

CALVARY CHAPEL OF PHILADELPHIA

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
3RD-5TH GRADE
TEACHER'S PACKET

SUNDAY MORNING

Study 2

The Birth of Jesus



The Birth of Jesus

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To present the birth of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of multiple prophecies from the Old Testament, specifically 2 Samuel 7:12-13.

Key Verses

Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-21—Main Teaching Passage
2 Samuel 7:12-13

Memory Verse - Luke 2:11

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Hook

As a class review last weeks memory verse: John 1:6-7

Take the lollipop provided on the cart and tell the students that you are going to give one of them the candy. Show it to all of the students, and again tell them that you are going to give them the lollipop. Then place the lollipop back on the cart and wait.

It is hard waiting for something that we have been promised. Tell the students that the Israelites had been waiting for God to fulfill a promise that He had made for over a thousand years, and what they were waiting for is way better than a tootsie pop. (At the end of class, give the candy to a student.)

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with a message: she will conceive and bear a son whose name shall be called Jesus. This Jesus will be the Son of the Most High, and He will reign on the throne forever. She was told that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and that she would give birth to the Holy Son of God.

Chapter 2 is the fulfillment of this prophecy. Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem in response to the decree of Caesar. While they were there, Mary gave birth, wrapping her newborn Son in swaddling clothes and laying him in a manger. Not far away in a field where shepherds were watching their sheep, a heavenly host appeared and proclaimed the arrival of the Christ, the Savior that has been long awaited and expected. Their announcement is of particular note. They stated that this is a day of great joy for *all* people. In the city of David, the Savior, Christ the Lord, had been born. The shepherds went to find the baby that the angels spoke of, and told Mary all of these events. Mary treasured these things in her heart, and named the child Jesus, just as Gabriel said.

The interpretation/
exegesis of the passage.
What does this passage
mean? How does this
passage apply to my
life?

LOOK

Over the past few months we have been studying through some of the most important events in the Old Testament. We have seen great acts of faith and learned how God responded to those acts of faith in incredible and miraculous ways. None of those events or supernatural miracles are as important as the one we read about in our story today. In fact, the birth of Jesus Christ is the most important event in all of history up to this point. The really interesting thing is that only a handful of people even knew that it had happened.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she was going to give birth to the Jesus, he was giving her much more than just a prophecy about the future. Mary was being told that her son was going to be the King, and that He would reign forever. You see, in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God had promised David, the King of Israel, that He would raise up a descendant of David who would sit on the throne forever. The problem is that since then, Israel had been defeated in battle by the Babylonians and the Assyrians, who had exiled them out of the land. From that point the Israelites had been waiting for God to fulfill His promise. They were waiting for God to send them a Savior who would come and sit on the throne again. When Gabriel told Mary that she was going to give birth to one who would reign over Israel, He was telling her that Jesus was the Savior that God had promised all those years ago.

LOOK (Continued)

The big problem is that God was not doing things the way people would expect. Jesus birth wasn't announced with trumpets and fireworks. He wasn't born in a palace surrounded by gold and silver. Jesus was born outside with the animals, and the announcement was made only to a few shepherds who were out in their fields.

There is incredible truth to the announcement that the angels gave to the shepherds. This was a moment of great joy, good news for the whole world. The Savior that had been prophesied had come into the world. God was fulfilling the prophecy that He gave to Mary, but He was also fulfilling a much greater prophecy that He had given all people many, many years before.

God was preparing to finally undo problems caused by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Because of their sin, people had been unable to meet with God face to face. They were unable to come into His presence. So instead of us going to God, He came to us. Jesus, God's Son, took on the form of a man, a baby, and entered into our world. He was doing this so that through Him all people in all places could be forgiven and brought into God's family. All of the stories of the Old Testament lead up to this moment. That is why Jesus' birth was the most important event in all history up to this point. There would only be one event more important than Jesus birth, and we will read about that at the end of the book of Luke.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class memorize Luke 2:11

Ask the students, "Why is Christ's birth one of the most important events in all of history? How did Jesus birth change the world?" Spend some time in discussion with them.

