

# STRANGER THINGS

A person stands with their back to the camera on a dark road that stretches into the distance. The road is flanked by dark fields and a fence. In the center of the horizon, a brilliant white light source emits powerful, radiating beams of light that fill the sky and illuminate the road. The sky is dark with visible stars, suggesting a night scene. The overall mood is mysterious and awe-inspiring.

**Episode Six**  
**How To Conquer The Universe**

**welcome to long beach alliance church**  
**october 16, 2016**

**MEN'S  
RETREAT**

**LBAC MEN**

**Hume Lake Men's Retreat  
October 20-23, 2016**



Contact Mike Comstock  
comstock7@verizon.net  
562.505.8398

Spots are filling up; don't miss out!  
**HUMLAKE.ORG/MENS**

- Q. Read Ezekiel 34:25-31. Given our current distracting political election/circus, what kind of expectation can God's promises provide; how does it connect?**
- Q. Ezekiel's promise of peace is in focus with the Christ, the Messiah (Luke 1:79, 2:14). Why is peace such a significant characteristic of the Messiah?**

## **The Next 50 Update**

**LBAC's Facility Renovation Fund**



Visit <http://www.lbac.org/our-church/giving>  
for information about giving online, and  
for more detailed giving information!



# Climate Survey Results

☀ JOIN THE ELDERS ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30 @ 12:15PM TO DISCUSS THE RESULTS AND DETAILS OF THE EARLY-2016 LBAC CLIMATE SURVEY! ☀

## AWANA FAMILY CAMP NOVEMBER 4-6

San Clemente State Beach

Cost: \$12/person - (\$60/family maximum)  
plus one bundle of wood!

JOIN US FOR HOT DOGS,  
SMORES, GAMES,  
PANCAKE BREAKFAST,  
BOOK TIME, AND MORE!

MORE INFORMATION?  
CONTACT EINAR RICHTER  
EINAR\_90808@GMAIL.COM  
562.706.7586

## LBAC Year-to-Date Financial Report

Budget	Required	Received	Budget %
Weekly:	\$12,236.37	\$10,792.56	88.2%
Month-to-Date:	\$24,472.74	\$23,131.33	94.5%
Year-to-Date:	\$73,418.22	\$72,707.74	99.0%
Disbursed YTD:	\$68,923.13	GOF Balance:	\$4,405.45

# LBAC's Family Calendar & Events

## Sunday, October 16

- 9:00AM Worship Celebration 1
- 10:00AM Mind the Gap (Courtyard)
- 10:45AM Foundations Adult Class
- 10:45AM Foundations Youth Meeting
- 10:45AM Worship Celebration 2
- 12:00PM Deacon Meeting
- 6:00PM Perspectives

## Monday, October 17

- 7:00PM Compulsive Eaters Anonymous

## Tuesday, October 18

- 10:00AM All Staff Team Meeting
- 7:00PM High School Youth Group

## Wednesday, October 19

- 6:30PM AWANA

## Thursday, October 20

Hume Lake Men's Retreat (Thursday-Sunday)

- 5:00PM Lydia House Outreach
- 7:00PM Junior High Youth Group

## Friday, October 21

- 8:00PM Narcotics Anonymous

## Sunday, October 23

- 9:00AM Worship Celebration 1
- 10:00AM Mind the Gap (Courtyard)
- 10:45AM Foundations Adult Class
- 10:45AM Foundations Youth Meeting
- 10:45AM Worship Celebration 2
- 6:00PM Perspectives

## MISSIONS

<http://www.lbac.org/missions>

Join us for Perspectives & Serving the World!

