

Unit 4 "This Is My Beloved Son" Lesson 13
God Sends Us a Savior

Objective: Students will be able to 1) explain that God's promise of a New Covenant is fulfilled through His sending His Son Jesus to be our Savior and 2) identify the ways the icon of the Nativity of Jesus Christ tells us the story.

For the Catechist

All the acts of God that collectively join to form the Old Testament reach a once-and-for-all fulfillment in the birth of Jesus Christ. In the last two units, the children learned that Moses and the prophets prepared God's chosen people for the fulfillment of His promise of a New Covenant. In this unit they learn how God fulfills His promise of a New Covenant to be in communion with His people always - God sends His Son Jesus to be our Savior.

The early Church saw Christ as a second Moses, the Lawgiver and Liberator. The parallels between the events of Moses' life and those of Christ are striking. Jesus was born in a manger in humble conditions and Moses was hidden as a baby in a basket and placed in the bushes. Jesus barely escaped death shortly after His birth, and Moses' life was threatened. Jesus spent forty days praying and fasting in the desert, and Moses spent forty days praying before receiving the Ten Commandments. Although similar, their greatest works are not parallel. While Moses received the [Old] Covenant from God, Jesus is the giver of the New Covenant. While Moses is the leader who delivered the Israelites from slavery, Jesus is our Savior who delivers us from the slavery of sin and death and gives us New Life. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Scriptures, the establishment of God's kingdom as prepared and foretold in the Old Testament.

Reading from the New Testament. Beginning with this unit, bold print will identify the Scripture to be read as part of the lesson. These passages can be 1) read aloud by everyone; 2) read by individual students; 3) read by the catechist; or 4) read silently. This activity helps the students learn how to find scriptural passages on their own and encourages them to read from the New Testament

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: Troparion for the Nativity of Christ

Introduction: Discussion of the anticipation while waiting

Read Text Aloud: Have the students volunteer to read the text aloud or have the students read sections silently.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity (detailed on the pages that follow) to reinforce the lesson.

- *Basic:* Christ is born! Glorify Him!
- *Group:* Genealogy Time Line
- *Craft:* Jesse Tree

Closing: Troparion for the Nativity of Christ

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord: Nativity

Teaching Pics

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

God's Plan

"These prophetic evocations of a new Exodus represent an attempt to explain God's unfolding plan in traditional and understandable ways. Throughout the Scriptures, we can note this tension between God's utter freedom and unpredictability on the one hand and the recurrence of certain forms and patterns on the other. The idea that the Exile can be compared to the events of the Exodus expresses the struggle of Israelite believers to find God's goodness and fidelity in events which, to all appearances, contradict His promises of the past.

"Just as the first Exodus had its climax in the ratification of the covenant on Sinai, so too the prophetic oracles of a new Exodus also look to a new covenant. History had demonstrated that Israel could not keep its covenant responsibilities toward God. By idolatry, immorality and injustice, they had broken the covenant and thus forfeited their claim to God's presence and to the possession of the land of Israel. St. Paul would later declare that righteousness under the terms of the Sinai covenant was, in fact, "impossible" (Romans 8:3).

"Instead of abandoning Israel, however, God chose to restructure the covenant with His people. Through the prophets, He promised to supply what His people lacked: God would make them capable of being faithful to Him. In many respects, the prophets' promises of a new covenant coincide with their announcement of a new creation. What God promises to bestow on the people so as to enable them to uphold a responsible relationship with Him is nothing less than His own Spirit" (*OTB* 75-76).

The Mission of Jesus

"In times past, God spoke in fragmentary and varied ways to our fathers through the prophets; in this, the final age, he has spoken to us through his Son' (Heb 1:1 NAB). This opening statement of the Epistle to the Hebrews reflects the Church's understanding that the whole of the Scriptures illustrates God's continuing work for the salvation of humanity. In this work the highpoint is the person and mission of Jesus Christ, 'the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures' (Col 1:15), in whom the mystery of God hidden from the ages was revealed (cf Col 2:25-28).

"The mission of Jesus was to restore humanity to its friendship with God: a relationship which had been lost by sin. 'God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself, not counting men's transgressions against them' (2 Cor 5:19). He did more than remove the enmity between God and humanity. He became man like us, 'he made himself poor though he was rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty' (2 Cor 8:9). We would 'become sharers of the divine nature' (2 Pt 1:4). St. Athanasius comments on these passages by saying '[Christ] was made man that we might be made God' (*On the Incarnation*, 54)" (*LLI* 41-42).

