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Teachers' Preparation Leaflet

LESSON I.

JULY 1st, 1894.

3rd QUARTER.

The Birth of Jesus. Luke 2: 1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Unto us is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2: 11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY verses 10-14. **CHILDREN'S HYMNAL** 17, 18, 211, 20.

PROVE THAT—Jesus is the promised Messiah. Acts 17: 3.

SHORTER CATECHISM. Quest. 82. Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

DAILY PORTIONS.

(The Selections of the International Bible Reading Association.)

MONDAY.	TUESDAY.	WEDNESDAY.	THURSDAY.	FRIDAY.	SATURDAY.	SABBATH
Luke 2: 1-16.	Isa. 9: 1-6.	Isa. 40: 1-11.	Jno. 1: 1-14.	1 Tim. 1: 12-17	2 Tim. 1: 1-10.	1 Jno. 4: 9-14.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—We begin to-day a study of the whole life of Christ. It will occupy a year and a half, and should fill every one of us with increased admiration of the wonderful Saviour. It should help us to understand him better and love him more. Before you begin, ask him to help you to study every lesson well, and to make you more like himself. Be sure and read the whole story from the beginning, including John 1: 1-18; Luke 1: 1-80; and Matt. 1: 1-25.

The Roman Empire then embraced the whole known world. Rome itself was a city of about 6,000,000 inhabitants, and more wealthy and magnificent than London. Jerusalem had a population of more than 2,500,000.

LESSON PLAN. I. The Infant Saviour. vs. 1-7. II. The Angels' Song. vs. 8-14. III. The Shepherds' Visit. vs. 15, 16.

I. THE INFANT SAVIOUR. 1. In those days—The calculations of Dionysius, a Roman abbot, surnamed "exiguus," or "the little," have been universally accepted throughout Christendom. These were published in A. D. 526 and by them the date of our Saviour's birth was fixed in the year of Rome 754. It is now generally acknowledged that this date is four years astray, and should have been A. U. C. 750. **Decree**—Greek "dogma." **Caesar Augustus**—The Roman emperor. His name was Octavianus, but he assumed the title "Augustus," or "the august," in compliment to his own greatness. Our month *August* is named from him, as *July* from his uncle Julius Caesar. **All the world**—R. V. marg. "the inhabited earth." This must refer to the whole Roman empire and not merely to Palestine. The emperors were called "lords of the inhabited world," and the empire was said to be "orbis terrarum." The Greek word here is that from which "ecumenical" comes. **Taxed**—R. V. "enrolled." The word means "to write off," or "enter in a list." It was a general census of the empire, taken for purposes of taxation or ambition, and therefore distasteful to the Jews both on patriotic and religious grounds. It has been objected that no such decree was issued at this time since we have no mention of it elsewhere. But (1) Luke wrote near the time and he would not have made such a glaring misstatement of fact, it would have been at once contradicted; (2) he has been proved to be singularly accurate in points in which at one time he was thought to have been in error, e. g. calling the magistrates of Thessalonica *Pollitarchs* (Acts 17: 6); (3) the political records of the time are very imperfect, but we know that Augustus frequently called for statistical returns; (4) the early defenders of Christianity refer to census lists made by Quirinus when first procurator and challenge their

