

The Radiant Dawn

25 DAILY BIBLE READINGS
LUKE 1-2 FOR ADVENT

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Introduction

Welcome to the joyful opening chapters of Luke's Gospel. They have always seemed to me to glow, and not only through their association with the Christmas lights that sparkle in the darkness of December. Luke presents Jesus' entry into the world as the radiant dawn of an eternal day. There's music as well as light. Jesus entered this world accompanied by songs of celebration. Since then, I'm sure these two chapters have inspired more music than any other section of the Bible. Glowing with light and ringing with music, Luke's nativity account invites us to experience the joy Jesus' birth still gives.

I've noticed that committed Christians often find December more exhausting than others, not less. Perhaps that's inevitable. The pre-Christmas build up is busy enough in the family and at work. In addition, we want to seize the many opportunities open to us for sharing and celebrating the Christmas message with others. I will be very happy if these daily notes can enable a busy Christian to experience Jesus' joy inwardly while serving him outwardly.

I have assumed that readers are already committed followers of Jesus. However, I'd like to give a word of encouragement to others. You may know for sure that you don't yet belong to Jesus. Or you might be unsure whether you do or not – perhaps never having realised that each one of us needs to make a personal response to him. I hope that you will read on. As you discover more fully what these familiar Bible

passages mean, I pray that you will believe the good news and receive Jesus' light and joy.

It is important to read the relevant passage from Luke before looking at the notes each day. Sometimes the same passage is repeated several times. It is intended that you revisit those passages in full every day, rather than skipping them and going straight to the notes. The prayers are written in the "we" / "us" form. I hope you will feel free to change that to "I" / "me" if you find that more helpful.

I first wrote these notes for Katie, my wife, in December 2017 after she discovered she had no Advent reading material at hand. Each daily reading appeared in the appropriate numbered bags that hang on our tree-shaped Advent calendar. Katie's clear and settled faith is of exactly the sort Luke wanted to instil in his dedicatee, Theophilus. I dedicate this short book to her.

*O Radiant Dawn,
Splendour of eternal Light,
Sun of Justice:
come, shine on Those who dwell in
darkness and The shadow of death.*

Antiphon for 21st December

1 GOD WANTS US TO BE CERTAIN

LUKE 1:1-4

Everyone expects a toddler to be wobbly on their feet, but if they still wobble in the same way as a teenager, there's a problem!


The same principle is true in the Christian life. It's no wonder new believers sometimes wobble. The problem is that too many of us remain stuck in the half-light of our early impressions of Jesus. We go on wobbling for years.

Luke wrote his account of Jesus' life to give a new believer – Theophilus – stability in his faith. It's true, “stability” doesn't sound very exciting. But actually, there is no greater treasure than a settled and clear certainty about Jesus and his Kingdom.

How did Luke intend to give Theophilus this stability? It's vital we all know the answer, because God uses the same strategy today.

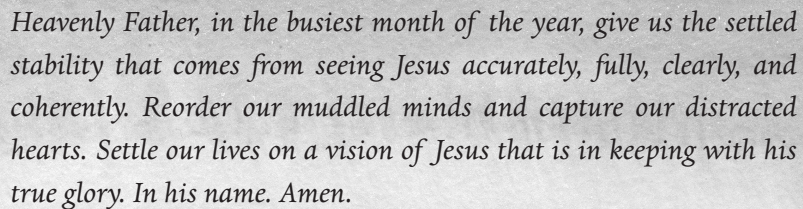
First, Luke intended to give an accurate account of the events. There's no stability if we're not certain that the events of Jesus' life – his birth, death and resurrection – really happened. Luke had conducted careful research, going back to the earliest eye-witnesses. As we read his account, we can be confident that we have the facts.

Second, he intended to give a full understanding of these events and their significance. In verse 1, Luke hints that their meaning had been explained long before they took place: Jesus *fulfilled* God's promises to Israel. Luke will show how that happened in his own “orderly account” (verse 3), orderly not just because he writes the events down in the right order, but because they make sense in the light of all God's promises.



There is no time in the year when it's easier to get off balance than in the manic pre-Christmas build up. We tend to shop, party and worry like everyone else. It's possible to fall flat on our faces – spiritually that is – like the wobbling toddler.

Let Luke's accurate, ordered account of Jesus' birth guide you this Advent. I hope it helps you towards a faith that's increasingly stable and clear.



Heavenly Father, in the busiest month of the year, give us the settled stability that comes from seeing Jesus accurately, fully, clearly, and coherently. Reorder our muddled minds and capture our distracted hearts. Settle our lives on a vision of Jesus that is in keeping with his true glory. In his name. Amen.