

Get Ready!

A Savior is Here

By: Terri Tschaenn



Text

Luke 2:1-20

Key Quest Verse

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11, NIV).

Bible Background

Caesar ordered that a census be taken in all the Roman world (Luke 2:1). So Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, the home city of Joseph’s ancestor David, to be counted. While they were there, Jesus was born.

That night, as on almost any other night that time of year, shepherds were watching over their sheep not far from Bethlehem. Some were probably sleeping, while others took their appointed turns watching for wild animals. Shepherds were not thought of very highly at this point in Israel’s history. Most were considered to be thieves. So, few people would expect that the birth of the Savior would be announced to lowly shepherds. Nevertheless, an angel suddenly appeared to them, telling them of Jesus’ birth.

Understandably, the shepherds – some of whom had just been awakened – were terrified. But, the angel’s message soon turned their fright into joy: the promised Messiah had come!

The angel offered an unlikely sign (Luke 2:21) by which the shepherds could confirm what he had said: the baby would be found lying in a manger – a strange place to find the child born the Savior of the world. Suddenly a host of angels appeared to praise God and pronounce peace to men on earth. Following this wonderful sight and sound, the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to see and honor the newborn Savior even though they had sheep to watch. They left what they were doing to honor God with worship of His Son. We should set aside time to honor and worship God during this season of celebration for the birthday of His Son.

Get Ready!**Lesson Quest**

What I want my students to:

Know: Understand that Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of God's promise.

Feel: Excitement about the gift of God's Son.

Do: Find ways that they can also spread the joy of Jesus.

Leader's Devotion

It's not unusual for a small child to think that the most ordinary objects are very special. Lately, our three-year-old daughter has started to have "collections." She'll find a rock she likes as we're going through the parking lot and we have to stop for her to pick it up. "It's for my rock collection," she tells us. In the summer, she liked to pick and collect flowers; then was very disappointed when they wilted and died! In the fall, of course, we have to press between sheets of wax paper some of the most colorful specimens in her huge leaf collection. Unfortunately, her latest collection obsession has to do with bugs! She is fascinated with spiders and their webs, ladybugs, ants, fuzzy caterpillars, and the list goes on and on. And of course, she wants to share each new discovery with her mommy and daddy! To us, some of her collections are a bit annoying (aren't we trying to get the bugs **out** of the house and the leaves **off** of the lawn?) But to her, they are the most priceless treasures. She can see a special beauty in things that are just ordinary to the rest of us.

Two thousand years ago some shepherds were able to find something priceless in an event that most people would find very ordinary – the birth of a child. After the excitement of their visit from the angels, they left their flocks and went to search for the Promised Child. When they found the manger, they saw what others might say was a very ordinary baby wrapped in swaddling cloths. We're not told whether the baby was sleeping, crying, or cooing – it really didn't matter, because the shepherds saw something far beyond ordinary; in this baby in the manger the shepherds saw none other than the promised Savior – the Son of God, just as the angels had told them. The shepherds had heard the promise, had believed the promise, and in believing, saw more than met the ordinary eye. In Jesus they saw the One in whom we have joy and peace.

I encourage you to look at the priceless value you have before you in your students. They are treasures that will continue to pass on the gift you give them through your love, patience, and time. Make sure you get to know them on a personal level, pray for them, spend extra time with them, encourage them – and they will bring you and others great joy.

Get Set!



Option A

Materials: A book of baby names and with their meanings (you can get one from a library or someone who is expecting a baby)

Procedure: **Do any of you have little brothers or sisters?** Let students respond. **How did you and your parents go about selecting his name?** Let students share their experiences. **What we are named is important, especially to us. In Bible times, names were given that represented the character or qualities a baby's parents hoped he would have.** Ask a few students if they know the meaning of their names. Have some of the students look up the meaning of their names in a baby name book. **Does anyone know what Jesus' name means?** (It means Savior.) If students need help in answering this question, have them read Matthew 1:21, the last part of this verse defines Jesus' purpose. **Let's look closer at the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth.**

