

LESSON 8

THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Marriage and Unfaithfulness

In Jewish culture, a couple that is to be married is first betrothed to each other. This is to show that they are committed to each other even though they have not left their parents' homes to start a new life together.

The betrothal usually lasts six months to a year. It is then followed by a great feast, which we would consider "the wedding." After the wedding, the couple leaves their parents to live together and start their own family.

When Mary conceived her son, she and Joseph were only at this first stage of betrothal—they were committed to each other but were not married nor living together. Hearing that she was pregnant suddenly turned their lives upside down. At the time, a child born out of wedlock was taboo.

Mary's pregnancy before marriage also carried serious consequences. According to Jewish civil law, Joseph had the right to divorce her, and the Jewish authorities could have her stoned to death for doing such an unlawful thing (Deut 22:23-24).

Mary's Pregnancy and God's Plan

When God chose Mary to conceive and give birth to the Savior, He did not need to consult Mary and Joseph for their opinions. At first, Joseph was shocked and even intended to break the marriage. Where did this "illegitimate" child come from? And when the angel informed Mary, she couldn't say, "No, thank you."

God has all the authority and sovereignty. And many times, even though God's plans may not be our plans, He has His good and perfect will behind them. What He wants from us is to accept and obey Him.

Through this difficult situation, we can see how obedient Mary and Joseph really were. Mary was merely baffled and asked, "How can it be?" The angel explained that the almighty power of God would always be with her, and Mary had no other objections. She bravely answered, "Let it be so according to your will."

Mary knew that she was a humble servant and that she only had to simply obey God's instructions (Lk 1:38). She not only obeyed but was willing to do it, expressing her joy in praise to God when she visited her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1:46-55). Mary accepted the task as an honorable thing to do for the Lord.

Joseph initially panicked when he found out, but when God commanded him to take Mary as his wife and raise her child (Mt 1:24-25), he also acted accordingly.

God's plan was not easy for Mary and Joseph. Mary's reputation was on the line—who would have believed her story that her son was conceived by the Holy Spirit? Joseph had to speed up plans to marry

BIBLE TEXT

Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20

BIBLE TRUTH

Jesus is our Savior and God.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize that Jesus is our Savior and God.
2. To be thankful that Jesus was born into this world to take away our sins.
3. To understand that Jesus is our way to salvation.

MEMORY VERSE

"And my spirit has rejoiced
in God my Savior."

(Luke 1:47)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. We thank You for Your wonderful love and mercy. Because You came to earth to save us, we can now go to heaven. Please help us always to remember how much You love us, and help us live each day to please You. Hallelujah! Amen.

her quickly in order to save her from being an unwed mother.

After Joseph married Mary, he did not lay with her until after Jesus was born (Mt 1:25). This was all part of God's wonderful plan. From Joseph and Mary's obedience came the birth of our Savior.

The Stable and the Manger

Palestinian houses were often large singular structures with two levels, one level for people and one for the animals. Family sleeping quarters were usually on the second floor (the upper room).

A small number of their flock was housed inside in one of the ground floor rooms called the stable. This is where they stored animals, tools, and agricultural produce. Food was prepared and possibly consumed on the ground floor, too.

By being inside, the animals were protected from the elements and theft. In addition, they provided body heat for cool nights, milk for the daily meals, and dung for fuel.

Mary and Joseph found an inn when they finally arrived in Bethlehem late at night. (Traditionally, the Greek word *kataluma* is translated as "inn" but it actually means "a place to stay.") Unfortunately, the inn was already full, so the only other option was to stay in the stable with the animals.

Since Mary and Joseph could find no place to lay the baby in the stable, they used a manger. A manger is a wooden or stone rectangular box used for feeding the animals. Excavations in Israel have uncovered numerous installations within domestic structures that probably

represent ancient mangers.

Some mangers are carved, but most are built with stones. Can you imagine being born in a stable and manger where the animals are kept instead of in a hospital? What a lowly place for the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Jesus' Birthday

The Bible does not specify a day or month that Jesus was born, though most Christians celebrate His birthday on December 25th. History convincingly shows that December 25th was popularized as the date for Christmas, not because Christ was born on that day but because it was already popular in pagan religious celebrations as the birthday of the sun god.

A careful analysis of Scripture, however, clearly indicates that December 25th is an unlikely date for Christ's birth.

First, we know that shepherds were in the fields watching their flocks at the time of Jesus' birth (Lk 2:7-8). Shepherds are not usually in the fields during December. And since December is cold and rainy in Judea, it is likely the shepherds would have sought shelter for their flocks at night.

