

# Finding JOY In Christmas



*"<sup>10</sup> but the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. <sup>11</sup> The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!'"* Luke 2:10-11 NLT

- For you, is Christmas a time of joy - or sorrow, fear, and depression?

For many, Christmas is a time of sorrow and loneliness. Some have lost a loved one to death, or their spouse walked out of the marriage, or a family member is away because of their job. Whatever the reason - some people feel lonely and sorrowful from being separated from those they love.

Also, we live in fearful days—terrorism, corruption in the government and other institutions of society, crime, unemployment, health issues, financial pressure, etc. God did not intend for us to live in fear. His desire is for us to live with joy. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4 *"Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!"* (Also see 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:16; Rom. 15:13; Col. 1:11).

Someone posted on Facebook the following: "You were never created to live depressed, degraded, guilty, condemned, ashamed, or unworthy. You were created to be victorious."

We can find joy this Christmas. Luke 2:10-11 is the basis for the title of this Bible study, **"Finding Joy This Christmas."** These verses show that God wants us to live in joy, not fear. *"<sup>10</sup> but the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. <sup>11</sup> The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!'"* Luke 2:10-11 NLT

## The Central Lesson

**Be joyful - the circumstances of our lives are in God's hands.**

**God has control over the circumstances of our lives. Luke 2:1-7 demonstrates this in the story of Christ's birth.**

1. **God Controlled the OCCASION** - God used the census to cause Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem, where Jesus would be born as foretold in prophecy (2:1-5).

*"<sup>1</sup> At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire."*

The Old Testament Prophet, Micah, foretold that the Messiah would be born in the tiny town of Bethlehem (See Micah 5:2). The census caused Mary and Joseph to be in Bethlehem **just at the right time** for Jesus to be born there.

Bible teacher, Warren Wiersbe, writes: **"Augustus Caesar was ruling, but God was in charge, for He used Caesar's edict to move Mary and Joseph eighty miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill His Word."**

2. **God controlled Mary's CONDITION** - Mary was pregnant as a virgin (2:5). Her pregnancy was caused by the Holy Spirit and was a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy (Isaiah 7:14).

Luke 2:5 *"He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant."*

Matthew 1:18 NLT *"<sup>18</sup> This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit."*

Matthew 1:22-23 NLT *"<sup>22</sup> All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: <sup>23</sup> 'Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"*

God has control over the **condition** of your life circumstances, too.

3. **God controlled the TIMING** - God was in control of the timing of Mary giving birth to Jesus while they were in Bethlehem for the census - fulfilling prophecy (2:6-7).

*"<sup>6</sup> And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born."*

Galatians 4:4 NLT *"But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law."*

God has control over the **timing** of your life circumstances, too.

4. **God Controlled the LOCATION** - God was in control of all lodging in Bethlehem being full, so the baby Jesus had to be placed in a manger as foretold in prophecy (2:7).

*"...She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them."*

- How have you seen God's hand in the circumstances of your life?
- When did something bad in your life turn out to be good?

God can turn bad into a blessing. The circumstances of our lives are in His hands - Romans 8:28 NLT

*"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."*

## Conclusion

**Be joyful - the circumstances of our lives are in God's hands.**

**Action Steps:** ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus. ► Read Luke 2:1-7. In what way do you see God's control in the circumstances of Christ's birth?