

Lesson 14 - Jesus: Son of David, Son of Abraham

Objectives

By the end of this lesson the student should know that:

- Understand that Jesus is the climax of Salvation History, and that He inaugurates the New Covenant, the age of the Messiah.
- Understand that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah-King.
- Recognize that Christ's Kingdom is not a political state or land but the spiritual realm of those who commend their lives to Him.

For the Catechist

"In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word" (Hebrews 1:1-3). These first verses of Hebrews sum up the experience of the handful of Jews who first accepted Jesus as the Messiah. They believed that God had communicated with the Israelites in varied ways through the prophets, but that in "These last days," this final age, He communicated with His people not by a spokesman, but by the very Mediator of creation. After their initial confusion they had come to see Jesus as the Messiah and then as even more than that: as the very Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

It was probably inevitable that Christians who saw the Incarnation as the climax of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant would create a new calendar based on His coming. It was also probably inevitable that they would err in calculating the date of His birth over six hundred years after the fact. The Gospels make no mention of it; we know neither the day nor the year. In the same way, the Gospels do not attempt to describe what Jesus looked like, although the Apostles could very well have described Him. The Church saw dates and descriptions as basically unimportant. It did not matter on what date Jesus was born; it did matter that He was born, that He came into the world for our salvation.

Attempts at dating or describing Jesus are often seen in pseudo-religious TV documentaries. These programs often suggest that Christians have been "wrong" in dating Jesus' birth or in describing Him through icons. This lesson indicates that the calendar is inaccurate; it should be presented in such a way that the students recognize that calendars and dates are not "Gospel." They are the attempts of later generations of Christians to celebrate the central place of Christ in God's dealings with the human race. It is the *how* and *why* our salvation came to us which is at the heart of our faith, rather than the *when* and *where*.

Materials Needed:

Opening Prayer: Icon corner, student texts

Introduction: Bibles, easel or wall pad, markers,

Guided Reading: Abingdon's Bible Maps for Children

Activity A: "John the Baptist" Worksheet, pencils

Activity A: "What the Prophets Announced" Worksheet, pencils, Bibles

Activity B: "Kingdom of God" Worksheet, pencils, Bibles

1. Opening Prayer

Pray Zechariah's Prayer on page 69 in the student text. Remind the students that this prayer celebrates the One who was of David's line, who was foretold by the prophets, and for whom John the Baptist prepared the way: our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson using the pages from your wall or easel pad. Use the time line on the Unit Page to recall the "six flags" which ruled the Holy Land since the destruction of the Kingdom (*Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome*). Recall the period of Roman rule and the person of Herod the Great who was king when John the Baptist was born.

Ask the students to explain why John described himself as "*The voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'*"

- Ask: What does this quotation say about his life? (*He was an ascetic.*) What does it say about his work? (*He was the forerunner.*)

3. Introduction

Have the students find and read in their Bibles John 1:24-28. Ask: What did John mean when he talked about sandals? (*His unworthiness to serve the Messiah*)

Have them continue reading (John 1:29-34). Ask: How did John recognize that Jesus was the Messiah? (*He saw the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus.*)

Finally have them read John 3:28-30. Ask:

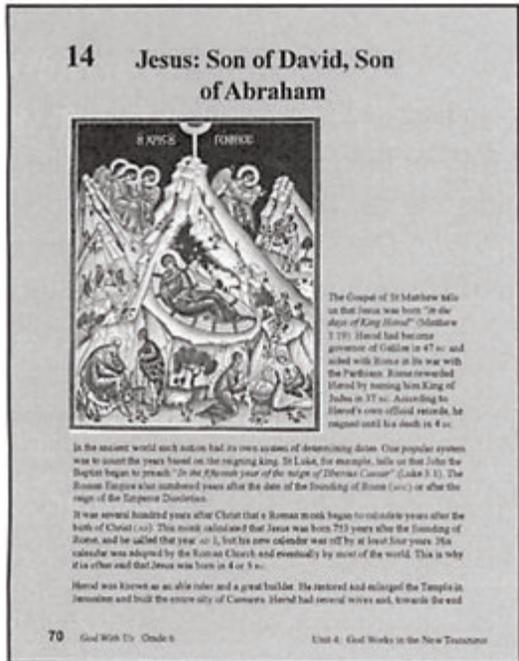
- What did John mean when he talked about the bridegroom and the best man? (*He was the helper of the bridegroom, Christ.*)

