

Study Hints for Thinking Further
International Bible Lessons

Luke 2:1-24

Sunday, December 22, 2013

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be the answers to the discussion questions. These indeed are “hints” a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think God used the decree of Emperor Augustus so Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem instead of just sending the angel Gabriel to tell them what to do?

God may have wanted Luke to report a date of Jesus’ birth in a verifiable “period of time” in history, rather than an exact calendar date that could not be verified outside of the Bible. God may have wanted to show that He could move an unbelieving pagan king ruling hundreds of miles away in Rome to do what He wanted done in Israel. The Bible does not tell us whether or not God also sent an angel to encourage Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem at that particular time. The situation does show that Joseph and Mary obeyed the civil authorities and upheld human government as a necessity, even though the ruling authorities were oppressive Romans and obeying the Emperor would be personally inconvenient because of Mary’s pregnancy. Jesus also taught obedience regarding the payment of taxes to the Romans; thus endorsing the necessity of human government (though imperfect) in our fallen world (Matthew 22:16-22). Still, for Joseph, Mary and Jesus, God’s government was the highest form of government, and they would obey God and God’s moral law no matter what others said with regard to the supreme authority of God’s government over human governments.

2. What might Mary have expected when she went to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus? Do you think she left Nazareth expecting the King of kings to be born in a stable? Give a reason for your answers.

She might have expected God to provide the best place possible in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus, His only begotten Son. I do not think she left Nazareth thinking that Jesus would be born in a stable. If she had known in advance there would be no room for them in an inn, she might have been hesitant to go or would have wanted to go at a later date, if possible. She might have thought that even if God did not provide a palace for the birth of Jesus that they could at least afford an inn (where they went first, but found no room, so they went to a stable).

3. If Mary had concerns or questions about the humble location of Jesus' birth and what that might mean, how do you think God helped her answer her questions?

She might have thought that she and Joseph had made some mistake or misunderstood something that God had said or had wanted them to do. God helped her when He sent some shepherds who had heard from some angels where they would find Jesus and exactly who Jesus was. When they reported that they had learned from angels about Jesus' birth and birth place and where He would be laying (in a manger), Mary had many thoughts to ponder in her heart.

4. What three titles did the angel give Jesus? What do these three titles mean to you?

The three titles were Savior, Messiah, and Lord.

To me, these titles mean that Jesus will save me personally from my sins and the eternal consequences of my sins and in many other ways. As the Messiah that God foretold would come through the prophets in the Old Testament and through John the Baptist, Jesus will defeat all the enemies of God and establish the visible Kingdom of God on earth where righteousness will reign, and I will serve Him someday in His visible Kingdom when He comes again. As the Son of God, Jesus is Lord, and He deserves my love, allegiance, obedience, worship, and efforts to glorify and serve Him according to the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. What kind of peace does Jesus give to those who trust in Him?

Peace with God. Peace within themselves as believers. Peace of mind and heart and conscience. Peace with others insofar as that depends on the believer. Peace that inspires God's people to be peacemakers and teachers of people to make peace with the King of kings on His terms.

— © Copyright 2013 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

You may reprint or reproduce Study Hints for Thinking Further for not-for-profit use.