

TEXT Luke 2:1-20

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that this account of Christ's birth records an actual event which altered the course of history. Every detail of this miraculous event was God-directed and a part of God's plan for the redemption of mankind.

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 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. — Micah 5:2

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **God Has a Plan**

**SEARCH
TITLE:** **The Christmas Story**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The greatest event that ever took place in the history of mankind was the birth of Jesus. Since our present calendar was established, every person who has written down a year on a school paper, letter, check, or any other item, has knowingly or unknowingly acknowledged Christ's birth. Of course the successive great event was His death and resurrection. These events were foretold throughout the Old Testament and came to pass with unerring accuracy.

Bethlehem (house of bread) is located five miles southwest of Jerusalem, 2,550 feet above sea level, in the hill

country of Judea, on the main highway to Hebron and Egypt. In Jacob's time it was called Ephrath (fruitful) and was the burial place of Rachel. Here David kept his father's sheep and was anointed king by Samuel. Hence, it was known as "the city of David." Here the Messiah was born, for which this town that was "little among the thousands of Judah" achieved its great fame, fulfilling the prophecy related in Micah 5:2.

The number of miles traveled by Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem was approximately ninety miles.

YOUR OPENER

The Christmas Story

RESPONSES

1. From the very first Messianic promise (the word *Messiah* means "the Anointed One") given in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) until the birth of Jesus, sinful man needed, and often longed for, a Savior that he might be delivered from sin. Man has solved many problems, but he cannot solve the sin problem by himself. God's love found the way and fulfilled the need, sending His Son to save men from their sins, and this salvation is available for us even today.

2. He was born in Bethlehem. This was prophesied by the prophet Micah more than seven hundred years before Jesus was born. Ask your students how it happened that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem. Where was their home? God caused Caesar Augustus to make a decree of taxation at that precise time. Thus, Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, and Micah's prophecy was fulfilled.

3. Jesus came from the lineage of David (Luke 2:4; Matthew 1:20). Have the students trace the Messianic promise through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Judah (Genesis 49:10), and David (Matthew 22:42-45). The prophets inquired and searched diligently, prophesying of the grace of Christ which should come. The Children of Israel anticipated Christ's coming, yet did not receive Him when He came (John 1:11). But today all mankind has the blessed privilege of believing and receiving Him with the promise of eternal life.

4. There was no room in the inn, so Mary and Joseph were staying in a stable that night. This would indicate the poverty of His family. Discuss the different things in Christ's life that indicated His earthly poverty. For example: He had no certain dwelling place during His ministry; no money to pay taxes, so He sent Peter to catch the fish with money in its mouth; the seamless garment He wore (a type of clothing of the poorer class).

5. The announcement was made to shepherds. The priests, scribes, and Pharisees were in no spiritual condition to receive the Lord Jesus. Lead a class discussion regarding the fact that God does not choose the poor because of their poverty, nor does He reject the rich because of their riches. He chooses the one whose heart will respond to Him. He calls everyone, but few heed His call. The poor have great need, but are not so occupied with worldly treasures, so generally they are more willing to give heed to spiritual matters. "The common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37).

TEXT: Luke 2:1-20

KEY VERSE: But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. — Micah 5:2

For centuries the coming of the promised Messiah had been the cherished hope of God's people. Now on this first Christmas night, the promise became reality. Jesus came to earth in the likeness of man to dwell among men. He was God's Gift to the world, but came willingly to pay the price of man's redemption. Jesus knew that the Cross lay at the end of His earthly pilgrimage, but His only desire was to do the will of His Father. God desires only one thing of us in return for the love He has manifested ó that we do His will.

1. Joseph was directed by the angel of the Lord to name Mary's Son "Jesus." This name means "Savior," "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). What significance does this truth have in our time?

2. In what city was the Christ Child born? Why is this birthplace more than just a coincidence? See Micah 5:2.

3. From what royal lineage did Jesus come? How can this be proved (Matthew 1:1-16; 22:42)? Does this mean, then, that the Gentiles are excluded from God's plan of salvation? See Ephesians 2:12-18.

4. Why was Christ laid in a manger? What does this seem to indicate? See 2 Corinthians 8:9.

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. Who heard the announcement of Christ's birth ? Why was the proclamation made to this sort of people, rather than to the scribes and priests? See Luke 2:15-20.

6. The angel proclaimed to the shepherds, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10,11). Compare the angel's announcement with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Which is the greater, and why?

7. The shepherds believed the message of the angels, and left their sheep and went quickly to see the Savior. How should men respond to the story of Christ today?

