

06 – The Birth of Jesus **Luke 2:1 - 20**

Step 1: Link (back to)

We are reading the story of Jesus in the book of Luke. First we read about two special birth announcements. The angel - ? (... *Gabriel*) went first to Zechariah to announce the birth of - ? (... *John*) Then the angel Gabriel went to the virgin Mary to announce the birth of - ? (... *Jesus*)

John's parents were very old, and Jesus' parents were very young. Mary was not yet married when Gabriel came to her. She was probably a young teenager. Joseph might have been a little older. The Bible doesn't tell us. These are guesses made from studying history.

Step 2: Background (shepherds)

I have heard people talk about "3K" jobs. What does "3K" mean? (... *let them tell you. Dirty, disagreeable and dangerous*) There was a 3K job in Bible times, too. Can you imagine what job it was? (... *shepherds*) Being a shepherd was a very unpopular job. It was dirty and dangerous. Shepherds had a very low position in society. Being a shepherd was a family business. Usually the young teenage boys had to watch the sheep at night.

Step 3: Key Questions

- **Where was Jesus born?** (*v.5-7: Bethlehem*)
- **Who were the first visitors?** (*v.15,16: shepherds*)

Step 4: Read **Luke 2:1 - 20**

Step 5: Answer the questions

Step 6: Talk about it

This is the Christmas story. Who are the characters in the Christmas story? (... *prompt if needed: if we were going to do a play, what actors would we need? . . . Mary, Joseph, baby, angels, shepherds, innkeepers, maybe a Roman soldier. The purpose is to help them visualize the story, flesh it out in their minds*)

Mary, Joseph and the shepherds were all very young people, teenagers.

Jesus' parents were both from Nazareth. (*show map*) Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem? (... *v.1-4: because the Romans ordered people to go to their hometowns to be listed. Some trans. say "census."*)

Over 400 years ago a prophecy in the Old Testament told that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Let's find that prophecy.

Read Micah 5:2 (. . . *s.o. reads. Be careful, sometimes the numbers are off by 1 in the Japanese Bibles . . .*)

Prophecy is very difficult to understand. It would be nice if the prophecy said "Jesus will be born in Bethlehem." But it doesn't. Let's see what it does say. What does it say about Bethlehem? (. . . *it's little*) Who will come out of Bethlehem? (. . . *a ruler*) What does it say about the ruler's family/origins? (. . . *from ancient times*) Teachers: use simple questions that fit your translation to draw these truths out.

Is this *really* a prophecy about Jesus? Let's look at another passage. Let's look at the book of Matthew. Matthew is the first book of the New Testament. Matthew tells another part of the Christmas story.

Messiah is the Hebrew word for "Christ." In this passage King Herod is looking for the Messiah – he's looking for the baby Christ.

Read Matthew 2:4-8. (*s.o. reads*)

This prophecy is almost exactly like the prophecy we read in Micah 5:2. Remember that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek. Then they were translated into English and Japanese. We don't expect the words to be exactly the same.

The Bible teachers at the time of Jesus understood that Micah 5:2 was a prophecy telling that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Is this a coincidence? Or was Jesus born in Bethlehem because God was controlling history to make prophecy come true?

Do you have any questions or comments?

Teachers' Note:

"coincidence" in Japanese is "*guu-zen*"