

LESSON I.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

January 7, 1900

Luke 2: 1-16. Commit to memory vs. 8-11. Read Luke 1; Matt. 1; John 1: 1-18.

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar 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 Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehém; (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 now go even unto Bethlehém, 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.

Revised Version—1 Now; 2 Enrolled; 3 This was the first enrolment made when Quirinus was; 4 Enrol themselves; 5 Family; 6 To enrol himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him; 7 And it came to pass; 8 Fulfilled; 9 Margin, Night watches over their flock; 10 And an angel of the Lord stood by them; 11 Be not afraid; 12 Is; 13 The babe; 14 And lying; 15 Peace among men in whom he is well pleased; 16 When the angels went away from them; 17 Both.

EXPLANATION

Connection—The lessons for the year are in the Gospels. They aim at giving an outline of the life of Jesus, the Christ, "between whom and whoever else in the world there is no possible term of comparison." John's statement, in words of utter simplicity, but of fathomless depth, sums up that wonderful life. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1: 1-14).

1, 2. In those days; following the wonderful events of last chapter. A decree; a proclamation by the Emperor of Rome, Cæsar Augustus. All the world. The Roman Empire of that time included nearly all the known world. Taxed, "enrolled," Rev. Ver. It was a census taken as a basis of taxation. Was first made; implying a second enrolment, which took place ten years later. Cyrenius; an obscure soldier who rose to high office, and finally to be Governor of Syria.

3-7. And all; in Palestine. Into his own city; where the family registers were kept. Nazareth; a despised village in Galilee (John 1: 46), where was the home of Joseph and Mary. The city; of David, Bethlehém of Judæa (Matt. 2: 5, 6). King David's birthplace (1 Sam. 16: 1). Joseph and Mary, although in very humble circumstances, were of the royal lineage of David. Swaddling clothes; strips of cloth bound

round the infant. A manger; a "stall" (13: 15) of one of the stables. The inn, or "khan," was a rude structure to afford shelter to travellers.

8, 9. In the field; near Bethlehém. Keeping watch, etc., to protect their flocks from thieves and wild beasts. And, lo; denoting surprise and wonder. The glory, etc.; the light of the divine presence (Luke 24: 4). Sore afraid; because of the supernatural (1: 11, 12; 9: 34).

10-14. Fear not. The angel seeks to soothe their fears before delivering his message (1: 13). Good tidings; tidings of salvation. To all people; Gentile as well as Jew. A Saviour. The name denotes the great purpose for which Christ came (Matt. 1: 21). Christ; the Greek for Messiah, meaning "The Anointed." The Lord; a testimony to His divinity and his lordship over men. Suddenly; the angelic host, invisible before, now visible. A multitude. All heaven honors the Christ (Ps. 24: 7-10), and rejoices in the salvation of men (Luke 15: 7, 10). In the highest. God is high above all creatures, therefore worthy of all praise. On earth peace; a word including all blessings. Good will toward men; shown in the sending of Christ. (See R. V.)

15, 16. Let us now go; and see for ourselves. With haste; the eagerness of faith and expectation. And they found. Faith and obedience were rewarded, as they always are.