

The Birth of Jesus

Lesson 4a — An Angel Talks to Mary and Joseph

Lesson 4b — Jesus Is Born

Lesson 4c — The Angels and Shepherds

Lesson 4d — Wise Men Come to Worship

Lesson 4e — God Protects His Child

OVERVIEW

We open this quarter with a study of the most dramatic event in the history of the world — the birth of Jesus Christ. A miraculous event which occurred at a time when men were looking with longing for spiritual deliverance, it changed the course of world history.

To children, this beautiful portrayal of God's love for mankind is also one of the most appealing of all Bible stories. The innocent Baby whose birth was announced by the angel, the humble shepherds, the wise men with their royal gifts, God's protective care for His Child which foiled a king's murderous intention — all of these hold drama and excitement guaranteed to capture a child's imagination.

As you teach the lessons, try to make each part of the story come alive for your students. The characters in-

volved were real people with emotions and feelings just like ours. How would we have reacted if we had found an angel standing beside us with a message like the one the angel brought to Mary? What would we have felt if we had been on the Judæan hills with the shepherds one night and heard the angelic proclamation that a Savior was born? What would our feelings have been if we had traveled many miles with only a star to lead us to an unknown place? Stress that each of these events actually took place.

As you go through these lessons, try to reinforce in each of your children the fact that these lessons bring out the true meaning of Christmas. The traditions and customs woven around this time of year may be enjoyable and much-anticipated, but we must keep uppermost in our hearts the reason for the celebration.

GAMES AND CONTESTS

Have two puppets with any personalities and names you want. For example, name one who is a brain "Clue," and name the other "Fudge" who has the prizes to hand out but forgets that he's supposed to share them. Divide group into teams, or simply pick someone to come up and get a clue from Clue. Clue brings up an object from the month's lesson such as: hay, plastic cow or donkey, manger with baby in it, star, camels, gold, Christmas angel. The child has to tell Clue from what story it came. If he's right then Fudge gives him a prize. If the first child is wrong, someone else may give the answer and receive the prize.

For a memory verse contest covering the five verses of this unit, give each child a ribbon about the size of a bookmark. As they recite a verse, add a sticker to the ribbon. (If possible, make the sticker appropriate to the lesson; for example: an angel for the lesson on the annunciation, a star for the lesson on the wise men, etc.)

If you have divided your group into teams, award points for each sticker and a team prize for the group collecting the most points.

Draw a large Christmas tree on your chalkboard. Draw on it an equal number of red and green candles. Divide your group in two, one side being the "reds" and the other side the "greens." Ask questions reviewing the five lessons of this unit, allowing the student who answers a question correctly to draw a yellow flame on one of the candles of his team's color. The team with the most lighted candles at the end of the contest wins.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Build a bulletin board as a class project for the whole unit. You may wish to divide the board into five sections. As an alternative, make one large scene, adding the appropriate figures each week. In this case, you may wish to use the angel figure from the annunciation lesson as an angel in the heavenly host.

Another class or department bulletin board can be composed using old Christmas cards and a long strip of butcher paper. Mark the paper into vertical sections about every 18 inches. Label the sections with the various aspects of the Christmas story: Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem, Jesus in the manger, angel and shepherds, the visit of the wise men, etc. Put out the Christmas cards, and allow students to glue the cards to the proper sections of the mural. This idea can be adapted also to a review or in-class activity.

Make a "Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus" bulletin board. (Cut the caption, "Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus" from shiny wrapping paper.) Make a large birthday cake with white construction paper (see Patterns). In the center of the cake, glue a picture of Baby Jesus in a manger. Cut candles for the cake from construction paper, at least one for each child and an equal number of red and green. Print a child's name on each candle.

UNIT PROJECTS

Make up an accordion-fold book of the Life of Jesus. Materials needed for each child will be old Christmas cards, sheets of construction paper cut to about 4½" x 6", scissors, pencils or crayons, paste or glue, masking or transparent tape.

Have the children select pictures of the life of Jesus to cut out and paste on their pieces of construction paper. Use the memory verses and help the children write them on pieces of the construction paper. Hinge the papers together with the tape and then fold back and forth between pictures in an accordion fold. Hinges can be on the side or on the top of the pieces of paper.

Make a cover for the book placing Bible verse on the cover. Suggested Bible verses: "He careth for you" — I Peter 5:7; "God is mine helper" — Psalm 54:4; "The LORD is good to all" — Psalm 145:9.

Let the children cut out, color and assemble cone-shaped nativity figures (see Patterns).

CHART IDEAS

Make a gift illustrating God's Gift to us (see Patterns).

Week 1: Draw an outline of a gift-wrapped box.

Week 2: Add strips of paper for ribbon.

Week 3: Add bow.

Week 4: Add tag.

Week 5: Add picture of Jesus on front.

As a chart for this month, for each child, cut out a manger and glue it to blue construction paper. Cut out small tufts of hay from yellow paper. The children should be given one tuft for attendance, one for knowing the memory verse, one for bringing their Bible, one for bringing a friend, etc. Let them glue the number of tufts they have earned to their chart each Sunday.