## GROWTH GROUPS

<http://www.lbac.org/gg>

Mid-week Bible Studies for all Adults

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

<http://www.lbac.org/children>

Sunday Mornings

Gospel Project @ 9:00AM & 10:45AM

## AWANA

<http://www.lbac.org/awana>

Wednesdays in September 6:30PM-8:30PM

## YOUTH MINISTRIES

<http://www.lbac.org/youth>

JH & HS Foundations - Sundays @ 9:00AM

HS Core Groups - Tuesdays @ 7:00PM

JH Core Groups - Thursdays @ 7:00PM

## WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

<http://www.lbac.org/women>

Woman To Woman Mentoring

Contact: sherylynneibac@gmail.com

Lydia House Meals Ministry

Contact: robbi@apabrاندu.com

Women Connecting with Missions

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month @ 7:00PM

Crafty Women

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month @ 10:00AM

## MEN'S MINISTRIES

<http://www.lbac.org/men>

Contact: mensministry@lbac.org

Weekly Schedule

Regular Ministry Schedule & Contacts



THE  
ALLIANCE

## long beach alliance church offices

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www.facebook.com/longbeachalliancechurch  
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## church staff team

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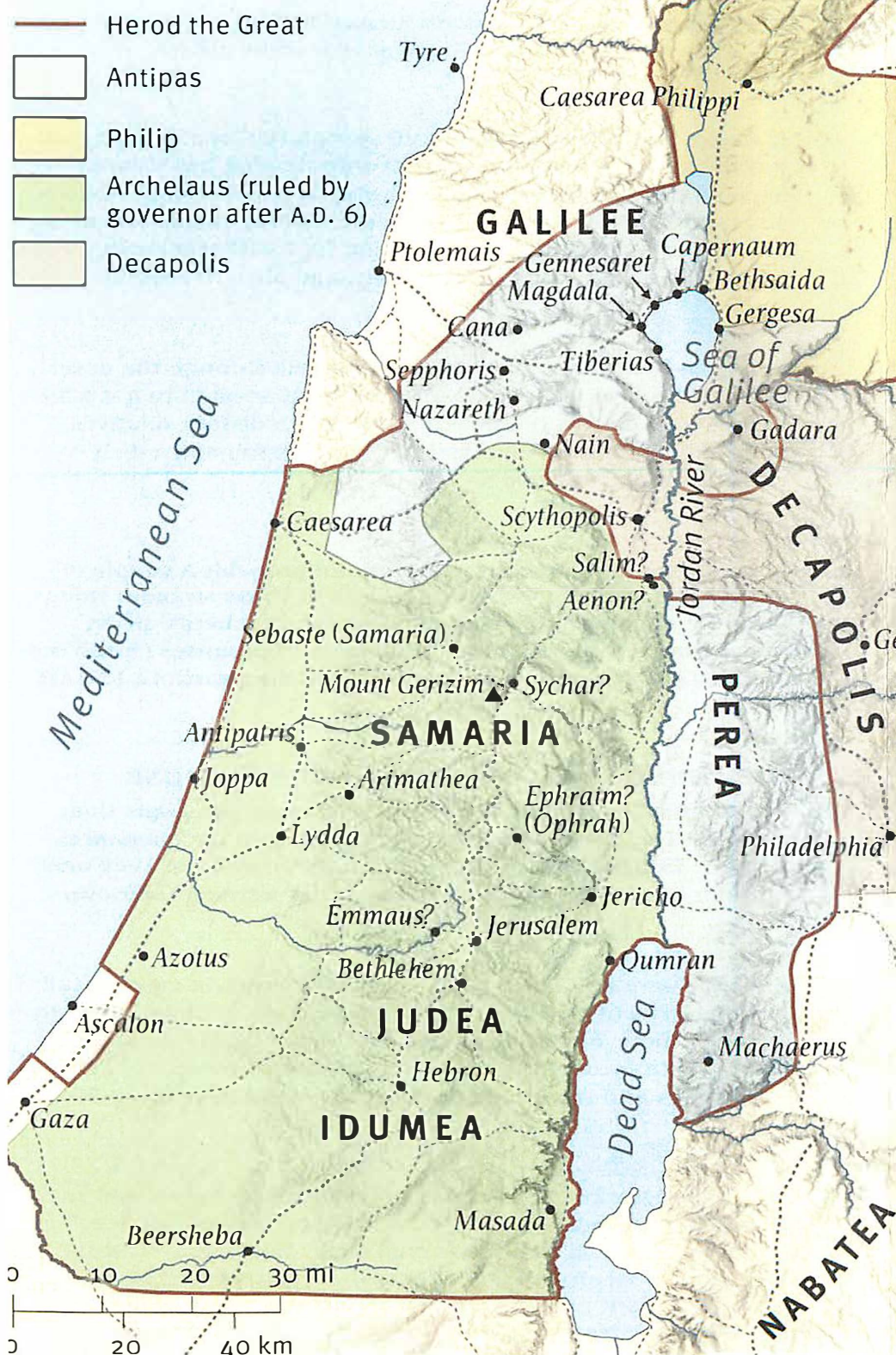
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# STRANGER THINGS

