

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-23; Luke 2:1-40

LESSON 50 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 1:18-25 (KJV)

1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Matthew 2:1-23 (KJV)

2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Notes:

The Messiah Prophesied

Old Testament prophets had written at one time or another about the Messiah Who would come to deliver the people of God from sin and bondage. We remember that God had told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that through their seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed; and that promise pointed to Jesus. Of course, they expected an earthly king to arise in their midst who would deliver them from the Roman captivity. They were a conquered people who could do very little without the consent of the emperor of Rome, or the people whom he had placed in authority. In Jerusalem Herod was the king who was ruling for the Roman government.

Four hundred years had passed since the last of the prophets had died; and sometimes the people grew weary of waiting, and wondered if the day of deliverance ever would come.

Not everyone then could read as we do now, and it was mostly the scribes and the priests in the Temple who read the Scriptures; but because of the sin in their lives they could not discern the truth when they read it. During Jesus' ministry He told the scribes and Pharisees to search the Scriptures to learn how to get eternal life, for "they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). If they had had honest hearts they would have recognized that the prophets in the Old Testament were talking about Jesus, but they did not want to believe in the lowly Nazarene.

To the Lowly

So it was that when the angels proclaimed their message, "On earth peace, good will toward men," they did not appear to the priests in the Temple — the religious people — but to the lowly shepherds on the hillside who were watching their flocks by night. No doubt, in their hearts they were looking for something from God, and they were ready to receive the message of the angels.

When the shepherds saw the first angel they were afraid. It is not often that men have seen angels. And perhaps they thought they were going to die. But the angel told them not to be afraid; he had good news for them. That night, in the little town of Bethlehem, a Babe had been born Who was going to bring joy to **all** people. The Jews were a conquered people, and were unhappy; but there were also many other downtrodden people in the world. All people who are sinners need the joy of salvation, but Jesus offered His happiness especially to those who could do nothing for themselves. He loved the galley slaves who were chained to their posts, and who had no hope of living a normal life; He loved the little children who had to work too hard; He loved the women who were practically slaves in their own homes. Jesus came with His message of salvation to lead all men into the way of true happiness, and promised them eternal life in Heaven where everything will be beautiful and there will be no more sorrow, heartache, or crying.

Joy to All People

There are people today who would have us believe that Jesus came to save only an elect few and none else need try to make Heaven their home. But the angel said He would bring joy

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought

to **all** people. Later Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The Hosts of Angels

After the first angel had made his announcements of where the Holy Child was born and how He was dressed, many other angels came to proclaim: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." It seemed the whole heavens were filled with the angelic host, praising God. God had given His only Son to come to earth and live with men, and finally to die for their redemption; and the angels who had known Him in Heaven had attended His arrival on earth.

The shepherds believed the report of the angels and immediately set out to find the Christ Child. They found Him just as the angels had said, and went away rejoicing, just as every person does who comes to Jesus and believes in Him. Jesus really brings to everyone who believes upon Him the joy that the angels talked about.

The Wise Men from the East

Other people had also heard about the coming of Jesus. There were wise men living in an eastern country who were looking for the Redeemer, and they watched the sky for a sign from Heaven when He should come. One night they saw an unusually bright star, one they had never seen before. How excited they must have been when they saw that sign! They believed it meant that Jesus had come to earth, and they started on the long journey to Jerusalem. We always see them pictured as three kings coming from the East on camels, although the Bible does not say that there were only three, nor that they came on camels.

The wise men thought that if a new king had come he must have been born in the king's palace; but when they talked to Herod about the wonder they had seen in the sky and what it meant to them, he was surprised. No heir apparent had been born in his house. He feared that someone might take his position from him, so he called together the scribes and Pharisees to inquire if they knew anything about a promised king. They had no trouble finding the information. Had not all the prophets written about the great Deliverer? The scribes and Pharisees came back with the message that the Christ was to be born in the little town of Bethlehem of Judaea — a humble place; and they also said that He was to be of the tribe of Judah. They knew the Scriptures, but their hearts were so hard that they did not recognize Jesus when they saw Him.

Herod pretended to be interested in the new Babe and sent the wise men to Bethlehem to look for Him and to return to tell him what they had found. How the wise men rejoiced as they started on their way again and saw that the star was still leading them! They followed it, and came right to the place where the Holy Child lay.

Perhaps by this time Mary and Joseph had moved into a house, but they were still in Bethlehem. We know that Bethlehem was not their home, but they had gone there to be taxed; and while they were there Jesus was born, so that the Scripture was fulfilled which prophesied of Bethlehem, "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2). God's Word must come to pass just as it is written, even though a ruler must make a law that all the world be taxed, in order to get His people where the Word says they will be.

The men from the East had brought many precious gifts for Jesus, to show their love for Him. When we truly love Jesus we bring Him our precious gifts, too. We are glad to give Him our

the young child's life.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Luke 2:1-40 (KJV)

2:1 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:)

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.

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.

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

very lives; and we continually sing praises to Him, and tell Him how much we love Him. We give Him our tithes and offerings of money, and also our willing service.

The wise men never returned to tell Herod that they had found the Child Jesus. God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod. The king was very angry when he found they had disregarded him. He believed that someone had been born who might try to usurp the throne. So he had all the babies under two years of age killed. He thought by doing that he would surely destroy the one who might grow up to be a king.

But God takes good care of His own. He knew what Herod was going to do. He told Joseph to take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, and remain there until God would send for them. That also brought about a fulfillment of prophecy: "Out of Egypt have I called my son." That was fulfilled when God called Joseph to return to Nazareth.

Jesus' Presentation in the Temple

When Jesus was eight days old He was taken to the Temple to be presented unto the Lord, for the Law commanded that the eldest child must be especially dedicated unto God. A sacrifice accompanied this rite, according to the wealth of the family. Jesus' parents were very poor, so they had only two young pigeons to offer. But what a blessing came upon everyone in the Temple when the Holy Child was brought in!

Simeon, a holy man of God, was guided by the Spirit of God to be there for this ceremony. How thrilled he was when he picked up the Holy Child and recognized Him as the Son of God! For many years he had waited for this moment, and the Spirit had told him he should not die until he had seen Jesus. Simeon prophesied that Jesus would also be a light to lighten the Gentiles, which was a strange message to the Jews who thought they were the only people of God.

Anna, a prophetess, came in during the ceremony, and she also glorified God. She was so overjoyed that she told everyone who was looking for Christ to come that the long-prophesied Redeemer of Israel had finally been born. They glorified God that they had been counted worthy to see His salvation.

The Divine Redeemer of Mankind

Jesus, the Son of God, had come to bring redemption to all who believed on Him. The Prophet had said that He should be called Immanuel, meaning "God with us." He was more than a good man, a great teacher to show us how to live; He was God manifested in the flesh (I Timothy 3: 16), the divine Son of the Father, Who came to die that our sins might be washed away by His shed Blood.

QUESTIONS

- 1 To whom did the angels give the message that Jesus was born?
- 2 Who else heard about it, and how did they know that Jesus was born?
- 3 Who was Jesus? Why did He come to earth?
- 4 Where did the shepherds find Jesus? Where did the kings of the East find Him?
- 5 Did the scribes and Pharisees know anything about the fact that Jesus should be born? How did they know?

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.

18 And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord;

23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24 And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in

Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37 And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.