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opponents to search them. It is never replied "These lists do not exist;" (5) Augustus compiled a summary of the resources of the empire which must have been based upon such a census as this; (6) Josephus relates that there was much agitation among the Jews shortly before the death of Herod, but does not mention the cause. It may have arisen from opposition to this census as to the subsequent one mentioned in Acts 5: 37. 2. The first enrollment made—(R. V.)—This clearly points to a second (Acts 5: 37.) Other translations are made with a view of obviating the difficulty connected with the verse (1) "This enrollment was first made" i. e. did not take effect until Quirinus, etc. But this idea would have been expressed in a different manner; (2) "Before Quirinus was governor, etc." This is not an impossible rendering of "first" but is awkward and unusual. The difficulty lies in the fact that Quirinus was governor in A. D. 6 and there is no record of his having been governor in B. C. 4. A German critic, A. W. Zumpt, has shown that it is highly probable that he was twice governor. He was honored with a "Triumph" in A. D. 1 or 2, for conquering some hostile tribes in the province of Syria, and the war in which these victories were won must have occurred about B. C. 4. The general of the army would also be governor of the province. Syria—Although Judea was ruled by its own king, it was more or less under the oversight of the Roman governors of Syria. 3. His own city—In Palestine the Jewish method was followed. Each person repaired to the family head-quarters to be enrolled. 4. Bethlehem—"House of bread" called also Ephrath, or Ephratah, "Fruitful." 1 Sam. 16: 1; Micah 5: 2; John 7: 42. Galilee was the most fertile and prosperous part of Palestine. Nazareth was about 70 miles north of Jerusalem and Bethelam 6 miles south. Lineage—R. V. "family." The nation was divided into tribes, these into families, and these again into houses. See Matt. 1: 16; Luke 1: 27. 5. Mary, who was betrothed to him—R. V.—She was legally, but not actually, his wife (Matt. 1: 24, 25.) The law did not require Mary to go with her husband. She may have thought of the prophecy and desired to fulfil it, at any rate God overruled her actions so as to bring it about that her child should be born at Bethlehem. She too was of the "house and lineage of David." (ch. 1: 32.) 7. Firstborn—"Although this term may undoubtedly be used of an only child, such use is necessarily always connected with the expectation of others to follow, and can no longer have place when the whole course of events is before the writer and no others have followed. The combination of this consideration with the fact that brethren of our Lord are brought forward in this gospel in close connection with his mother, make it as certain as any implied fact can be that these children were the children of Mary herself." (Alford.) "The evangelists could not well have used this term of Jesus if they had known that Mary had no other children." (Schaff.) Swaddling clothes—lit. "she swaddled him." i. e. wrapped around the body and limbs a long strip of linen about four inches wide. Mary seems to have been without the attendance so necessary at such a time. Manger—Ancient tradition states that the stable was a cave. "The monks of Bethlehem show a grotto beneath the great Christian church, lined with marble, which they claim to be the stable where the infant Christ was laid. I believe that this tradition is better founded than those of most holy places. The caravansera, or inn, would naturally be where this is, just outside of the little town. It was founded by Chimham, son of Barzillai, in the days of David (2 Sam. 19: 37; 38; Jer. 41: 17,) and was scarcely likely to be changed up to the time of the Roman rule, when the early Christians consecrated it as a church. There are many natural grottoes on the slope of the hill; and we frequently see in other places that the caves near a caravansera have been enlarged and used as stables. The stable is very unlike ours. At the end farthest from the door is always an elevated dais or platform, usually made by enlarging the cavern, but leaving the floor of the platform about three or four feet higher than the area. In front of it is a long trough hollowed out, reaching from end to end,—the manger. The forage is stored on this platform, out of reach of the cattle, and is pushed into the long manger as required. Here the camel-drivers usually sleep, close to their animals. Now the inn being full, Joseph and Mary would be compelled to avail themselves of this shelter, and to sojourn on this platform. Naturally, when the child was born, the manger would suggest itself as the only cradle available, where the mother could tend him lying by her side, and wrapped, as is still the universal Eastern custom, in a series of bandages from head to foot, like a mummy, till the babe looks like some limb newly set and bandaged with surgical skill." (Canon Tristram.) Dr. Thompson in "The Land and the Book" says, that such mangers make very excellent cradles indeed, and that his children have very often slept in them while spending the summer among the hills. Inn—This was generally a quadrangular court-yard surrounded by rooms, or alcoves, the paved floor of which was raised a foot or more above the central area. In these the travellers found shelter, providing for, and waiting upon themselves.

II. THE ANGEL'S SONG. 8. In the same country—rather "in the same place," i. e. near Bethlehem. Shepherds—The sheep intended for sacrifice in the temple were pastured near Bethlehem. "Here on the road to Jerusalem, stood Migdal-Edgar, 'the watch-tower of the flock, the station where the shepherds watched the flocks destined for the daily sacrifice in the temple. Animals straying from Jerusalem on any side, so far as to Migdal-Edgar were confiscated to the temple service. It was a settled conviction among the Jews that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, and that previously he was to be an-

nounced from Migdal-Edgar. The beautiful significance of the revelation of the infant Christ to shepherds watching the flocks destined for sacrifice needs no comment." (M. R. Vincent.)

