

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-7

MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 2:7

“And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Four signs that read “North,” “South,” “East” and “West” and depending on the size of your class make several slips of paper which say either “North,” “South,” “East” or “West.” Make enough to divide your class into 4 equal groups.

Pictures from a magazine of 1) a palace, 2) a hotel, 3) a barn and 4) an outdoor night scene. Paste the pictures on a piece of black construction paper.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

“Caesar Says” Game

Have all the children in class stand up facing you. Explain that every time you say “Caesar Says” they need to copy an action demonstrated for them by you. If you don't say "Caesar Says" and they still do your command then they have to sit down until the game is over.

Make the actions you model for the children as silly as possible, it will be a reference point for the lesson.

LESSON TIME!

Today we will learn about the most wonderful, glorious, stupendous event that ever happened in all the decades and centuries of the history of the entire world! The Messiah, prophesied in the Old Testament, arrives exactly as God promised. The coming of Jesus who was sent to take away the sins of the world is the most important thing that ever happened in history, and it is the most important thing in our lives as well. **God is in control of all things.**

LUKE 2:1-3

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

This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

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

What was the world like at the time of Jesus' birth? Caesar Augustus was the first Emperor of Rome. He did not want to be called just "dictator" because it was not a grand enough title. He did not want to even be called "king" because the reign of a king is temporary. He wanted to be an emperor because that made him the supreme, number one ruler of the entire known world.

In those days, the world was not governed by the people through voting for their leaders, but instead by one man. The whole world had to submit to him and do as he said.

“Caesar Says” Game

Ask the children to think back to the game “Caesar Says” played at the beginning of class.

Remind them of the silly things they had to do to stay in the game, all because “Caesar Says.”

Explain to them that during the time of Caesar Augustus, people had to do what “Caesar Says” just to stay alive.

Caesar was master of the world, and it was in those days that Jesus was born. It was one of the darkest hours our world has ever known. No one could choose or decide things for themselves; no one could disagree with Caesar. He said that everyone had to be enrolled and counted in order to be taxed; everyone had to obey. It wasn't enough to write a letter to be counted. Each person had to go to the place of his or her family origin.

The “Census” Game

Put up four signs in four different places in the classroom. These signs should say “east,” “west,” “north,” and “south.” Pass out corresponding notes to each of the children in the class.

Have each child go to the place that corresponds with his note. When each child has arrived at his location, appoint one child from each group to count his group and report the number to you.

Explain that this is what Joseph and Mary had to do when they traveled to Bethlehem to be counted in the census.

Caesar thought that he had gained the greatest position, the grandest place, and the highest throne, but he was wrong. Jesus was about to be born; the only one worthy of that place. **God is in control of all things.**

LUKE 2:4-5

And 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.

Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, the city his family was from. Joseph was a descendant of King David. He had to travel from his home in Nazareth all the way to the little town of Bethlehem. Today that trip would only take a couple of hours by car. But in that day it probably took about 5 days because they had to walk.

Where Did You Come From?

Tell the children a little bit about your family heritage and where you are from.

Allow one or two of the children to share their heritage and origin.

Mary traveled with Joseph to Bethlehem. She was betrothed to him and was now considered a part of his family. She was also a descendant of King David. It was very close to the time she would give birth to her baby, but she had to obey the Roman Emperor as well.

God had written at least 650 years before the birth of Jesus that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Caesar Augustus thought he was the supreme ruler of the world, but he was actually being used by God to bring about the fulfillment of prophecy. God intended all along for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, because **God is in control of all things.**

So Mary and Joseph, two seemingly unimportant people, among the multitude of people traveling to be registered, were of the greatest importance to God. Young Mary, carrying in her womb the very Son of God, and Joseph, the man who loved her and assumed the responsibility of caring for her and her unborn baby, together traveled the hard journey to Bethlehem, just as God intended, because **God is in control of all things**. They weren't really marching to the orders of Caesar, they were fulfilling God's eternal plan.

LUKE 2:6

So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.

While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born, just as God had planned because **God is in control of all things**. The Bible tells us that there was no room for them in the inn. Did God leave out a detail? Did He forget to provide a place for Jesus to be born? No, He knew all along. It is interesting that when Jesus arrived there was no room for Him. Hopefully there is room for Him in our hearts.

