



S2.Lesson 12: Birth Stories – Jesus

Middle School Lesson Plans

Supplies Needed: Journals; Handout; TV and DVD player to play the movie/play "The Cotton Patch Gospel. It's currently available on Amazon at http://www.amazon.com/Cotton-Patch-Gospel-Tom-Key/dp/B0020LA3YK/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1316567123&sr=8-1

OPENING PRAYER

READ Matthew 2:1-16

1 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 6 "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." 9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. 13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.

ASK

- In verse 1 and 2, what do the wise men from the east want to know? (where the child who is the king of the Jews is)

- Why do the wise men from the east want to know this? (so that they can pay him homage)
- Do you know what homage is? If not, give it your best try! (reverence and respect)
- So the wise men from the east (who are from a different country and culture) want to show reverence and respect toward this child – in verse 3, though, what is the response of King Herod and all of Israel? (fear)
- In verse 4 – are you at all surprised that the king does not know where the Messiah is to be born but foreigners already do?
- In verse 8, do you think King Herod is truthful when he tells the wise men that he too wants to pay homage to the child?
- In verse 10, what is the wise men's response to getting closer to finding Jesus?
- Again, that's very different than the fearful response from Herod and the Israelites, right?
- In verse 11, what does homage from the wise men look like?
- In verse 16, what does homage from King Herod look like?
- What do you think about King Herod doing the same thing to his own people that the Egyptians did to his ancestors, 1200 years previously, in Egypt at the time of Moses birth?
- What do you think about Egypt, the country that originally enslaved the Israelites, becoming a place of safety for Mary, Joseph and Jesus?

TELL

- What the birth story of Jesus and of Moses show us is that from even the humblest beginnings, if we're paying attention to God, we can do great things.
- The Saul/Paul story from last week shows us that our birth story isn't important – paying attention to God and experiencing the conversion that comes from paying attention to God is what is important.
- Looking at all three stories together, we can see how God works with individuals and families in extreme circumstances and helps those individuals overcome overwhelming obstacles and odds.
- This is good news because this is how God works with all people.
- So maybe your circumstances don't feel as extreme as Moses or Jesus or Paul's. And that's fine. Because if God can get through to and help those individuals despite their circumstances, then God can get through to and help you, whatever your circumstances may be.

TRANSITION TO MOVIE:

- For the rest of the class, we're going to watch “The Cotton Patch Gospel.”
- This is a play that was recorded in the 1980's, as you'll be able to tell from the fashion of the people in the audience.
- The idea of the play is to tell the story of Jesus set in a modern place and time (Atlanta, Georgia)
- There is one actor who plays all the parts.
- There are 4 musicians who sing songs from time to time in a country/bluegrass fashion.
- We might fast-forward through some of those songs.
- We're mostly watching for the telling of the birth story, but we'll keep watching beyond then until we're out of time.

WATCH MOVIE

CLOSING PRAYER