

TEXT Luke 2:8-20

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to relate how the birth of Jesus was announced to the shepherds and that the news was received with joy.

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

Shepherds Hear the Good News

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

GLORY — Extend left palm facing up, right finger tips touch left palm, raise right hand, wiggling fingers.

TO GOD — Point up.

IN THE HIGHEST — Extend arms straight up.

AND ON EARTH — Hold arms in a circle over head.

PEACE — Hold up two fingers (peace symbol).

GOOD WILL — Smile and pretend to shake hands with someone.

TOWARD MEN — Point to others.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

Two singing angels, with clouds above and below, are the visual representation of this week's verse. (See pattern at end of lesson.) Cut the four pieces apart as indicated by the heavy black lines. Arrange the puzzle a piece at a time as your students recite each section of verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Give each of your students a shepherd or sheep finger puppet. (Pattern available with material for Lesson 4c.) Describe the usual things a shepherd did, and bring out that their job probably wasn't exciting. One night, however, a certain group of shepherds had something very exciting happen to them.

1. While the shepherds watched over their flocks, God chose a dramatic way in which to announce the birth of Jesus. An angel appeared in the sky and the glory of the Lord shone around them.
2. The shepherds were afraid, but the angel told them not to fear. He gave them the joyful news of the birth of the Savior.
3. A multitude of angels appeared in the sky, praising God.

Climax: The shepherds believed the message and hurried to Bethlehem to see the Christ Child.

Conclusion: The shepherds were full of joy at their great privilege, and told others of what they had seen and heard.

Response: Your students will be able to explain the

good news brought by the angels and tell how the shepherds responded.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It may seem strange to some that God would send the announcement of Jesus' birth to a group of shepherds. But as we study the Old Testament we find that many of the people God used were shepherds. The first shepherd of which we have a record was Abel whom Jesus mentioned as being righteous. Abraham, who was called the "friend of God," was also a shepherd. The Lord said to David, "I took thee from the sheepcote, from following sheep, to be ruler of my people, over Israel." Moses spent many years tending sheep in the land of Midian. Moses, Abraham, and David all prophesied of the One who was to come, who would be a prophet, ruler, and a blessing to all nations. But Jesus said of Himself, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).

We have no record before or after this account concerning the shepherds. We can be sure they were righteous men as they did not doubt the angelic message, but hurried into Bethlehem to find the newborn Baby. And after finding the Christ Child they praised and glorified God and made known abroad the message the angels gave them.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR THIS LESSON

Refer to Lessons 4c and 16b for additional ideas.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Make woolly sheep to distribute during class time. Use a 2" x 1" piece of fluffy cotton and one white pipe cleaner for each. Make the body of the sheep from the cotton and cut the pipe cleaner in half for the legs. Twist one piece of pipe cleaner around the cotton about $\frac{3}{4}$ " from the end to form a head and front feet. Twist the second piece of pipe cleaner around the cotton about $\frac{1}{4}$ " from opposite end to form tail and back legs. Pinch a bit of cotton at each side of the head to form ears.

Roll between fingers a little cotton from body to form a tail.

Put many angel stickers on the inside of a shoe box. Tape the shoe box and lid together. Cut a hole in one end and in the bottom cut a larger hole into which you can fit the bulb end of a flashlight. Let the children look through the small hole in the end of the box and see how black the night could have been. Then turn on the flashlight and let them look in. Tell how dark it must have been on the hillside except for the moon and stars and perhaps a campfire. Then how exciting it was for the sky to light up with a host of angels and hear them fill up the quiet of the night with singing and praising God!

Invite a guest, dressed as a shepherd, to come to your class. Introduce him to your students as one of the shepherds who was on the Judean hills the night the angels appeared. Let your class interview him about what happened that night and his feelings and emotions.

Give each student a copy of the Touch-and-Feel nativity scene (see Patterns). Supply the necessary materials needed for the children to finish their scene (glue, scissors, and material listed on the handout).

A class of little girls will enjoy making this host of angels. Prepare a felt angel puppet (see Patterns) for each child. For each angel cut the face from pink or tan felt, the wings from yellow, and the robe from a pastel color. Sew or glue the pieces together. Attach the angel to a tube-shaped mitten to create a puppet. Sew several pieces of long, thick yarn to the top of the angel's head. Let the children style the yarn hair (pony tails, braids, etc.). Have ribbons ready for them to use on their finished hairdos. When they all put the puppets on their hands and hold them up, the "sky" will be filled with angels.

Give each of the children their own paper-plate tambourine to accompany the heavenly choir when it is time to sing. To make them, invert two paper plates and draw designs using colored markers. Use a paper punch to punch holes at intervals around the rim of each plate. (Be sure the holes of one plate match the other plate!) Lay one plate right side up on a table and put a handful of small pebbles, rice, or beans in the plate. Invert the other plate and place it on top of the first plate. Line up the holes and use yarn to tie the plates together. Let the ends of the yarn dangle free. You may want to glue or staple the edges of the plates together to make sure whatever you have put inside does not fall out. Hint: You can also use styrofoam plates, or disposable aluminum pie plates. If styrofoam plates are used, the children will need permanent colored markers to draw their designs.

QUESTIONS

What does a shepherd do?

Why do you think the angels told the poor shepherds about Jesus' birth?

What was the sign that the angels told the shepherds to look for so they would know it was Jesus?

Do you think the shepherds had been waiting for Jesus to come? Why did they believe the angels?

After the shepherds saw Jesus, what did they do? How can we tell people about Jesus?

Where did the angels find the shepherds?

What did the angels tell them?

Should we tell others about Jesus? Why?

Do you think the shepherds would have felt comfortable visiting Jesus if He had been born in a palace as most kings are?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Bring a toy lamb to use as an opener for a discussion about what it must have been like for a shepherd boy up there on the hillside that night.

Make paper sheep on which the children may glue cotton balls (see Patterns).

Talk about where Jesus was born and about the animals that might have been at the manger when the shepherds came to visit. Show pictures of sheep and other animals.

Use a fuzzy felt Bible Story Box (available at Bible book stores). Cut the additional figures needed from felt available at fabric and craft stores.

REVIEW IDEAS

Turn off the lights. Have a spotlight previously set up. Have an adult come in dressed up as an angel (turn on spotlight) and have the narrator tell how it must have been that night so long ago out on a dark hillside when an angel and bright light appeared with the good news. Then the sky was filled with bright shining angels — point to adult angel. Make sure your angel has lots of tinsel and well-glittered wings to shine in the spotlight. Play a tape or record of the song, "Angels We Have Heard on High."

Use a Christmas tree-top angel, stuffed lamb, and crown. Discuss (using objects) how God did not choose

to announce Jesus' birth first to kings and royalty (show crown). He had the angels (show angel) take the message to shepherds out on the hillside keeping their sheep (show sheep). God sent Jesus to be the Savior for all people.

COORDINATING SONGS

"Go Tell It on the Mountain" — Songs of God and Me
 "Silent Night" — Songs of God and Me
 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Use a large nativity scene and sandbox. Be very descriptive in telling the story.

MEMORY VERSE SONG

♩ = 100

Glo-ry to God, Glo-ry to God, Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and on earth
 peace, good will t'ward men. will t'ward men.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