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Option B

Materials: Copies of a map (a good map to use is on www.bible.ca, copyright 1994 by Abingdon Press "Palestine at the Time of Jesus")

Procedure: Have students look at the map. **When we study about Israel, the city we hear the most about, even today, is Jerusalem.** (Have the students locate this city.) **But the people in our story today lived in a small town in the northern part of Israel.** (Indicate north.) **Where did Mary and Joseph live?** (Nazareth – have class find it on the map). **Who remembers where Mary and Joseph traveled to before Jesus was born?** (Bethlehem – find it on the map.) See if they can use the scale to figure out how many miles it is from Nazareth to Bethlehem (about 60 miles – give them a comparison for a town that is about 60 miles from you.) **Many of you are very familiar with today's story, but let's see if we can find out some new information about the trip that Mary and Joseph had to make from their home in Nazareth.**

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY



Get Set!

Bible Story

Teacher Tip: Provide markers for the students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles.

Our lesson today is about the promise that the Jewish people, God's special chosen ones, had been waiting for over 700 years and was finally coming true.

It's important to remember two things for this lesson. First, God's people knew the Messiah was *coming*. They even knew certain facts about His place of birth and the time He would be born. Second, even though the Jewish people expected the birth of the Messiah, only God knew the exact time. God was actively arranging things to happen so that everything would be in place for His Son to be born. Finally, when the time was just right. God put His plan into action. Many of the things that had to happen were good. These were planned and carried out by God. At the same time, God also showed that He could even use the evil, selfish desires of men for the good of accomplishing His purposes.

Let's look at the last-minute details that made the time right. (Ask a pupil to read Luke 2:1-3.) Caesar Augustus was ruler of the Roman Empire and Israel was a part of that empire. To collect the right amount of taxes, the emperor needed to know how many people were in each part of his empire – that is called a census. The Jews kept family records at the family's original hometown and each person of the family had to go there to register. Do any of you know where your great-grandfather was born? If you were a Jewish family at that time, your family records would keep track of that information and that is where you would have to go to be counted in a census. Little did Caesar know that God would use his arrogant, greedy act to bring about the right time for Christ's birth. How wonderful and mysterious are God's ways!

Have a student read Luke 2:4-5. **Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, but they had to go to Bethlehem, the ancient home of their families.** Find Bethlehem on the map. Note to the students that it would have been about a three-days' walk over rough terrain for Joseph and Mary. **Though it was almost time for her baby to be born, Mary, along with Joseph, traveled to Bethlehem because they were both of the house and line of David.** Bethlehem, a poor and insignificant town was to be made great through the birth of God's promised Messiah. Remember our study of Micah's prophecy about Bethlehem in Micah 5:2? The class should look this up if it wasn't covered before.

Have a student read Luke 2:6-7. **That was the night when all the wonderful promises which God had given about the coming of a Savior were fulfilled.** God had all the pieces of His great puzzle together. When the right time came, His Son was born on earth. The Son of God was born in a stable. He was given a manger bed. He was wrapped in simple, swaddling clothes like any other poor Roman Jew! How much God loved us to allow His Son to be born like this!

Whatever glory Christ did not receive because of the circumstances of His birth, God quickly made up for. Read Luke 2:8-14 to see where and how the birth announcement was given. **The angel of the Lord announced Christ's birth to shepherds on a hillside.** God showed His special favor for the poor, simple, average people by sending His angel to them first. Christ's birth was first announced under a night sky overlooking Bethlehem. How do you think the shepherds felt when they heard and saw the angels? Discuss. The message was good news for everyone, and after the announcement a whole crowd of angels filled the night sky with praise to God for His promise came true. Part of their praise included the message that God had brought peace on earth to mankind. What a unique way to announce a birth!

Go!**On the spot report-****ACTING/DRAMA****Materials:** Bibles**Quest Connection**

The events in this text were exciting and very emotional for everyone involved. All that God had promised the people of Israel was coming true with the birth of His Son. How would you have felt if you had been able to witness this life-changing event? Encourage them to imagine they were part of this story and think about how they would have reacted.

