

Christmas Eve

The Nativity of Our Lord · Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Are any of the five parts missing?

***Answer:** Address: "O God." Reason: "You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light." Petition: "Grant." Purpose: "that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven." Ending: "through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord..." All five are present, the first complete collect since Advent began. The petition is one word; the weight falls on the purpose.*

2. The collect sets earth beside heaven. What do we have now, and what do we still wait for?

***Answer:** Now we know "the mysteries of that Light": Christ hidden in a manger, and today hidden in Word and Sacrament. We wait for "the fullness of His joys," seeing Him face to face in heaven.*

3. The collect speaks of "the mysteries of that Light." Why is Christ's coming called a mystery?

***Answer:** God becoming man is beyond human reason. It is revealed by God and received by faith, not figured out.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Luke 2:1-14

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** And all went to be registered, each to his own town. **4** And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, **5** to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. **6** And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. **7** And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. **10** And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12** And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, **14** "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

1. Why does Luke name Caesar Augustus and Quirinius (vv. 1-2)?

Answer: To anchor the birth in real history. It also shows God using an emperor's decree to bring Mary to Bethlehem, where the prophet had said the Christ would be born (Micah 5:2).

2. Why does it matter that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, "the city of David"?

Answer: God had promised that the Christ would be a son of David. Bethlehem was David's hometown, so the place itself says this child is the promised King.

3. Why do you think God sent the news to shepherds first?

Answer: Shepherds were ordinary, low-ranking workers. News "for all the people" begins with the lowly. David, too, was a shepherd in Bethlehem before he was king.

4. The angel says, "Unto you is born... a Savior" (v. 11). Why does "unto you" matter?

Answer: The Savior is not only born into history but born for these shepherds, and for us. Faith receives that "for you."

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: "Most holy night" matches "keeping watch over their flock by night" (v. 8). "Brightness of the true Light" matches "the glory of the Lord shone around them" (v. 9). "Fullness of His joys" matches "good news of great joy" (v. 10). "Mysteries of that Light on earth" matches the sign of a baby in a manger (v. 12) and "on earth peace" (v. 14). Any two, well explained, are enough.

2. Isaiah 9:2 says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." How does Luke 2 fulfill it?

Answer: Shepherds in the dark of night see the glory of the Lord and hear that the Savior is born. The great light Isaiah promised has come in the child of Bethlehem.

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The Second Article. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was **conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary**, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. **What does this mean?** I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Cross-reference. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Galatians 4:4-5)

1. Which line of the Creed tells the story of Luke 2?

Answer: "Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary."

2. Luther confesses Jesus as "true God... and also true man." Why must our Savior be both?

Answer: As a man He can stand in our place under the Law and die. As God His life and death have the power to redeem all people and to defeat death.

3. Galatians says God sent His Son "born of woman... to redeem." How does that match Luther's words "who has redeemed me"?

Answer: *Jesus was born in order to redeem. Christmas already points to the cross, where He paid for us "with His holy, precious blood."*

Parent note: the question they may ask. *"How can a baby be God? Did God stop running the universe?"* The Son did not stop being God when He became man. The same Word through whom all things were made (John 1:3) lay in the manger, and in Him "all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). This is the mystery the collect names: we confess it because God has revealed it, not because we can picture it.

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: *Answers will vary. Example: "O God, You sent Your angel to shepherds with good news of great joy. Open our eyes to see Your Son in humble places, that we may glorify and praise You as they did; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you by being born?

Answer: *He comes to be my Savior. He was born so that He could live, die, and rise again for me, and give me peace with God.*