UNIT SUPPORT MATERIAL

"Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem" — Coloring strip poster, 8 pages hooked together to form long, narrow poster, Concordia

"Birth of Jesus" — Suede-graph, Standard Publishing

"Birth of Jesus" — Pict-o-graph, Standard Publishing

"I Learn to Read About Jesus" — Basic Bible Reader, Standard Publishing

"Christmas Is a Happy Time" — Jane Belk Moncure book, Standard Publishing

"Christmas Is a Time for Singing" — A Happy Day Book, Standard Publishing

"Jesus Is Born" — Classroom story and activity book, 8 copies of each picture, Standard Publishing

"The Birth of Jesus" — Bible teaching panorama. Set contains four 40" x 9¼" full color sheets to make panorama 16 feet long, Standard Publishing

"The Life of Christ" — Bible Overhead Teach-parencies for use on overhead projectors. Includes lessons on birth, baptism and early ministry, Scripture Press Publications, Inc.

"The Birth of Jesus" — Ella K. Lindvall, People of the Bible Series book, Moody Press

"Jesus Is No Secret" — Carolyn Nystrom, Children's Bible Basic series, Moody Press

"Who Is Jesus?" — Carolyn Nystrom, Children's Bible Basic series, Moody Press

Attendance Cards — Nativity Scene. Use with "Little Baby Jesus" stickers (1808), 5 each of 13 seals, or "Birth of Jesus," 8 each of 4 seals, or set of 10 cards and 1 book of seals (1828), Standard Publishing

Stickers — to make bookmarks, etc., approximately 1½" x 1", "Peace on Earth," "Silent Night," "Joy to the World," "Christ the Savior Is Born," Standard Publishing Bible Pictures for Children — Set 2, "Jesus Our Savior," 16 full color pictures include birth and childhood, parables and disciples, G/L Publications

Bible Teaching Pictures — Richard and Frances Hook, include birth, childhood, and early ministry, David C. Cook Publishing Co.

The New Testament Bible Stories "Magic Pad" — Alex Wilson Coldstream, Ltd.

An Angel Talks to Mary and Joseph

TEXT Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:21,26-32

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to recount the announcement of the angel to Mary and Joseph regarding Jesus and will be able to tell that He was a special baby because God was His Father.

MEMORY VERSE Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. — Matthew 1:21

MEMORY VERSE SONG

Thou shalt call His name JE - SUS, Thou shalt call his name
JE - SUS for he shall save his people from their sin.

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

THOU SHALT CALL — hands cupped around mouth
HIS NAME JESUS — right middle finger to left palm,
left middle finger to right palm
FOR HE — point up
SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS —
with cupped hands draw a cross in the air

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Cut apart the large word “Jesus” surrounded by sections containing an angel and praying figure. (See pattern at end of lesson.) Assemble the puzzle piece by piece as the students learn each portion of the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Use an angel doll (a Christmas tree ornament, perhaps) or a picture of an angel to open your

lesson. Discuss what it would be like to have an angel appear and speak to you.

Progression of events:

1. An angel appeared to Mary and told her she was highly favored and blessed.
2. He explained that she would bear God’s Son, Jesus.
3. Mary showed her willing spirit.
4. After Mary was found with child, an angel appeared to Joseph.
5. The angel told him the child was conceived of the Holy Ghost.

Climax: Mary and Joseph believed the message of the angel.

Conclusion: Jesus was a very special baby because God was His Father.

Response: Have your students retell the announcement of the angel to Mary and Joseph and tell why Jesus was a special child.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Christ was to be born in the family of David and in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2-5). But Mary and Joseph lived about 100 miles from Bethlehem. A decree of Rome required them to go to Bethlehem just at the time the child was to be born. God had planned this birth for years and His time chart always falls into place. Historical records place the enrollment of Quirinius (Cyrenius) in A.D. 7, which was 10 to 12 years after Jesus was born. In recent years, ancient papyri have been found from which was learned that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria. Luke says it was the first enrollment.

An angel appeared to Mary, a young virgin, and announced to her that she would conceive through the Holy Spirit and bring forth a son who would be called Jesus (Luke 1:31), Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23), and the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

At this time Mary was probably about twenty years of age. She was unmarried but was betrothed to Joseph. Because of this she was in danger of two things: 1) she could be called a harlot, or 2) Joseph could legally divorce her. It was the custom in that day for parents to arrange a marriage when children were still quite young. For a period of one year the couple was espoused, or betrothed, to each other before they came together. This betrothal could be broken only by a legal divorce because of the unfaithfulness of one of the partners. It was at great personal cost that Mary submitted to God and said, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). Mary, no doubt, suffered from the cruel words of those who did not understand the great miracle of God. John 8:41 shows how the Pharisees misunderstood Christ's birth and accused Him of being born of fornication.

This whole incident was also very costly to Joseph. He was a righteous man (Matthew 1:19), but his espoused wife was found with child. He obviously loved Mary and did not want to cause her any disgrace so he thought to secretly divorce her (Matthew 1:19). But an angel also appeared to Joseph and assured him this was a miraculous birth from God! Mary and Joseph dared to believe God and obeyed Him in the face of public disgrace and social pressure.

It was at great cost to God also that all these things were accomplished. Jesus was willing to become intimately identified with His creation by setting aside His glory to be clothed in human flesh and yet He maintained His deity by being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born in the flesh (Philippians 2:6-11). He truly was *Emmanuel* which means "God with us."