Jesus' Descent from King David

"The Evangelists Matthew and Luke both provide family trees which demonstrate Jesus' descent from King David. Both likewise place his birth in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David and the object of the well-known prophecy of Micah: 'But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler of Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times' (Micah 5:1). Nazareth, Jesus' adopted home town, in the region of Galilee also accommodates messianic interpretation" (*OTB* 109).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Let's look at the icon we have in our icon corner. What is the name of the icon? (The Nativity of Christ) This morning we are going to pray the troparion for the Nativity. The troparion is a short verse which tells us the story of the feast we are celebrating. Let's pray: "Your birth, O Christ our God. . ."

[Use the translation for your jurisdiction found at the end of this lesson.]

Introduction

Today I want to start by telling you a story about my family. [Adapt the following story according to your experiences while waiting for something.] Every year we would have a birthday party for our children, and we would invite our relatives. Most of them lived at least an hour away so we would have to wait for them to come. Do you have relatives who live far away? Every year we would get ready for noon, but then we would have to wait because we didn't know exactly what time they would get there. What do you think my children did as they waited? (Played video games; watched television) Every time a car would drive by, one of us would go to see if someone came. Most of the time the car wasn't coming to our house. What are some other ways we thought our relatives came, but it wasn't them? (The door bell and/or the phone rang) Each time we knew we had to wait longer. One day we waited two hours before someone came. How do you think you would feel waiting? Why were we willing to wait rather than go somewhere else? (Some very important people were coming—our relatives, and they were coming to be with us.) Do any of you have a story like this?

[Let them share what they did as they waited.]

The people who lived before Jesus was born were waiting also. They were waiting for someone very important. Let's turn to our lesson to learn about all the people who were waiting for the Messiah.

13

God Sends Us a Savior



This year we have learned about some of God's promises. God promised to be with Moses and deliver the Israelites from slavery, and He kept His promise. God made a covenant with the Israelites. He promised to be with them and gave them the Law and the Ten Commandments so that they would know how to act as His people.

We learned that many times the Israelites did not keep the covenant they had made with God. When they were unfaithful, God sent prophets to remind them how to live as God's people. But no matter how they tried, God's people could not keep the covenant. God did not leave them but promised to make a New Covenant with them instead. He would send someone to help them.

For hundreds of years people prayed and waited for God's promise to be fulfilled. They waited for someone like Moses to come and begin this New Covenant. They called him the Messiah, the special Savior God had promised.

70 God With Us Grade 4 Unit 6: This Is My Beloved Son

Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

He would send someone to help them.

Why did the Israelites need help? (They could not keep the Covenant on their own.) What does Covenant mean? (Agreement) God was keeping His promises, but they were not keeping theirs.

They called him the Messiah, the special Savior God had promised.

Why did the people think God's promise would be fulfilled with someone like Moses? (They were familiar with Moses. They knew he did wonderful things and they were hoping for the same.) What does Messiah mean? (The special Savior God had promised.)

We believe that Jesus is the Messiah. When the right time came, God sent His Son Jesus to be born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. Moses had saved the Israelites from slavery and led them out of Egypt, but Jesus came to save us from our sinfulness and to lead us to the Kingdom of God. Jesus is greater than Moses and the prophets. **Read the Gospel of John 1:17** to learn why.

It took hundreds of years for God's promise to be fulfilled because God's people were not ready. People had children and their children had children, but it was not yet time for God to keep His promise.

On the second Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity, our Church remembers the generations who waited for the birth of the Messiah. On the Sunday before the Nativity we hear the priest or deacon read the genealogy of Jesus in the **Gospel of Matthew 1:1-17**. Let's look at those names, many of which are unfamiliar. Are there any names you have heard before?

One generation would be you and your brothers and sisters. You and your father would be two generations. You, your father and your grandfather would be three generations. **Read Matthew 1:17** again to learn how many generations are in Jesus' genealogy. Imagine how many years people waited for Jesus, the Son of God, to be born.



71

Are there any names you have heard before?

Do you know anyone who has any of these names? What does genealogy mean? (A list of the members of a family, generation by generation.)

[Note: 42 generations are listed X about 30 years for each generation = 1,260 years of ancestors are identified in this Gospel reading.]

... for anyone who would follow Jesus.

Point to the part of the icon that shows us Jesus is the New Light. How is it shown? (Jesus is bright in the center of a dark cave that represent the world.) Were the wise men Israelites? (No) Why are they there? (They followed the star. They wanted to honor the Messiah.) Their being at the cave tells us the Messiah was born for all people who follow Jesus, not just the Israelites. Our ancestors are part of this heritage.

... because they suffered innocently.

Why do you think it was so important for King Herod to try to kill Jesus? (He was afraid someone would become more important than he was.) People worry about losing their power, and they do anything to protect it - even something as horrible as this.

Words to Remember: [Read the words together, and use them to introduce, summarize, and/or review the lesson.]

