

TEXT Luke 2:1-7; John 3:16

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to recount the events that led up to, and the occasion of Jesus' birth. They will know that Jesus was God's greatest Gift to mankind.

MEMORY VERSE Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son. — I John 4:10

Birth of Jesus

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

HEREIN IS LOVE — Cross fists over heart.

NOT THAT WE — Point to self and shake head no.

LOVED — Cross fists over heart.

GOD — Point up.

BUT THAT HE — Drop hand to waist and point up again.

LOVED — Cross fists over heart.

US — Point to self and then to others.

AND SENT HIS SON — Mimic rocking a baby in your arms.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

The visualization of this week's memory verse features a heart with rays descending to a Baby lying on the hay. (See pattern at end of lesson.) Cut apart the pieces as indicated by the heavy black lines, and display them one at a time as your students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Show your students a picture of a birthday celebration — either a family photograph or a magazine illustration. Ask them to tell you what they think is going on in the picture, and talk a little about birthdays. Then move into your lesson by reminding them that Christmas is Jesus' birthday.

1. Briefly review last Sunday's lesson, describing how the angel announced Jesus' birth to Mary and Joseph.
2. Describe the journey to Bethlehem and that it was necessary to obey the taxation law.
3. When Mary and Joseph arrived at Bethlehem, they could find no place to stay except a stable.

Climax: Jesus was born at a time and place appointed by God and detailed by prophecy.

Conclusion: Jesus' birth was a humble one, but it was the greatest event the world had ever known because it revealed the depth of God's love for mankind.

Response: Your students should be able to retell the story of Jesus' birth. They will be able to supply details such as where and why it took place in the way that it did.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

God knew of the need for a Redeemer from the very beginning and had a plan from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). This plan is first mentioned in the Old Testament in Genesis 3:15 where God says that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Later on we read that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through a descendant of Abraham. We are also told from which son of Abraham the Redeemer would come. The promise was reaffirmed to Jacob and then to the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). God promised David that He would establish his throne forever (II Samuel 7:16). This is also confirmed by the Spirit of God through the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 11:1-5).

The Lord revealed through prophets other facts concerning Christ's birth. Isaiah spoke of a virgin bearing a Son whose name would be Immanuel. Daniel told the time of His appearing (Daniel 9:25). Micah 5:2 told where He would be born.

A Roman ruler had a part in Christ's fulfilling of Micah's prophecy. Caesar Augustus decreed that the world should be taxed and each taxpayer had to report to his own city. Joseph and Mary were of the lineage of David and had to go to Bethlehem to be taxed, thus bringing Micah's prophecy to pass.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4b and 16c for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Show the children pictures of different birthday celebrations. Have the children take turns telling about their birthdays. Use this as an opener to the fact that Christmas is Jesus' birthday. Stress that we receive gifts on our birthday but on Jesus' birthday He was the Gift to us.

Use a shoe box or box of similar size. Glue a picture of Baby Jesus to the inside bottom of the box so that it shows through the opening which you will cut in the

form of a cross. Title the picture, God's Greatest Gift. Wrap the box in Christmas paper and cut a cross into the top. Let the children look into the box through the cross cutout. Explain the contrast — an innocent Baby and the cross.

Bring several presents to class (one for each child to open and one for the teacher). Talk about God's Gift to us and open a box with the Baby in a manger picture or figures inside. Then show a picture of Jesus as an adult and tell how He grew to be our Savior. Have each child open his gift. Inside each gift, have a picture representing the different things we can give Jesus. Some suggestions: a clock to represent our time, a hand to represent doing for others, a smile, a church invitation, a map of the world to represent missionary work, a quarter, etc. Discuss the different things we give to Jesus as each gift is opened.

For each student, make a set of Joseph and Mary stand-up figures and the baby Jesus for Mary to hold (see Patterns). Cut on the heavy lines around Mary's arms and one hand. You may use these in telling the story and then the children can use them to retell the story when they go home.