Pray: Thank the Lord for taking on flesh and coming into the world. Praise Him for coming to us in order to give us forgiveness from sin.

Parent Question: How did Jesus birth fulfill prophecy?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Luke 2:1-21 by David Guzik

Luke 2 - Jesus' Birth and Boyhood

A. The world Jesus was born into.

1. (1) A decree from Rome reaches the whole Mediterranean world.

And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

a. **It came to pass in those days:** Luke clearly tells us that he recorded *actual history* and *real events*. This is not “once upon a time.” These are not fanciful stories of Zeus and Apollo on Mount Olympus. This is *real*.

b. **A decree went out from Caesar Augustus:** The story of Jesus’ birth began during the reign of one of the most remarkable men of ancient history.

i. He was born with the name Octavian, named after his father. His grandmother was the sister of Julius Caesar, and being a talented young man, Octavian came to the attention of his great uncle. Julius Caesar eventually adopted Octavian as his son, and he was made his official heir in 45 B.C. Within a year Caesar was murdered, and Octavian joined with two others – Mark Antony and Lepidus – in splitting the domination of Rome three ways. For decades, the whole Mediterranean world was filled with wars and violence; now, under the Triumvirate, it became far worse. There were years of bloody, brutal fighting for power and money in Rome and the provinces.

ii. Octavian and Antony soon pushed Lepidus out of the picture. Even though his sister married Antony, for thirteen years Octavian and Antony existed together as rivals, until 31 B.C. For a year, their huge armies assembled and positioned themselves. Antony, with the help of Cleopatra, brought 500 warships, 100,000 foot soldiers, and 12,000 cavalry. Octavian answered with 400 warships, 80,000 infantry and 12,000 horsemen. Octavian had the better strategy and the more mobile ships, and he defeated the combined forces of Antony and Queen Cleopatra of Egypt at the battle of Actium. Now Octavian was the sole ruler of the Roman world, and took the title **Caesar Augustus**.

c. **That all the world:** For decades, the **world** Augustus lived in and Jesus would be born into, the world of the Mediterranean basin, was wrecked by war, destruction, brutality, and immorality.

i. “The lusty peninsula was worn out with twenty years of civil war. Its farms had been neglected, its towns had been sacked or besieged, much of its wealth had been stolen or destroyed. Administration and protection had broken down; robbers made every street unsafe at night; highwaymen roamed the roads, kidnapped travelers, and sold them into slavery. Trade diminished, investment stood still, interest rates soared, property values fell. Morals, which had been loosened by riches and luxury, had not been improved by destitution and chaos, for few conditions are more demoralizing than poverty that comes after wealth. Rome was

full of men who had lost their economic footing and then their moral stability: soldiers who had tasted adventure and had learned to kill; citizens who had seen their savings consumed in the taxes and inflation of war and waited vacuously for some returning tide to life them back to affluence; women dizzy with freedom, multiplying divorces, abortions, and adulteries.” (Durant)

d. **A decree went out from Caesar Augustus:** It seemed that the authority of this man changed the chaos of that time in a dramatic way. He brought three things that turned the tide miraculously. First, he brought peace because he had defeated all his rivals. Second, he brought political and administrative skill, perhaps even brilliance. Third, he brought vast sums of money from Egypt to pay the soldiers and to help the Roman economy.

i. “Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus. After a long period of wars which had racked the Mediterranean and its shores, political unity had been achieved and the Roman Empire had become roughly coterminous with the Mediterranean Basin. Here and there it was soon to spread beyond it. Augustus was the first Emperor. Building on the foundations laid by his uncle, Julius Caesar, he brought peace and under the guise of the chief citizen of a restored republic ruled the realm which for several generations Rome had been building. The internal peace and order which Augustus achieved endured, with occasional interruptions, for about two centuries. Never before had all the shores of the Mediterranean been under one rule and never had they enjoyed such prosperity. The *pax Romana* made for the spread of ideas and religions over the area where it prevailed.” (Latourette)