Review: What does covenant mean? (Agreement) How does God fulfill His promise for a New Covenant? (By sending His Son Jesus to be our Savior) The New Covenant is Jesus who saves us from eternal death and grants us eternal life with God forever For whom is this New Covenant? (For all people)

Activity Tracks

Basic: Christ is born! Glorify Him!
[This worksheet is in the student text.]

Today we have been learning about the birth of Jesus. Now we are going to read from the New Testament about how Saint Luke told the story of Jesus' birth.

The icon of the Nativity shows us the meaning of Jesus' birth. The manger which holds Jesus is in a dark cave. The dark cave represents the world before Jesus came. Jesus is the New Light who came to lead us out of darkness into the New Life. Magi or wise men are shown following the star to the place where Jesus lay. The wise men were not Israelites, but they came to honor the Messiah too. God's New Covenant was not meant just for the Israelites but for anyone who would follow Jesus.

Many times during the week after the Feast of the Nativity, our Church sings a special hymn, the *Troparion* of the Nativity. It begins, "Your birth, O Christ our God." In this hymn we sing about the magi. They used to worship stars, but now they learned to worship Christ. In God's New Covenant everyone can be part of God's people.

Not all the Israelites tried to keep the commandments and not everyone welcomed Jesus as the Messiah. When the magi told King Herod that they were looking for Jesus, the king became jealous. The magi would not tell the king where Jesus was, so he sent soldiers to find Jesus. **Read Matthew 2:16** to find out what the soldiers did.

Our Church remembers these children every year on December 29, four days after the Feast of the Nativity. We call these children the *Holy Innocents* because they suffered innocently.

Words to Remember:

Messiah: Title of the special Savior God had promised. Like the title Christ, it means Anointed One. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Genealogy: A list of the members of a family, generation by generation.

Magi: The wise men came from another country and followed a star that led them to Jesus. They honored the Messiah.

Troparion: A hymn that tells us the story of the feast we are celebrating.

Holy Innocents: The children who died when King Herod was trying to kill Jesus.

72

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Complete this puzzle after you have read Luke 2:1-14.

"In those days a decree went out from (2 Across) Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. . . . And Joseph too went up from (1 Down) from the town of Nazareth in Judea, to the city of David that is called (2 Across), because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with (6 Down), his betrothed who was with child. . . . While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn (2 Across).

"Now there were (2 Down) in that region. . . . The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I proclaim to you good (2 Down) of great joy that will be for all the people". . . . And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

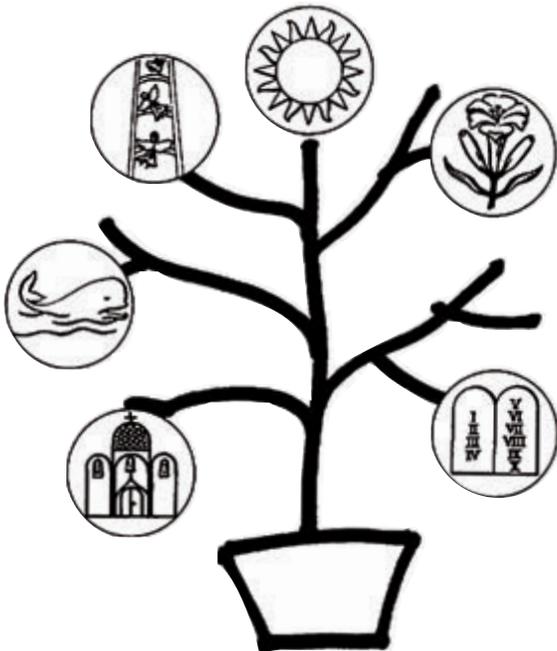
"(3 Across) to God in the highest and on (3 Down) peace to those on whom (4 Across) favor rests."

73

Group: Genealogy Time Line

Materials: Yarn, tape, scissors, small ruler, New Testament

*Every year we hear the names of the ancestors of Jesus. On what Sunday is the Gospel reading? (Two Sundays before the Feast of the Nativity of Jesus) We need our New Testaments for today's group activity because we are going to look at this Scripture again. Turn to the Gospel of Saint Matthew 1:1-17. This time I am going to read the names even though I might not be able to pronounce them correctly, and you are going to keep record of the generations. I have everything we need on my desk. For each name that I say, one of you measure a 2 inch piece of yarn and cut it. We will put the pieces on a pile. When I read the name David, we will stop for a few minutes and tape our strings together. Then we will do the same after the name Jechoniah. And the same after the name Jesus. Now let's read verse 17 and count our strings. What does the * mean after the word generations? (It is a footnote and tells us to read more.) Let's look to our footnote to learn more. Let's read the footnote that starts with 1,17. What do all these names and our pieces of string represent? (All the people waiting for the Messiah, Jesus, to be born.)*



Craft: Jesse Tree—Part 3

Materials: The "Jesse Tree" worksheet, Nativity icon, tree branch for the symbols, a pot or vase that will hold the branch steady, the symbols. [Instructions are given for a one tree project—adjust accordingly for more than one project.]

