luke 19:38 and compare the words of the crowd with the words of the angelic multitude in Luke 2:14. What do you make of these similarities in light of all that was coming Jesus’ way in his death and resurrection?

**APPLY →** Given the testimony by the angel and the angelic multitude about the reasons why Jesus came, is your celebration of Christ rooted in a correct perception of the purposes for which He came? How might you need to prayerfully pursue bringing correction towards your perspective of Christmas?





## Connect

**Gospel Connections.** Jesus' life was one that was marked by a humble birth and a humiliating death. He was born in a manger with animals likely nearby and the people of Bethlehem clueless as to the significance of what was happening as they went about their regular business. He was crucified on a cross, this time not ignored or neglected by the world as it went about its business, but as a criminal to be mocked and tormented. The birth of Christ as told in Luke 2 gives us a picture of the heavens rejoicing as God drew near to the humble of the earth for the glory of His name. The death of Christ as told at the end of Luke's gospel tells us of the heavens darkening as God was crucified in the ultimate act of humiliation for the glory of His name. The life of Christ was not one of a typical king, but the life and death of Christ were the initial steps towards the return of Christ the King—who will establish His kingdom and bring final peace and eternal good news of great joy.

**Whole-Bible Connections.** There are numerous places in the Bible where the reader is given a picture of a multitude praising the name of God. In Genesis 32, the Lord gives Jacob a vision of angels coming and going out of heaven to do his work in the world. In the Psalms (103:21 & 148:2), the psalmist praises God in crying out for the heavenly host to bring praise to God. In Revelation 5, John writes of a vision in which a multitude from every tribe, nation, and tongue will sing the praises of God. The ultimate purpose of the work of God in the world is the praise of His name—and throughout the Bible multitudes in Heaven and eventually, a multitude from earth will be gathered around Him singing, "Glory to God in the highest!"

**Theological Connections.** The promise of peace is prominent in the promise of the coming of Christ. In Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah wrote that the coming King will be the "Prince of Peace" and the peace that He will bring will know no end. Peace is spoken of often by God because peace is needed in the hearts of man. In our sin, we are at war with God and even with our world. Yet God has come to us in order to bring peace. This peace is established in Christ and this peace will be advanced through Christ to the ends of the earth as the world marches towards His eternal reign and He brings peace to a world at war.

### **Praise Connections.**

#### **GLORIOUS LIGHT**

"Glorious light! see the dawn of Salvation:  
Angels in white fill the skies with their wondrous song;  
Awakening earth with news of His birth;  
Join the hymn of the highest heavens!

Long has the world fought the song of the angels.  
Heavenly music is drowned by a warring world;  
Yet hope burns a light, that shatters the night;  
Turn your heart to the call of glory!

Glory to God in the highest!  
Peace to men on earth.  
Come and adore Him with wonder -  
Christ Lord of Heaven and earth.

There is a day all creation has longed for -  
When all of time has been spent and the Lord returns;  
His song we'll repeat as heaven completes;  
Promised peace that will fill the nations!

Glory to God in the highest!  
Peace to men on earth.  
Come and adore Him with wonder -  
Christ Lord of Heaven and earth."

Words and Music by Keith and Kristyn Getty and Ian Hannah  
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