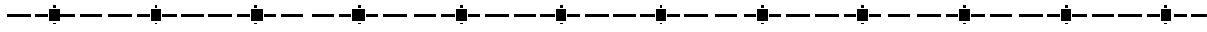


GOD'S BIG PLAN

It's a Boy!

Luke 2:1-40

Supporting Scriptures: Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7; Hosea 11:1; Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-23; Mark 1:1-3; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:5-7



Lesson Goals: To see that God loves us.
To see that God wants a relationship with us.
To see that God made the way for us to have that relationship by sending His Son, Jesus.

Scripture Memory This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11 (CEV)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Tell it as a STORY, not as "He said. . . She said" or read. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson: Let's review what we have learned so far about God's Big Plan. (Review the previous stories that point to the coming of Jesus. Also review the last two lessons, encouraging more and more students to share.)

Since the time of God's promises to His prophets, like Isaiah and Micah, the world had changed a lot. God has announced the coming of His Son. He will be born to Joseph and Mary of Nazareth. Who remembers what group of people are in charge of a very large part of the world when God made this announcement? (The Romans.) They are ruling what is called the Roman Empire. The ruler of the Roman Empire is Caesar Augustus. He was so popular for saving the lives of his citizens that the people began to call him their savior. That's pretty good news for an empire that was in trouble.

But God has even better news! God's story tells us that the beginning of that good news was John preparing people for Jesus. What do we know so far about the birth of Jesus? God told us through His prophets that Jesus would be born in the little, unimportant town of Bethlehem. God would bring Him out of Egypt. He would be the forever King that God promised to King David.

Where were Joseph and Mary from? (Nazareth.) So, how was Jesus going to be born in Bethlehem? Well, God has a plan. Just as God used leaders and nations to punish His people and then to set them free, He can also use them to get people who live in one place to go to another. Let's see how He did it!

READ: Luke 2:1-5 (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)

It had been almost nine months since the angel Gabriel had visited Mary and Joseph. It was almost time for Mary to have her baby, but then came the law from Caesar Augustus. Everyone had to go to the land of their ancestors to register for the emperor. He wanted to count all of his people. King David was Joseph's ancestor, so Joseph and Mary took the trip to Bethlehem, David's town. When they arrived in Bethlehem there were so many people. All of the places to stay were full. There was no room for them.

But it was time! Mary was having her baby. They made themselves comfortable in a stable. They could smell the sweetness of the hay. They could smell the donkeys and sheep. God's Son, David's forever king, was about to be born, not in a marble palace or fancy hotel but in a stable with animals. Mary gave birth

to her first baby. It was a boy! They wrapped him up and they laid Him in the closest thing to a baby bed that they could find - the animal's feeding trough. Joseph named Him "Jesus" just as the angel had told him to. Do you remember that "Jesus" means "God saves?" God's Son had been born at a time when Roman citizens called Caesar Augustus their savior. But God had other plans. This small one lying in the manger was God's salvation for an entire world. What exciting news! Who should be told? When babies are born the news is announced, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!"

Well, outside of the town of Bethlehem, there were shepherds living in the fields, out under the stars. They were taking care of their sheep like they always did. But on this night, something different happened. An angel appeared. The night sky became bright and the shepherds were terrified! And just like angels seem to do, this one comforted the shepherds by saying, "Don't be afraid. I have good news for you. This very day in King David's hometown, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord." Then many more angels joined the first and they sang praises to God. What a birth announcement! When the angels left, the shepherds went running to Bethlehem. They found Mary and Joseph there and baby Jesus in a manger. After the visit, the shepherds left and told everyone about the wonderful things they had seen!

That wasn't the only announcement, though. Jesus' star was seen by some wise men from the east. When they noticed His star, they packed their things and headed off to see the king who had just been born. They followed His star all the way to Bethlehem. When they found Jesus, they gave Him wonderful, amazing gifts like gold, frankincense and myrrh.

But mean King Herod didn't like the news that there was a new king in town. To get away from him and to be safe, God appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up and go down to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you to come back. King Herod is searching for Jesus." So Joseph obeyed. He woke up his small family and they escaped to Egypt. After King Herod died, Joseph had a dream while he was still in Egypt. "Get up. It's time to go back to Israel." And he did. Joseph and Mary went back home to Galilee, to the town of Nazareth. There they lived with Jesus. By being obedient, they fulfilled two of God's promises - "I called My Son from Egypt" and "He will be from Nazareth." God keeps His promises.

Review:

Let's review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

Several days after Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary took him to the temple. There was a man there named Simeon. He was old. He had been waiting for God's Promised One. He took baby Jesus into his arms. He praised God and said "my eyes have seen God's salvation." You see, God had promised Simeon that he would see Jesus before he died. Simeon knew that Jesus was God's salvation for the whole world. There was also a widow at the temple named Anna. When she found out about Jesus, she told everyone. She couldn't help but tell. She knew that Jesus would free them.

But what does Jesus free us from? He frees us from our sin. He saves us from the bad things we do when we turn away from God and choose our own way. Have you ever turned away from your sin toward Jesus? He's waiting for you.

If you have turned to Jesus, what can you do to announce Jesus' birth? Who can you tell? The shepherds ran to tell. Anna told others. That's what happens when we meet Jesus. We want to tell others. Who can you tell today?

Planning for Next Week
Lesson 29 • Jesus Visits the Temple
Luke 2:41-52

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: “Happy Birthday” to Jesus

SHARE: It had been almost nine months since the angel Gabriel had visited Mary and Joseph. It was almost time for Mary to have her baby, but then came the law from Caesar Augustus. Everyone had to go to the land of their ancestors to register for the emperor. He wanted to count all of his people. King David was Joseph’s ancestor, so Joseph and Mary took the trip to Bethlehem, David’s town. When they arrived in Bethlehem there were so many people. All of the places to stay were full. There was no room for them.

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PRAY: Thank you, God, for sending Jesus.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Print each word from the memory verse on construction paper stones or bricks. Take turns building the wall around King David's city, Bethlehem, by placing the bricks or stones in order.
- Make paper angel chains.
- Make word puzzles from words like Bethlehem.
- Make birth announcements. Use the side of your hand to make small "footprints."
- Make a manger for the baby Jesus out of small letter envelopes. Open out the envelope and cut away the front of the envelope, leaving a roof for the stable. Decorate and place the baby inside.
- Sing Christmas carols like "Away in a Manger," "Silent Night," "Happy Birthday, Jesus" and "O Come, Let Us Adore Him."
- Decorate your space as if it were Christmas. You might even want a banner or poster that announces "Christmas in July" or whatever the appropriate month is. If you have a replica of a manger, wrap it up in a box and let one of your students unwrap it at the end of the lesson. Decorate a "Jesse Tree." Jesse Trees are traditionally decorated with pictures that represent stories from the Bible that point to Jesus. Try making decorations of the following: Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:15), Rainbow (Noah) to remember that God keeps His promises, a ram to remember that God sent a ram to save Isaac (and Jesus to save us), etc. Be creative!
- If you haven't already played Bible Promises Bingo, take this opportunity to play a game while reviewing the previous Old Testament people and promises that pointed to Jesus. Prepare Bingo Cards by placing pictures where numbers usually are. The pictures should represent stories from the Old Testament that point to Jesus. Examples include a fruit tree and snake for the first promise, a crown for King David, a ram for Abraham and Isaac, etc.
- For adults or older students: Take another look at the Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled at Jesus' birth; Isaiah 9:1-7; Hosea 11:1; Micah 5:2.