



Lesson Aim: To see how the story of the birth of Jesus reveals God's sovereign power over every situation on earth and over every detail of our lives.

Icebreaker: What is one way your hometown is different now than when you grew up? Does it still feel like home to you? Why or why not?

1. Thinking back over Scott's teaching last Sunday, is there anything that encouraged, challenged or confused you about the birthplace of Jesus? Why?
2. **Read Luke 2:1-20.** What is encouraging or challenging to you about the fact that God chose shepherds (outsiders in their society) as the first people to hear about the birth of Jesus? Why?
3. A key principle from Sunday's teaching was "God's sovereign power can work through any situation on earth." Are there any situations on earth where you struggle in believing that God can still work? What are they and why?
4. Another key principle was "God is in ultimate control of every detail of your life." **Read Philippians 4:6-7.** Are there any areas of your life right now where you really need to apply the truth of these verses? Share about it with your group.
5. **Stop and pray** about these areas of life. You can do this all together as a group or break down into smaller groups of 3-4.
6. Another key principle from Sunday's teaching was that we need to "make appropriate room for Jesus Christ in your life." What types of things tend to "crowd Jesus out" of your life?
7. **Read Matthew 9:9-13.** What are some ways Matthew "made room for Jesus" in his life?
8. What steps have you found to be helpful in making room for Jesus in your busy schedule?

Close in prayer as the Lord leads you.

THE ICARNATION

❶ TIME: 5-4 BC

❷ PLACE: Bethlehem

▶ David was born & raised there (1 Samuel 16:1)

▶ Joseph was a descendant of King David (Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4)

▶ “Bethlehem” means “House of Bread” (John 6)

▶ Prophecy #1 – The Messiah will come from the Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10)

▶ Prophecy #2 – The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; cf. Matthew 2:4-6)

❸ POLITICAL CONTEXT: Roman Taxation Census

PRINCIPLE #1: God’s sovereign power can work through any situation on earth.

PRINCIPLE #2: God is in ultimate control of every detail of your life.

❹ DIVINE CONTEXT: Birth of the Savior (1 Corinthians 1:27-29; Galatians 4:4)

PRINCIPLE #3: In our fallen state the arrival of Jesus is generally not seen as good news!

CHALLENGE: Make appropriate room for Jesus Christ in your life!

❺ LOCAL CONTEXT: Angels & Shepherds

▶ Shepherds living out in the fields ▶ It was nighttime ▶ One angel surrounded by glorious light appears

▶ Announcement – The Savior/Messiah is born ▶ Sign – Wrapped in clothes & placed in a feeding trough

▶ Huge angelic company praising God ▶ Shepherds find Jesus, praise God & spread the word

▶ People who heard the news were amazed ▶ Mary treasured this memory & often thought about it

QUESTION: WHY TELL THE SHEPHERDS AT BETHLEHEM FIRST?

▶ Bethlehem was the village where the great King David was born & raised (1 Samuel 16:1)

▶ David got his start as a shepherd there (1 Samuel 16:11)

▶ David was called from the sheep pen to the throne to shepherd Israel (Psalm 78:72)

▶ Prophecy #1 – The Messiah will come from the Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10)

▶ Prophecy #2 – The Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)

▶ Shepherding is a constant image in Scripture (Psalm 23:1)

SHEPHERDS IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

▶ Poor & downtrodden

▶ Filthy & “disqualified”

▶ Despised class

PRINCIPLE #4: God is on the side of the outsider.