Sunday School Lesson

LESSON XII.

The Birth of Jesus.—Luke 2:1-20
Printed Text Luke 2:8-20.

Golden Text.—There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.—Luke 2:11.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING

Time.—B.C. 5.

Place.—Nazareth in Galilee, the home of Mary and Joseph, and Bethlehem in Judaea, where Jesus was born.

While, on the one hand, the story of our Lord's birth is recognized as the most beautiful and exquisite story of all literature, marked by great simplicity and holiness, and, we might say, heavenliness, yet the first two verses of this story in Luke's account only record bare historical data. The Roman census was taken at this time every fourteen years, and this fact also fits in perfectly with the historical facts which are in our possession.

The World's True Bread

Now Joseph, the husband of Mary, "was of the house and family of David," Israel's great king, and David's original residence was in Bethlehem, and it was necessary for him to go down to this lovely city from Nazareth where he was residing, to be enrolled in such a census as was now being taken. Joseph took Mary, soon to become a mother, with him, not leaving her in the care of others. The word "Bethlehem" means "house of bread," because near by were large grain fields. Here was to be born the true Bread of the world. We must not interpret the word "betrothed" as identical with our word "engaged." "Betrothal was virtually marriage, lacking only that the bridegroom take his bride to his home.

How almost pathetically is the birth of the Son of God recorded by the physician Luke! There is nothing miraculous in the description of the birth itself, though the details reveal a loneliness, if not a poverty and an ignorance on the part of the world round about, of what was happening that can be taken as indicative of all the future experience of the One here born.

"No Room at the Inn"

"There was no room in the inn" for the holy family, it is not to be understood "to mean merely that there was no room for the Child; but that the inn in which they could have found lodging lacked a suitable room for the birth, as well as a suitable bed for the babe, so that they had to leave the inn and find refuge in a crib in the stable. In the East today the dwelling place of man and beast is often in one and the same room. But this is not how the Evangelist conceived it to have been; he imagines that the manger was outside the inn in some particular stable, such as are used today for camels sometimes, but more rarely, for sheep. He takes it for granted that the stable was empty as would be natural during the time when sheep spent the night in the open.

Testimony of Heaven

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. In Palestine flocks are allowed to graze the land only while the fields are still unplowed. The shepherds sleep in their clothes in the midst of their flocks when they are out all of the night.

And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. These shepherds were simple, unsophisticated pastoral men. They were engaged in their common occupation when they received the wonderful revelation from heaven. It is not when speculating about abstract doctrines or dreaming about heavenly vision that heaven draws near to us and reveals itself to us. It is when engaged in daily duty, doing the work of the appointed hour that is laid to our hand.

"And the angel said unto them Be not afraid." That was heaven's first word to earth after the birth of Jesus. It was the voice of an unfallen spirit sounding anew the keynote of the music of hope among sinning men. "For behold"— it is natural for men to be afraid in the presence of God, in the manifestation of that which is supernatural. "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people." The word here translated "good tidings," means, literally, "good news" and is, in the Greek, the word from which comes our English word evangelist. It was an angel who announced the evangel.

"For there is born to you."—Jesus was born for all men. It was because he loved men that he came into the world. In saying he is born for us, we mean that he was born for our good, for our enrichment, and, for our salvation. "This day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."— In the Old Testament, God is often referred to as the Saviour (2 Sam. 22: 3; Isa. 43: 3, 11; 45: 15, 21; Hosea 13: 4, etc.). A Saviour is one who saves. Jesus came to deliver us from every evil power, and to bestow upon us an eternal life. The word Christ means anointed by the Holy Spirit for his great work of redemption. It should never be forgotten and cannot be over-emphasized that it is a voice from heaven which declares these wonderful things about the babe born in Bethlehem. These titles were not given to Jesus by his followers, or by himself, or by later writers, but by the angel of the Lord, sent of God.

"And this is the sign unto you; did not reason or debate with themselves who should keep the wolf from the sheep in the meantime, but did as they were commanded, and committed their sheep to him whose pleasure they obeyed.

"And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger."

