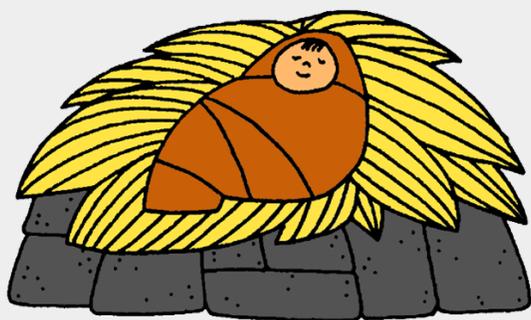


# Birth of Jesus



Scripture Reference: [Luke 1:39-45; 2:1-21](#)

**Suggested Emphasis:** God sent Jesus from heaven to earth in the form of a little baby. We should thank God for His gift to the world.



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



Learning Activities



Other Online Resources

## Story Overview:

Joseph and Mary traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for the census. While they were in Bethlehem, Jesus was born. The angel of the Lord told shepherds of Jesus' birth. The shepherds went and worshiped Jesus.

## Background Study:

(For background read [Luke 1:1-80](#) and [Matthew 1:18-25](#)) Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire (31 B.C. to A.D. 14). He wanted to find out how many people were in the empire. This was probably done in connection with the taxes he wanted to collect. Syria

was north of the Jew's country, but apparently in the Roman organisation, the governor of Syria had something to do with the census in Palestine. This was the first such census he directed. Years later, Quirinius of Syria disturbed the Jews by coming to conduct a census ([Acts 5:37](#)). Luke says he is not writing about that census, but an earlier one.

“His own town” means the city from which a man's family came. The official family records were kept there, and a man was expected to go there to register. The family records for David's descendants were kept in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was 110 kilometres (70 miles) south of Nazareth.

Mary was about to have a baby, but her child was the Son of God, not the son of Joseph. This fact is very clear in Luke and in [Matthew 1:18-25](#).

Probably the inn was overcrowded because many descendants of David had come to register. Mary and Joseph found a quieter place to camp, a place where animals were kept. The animals' feed box became a crib for Mary's child. The cloths were the usual clothes for a new baby. They wrapped him more tightly than modern babies are wrapped.

There was much pastureland near Bethlehem. Several flocks of sheep might be brought together at night so each shepherd could take his turn at standing watch while the others slept. The watchmen guarded the sheep against wild animals or human thieves. In the dark night the angel suddenly stood close by them, with the light of God's glory shining all around. The angel didn't want to frighten them. He came to bring good news for them and for everybody else.

Christ was the descriptive title given to the Saviour whom Isaiah had promised; it means “Anointed One.” For hundreds of years the Jewish people had been hoping for the Saviour God had promised, and now He had arrived!

The angel knew the shepherds would want to see the Saviour, so he told them how they would know when they had found Him. There may have been other babies wrapped in

cloths in Bethlehem, but probably only one had a manger for his bed. A crowd of angels appeared as suddenly as the first one had come.

The shepherds lost no time in going to see the Saviour. "Spread the word" may be translated "made known thoroughly", and some manuscripts say simply "made known." The shepherds may not have told everybody in Bethlehem, but they told those at the manger what the angel had told them. Those who heard the story the shepherds told must have been puzzled by it. No doubt Mary remembered and thought about these things as long as she lived. For the shepherds it was a night filled with praise to God.

Have you ever thought about the reason for a census? It helps governments make objective judgements about things like roads, taxes, community needs, etc. Have you ever thought about keeping an attendance record of your students? This will be a good reminder to send the child a card or give them a ring to let them know that you missed them. Also, it can help us be objective. We might wonder why a student is misbehaving instead of paying attention to the lesson. If we have a record we might notice that the child has not been there for three Sundays out of the last five. No wonder he is not interested in review games! We can then find other ways to involve the child.