Abiding in the field—There is no reason why this should not have been the case in December. In the climate of Palestine some of the finest weather of the year occurs in the latter part of this month. The precise day of our Saviour's birth is, however, not known. The event was not celebrated until after the middle of the fourth century, and then there was the utmost diversity as to date. Ultimately the usage of the Roman church prevailed. The saying of the Talmudists, on which the opposition to the December date rests, that the flocks were taken to the fields in March and brought home in November, is said to have referred to the pastures in the wilderness far away from the cities and villages. (See Andrew's *Life of Christ*.)

Keeping the night watches (R. V. marg.)—lit. "the watches of the night." Meyer thinks that the plural refers to the different watch stations. The common view is that they kept watch by turn for a certain number of hours. It was necessary to guard against wild beasts and robbers. (1 Sam. 17: 34; John 10: 10, 12.)

9. An angel—not "the" angel. **Came upon them**—R. V. "stood by them." The idea is of a sudden appearance. He was there before they perceived his approach. **The glory of the Lord**—They recognized this as the *Shechinah*, the symbol of divine presence, testifying to the celestial messenger. Ex. 24: 16; 1 Kings 8: 10; Isa. 6: 1-3; Acts 7: 55; 26: 13; Rom. 9: 4.

Sore afraid—lit. "feared a great fear." "sore," in the sense of "very much," denotes an intensely disagreeable sensation. Its use is poetic and archaic. Doubtless the shepherds were, like Simeon, "waiting for the consolation of Israel," yet their fear was natural, not only from the sudden and unexpected character of the appearance, but from the consciousness that they were in the presence of a supernatural being. There was also the old belief that no one could see God and live. Judges 13: 22; Ex. 33: 20. Compare Luke 5: 8; 24: 4, 5, 37. This fear may be connected with the consciousness of sin.

10. Fear not—Almost always the first words of a gracious visitant. Matt. 28: 5, 10; Luke 1: 13, 30; Gen. 15: 1. **I bring you good tidings**—This is one word in Greek. Wycliffe translates it literally, "I evangelize to you a great joy." The angel was the first evangelist. **Joy**—Read Isa. 52: 7; 61: 1; Rom. 5: 11; 1 Pet. 1: 8.

To all the people R. V.—i. e. to all the people of Israel. This was but the prelude to the more glorious anthem of the angelic host. The message was first to the Jews and through them to the whole world and to all classes of men. Gen. 12: 3; Ps. 72: 8; Isa. 2: 2; 42: 6; 60: 3; Ezek. 17: 22, 23; Micah 4: 1, 2; Matt. 28: 19; Luke 24: 47; Acts 13: 46, 47; Rom. 15: 8, 9; Col. 1: 23.

11. A Saviour—A deliverer, for whom the oppressed people prayed and of whom their prophets had spoken. Isa. 9: 6. He was a Saviour in a deeper sense than probably the shepherds understood Matt. 1: 21. **Christ the Lord**—"Messiah Jehovah," "the anointed One, who is Jehovah." "The Lord" is the common name for Jehovah in the Old Testament, and stands here in apposition to "Christ." This is the only place in which these two names come together. In Acts 2: 36 we have "Lord and Christ" which means the same. This is a distinct assertion to the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. Phil. 2: 11. The advent of the long expected Messiah is now announced.

In the city of David—According to Micah 5: 2, to which the minds of these Bible reading shepherds would revert, and grasp more clearly the full meaning of the astonishing news. These words stand last in order in the original and by particularizing the place, and that close by, make the message more real to the ears of the shepherds.

12. This is the sign R. V.—The mark by which they should recognize the child, namely, he would be "a swaddled babe cradled in a manger, in Bethlehem." This was not a sign vouchsafed to unbelief, for asking which Zacharias was struck dumb (Luke 1: 18-20) and which Christ refused to give to the Jews, but a mere mark of identification. The faith of the shepherds is perfect and child-like.

13. The heavenly host—or "army," a common designation of the angels. The figure is derived from the pomp of military display around the persons of earthly monarchs. Other appearance of these, Gen. 28: 12; 32: 1, 2; 1 Kings 22: 19; 2 Kings 6: 17; Dan. 7: 10; Rev. 5: 11; 19: 14. See also Matt. 26: 53. "They are participants in creation (Job 38: 7,) at the giving of the law (Deut. 35: 2; Acts 7: 53,) at the ascension (Ps. 68: 17; Luke 24: 4-7,) at the judgment (Matt. 25: 31)" (Webster and Wilkinson.)

