

SMALL GROUP SERMON STUDY

Leader's Guide

June 26 and 27, 2010

The Birth of the King

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Timeless Truth: The Word became flesh.

Chapter Summary

(Have someone in your group read the summary section.)

Silence. For 400 years God did not speak. No visions. No dreams. No prophets. No burning bush. No splitting seas. No manna meals. Just silence.

Then, in a magnificent yet inauspicious way, a word – but not just a word, The Word. The One who had no beginning, the expression of God who is Himself God, came into the world to make Himself known. It is to this event that everything thus far in The Story has pointed.

This Jesus Christ was the source of life and light. His presence dispels the darkness of sin and provides the light of salvation to all who receive Him. Those who receive Him become the children of God. The Son's humanity was the greatest possible demonstration of God's grace and truth to mankind.

Lest we confuse the familiar with the ordinary, the birth of the king was quite extraordinary. God's promise to David would finally be realized in Jesus. To emphasize that this child would be no ordinary man, God heralded His birth celestially. The angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was the chosen woman who would give birth to the son of David, the Son of God, impregnated by the Holy Spirit. But there was just one problem—Mary was an engaged virgin.

Joseph kindly considered divorcing her to save them both the humiliation of this pregnancy, but another angelic explanation eased his concerns; so a righteous Joseph took her as his wife.

They journeyed to Bethlehem for the required census where Mary gave birth in a humble manger, because the local inn was booked

full. The angels then had the privilege of delivering the blessed birth announcement to shepherds in a dark, cold field. They hurried to see for themselves and found a surprisingly unassuming setting for a king: a baby in a feeding trough, accompanied by his mother, earthly father, and the local livestock. Afterward, they told everyone about their out-of-this-world experience.

Another celestial sign, a star, told three Magi of the birth. They followed it until they reached Jerusalem where they inquired of His whereabouts. The Scribes cited the prophet Micah who predicted that this Ruler would come from Bethlehem. They were overjoyed to find the child and give Him their gifts. King Herod, however, was not so pleased to hear of this threat to his power. So he ordered the massacre of all the baby boys in the area.

Again, God's angel would see to it that His great redemptive plan would stay its course. He warned Joseph in a dream to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt until it was safe to return. When it was, the angel gave Joseph the green light to return to Galilee where he raised Jesus in the town of Nazareth.

Jesus grew up in Nazareth as the precocious son of pious Jews. They went to Jerusalem each and every year to celebrate the Passover. The year that Jesus was twelve, He stayed behind in the temple unbeknownst to his frantic parents. When they found Him three days later, He was amazing the teachers with His questions and answers. As Jesus grew up, He increased in wisdom and favor with God and with people.

God's Upper Story and Lower Story converge in the God-man Jesus Christ. The Son of God from eternity past will remain the Son of Man for eternity future. It is toward Him that God's redemptive story has been pointing all along.

For Discussion

Icebreaker Question: Share with your group what is your favorite part of the Christmas story and why. If you were in a Christmas pageant as a child what part did you play?

(Note: additional discussion questions pp. 390-400 The Story)

1. These verses in the Gospel of John reveal one of the most important beliefs. How does p. 255, or John 1:1-14, 18, help clarify the relationship between God and Jesus? Why is this so important?

2. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of all people," (p. 255, Jn. 1:4). Look up Jn. 5:21-29, 6:47-58, 10:10, 11:25, 14:6, 17:3, and 20:31. What does it mean, that in Him was life?
3. List some of the names of Jesus and their meaning or significance (see also Isa. 9:6-7.)
4. What things did Mary know about her child even before she conceived (p. 256)? Why was this important?
5. In response to her situation, Mary offers a song of praise (p. 256). Compare Hannah's praise song in 1 Sam. 2:1-10. How are these songs similar? Did Mary see herself as part of God's Lower Story or part of His Upper Story?
6. What do you suppose Joseph thought and felt about Mary's pregnancy before and after the angelic visitation (p. 257)? What is the difference between having faith in people and having faith in God?
7. Joseph was a "righteous man" (p. 257, Lu. 1:19). What examples can you find of his righteousness?
8. Herod was not the first evil ruler to commit, or attempt, infanticide against Hebrew babies. What other examples can you recall? What does this teach you about God's Upper Story plan of redemption?
9. The text tells us "all who heard [twelve year old Jesus] were amazed" (p. 258). What do you suppose it was that surprised them?
10. Did Kyle mention anything else in his message that you'd like to discuss?