According to the angel who spoke to Mary and Joseph, the Child was to be called "Jesus." Jesus was a com-

mon name in Israel at that time. It was the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua* and it means "Savior" (Matthew 1:21). Perhaps many Jewish mothers had hoped their son would be the Promised Child who should deliver God's people from political oppression, but this Child was unique. He would be the true and final Deliverer from the oppression of sin.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

A book could be made from old Christmas cards telling the Christmas story.

Make a peek box, perhaps with an angel talking to Joseph or Mary, or both.

Bring a Viewmaster with reels showing the Christmas story.

The New Testament Bible Stories Magic Pad is fun for children from two to twelve years old, and covers the whole Christmas story.

Make a cloud and have an angel behind it. Tell the children the angel was sent from God, and came to tell Mary and Joseph about Baby Jesus (see Patterns).

Make an angel for each child (see Patterns). Cut out and fold head on dotted line. Fold half circle to form a cone and tape together. Tape wings onto back of cone.

Use a tape recording to simulate the voice of the angel as you tell the story in class.

QUESTIONS

What prophet spoke of Jesus' birth, and what did he say?

What other names have been given Jesus (Isaiah 9:6)? How would you feel if an angel appeared to talk to you? How could a prophet know so many years before that Jesus was to be born and where?

The angel told Joseph that the baby's name was to be Jesus, and Emmanuel. How did the angel know and what did the angel mean by calling Mary "highly favoured"?

What was Mary's reaction to the angel's appearing? Did the angel know how she felt? Explain.

PRE-SCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

There is a Viewmaster story of the annunciation available. Small children like to look at the scenes in this way, but be prepared to switch the pictures yourself. Also, allow plenty of time for "turns"!

Use finger puppets of Mary and the angel to illustrate the story (see Patterns).

Bring a real baby (or a photograph of one), some articles that one might get in preparation for a baby (rattle, bottle, sweater, blanket, etc.) to build on the "special" baby idea.

Allow your children to put an angel sticker on a small picture of Mary and then take it home.

REVIEW IDEAS

Have a pre-recorded puppet show — the only thing necessary would be to move the puppets. One or two persons could do this.

First scene: Angel talks to Mary.

Second scene: Angel talks to Joseph in a dream.

The moderator will tell the students that next Sunday they will learn that Jesus really was born.

Make an overhead presentation of the story. Overlay can be used to make angel "appear" to Mary; the same technique to show the angel coming to Joseph. Thought balloons can appear to show thoughts. In

some cases you may wish to write in the thoughts or spoken words as you tell what is happening. Try to make some action — writing, overlays, or other forms of movement — in each scene on the screen.

Present a skit using some of your students as Mary, Joseph, and the angel. Costumes from Christmas programs can help lend an authentic touch. Backgrounds may be drawn and projected from an overhead, or simple props such as a table or bed used.

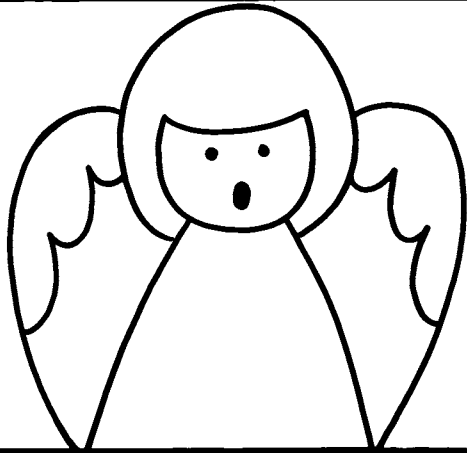
SUPPORT MATERIAL

"Mary's Story" — Arch book available with cassette, also available with filmstrip and cassette, Concordia The Bible Story Set, Volume 7 — by Arthur S. Maxwell, Pacific Press Publishing Association

The A,B,C's of Christmas — by Jane Belk Moncure (for beginners), Standard Publishing

"Primary Cutouts" — a cutout flannel set that can be used all year for small children, available at Learning Palace.

NOTES



Thou shalt call his name

JESUS

For he shall save his
people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21



Jesus Is Born

TEXT Luke 2:1-7

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Micah 5:2; Luke 1:30,31; 2:21

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to describe the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE 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

MEMORY VERSE SONG



She brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in
swad-dling clothes, and laid him in a man-ger; be-
cause there was no room, no room for them in the inn.

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRSTBORN SON — rocking motion holding baby
AND WRAPPED HIM IN SWADDLING CLOTHES — wrapping motion with right hand around left arm
AND LAID HIM IN A MANGER — lay baby down
BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM — shake head “no”
IN THE INN — make house shape with fingertips touching

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Cut apart a picture of the baby in a manger with portions of memory verse written in surrounding sections. (See pattern at the end of the lesson.) Assemble the puzzle piece by piece as the students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Use a baby doll or a live baby to start your

lesson, presenting the fact that Jesus was the most special baby ever born.

1. Review last week's lesson reinforcing how the angel announced His coming to Mary and Joseph.
2. Describe the journey to Bethlehem.
3. Detail the surroundings and explain why this came about.

Climax: Jesus was born at a time and place appointed by God and detailed by prophecy.

Conclusion: Jesus' birth was humble in origin, but it was the greatest event the world had ever known.

Response: Your students will be able to tell you the story of Jesus' birth.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The birth of Christ had been prophesied many times and very specifically in the Old Testament. They were prophecies of hope to a discouraged and oppressed people.

