

## Lesson 3 – A Journey to Bethlehem

- Teacher Prep: Ninety miles is a long way, even in a car! But it seems even longer if you are on foot and expecting a baby. All of the lovely pictures of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem from Nazareth show Mary riding on a donkey, but there may or may not have been one. Certainly, the Bible doesn't mention one. Mary and Joseph may have walked the whole way! A distance that probably took them 8-10 days to travel. But the Promised Messiah could only be born in the City of David; in Bethlehem. So, God moved a ruler's heart to order a census, so that they would make the journey.
- Major Points: **Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth**  
**The Savior was to be Born in Bethlehem**  
**Caesar Augustus Ordered a Census**  
**Joseph (and Mary) were descendants of King David**  
**Mary and Joseph Went to Bethlehem**
- Scripture Ref: **Luke 2:1-5** The Journey to Bethlehem  
**Micah 5:2** "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."  
**Matthew 2:1** ...Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea...
- Lesson: **Mary and Joseph Lived in Nazareth**
- Christmas is almost here! I can hardly wait! How about you?
  - I can think of some other people who were ready for Christmas... the first Christmas, when Jesus was born!
  - I think Mary and Joseph were ready for Jesus to be born!
  - But where would baby Jesus be born? (*Bethlehem*)
  - Do you know where YOU were born? (*Wait for answers.*)
  - That's great! I was born in... (*give name of place.*)
  - We were all born somewhere! And it's important to know where!
  - Baby Jesus was getting ready to be born! And where He would be born was also important!
  - Mary and Joseph lived in a town called Nazareth.
  - Nazareth is in the northern part of Israel, pretty near the Sea of Galilee. (*Look on a map where Nazareth is.*)
  - The city of Nazareth is still there today!
  - Joseph was a carpenter. Mary was his betrothed wife.
  - And Mary was going to have a Baby! A special baby!
  - Mary was going to have Jesus, the Son of God.

### **The Savior was to be Born in Bethlehem**

- For many years, people had been waiting for the Savior, the Son of God, to be born!
- God had been promising to send the Messiah (Savior) for many years.
- During those years, God had told the people what the Savior would be like.
  - He did this so that they would be sure to recognize the Savior, when He came.
- The promises God had made were called “prophecies”
  - A prophecy is when God tells us something that will happen in the future
  - Only God knows exactly what will happen in the future!
- One of these prophecies (or promises) was that the Savior would be born in a town called Bethlehem.
  - **Read Micah 5:2** *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”*
- Bethlehem is in the southern part of Israel, near Jerusalem.
  - It is still there today! (*Look on a map where it is found.*)
  - Have you ever heard the Christmas song, “O Little Town of Bethlehem”?
- Bethlehem was also the birthplace of King David.
- King David was a famous king of Israel, who had lived many years before Jesus was born.
- God had promised that the Messiah (Savior) would be one of King David’s descendants.
- And God had promised that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
- So, if you were looking for the Messiah in the place where He would be born... You should be looking in Bethlehem!

### **Caesar Augustus Ordered a Census**

- Unfortunately, King David wasn’t the king anymore. Now there was a new king (or ruler.) (*And he wasn’t even a Jewish ruler!*)
- Caesar Augustus was the ruler of Israel now! And he lived in a place called Rome (which was VERY far away!)
- Caesar wanted to know how many people he ruled over!
- So, one day, Caesar ordered a census.
- How many of you like to count? How high can you count? (*wait for answers*) That’s really great!
- A census is just a counting of people.
- And, no matter how much you like to count, counting a whole country full of people would be hard work!

- Caesar said that everyone had to go to the hometown of their ancestors to be counted for the census.
- Wow! That meant that people had to move to a different place just to be counted for Caesar's census!

### **Joseph (and Mary) were descendants of King David**

- Now, where did we say that Mary and Joseph lived? (Nazareth)
- And where is the Savior to be born? (Bethlehem) That's right!
- God had arranged things so that Mary's betrothed husband, Joseph, was a descendant of King David.
- So, Joseph had to go to King David's hometown to be counted.
  - Where was that? Yes, Bethlehem!
- And, Mary, as his betrothed wife, went with him.
- Mary was expecting a baby! Who was that? (Baby Jesus!)
- Also, it's important for us to know that Mary was also a descendant of King David. (*Luke 3 gives her lineage.*)

### **Mary and Joseph Went to Bethlehem**

- So, Mary and Joseph packed up and headed for Bethlehem!
- How do you think they got there? Did they take a plane? Or a train? Or a car? (*NO!*)
- Mary and Joseph had to walk to Bethlehem. They might have had a donkey for Mary to ride on, or to carry their things.
- How far do you think it is from Nazareth to Bethlehem? (*wait for answers*)
- Depending on the route they took, it was between 90-100 miles!
  - Or... 145-160 kilometers!
  - It probably took between 8-10 days of walking.
- That is a LONG way to walk!
  - especially if you are expecting a baby!
- But Mary and Joseph made it all the way to Bethlehem!
- When they got there, there was no room in the inn for them to stay, because there were so many people there for the census.
- But this is where the Baby Jesus was to be born! In the home of His ancestor, King David!
- Just like God had promised!