The normal practice was to keep the flocks in the fields from spring to fall. Jesus may have been born in the summer or early fall. Also, winter would likely be an especially difficult time for pregnant Mary to travel the long distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which is a distance of about seventy miles.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Those of your students who had been baptized as infants and exposed to religious education at a young age may have some idea of who Jesus is, but lack a clear understanding. You may use this week's lesson to review their knowledge of Jesus and the meaning of salvation.

As for the new students who haven't been baptized, now would be an excellent time to introduce them to Jesus Christ—who He is, what He did, why He did it, and how He is their Savior.

Before starting the lesson, be sure to explain what a "Savior" is. A savior saves someone from danger. Help your students understand that all of us need to be saved. "Saved from what?" they might ask. We need to be saved from death, because all of us are sinners.

According to God's law, whoever does what is wrong must receive punishment (Rom 6:23). Ask your students if any of them have never done anything wrong. Of course, all of us have sinned, and therefore all of us deserve punishment.

But God loves us so much that He came down to earth to die for us in our place. He took our punishment on the cross so that we wouldn't have to be punished. Instead,

God has prepared for us a special place called heaven. If we believe in Jesus and are washed in His precious blood, we too can be saved.

In today's lesson, your students will learn about the birth of our Lord and Savior. Take this opportunity to share with them God's wonderful love in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ.

VOCABULARY

Holy Spirit: the Spirit of God

savior: someone who saves people from danger; the name "Jesus" means savior

virgin: a woman who has never had relations with a man before

frankincense/myrrh: two kinds of very expensive perfumes; myrrh was also used as a painkiller

engage: to publicly declare that two people are going to get married

Immanuel: "God with us"; the name given to Jesus

governor: a ruler over a city

manger: a feeding trough

REVIEW

Last week, we learned about an important worker of the Lord. We called him a prophet. Do you remember his name? (John the Baptist) What did John the Baptist do? (He preached about God and baptized people who repented.)

Ask the students if they remember John the Baptist's mission (i.e., what God wanted him to do in his life). His mission was to preach and baptize people in order to prepare the way for our Savior, Jesus Christ. He called people to repent and turn away from their wrongdoings.

John the Baptist helped people get started on changing their lives, so that they could accept Jesus and His teachings when Jesus came. Today, we will be learning about the special way our Savior was born.

BIBLE STORY

Mary Is Pregnant

There was a young woman named Mary, who was engaged to a man by the name of Joseph. Does anyone know what "engaged" means? When two people become engaged, they announce to everyone that they are getting married, but they do not hold their wedding yet.

But while Mary and Joseph were engaged and before they were married, do you know what happened? Mary found out that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit! Usually it is wrong for a woman to have a baby without being married first.

To get pregnant before the wedding would be very bad for Joseph and Mary, because people would think that they did not keep holy before they were married. So when Joseph heard that Mary was pregnant, he decided to quietly call off the wedding.

An Angel Appeared to Joseph

What kind of feelings do you think Joseph had during this time? He was probably quite worried and anxious about what to do. He may have been hurt and wondered if Mary had been unfaithful to him.

While Joseph was thinking about how to handle the situation, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit, and you are to marry her. After the baby is born, give Him the name Jesus, because He will

save His people from their sins."

All this happened so that the Lord's promise would come true, just as His prophet said, "A virgin will have a Son, and He will be called Immanuel." This name means "God with us."

Ask the children to repeat the word Immanuel since they may not have heard this word before. Then check their memory by asking, "What does Immanuel mean?" ("God with us.")

When Joseph woke up from his dream, he obeyed the Lord's angel and soon took Mary as his wife. But Joseph did not lay with Mary until the baby was born. After the baby was born, they obediently named Him Jesus.

Going to Bethlehem

Around that time, Emperor Augustus gave orders for everyone's name to be listed in a record book. These records were first made when Quirinius was governor over Syria. A governor is a person who rules over all the people in a city. Because of this order, all the people had to go to their hometowns to have their names listed.

Joseph was a descendent of King David, whose hometown was in Bethlehem. At the time, he and Mary were living in Nazareth, which was about seventy miles away from Bethlehem. Because of this order, Joseph and Mary had to make a trip back to Bethlehem to record their names.

Take out a map. Joseph was living in Nazareth in Galilee at that time [show the students where it is on the map]. Where did he have to go to get his name recorded? [Let the students answer "Bethlehem."] He had to go to Bethlehem in Judea. [Show students where it is on the map.]

