

**But His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**

"Jesus grew in wisdom"— Jesus was fully God,

but also fully man, having laid aside His majesty to be born as one of us: "But He gave up His place with God and made Himself nothing, (lit. emptied Himself)", Phil. 2:7, Exp. Bible. There is no suggestion in Scripture that Jesus had all knowledge and wisdom from birth.

## Colossians 3:12-17 – God's people are to grow in grace

*Growing in Jesus' character is what distinguishes the body of Christ*

**12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**

"God's chosen people" — this phrase was used of Israel, then of the Christian community, Deut. 4:37; 1 Peter 2:9. Being chosen by God, a frequent theme in Paul's letters, doesn't lessen our responsibility to live unselfishly. "He chose us... to be holy and blameless in His sight", Eph. 1:4.

**13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

"Bear with... forgive..." — Jesus taught that having received grace and forgiveness from God, we must extend the same grace in forgiving others.

**14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

"Put on love" — which will look like attitudes of v.12, and like the fruit of the spirit, Gal. 5:22.

**SUMMARY** The story of young Samuel, called by God, and the young Jesus, the Son of God, speak to us about growing in spiritual maturity. Words written to the church in Colossae challenge us to grow in Jesus-like attitudes and relationships.

**APPLICATION** The grace and glory of God are able to grow within us when we surrender self-rule and independence, and ask Jesus to come in. That's the path to Christian maturity. This is grace, and it disarms the enemy and brings God's glory.

**PRAYER** In this Christmas season, Lord, may we put on Your love afresh, learn how working with others we can bring Your kingdom — and together bring You glory. Amen

The Living Word online, with active links, is published early in the week for the following Sunday

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# The Living Word

Find the full version ONLINE at [www.thelivingword.uk](http://www.thelivingword.uk)

PRINT EDITION

Bible readings for Dec. 25-26, 2021 + commentary & references

Non-denominational Bible study for Dec 25-26 (Revised Common Lectionary readings)

Prepare: read the Bible passages beforehand. Reflect: re-read to think about the message preached

Theme: **God reveals Himself in Jesus**

Isaiah 9:2-7 — Wayward Israel is where the glory of God shines

Luke 2:1-14 — Shepherds experience God's glory in terror

Titus 2:11-14 — We grow in grace actively awaiting Christ's return

1 Samuel 2:18-20,26 — An apprentice learns to minister to the Lord

Luke 2:41-52 — Jesus is found with the teachers at the temple

Colossians 3:12-17 — God's people are to grow in grace

## Isaiah 9:2-7 — Wayward Israel is where the glory of God shines

*A peace-bringing Davidic kind of ruler comes to a spiritually-dark nation*

**2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.**

"Light has dawned" — Jesus the light of the world, brings the light of His truth first in Capernaum.

• **Further study:** Isa. 9:1, Matt. 4:13-17, Jn. 8:12; 9:5.

**3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before You as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.**

"Enlarged" — growth following the resettlement.

**4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat, You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.**

"Midian's defeat" — Gideon's call in Judges 7.

**5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and**

**every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.**

**6 For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

"And He will be called" — "Wonderful Counsellor" who carries out a plan with the power of "Mighty God". He carries the "Everlasting Father's" compassion and protection, and rules as "Prince of Peace" bringing wellbeing to all.

**7 Of the greatness of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.**

## Luke 2:1-14 — Shepherds experience God's glory in terror

*They are to seek out a newborn baby, tucked up in a feed trough in the village*

**1-2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)**

"First census" — Jesus' birth and then flight from Herod the Great must have been between 6-4 BC, before Herod's death in 4 BC, in the first of two terms served by Quirinius.

**3 And everyone went to their own town to register.**

"Register" — for the Roman poll tax.

**4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.**

"Bethlehem" — as foretold in Micah 5:2.

**5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.**

**6-7 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.**

**8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.**

"Living out" — probably between March and November. It is not known when Jesus was born; the midwinter tradition arose from pagan origins.

