

Purpose

- Review the birth of Jesus
- Learn about Jesus and his parents flight from Bethlehem.
- Learn about Jesus' visit to the temple
- Pick up the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus when John baptizes Jesus.

Materials

- Bibles

Background Information**JESUS' BIRTH**

Let's review the birth of Jesus. Elizabeth and Mary were related so when Mary was told she was going to have God's son she rushed to Elizabeth to share the news. Elizabeth knew that her son would pave the way for Jesus and Mary knew that her son would be God's son the promised one.

Joseph, after the angels visit, decided to go ahead and marry Mary even through she was already pregnant. This was not typical of reactions of that day. Joseph and Mary lived in Jerusalem but when it was time for the baby Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem to be included in the census. Because everyone was traveling no rooms were available. They settled in a stable and Jesus was born that night.

The shepherds were visited by angels and told about Jesus' birth so they hurried into Bethlehem and searched until they found the newborn baby and their parents. Seven days later Mary and Joseph took Jesus into the temple where he was presented and circumcised. Thirty-three days later they returned to the temple to offer a sacrifice. Mary, Joseph and Jesus returned to Nazareth.

Although the wise men started their journey while the holy family was in Jerusalem they did not locate Mary, Joseph and Jesus until after Jesus was born and they were all in Nazareth. The wise men had asked King Herod to help them locate the child, but they did not return to the King and report what they found. Herod had asked them to report to him, but an

angel warned the wise men that Herod had questionable motives so that they should return home a different way.

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

After the wise men (Magi) left an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told Joseph to take Jesus and Mary and flee to Egypt. They were to stay in Egypt until God sent word to them that it was safe to leave. They were warned that King Herod was determined to destroy Jesus because he feared that he would become king and take all his power. Joseph did as the angel instructed him until he heard that King Herod had died. When King Herod figured it out that the wise men had betrayed him he became angry. King Herod ordered that all male children under the age of 2 years of age be put to death. When King Herod died one year later God appeared to Joseph in a dream and told Joseph to take his family and return to the land of Israel. Joseph did as God instructed. He is not sure but Matthew and Mark indicate that Joseph took his family to Nazareth to raise Jesus. When King Herod died his oldest son, Archelaus, was given the territory of Judea and Samaria. Joseph was not sure that Archelaus would not continue to pursue Jesus. Remember that Jesus was often referred to as Jesus of Nazareth so we can assume that Jesus grew up in Nazareth. We know very little about Jesus until he visits the temple. We are only told that the child grew and became strong of spirit.

JESUS VISITS THE TEMPLE

It was customary for a Jewish boy to be considered a man and to held accountable to the Laws as soon as he had his bar mitzvah at age 13. Parents usually took their son to the temple one or two years before he turned 13. Jesus' visit to the temple was considered normal, but what was not normal was the depth of Jesus' understanding of the law and God.

Each year one of the Jewish holidays that was celebrated was the Feast of the Passover. At this time they normally visited the temple. When Jesus was 12 his parents took him with them when they visited the temple. After they had finished their time at the temple Mary and Joseph started home. After traveling for a whole day Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus was not with them. At first this seems strange that they did not miss him for a whole day. However it was very common for families to travel together. Jesus' parents could easily have assumed that he was traveling with cousins.

When they could not find Jesus they returned to the temple and started searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers. He was not only listening to them and asking questions, Jesus was also giving them answers to their questions. All of the leaders and his parents were shocked at how much he understood. When Mary and Joseph questioned him and probably scolded

him for not coming with them, Jesus answered by asking why they were hunting him. He was shocked that they did not know he would be about His Father's business.

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

Remember that John the Baptist is only 6 months older than Jesus but he starts his ministry several years before Jesus does. We believe that he was 31 when he started preaching. John left the desert and traveled to Judea. Many said John looked like Elijah because he wore clothes of camel's hair (that would make them very rough). He often wore a leather belt around his waist. John's diet consisted of locusts and wild honey. John was often seen down the Jordan River baptizing those who believed in Jesus. Many times the Pharisees and the Sadducees would approach him and John would preach to them. John was gentle and approachable like Jesus. John spoke exactly what was on his mind and was very blunt and could even be unkind.

John preached about the one who would follow him and he (Jesus) was coming to save them from their sins. John told that he baptized with water, but the one to come would baptize with the Holy Spirit. John also felt that he was not worthy to even touch the feet of the man to come. John frequently denied that he was a prophet. It is interesting that John the Baptist and Jesus were related but did not seem to know each other. It is easy to believe that they were raised in different regions of the country and had not contact with each other.

JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS

As John was baptizing people at the river Jordan, Jesus approached John and asked to be baptized. John tried to refuse saying that Jesus should baptize him, but Jesus insisted. Jesus explained to John that he was to be baptized as an example. Jesus had not sin, but he was to be our example. It also fulfilled the prophecy that Jesus be baptized by one who would come and pave the path for him.

As Jesus came out of the water the heavens were open and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven spoke saying "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Mark 1:11).

Procedure

- Do 16-1 and 16-2. Have fun with them.
- Read 16-3 and put it in your folder for future reference.