Episode Six: How to Conquer the Universe  
Long Beach Alliance Church • October 16, 2016 • Pastor Chris Lankford

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:6-7

## 1) A Life Filled With Many Important Distractions

- A) Zechariah's amazing prophecy (see Luke 1:67-79) serves as a "birth announcement" for Jesus, a fresh and new dawning of God's light; a revealing of God's loving "tender mercy" (1:78) toward mankind (also see 2 Samuel 7:11b-16 & Isaiah 9:1).
- B) Even given Zechariah's announcement, the events surrounding the "firstborn son" of Mary & Joseph (Luke 2:1-21) are loaded with numerous 'distracting life details.' Imagine your own life if you had to deal with all of these "stranger things":
  - A census decree from the Roman Senate for taxation,
  - The local government requirement of travel for Joseph to his ancestral hometown,
  - A 90-mile journey from Nazareth in the Galilee region down to Bethlehem (the "city of David," Micah 5:1-2, also 1 Samuel 17:12) in the Judean region.
  - Of course, this journey is quite special for Joseph because his companion is Mary, his at-least 6-7 months pregnant virgin fiancé.
  - As if that wasn't enough, when they arrive in Bethlehem, Joseph & Mary end up living in a stable for animals, because the rest of the family home they are visiting is overly-full.



- C) With all of this happening in the background, Mary comes to full-term in her pregnancy, and gives birth to her unnamed "firstborn son" (Luke 2:7). Out of necessity, Mary & Joseph use a feeding trough for a cradle to rest their newborn son.

## ***2) Have You Ever Heard the One About the Shepherds, the Virgin, and the Angels who Name the One Who is Not-Yet-To-Be Named?***

- A) The seeming roller-coaster lives of Joseph & Mary (and now their newborn) are abruptly interrupted by a very strange sight for newly minted parents, a group of local sheep-herders who have come to visit... their newborn son (2:16)!
- B) The shepherds immediately tell Joseph & Mary their fantastical story of an "angel of the Lord" (2:8), bright lights (2:9), and their great (mega) fear! But after hearing "good news" from the angel, their great fear had become great joy (2:10)!
- C) As if this wasn't strange enough, the shepherds also tell Mary & Joseph the answer to the question they probably wanted to know the most, 'how in the world did you find us?' The angel told them they would find a newborn in the strangest of places, laying in a manger, still wrapped in his newborn swaddle cloths!
- D) But the most remarkable part of the shepherds story was not the Easter-egg hunt the angel had sent them on, but who it was the angel said they were looking for... "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (2:11)!

## ***3) Nine Very Strange Months***

- A) Joseph & Mary were all alone and far from home; tossed around at a tiring and trying time of life by Emperors, family, and (no question) God Himself... and now, in the middle of their weak and weary lives, the strangest news about an angelic army exploding with "Glory to God" and "peace on earth" (2:14)?
- B) It had been over 9 months since Gabriel had visited Mary, and just a little while after that when Mary had gone to Joseph with her insane story of "favor" about how she was a pregnant virgin.

It wasn't too long until Joseph himself had an angelic visit, but his was a distant dream, and so many months earlier.