ii. But as great a man as **Caesar Augustus** was, he was only a man. And the man who brought the answers also took a dear price. He demanded absolute power over the Roman Empire. For hundreds and hundreds of years, Rome prided itself on being a *republic* – a nation governed by laws, not by any man. The idea that no man was above the law, and the Roman Senate and the army and various political leaders lived together in a sometimes difficult arrangement. Now, Octavius would change all that. In 27 B.C. he arranged for the Roman Senate to give him the title *Augustus*, which means “exalted” and “sacred.” Now Rome wasn’t a *republic*, governed by laws; it was an *empire* governed by an *emperor*. The first Emperor of Rome was this same **Caesar Augustus**.

iii. Durant on the title **Augustus**: “Hitherto the word had been applied only to holy objects and places, and to certain creative or augmenting divinities; applied to Octavian it clothed him with a halo of sanctity, and the protection of religion and the gods.”

iv. One of his early titles was *imperator*, the commander in chief of all the armed forces of the state. But he came to make the title mean *emperor*.

v. This says something important about the world Jesus was born into. It was a world hungry for a savior, and a world that was living in the reign of a *political* savior – **Caesar Augustus** – but that wasn’t enough.

vi. “In the century before Christ was born the evidences of disintegration were so palpable in wars, in the passing of the old order, and in moral corruption, that the thoughtful feared early collapse. From this disaster the Mediterranean Basin was saved by Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar...[but] we must note that the principate devised by Augustus did not cure but only temporarily halted the course of the disease from which Graeco-Roman culture was suffering.” (Latourette)

vii. “Augustus and his successors had not solved the basic problems of the Mediterranean world. They had obscured them. For what appeared to be a failure in government they had substituted more government, and government was not the answer.” (Latourette)

2. (2) The governor of the Roman administrative region near Galilee.

This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

a. **This census:** The registration and **census** described wasn't for simple record-keeping or statistics. It was to efficiently and effectively tax everyone in the Roman Empire.

i. According to Leon Morris, Justin Martyr, writing in the middle of the second century, said that in his own day (more than a hundred years after the time of Jesus) you could look up the record of the same **census** Luke mentioned.

b. **First took place:** The idea in the original language is that this was "the first enrollment." Using a census for taxation was common in ancient Rome, so Luke called this one "the first enrollment" to distinguish it from the well-known enrollment in A.D. 6 that he later mentioned in Acts 5:37.

c. **While Quirinius was governing Syria:** This is another historical anchor, securing Luke's account with the reign of known, verifiable historical people.

3. (3) The world responds to the command of Caesar Augustus.

So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

a. **So all went to be registered:** It is an impressive thought; one man, in the ivory palaces of Rome, gave a command – and the whole world responded. It may well be that up to that point there had never been a man with power over more lives than Caesar Augustus.

i. Overall, Caesar Augustus was a good ruler. He expanded the territory of the Roman Empire and he did much for his people. The greatest sorrows of his life came from his home, because he had an out-of-control daughter, no son, and all of his nephews, grandsons, and his favorite stepson died young. But like most every man of such ambition and authority, he thought a lot of himself. It is easy to imagine how invincible he felt when he made a *decree... that all the world should be registered* for taxation. It's pretty heady to think, "I make the command and the whole Roman world has to obey it."

ii. But Augustus wasn't really powerful at all. In John 19:10-11, Jesus confronted another Roman who believed he was powerful. *Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above."* The same principle applied towards Caesar Augustus; whatever power he had was *given* power, given from God.

iii. As he sat in his palace and made his decree, he thought it was the supreme exercise of his will, the ultimate flexing of his muscle. But he was just a tool in God's hand. God had promised that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and that promise would be fulfilled. So how does one get a young couple from Nazareth down to Bethlehem when they might not be inclined to travel? Simple. Just work through the *political* "savior of the world," and use him as a pawn in your plan.