What is an inn? We may think it was like a little hotel, but it was not. The Greek word used here for "inn" is "kataluma" and it simply means an enclosure; walls a traveler could drive his cattle into for the night with perhaps a small walled area for him to rest. A kataluma had no food, no innkeeper, no provisions, maybe just some water. The Bible tells us that even in this sparse enclosure, there was no room for Jesus to be born.

Mary's time to deliver her baby had come and they simply had to find some place for her. Jesus, the King of kings, was to be born that night in Bethlehem. There was no palace for Him, no hotel, not even room in a lowly kataluma enclosure. But even in the midst of this God was still in control.

Have you ever had things happen that you didn't understand? Maybe Joseph and Mary didn't understand why they couldn't find a place for Jesus to be born. But no doubt they just placed their trust in the Lord to provide.

Palace or Barnyard?

Gather some magazines pictures of 1) a palace, 2) a hotel, 3) a barn and 4) an outdoor night scene. Mount them on a piece of black construction paper.

Hold them up for the children and describe them.

Ask the children where they would like to have been born. Compare that with where Jesus was born.

Jesus was born and laid in a manger. A manger is just a feeding trough; a place where animals ate their food. This manger was probably in some little outside shelter; more lowly than even a kataluma. So Jesus was born...how glorious and wonderful, and yet He passed the courts of kings, passed the plush palaces of earth, passed the inns and even the kataluma enclosures. He was born into this world so low, that it's hard to imagine how any baby could ever be born lower.

The King of the entire universe was born in a lowly stable...why? Perhaps He knew that that kind of birth would not impress or threaten anyone. He wants us to genuinely believe in Him as Savior. He came so that the entire world could come to Him, not just those who are wealthy or influential. He does not try to impress; He is not threatening. God planned the humility and simplicity of His birth, because **God is in control of all things**. God wants us to come to Him freely and openly. The simplicity of His birth helps us come to Him genuinely and honestly.

LUKE 2:7

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.

We read that “she” brought forth her baby. No nurse or doctor was there to help Mary. “She” wrapped him in swaddling cloths....there was no one to do it for her. Luke lets us know that at a time when Mary should have had the tenderest care, she and Joseph were in a dirty stable without friends or family to help them. With her own hands she wrapped her baby in strips of cloth and laid him into a feeding trough.

Help and family did not surround Mary, but she knew the glory of this night. The Messiah had come, and He would make it possible for all to be saved through His free gift. Mary knew that **God is in control of all things** and that even this lowly birth was His plan.

If Mary had sung the little baby Jesus a lullaby, perhaps she sang something like this:

I hold You gently, and gaze into Your eyes;
You deserve a throne room, but we only have the skies.
I sing You a love song, 'cause I know who You are;
You deserve gold and jewels, but we only have the stars.

The wind extols Your majesty, whispering praises as it blows.
You deserve a purple robe, but You're in swaddling clothes.
You deserve a purple robe, but You're in swaddling clothes.

Jesus was Mary's first born son....she had no other son before Him. The word “firstborn” here is more significant than just being the first to arrive. The “firstborn” was first in place, first in order, first in importance. This “firstborn” would show the whole world how to live, and He would one day die to save the world from sin.

Follow the Leader

Have the children form 2 to 4 lines. Direct the first child in line to move his arms, legs, and head in various poses.

Have the children in each line copy whatever the first person in line is doing.

Explain to the children that Jesus is the first person in our line, and that He came to show us what to do.

Jesus is the Son of God. There in that little town of Bethlehem, the Son of God, in human flesh, entered our world just as God planned because **God is in control of all things**. He came to live a perfect life as an example to us and then to die for our sins so we could enjoy Him forever and ever.

The town of Bethlehem did not realize what had happened on that dark night, but Mary knew, Joseph knew, and God knew. It was the most important night in all of history...Jesus, our Savior, was born!

The next time you feel like things are out of control, remember the story of Jesus' birth. He always has everything under control. We might think we understand what God wants us to do, and then things change. It is interesting that perhaps Mary and Joseph had it in their minds how Jesus would be born back at Nazareth, near home. But God's plan was different. There was a prophecy many years earlier that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. So all these things happened for a purpose in Mary and Joseph's life. It was to fulfill prophecy.

To show that God controls all things we can look at the prophecies given in scripture and then later see them fulfilled. There are more than 300 prophecies concerning Jesus' life alone. God controls everything and He loves us and wants us to walk with Him through all things. Let's give our lives to Him and allow Him to do great things through us. **God is in control of all things.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for coming to live among us and for dying to save us from our sins. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.