Let's pray and thank God for being faithful in sending His Son, Jesus, as our Savior.

Prayer: Dear God,  
Thank you for your faithfulness!  
Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, as our Savior!  
Thank you for loving us.  
We love you back.  
Amen.

Suggested Activities: Pick 1-2 activities that will work best with your group.

**Christmas Songs** – *The children will sing various Christmas songs.*

**Before Class:** Choose 2 or 3 Christmas songs to sing with the children. Have music to accompany you or plan on leading them yourself *A Capella*. Prepare song sheets for the children with the words of the songs. Remember that the older hymns have a lot of Bible information in them. Talk to the children about some in these two songs.

**During Class:** Lead the children in 2-3 Christmas songs. Discuss some of the biblical ideas found in the songs.

**Silent Night**

Silent night, Holy night  
All is calm, all is bright  
'Round yon virgin  
Mother and Child  
Holy infant, so tender and mild  
Sleep in Heavenly peace,  
Sleep in Heavenly peace!

Silent night, Holy night  
Shepherds quake, at the sight  
Glories stream from heaven afar  
Heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia"  
Christ the Savior is born,  
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, Holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure Light!  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth!  
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth!

**O Little Town of Bethlehem**

O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie,  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by.  
Yet, in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light!  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,  
And gathered all above  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love  
O morning stars together  
Proclaim the holy birth  
And praises sing to God the King  
And Peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still,  
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem  
Descend to us, we pray  
Cast out our sin and enter in  
Be born to us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell  
O come to us, abide with us  
Our Lord Emmanuel

**On the Way to Bethlehem!** – *The children will draw a picture of Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem.*

**Before Class:** Provide paper for each child. Also provide markers, crayons and/or pencils to use in class. Optionally, provide construction paper and glue, as well. Arrange to listen to Christmas music while you are drawing your pictures.

**During Class:** Pass out the paper and markers, etc. Allow the children to draw a picture of Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem. (*Like all great artists, who have drawn this in the past, you may draw Mary riding on a donkey!*) Afterwards, “frame” your picture by gluing it on to a larger piece of construction paper. When dry the children may take them home, or help decorate the room by displaying them.

**Help Mary and Joseph! – Maze Puzzle** – *The children will solve help Mary and Joseph find their way to Bethlehem by solving a maze puzzle.*

**Before Class:** Provide copies of the Activity Sheet for the children in class, also pencils, crayons or other markers. For additional fun, bring a map that shows Bethlehem and Nazareth, if you have one available.

**During Class:** Distribute the activity sheets and pencils. Ask the children to solve the maze puzzle to help Mary and Joseph get from Nazareth to Bethlehem. If you have access to a map of where Nazareth and Bethlehem are located, let the children look at it for fun. Explain that both of these cities are still there today!

**Got to Get to Bethlehem! – Game** – *The children will play a game that helps them enact Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem, with some modern-day twists.*

**Before Class:** Make a copy of the **two activity sheets** for this game; the one with cards and numbers and the other one with the gameboard. Cut apart the cards and the numbers. Shuffle the cards and numbers and put them face down in two separate piles. Provide a token for each team that will play. Place each token on the start square.

**Alternatively**, set up your classroom as a big game board, using chairs or construction paper on the ground as squares. Students will move around on this board. Remember to follow the gameboard illustration for numbers and question marks on the chairs.

**During Class:** Explain the rules of the game. Divide the class into small teams to play against each other. Appoint one person to draw, and one person to move their team’s token on the game board (or to walk around in the room) representing their team. Play until one team gets all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Declare a winner!

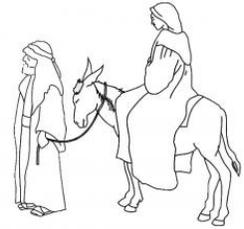
**Rules of the Game:**

- 1) Put a token for each team on the Start square.
- 2) Choose which team goes first, by some random method.
- 3) Team #1 draws a number (either 1, 2, or 3) and moves their token that far.
- 4) If they land on a square that has a number on it, they advance that many squares. (This happens just once on any turn.)
- 5) If at any time they land on a square that has a question mark on it, the team draws from the Question Card Pile and follows the directions on it.
  - a. Question Cards may cause the team to move backwards or forwards or even win the game.
- 6) When Team #1’s turn is over, then Team #2 goes.
- 7) Play continues until one team lands on the End square.

