

# **Christmas In August**

Acts 22

## **SURPRISED BY CHRISTMAS**

Luke 1:26-38/ Luke 2:1-16/ Matthew 2:1-11

## **PAUL'S STORY**

Acts 22

## **OUR STORY**

## **YOUR STORY**

## Food for Thought

For the week of December 21, 2008  
(Questions and Scriptures for further study)

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1. This weekend we took a look at Paul's initial encounter with Jesus and how that radically changed and shaped the rest of his life. As you look back over your notes about the Christmas encounters we looked at, which comment or point would be most important for you to remember in the coming days and weeks?

2. Throughout scripture we see a variety of responses to first encounters with Jesus. As you read the passages below, describe the attitudes and actions portrayed by those who encounter Jesus.

### Luke 4:14-28

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. [15] He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

[16] He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. [17] The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

[18] "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,  
[19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

[20] Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, [21] and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

[22] All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

[23] Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.' "

[24] "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. [25] I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. [26] Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. [27] And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian."

[28] All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. [NIV]

### Luke 4:31-36

Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people.

[32] They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.

[33] In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, [34] "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!"

[35] "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

[36] All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" [NIV]

**Luke 5:12-16**

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

[13] Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

[14] Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

[15] Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. [16] But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. [NIV]

**Luke 5:27-31**

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, [28] and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

[29] Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. [30] But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

[31] Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. [NIV]

**Luke 7:1-9**

When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. [2] There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. [3] The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. [4] When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, [5] because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." [6] So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. [7] That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. [8] For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

[9] When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." [NIV]

Are any of the actions or attitudes above similar to your first encounter with Jesus?

3. Going back and remembering our own story of how we first encountered Jesus can help affirm and evaluate how we are now responding to him. Take a few minutes and jot down any significant encounters you've had with Jesus along the way. Any responses you want to continue, change or begin?

**\* Christmas Reflection Idea** – Read the Christmas story with family or friends (Luke 2:1-20) focusing on being thankful for God's gift to us. Question to ask: *As you reflect on the Christmas story and this past year, what are you thankful for?*