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LESSON 1

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

“But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” These words of Paul in Gal. 4:4 speak to the historical climax that was the birth of Christ. As we will see in this third part of our study, the fate of all peoples depends upon how they respond to God’s climax in history. The Scripture for this lesson in particular highlights the proper responses of three very significant people. Each responded to the appearance of God’s Messiah with a beautiful song of praise to the Lord.

First, Mary replied to the angel Gabriel’s remarkable news with a statement of utter submission: “Behold, I am the handmaiden (bondservant) of the Lord.” Her willing submission to such an astounding revelation demonstrates an enthusiastic readiness to serve God (Luke 1:46-55).

Next, Zacharias began to praise the Lord and prophesy over his son as soon as he received back his powers of speech. His adoration of God beautifully announces the mighty redemption of Israel and the fulfillment of all God’s covenant faithfulness (Luke 1:68-79).

Lastly, Simeon, a devout man of God described as “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” revealed over the infant Messiah. After meeting Jesus, Simeon knew that his hopes for Israel’s restoration would soon be realized.

Not only do the faithful responses of these three provide us with rich poetry and praise to God, but they also show us the measure of sincere spirituality. Those that recognize Jesus as Messiah and Savior truly know God, but those who disregard Jesus have no knowledge of God. Because these people had an understanding of God’s ways, they were able to properly respond to God’s most profound act in history: sending His Son to Earth. As we engage the life of Jesus, we should pay careful attention to how people receive him, for they are actually receiving the one who sent him (“He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him,” John 5:23b).

LESSON 1: Zacharias | Angel Visits Mary | Birth of Jesus

Golden Children’s Bible: pp. 346-353 (Luke 1-2)

FACTS TO KNOW

1. **Zacharias:** father of John the Baptist
2. **Elisabeth:** Mary’s cousin; mother of John the Baptist
3. **John the Baptist:** greatest prophet who prepared the way for Jesus
4. **Gabriel:** Angel of the Annunciation
5. **Mary:** Jesus’ mother
6. **Joseph:** Mary’s husband who raised Jesus as a son
7. **Annunciation:** Gabriel’s announcement to the virgin Mary
8. **Simeon:** priest who blessed baby Jesus in the Temple

MEMORY VERSE

THE MAGNIFICAT – LUKE 1:46-55

*And Mary said,
My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
For He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden;
for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done great things for me and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
He hath shown strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.*

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VOCABULARY AND EXPRESSIONS

1. **incense:** spices that release a fragrant scent when burned
2. **“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.”:** John will take the Nazarite vow, just as Samson, Samuel, and other prophets from the Old Testament.
3. **circumcision:** an ethnic marker for Israelites prescribed by the Law of Moses to take place on the eighth day after a boy is born; this was also the time to name the child.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What news did the angel Gabriel tell Zacharias the priest? The angel told Zacharias that he and Elisabeth would have a son named John who would prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Lord. (p. 346)
2. Why did the angel Gabriel make Zacharias unable to speak? How did Zacharias regain his speech? Zacharias lost his ability to speak because he did not believe Gabriel's words. When Zacharias' son was born, he insisted that he be named John as the angel had instructed him. For that act of faith and obedience, Zacharias regained his speech. (pp. 347, 350)
3. What was the special purpose of John's life? John would turn the people of Israel back to God and prepare them for Jesus' coming. (p. 350)
4. What news did the angel Gabriel tell Mary? Why was Mary surprised by this news? Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah. She was surprised by this news because she had no husband. (p. 348)
5. Where did Joseph and Mary live? Where were they when Jesus was born? Joseph and Mary lived in the city of Nazareth in the region of Galilee. They were in the city of Bethlehem in the region of Judea when Jesus was born. (p. 351)
6. What did the shepherds do after the angels announced the birth of Jesus to them? The shepherds went to visit the child. Then they told everyone they saw about Jesus and what the angels had said to them. (pp. 351-352)
7. Where did Jesus' parents take him to be presented to the Lord? They took him to the Temple in Jerusalem. (p. 352)
8. What did the Holy Spirit say would happen before Simeon died? The Holy Spirit said that Simeon would see the Messiah before he died. (p. 352)

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BIG PICTURE OF THE BIBLE

Include these selected readings from other Bible passages to emphasize important points from this lesson and reinforce larger Scriptural themes.

- Isaiah 7:14 for the prophecy about the virgin giving birth. Matthew quotes this prophecy in 1:23 to emphasize the greater fulfillment of that sign in the birth of Jesus—the embodiment of “God with us.”
- Isaiah 9:6-7 for the prophet's announcement of the kind of reign Jesus will have as heir to David's throne.
- Luke 2:36-38 for the story of the aged prophetess Anna, another witness to the infant Messiah who was eager for the redemption of Israel.

MEMORY WORK

Start memorizing the New Testament Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John).

ACTIVITIES

- Draw a picture of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.
- pp. 346-347: What was Zacharias doing when the angel visited him? He was burning incense in the Temple while the people prayed outside.
- pp. 348-349: What news has Mary just received? Describe her expression. Mary just learned that she would be the mother of the Lord. She was at once humbled by the Lord's choice and submitted herself solemnly to God's will.
- Name the emperor of Rome at the time Jesus was born: Caesar Augustus
- pp. 352-353: Describe the scene in the Temple. Who is holding baby Jesus? Why were people so glad to see baby Jesus? Joseph and Mary have brought Jesus to be presented to the Lord. Simeon holds baby Jesus as he dedicates him to God. Simeon and others had waited a long time for God to send the promised Messiah.
- **Copybook Verse Review:** #35 and #43 in Appendix.