

1. Why is the phrase, "Peace on earth" often repeated around Christmas time? What is it usually taken to mean?

*It's taken from the Christmas narrative and usually romanticised to refer to peace on earth among people eg the end of wars and people getting on together.*

2. **Read Luke 2:1-7** and notice the remarkable brevity with which Luke describes this momentous event. Why do you think there is so little detail? (when almost any children's Bible, Christmas play or movie and even Christmas card contains much more detail!!)

*Most likely – these were all the facts Luke had – he did not embellish facts, and these are the facts that would help serve his greater purpose, and to know that, read 1:3-4.*

3. **Read Luke 2:8-12.** This is now the third appearance of an angel in Luke. What similarities are there with the previous two appearances? **Read Luke 1:11-13, 26-31?**

*Words from God – "angel" means "messenger", fear in response – something about angels caused fear in humans, assurance from God to **not** be afraid – God enters our world to put our fears before him to rest and bring peace between us.*

God's sovereign control – and his response to those who think they rule the world (cf Ps 2:4) : When the Emperor Augustus was born, it was announced with a report of (literally) "Good news" and the arrival of a "saviour" – same words as vv10-11. This is the same emperor who ruled when Jesus was born. The same emperor who issued a decree demanding a census (mostly for taxation purposes). The same census that caused Joseph to go to Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth to Jesus, just as, 800 years earlier, God had said it would happen.

4. There is nothing given here to explain how this child would be a "saviour" or what he would be a saviour from. But the context in Luke answers this for us. Read Luke 1:76-79. What would Jesus be the Saviour from? How would people be saved?

*People need salvation from sin and this would come through being forgiven (v.77). God's mercy (v78) would lead them to "peace" (v79). Peace in this sense must be peace between people and God, which comes through the forgiveness of their sins / rebellion.*

5. **Read Luke 2:13-20.** If one angel caused terror in the shepherds, imagine what a multitude of angels would cause! But we're not told of such amplified terror. Why do you think the shepherds were not frozen with fear at vv13-14?

*It was the whole purpose of the angel's visit – so that they would **not** be afraid. The shepherds must have believed the good news the angel said. Their response in vv15-20 are based on them taking what they'd heard as the Lord telling them about it (v.15).*

6. Considering the context of Luke 1:76-79, what does the proclamation of v.14 mean? How is this verse often used to mean something very different?

*The favour of God comes through the forgiveness of sins that Jesus would bring, and this would put such people at peace with God. This is not about "horizontal" peace between humans, but "vertical" peace between us and God.*

7. What is encouraging about these shepherds for us? And how are they examples for us?

*They were ordinary people, we're not even given their names, but God chose them to be the first witnesses of his Son's birth. Cf 1 Cor 1:26-29.*

*God can clearly use heavenly messengers to proclaim his word, but he uses ordinary people like us. These shepherds took God at his word, they went to see what he told them about. Investigating God's word and looking into the facts is not the opposite of faith but rather an expression of it! And when they had seen and confirmed God's word, they couldn't help but talk to others about it – good news is meant to be shared!*

8. Spend some time in response to what you have read, and also pray for opportunities to "spread the word concerning what we have been told about this child" this Christmas.