Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

Luke 2:17&1

The Lord provides for our eternal happiness
The Lord is always looking towards the eternal happiness of everyone. This means that He wants us to find happiness here on earth, and also in heaven forever. Whenever a time in history became so dark that people no longer knew the difference between good and evil, He provided a revelation to give them a message of hope and the means to choose a good life.

In the earliest times people received the Word as direct communication from the Lord and His angels. They also had something called perception. They just knew what was right and wrong when they learned it from parents and from the Lord and happily cooperated.

The Lord does not give up on people
When people decided they knew better how to live their lives than the Lord did, He needed to provided people with the revelation we call the Ancient Word. At first people passed this revelation by word of mouth from one generation to the next. In this way the Lord could be present with people and they could know how to live a good life. Eventually, the Ancient Word was written down, and spread throughout much of the known world.

Unfortunately, once again, people lost their faith in the Lord and chose evil over good. They turned the Ancient Word into stories where different gods performed the work we know the Lord does for us. The myths of many ancient cultures are the result of the way people changed the Ancient Word.

The Old Testament
With these changes, the Lord knew people needed still another revelation so they could choose right from wrong. These stories from the Old Testament teach us the history of the Children of Israel and how the Lord could be present with them as they obeyed His Word. From the lessons you have been learning this year, and earlier ones, you can see that they experienced many hardships because of their inability to do what the
Lord commanded them.

**The Lord raised up prophets**

During the years after David’s and his son Solomon’s reigns the prophets gave many warnings to the people of Judah and Israel. They told the people that the Lord could not help them if they did not follow Him. They warned of the destruction of Judah and Israel. These same prophets also gave them hope. They prophesied that God would come on earth as King to save them.

**Do you know some of these prophecies? Why do you think many people just ignored them?**

Sadly the Jews chose to forget the laws of the Lord even though these prophesies were spreading in their own land and into other lands.

**The Lord was born as a baby**

So, once again, the Lord had to give people a new revelation. This time He came on earth Himself to teach the truth and bring people hope. As was prophesied, He came as a king, but not an earthly king as everyone expected. Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. He was born to Mary, a simple, humble young woman who was willing to be part of this miracle, the greatest miracle ever to happen on earth.

A few people were ready to receive the Lord on earth. Among them were the shepherds. From the reading for this lesson and the recitation you know how they reacted. They were overjoyed, and after going to see the baby Jesus they told everyone they met that Jesus had been born. They spread the good news.

**Do you think the people who heard the shepherds kept the news to themselves? Why or why not?**

The Word does not tell us what they did, but it does say they marveled at what they heard. With such amazing news we can imagine them running to tell other people.

In our lesson for today we see that Mary and Joseph planned to raise Jesus according to the laws and customs of the Jewish religion, the religion that the descendants of the Children of Israel practiced. They had Him circumcised and gave Him His name on the appointed day. Then they took Him to the temple to present Him to the Lord.
“Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.”

(Luke 2:22)

Many people were waiting for the Savior to be born on earth. A just and devout man named Simeon had been led by the Lord to come to the temple at the same time Mary and Joseph would be there. He was very old, but he had been promised a sight of the Lord’s Christ before he died. Imagine how he felt knowing he was seeing and holding the promised savior. He might not have known the baby was the Lord Himself, but he knew this baby would grow up to be the savior promised in the prophesies.

“A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

(Luke 2:32)

Someone else was ready to receive Jesus as the savior—a woman named Anna. She was a prophetess, so she most likely knew of the prophesies of the Lord’s birth. Do you remember where she spent much of her time? In the temple, serving God by fasting and praying. In the moment that Simeon was blessing Jesus, Anna gave thanks to the Lord. Then she, too, spread the good news that the promised Redeemer had been born.

Do you remember from other Christmases who else had heard the prophecies about the coming of the Lord?

People from far away in the east had heard the prophecies. They remembered that a special star would appear when the savior was born. Though this star did not appear to everyone, it did appear to these wise and learned men. The Lord knew they would respond and travel a great distance just so they could see the promised savior. They also brought Jesus precious gifts.

“And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincence, and myrrh.”

(Matthew 2:11)

At the end of their visit, they returned to their own country. Do you think they spoke to others about what they had seen? Did they tell the news of the Lord’s birth to people far from Jerusalem?

The life of the Lord on earth was written down by many people
The Lord chose to have the accounts written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John be part of the Word. A fifth book, also written by John, is called Revelation. This book tells of the second coming of the Lord. In the New Church we call these five books together the New Testament, though the Christian Church includes many more short works.

**The Word has been spread all over the world**

The Old Testament and the New Testament have been spread all over the earth by people who follow the Lord as Jesus Christ. People who believe in the words of Jesus Christ are called Christians and belong to the Christian Church.

**Do you know why the Christian Church spread so far?**

People were moved by the words the Lord spoke while He was on earth, and wanted to share the good news. But, it was more than this. The Lord provided different ways for His Word to be spread. He sent out His disciples.