This is a very long distance! How do you think they got there? In those days, there were no cars, trains, or airplanes. Joseph and Mary had to walk seventy miles to get there, a journey that would take several days, and Mary was pregnant at the time!

Born in a Manger

Mary was going to have a baby soon, but she went on the journey with Joseph. When they got to Bethlehem, they needed a place to stay. Unfortunately, they found out that the inn was already full and they had nowhere else to go.

They ended up spending the night in the stable that belonged to the innkeeper. A stable is a place where the animals are kept. They probably made beds from hay on the floor to sleep on. That night, Jesus was born.

Do you know where women usually go to give birth? Nowadays, babies are born in clean and safe places, such as hospitals. But Joseph and Mary had nowhere to stay and since there was no crib, they laid baby Jesus in a manger.

Do you know what a manger is used for? A manger is a feeding trough, and it holds the food that feeds the animals. Mary and Joseph found the manger, perhaps lined it with some hay, and made a nice bed for baby Jesus.

Truly, our Savior had a lowly and humble birth! Jesus is God Himself, which means He deserved to be born in the most beautiful golden palace—a place fit for a king. And yet, he was born in an animal-feeding trough!

Angels Announce Jesus' Birth to Shepherds

That night in the fields near Bethlehem, some shepherds were guarding their sheep. Suddenly an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory shone around them.

The shepherds were frightened, but the angels said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everybody joyful. Tonight in King David's hometown, a Savior was born for you! He is Christ the Lord, and this is how you will know who He is: you will find Him dressed in baby clothes, lying in a manger."

Suddenly many other angels joined in praising God. They declared: "Praise God in heaven above! And peace on earth to everyone who is pleasing to God."

The Shepherds Visit Jesus

After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about!" They hurried off. Where do you think they found Mary and Joseph? [Give students time to answer.] That's right! They found Mary

and Joseph in the stable and saw baby Jesus lying in the manger.

When the shepherds saw Jesus, they told His parents what the angel had said about Him. Everybody was surprised, but Mary kept thinking about all this and wondered what it meant.

As the shepherds returned to their sheep, they were praised God and said wonderful things about Him. Why were the shepherds so happy? Because Israel had been waiting for a Savior for so many years and finally the Savior had come! Everything they had seen and heard was just as the angel had said. They had been waiting for God to send someone who would save them.

Everyone has sins and we are not worthy of heaven. But Jesus came to this world to be our Savior, to take away our sins, and to give us the hope of eternal life in heaven. If we truly believe He is our Savior, then we need to obey God's commands and be baptized, pray for the Holy Spirit, and do what the Bible tells us.

The Wise Men Go to King Herod

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Herod was king of Judea. During this time, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews?"

We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

When King Herod heard about this, he was worried. Why do you think King Herod was worried? Because he didn't want anyone else to be king except himself! Herod brought together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

Do you remember the name of the city that Jesus was born in? Right! He was born in a city called Bethlehem. They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem of Judea, just as the prophet wrote: 'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a Leader, who will be like a shepherd for My people Israel.'"

The Wise Men Visit Jesus

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the Child. When you find Him, let me know so I can also go and worship Him."

Do you think King Herod really wanted to worship Jesus? No, he had other plans. He probably wanted to kill Jesus because he was afraid Jesus might be the next king.

The wise men listened to what the king said and went on their way. The star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the Child was. They were really glad to follow the star.

When the men went into the stable and saw the Child with Mary, they knelt down and worshiped Him. They were so joyful and thankful that they could see the Savior

Savior! They wanted to give Jesus something very special. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to Him.

After their visit, when they were about to leave, the

wise men were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went home by another road. God protected Jesus from harm so He could go on to be the Savior for all mankind.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. **When the angel appeared to Joseph, what did he tell Joseph to do?** The angel told Joseph not to worry because Mary conceived a child through the Holy Spirit, so he should still marry her.
2. **Where was Jesus born?** Bethlehem.
3. **When Jesus was born, who appeared to the shepherds?** Angels appeared to the shepherds, telling them the good news that the Savior was born.
4. **Who else went to visit Jesus besides the shepherds?** Wise men from the east.
5. **Why did the wise men want to visit Jesus? What gifts did they give Him?** They wanted to worship Him and give Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
6. **Why did Jesus have to come down to earth? What did He do for us?** He came down to earth to die on the cross for us and to save us.
7. **Why is Jesus called our Savior? What has He saved us from?** Jesus saved us from our sins.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

"And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." (Luke 1:47)

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

Spiritual Teaching

Jesus Christ is God's ONLY provision for man's sin. Through Him, we can know and experience God's love and plan for our life. Three important reasons:

1. He Is the Only Way to God

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).