Jesus was the son of Abraham as prophesied in Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18, and fulfilled in Matthew 1:1. Jesus was the son of David as prophesied in II Samuel 7:11-13 and fulfilled in Matthew 1:1. Jesus was born of a virgin as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 and fulfilled in Luke 1 and 2. He was born in Bethlehem as prophesied in Micah 5:2 and fulfilled in Luke 2:4-7.

After such great prophetic utterances had been given to mighty men as Abraham, the father of nations; David, the mighty ruler; Isaiah, a prophet who stood before kings, the fulfillment of these prophecies came in a very humble way.

One would not expect the person of whom it had been said that He would bless all peoples and establish an everlasting kingdom, to be conceived by a woman who was yet unmarried, to be born in a stable to parents who were overtaxed and oppressed by a foreign ruler, and to have an earthly father who was a poor carpenter from the despised town of Nazareth.

And yet fulfill the prophecies He did! To those who were humble and open to God it was crystal clear. God revealed to old Simeon and Anna that this child was indeed the Christ, the promised Messiah who would save His people and give light to the world.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Use a map for a simple sketch to show where Nazareth and Bethlehem are (see Patterns).

Have the children do a word search after you have explained where Jesus was born and why. Then, as they find the words, have them tell you how the words fit into the story.

Give each child a piece of paper and have him draw Jesus' family, and tell you the story. Then go over the story to make sure they have the important facts.

Make a picture of Baby Jesus in a manger, gluing straw in the manger before you cut out and glue the Baby's picture in place (see Patterns).

Let your class design and make a baby announcement, telling everyone that Jesus is born.

Help each child in your class make an invitation to Sunday school. Help them focus on the Christmas story — "Good News! Jesus was born! Come to Sunday school with me and find out all about it!" Be sure to have particulars available regarding special programs or seasonal events at the church during the holiday season. Encourage each child to give out his invitation in the coming week. If you have mostly children from non-

Apostolic homes, as a variation of this idea, help your children create invitations for their own parents.

Use Hallmark or other punch-out nativity scene to tell the story. Make each student in your class responsible for one of the characters. He should move it into the scene at the proper time, and possibly say any appropriate lines.

QUESTIONS

Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?

Was Baby Jesus like all other children? Why or why not?

God gave us His only Son Jesus. What can we give Him?

Why couldn't Joseph and Mary stay in Nazareth to be taxed?

Since it was close to the time that Mary's baby would be born, why did she travel with Joseph?

Why do you suppose God let His Son be born in such a poor place?

How do you think Joseph may have felt when he could find no better place for Mary?

Are you surprised that Mary offered no complaint? Would you have?

PRE-SCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Do a skit or panorama using the children themselves. Perhaps some of the same props that were used in the Christmas program could be used. Let the children see and touch a manger, swaddling clothes, etc., and discuss the meaning of each word. Stress that Jesus wasn't born in a palace or a rich man's home, but a simple stable.

Show some of the things we get to prepare for a new baby: (either the items or pictures of them) crib, clothing, blankets, toys, etc. Baby Jesus had none of these.

Use a sturdy nativity set with several pieces. Wrap a piece for each of your students. Let them pick which piece they want to unwrap, then add it to the scene when you come to the proper time in the story.

Prepare a teaching picture for the Christmas story similar to an Advent calendar. Allow the children to open little doors to reveal shepherds, the star, angels, sheep, etc. As they open each door, discuss how the object revealed fits into the picture and story.

REVIEW IDEAS

Plan a birthday party for Jesus. Each teacher could send a birthday announcement to the children in his class, or give it to them the week before. Have a party for the department. Decorate as you would for any party, but use Christmas-related decorations and color

scheme. Have a cake and sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. This is a good time to review the Christmas story. Ask the children what we can give to Jesus (our love, heart, time, etc.).

Bring a real baby. Let the children hold it and look at its tiny fingers, hands, etc. Talk about how much we love our little brothers and sisters. Bring out that though every baby is special, Baby Jesus was the most special Baby of all.

Have a small Christmas tree decorated with gifts. Explain that gift-giving, one of the traditions of the Christmas season, is done because we are remembering the gift of God — His own Son. When we exchange gifts with each other, we should not forget this. Select some children from your group to open the small presents tied on the tree. In each gift have something written that they can give to Jesus; for example, their heart, their time, obedience to parents, kindness to others.

Set up a manger and a baby doll in the front of your department. As you talk about how Jesus came to earth,

focus on how each child can give himself to Jesus as a gift. Pass out paper hearts and ask the students to write their names on the hearts. At the close of your review, have each child come up and place his heart in the manger or in front of it.

