

TEXT Luke 2:1-20

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Romans 5:7,8; Ephesians 2:4-8

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to recount the events which took place at the time of Christ’s birth. They should recognize the great love God showed to mankind in giving His own Son.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. — Luke 2:11

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. — John 3:17

ANSWER TITLE: **The Greatest Gift**

SEARCH TITLE: **An Angelic Proclamation**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The Romans did not have dominion over all the world. The phrase, “that all the world should be taxed,” means just that part of the world that was under Roman government. One of those places, Bethlehem of Judea, was the ancestral home of Joseph, and was where he needed to return to be taxed according to the decree of Caesar Augustus. Even though there were two Bethlehems existing at the time of Jesus’ birth, one in Judea and one in Galilee, Luke writes that Joseph and Mary went “into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem.” This leaves no doubt as to which city was the birthplace of Jesus. King David, as a lad, tended his father’s sheep in the fields near Bethlehem, perhaps the same fields where his forebears, Ruth and Boaz, met. These may even have been the same fields where the angels delivered their message to the shepherds.

In verse 17 we read, “They made known abroad the saying, which was told them concerning the child.” These shepherds were the first to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. Jesus’ birth was announced by an angelic proclamation saying that a Savior was born “which is Christ the Lord.” His name, Jesus, was not mentioned at that time but His name had already been chosen—not by Joseph and Mary, but by orders from God through the angel Gabriel. The name *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, both meaning “God saves,” or “Savior.” It was a favorite name and used often in those times, thereby becoming quite common. It is, no doubt, for this reason that in the Bible, Jesus is often called Jesus Christ to distinguish Him from others of the same name. The word *Christ* means “anointed one,” and referred to the One anointed by God to be the Savior of mankind.

YOUR OPENER

An Angelic Proclamation

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KEY VERSE: For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. — John 3:17

RESPONSES

1. Mary lived in the area of Galilee in the city of Nazareth which was many miles north of Bethlehem, the city in which Jesus was to be born. The point to make here is the accuracy with which Micah’s prophecy was fulfilled. In discussion, bring out that prophecies yet to be fulfilled will be fulfilled in detail.

2. Caesar Augustus made a decree that all should be taxed. Everyone needed to return to the city of their lineage. Joseph took Mary and went to Bethlehem for this taxation because they were of the family of King David. Let your students know that God controls the whole world and He can cause the world rulers to do His will even if they are ungodly.

3. God knows the hearts of all men, and He knew these shepherds were honest enough to believe the proclamation. They were in a place where they could note the wondrous works of God. God looks for the honest hearts today who will have faith in Him. The discussion should bring out that it was the love of God that caused Him to reveal the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. God loves all mankind today and will reveal His will to those who respond to Him.

The angelic proclamation, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11), announced God’s greatest gift to mankind. This message was given to the shepherds on the Judean hills. They did not doubt the wondrous declaration, for they saw the attendant glory, and they would soon spread the news to others. God’s angels must have realized the importance of the announcement, for as soon as the good tidings were made known, a multitude of the heavenly host joined in the exultation, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).

1. Where was Mary living previous to the birth of Jesus? Where was it prophesied that Jesus should be born? See Micah 5:2.

2. What circumstance did God use to make sure Mary would be in Bethlehem at the birth of Jesus?

3. Why do you feel God chose to proclaim the good news to shepherds rather than to some authoritative figures?

4. What did the shepherds do with the great news that was told to them?

7

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. Write what you feel is meant by the word *pondered* as used in verse 19.

6. Read Philippians 2:5-8. In your own words, explain why you feel it was necessary for Jesus to be born "in the likeness of men."

7. The celebration of Christmas can be used to spread the story of Jesus. Write down some ways the Christmas season can provide opportunities for evangelistic outreach.

4. They hurried to Bethlehem to see the newborn Savior. After they had seen Him they began telling other people about Jesus. They returned to their flocks praising and glorifying God. Ask your students how they glorify God today. Your class should conclude that God is glorified by the life that the Christian lives and by the testimony that he gives.

5. Your students will likely conclude that the word *ponder* means to "weigh in the mind, consider carefully, meditate." Let them give their ideas, guiding the discussion to bring out the importance of meditating on the things of God. When one does this, the love of God for mankind is apparent to them in a greater measure.

6. Encourage your students to give their explanations. Guide them to the conclusion that Jesus was born and lived as a man so that they might be assured that He knows how they feel when they have physical needs, such as being tired or hungry. The students should understand that this was all part of God's great love for them.

7. Your students may list the following: Sunday school program, Christmas concert, taking a Christmas program to the retirement centers, taking Christmas boxes to the shut-ins. The class should conclude that they do these things because they love Jesus and they love people. Jesus loved them while they were yet sinners, so they should have the desire to let other people know about His love.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What character attributes were possessed by the shepherds as indicated by their actions?

God's gift to the world was a result of His love. What are some other reasons for gift giving? Compare or contrast these reasons with love as a motive for giving.

Why does giving a gift that we ourselves treasure or value have so much more meaning than just a casual gift purchased as an obligation? What does God's gift of His own Son tell us about His feelings toward mankind?

What can we give Him to show our love for Him?

Can you give at least two reasons why Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem at the time of Christ's birth?

When Jesus was born, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. What does this mean? What does it tell us about the purpose of His coming?

Why do you suppose God sent His Son to be born in a stable instead of a mansion or a palace?

What does Christmas mean to you?

In the ANSWER story, what would indicate that Peggy understood the true meaning of Christmas?

THINGS TO DO

Take a gift-wrapped package to class. Discuss the various things that make up a package (ribbon, tape, paper, box). Ask your class how a three-year-old opens a package. The package is enticing but he knows that what is inside matters more than the outer covering! Tell them that our gift to Jesus should be ourselves. We come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, but God cares about what's inside.

In the corner of your classroom, you might want to construct a manger. Build the manger by nailing pieces of wood together. In the manger, place some hay (or straw) and a doll. Wrap the "Baby" in swaddling clothes. On a large sheet of cardboard that can stand, write the key verse and place it beside the display.

Ask your students to make a list of some of the things they own that are precious, special, or important to them. Have them draw one or two items on hearts cut out of

construction paper. On a large construction-paper heart write the name JESUS. Tell the students that Jesus is God's only Son and He is very precious to God. But God loved us so much that He was willing to give His Son in order to pay for our redemption. If we want to be redeemed, we must give our hearts to Jesus.

Accordion-fold a long strip of paper, and trace an angel on the top section. Cut out the angels (keeping them attached at the sides) to make a fold-out of an angel choir. On the skirt of each angel, write a portion of the key verse, so that when the angels are stretched out the entire key verse is displayed. This could be a nice addition to a class bulletin board.

Use a nativity set to retell the Christmas story. Let each child move one of the characters as the narrative develops. They might enjoy putting voices with the characters; for example, saying what they think the shepherds may have said when they first saw Baby Jesus.

Answers for ANSWER

Good News!

The incomplete story below is about a special birth. Finish the story by drawing a picture in the empty boxes to replace the missing words.

Shepherds were watching their sheep on the hillside. An angel appeared to them and gave them some good news! A special baby had been born in a manger.

The shepherds were so happy, they went to Bethlehem to worship the Baby whose name was Jesus.