"And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds."—The shepherds not only made known what they had heard concerning Jesus to Mary and Joseph, but undoubtedly they proclaimed their message to all the inhabitants of Bethlehem.

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them."—To glorify God is to acknowledge, to extol, and to worship him for what he is.

Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:"—Thousands of angels appeared filling the expanse of sky. Luke does not actually say that the angels sang, but the angels' words are in poetical form.

Peace and Good-Will

"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."—This is the meaning of the coming of this child, the meaning of the Saviour, Christ, Lord. Men everywhere are talking about peace, and they are trying to produce peace. There is no peace for the earth except among men in whom God is well pleased.

"And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath known unto us." — Often we miss such great blessings in life by not immediately acting upon some divinely sent urge within our hearts to do this or that.

The shepherds appears no more in the Gospel story. We see them returning to their task 'glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen,' and then the mantle of a deep silence falls upon them.

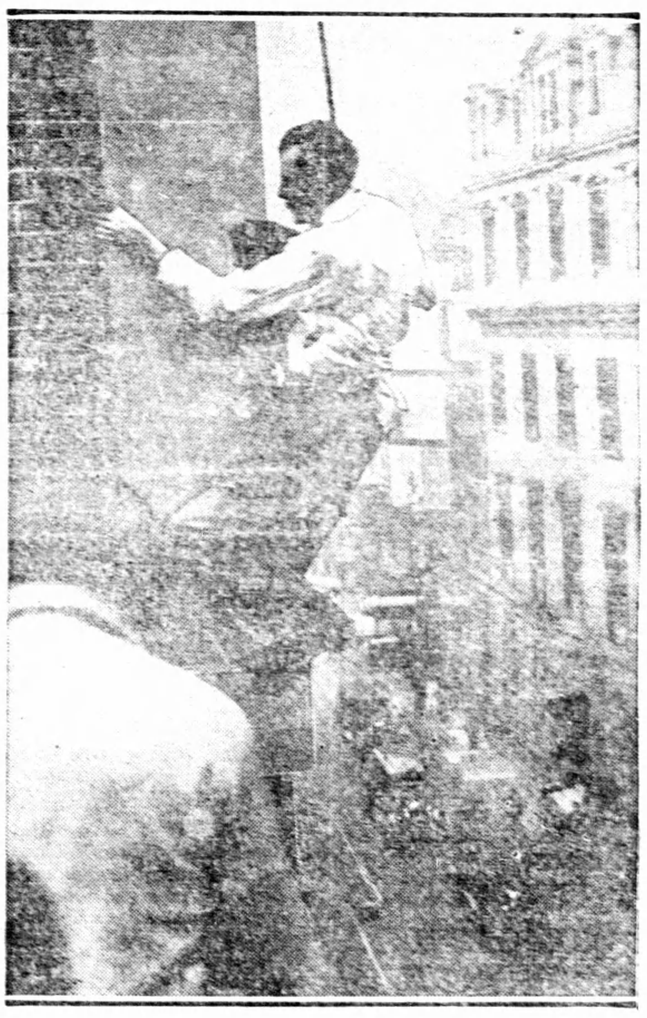
Mary's Meditation

"But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart."—The action of Mary is here contrasted with that of the shepherds. In their surprise and astonishment, they immediately published what they had heard and saw. Mary was not astonished because she knew the significance of the babe to which she was to give birth from previous annunciations to her and to Joseph by the angel. The word "pondered" means "to bring together in one's mind," "to consider." The roll of the coming years would pass before the mind of Mary as she looked into the face of her own "little Lord Jesus." And Mary had "all these sayings" to help her see God in the Babe of Bethlehem.

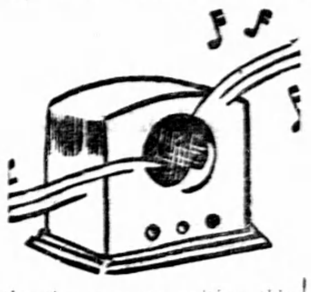
Ready For Rose Bowl

Joe Kilgrow will head the attack of the Crimson Tide when Alabama meets California in the Rose Bowl on New Years Day.