Procedure: Read today's text together (Luke 2:1-20). **Today we're going to imagine that we've stepped back in time to the day Jesus was born. It will be your responsibility to find out what happened, based on the reports of different people who were present.** Assign volunteers to interview one of the following groups of people: the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, the people the shepherds told about Jesus, the angels. Let students prepare questions and then interview each other. Among other things, their reports should convey how the people involved felt about what they had experienced, what their reaction was with Christ's birth, and how it impacted their lives. Allow each group to present its interview.

Close

Luke 2:20 says, "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told." Like the shepherds, we should be excited. Jesus came for you and me just as He did for the shepherds. Also, like the shepherds, we can tell the news of Jesus to others. We should still be glorifying and praising God today for the wonderful gift of His Son. How can we show our joy and happiness for the birth of Jesus? Discuss things the class can do individually or as a class.

Go!**A Search for the Manger****RELAY**

Materials: Nine copies of the manger pattern, Bibles

Quest Connection

Luke 2:11 says that the angel gave the shepherds a sign so they would know how to find the Christ child. As they searched Bethlehem for the baby, they knew to look for a child wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. To help you learn the Key Quest Verse, you need to find the mangers that are hidden around the room.

Procedure: Before class, write one phrase of the Key Quest Verse as follows on each manger and then hide them around the room: Today/in the town/of David/a Savior/has been born/to you;/he is/Christ the Lord./ Luke 2:11. If you have a large class, make a different colored set of the baskets for each group of three or four students.

Instruct the students to find the mangers and then group themselves together according to the color of the baskets. Challenge them to line up the verse in the correct order and then check their work by looking up the reference in their Bibles.

Close

This message was not just for the shepherds, but is also a message to us that Jesus was born to be our Savior. Let's repeat the verse together.

Go!**Group juggling****GAME**

Materials: 4 beanbags or soft balls (or more if they're really good at this)

Quest Connection

When time runs out, say, **That was a little hectic, wasn't it? And it was easy to be distracted by all the things flying around the circle. How is that like your life?** Allow for comments, then say, **sometimes we lose focus on what's important when we get so distracted by all of the activities going on around us. During this busy Christmas season (and all through the year) it's important to take the time to worship God and His Son Jesus. If we keep our focus on God's ways, the craziness of life will make much more sense.**

Procedure: Have everyone stand in a circle. Start with one beanbag and toss it to someone else. That person will throw it to another, and so on until everyone has caught the object successfully and it is thrown back to you. Tell students to remember who threw them the object, and to whom they threw it, so the sequence will be the same every time. Have one or two practice rounds, and then move the game along by throwing another object just after you've thrown the first. Students will be tossing two items around the circle in the same sequence. After they've done that successfully, add another item. Continue adding items until you are throwing at least four things around the circle without dropping anything. Try to increase your speed with every round.

Close

Encourage your students to set time aside for Bible study and prayer.

Go!**Jesus, Name Above All Names****ARTS AND CRAFTS**

Materials: Construction paper or colored copy paper, scissors, markers or crayons, Bibles

Quest Connection

When students are finished, let each person share the name they were assigned and explain the symbol they created. Then say, **Matthew 1:21 tells us that an angel of the Lord told Joseph that the child Mary would have would be named Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins – and He did become our savior when He died for us on the cross. What are some of the things that Jesus did in His lifetime that would cause us to use these other ‘names’ for Him?** For example: He was compared to a good shepherd because He took care of His flock (the people).

Procedure: Assign each student one of the twelve scriptures listed below. Have them look up the verse and locate in it another name for Jesus. Have them use the materials provided to make a symbol that represents the name, then write the actual name on the symbol. (For example, Jesus is referred to as “the light of the world” in John 8:12. The student with that verse could cut out the shape of a globe and the shape of a light bulb, and then connect the two shapes.) Students may need help locating the name in each verse. Let them be creative and have fun with this activity.

