

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:** Have the children answer the two questions individually or as a group. What did you learn from this lesson? How can you put into practice what you learned?
- ★ **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.
- ★ **This Week's Big Question:** Have the students fill in the blanks for the way the memory verse answers the big question.
Jesus our Savior is Christ the Lord.
- ★ **Coloring Page:** Color the lesson picture.
- **Craft:** The Shepherds
As a reminder that Jesus was born in a stable and the angels appeared to shepherds, make a shepherd and a sheep.

Materials: Card stock paper, scissors, glue sticks, colored pencils or crayons, cotton balls.

Preparation: Run off the craft on card stock paper. Cut apart.

Instructions: Cut out and fold the sheep and shepherd so they stand up. Color in the shepherd and glue a cotton ball to the sheep.

- **Game:** Find the Baby (variation of Find the Hanky)
As a reminder that the shepherds and Magi went to Bethlehem to search for the Savior, play "Find the baby."

Instructions: Print off a small picture of Jesus in the manger. Let one child hide the baby while the others have their head covered. Only a small part of the picture should be left visible. Once the baby is hidden, the others can search for it. When a child spots the baby, he goes and sits back down without telling anyone where it is. Once all the children have spotted the baby, the one who saw it first gets to hide it again.

JOURNAL

The daily journal is included in the booklet for the students to complete at home. It has six poetic readings and related Bible verses. It would be beneficial for the teacher to read through and be familiar with its content.