- C) It wasn't long after Mary had told Joseph that she abruptly left Nazareth and urgently trekked 90 miles to visit her old and barren relative Elizabeth. It had been six months since she left a very fruitful Elizabeth and her mute recluse husband behind, with a baby expected at any moment, for another 90-mile jaunt back to Nazareth, back to her family, and back to Joseph.
- D) And then the decree. Another 90-mile walk through the desert, and this time with Joseph and a belly that seemed to get a bit bigger each day. To Bethlehem to stay with distant relatives, belly and all, only to find David's City to be full and a dirty stable as their new home.
- E) Lots of time for long conversations and probably a couple of pesky unanswered questions about all of these stranger things. But now, angels announcing good news? Shepherds giving praise? Impossibly accurate fulfillments of promises (Micah 5:1-2) and a sudden explosion of heaven invading earth (2:13-14)?

## ***4) The Familiar Disguise of Divine Purpose***

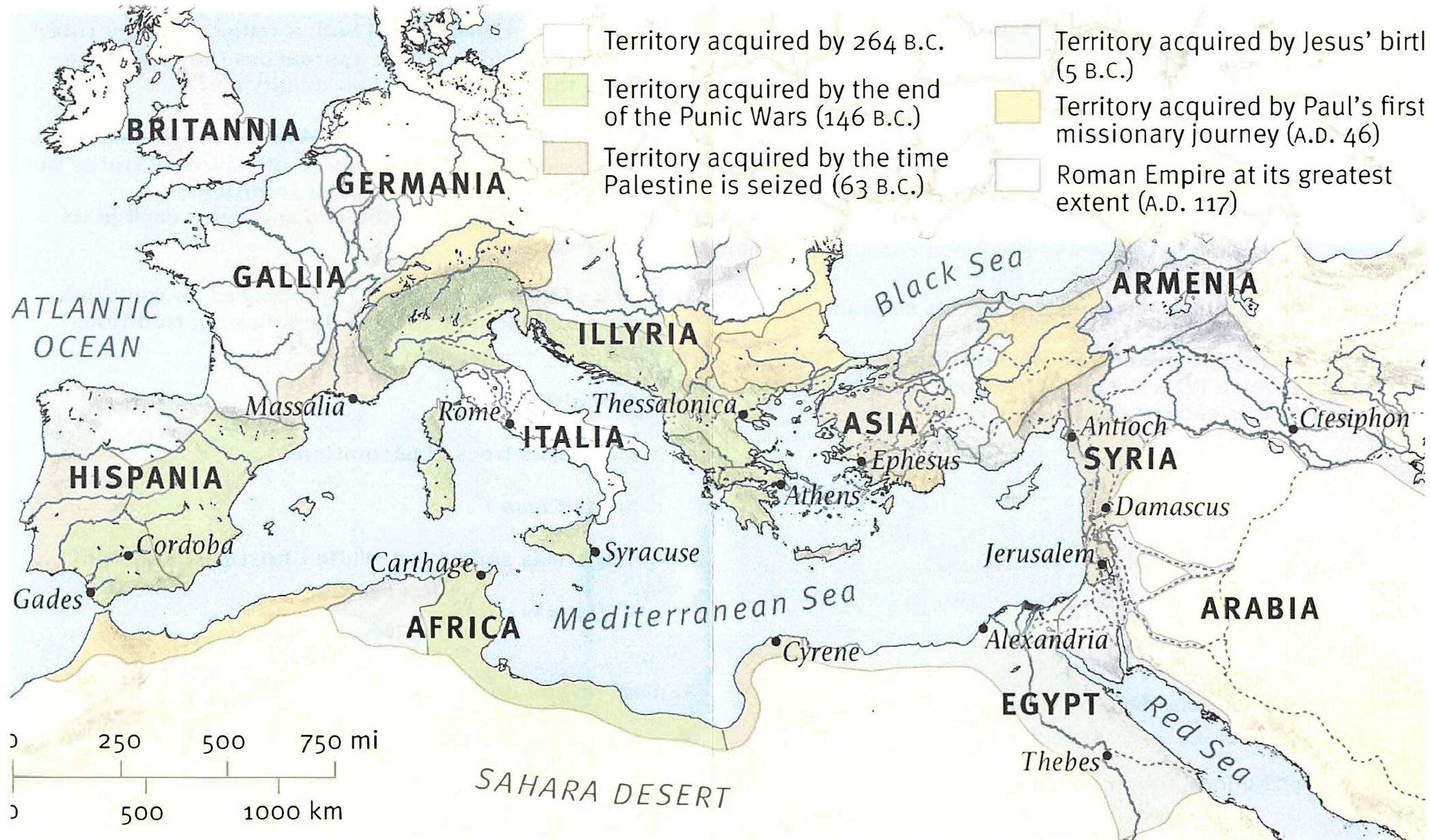
- A) For months Joseph and Mary lived with more questions than answers. Their lives showed faith despite hard circumstances (Luke 1:38, 45; Matthew 1:19, 24-25). In many ways, they were on their own. At least, it seemed like they were on their own.
- B) But they were not alone at all. God was at work in every detail; in the decree of an Emperor, and in the darkest night of smelly sheep herders. Suddenly, things that seemed random were coming into focus. Mary meditated on God's stranger ways as the praises and smell of the shepherds faded away (2:19-20).
- C) God was at work in subtle ways only Joseph & Mary could see. It was like God was actually trying to keep Himself hidden. New questions, with no new answers in sight. But God was on the move, and Joseph & Mary continued in their faithful obedience to the covenant promises of God (2:21), and in naming their firstborn son Jesus, just as the angel had instructed them.