Risks Life To Save Cat



For two days a cat lay on a fifty feet high ledge on the building of Gatti's Restaurant near the Strand, in London, England. A small boy noticed the animal and told the timekeeper. Twenty-three-year-old Harry Bone, restaurant storekeeper, volunteered to rescue the cat. He climbed to the roof of the building where his workmates tied a rope round his waist and lowered him down to the endangered feline. Crowds in the street below watched while Harry grasped the cat and was hauled back to the roof where the animal escaped and ran away. Harry has a widowed mother to support, but he had to risk his life saving that cat. You see, he is a cat lover. He has three of his own. Pictured is Harry Bone being hauled to the roof with the rescued cat in his arms while crowds in the street watch breathlessly.



Around The Dial

RADIO HEADLINERS OF THE WEEK

By FRANK DENNIS

At the time we are writing this column James Shields is in town, looking up old friends and acquaintances, and he'll be back on his way to New York as this goes to press. Jimmy, as you may recall, is being starred on the new Lucky Strike network program. Jimmy is another proof that Canada has big time talent. . . .

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Finally, the day has been set for the gigantic Star Santa Claus Fund broadcast, which generally lasts about three hours. Just spoke to Jimmy Annan who is handling the show, and he informs us that Geoff Waddington and a thirty piece orchestra, the Campbell sisters, Ethel, Myrt and Jean, Jean Haig, Adolph Wintroff, Harvey Doney and exotic Louise King have already consented to appear. John Sturgis will make an effort to come from Buffalo for the show. Rumours also have it that Maude Waterworth Craig, symphonic harpist and Dr. Fricker will be present. A stunt is being planned similar to one used last year, namely, a trip to some house typical of those for whom the program is being conducted. Greg Clark and Denton Massey will be Masters of Ceremonies, and community singing will be held. The place of broadcast this year is the Eaton Auditorium on Wednesday, December 22nd. CRCY will carry the complete program from 8 o'clock until midnight. It is quite likely that CRCT will also carry the program. By the way, innumerable novelty and variety acts will be presented, but these will be kept secret, and we cannot get any information on them. . . .

Visits to Exotic Countries

A new program is scheduled for CFRB on Sundays, 10:30 to 11, entitled Ports of Call. The program has proved exciting and interesting, featuring dramatic visits to foreign lands. These visits are authentic and educational. The music on the program coincides with the visit. . . .

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Just stepped into an audition today, and heard something that is quite unusual. Two young lads playing guitars. George O'Connor and Dave Richards. The boys offer something very new in the way of guitar playing, and will be heard in a very short while. More information forthcoming. . . .

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Whiteman Comes Back

Speaking of smart music, Paul Whiteman, King of Jazz, will return to the Columbia Network, Friday, December 31st, 8 30 to 9. The sponsors of this program are replacing their present series, featuring Alice Faye and Hal Kemp. In the words of Whiteman: "The series will be popular programs devoted to tune favourites, old and new, but I hope to introduce the works of new American composing talent." Paul Douglas will be the announcer. . . .

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Columbia presents amateur talent en masse. Every Saturday, from 6 to 6.25, an amateur contest takes place, open to choirs, choristers and glee clubs of the United States, composed of mefbers 25 years or younger and having forty members or less. They will compete for a cup awarded by CBS and a concert tour arranged by Columbia Concert Corporation. It should be a program worth listening to. . . .

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Toronto an on Ford Hour

Sir Ernest MacMillan, conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since 1931, will be guest conductor of the Ford Sunday Evening Hour series over CBS during the period from February 27 through March 27. Sir Ernest's name completes the 1937-1938 roster of internationally known orchestral directors for the Ford Sunday Evening Hour which lists Jose Iturbi, Eugene Ormandy, Fritz Reiner and John Barbirolli of the New York Philharmonic - Symphony Orchestra. The guest artists who will appear while the Detroit Symphony Orchestra is under Sir Ernest's direction will include Kirsten Flagstad, the noted Wagnerian soprano; Lily Pons, the Metropolitan Opera coloratura; Jose Iturbi, as piano soloist; and Nino Martini, romantic tenor.

