

## Faith Baptist Church, Meridian, MS

### Journey to Bethlehem Story

The birth of Jesus was foretold by the Old Testament prophets hundreds of years before He was born. The people of Israel knew these prophecies and were constantly looking for the One who would be the Messiah, or deliverer, of their nation. This is why the series of miraculous events surrounding the birth of Jesus were accepted by the people in the Christmas Story and why they understood – at least in part – the importance of what was happening through these events.

**The Gospels of Matthew and Luke describe the circumstances of the birth of Jesus.** The story begins in Israel, in the small town of Nazareth, during the early First century AD. We invite you to join us as we embark on this Journey to Bethlehem . . .

#### **Scene 1 (Luke 1:26-27; Luke 1:30-31)**

Mary, a virgin engaged to Joseph, was visited by the angel Gabriel, a special messenger of God. Gabriel told Mary that she had found favor with God and was to be the mother of a Son, whose name should be called Jesus. Gabriel explained to Mary that the Child would be miraculously conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit and thus would be called the Son of God.

#### **Scene 2 (Matthew 1:20)**

Joseph, the betrothed of Mary, wondered what his response should be when Mary was found to be carrying the child. In a dream, an angel told Joseph he should not be afraid to take Mary as his wife, since the Child was of the Holy Spirit of God. This angel also instructed Joseph to name the Child Jesus and explained that the Child's name reflects His life's purpose; that is, to save His people from their sins.

#### **Scene 3 (Luke 2:1)**

Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, called for a census of the whole Roman world during this time. (Roman rulers periodically took a census so they could assess taxes on their citizens.) When a Roman emperor issued a decree, everybody obeyed without delay.

#### **Scene 4 (Luke 2:3; Luke 2:4-5)**

The decree required that the people register in their home towns, so many had to travel long distances from the places where they were currently living. Because Joseph and Mary were in the lineage of David, they had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for the census.

#### **Scene 5 (Luke 2:6-7)**

As they approached Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth. Joseph tried to find a suitable place for them to stay but was unsuccessful. Looking further, they found an enclosure that was probably used to shelter animals. The humble surroundings at least offered protection from the weather and warmth from the animals.

#### **Scene 6 (Luke 2:8-9; Luke 2:10-11)**

When the Child was born, angels appeared to the shepherds in a nearby field to announce the Good News! The angels sang praises to God and told the shepherds how to find the Child.

### **Scene 7 (Matthew 2:1-2)**

Several Wise Men from the East noticed that the Child's star had appeared in the sky and traveled to Israel so they could worship Him. Inquiring first in Jerusalem, they were told about the prophecies of the Child being born in Bethlehem. As they continued on their journey, the star reappeared, and the Wise Men followed it to find the family.

### **Scene 8 (Luke 2:7)**

The Journey to Bethlehem finally ended in a humble manger, with the promised Child and His parents, surrounded by animals, shepherds, and people of no worldly importance. Only the angels and some far-off foreigners truly recognized the magnitude of this moment. This Child was the very One who was promised so many years ago. And the world would never be the same because of Him and why He came.

So, why did He come? Our Journey is not quite over . . .

### **Transition (Luke 2:52, Philippians 2:7, John 18:37a John 18:37b)**

We only get the slightest glimpse of the childhood of Jesus; we know that He was interested in the things of God, amazed His teachers, was obedient to His parents, and became a wise, compassionate, and gracious man.

In His early 30s, Jesus began His ministry of healing the afflicted, giving hope to the hopeless, and preaching about the Kingdom of God. This was not the type of Messiah that the Jewish leaders were looking for; they wanted someone to throw off the oppression of the Roman Government, not challenge them about how they had distorted the true nature of God due to their man-made traditions and teachings.

They finally devised a plan to rid themselves of Jesus through false accusations of treason and ensured that He was turned over to the Romans for trial and punishment. As He stood before Pilate, Jesus told him that testifying to the Truth was the reason for which He was born, and that His claim to kingship did not mean king of the Roman people, but of another kingdom. When Pilate found no fault with Him, the crowd accused him of disloyalty towards Caesar, so Pilate agreed to have him crucified.

The Apostle Paul later interpreted the true significance of this punishment as seen through the eyes of God; it was that Jesus, who had no sin in Him, became a man so He could offer Himself as a substitute, and pay for the sins of all mankind.

### **Scene 9 (John 3:16)**

The sinful nature of the world is so great that no one person or group of people could make sufficient atonement in the eyes of God. His holiness is so far beyond our understanding that no effort of any person could ever bridge the gap between God and man. That is why he sent Jesus, fully God and fully man, to offer the one and only way to bring mankind reconciliation to God and freedom from the bondage of sin. If not for Jesus, we would all be eternally separated from God.

### **Scene 10 (Matthew 28:6)**

God confirmed the completed work of Jesus with His resurrection. He is no longer in the grave but is forever alive and interceding for us in heaven!