Matthew 2:2 (king); John 1:29 (lamb); John 3:2 (teacher); John 6:35 (bread of life); John 8:12 (light of the world); John 10:9 (gate); John 10:11 (good shepherd); John 15:1 (true vine); Luke 4:23 (physician); Revelation 22:16 (star); Matthew 13:55 (carpenter’s son); Revelation 5:5 (lion of the tribe of Judah)

Close

Close with prayer thanking God for everything that His gift of Jesus has brought us.

Go!**Video****VIDEO**

Materials: The video “The Birth of Jesus” from the series *The Visual Bible for Kids*. This may be for rent at your local Christian bookstore or video store, but if you are not able to find it to rent it is well worth the price to purchase it (approx. \$15). If it is not on the shelf ask for it to be ordered – ISBN #0-8499-8671-0

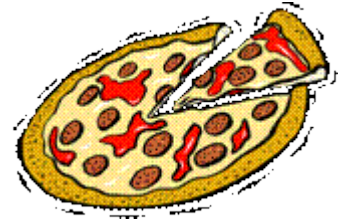
Quest Connection

After watching the video, allow time for discussion about how the character Jason seemed to feel embarrassed about sharing the Christmas Story with his friend Sam. **Do you sometimes feel that way around friends that you know aren’t Christians?** (Allow time for response.) **What would have happened if mom would have let them go to the mall instead of staying to hear the story?** (Sam wouldn’t have heard about the birth of Jesus and understood that it was real instead of make-believe.) **At the beginning of the movie Sam thought that the story of Jesus’ birth was pretend like a fairy tale; what made him change his mind?** (Hearing the facts told word-for-word from the Bible, understanding that real people witnessed it and wrote it down, seeing that others accepted it as fact and had studied it directly from the Bible.) **What are some ways that you can share the true meaning of Christmas with some of your non-church friends?** (Invite them to church would be a good response – see what else they can think of and encourage them to follow through.)

Procedure: This is a 30-minute video with an excellent retelling of the Christmas Story in a family setting. If you choose to use this after teaching the lesson, it will sum up and re-emphasize everything you have been teaching while bringing the story to life for your students. The video is hosted by Kirk Cameron as he retells the birth of Jesus using the word-for-word NIV text from both Luke and Matthew.

Close

Sometimes we get so used to hearing the story of Christ’s birth, that we forget there are still people around us that don’t understand what Christmas is all about. Take time to pray for your students that they might be able to share this story and also for their non-Christian friends that they might be willing to accept it.

Go!**Pizza Map****COOKING:** Please check for food allergies!

Materials: One pizza crust mix for every 3-4 students, 8 ounces of pizza sauce, 8 ounces of grated cheese per pizza, a variety of pizza toppings such as: black olives, green peppers, onions, mushrooms, pepperoni, sausage, or any other desired toppings, cookie sheets, shortening or vegetable spray, and a little flour

Provide maps of Israel or other countries and states that your class would enjoy studying. (A good map to use is on www.bible.ca, copyright 194 by Abingdon Press “Palestine at the Time of Jesus.”)

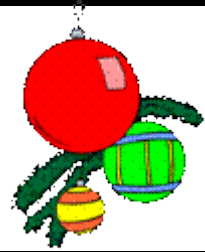
Quest Connection

This is a fun way of studying and learning from maps to get your students familiar with the shape, size, and landmarks of another country. Many students may be surprised at how small the country of Israel is compared to the United States, yet how important it is to world events.

Procedure: Following instructions on the package, make the crust. After mixing and letting it rest as instructed, put dough on a floured plate. Fold and press the dough a couple of times until it is elastic but not sticky. Put the dough on a greased cookie sheet and shape the dough to look like the shape of Israel. Cover with tomato sauce and cheese and then use the toppings to mark the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, the Jordan River, mountain ranges, and important cities from the story like Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. Have the students study a map and put on any other important landmarks that they would recognize from other Bible studies. Also, as a comparison to size, it would be fun to let some of the students also make a map of your home state or even of the United States or other country. This project could be as simple or detailed as you and the students would like to make it.

