

THE WORD BECAME FLESH



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

#04 - The Birth of Jesus Luke 2:1-20, Matthew 2:1-12

PICTURES (Note: Inserted in brackets at the appropriate place in the lesson is the number of the picture to show the students.)

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| 4-1 | Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem | 4-4 | King Herod and Magi |
| 4-2 | The angel speaking to the shepherds | 4-5 | The Magi giving gifts to Jesus |
| 4-3 | Shepherds at manger scene | 4-6 | Manger scene with shepherds and Magi |

REVIEW (Before teaching lesson)

- **Journal Review:** Ask students to share an important truth that they learned from their journal readings at home that week. Share some of your own insights.
- **Previous Lesson Review:** (Use the visual from the last lesson to aid in review)
What did the angel Gabriel say would happen to Mary? What was Mary's response to Gabriel? What did Joseph want to do when he found out Mary was pregnant? Why didn't he do that? What prophecies did the readings from the lesson show the birth of Jesus fulfilled?
- **Big Question Review:** How was Jesus conceived?
Let the students give their answers to the question.
- **Bible Verse Review:** Luke 1:35
Jesus' conception was a miracle of God by the power of his Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

LESSON CONTENT

Note: The Bible verses included in the lesson are from the NIV 1984 edition. The wording of the questions is derived from that version. If another version of the Bible is used, questions may need to be adapted.

In the last lesson, we saw three of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus. What were they? Mary and Joseph were both from the line of David. Mary was a virgin. When Gabriel appeared to Mary, he said that the child she would bear would be the Son of God.

What is the prophecy that the birth of Jesus still needs to fulfill? Old Testament prophecy said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the town of King David.

Where were Mary and Joseph from? Mary and Joseph were from the town of Nazareth. If Jesus were to be born in Bethlehem then God would have to make a way for that to happen.

Luke tells the story of how Mary and Joseph happened to be in Bethlehem when it was time for Mary to give birth. The story of Jesus' birth is told every year at Christmas. Don't let it become old to you. As you hear it, pray that your heart would be open to the wonder and majesty of all that happened.

Luke 2:1-7 (picture 4-1)

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register.

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

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

Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem? The ruler of Rome was taking a census, which means he was counting the people living in places under the authority of Rome. Everyone had to go to the place they were from. Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to register because that is where his family (the line of David) was from. It was at least a three-day trip from Nazareth, where they were living, to Bethlehem.

What does the way Mary and Joseph ended up in Bethlehem show about God? This shows us that God is sovereign over rulers and events and uses them for his purposes.

What is a manger? A manger is a feeding trough for animals.

What does Jesus being placed in a manger after his birth show you about God? God doesn't value the same things as men. Jesus, ruler of all creation, was born in humble circumstances, to come and serve all people. The Jews were expecting the Messiah to be a conquering king. They would have expected the Messiah to be born in a place of great importance.

Luke 2:8-14 (picture 4-2)

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² 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, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

What frightened the shepherds? Seeing the glory of God frightened them. It was an overwhelming spectacle. (Have the children close their eyes and imagine what it might be like.)

What did the angels say about the baby? The angels said that a Savior had been born to them.

Why was that great news? The baby was the Messiah that the Jews were waiting for. This was actually good news of great joy for all people, not just the Jewish people. Who will have peace on earth? Men on whom God's favor rests will experience peace on earth.

What does it take to have God's favor rest on you? You have to respond to Jesus for who he is, Christ the Lord, your Savior and King. Then you can receive all God wants to give, which is salvation, the forgiveness of sin and a restored relationship with him.

Luke 2:15-20 (3)

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

What was the response of the shepherds to what they heard and saw? The shepherds spread the news about Jesus' birth all around. They couldn't keep quiet.

Would God's favor rest upon the shepherds? yes How do you know? The shepherds responded to Jesus for who he is, the Sovereign Lord and Savior of mankind. They were humble and received the good news of Jesus without hesitation.

The gospel of Matthew relates a different aspect of some events that happened after Jesus was born.

Matthew 2:1-8

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

Why did the Magi appear before King Herod? (picture 4-4) The unusual star they saw led them to Jerusalem. They thought a king had been born so they went to the palace of the king. They were expecting an earthly king.

How did the teachers of the law know where the Christ would be found? They knew the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

Matthew 2:9-12

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

How did the Magi find Jesus? The star continued to lead them. It came to rest over the place where Jesus was.

What did the Magi do when they found Jesus? (picture 4-5) They bowed down and worshipped him. They gave him royal gifts.