Praising God—It is assumed that these words were sung, but the narrative does not say so. They have the form of Hebrew poetry and therefore it is reasonable to suppose that they were chanted after the manner of the Psalms. This gives us no hint of the music heard in heaven, for the angels would adapt themselves to their hearers so as to edify rather than astonish them.

14. We cannot go fully into all that has been written regarding this verse. The sense generally is that the event announced by the angel enhances the glory of God, brings peace to earth, and proclaims God's goodwill to men. The main controversy centres around the word "goodwill." There are two readings differing by only a single letter. "Peace on earth to men of goodwill," and the one in our Bibles. The former is adopted by the Revised Version, "peace among men in whom he is well pleased," i. e. men who are the objects of God's "goodwill." "The elect people of God." (Van Oosterzee.) This reading has been thought by critics to be the best supported by ancient manuscripts, but it has not proved acceptable to English readers for reasons both sentimental and logical. The sentimental reasons are obvious, but apart from these, it does not seem a statement worthy

of the occasion that there is peace to those with whom God is well pleased. No heavenly chorus was needed to tell men that. The most ignorant heathen knows it. But it was in every way suitable to the event to proclaim that God looked with pitying "benevolence" on the whole fallen race. (John 3:16; Eph. 2:7; 1 John 4:9, 10.) Godet says "*Men of goodwill*, meaning those on whom goodwill rests, is a mode of expression without any example." Dr. Scribner says, that the received text of our authorized version "has the virtually unanimous evidence of the Greek fathers, with an authority from which there is, or ought to be, no appeal." The Lewis manuscript of the gospels, discovered in 1892 in the convent at Mt. Sinai, has the common reading "goodwill towards men." Great importance is attached to this by scholars. If the words be taken to mean "men possessed of goodwill" i. e. towards God (as in the English version,) it is false theology and although an angel from heaven declared it we would not receive him. (Gal. 1:8.) If God gave peace only to those who first manifested "goodwill" none would be saved. In the highest—i. e. in the heavens, as is shewn by antithesis to "on earth." Others understand it to mean (1) in the highest strains; or, (2) among the highest angels; or, (3) the most high God. This was a familiar doxology. (ch. 19:38.) "The song suggests that heaven and earth have been united, are in a certain correspondence, and be simultaneously described; as the halo of glory spread out from God to all sides in heaven, so the halo of peace will spread out from God's people on all sides on earth." Rom. 5:1. (Lindsay.) Peace—Isa. 9:6. (1) Christ reconciles men to God by his atonement; (2) induces the sinner to lay down the weapons of his rebellion; (3) bestows a peace which passeth all understanding; and (4) infuses principles of kindness and goodwill amongst men, ultimately bringing about universal peace. The following clause stands in apposition and is explanatory of the reason why there is peace on earth, hence there is no connecting "and." There is peace on earth because God's kindness and compassion, his "goodwill," have found expression in this new-born babe, and are incarnate amongst men.

III. THE SHEPHERDS' VISIT. 15. Let us now go even unto—lit. "let us go, right off, as far as to Bethelchem." The words imply that they were at some distance from the town. 16. "They came hastening," shewing zeal as well as faith. The truth of the news is not for a moment doubted by them. Notice how graphic the narrative is. Found—"discovered," implying more or less prolonged search.

SUMMARY AND REVIEW.

By members of St. Enoch's Church, Toronto, Sabbath School Teachers' Association.

(We regret that our space does not permit us to give, in full, the excellent notes accompanying these outlines.)

BLACKBOARD.

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

THE ANGELS' MESSAGE. {A Saviour is Born.
Ye Shall Find Him.

THE HEAVENLY SONG. {Glory to God.
Peace on Earth.
Goodwill to Men.

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO US. {Come unto Me.
Go Tell All Nations.

For Junior Classes the following Outline may be followed to advantage:

THE ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT.

“ “ CHOIR.

“ HUMBLE WITNESSES.

“ BIRTH PROCLAIMED.

In arranging the lesson this way we have a series of word pictures which can be made exceedingly interesting to the Junior scholars.