Close

Enjoy a snack with your students! While you are eating, review the landmarks you discussed in class.

Go!**Tree ornaments****ARTS AND CRAFTS**

This would probably be best to be done in two separate classes. The first to mix and make the ornaments, the second to paint and finish.

Materials: Flour, salt, water, oil, measuring cups and spoons, metal spatula, wax paper, toothpicks, cookie cutters, plastic knives, rolling pin, paints, brushes, clear acrylic spray

Recipe:

2 cups flour

1 cup salt

1 cup water

1 teaspoon oil

(one batch makes 20-30 medium ornaments)

Quest Connection

Besides being a fun craft activity, this could be a way of sharing their joy of Christmas with others. Have the students make several ornaments and give them out as presents to others with a personalized card. (I've had very creative students make a full manger scene.)

Procedure: Put all of the ingredients into a bowl and let the kids mix with their hands (or if class time is limited, have the dough premixed and in a covered bowl). Squeeze it together to make a ball of dough. (If it seems too sticky, work in a little extra flour.) Have the students work on individual pieces of wax paper for ease in moving the finished product. Roll to ¼ inch thick and cut out shapes with a cookie cutter or a plastic knife or make your own designs by making a base and adding pieces of dough dampened with water. Set the finished ornaments on a cookie sheet and make a hole with a toothpick so that you can hang them up. You may allow them to air dry for several days, or bake for 20 minutes in 350 degree oven. Cool on a wire rack before painting. Poster paints work well and are easy for clean up. To protect and give a shiny coat, spray with acrylic finish after the paint dries.

Close

Hands-on activities often allow teachers a way to reinforce the story. While they work, review the lesson and memory verse, or just take the time to get to know your students. Celebrate their creativity!

Go!

**Christmas Around the World****RESEARCH**

Materials: A little imagination!

Quest Connection

All around the world, on Christmas Day, Christians celebrate the birthday of Jesus. Just as we do in the United States, special services are held, carols are sung, and presents are given. It is a day for rejoicing. But many countries also have their own special traditions, some of them are hundreds of years old.

Procedure: Encourage the students to do a little research to find out how Christmas is celebrated in other places. It's easy to get books from the library on this topic, do a search on the Internet, or ask a friend who's been in another country. Then decide what you can do with this information. Perhaps they could share a game they learned, a tradition or song, a special treat or food they serve in another country, etc. Use your imagination to make this a fun event each student will remember for a long time.

Another fun idea with this theme:

Organize a progressive dinner party with three or more families (or classes) within the church. Each family makes one course of a meal: appetizer, soup, salad, main dish, and dessert. The class travels together to the first house (or classroom) for the first course then travels to each house until the meal is finished. It is fun to expand on a theme like "Christmas Around the World" by having everyone dress up, bring a piece of historical information, sing a song in a different language, share a custom from another country, prepare some sort of entertainment, etc.

Here are some samples of traditions in other countries:

POLAND: Christmas Eve is called the Festival of the Star. People go without food all day, preparing for the feast that begins as soon as the first star appears. At this meal a place is always left for the Christ Child. When everyone has finished eating, candles on the tree are lit and carols sung. Boys dressed as the three wise men then come in bringing presents.