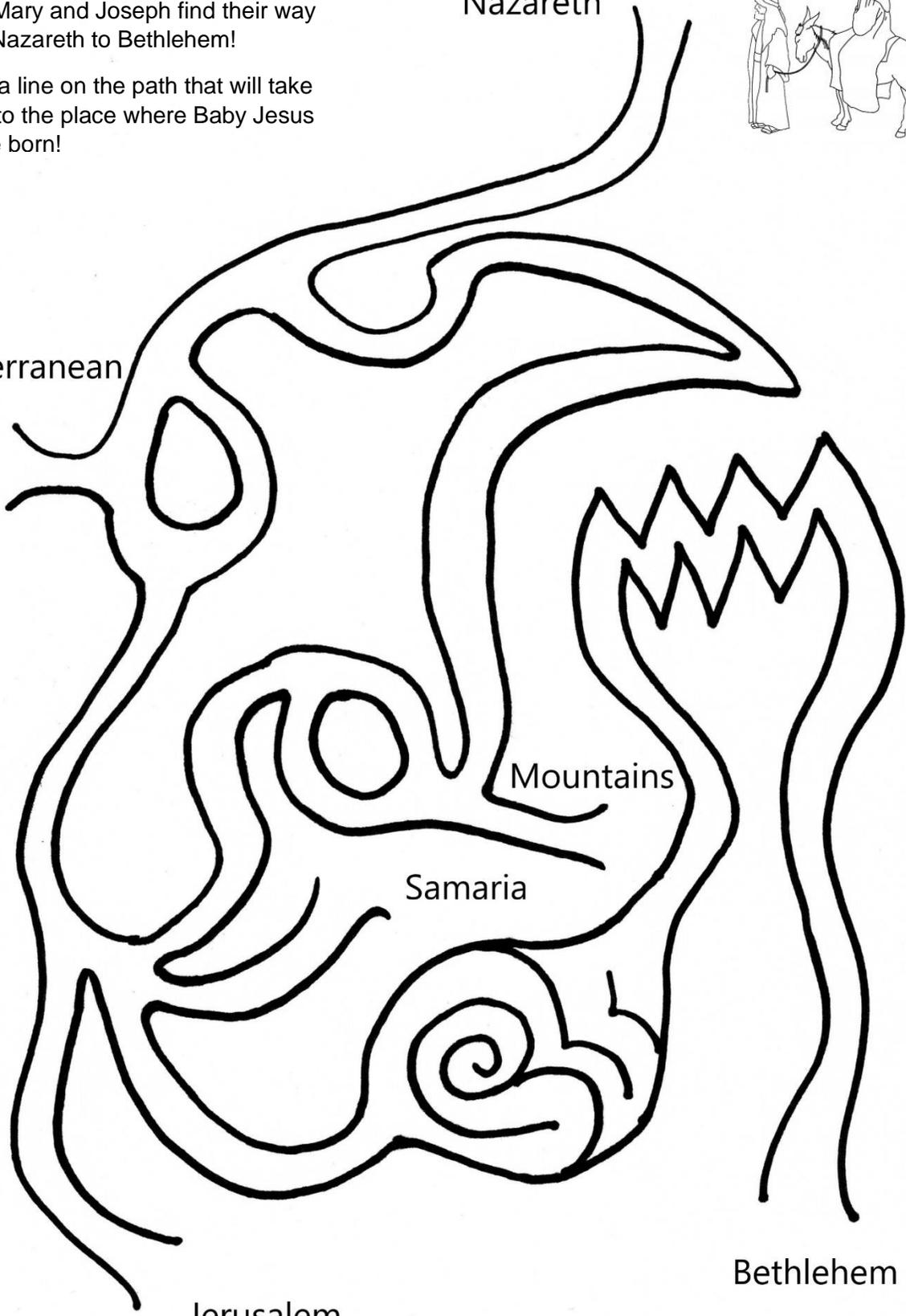
Help Mary and Joseph find their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem!

Draw a line on the path that will take them to the place where Baby Jesus will be born!

