

Teacher Background & Preparation Sheet

For Teacher Study Only - Not Read Aloud

Week	36	Date	September 6, 2026
Lesson Title	Jesus Is Born: God With Us	Primary Scripture	Luke 2:1-20
Bible Timeline	The birth of Jesus Christ, following centuries of Old Testament promise and expectation.		

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

For many children, the birth of Jesus is familiar because they have seen nativity sets, Christmas cards, plays, and cartoons. Familiarity can sometimes hide how astonishing this event really is.

Luke is telling us that Jesus entered real human history. He was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus, when Quirinius was connected with the government of Syria. Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, Mary gave birth there, shepherds were nearby, and angels announced what God had done. Luke presents these details as events that happened in the real world, not as a legend meant simply to teach a lesson.

At the center of everything is the identity of the baby.

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." Luke 2:11

Those three descriptions matter. Jesus is **Savior**, because He came to rescue sinners. He is **Messiah**, which means He is the promised King God had been telling His people would come. And He is **Lord**. This child is not merely another prophet or good man sent by God. Jesus is God the Son who truly became human.

The children should leave this lesson understanding that the God who made promises throughout the Old Testament kept those promises by sending Jesus. Jesus did not suddenly appear as God's emergency plan. His coming was part of God's saving purpose from the beginning.

BOOK AND PASSAGE BACKGROUND

Book: Luke

Traditional Author: Luke, a physician and companion of the apostle Paul. Paul calls him "our dear friend Luke, the doctor" in Colossians 4:14. Luke also traveled with Paul during portions of his missionary work, which can be seen in the "we" passages of Acts.

Approximate Date Written: Commonly placed in the first century, with evangelical scholars differing over whether Luke was written before or after A.D. 70. We should not give teachers or children a false certainty where faithful scholars disagree. The important point is that Luke belongs to the earliest Christian testimony about Jesus and presents itself as careful historical investigation.

Original Audience: Luke addresses his work to Theophilus, though the Gospel was clearly intended to serve a wider Christian audience.

"I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." Luke 1:3-4

Luke does not ask his reader to believe something because it sounds beautiful. He says he investigated the events carefully so that his reader could know what happened with confidence.

IMMEDIATE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Luke 1 prepares us for the birth of Jesus. The angel Gabriel first announces that John the Baptist will be born. John will prepare people for the coming Lord.

Gabriel then comes to Mary and tells her something far greater. She will have a Son named Jesus.

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." Luke 1:32

Mary asks how this can happen because she is a virgin. Gabriel explains that this conception will be God's supernatural work:

"The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Luke 1:35

Luke 2 then moves from God's promise to its fulfillment. Caesar Augustus issues a decree. Joseph travels from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea because he belongs to David's family line. Mary goes with him.

While they are there, Jesus is born. What looks on the surface like the movement of an empire becomes part of God's much older purpose. Centuries earlier, Micah had identified Bethlehem as the place connected with the coming ruler:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel." Micah 5:2

Caesar believed he was governing his empire. God was keeping His Word.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Bethlehem was a small Judean town several miles south of Jerusalem. Its importance in Scripture reaches back into the Old Testament, and it was especially connected with King David. That matters because God had promised that the Messiah would come through David's royal line. Luke identifies Joseph as belonging to "the house and line of David" in Luke 2:4.

The Roman Empire controlled Judea at the time. Caesar Augustus was a real Roman emperor who ruled from 27 B.C. until A.D. 14. Luke therefore places Jesus' birth within a recognizable historical setting.

Luke also mentions a census associated with Quirinius. Teachers should know that the exact historical relationship between Luke's wording, Quirinius, and the best known Roman census connected with him has been debated by historians and biblical scholars. Several explanations have been proposed, but the evidence does not allow us to pretend every historical question has been settled.

That is not something to fear. Luke gives us historical names precisely because he is placing Jesus in history. When outside records are incomplete or scholars disagree about chronology, we should say so rather than manufacture an answer. Faithful apologetics does not require us to pretend we know something we do not know.