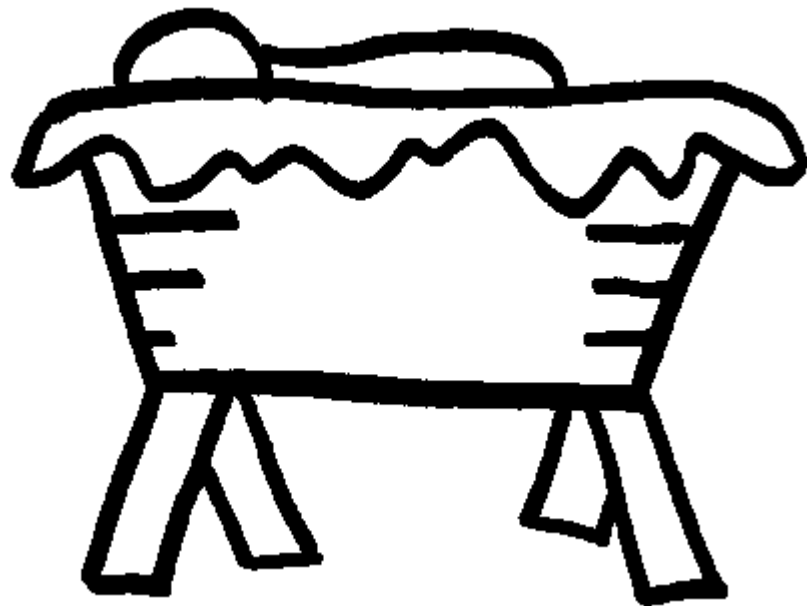
DENMARK: Christmas Eve is the day everyone looks forward to. Families go to church in the afternoon. Then, Dad has the fun of decorating the Christmas tree with white ornaments and candles. No one else is allowed to see it until after the meal, when it's also time to open the presents.

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND: For people in Australia and New Zealand Christmas comes in the middle of summer. Many families still have the traditional roast turkey at midday. But they also go to the beach for a swim and maybe a picnic. Australian carols talk about sun, not snow.

Close

Thank God for Christians in other parts of the world and ask for protection and encouragement as they celebrate the birth of His Son.

Resource Page



WOW! NOW THAT'S GOOD NEWS!

Read about Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20. Then, use the clues to unscramble the words. Write the circled letters in order in the spaces at the bottom of the page.

Verse 1. Caesar _____ was Emperor of Rome.

GSSTUAUU **A** _____

Verse 4. _____ is called the town of David.

LTHHEMEEB _____ **A**

Verse 7. Mary wrapped baby Jesus in cloths and placed Him in a _____.

AGMNRE _____ **A** _____

Verse 4. Joseph and Mary lived in the town of _____.

RTEHZAAN _____ **A** _____

Verse 10. The _____ said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

GLNEA _____ **A** _____

Verse 16. _____ hurried to Bethlehem to find Mary, Joseph, and the baby.

PEDRSHHSE _____ **A** _____

Unscramble the circled letters to fill in the blanks below.

Verse 18. And all who heard it were _____ at what the shepherds said to them.

Angelic Praise

The angel that announced Jesus' birth was joined by a great company of the heavenly host. Decode the message below to discover what they said as they praised God for the gift of His Son.

A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L
a	β	χ	δ	X	Δ	E	Ø	y	ψ

M	N	O	P	R	S	T	U	V	W	Y
λ	~	v	σ	τ	υ	ω	2	=	;	:

“

Δ ψ υ τ : ω υ Δ υ χ Ø ~

ω E δ E Ø Δ E δ υ ω a ~ χ υ ~

δ a τ ω E σ δ a β δ ω υ λ δ ~


υ ~ ; E υ λ E Ø υ X a = υ τ

τ δ υ ω υ .” ψ 2 y δ 2:14


Now make your own message of praise and exchange it with a friend.

Who Gets The Best Gifts?


God is the best gift giver of all! Do you know that with the birth of Jesus many gifts were given to us! Look up the Bible Verses below to list the gifts God gave us through His precious Son!



Romans 6:23




Acts 2:38




1 Peter 1:3


We Do!



1 Corinthians
15:57



Acts 13:38



1 Peter 5:4

“For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).



Journal Page



Sing:

*"Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her king.
Let every heart prepare him room.
Let heaven and nature sing, let heaven and nature sing,
Let heaven, let heaven, and nature sing."*

This popular hymn expresses the joy we feel about Jesus' birth. It is important for us to learn how to express that joy throughout the year. What greater joy could we possibly have than the knowledge that God keeps His promises, and because He does, someday we can live forever with Him in His kingdom!



Get creative and write a song to express your joy for God's love for us.