Nazareth



Mediterranean  
Sea



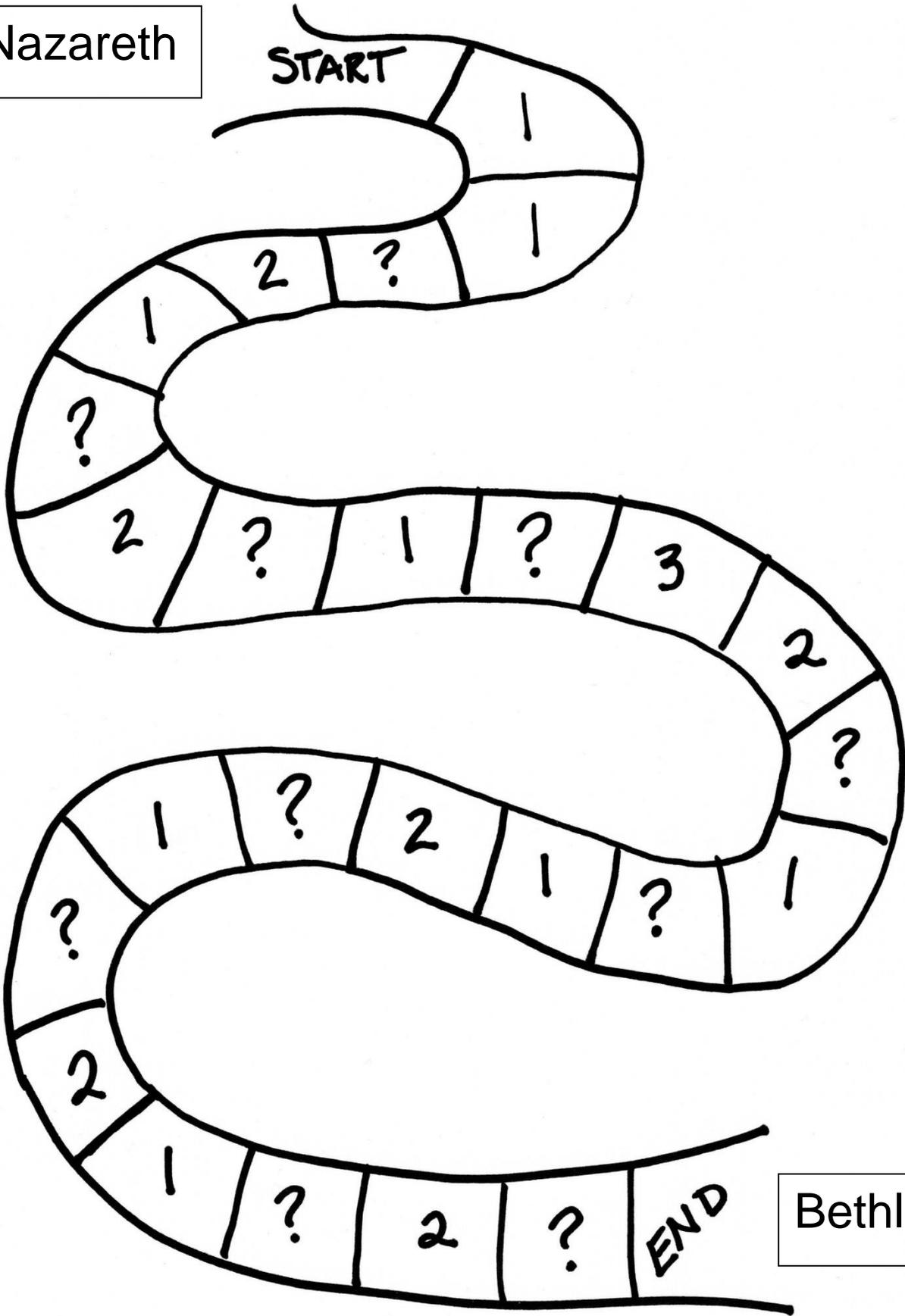
Jerusalem

Bethlehem

Cards and Numbers for the "Got to Get to Bethlehem" Game – Cut apart, shuffle and place cards and numbers face down in two separate piles. (Find Gameboard on next page.)

<p>Ask Directions. Go back 2 squares.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Remember God is with you! Go forward 3 squares.</p>
<p>Donkey has a flat tire Go back 1 square.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Jesus is to be born in Bethlehem! Go forward 2 squares.</p>
<p>No Service. Maps won't work. Go back 2 squares.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Mary smiles because her baby is the Son of God. Go forward 2 squares.</p>
<p>No Room in the Inn! Go directly to Stable! You win!</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Joseph leads the donkey well. Go forward 2 squares.</p>
<p>Donkey sits down. Go back 3 squares.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Kind people help along the way. Go forward 1 square.</p>
<p>Rest stop! Go back 1 square.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>The donkey is sure-footed. Go forward 2 squares.</p>
<p>Lunch break. Go back 1 square.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Mary and Joseph pray together. Go forward 3 squares.</p>
<p>Stop early for the night. Go back 1 square.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Arrive in Bethlehem! You win!</p>

Nazareth



Bethlehem