Would God's favor rest on the Magi? Yes How do you know? Even though they weren't Jews, they recognized who Jesus is and saw him as their king.

It is important to take notice of who was led to worship Jesus when he was born. It wasn't the important Jewish people, it was humble Jewish shepherds and wise men from another country.

What can we learn from that? Jesus is the Savior of all people who come to him, humble and wealthy, Jew and non-Jew. We come to know Jesus through the revelation of God. Angels spoke to the shepherds and the Magi saw a special star. The Jews who knew the prophecies, the teachers of the law and priests, didn't come to him.

LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem? What did the angels tell the shepherds? Why did the Magi seek Jesus? What did the Magi bring to Jesus?
- **Thought Questions:** Why do you think the Jews were expecting the Messiah to be a conquering king instead of a humble servant? Why do we focus more on what we need and want on earth rather than what we need for eternity? Why does God focus more on our eternal need?
- **Prayer:** Thank God for sending his Son to save us from our own sin that oppresses us. Pray that you would recognize that your own sin is a greater problem for you than the circumstances you are in. Pray that you would learn to focus on the eternal and that which affects your relationship with God rather than gaining things on earth.
- **The Big Question: What is the good news for all people?**
Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.
- **Memory Verse: Luke 2:10-11** Jesus our Savior is Christ the Lord.

¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Questions: How is Jesus' birth good news? Who is it good news for?

ACTIVITIES (Completed after the lesson)

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

- ★ **Lesson Notes:** Ask the students to summarize in one sentence what the lesson was about. Then have them give three main points covered in the lesson. An example is below.

Theme: Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem where Old Testament prophecy said the savior would be from.

1. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem because Joseph was from the house of David and had to register in the town of David. When Jesus was born, Mary laid him in a manger.
2. Angels appeared to shepherds who were out in the fields and told them all about Jesus. The shepherds hurried to find Jesus and worship him.
3. Magi from far away saw a star in the sky and followed the star to Judah. There they asked where the baby king was born and when they found Jesus, they bowed down and worshipped him.

Why do I need to know this? So I recognize the greatness of God and how he intervenes and reveals himself to people.

★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the booklet and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse in the inside.

★ **Activity Page:** Hidden Message

Instructions: Unscramble phrases from Isaiah and other passages used to describe the Messiah (Jesus) and then use the coded letters to find the hidden message.

Hidden message: Jesus is Christ the Lord.

Lord our righteousness

Prince of peace

Mighty God

Wonderful Counselor

Everlasting Father

Son of David

Son of the Most High

God with us

★ **Further Understanding:** Investigation/Reasoning Skills

Instructions:

1. Read the whole passage below to the students as they read along in their Bibles or on the discussion notes.
2. Read the passage verse by verse and have the students explain each verse.
3. Have the students extract one important truth from the passage. This can be done as an entire class or you can break into pairs or small groups.
4. Have the students answer the additional two questions: How can you apply this truth in your life? What will be the result of applying that truth?

Isaiah 9:1-7 – For unto Us a Child Is Born

9 Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—

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

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

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.

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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase 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 forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

JOURNAL

The daily journal inside the booklet has six readings that relate to a theme. It would be beneficial for the teacher to work through the journal readings also.

Journal Focus: Who is Jesus?

Reading 1: John 1:1-5 – The Word is God.

Who does the Word refer to? How do you know? What was the beginning? What existed before the beginning? Why? How were all things made? What does that say about Jesus? What does it mean that “in him was life”? What kind of life comes through Jesus? What does light do for men? Why can’t men understand the light?

Reading 2: John 1:6-9 – John came as a witness to the light.

What did John come to do? Why is having a witness important?

Reading 3: John 1:10-14 – Those who believe have the right to become children of God.

Who were God’s own? Why didn’t they receive Jesus? What does it mean to be a child of God? How do you become a child of God? What does it mean that the Word became flesh? What did Jesus becoming a man do for us? What is grace? What is truth? How is Jesus full of grace and truth?

Reading 4: John 1:15-18 – Grace and truth came through Jesus.

Who is the John who testifies about Jesus? What came through Moses? What does that mean? What comes through Jesus? What does that mean? Why can Jesus make God known?

Reading 5: John 1:29-34 – Jesus is the Lamb of God.

Why did John call Jesus the Lamb of God? What did John mean that Jesus had surpassed him because he was before him? What was John’s testimony about Jesus?

Reading 6: Colossians 2:9-12 Jesus is the fullness of God in bodily form.

Who is Christ? What happens when we believe in him?