WHAT SCRIPTURE ACTUALLY SAYS ABOUT THE BIRTH

This is a useful place for teachers to separate Scripture from Christmas tradition. Luke tells us that Mary gave birth to Jesus, wrapped Him in cloths, and placed Him in a manger because there was no available guest room for them. A manger is a feeding place for animals.

Luke does **not** say that Mary went into labor the moment she arrived in Bethlehem. Luke does **not** name an innkeeper. Luke does **not** tell us there were animals standing around Jesus. Luke does **not** say Jesus was born in a wooden barn like those commonly pictured in Western nativity scenes. Luke does **not** say three wise men visited Jesus that night. Matthew records the visit of the Magi separately, and Matthew 2:11 describes them entering a house.

None of those familiar traditions should become the point of the lesson. What Scripture actually tells us is far better. The eternal Son of God entered the human world in humility.

CORE TRUTH 1: GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

The birth of Jesus belongs to a promise that had been unfolding for generations. God promised that the offspring of the woman would ultimately defeat the serpent in Genesis 3:15. God promised blessing through Abraham's family. God promised a King through David's line. Isaiah spoke of the coming child, and Micah pointed toward Bethlehem.

"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman." Galatians 4:4

Notice the wording. God **sent His Son**. Jesus did not begin to exist in Bethlehem. The Son already existed and was sent into the world.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." John 1:14

God kept His promise by coming near to us in Jesus Christ.

CORE TRUTH 2: JESUS IS FULLY GOD AND TRULY HUMAN

This is the doctrine Christians often call the **incarnation**. That word simply means that God the Son truly became human without ceasing to be God.

Jesus did not merely look human. He was born. He grew. He became tired. He became hungry. He experienced human life. Yet Scripture also identifies Him as God. John 1:1 says the Word was God, and John 1:14 says that Word became flesh.

Jesus is therefore not half God and half human. He is truly God and truly human. We cannot explain every mystery of how this works because Scripture does not explain every detail. We can confidently teach what Scripture reveals.

CORE TRUTH 3: JESUS CAME TO SAVE SINNERS

The angels do not merely announce that a baby has been born. They announce a Savior.

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." Luke 2:11

Why do we need a Savior? Because our deepest problem is not simply sadness, loneliness, sickness, fear, or bad circumstances. Those things matter deeply, but underneath them is the brokenness sin brought into God's good creation. We have also personally sinned.

Romans 3:23 says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We cannot repair that separation from God ourselves. Jesus came to do what we could never do. He lived without sin, willingly died for our sins, and rose bodily from the dead. The manger therefore cannot be separated from the cross and empty tomb.

CORE TRUTH 4: THE BIRTH OF JESUS SHOWS GOD'S HUMILITY AND GRACE

There is a striking contrast in Luke 2. Caesar Augustus appears powerful. He issues a decree, and people across his empire respond. Jesus appears small and helpless, lying in a manger. Yet Caesar is not the true King of this account. Jesus is.

Philippians 2 explains that Christ Jesus humbled Himself, taking "the very nature of a servant" and becoming human. Jesus did not come because humanity had earned God's kindness. He came because God is gracious. Grace means God's undeserved kindness toward us.

CORE TRUTH 5: GOD IS TRINITY

This lesson gives us a natural opportunity to reinforce what the children will study even more clearly when Jesus is baptized in Week 38.

God is **one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**. We do not worship three gods. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. Yet the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father.

"The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Luke 1:35

We should not use water, eggs, clovers, or other objects to explain the Trinity. Those pictures usually create more confusion than clarity. There is nothing else exactly like God. We simply teach what God has revealed about Himself.

CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE CONNECTION

This passage naturally begins with Jesus as **Savior**. That is the first part of the Alliance's Fourfold Gospel: Jesus our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King.

"A Savior has been born to you." Luke 2:11

Jesus came to rescue sinners. Yet the other truths of the Fourfold Gospel grow from the same identity. The Savior who was born in Bethlehem is the Lord who changes His people through the Holy Spirit, compassionately heals according to His wisdom and will, and will one day return as King. We should not force all four themes into the children's lesson equally. Luke 2 gives us a beautiful opportunity to let **Jesus our Savior** stand at the center.

RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURE AND APOLOGETICS FOUNDATION

Luke begins his Gospel by telling us that he carefully investigated the events he recorded. Our faith is not built on "once upon a time." Luke names rulers, towns, regions, family connections, and historical circumstances. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Judea,

Galilee, Caesar Augustus, and the Roman world belong to real history.

The Christian claim goes further, however. We believe the miraculous parts because Scripture reveals them as God's actions. Historical research can help confirm the world surrounding the account, but archaeology cannot dig up an angel's announcement or scientifically reproduce the virgin conception.

What does the Bible really say? Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Mary was His mother. His conception was miraculous. Angels announced His birth to shepherds. Scripture identifies Him as Savior, Messiah, Lord, and Son of God.

What can history help us know? The Roman Empire was real. Caesar Augustus was real. Bethlehem and Nazareth were real places. Roman governments conducted censuses and registrations. Luke intentionally places his account within this historical world.

What are we only guessing about? We do not know the exact appearance of the place where Jesus was born. We do not know exactly how many shepherds came. We do not know what Mary was thinking as she laid Jesus in the manger. We do not know many details that later Christmas traditions have supplied.

Those gaps do not weaken Scripture. They teach us not to add to it.

ANTICIPATED CHILD QUESTIONS

Was Jesus God when He was a baby? Yes. Jesus did not become God later. John 1:1 tells us that the Word was God, and John 1:14 tells us the Word became flesh. Jesus is God the Son who truly became human.

Who made Jesus? Jesus' human body began growing in Mary's womb through a miracle of the Holy Spirit, but the Son of God was not created. John 1:1 tells us He already existed "in the beginning."

Did Jesus stop being God when He became a baby? No. Jesus became truly human without stopping being God.

Why did Jesus have to come? Because we have sinned and cannot save ourselves. Matthew 1:21 says, "You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Why didn't Jesus come as a powerful king in a palace? Jesus truly is King, but His first coming included humility and suffering because He came to save sinners. He will return openly as King.

Were there really angels? Yes. Luke presents their appearance as an actual event. Angels are created spiritual beings who serve God. They are not dead people who became angels.

How do we know this really happened? We begin with God's Word. Luke tells us he carefully investigated what happened so his reader could have certainty. History also confirms many people, places, customs, and political settings surrounding the New Testament. We should not claim history proves every miracle.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Jesus' birth was the beginning of Jesus. No. His human birth occurred in Bethlehem, but God the Son is eternal. John 1:1-3 makes this clear.

Jesus was created by God. No. Scripture teaches that all things were made through the Son. The Creator cannot belong to the category of things He created.

Mary is the mother of the Trinity. No. Mary is the human mother of Jesus. She did not create God or exist before God.

The wise men were at the manger with the shepherds. Scripture does not say this. Luke records the shepherds visiting Jesus after His birth. Matthew records the Magi separately and describes them coming to a house.

Jesus came mainly to teach us to be kind. Jesus certainly teaches and produces love in His people, but that is not the heart of why He came. He came to save sinners.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

This entire lesson should move toward one beautiful truth: **The child in the manger is the Savior.**

"A Savior has been born to you." Luke 2:11

God is holy and good. We have sinned against Him, and none of us can erase our own guilt. So God did what we could never do. God the Son came to us. Jesus lived the sinless life we have not lived. He willingly died on the cross for our sins. He rose from the dead, defeating death. Everyone who turns from sin and trusts in Jesus is forgiven and receives new life. The manger matters because of who was lying in it. Our Savior had come.

TEACHER HEART PREPARATION

Before teaching this lesson, spend a little time with Luke 2:11:

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

The children in front of you will come from different homes and different experiences. Some know the Christmas account almost by heart. Some may barely know who Jesus is. Some may be carrying fears and hurts they cannot explain to you.

They do not need us to make Bethlehem magical. They need us to show them Jesus.

The Christian hope is not that God watched our broken world from far away and sent us better advice. God the Son came near. He entered our world, took on our humanity, carried our sin to the cross, rose from death, and remains our living Savior.

God kept His promise. The Savior came. And His name is Jesus.