8. How did Mary react to the news concerning the angel's proclamation? What advantage can be gained by meditating on God's Word? See Joshua 1:8.

9. "God so loved . . . he gave" (John 3:16). Who does God love and what did He give on that first Christmas night?

6. Discuss with your class the results of each proclamation, bringing out that Lincoln's decree released the slaves in the United States from servitude— a wonderful day for those people. The message from Heaven told of the Savior who would bring release from the bondage of sin— an even greater freedom "which shall be to all people." Discuss the fact that many people have hated the bondage of sin and have tried hard to be freed, only to fail time after time. Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ provides grace and power to be made free from sin and the ability to live a life of victory over sin.

7. Discuss with the class that the shepherds believed the message of the angels, left their sheep and went to Bethlehem. They found the Christ as they had heard, and they spread the news of what had been told them concerning this Child. Ask the students to compare the actions taken by the shepherds to the steps that should be taken by one who hears the story of the Gospel today. They, too, must believe and leave all in order to meet the Savior. It is then that the joy of Heaven comes into their hearts inspiring them to tell others about Him. How does giving a testimony help in our spiritual life? See Revelation 12:11.

8. "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Joshua 1:8 indicates that by meditating on God's Word we have God's assurance that our way will be prosperous and that we will have good success. Allow the students opportunity to give their answers, then discuss the advantages of meditating on God's Word. Joshua was not a formally trained soldier by today's standards, yet by meditating on and obeying God's Word, he was promised a prosperous way and good success as he led the Children of Israel into Palestine. The Psalmist said that blessed is the man whose delight "is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2). The Psalmist further stated that by meditating on God's Word, he had more understanding than all his teachers (Psalm 119:99). Timothy was advised that it would be profitable to him to meditate on the things of God which he had learned. See 1 Timothy 4:15.

9. Wrap up the lesson by bringing your students into dialogue concerning the love that God manifested in sending Jesus Christ to the earth. Mankind was not worthy of this love, having forfeited every hope of eternal life through sin. See Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:12,13. God gave His Gift to the world willingly because of His love. Jesus Christ came to earth and suffered willingly to fulfill God's plan of redemption. How thankful the redeemed should be at this Christmas season. We should willingly do whatever God reveals, in order to enjoy the fullness of the Gift God has given!

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

The angel and the heavenly host in Luke 2:14 were saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." What did they mean?

Jesus is referred to by the angel in verse 11 as a Savior. Why do we need a Savior, and from what did He come to save us?

What is the significance of the angel's saying, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people"?

What does Luke 2:15 indicate about the shepherds' faith?

When and where in the Bible is the first mention of Jesus' birthplace?

Do you think the people in that day looked for His coming? Why or why not?

Why did only a small number of people believe Jesus was the Messiah? What about today?

In our ANSWER story, why did Grandpa want to give David the puzzle on Christmas Day? What special significance did it have?

Can the darker pieces of a puzzle, or the shadows in our lives, be beneficial to us?

THINGS TO DO

Make a large, paper Christmas tree. Cut out decorations and have your class put a different name of Jesus on each decoration (Emmanuel, Savior, King of kings, etc.). Put them on the tree.

Gift-wrap a big box and make it really special. Have the name tag on the gift read something like this: To All People on Earth. Put into the box things that represent the birth of Jesus as a very special gift to mankind. For example: a miniature nativity scene or a picture of one, a picture of Jesus, a picture of a cross, and something to

represent Heaven. This will show what the birth of Jesus led to, and will lead to.

Bring to class a map showing the location of Bethlehem. Trace Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth. Pictures of Bethlehem today, found in magazines and Biblical reference books, might also be of interest to your class.

Cut up sheets of white tagboard or construction paper to make Christmas cards. Have the students decorate these cards so as to announce to their friends and loved ones the good news of the birth of the Savior.

Answers for ANSWER

No Surprise!

Jesus' birth should not have been a surprise to the people. God had let them know in Old Testament times where Jesus would be born and into what family He would be born. When they really thought about this they finally asked . . . Well, you figure out what they asked. Each letter of the coded verse below represents the letter that comes BEFORE it in the alphabet. Example: B=A, C=B, etc.)

Hath not the scripture
T B U I O P U U T F T D S J Q U V S F

said that Christ cometh
T B J E U I B U D I S J T U D P N F U T

of the seed of David
P G U T F T F F E P G E B W J E

and out of the town of
B O E P V U P G U T F U P X O P G

Bethlehem where David
C F U T M F I F N X T F S F E B W J E

was
X B T ?

