

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.