# The Extraordinary Growth of the Roman Empire from 264 BC to 117 AD

(Jesus the Christ born around 6/5 BC, dies around 27/28 AD, also resurrected in 27/28 AD, alive & well in 2016 AD)

Rome began as a small monarchy around 750 BC, and then advanced to become 'The Republic,' a sprawling and powerful rulership from Rome (the city) over the whole of the Mediterranean world (see map below). The Republic came to its end with the assassination of Julius Caesar, and the ascension to the throne of Julius Caesar's adopted son, Octavian. Octavian was given undisputed power over all of Rome, and given the title "Augustus" (the highest one), and was henceforth known as *Imperator Caesar divi filius Augustus* (Emperor Caesar, son of god, highest one). These changes ushering in the period of the Roman Empire beginning in 27 AD. The Roman Empire would expand and grow to become one of the most powerful empires the world has ever known. The Roman Empire was at its greatest heights in 117 AD, until the death of the Emperor Trajan. Jesus Christ lived from roughly 6/5 BC – 27/28 AD, about 65 years after the Roman Republic expanded into Palestine (the general region of Israel and her neighbors). The Roman Empire's extraordinary power and control over this part of the world (over 20% of the total world population at the time) brought the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), a 200 year period of relative peace in the Mediterranean world. Into this world of dramatic events, Jesus Christ is born. Understandably, the Apostle Paul would write that Christ's life and death were at just the right time (Romans 5:6).





# **Growth Group Guide Week 6 • Luke 2:1-21**

## **Stranger Things: How to Conquer the Universe**

### **Ice Breaker**

- What is your favorite Christmas TV special? Christmas movie? Why?

### **In-Depth**

#### ***Read Luke 2:1-21***

Discuss what you learned from this week's sermon.

1. We are all very familiar with the story of Jesus' birth, so let's look a little deeper. What does the story reveal about God in each of the following:
  - a. A world-wide census
  - b. Birth at Bethlehem
  - c. Birth in a manger
  - d. Shepherds were the first to know
  - e. A multitude of the heavenly host

### **Making It Relevant**

1. Christmas has turned into both a religious and secular holiday in America. Three approaches Christians can take to this religious/secular duality are:
  - a. Reject secular traditions and focus on the religious;
  - b. Practice both, but emphasize the spiritual truths that underlie many of the secular traditions;
  - c. Distinguish between the two and enjoy each in its proper place.
2. Which of these (or another) approaches do you think should be taken for each of the following traditions? Why?
  - a. Gift giving
  - b. Christmas trees & decorations
  - c. Santa Claus
  - d. Christmas songs (e.g. White Christmas, Rudolph)
  - e. Christmas cards
3. What do you do to ensure "The reason for the season" is not drowned out by the noise of the secular? What can you do better?