COORDINATING SONGS

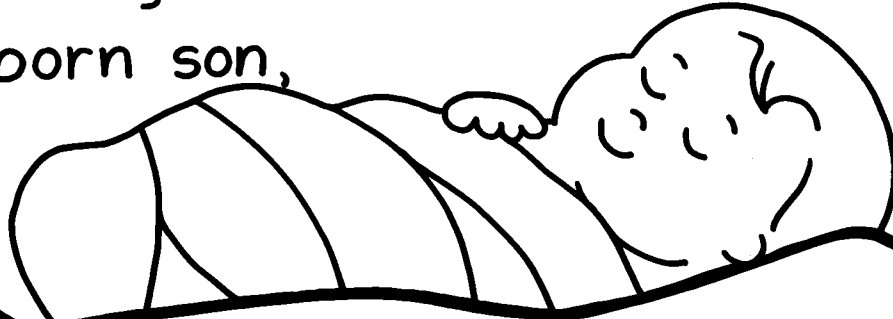
"What Child Is This?"
"Away in a Manger"
"Silent Night"
"Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus," by Harold Kasper

SUPPORT MATERIAL

"The Very Best Book of All" — Happy Day book by Fran Flourney, Standard Publishing
"The Very Special Night" — Happy Day Book, Standard Publishing
"The Gift of Christmas" — Jane Belk Moncure book, Standard Publishing
"Jesus Loves Us" — Coloring book, 8 each of 6 pictures, Warner Press
Frances Hook's "Bible Pictures" — Includes "Birth of Jesus," Standard Publishing

NOTES

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

The Angels and Shepherds

TEXT Luke 2:8-20

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Matthew 18:10; Acts 27:23,24; Hebrews 1:13,14

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to tell the method by which God made the announcement of the Savior's birth. They will further be able to describe the action taken by the Shepherds who received the announcement.

MEMORY VERSE Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. — Luke 2:10

MEMORY VERSE SONG



Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tid-ings of great
joy, which shall be to all peo-ple. Fear not: for, I
bring you good tid - ings of great joy.

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

FEAR NOT — afraid, hands up to face
FOR BEHOLD — hand cupped around mouth
I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS — fingertips on mouth
 moving out to both sides with smile on your face
OF GREAT JOY — clap hands
WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE — point around
 the room

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Cut apart the angel making the announcement. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Put up the puzzle, a piece at a time as the students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Briefly describe the setting of the Judæan hillside. Hand out the picture of the shepherds looking into the sky (see Patterns) and let the students fill in the facial expression on each face.

Progression of events:

1. Review last week's account of Jesus' birth.
 2. God chose a dramatic way to make the announcement to mankind — the appearance of the angels.
 3. Explain the angel's message.
 4. Explore the probable emotions of the shepherds.
- Climax:** They left their sheep and hurried to Bethlehem.
Conclusion: The shepherds believed, and so saw the Baby Jesus with their own eyes.

Response: Your students will be able to explain the good news brought by the angels and tell how the shepherds responded.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although we think of Abraham and David as mighty men and rulers, they were also in fact, shepherds. Just as God had announced to those Old Testament shepherds His plan to bring forth a Savior, on this first Christmas He chose humble shepherds of Bethlehem to hear His message. Although Christ's entrance into

this world was very humble, God also exalted His Son by sending an angel to announce His birth and a host of heavenly beings to praise Him.

And to whom was this pronouncement made, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"? The "all people" and the "you" of Luke 2:10,11 refer to any who will gladly hear the message of God. And Isaiah 9:6 says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." God will bless with insight the humble and spiritually needy. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Bring one or more angels and several shepherds. These could be hand puppets or dolls, or let the students be the shepherds and the teacher be the angel.

Do a flannelgraph with a Bible story tape for background effect. Bring a number of items used for communication: radio, walkie-talkie, telephone, newspaper, letter. Discuss how God chose a unique way of presenting the announcement of the birth of His Son Jesus. Another possibility would be to have your class try writing some newspaper headlines to announce His birth, or compose a spot announcement for a radio broadcast.

Give each child a picture of the shepherds looking up as they hear the message of the angels (see Patterns). Let them fill in the facial features and expressions on each face, showing the awe, fear, or wonder the shepherds must have felt when they saw the angels.

Give each child two pieces of chenille wire and show them how to twist them together and then form a crook on one end. As they are doing this, discuss the responsibilities of a shepherd and why he carries a crook, as a lead-in to the lesson.

QUESTIONS

The text says, "And there were in the same country" What country?

Why do you suppose people were frightened when they saw an angel?

Do angels always appear with a bright light about them?

Do you believe there are angels around today? Why or why not?

What city is the City of David? Do you know why?

Even when there is much war and trouble in the world, where is there "peace on earth"?

How do you suppose the shepherds felt at finding the Baby in a manger?

The shepherds told abroad the things they'd seen and

heard. Why do you suppose people didn't flock to the manger to see for themselves?

PRE-SCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Make a paper chain of angels with your children. Let them color or glue on stars.

Let the little ones glue cotton to the sheep (see Patterns).

Bring a stuffed lamb for the little ones to hold and pet.

Make an angel, shepherd and sheep finger puppets (see Patterns). Let your children act out the story as you tell it.

Use a tape recording to simulate the praises of the angels.

REVIEW IDEAS

Do an overhead telling the shepherds' story. Using the patterns provided, trace the figures onto a paper background. Cut out shapes so that when you put it on the overhead it gives a shadowbox effect (see Patterns). Tell the story as you normally would, using the overhead viewer.

Have your class put on a skit, various students taking the parts of the angel, shepherds, and angel host. Discuss how the students would feel if they were the angel bringing the good news, or if they were the shepherds that God chose to hear the wonderful news, or if they were the angels saying "Glory to God in the Highest." Let them dress in costume and perform for the whole department or an older class.

Teach the students a Christmas song which features the angels and shepherds, such as "Angels We Have Heard on High," "O Holy Night," or "The First Noel."