iv. We also see that Augustus, for all his accomplishments, couldn't really be the answer. God allowed Caesar Augustus to rise to unheard of human power for many reasons; in some ways, he was like a Roman John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. At the end of the story, what is important is Jesus. Who does the world know more today – Jesus or Caesar Augustus? Who has a more lasting legacy?

b. **Everyone to his own city:** There is no record in secular history that Augustus decreed this census and commanded it be performed in this manner, but it was consistent with what we do know of him from history. Augustus was known to be very sensitive to the nationalistic feelings of his subjects, and so he commanded them to return to their cities of family origin for the census.

i. Barclay and others cite a government edict from a Roman census commanded in Egypt in the same era, that

each person had to go to their own city for the census enrollment.

ii. In this way, Augustus softened the blow for many. They had to travel, they had to pay taxes – but they would also gather together with family, and see relatives that they perhaps had not seen for a long time.

B. The birth of Jesus.

1. (4-7) Joseph and Mary come to Bethlehem; Jesus is born.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

a. **Joseph also went up from Galilee:** The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem (just outside of Jerusalem) is about 80 miles. This was not a short distance in those days. It was a significant undertaking, costing time and money.

b. **With Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child:** We often think that Mary was close to delivery when they made this journey, but this may not have been the case at all. Joseph may have been anxious to get her out of Nazareth to avoid the pressure of scandal. Luke tells us that it was while they were in Bethlehem, **that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.**

i. According to the Roman law, Mary didn't have to go with Joseph for the tax census; but it made sense for her to go with Joseph, especially because she was in the latter stages of a controversial pregnancy - surely the subject of much gossip in Nazareth.

ii. "It is possible that he used the emperor's order as a means of removing Mary from possible gossip and emotional stress in her own village. He had already accepted her as his wife (Matthew 1:24), but apparently continued in betrothal (Luke 2:5), pledged to be married, till after the birth." (Liefeld)

c. **And she brought forth her firstborn Son:** One of the striking things about Luke's narrative is how simple it is in contrast to how great the events are. In our modern age, small events are often inflated with over-description and presented as more important than they actually are. Yet under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke presented this most amazing event in an understated manner.

d. **She brought forth:** This phrase is filled with wonder. We are not told that anyone assisted Mary in the birth, though someone may have. One way or another, this young woman was completely separated from all her family and supporting friends, who lived back in Nazareth.

i. "The narrative runs as if Mary did these things herself, whence the patristic inference of a painless birth." (Bruce) "That Mary wrapped the child herself points to a lonely birth." (Morris)

ii. When did this happen? The date of December 25 is improbable but not impossible; this date was first popularized in the church the fourth century.

iii. Where did this happen? In A.D. 150, Justin Martyr said that the place Jesus was born was a cave in Bethlehem. Later (330) under Constantine the Great a church was built over the cave, which many believe is still the most probable place where Jesus was born.

e. **Her firstborn son:** This invites the logical conclusion that Mary had other children as well, despite the Ro-

man Catholic dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

f. **Wrapped Him in swaddling cloths:** These are snugly wrapped strips of cloth. More remarkable than the **swaddling cloths** is the fact that He was laid in a **manger** - a feeding trough for animals.

i. Trapp points out that the word translated *swaddling cloths* comes from the ancient Greek word meaning “to tear,” meaning they were torn strips of cloth wrapped around Jesus.

g. **There was no room for them in the inn:** This happened in a public place, with other travelers and residents. “Men were trafficking, and little children playing, and woman gossiping beside the well – and lo! The kingdom of heaven was among them.” (Morrison)

i. “That there was no room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus. The only place where there was room for him was on a cross.” (Barclay)

2. (8) Shepherds watch over their flocks.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

a. **Now there were in the same country shepherds:** Bethlehem’s shepherds were known to care for the temple flock. These men may have also protected and cared for the lambs used in temple sacrifice.

b. **Living out in the fields:** Many have said that a late December date is impossible, because shepherds would not have been out at night at that time of year. Nevertheless, warm winters are not unknown in Judea, which has a climate remarkably similar to Southern California.