2. He Died in Our Place

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

3. He Rose From the Dead

"Christ died for our sins...He was buried...He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures...He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred" (1 Cor 15:3-6).

In this lesson, we learned that Jesus is our Savior. The Israelites had been waiting for hundreds of years for a savior. Everyone has sins—the Israelites and also us today. We need to be cleansed of these sins in order to be saved and go to heaven.

In the Old Testament, the high priests offered animals as sacrifices for our sins. But this kind of animal sacrifice is imperfect. When God came to this world as flesh, He became the perfect sacrifice for us when He died on the cross. His death and His blood are what wash away our sins today.

When we get baptized and are washed in His blood, we become pure and holy. If we are holy, then we can have a hope to go to heaven.

But we must continue to stay holy.

Life Application

The key question for us is, "What does all this information about Jesus Christ have to do with our lives?" We have all been baptized and our sins have been washed away by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God loves us and offers a wonderful plan for our lives.

Jesus is our Savior and baptism in His blood makes us pure and holy. In order to stay holy, we must constantly examine ourselves. We need to think, "Have I done

anything today that makes God unhappy?"

Students need to be willing to acknowledge these sins—such as lying to their parents, taking things that don't belong to them, being disrespectful to their parents, using the Lord's name in vain, etc.

Since Jesus is our Savior, we need to know what to do in order to be saved. You can ask your students if they know what they need to do to get to heaven. This should include the important doctrines, such as water baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit.

ACTIVITIES

1**An Angel's Announcement**

Objective: To help the students remember that angels were part of the nativity.

Materials

- Cardboard tubes from toilet paper or wrapping paper
- White paper doilies
- Crayons
- White facial tissue
- Rubber bands
- Glue

Instructions

1. Give each student two cardboard tubes for the shepherd and angel puppets.
2. Draw faces at the top of each tube and glue facial tissue on the bottom to make the clothes.
3. Place one tissue on the top of the shepherd puppet and wrap a rubber band around it to create a shepherd's headpiece.
4. Glue a white paper doily to the back of the angel to create the wings.

2**Praise Jesus' Birth**

Objective: To praise God that the Savior was born.

Instructions

Pick one or more songs to teach the students. Some famous hymns include:

- Away in a Manger
- Angels We Have Heard on High
- Go Tell It on a Mountain
- What Child Is This?

3**Manger Craft**

Objective: To help students understand Jesus' humble birth.

Materials

- Paper plate
- Wet wipes
- Glue
- Pretzel sticks
- Spanish moss
- Shelled peanuts

Instructions

1. Have students take two pretzel sticks and glue them to the paper plate to make an "X" for the legs of the manger.
2. Glue Spanish moss above the pretzel sticks to represent the hay.
3. Have the students glue a shelled peanut so that it rests on the hay to represent the baby Jesus lying in the manger.

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

- | | | |
|--------------|----------|--|
| 1. manger | 5. True | 9. False |
| 2. shepherds | 6. True | 10. He is our only Savior; He is the one |
| 3. star | 7. False | True God; He came to die for our |
| 4. myrrh | 8. True | sins. |

E1 Year 1 Book 4 Lesson 8—The Birth of Our Savior, Jesus Christ

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truth: Jesus is our Savior and God.

Lesson Objectives:

1. To recognize that Jesus is our Savior and God.
2. To be thankful that Jesus was born into this world to take away our sins.
3. To understand that Jesus is our way to salvation.

Bible Reading: Please put a checkmark in the space when you complete the reading each day.**Prayer:** Please put a checkmark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Luke 1:47)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

Fill In the Blank

shepherds myrrh star manger

1. After being unable to find a place to stay, Mary gave birth to Jesus and laid Him in a _____.
2. Angels appeared to the _____ telling them that the Savior had been born.
3. The wise men followed the _____ in the east to find the baby Jesus.
4. The wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and _____ to offer to the baby Jesus.

True or False

5. Mary conceived a baby through the Holy Spirit. _____
6. Jesus was born in Nazareth. _____
7. The shepherds and wise men were sad to see Jesus. _____
8. King Herod wanted to kill Jesus because he didn't want anyone else to be king. _____
9. The wise men went back to King Herod and told him where Jesus was. _____

Life Application

10. Please write about why Jesus' birth is important to you. Name three reasons.
