

Faith and Love C.O.G.I.C Sunday School

Lesson 4 December 24, 2023

THE MESSIAH ARRIVES

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THE MESSIAH ARRIVES

- ▶ Bible Basis: Luke 2:1-17
- ▶ Bible Truth: The Messiah was born.
- ▶ Memory Verse: “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7, KJV)
- ▶ Lesson Aim: By the end of the lesson, we will REVIEW the story of Joseph and Mary’s journey to Bethlehem; REFLECT on the meaning of the Messiah in contemporary times; and IDENTIFY the saving work of Jesus in the world today.
- ▶ Background Scriptures: Luke 2– Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

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Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:1-17, KJV

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)



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Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:1-17, KJV

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.



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Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:1-17, KJV

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.



Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:1-17, KJV

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Joseph was a just man from the bloodline of David. He lived in Nazareth in Galilee. Before marrying Mary, he considered breaking up with her when she told him she was pregnant. But he received angelic communication that his fiancée was pregnant with a child by the Holy Spirit, so they remained together.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Their story also involved Palestinian shepherds who had challenging lives of danger, hardship, and exposure to extreme heat and cold. The shepherds' equipment included a cloak made of sheepskin fleece, a wallet for food and money, a staff with a crook as a weapon and to manage the flock, and a sling to fight. The shepherd's occupation required great watchfulness, especially at night.

Teaching the Bible Lesson

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

AIM: We will believe Jesus was born and God's
promise was kept.

INTRODUCTION

The Census

Joseph and Mary were preparing for the arrival of their first born when Rome made a decree for a census. Although close to her due date, the couple made a 90-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. To fulfill God's promise, Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem, the City of David, where his parents had to pay hometown taxes.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: We will learn that Jesus fulfilled all
Scriptures concerning the coming Messiah.

I. PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH

Luke 2:1-6

Joseph and Mary had probably prepared a place for the baby in their home, chosen His first outfit, and made sure they had a well practiced first-century version of Lamaze breathing ready for Mary's labor and delivery. Then, Caesar issued a decree—every man had to go to his hometown to be taxed.

This taxing process was all part of God's plan because Bethlehem held a special place in scripture. It was King David's hometown and was where the expected Messiah was to be born (Micah 5:2; cf. Matthew 2:1).

I. PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH

Luke 2:1-6

The tax wasn't necessarily a Caesar idea, but a God idea. It caused two people who lived in Nazareth to journey to Bethlehem in a prophecy-fulfilling moment in history. Guess what happened when the couple got to Bethlehem? Mary's contractions began. With no rooms in the inns, the couple was forced to seek shelter in a barn. There in a stall, the first witnesses to the Messiah's birth were animals.

I. PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH

Going Back

Luke 2:1-6

The phrase “those days” refers to an era of oppression under the Roman empire. Caesar Augustus was born Gaius Octavius, the grandnephew of Julius Caesar. Since Julius Caesar had legally adopted Octavius as his son, Octavius took the name “Caesar” from Julius, which later became a name almost equal to “emperor.” The term “Augustus” in Latin means “worthy of reverence,” showing how Romans used titles with overtones of pagan divinity. He reigned as emperor for 41 years from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14, a time of political security and lavish building projects.

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I. PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH

Luke 2:1-6

Augustus restored 82 temples in Rome alone. He himself became an object of worship in the state religion, although he emphasized a return to worship the old gods that had made Rome great. Taxing the whole world took place regionally, and everyone in power tended to receive some form of a profit from it. The Greek verb used for this taxing is apographa (a-pogra-FA) meaning to “enroll” or “register,” like in an official listing of citizens. The census was called “taxing” because once everyone was accounted for, they could be more accurately taxed, plus Augustus wanted to know whether the population of his empire was growing for he was interested in all the nations Rome had absorbed. This “first” or “prior” census (taxing) was distinguished from the later one Luke mentions in Acts 5:37. Even people who lived far away from their home city had to return for the census.

I. PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH

Luke 2:1-6

The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 90 miles, going upward to an elevation of 2,300 feet above sea level. Joseph “went up” on a journey that was a significant undertaking of days, travel and expense. Luke recorded the territories they crossed as a reference point so Jews would also recognize that Bethlehem was an area first mentioned in Genesis 35:19, then 48:7, Judges 12:8–10, and Ruth 1:1–19. Bethlehem was a small, humble village, but Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born there (Micah 5:2). He would be the “Son of David,” and Bethlehem was where David had been born and raised (1 Samuel 16:1).

I. PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH

Luke 2:1-6

Joseph is mentioned as being a descendant of David, while nothing was said of Mary's genealogy. Mary was described as espoused or engaged to Joseph. This arrangement was legally established; therefore, to break it off would be considered divorce. Matthew 1:24 clarifies Joseph took Mary as his wife before Jesus was born. Mary's controversial pregnancy would have left her under fire had she remained home while Joseph went to Bethlehem.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Child in a Manger

Mary wrapped Jesus tightly in swaddling cloth and laid him in a manger. God was sending a subtle message here for Isaiah 1:3 records: “The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” These same animals in this manger knew their owner for they knew that He had put on flesh and was lying before them in a manger.

II. ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH

Luke 2:7-12

While the Messiah and His parents slept, the shepherds were in a field keeping watch over their sheep. The evening started out as routine as any other and the shepherds brought the sheep back to the fold.

II. ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH

Coming Forth
Luke 2:7-12

Since the census affected all of Joseph's family, there were probably family members there taking part in a type of reunion. There is also no indication that Mary had any help in giving birth for she brought forth her own baby, wrapped Him in clothes, and placed Him in the manger.

II. ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH

Coming Forth
Luke 2:7-12

Shepherds made little money and were on the low end of the social scale. Due to long periods of time out in the fields with sheep, they couldn't keep up with the ceremonial cleansing rituals that Orthodox Jewish leaders demanded so they often smelled bad. Although their profession was necessary and honored, shepherds were seen as second-class people.

II. ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH

Coming Forth
Luke 2:7-12

God's glory appeared with this unnamed angel as a brilliant light, just as it had in other passages (Isaiah 60:1; Ezekiel 1:28, 10:4; Matthew 17:5). Like Zacharias and Mary, the shepherds were shocked when they saw the angel. Then, the angel told the shepherds the same thing said to others: "Fear not." Until you have a fear of God, you won't hear the invitation to no longer be afraid of Him.

II. ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH

Coming Forth
Luke 2:7-12

The pronouncement of Jesus' birth was presented as a gift, not only to everyone but also to these particular people. Most groups of shepherds during that era would include a mixture of ages and backgrounds, from career shepherds to those training. It may have also included girls who hadn't had a physical transition into womanhood, for once they did they would go home and serve alongside their mothers. This announcement to those on the margins of society is indicative of God's concern for all of us, including those most may ignore.

II. ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH

Coming Forth
Luke 2:7-12

The angel promised a tangible sign to validate the claims, which follows a pattern throughout the Bible of how God promised something, pledged to do it within certain circumstances, and then offered visible proof that He would follow through. The virgin birth itself was a sign (Isaiah 7:14), but in this instance the focus was on Jesus and not His mother. While she had used the common clothes and feeding trough to care for her baby, these natural elements would become supernatural markers for the shepherds.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Witnesses to the Birth

This good news for the shepherds made them immediately act on it. They were excited to be with Mary, Joseph, and Jesus lying in a manger and to discover God's words are true like God had said it would be. As witnesses, they had to tell somebody, anybody, and everybody! The shepherds had to tell the Good News of the birth of the Savior of all people.

III. SHARING THE BIRTH

Luke 2:13-17

If the shepherds had any doubt about what they saw and heard was true, there next appeared a host of praising angels. Heaven was excited about this newborn Savior, and the least the shepherds could do was verify the sign they'd been given. They went quickly to Bethlehem.

III. SHARING THE BIRTH

Spreading Out
Luke 2:13-17

The angel was suddenly joined by a great multitude of angels. The Greek word for “host” is stratia, which refers to an army, a band of soldiers, or a troop of angels. These weren’t cute little angel cherubs with fat cheeks, but military-level angels. As heavenly soldiers, they understood the amazing event taking place at that moment on earth, so they proclaimed it.

III. SHARING THE BIRTH

Spreading Out
Luke 2:13-17

The angels even went to invite others to respond. The phrase “Glory to God in the highest” means to force yourself to a new place of worship in response to who God is. It’s as if heaven itself cracked open momentarily and the shadowy world had light and song.

III. SHARING THE BIRTH

Spreading Out
Luke 2:13-17

The Bible contains the names of several people who we know very little about. In contrast, these shepherds were among the first to see the face of Jesus, and they remain unnamed. These unnamed shepherds will forever have the honor of being the first ones outside of the holy family to hear of the birth of Jesus. God ordained it for them, which perhaps is how they mysteriously found Christ in the middle of the night during a busy census season. They found Him asleep in a manger, just as the angel had said.

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: We will understand that almost every God-given promise is surrounded by problems.

BIBLE APPLICATION

We live in a society where people think that God's promises are easy to obtain. They say, "What God has for me is for me," until they come upon hardship. Then they say, "I must've heard God wrong." Almost every God-given promise is shrouded by problems. The path from Egypt led straight to the Red Sea. The Promised Land had giants in it. Jesus' birth was redirected by a census that caused a series of unfortunate events. We must learn to persist and endure if we are ever going to be witnesses of the greater things of God.

STUDENT RESPONSES

AIM: We will learn to trust God despite obstacles.

STUDENT RESPONSES

What promise has God made to you? Make a list of the obstacles you're enduring and remember Mary and Joseph. Know that each obstacle gets you closer to the promise. Praise God in advance for the birth of the promise He's entrusted to you.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
we thank you for bringing your Word to pass. You brought your Word to pass in sending your Son Jesus. We know that you can bring your Word to pass in our lives. We ask that you would have your way in our lives and we would obey your Word in everything that we do.
In Jesus' name we pray.
AMEN

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Next Sunday
December 31, 2023
Lesson 5
Jesus, Simeon and Anna
Luke 2:25-38