QUESTIONS

What is a gift?

Tell about your favorite gift. How did you feel when you got it?

What is God's best Gift to the world?

How would you feel if you were the innkeeper and found out that Jesus was born in your stable?

The innkeeper didn't make any room for Jesus. Do all people make room for Jesus in their hearts and lives? If not, why not?

How do you think Mary felt when she saw her Baby Boy?

Have you ever seen a tiny baby who was just a few days old? What do you think Jesus looked like? Do you think He was different? How?

Do you think Jesus knows how little kids feel? Why?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Wrap up a pretty Christmas gift with a picture of Baby Jesus inside. Let all of the children help to open it. Talk about how God gave His Son Jesus to be born as a gift to us. That is why we have Christmas and give gifts to each other — to celebrate Jesus' birthday.

Prepare a lacing card of Baby Jesus for each of your students (see Patterns). Cut out and punch holes as indicated. Give each child a length of yarn and let them "sew" Baby Jesus' blanket.

Let the children make marshmallow birthday cakes for Jesus. Give each child a large marshmallow and one pretzel stick. Put the pretzel "candle" into the marshmallow "cake." Have the children sing Happy Birthday to Jesus.

Take a doll wrapped in swaddling clothes and tell the nativity story and explain the swaddling clothes.

Cut one 3" x 5" (approx.) piece of felt for each of your students. Attach small pieces of Velcro to opposite sides of the felt so it can be closed around Baby Jesus. Purchase a tiny plastic baby doll for each child to wrap in the swaddling clothes.

REVIEW IDEAS

Talk about gifts God has given to us, using visual aids. Some examples could be: a globe — He gave us a beautiful world to live in; a Bible — He gave us the Bible to show us the way to Heaven; a picture of Baby Jesus — He sent His Son to be our Savior. Explain that this was God's greatest Gift.

Bring hay or straw and make a small manger. Have a small baby doll wrapped in cloth and ready to place in the hay. Tell about Joseph and Mary's journey and Jesus' first bed and how He was clothed. Show them what swaddling clothes are.

Have nine various Christmas pictures mounted on cardboard. On the back of each, write the letter the picture stands for. Talk about the picture to the children and have them guess what letter it stands for, then turn it over and put it up on the bulletin board. Go through all in scrambled order, then tell them to guess what it spells. Below are some ideas that can be used:

C — Christ Child
H — Heaven
R — Jesus (Redeemer)
I — Inn
S — Shepherds
T — Road to Bethlehem (travel)
M — Manger
A — Angels
S — Stable

COORDINATING SONGS

"Jesus Is His Name"
"Away in a Manger" — Songs of God and Me
"Oh Come, Little Children"

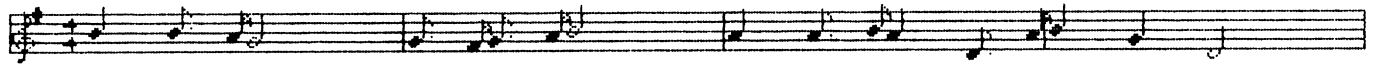
"Oh, Bethlehem" — 50 Songs for Boys and Girls of All Ages — Singspiration
"Baby Jesus" — 50 Songs for Boys and Girls of All Ages — Singspiration

SUPPORT MATERIAL

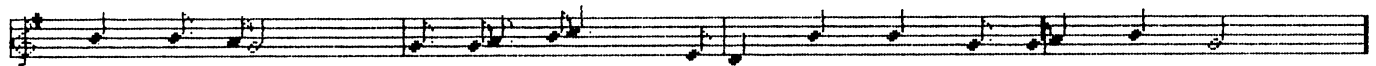
The Birth of Jesus — by Frances Todd Steward and Charles P. Steward III

MEMORY VERSE SONG

♩ = 90



Here - in is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son.



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MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