Make a large crossword grid on a blackboard, overhead transparency or piece of posterboard. Using clues written around the text of the lesson, help your students fill in the crossword puzzle with words selected from the text.

COORDINATING SONGS

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

"While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night"

"Glory to God," by Harold Kasper

SUPPORT MATERIAL

"The Night the Angels Sang" — Arch Book, Concordia

"The Little Shepherd and the First Christmas" — Arch Book, Concordia

"Little Benjamin and the First Christmas" — Arch Book, Concordia

Fear not:

for, behold, I
bring
you

good tidings of great
joy

which shall be to all people.

Luke 2:10

Wise Men Come to Worship

TEXT Matthew 2:1-12

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Exodus 13:21; Psalms 25:9; 48:14; Isaiah 30:21

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to relate the details of how God led the wise men to the Christ Child and His instructions concerning their return.

MEMORY VERSE When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. — Matthew 2:10

MEMORY VERSE SONG

When they saw the star they re - joiced with exceeding great
joy; when they saw the star, they re - joiced.

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

WHEN THEY SAW — hand over eyebrows
THE STAR — both hands up at side of face, all fingertips touching thumb, open and close hands quickly
THEY REJOICED — palms toward body, make circles away from body with a bubbling motion
WITH EXCEEDING GREAT JOY — clap hands

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Cut apart the star with words to the memory verse printed in the descending rays (See pattern at the end of the lesson.) Begin by putting up the star and then adding the rays in the proper order as the students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Bring a beautifully wrapped gift to class. Explain to your class that today you are going to talk about the very first Christmas gifts.

1. Explain who the wise men were.
2. They saw the star, realized its importance and purposed to follow it.
3. They came to Jerusalem, sought there for the Child, and met with King Herod.
4. Their persistence was finally rewarded when the star led them to the Christ Child.
5. They worshipped the Child, and then returned by another way.

Climax: The persistence of the wise men was rewarded when they saw the newborn King they had been seeking.

Conclusion: God led and directed the wise men and He will also lead and guide us.

Response: The students will be able to explain how and why the wise men made their journey and what happened when they reached their goal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 34 B.C., at the age of 25, Herod the Great was appointed Governor of Galilee because his father had as-

sisted Cæsar in Egypt. Palestine and, in fact, the whole Roman world was in much political turmoil at that time. Through many changes in leadership and various uprisings, Herod secured the favor of the Roman rulers and was eventually declared King of Judæa. However, he still needed to conquer his kingdom. With the help of the Romans and through much bloodshed, he eventually conquered all of Palestine and after laying siege to the city, made Jerusalem the place of his throne.

Herod was an Idumæan. These were a group of people in southern Palestine, the descendants of Esau, who had been conquered a century earlier by the Jews and forced to accept Judaism. The true Jews never really accepted them, calling them "half Jews."

Herod, however, did try to appease the Jewish people, who had become alienated by his cruelty and oppression, by rebuilding the Temple. He set about to make it as magnificent as it had been in the time of Solomon. This Herod is not to be confused with the four other Herods mentioned in Scripture who were his sons. When one reads the account in Matthew 2 of Herod's reaction to the visit of the wise men seeking another king, it is easy to see that the order to kill all the children two years and under, in Bethlehem and the surrounding villages, was in keeping with the record of his character.

How many wise men there were, their names, and their homeland are questions that can only be a matter of speculation. All that one can say for sure is that they were Gentiles from somewhere east of Israel (Matthew 2:1). They came because they had seen an unusual star and it had been revealed to them that it was somehow connected to the birth of a special King of the Jews.

Herod sought to kill this Child. The religious people of Jerusalem, although they knew the Scriptures and were stirred (Matthew 2:3), seemingly did nothing. However, those eastern astrologers acted upon the little light given to them and were the first Gentiles to worship the Christ.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Gifts to represent the gifts from the wise men can be made from odd-shaped jars, boxes, etc.

For each child, cut two stars from tagboard. Cut slits as indicated. Let the child add glue and glitter to the stars, then put the two pieces of the star together (see Patterns). Hang from ceiling with a piece of yarn or string.

Star Mobile — Make one big star and three or four smaller ones (see Patterns). Put glitter on them or make them of foil. The wise men followed the star to

Jesus, and Jesus is our Star. He will take us to Heaven if we follow Him.

Each teacher can make a big star for his/her class (see Patterns), and the week before send each child one or two smaller ones and ask him/her to bring them back on Sunday. See which class has the most stars on Sunday, and hang an award banner at the entrance to the class.

Make a folder in the shape of a wrapped and tied gift (see Patterns). Cut a heart from red construction paper and place inside. The wise men gave gifts to Jesus. We can give Him our heart.

Bring a road map to class. Talk about a trip, tracing a route from one destination to another. Discuss how the wise men did not have a map to follow, but a star instead.

Let the class dress up some volunteers as wise men. Have some things prepared to make the costumes fancy, such as tinsel or foil stars.

QUESTIONS

How did the wise men know Jesus had been born?
What did Herod tell the wise men to do?
Did the wise men do what Herod told them to do? Explain.
How do you suppose that the wise men from the East, who would not be Jewish, would have learned about the expected birth of a King of the Jews?
King Herod told the wise men that he, too, wanted to worship the newborn King. What were his true intentions?
Where did the wise men find Mary, Joseph, and the Baby? How did they locate the place?
How do those who are looking for Jesus today find Him?
What "gifts" can we bring to Jesus?