> “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’”

*(Mark 16:15)*

The monks of the early Christian Church carefully copied His words and the stories of His life on earth. Later, His Word was made available to more people through the printing press. Explorers moved beyond the known world and carried the Old and New Testament, claiming the land for the church as well as their country. People left their homelands in Europe to settle new lands and took the Word with them. In recent times missionaries have taken the Word to places where ancient religions existed and are still practiced. Today the Christian Word can be found in almost every country on earth.

**We can help the Lord spread His truths**

The Lord wants all people to have the chance to choose heaven. Reading and listening to His Word helps people to make this choice. Perhaps you have shared your religion with someone who has not heard about it before. The Lord asks us to share our beliefs in His Word. In the Heavenly Doctrines, He says that the main reason He come into our world and not another was:

> ….for the sake of the Word, in that it could be written on our earth, and when written could then be published throughout the whole earth; and once published could be preserved for all posterity.

*(Arcana Coelestia 9351)*

We can be like the shepherds and others who have spread the good news as we learn about the Lord and find ways to tell people. Maybe this Christmas you can share your enjoyment of the story of the Lord’s birth with a friend or neighbor.
ACTIVITIES

LESSON 34: CHRISTMAS – THE SPREAD OF THE LORD’S WORD

1. LEARN THE RECITATION

Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

Luke 2:17-18

2. ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

3. JOURNAL ACTIVITY
   a. How do you feel each year as Christmas approaches? What are your favorite parts of the season? What special traditions does your family have for Christmas?
   b. Write your thoughts in your journal.

4. YOUR BOOK OF STORIES – THE LORD AS A KING
   ▪ Add a page to the book you are making.
   ▪ **Picture:** Draw a picture of your favorite part of the Christmas story.
   ▪ **Calligraphy Quote:** “For there is born to you this day, in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

5. REVELATION ORNAMENTS
   ▪ Make Christmas ornaments showing the five different revelations given by the Lord. See the instructions.

6. SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY
   ▪ Answer the questions about the map that shows how the Lord’s Word was spread in the centuries after His birth.

7. BRINGING THE LESSON INTO YOUR LIFE – SPREAD THE LORD’S WORD
   ▪ Christmas is a natural time to talk to people about the Lord. By joining the Jacob’s Ladder program you know some very special truths about the Lord being born on earth. You have learned that
He came to save us from the power of hell and to give us a new revelation (the New Testament). You also know that each new revelation shows how people can return to the Lord’s ways.

- This week take any opportunities you have to share with people what is important to you about the Christmas. Perhaps you could invite a friend to share in some of your Christmas worship activities—a tableaux service, church or a family worship. This way you can help with the important job of spreading the Lord’s Word.
Questions
Lesson 34: Christmas – The Spread of the Lord’s Word

You are probably very familiar with the Christmas story. See if you can fill in the missing words from the quotes below without looking back at the story. It is from the part of the story when the angels appear to the shepherds in the field.

Then the angel said to them:

Do not be ________________, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great ________________, which will be to all ________________. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the ________________. And this will be a ________________ unto you: You will find the babe wrapped in ________________ cloths, lying in a ________________.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

___________________ to ________________ in the ________________,
And on ________________ peace, ________________ toward men!”

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another:

Let us go now to ________________ and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made ________________ to us.
Revelation Ornaments
Lesson 34: Christmas – The Spread of the Lord’s Word

Match each of the five churches with its special form of revelation. Have your answers checked before beginning the project below.

Most Ancient Church    Ancient Word
Ancient Church     New Testament
Israelitish Church    Old Testament (10 commandments)
Christian Church    Heavenly Doctrines (Writings)
New Church     Communication with the Lord and angels

Now make an ornament for each revelation. Use thick paper cut into the shape of a circle or star (use template as a tracer). On one side draw a picture of the revelation and on the other use your neatest writing to write the name of the church. Color your pictures and go over your writing with a thin marker. Punch a hole through the top and use string or ribbon to make a loop. Add decorative touches, like glitter, to make your ornaments beautiful. Remember, the greatest Christmas gift of all time was the Lord being born on earth and giving us His Word.

(Star Template)
The Spread of Christianity
Lesson 34: Christmas – The Spread of the Lord’s Word

Less than 200 years after the Lord was born on earth, the Christian Church had spread widely around the Mediterranean Sea. It would continue to spread, even to this day. Use the map to answer the questions below.

What empire is shown by the solid red line? _________________________________

When did Christianity come to the island of Crete?___________________________

How many areas of Christianity were there in Spain by 185 AD? _____________

List at least five early centers of Christianity: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How would you describe the amount of red shading compared to yellow?    _____________________________________________________________________
LESSON 34

CHRISTMAS – THE SPREAD OF THE LORD’S WORD

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

- The Lord always provides a revelation so people have the means to choose a good life.
- Prophesies prepared people for the coming of the Lord.
- The shepherds were told about the Lord’s birth, went to see Him, and spread the good news.
- Simeon and Anna saw the Lord. Anna shared what she had seen with others.