[Previous Lesson](#)



[Next Lesson](#)



[List of all lessons on this website](#)

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[top](#)

## Way to Introduce the Story:

(Make a poster using baby photos from the children and others in the church - both young and old. Be sure to include your own. Some photos of teens of the congregation

would be interesting to the children also.) Let children guess who each of the babies are. Name the Father and Mother of each one mentioned and possibly where they were born. "Today we are going to learn about a very special baby. This is a baby who was sent especially by God. His mother's name was Mary. Can anyone guess who his Father was? This baby was the Son of God. Today we are going to learn about how God sent his own son as a special gift to everyone in the world."

[top](#)

## The Story:

Joseph and Mary were married and lived in the town of Nazareth. God had chosen Mary to be the mother of a very special baby who was the son of God. Joseph was a good man and took care of Mary and her baby.

While Mary was pregnant she went to visit her much older cousin, Elizabeth. When Elizabeth saw Mary she felt the baby inside of her tummy move around. This was a happy day. In the future Mary's baby and Elizabeth's baby would be cousins. They would be Jesus and John the Baptist.

Joseph and Mary lived in a town called Nazareth. The Romans were in charge of the country. One day, the ruler of the country, called Caesar Augustus, sent a letter to Nazareth saying that all the people had to go to the city where their families came from. Every person in the family had to be counted. This was called a census. He wanted to know exactly how many people there were because he wanted everyone to pay taxes.

Joseph and his family had come from a little town called Bethlehem. Bethlehem was a long way from Nazareth. Of course there were no planes or cars back then. People had to walk or ride animals. Because Joseph and Mary wanted to do what the King commanded, they packed up their things. Mary rode a donkey, while Joseph walked beside her. They began their trip to Bethlehem.

When they arrived, they found the roads very crowded with people. They looked and looked for a place to stay, but all the inns were full. It was growing very late. Mary was tired. It was almost time for her baby to be born. Joseph was also tired and needed a place to rest.

God had not forgotten Mary and Joseph. Joseph saw a place kind of like a shed or barn where the animals were kept. He led Mary where it was warm and safe. They were glad to find a quiet place to rest from their long journey.

During the night a wonderful thing happened. Mary had her baby. Mary was so happy. It was a son just as God had promised. He was the Son of God. Joseph and Mary gave him the name of "Jesus".

Joseph looked for a place to put the newborn baby. He found a box full of straw. This was the kind of box that farmers put hay in so the animals could eat from it. It was called a manger. Mary fixed the straw and put a piece of cloth on it. Then she wrapped the baby up tightly and placed Him in the warm straw.

Outside the city, some shepherds were watching over their flocks of sheep in the quiet night. Suddenly, a great light filled all of the sky. They had never seen anything like it before. In the middle of the light they saw an angel. The angel spoke to them. He said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

All of a sudden, there was not just one angel but also many other angels and they were praising God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests!"

When the angels went away, the shepherds left their sheep and hurried into the town of Bethlehem. The angel had said that the baby would be in the town of David. Everyone

knew that another name for the town of David was Bethlehem!

The shepherds found Joseph and Mary and the baby just as the angels had said. They told Mary and Joseph all about the wonderful sight of the angels in the middle of the great light and the wonderful words they said. The shepherds were glad they found this special baby whose birth made even the angels happy.

Of all the gifts that anyone could ever give, the shepherds knew that God's gift was the best. God had given this little baby to the world.

[top](#)

## Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print.](#)

Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

[Click here for an additional slideshow and illustrations for this story.](#)

## Review Questions:

1. Who was the mother of Jesus? Mary
2. Who was Mary's husband? Joseph
3. In what city was Jesus born? Bethlehem

4. Why did Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem? To register for the census
5. What did baby Jesus have for his first cot? A manger
6. To whom did the angels tell the good news of Jesus' birth? Shepherds

[top](#)

## Song Suggestions:

- Sing other appropriate Christmas carols (Go Tell It on the Mountain, Silent Night, etc.)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

## Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

### *Activities:*

- Sing appropriate "Christmas" carols. Compare them to the biblical story.
- For younger children, bring a doll and some hay and blankets and practice putting the baby to bed.
- Nativity sets (the kind you can buy at Christmas) can be good for the children to act out the story.
- Find Nazareth and Bethlehem in a bible atlas. Compare the travel distance to the distance to modern towns in your area. Discuss what it must have been like for a heavily pregnant woman to make the journey.
- Let one of the children retell the story while the other children provide sound effects