3. (9-14) The angelic announcement.

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

a. **An angel of the Lord stood before them:** Interrupting this quiet, dark night was the shining presence of an angel and **the glory of the Lord**. This first angel brought **good tidings** (literally it means that they preached the gospel) to these shepherds, who were regarded as social outcasts.

i. “As a class shepherds had a bad reputation...More regrettable was their habit of confusing ‘mine’ with ‘thine’ as they moved about the country. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law courts.” (Morris)

ii. “The first preacher of the gospel was an angel. God hath now taken this honour from the angels, and put it upon the ministers, who in Scripture are called angels, Revelation 2:1.” (Trapp)

b. **For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior:** They announced the birth of a **Savior**, which was (and is) exactly the need of mankind. We don’t need another advisor, a reformer, or a committee, but a **Savior**.

c. **Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God:** After the single an-

gel's announcement, a whole group of angels appeared. This was a **heavenly host** (a band of soldiers) that proclaimed peace. The world needed then and needs now **peace**.

i. Even the pagans of the first century world sensed this need for peace and a savior. Epictetus, a first century pagan writer, expressed this: "While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy; he cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearn for more than even outward peace."

ii. The contrast between the angelic glory and the humble Jesus must have seemed extreme. God loves to put His glory in unlikely packages so His glory is more clearly displayed (2 Corinthians 4:7).

iii. "Let God have all the glory, so we may have the peace." (Trapp)

4. (15-16) The shepherds come and see the child Jesus.

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

a. **Let us now go:** This shows a genuine urgency. They didn't hesitate at all.

b. **And see this thing that has come to pass:** The angel told them to look for *a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger* (Luke 2:12). It wasn't an unusual *sign* to see a baby *wrapped in swaddling cloths*, but it was strange to see a baby *lying in a manger* - a feeding trough. If the angel had not told them to look for such a specific sign, they would never have believed it.

c. **And found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger:** This was a strange sight, and the specific sign they were told to look for. They no longer heard or saw angels, but they had the abiding encounter with Jesus. Angels may go, but Jesus remains.

i. "This was a revolting sight, and was sufficient of itself to produce an aversion to Christ. For what could be more improbable than to believe that he was the King of the whole people, who was deemed unworthy to be ranked with the lowest of the multitude?" (Calvin)

ii. "It is a lovely thought that the shepherds who looked after the Temple lambs were the first to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (Barclay)

5. (17-20) The shepherds spread the news of Jesus' birth.

Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

a. **They made widely know the saying which was told them concerning this Child:** The combination of the angelic announcement and the sign of a child in a feeding trough inspired the shepherds to tell as many as they could of what they heard and experienced.

b. **All those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds:** The shepherd's good news amazed all who heard it. Even if they didn't really understand it, they recognized that something significant had happened.

i. "God, to show that he respected not persons, revealed this grand mystery to the shepherds and the wise men; the one poor, the other rich; the one learned, the other unlearned; the one Jews, the other Gentiles; the one near, the other far off." (Trapp)

c. **Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart:** Mary's reaction was different than either the shepherds or those who heard them. She calmly took it all in and meditated over it **in her heart**, seeking to understand the deep meaning of it all.

i. "The wonder of the many was a transient emotion (aorist), this recollecting and brooding of Mary was an abiding habit (imperfect)." (Bruce)

ii. Mary had good reason to meditate. What brought her to Bethlehem? A Roman emperor's great decree and perhaps gossiping tongues in Nazareth. God works through all kinds of people and all kinds of events to accomplish His plan.

d. **The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them:** The shepherds had such happiness and praise to God because *the word was fulfilled just as it was told them*.

i. "Their zeal in *glorifying and praising God* is an implied reproof of our indolence, or rather of our ingratitude. If the cradle of Christ had such an effect upon them, as to make them rise from the stable and the manger to heaven, how much more powerful ought the death and resurrection of Christ to be in raising us to God?" (Calvin)