



# THE BIRTH OF JESUS

## Colour me!



### Luke 2:1-16

About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to go to their own home town to be listed. So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's home town, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and travelled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her firstborn son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's home town a Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said: "Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God." After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about." They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay.

## Commentary

Luke gives us a detailed account of exactly when Jesus was born. The references to the emperor, the census and the governor are important because Luke wants us to know that this really happened and that it is not some made-up story. He is telling his readers that Jesus' coming into the world is something you can find in the history books and was something that has changed the world for ever. This is what the angels mean when they surprise the poor shepherds on the hillside with their singing.

Their song speaks of peace with God which is now possible for anyone, whether they are carpenters, shepherds or emperors. But all this has to start with a baby lying on a bed of hay. The long journey must have been tough for Mary, but the fact that the baby was born in Bethlehem is an important clue to who Jesus really is. He will be a king, like David long ago, but also a different sort of king because his reign will not end with his death—but that part of the story is still to come!

## Questions

- ▶ Can you imagine the conversations between Mary and Joseph when they received the news that they had to go to Bethlehem?
- ▶ Why do you think there was no room for Mary and Joseph when they arrived in Bethlehem?
- ▶ The job of being a shepherd wasn't particularly popular in those days. Why do you think God chose shepherds to be the first to hear the good news?
- ▶ What do you think the shepherds talked about after they had found the baby in Bethlehem?
- ▶ Which part of this Christmas story do you like best?



## Visual aid

Find a picture of a nativity set or manger scene. Use this as a focus for the story.

## Activity idea



Everyone is traveling in this story. Mary and Joseph and many others are on their way to somewhere else because of the emperor's command, and the shepherds are running off the hillside—even leaving their sheep behind, it seems. Pretend to be these different groups as they travel, and imagine their conversations with one another. What new insights and ideas about the story can you uncover? End by choosing your favourite Christmas carol and singing it together.

## Prayer idea



The angels' song expresses the joy in heaven that Jesus has been born. Think of all the good things that have happened to your family recently and, as you name them, say together, "Glory to God in highest". Now think of all the places on earth where sad things are happening and, as you name them, pray together, "May there be peace in..." and "May people do what pleases God."

## Key verse

This very day in King David's home town, a Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11).

## Old Testament story link

Micah 5:2-5: This is Micah's prophecy of what would happen in Bethlehem one day.



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