

The Presence of Love

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and the Biblical Commentary to prepare to share the truths of this passage with learners. Encourage learners to take notes on their copies of the Learner Worksheet as you teach. The underlined words in the Master Teacher Outline correspond to the blanks on the worksheet.

Introduction: Each gospel account of the birth of Christ focused on different aspects of Jesus. Matthew focused on the royal lineage of Jesus and John presented Jesus as the pre-existent Word of God, who was present at creation. And Luke used great detail to discuss Jesus' ancestry, the circumstances of His birth, the miracles that accompanied His birth, and how the birth of Jesus expressed the love of God to the world.

1. God fulfills His promises through His gift of love (Luke 2:1-7).

- Caesar Augustus required a census of all the peoples of the earth (vv. 1-3).
- Because Joseph was a descendent of David, he had to travel a great distance to be counted in the census in Bethlehem, the city of David (v.4).
- His fiancé Mary traveled with him, and gave birth to Jesus when they arrived in Bethlehem (vv. 5-7).

Illustration: Author and speaker John Piper addressed the promise fulfilled to David by pointing out: "When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary in Luke 1:31–33, he said, 'Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Therefore, beyond any shadow of a doubt the Bible teaches that the promise to David that his descendant would rule forever is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As the Son of David (Romans 1:3) and the Lord of David (Matthew 22:45; Psalm 110:1) Jesus now reigns as king in heaven (1 Corinthians 15:25) over the true house of Israel" [Piper; on-line].

2. God's gift of love is for all peoples (Luke 2:8-12).

- An angel appeared to shepherds who were in the same region as Mary and Joseph (vv. 8-9).
- The angel shared the news that Christ had been born and was lying in swaddled in a manger (vv.10-12).

Illustration: Jeffrey Holland, author of *Created for Greater Things* wrote: "None of us is less treasured or cherished of God than another. I testify that He loves each of us— Insecurities, anxieties, poor self-image, and all. He doesn't measure our talents or our looks; He doesn't measure our professions or our possessions" [Holland, on-line].

3. Because of His gift of love, God is deserving of praise (Luke 2:13-20).

- Angels emerged from the heavens praising God (vv. 13-14).
- When they heard the news, the shepherds rushed to the manger to see Jesus (vv. 15-16).
- The shepherds left the manger, spreading the good news of Jesus' birth and praising God (vv. 17-20).

Illustration: Christian author Wesley L. Duewel wrote: "The more you praise God, the more you become God-conscious and absorbed in His greatness, wisdom, faithfulness, and love. Praise reminds you of all that God is able to do and of great things He has already done" (p. 168).

Conclusion: From the beginning, God had a plan for creation—to live in harmony with God. Adam and Eve broke that harmony, but God reconciled this brokenness through Jesus. The birth of Christ is an example of the depths of God's Love For Us.