PRE-SCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Take your children on a walk around the department, following one child who is carrying a large star on a tall stick. Have them end up at a special location where you have placed a manger and a baby doll.

Teach your children the Christmas version of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." The words are:
"Twinkle, twinkle, little star
Leading wise men from afar
To the place where Jesus lay
On that first glad Christmas day.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
Leading wise men from afar."

Show your little ones something representing the gifts

of the wise men to help understand what "gold, frankincense and myrrh" were. Some suggestions: gold coins filled with chocolate, some spice such as cloves or nutmeg, and incense or perfume.

Make a shadow box using twinkle lights and one large light for the star that led the wise men.

REVIEW IDEAS

Have several large stars cut from different colored paper. On the back of each, write a word representing some things young people of this day might "follow" — such as money, friends, movie stars, possessions, etc. Turn these over one at a time, discussing how following these things can keep us from following Jesus. End up by bringing out a bigger star, perhaps decorated with glitter or in some other way made special from the

others. This one should have a picture of Jesus on the back. Illustrate that you cannot follow two stars at once.

COORDINATING SONGS

"We Three Kings"

"Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star, Leading Wise Men From Afar"

SUPPORT MATERIAL

"The Happiest Search" — Arch Book, Concordia

"Clem the Clumsy Camel" — Arch Book, Concordia

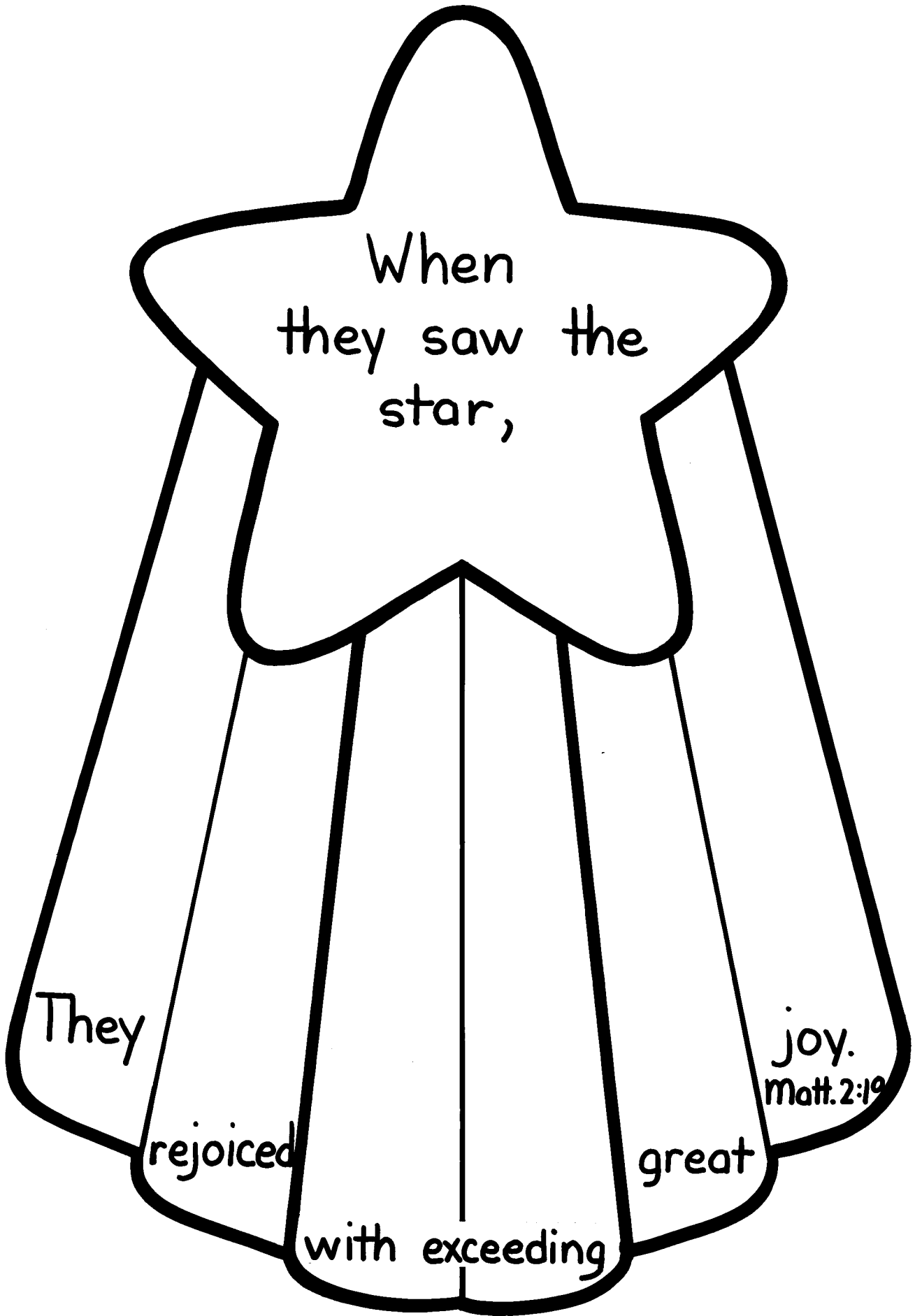
"Bethlehem's Brightest Star" — Arch Book, Concordia

"Strange New Star" — A Magic Picture Book, David C. Cook Publishing Company

"The Mysterious Star" — J. Marxhausen, Concordia

"Andro, Star of Bethlehem" — A Happy Day Book, Standard Publishing

NOTES



God Protects His Child

TEXT Matthew 2:13-23

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Jeremiah 31:15; Hosea 11:1; Psalm 34:7

OBJECTIVE The student will be able to recount how God protected His Child, and will further understand that God's providential care will surround the one who is His child in our day as well.