**9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone**

**around them, and they were terrified.**

"Terrified" — of majestic angels in blazing light suddenly appearing in the darkness.

**10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.**

**11-12 "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."**

**13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,**

**14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests."**

"Good news" (v.10) — from the word that gives us 'evangelise'. "On earth peace" (v.14) — Jesus is the Prince of Peace prophesied by Isaiah, Isa. 9:6 above, to bring God's peace; not universally, but all who would turn to Him and come to know God and God's favour.

**Titus 2:11-14 – We grow in grace actively awaiting Christ's return**

*Christians are empowered to live above themselves while living in expectation*

**11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.**

"Grace... offers salvation" — the word used here specifically means favour with God, never earned but made possible by Christ's sinless self-sacrifice. It is offered to all people and a response to Jesus is called for, which is a choice to turn to Him, be changed and come to know God in a personal way.

**12-14 It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and**

**SUMMARY** The three readings are about how the favour of God comes through Jesus being revealed to us, and our choosing to ask Him into our lives. In Isaiah 9 the perspective is looking forward to what would be revealed in a new era; in Luke 2 the shepherds are the first to experience this revelation; Titus 2 exhorts believers living in the last times to expect the return of Jesus Christ, who gave Himself to purify from wickedness a people who are His own.

**APPLICATION** The Bible is clear that we cannot earn the salvation of God. If we could, it would not be God's grace. Nowhere does the Bible teach that salvation is through participation in the church's ordinances; that would devalue God's grace also. Widely and clearly the Bible teaches that salvation is a choice to invite Jesus

**to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.**

"Teaches us... to live..." — salvation and holy living are "not because of anything we have done but because of [God's] own purpose and grace, 2 Tim. 1:9. The "blessed hope" is expectation of Jesus coming again.

as Saviour. Before that decision we are all unable to see the spiritual realities of good and evil, walking in darkness. The story relates how some were impacted by God's glory over Bethlehem, and believers in the early church by the Holy Spirit.

**PRAYER** Lord, we love the nativity scene, but help us to see beyond it to Your Lordship and Your glory. May the impact of who You are, transform how we are, in this season of remembering Your first coming and preparing for the next.

*DECEMBER 26 – THE GRACE AND GLORY OF GOD GROW IN US*

**1 Samuel 2:18-20,26 – An apprentice learns to minister to the Lord**

*Samuel grows in stature and God's favour, as was said later of Jesus*

**18-19 But Samuel was ministering before the Lord – a boy wearing a linen ephod. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.**

"Linen ephod" — an embroidered over-garment worn by priests in the sanctuary. The contrast between Samuel, and Eli's sons, all young

Levites, is that Samuel lived up to his calling.

**20 Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the Lord give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the Lord." Then they would go home.**

**26 And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the Lord and with people.**

"Grow in stature and favour" — like Luke's description of the boy Jesus, Luke 2:40 and 52.

**Luke 2:41-52 – Jesus is found with the teachers at the temple**

*He finds rabbis in the temple courts who allow Him to debate with them*

**41 Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover.**

"Every year" — observant Jews kept the three commanded festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, Exodus 23:14-17; Deut. 16:16.

**42 When He was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.**

"Twelve years old" — preparing to take adult covenant responsibilities, usually at age 13.

**43 After the festival was over, while His parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.**

"Unaware" — because whole villages and extended families were travelling together.

**44-45 Thinking He was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for Him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for Him.**

**46-47 After three days they found Him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and His answers.**

"After three days" — a day's 20 mile travel, a day turning back, and a day finding Jesus in the city.

"Listening... asking questions... His answers" — it was highly unusual for these scholars of Moses' law to debate with a young person.

**48 When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. His mother said to Him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You."**

**49-50 "Why were you searching for Me?" He asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in My Father's house?" But they did not understand what He was saying to them.**

"Your father and I... My Father's house" — Jesus contrasts His Father with His earthly parent, aware of His unique relationship, His parents less so.

**51-52 Then He went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.**