

JESUS' BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Matthew 2:1-2:23; Luke 2:1-2:52

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Mary; Joseph; Jesus

Key-location: Bethlehem

Key-repetitions:

- Angels (Lk 2:8-15, 21; Mt 2:13,19);
- Mary treasured thoughts in her heart (Lk 1:29; 2:19, 51).
- Praise expressions manifested by: the angels (Lk 2:14); the shepherds (Lk 2:20); Simeon (Lk 2:29-33); Anna (Lk 2:38); and the scholars (Mt 2:11).
- Baby Jesus was called Savior (Lk 1:69; 2:11, 30, 34, 38)
- God spoke through dreams: to the scholars (Mt 2:12); to Joseph (Mt 2:13, 20, 22).
- Prophecy fulfilled: the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mk 5:2 & Mt 2:1-6); the Egyptian exile (Hos 11:1 & Mt 2:13-15); murder of little boys (Jer 31:15 & Mt 2:16-18); the Messiah came from Nazareth (Is 11:1 & Mt 2:19-23).

Key-attitudes:

- The shepherds' fear of the angels.
- The gratitude of Simeon and Anna.
- The scholars' adoration of the boy Jesus.
- The insecurity and cruelty of King Herod.

- Joseph and Mary's concern when they did not know the location of the boy Jesus.
- The admiration of all in the Temple for the boy Jesus.

Initial-situation:

After the events recorded in the Old Testament, about four hundred years went by without God's sending a prophet. Then an angel informed Zechariah, Mary and Joseph about the expected Messiah's birth. Zechariah and Elizabeth had a son named John who would prepare the people for the Lord's arrival. A virgin girl named Mary was engaged to marry Joseph when she became pregnant. An angel informed Joseph that the baby had been conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph married Mary but didn't have sex with her until after the birth of the baby.

Initial-problem:

The Roman Emperor ordered a census to be taken throughout the entire Roman empire. So Joseph with his pregnant fiancé left the town of Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem.

Final-situation:

The boy Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Lk 2:52).

BIBLE STORY

The Birth of Jesus

An angel informed Joseph that Mary had conceived a baby by the Holy Spirit.

About that time, Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the entire Roman empire. Everyone went to his ancestral hometown to register.

Joseph was a descendant of King David. Joseph left the Galilean town of Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem in Judea, which was known as David's town. Joseph went there to register with Mary who was pregnant even though Joseph and Mary had not consummated the marriage with sexual intercourse. While in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a feeding trough, because there was no room for them in the hotel (Lk 2:1-7).

There were shepherds camping out in the nearby fields watching over their flocks at night. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared! The glory of the Lord blazed around them. They became terrified! The angel told them, "Don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people worldwide. Today in David's town, a Savior was 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 feeding trough."

Immediately, a huge angelic choir joined the first angel, praising God and singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all men who please him" (Lk 2:8-14).

When the angelic choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see for ourselves this event that the Lord told us about."

They hurried and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the feeding trough. When they had seen him, they told everyone what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds' report were amazed. But Mary kept all these things deep within her heart and kept thinking about them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It was just like the angel had told them (Lk 2:15-20).

When the baby was eight days old, he was circumcised, and he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived (Lk 2:21).

Forty days after giving birth to her firstborn, Mary completed the time for purification required by the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses taught that 40 days after a Jewish woman gave birth to a baby boy, she should be cleansed by a special ceremony (Lev 12:1-4). Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (Lk 2:36-38).

Scholars Visited Boy Jesus

Jesus was born in Bethlehem during the time of King Herod. After Jesus was born, scholars from the east arrived in Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be king of the Jews? We saw a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth and have come to worship him."

King Herod was disturbed when he heard about this new king of the Jews; and all Jerusalem with him. Herod brought together the people's chief priests and teachers of the Law; he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

They replied, "In Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about it, 'But you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; from you will come a leader who will be the shepherd of my people Israel'" (*Quotation from Mic 5:2. Mt 2:1-6*).

Herod had a secret meeting with the scholars and discovered from them the exact time they first saw the star. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go, carefully search for the child. As soon as you find him, send word to me, so that I, too, may go worship him" (Mt 2:7-8).

The scholars went on their way. The star they had seen in the eastern sky reappeared and led them until it stopped over the house where the child was. They entered the house and saw the child with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped the child. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, incense and myrrh. God warned them in a dream not to report back to Herod, so they returned to their country by another route (Mt 2:9-12).

After they left, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and commanded, "Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

Joseph got up while it was still night, took the child and his mother and left for Egypt. They lived in Egypt until Herod's death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet Hosea, "Out of Egypt I called my son" (*Quotation from Hos 11:1. Mt 2:13-15*).

Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the scholars. He was furious and gave orders to kill all little boys two years old and younger in Bethlehem and its vicinity. He determined the age from the information he gained from the scholars (Mt 2:16-18).

Joseph was still in Egypt when Herod died. Then, the Lord's angel appeared to him in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel, for those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

Joseph got up, took the child and his mother and reentered Israel. When he heard that Herod's son was king in Judea, Joseph was afraid to go there. He was warned in a dream to go to the district of Galilee. He went and settled in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled the prophet's words, "He will be called a Nazarene" (*Prophecy from Isa 11:1*. Mt 2:19-23).

Joseph and Mary returned to Galilee to their home town of Nazareth. There the child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him (Lk 2:40).

Twelve-Year-Old Jesus in the Temple

Joseph and Mary returned to Galilee to their home town of Nazareth. There the child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him (Lk 2:40).

Every year his parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. When the Feast was over, his parents left for home. Twelve-year-old Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they journeyed for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem searching for him. After three days, they found him in the Temple courts, seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were amazed. His mother said to him: "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you."

The boy Jesus asked: "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was talking about.

Jesus went back to Nazareth with them and obeyed them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart (Lk 2:41-51).

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Lk 2:52).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How were the angels involved in the events related to the birth of Jesus?
2. How did different people express praise to God during the events related to the birth of Jesus?

3. What prediction and prophecies were fulfilled during the events related to Jesus' birth?
4. What happened to the youth Jesus when he was twelve years old?
5. What does the birth of Jesus mean to you personally?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. From his birth, Jesus was a true man and at the same time he was God. The angel informed Mary that her son would be a man and the Son of God (Lk 1:32). The hands that created the universe became a baby's fingers. By assuming the condition of a man while being God, Jesus accepted the strategy to submit to the limitation of nature imposed on all people without distinction: to be born, to cry, to suck, to relieve his bowels, to laugh, to play, to grow, to study, to receive a mother's affection, to live together with companions, to cheer, to sadden, to eat, to drink, to travel, to tire, to sweat, to anguish; and finally: to live and to die as a man.
2. It is possible to have Bible knowledge without experiencing God's actions. The priests and the teachers of the Law knew that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:5-6); however, they didn't go to see and adore the baby Jesus.
3. Jesus is the Savior. The angels informed the shepherds that a Savior had been born (Lk 2:10-12).
4. Satan and his human agents struggle against God and his will; however, God always wins. Just as God protected the baby Moses from Pharaoh (Ex 2:1-10); likewise, he protected baby Jesus from King Herod (Mt 2:16-18).
5. People of all social classes can adore and serve Jesus. Joseph and Mary were poor. The poor shepherds visited the baby, just as the rich scholars.