MEMORY VERSE Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. — Matthew 2:13

MEMORY VERSE SONG

A - rise, and take the young child and his moth-er, and flee
in-to E - gypt, a - rise and take the young child and his
moth-er, and flee in - to E - gypt (land).

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

ARISE — raise both hands in front of you
AND TAKE THE YOUNG CHILD — hold hand out in front of you below the waist (palms down)
AND HIS MOTHER — hold hand out in front of you above your head
AND FLEE — left arm, extended out in front of you (palm up) right index and middle finger “run” down arm
INTO EGYPT — clap hands

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Cut apart the angel in a circle with the words of the memory verse written in sections around her. (See pattern at the end of the lesson.) Display the angel and sections of surrounding circle piece by piece as the students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Use a picture of an angel watching over

children in a dangerous place. Discuss how God watches over us just the way He cared for His own Son Jesus.

1. Herod sought to kill the Child.
2. An angel came to Joseph and told him to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt.
3. Joseph obeyed.
4. Jesus was spared when Herod ordered all male children under two years of age to be killed.
5. An angel came again and told Joseph when it was safe to return to Israel.

Climax: God overruled the orders of kings to preserve His Son.

Conclusion: God watches over the one who is His child in our day, just as He was watching over Baby Jesus.
Response: The students will be able to relate why Joseph fled to Egypt and explain how God protected His Child. They will be able to name some things from which God protects us.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The wise men naturally came first to Jerusalem which was the political and religious center of the nation. When the question was asked where Christ should be born, the scribes knew exactly what the Scriptures said, yet did nothing to honestly investigate all the astonishing events happening just five miles from Jerusalem. Their callous indifference is amazing. Yet just as amazing is the fact that Herod thought he could thwart the plan of God which had been revealed to the prophet hundreds of years earlier (Micah 5:2). This man's insane jealousy blinded him and so he set out to kill the Christ Child. However, in so doing he only succeeded in proving his own foolishness and fulfilling yet more prophecy (Matthew 2:15,18). Even though Herod hid his evil desires in pious words (Matthew 2:8), God knew exactly what Herod was thinking and revealed it unto Joseph in a dream (Matthew 2:13). God is well able to bring His plans to completion. Heaven and earth will pass away but His Word endures forever (Matthew 24:35).

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Make beds, Joseph, Mary, Baby Jesus, and donkey out of clay or papier mâché and use them as you tell the story.

Bring a map to class and on it mark all the places mentioned in this month's lessons.

Bring a number of items that people use to protect themselves and their property — for example, an umbrella, a lock, a hard hat, seat belt, boot, Mr. Yuk stickers, stop sign. Discuss these items one at a time. End with a picture of parents, and then a picture of Jesus, showing how they also protect us. This idea could also be adapted for use as a review.

Make your own puzzle from a picture of the flight into Egypt. Let the children help put it together as you talk about the lesson.

QUESTIONS

Why were there weeping and mourning in and around Bethlehem?

Why wasn't Jesus slain?

Why did Mary and Joseph go to Egypt?

Where did they go when they left Egypt?

Why did Herod want the babies to be killed? Did he have just a few killed or many? How do you know?

To what occasion in Old Testament history can you liken this event? What comparisons between the two can you make?

Couldn't Joseph and Mary just have hidden their Baby and not had to travel so far? Explain.

What caused Joseph and Mary to return from Egypt? What made them feel it was safe and who gave them instructions?

How does God talk to people today and tell them what He wants them to do?

PRE-SCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Show pictures of guardian angels watching over children.

Use small dolls and a hand puppet for an angel to portray situations in which a child might need protection.

Show pictures of children engaged in various activities common to this age — playing, eating, sleeping, etc. Explain how Jesus is watching them while they do each of these.

Compare God's protection to an umbrella. The umbrella protects us from the rain just as God protects us from harm.

REVIEW IDEAS

Prepare an overhead on God's protection. Use drawings of some of the items for protection mentioned under In-Class Activities. Include pictures depicting the text of the lesson, and perhaps a simplified map showing the approximate distance traveled. Conclude by showing pictures of the Bible, a Sunday school class, parents talking to child, and explain how all of these are a part of the protection God has for us.

From what does God protect us? Ask children for their ideas and sketch them on a chalkboard or make a list.

Set up an obstacle course in the front of your department. Have a blindfolded student volunteer and try to go through the course without touching anything. Bring out how we have to be alert to God's Voice in order to be protected. You may also wish to point out how you, as direction giver, must keep your eyes on the student all the time. In the same way, God keeps His eyes on us.

COORDINATING SONGS

"Jesus Loves Me"

"Angels Watching Over Me"

"God Will Take Care of You"

"His Eye is on the Sparrow"

SUPPORT MATERIAL

"The Secret Journey" — Arch Book, Concordia