Every Friday Night on a national coast to coast network.

Thirty Millions Going to School In Russia Today

Great Advance In Education Seen Under Red Regime

Russia's educational, cultural and scientific progress from that of a backward nation of illiterates to that of a country pioneering in flights over the North Pole was emphasized on the Soviet Union's 20th birthday, November 7, celebrated in the midst of the campaign for the general election December 12.

Soviet leaders constantly remind the masses how much better off they are materially and mentally than under the czars. Foreign observers agree that the material and mental lot of the masses has risen from what, before the war, was almost zero.

Visitors who were in Russia several years ago report that the Russian, while far from being well-dressed, now is better clothed. Food now appears sufficient, if not over-plentiful. It no longer is rationed.

Thirty million children are going to school in Russia, where there were only 7,800,000 before the revolution. Illiteracy has been reduced from 67 per cent. to 10 per cent. The young Russians have 92,000 playgrounds, where they had only 125 under the czars.

Until Soviet Russia's struggling industrial development catches up with the needs of the 170,000,000 inhabitants, there is unlikely to be any unemployment. New areas have been settled and are being developed, notably the great region above the Arctic circle.

Although it is notable to develop new political leaders in the younger generations, Managers of factories and other industrial leaders likewise are being recruited among the younger workers who have shown outstanding ability.

Although the dread political police watches over the loyalty of the Soviet citizen, the public appears to have regained the ordinary Russian freedom except to avoid, by shirk dangerous responsibility, keep his mouth shut tighter so far as politics is concerned and avoid contact with foreigners, lest he be suspected of trafficking with spies.

"In the midst of the depression, when many things have gone backward, the woman's movement has gone forward."—Carrie Chapman Catt.

Is This Your Birthday?

By A. R. WEIR

What the Stars Foretell for Those Born on December 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16

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What the STARS foretell for those born on December 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23

If the date of your birth is December 17, 18, 19 or 20, Sagittarius is your Zodiac sign. This gives you a philosophic, religious nature and high ideals. If December 21, 22 or 23 is your birth date Capricorn is your Zodiac period. This gives you a quiet and determined character and great ambition. You achieve success by persistence and industry.

YOUR OWN BIRTHDATE:

DECEMBER 17—Some very pleasant news from a long distance may necessitate a very long journey. There may be disputes over a loan or debt and with workmates and servants. Indications are good socially and for business generally. You are extremely restless and have a tendency to overdo things.

DECEMBER 18—While you would be ill advised to rely on friends, relatives should benefit you as the year is good for social and domestic matters. Your lucky number is 4 and your most beneficial days the 4th, 13th, 22nd and 31st of each month.

DECEMBER 19—You should gain by correspondence and documents but you will be secretive about them. A few months hence a removal of residence is indicated. You are quick to adopt new ideas and new surroundings and will welcome this change.

DECEMBER 20—Although you may have obstacles to overcome, mainly through property and elderly people, there is a sudden change for the better bringing more prosperity and contentment. You are sincere and will succeed in life because you are not afraid of hard work and know that prosperity must come through your own efforts.

DECEMBER 21—You prefer to live quietly, rather shirking responsibilities. A very important change is shown in your business affairs and some woman may attempt to hinder you.

DECEMBER 22—An influential woman will help you and you will gain by an important contract or agreement. Much happiness is shown in love. You are keen to save money, are economical and thrifty.

DECEMBER 23—You should gain through elderly friends and experience promotion in business. The coming twelve months should be a prosperous period though exciting and sometimes bewildering. Though you are not very demonstrative in nature you are sincere and dignified in manner.

IF YOUR BIRTH DATE IS NOT LISTED ABOVE and you would like your personal Horoscope or if you wish a complete Horoscope for any date listed above, send 10c (coin preferred), to A. R. Weir, 73 Adelaide St. W., Toronto, Ont. Please print your name, address and BIRTH DATE plainly.