[Have sample ready to show children.] *Today we will assemble a Jesse Tree that gets its name from Jesse, the father of King David.* [Have the students place the branch into the pot and gather their symbols. Place the icon of the Nativity where everyone can see it, and give out the handout that has everyone decorating one tree.] *Let's begin.*

Closing:

Let's look at the icon of the Nativity of Jesus as we pray the troparion that we said at the beginning of class. [Use the prayer page for your jurisdiction for this troparion and add it to the song booklet if you are making one.]

Messiah

Genealogy

Magi

Troparion

*Holy
Innocents*

A list of the members of a family,
generation by generation.

Title of the special Savior God had
promised. Like the title Christ, it means
Anointed One. Jesus is the Christ, the
Messiah, the Anointed One.

A hymn that tells us the story
of the feast we are celebrating.

The wise men came from
another country and followed a
star that led them to Jesus.
They honored the Messiah.

The children who died when
King Herod was trying to kill Jesus.

The Jesse Tree

(God prepared the world for the greatest gift He could ever give, the gift of His Son Jesus. Our symbols are going to remind us of the people who waited and prepared for Jesus for hundreds of years. Everyone will put on a symbol. Before you do, please read what the symbol represents. After you put the symbol on the tree, all of us will say, "God is with us!" Let's begin.)

Sun - The sun is a symbol of God's creation. Jesus is the fullness of God's creation. Just as the sun gives light to all, Jesus makes the darkness of sin disappear and brings divine life to the world.

Ark - This ark is a symbol of Noah. The ark is a sign of the Church which will save us just as Noah listened to God and was saved from the flood. It is also a symbol of the Church which saves us from the flood of sin.

Burning Bush - This burning bush reminds us that God appeared to Moses and called him to lead the people to the Promised Land.

Altar - This symbol of an altar is to remind us of Abraham who was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to God. This is a sign that Jesus, too, would be offered to the Father.

Pillar of Fire - This pillar of fire tells us that just as God led His people through the desert, Jesus will continue to lead us through the difficulties of life.

Jacob's Ladder - In a vision Jacob saw a ladder reaching from heaven to earth. Christ now joins heaven and earth.

Tablets of the Law - God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. It was a sign of God's love to His people. Jesus comes to fulfill the Law of the Lord.

Fish - The fish reminds us of Jonah who remained in a larger fish for three days. Jesus remained in the tomb for three days.

Lock - The lock is a sign of being closed in. The Israelites could not get out of slavery in Egypt; and before Christ, all humanity could not get out of the slavery to sin.

Flower - The flower represents the root of Jesse. The Savior was born from the house and family of Jesse.

Bethlehem - This symbol reminds us of the city where Christ was born. At Christmas time people in some countries carry a small church which they call "the Bethlehem" because Christ is born for us.

Tools - Saint Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, was a carpenter. These tools remind us of him.

Let's look at the icon of the Nativity of Jesus Christ and remain silent for a few moments. Let's think about all the people who waited for Jesus and about how thankful we are to Jesus for everything.

Troparion for the Nativity of Christ

Your Nativity, O Christ our God, has shed the light of knowledge upon the world. Through it those who had been star-worshippers learned through a star to worship You, O Sun of justice, and recognize in You the One who rises from on high. O Lord, glory to You.

Melkite
Greek
Catholic
Church

Troparion for the Nativity of Christ

Thy nativity, O Christ our God, dawned upon the world as the light of knowledge; for in it those who worshipped the stars, from a star learned to adore Thee, the Sun of righteousness, and to recognize Thee, the Orient from on high. Glory to Thee, O Lord

Romanian
Greek
Catholic
Diocese of
Canton

Troparion for the Nativity of Christ

Your birth, O Christ our God, has shed upon the world the light of knowledge; for through it those who worshipped the stars have learned from a star to worship You, the Sun of Justice, and to recognize You as the Orient from on high. Glory be to You, O Lord

Ruthenian
Byzantine
Catholic
Metropolitan
Province

Troparion for the Nativity of Christ

Your birth, O Christ our God, brightens the world with the light of understanding. For those who adored the stars were taught by a star to worship You, the Sun of righteousness, and to know You the dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory to You.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Diocese of
St. Josaphat

Troparion for the Nativity of Christ

Your birth, O Christ our God, has shed upon the world the light of knowledge; for through it, those who worshiped the stars have learned from a star to worship You, the Sun of justice, and to recognize You as the Orient from on high. Glory be to You, O Lord

Ukrainian
Catholic
Synod