THOUGHTS FOR PARENTS

No other story in the Word is as well known and loved as the Christmas story. The idea of the Lord coming to earth as a little baby touches our affections because of the innocent picture it portrays. While on earth He was a teacher, giving people the essential message of the Old Testament in a new form. Rather than blind obedience, the Lord taught that genuine happiness comes to us from loving and serving the Lord and the neighbor.

The message of hope and love in the New Testament is known in all parts of the earth. The Lord has used many means throughout history to spread His Word. In a world of technology, we have many new ways to share the good news of the Lord’s first and second comings as seen in the Heavenly Doctrine.

- As parents we can encourage our children to share the Word with others. Choosing well known stories that touch their affections—such as the Christmas story—will give them more confidence. Providing opportunities to share is also important. Older children can share with younger siblings. Part of family worship could include the retelling of the story and its message.

- When children witness their parents sharing their faith with others, they can see how important that faith is, and that it is not something to be kept to oneself. Inviting non-New Church friends to a New Church service, such as the Tableaux, is one way to demonstrate how to spread the good news.
**FROM THE WORD**
The Lord's church is spread through the whole world; but its inmost is where the Lord is known and acknowledged, and where the Word is. *(Apocalypse Explained 313)*

Religion existed from the most ancient times, and the inhabitants of all parts of the world knew about God, and something about life after death. This knowledge did not come from them themselves or their own intelligence, but from the ancient Word, and later on from the Israelite Word. *(True Christian Religion 275)*

For a knowledge of religion does not come to a person from himself, but through another who has either learned it himself from the Word or by tradition from others who have learned it. *(Divine Providence 254)*

After the Apostles had been given the Holy Spirit by the Lord, they preached the Gospel throughout much of the world, and spread the news of it by word of mouth and by their writings. They did this of themselves from the Lord. *(True Christian Religion 154)*

The Word could be written in our world, because the art of writing existed here from the most ancient times, at first on tablets, then on parchment, later on paper, and finally it could be disseminated in print. The Lord's providence caused this for the sake of the Word. The Word could then be circulated throughout this world, because all peoples here are in contact, not only by travels abroad, but also by voyages to every part of the globe. Thus the Word, once written, could be spread from one people to another and be taught everywhere. *(Earths and the Universe 115 & 116)*

**HELPING YOUR CHILD**

Help your child get ready to listen to the story from the Word

- Ask your child if he or she has ever had an idea or story they have really wanted to share with someone else. How did they feel? Were they excited, eager? Was it hard to wait until a parent or friend could listen?
- Discuss with your child what they remember about the Christmas story. Ask them to tell you why the Christmas story needs to be told all over the world.
- In the first lesson your child learned of the different revelations throughout history. See what they remember.
Listen to the CD

- Remind your child to find Isaiah 2 in the Word before turning on the CD. (If you do not have the CD, read the portion from the Word together.)

Encourage your child to follow along with the reading in a copy of the Word.

Ideas to discuss together

- What is the purpose of a prophesy?
- How did the prophesies prepare for the Lord’s coming on earth?
- What did the shepherds do when they heard of the savior’s birth? What did they do after going to see Him?
- What two older people were waiting to see the savior when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple? How do you think they felt when they saw the baby Lord?

Work in the Student Activity Book

- Your child should now read the lesson in the Student Activity Book. You may wish to share the reading of this special story with your child.

Activities

1. **LEARN THE RECITATION**
   Luke 2:17-18

2. **ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS**
   1. afraid
   2. joy
   3. people
   4. Lord
   5. sign
   6. swaddling
   7. manger
   8. glory
   9. God
   10. highest
   11. earth
   12. goodwill
   13. Bethlehem
   14. known

3. **JOURNAL ACTIVITY**
   This writing activity allows your child creative freedom to reflect on the Christmas story however he or she wants. Your child may enjoy writing about family traditions, favorite carols, special decorations, etc.

4. **BOOK OF STORIES**
   By allowing free choice of a picture to go with the Christmas lesson, children will create a picture that can be cherished.
5. **Revelation Ornaments**

Since the focus of this lesson is the Spread of the Lord’s Word, this project emphasizes the five special revelations given by the Lord, and it connects it to Christmas by the making of ornaments. Your child will need paper and other decorating items.

Answers to matching:
1. Most Ancient Church – communication with the Lord and angels
2. Ancient Church – Ancient Word
3. Israelitish Church – Old Testament (10 commandments)
5. New Church – Heavenly Doctrines (Writings)

6. **Spread of Christianity**

Answers to the map:
1. the Roman Empire
2. by the 1st Century AD
3. Four
4. Rome, Memphis, Cyrene, Puteoli, Athens, Alexandria, Myra, Carthage, Syracuse, etc.
5. More than twice as much yellow as red

7. **King of Kings**

Christmas provides another appropriate time for children to consider the Lord as a heavenly king.

8. **Bringing the Lesson into Your Life – Spread the Lord’s Word**

Talking to others who are not church goers or are non-religious can be intimidating for anyone. So it makes sense to begin with sharing things that you love about your religion.

Christmas can be an ideal time to share religious celebrations and a few beliefs with new people. The simplicity and innocence surrounding the Christmas season opens many doors for comfortable and useful conversations.