

A Star for a King

- ◇ Do you think the star followers were actively looking for the star, or just spotted it one night?
- ◇ Can you imagine the conversations that happened when they decided they needed to follow the star?
- ◇ What might have been their hopes and dreams for the journey?
- ◇ What do you think they thought and felt when they arrived at the palace to discover Jesus wasn't there?

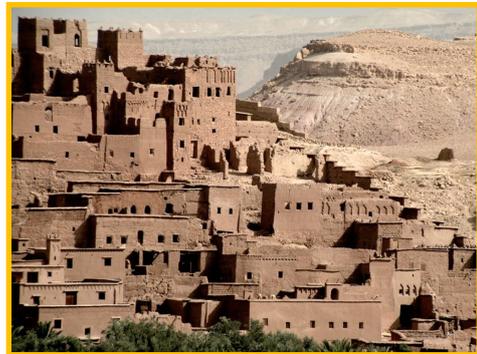


A King's city

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven
No ear may hear His coming
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still
The dear Christ enters in



- ◇ Use the words of 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' to think about what it was like when Jesus was born.
- ◇ Do you think the words are accurate?
- ◇ Do you think they are helpful?
- ◇ If you were writing a carol what would you include?

God's message for Mary

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

- ◇ **Why do you think we think of angels as white?**
- ◇ **What would be your reaction if an angel turned up at your house?**
- ◇ **What do you think Mary was thinking and feeling after the angel had gone?**
- ◇ **What do the words of Mary's song/prayer from Luke 1:46-55 (above) tell us about her thoughts and feelings after she had had some time to process things?**



God's message for the shepherds

- ◇ Why do you think God chose the shepherds to be the first people to hear the good news about Jesus?
- ◇ Spend a few moments trying to imagine what it would be like to see a whole sky full of angels singing praises to God
- ◇ What do you think Mary thought when the shepherds turned up just a short while after Jesus' birth?



God born in a stable!

- ◇ What is the most amazing thing about this story?
- ◇ What do you think the shepherds told people as they returned to their sheep?
- ◇ What would you say if you were just leaving the animal shelter having seen Jesus?



Myrrh for a sacrifice

- ◇ Even with all these strange occurrences surrounding his birth, do you think Mary had any idea what would happen to her son in the end?
- ◇ What gift would you have given Jesus?
- ◇ Read Simeon's words. What strikes you most about them?

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."



The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

A refugee king

- ◇ Why do you think Herod was so frightened of Jesus that he threatened to kill him?
- ◇ Imagine the conversation the star followers had when they woke up after their dream from God warning them not to tell Herod where to find Jesus
- ◇ Mary and Joseph must have been very frightened, after all this was the Son of God, they were responsible for keeping safe! Jesus promises us peace from God beyond all understanding. Do you think this was true when he was just a baby?