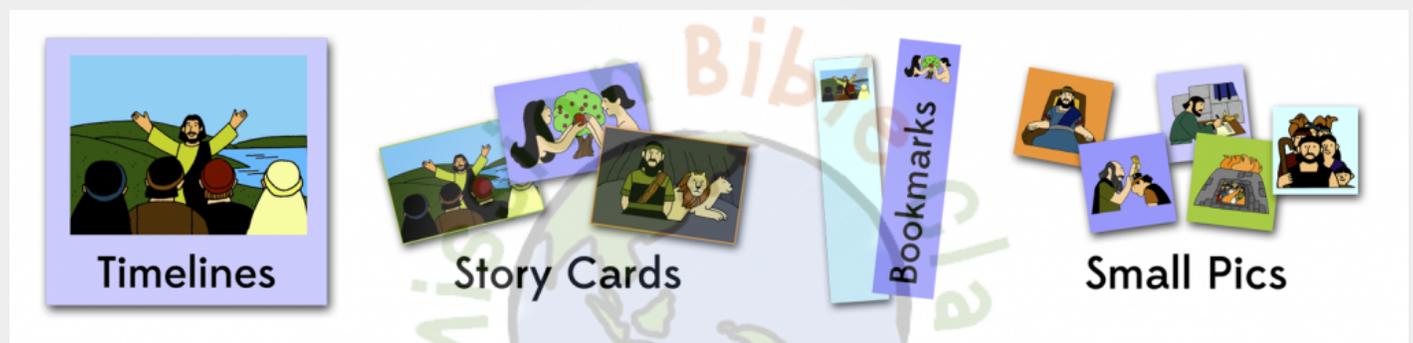
### *Crafts:*

- Use nativity scenes from old Christmas cards to make a card announcing the birth of Jesus.
- [Make a scroll. Click here for instructions.](#) Write this verse on it: "For unto us a child

is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” [Isaiah 9:6-7](#), NIV

- Make any angel craft. Many religious book stores sell angel items.
- Use a hand puppet to tell or review the story from a different point of view. Try telling it from the point of view of a shepherd, angel, one of the animals in the place where Jesus’ family slept, Joseph, Mary, etc.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for “Birth of Jesus” printables to print on A4 size paper](#)

[Click here for “Birth of Jesus” printables to print on Letter size paper \(USA\)](#)

[top](#)

## Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets about the birth of Jesus \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets about the genology of Jesus through Joseph and Mary \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about Gabriel’s visit to both Mary and Joseph \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about Mary’s visit to Elizabeth \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about angels appearing to shepherds \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)

## Curriculum)

- [Colouring page of baby Jesus in manger from christiananswers.net](#)
- [Colouring page of Mary and the angel from christiananswers.net](#)
- [Colouring page of shepherds and angels from christiananswers.net](#)
- [Colouring page of Mary, Jesus in manger and shepherd boy from christiananswers.net](#)
- [Colouring page of animals, manger and baby Jesus from chistiananswers.net](#)
- [Colouring page of Luke 2:11 \(NIV\) from teacherhelp.org](#)
- [Colouring page of Isaiah 9:6 \(NIV\) from teacherhelp.org](#)
- [Simple dot-to-dot of manger from christiananswers.net](#)
- [Craft: Mary and Jesus toilet paper roll figures from sundayschoolcrafts.net](#)
- [Various crafts from sundayschoolcrafts.net](#)
- [Craft: Nativity scene made from craft sticks from whattoexpect.com](#)
- [Craft: Make a camel for a nativity scene \(Printable\) from learncreatelove.com](#)
- [Various activities and puzzles specifically about Mary \(covers more than one story\) from gardenofpraise.com](#)
- [A good selection of both online and printable puzzles, activities and story words covering the birth of Jesus through to his visit to the temple at the age from gardenofpraise.com](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-birth-youth/>  
[top](#)



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