What did John mean when he talked about increasing and decreasing? (*Since the Messiah was here, He would become more prominent in Salvation History*)

Background Reading (Messianic Prophecy):

"Nevertheless, the study of 'messianic' texts in the Old Testament is hardly a simple matter. Christian interest in the Old Testament has most often focused on finding hints and traces of New Testament events in it, and so traditional interpretations of the prophets have almost always been restricted to passages which could be applied to the identity and mission of Jesus Christ. Often the importance of prophecy in its own time in Israel as a moral, spiritual and social force was overlooked as the Fathers of the Church searched for the Messiah in between the prophets' lines" (*OTB 104-105*).

4. Guided Reading, Page 70



Before the reading, **summarize the objectives of the lesson** on a wall pad or easel pad so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

Indicate that we are going to step back a bit and look at the world where Jesus was born. **Use the red-framed wall map** to show that at the time of Christ's birth the Holy Land was part of the Roman Province of Syria. Have the students locate the sites of Christ's birth (Bethlehem) and upbringing (Nazareth).

Have the students **read the first paragraph**; then ask: How could Jesus have been born in the days of King Herod when Herod died in 4 BC?

Stress that the only "year" for Jesus birth given in the Gospel is that it happened "in the days of King Herod" (Luke 1:5). Let's see what that means.

Have the students **read the second paragraph** to see how the Romans dated things. If asked, explain that the letters AUC abbreviate the Latin phrase *ab urbe condita* ("from the city's foundation").

Note that every people had one or more calendars: the Jewish calendar is dated "from the creation of the world." If we still used the Byzantine calendar, the year 2007 would be the year 7516.

Background Reading (Christmas and the Birth of Christ):

"While many in the early Church sought to determine the date of our Lord's birth or His baptism in the Jordan, our observances of these feasts are connected more with annual calendar events than with historical dates. Their dates fall around the winter solstice, when the days begin to lengthen. All the pagan religions kept a feast around this time as a rebirth of hope in the return of the sun and warmth. Christians could not take part in the pagan festivities of false worship. Instead they celebrated the beginning of the life of the true Son of God, the Light of Life. ...

"While the Eastern Churches emphasized the manifestation of the Lord at the Jordan, the Western Church was to develop the feast of Christ's birth by the Virgin Mary. The Feast of Christmas originated in Rome. Since the pagan feast celebrated the lengthening of the day as a "rebirth" of the sun, the Christians chose to commemorate the beginning of Christ's life on that occasion. They celebrated the coming of the true light into the world and the birth of the Son of God. The feast existed as early as the third century" (LLII 43).

4. Jesus, the Messiah-King Page 71

of his life, he began to see some of their sons as threats to his reign. Herod executed five of his own sons for plotting against him. He would not welcome the announcement of the birth of another King of the Jews.

Jesus, the Messiah-King

St. Matthew tells us how Herod reacted when he heard of Jesus' birth. "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah, on the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews?' He saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judah for thus it has been written through the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" (Matt. 2:1-6)

The priests answered Herod by quoting Scriptures that prophesied the birth of the Messiah. Herod responded by killing all the boys in Bethlehem under the age of two. The king thought that he had eliminated another threat to his reign, but he was wrong for two reasons. First, Jesus escaped and second, Jesus was to be a different kind of king.

The Kingdom of God

Years later Jesus was on trial before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. "Why Pilate asked if Jesus was a king, He answered, 'My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here.'" So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:36-37)

After one of Jesus' greatest miracles, people wanted to carry him off to make him king, but He hid from them. Jesus did not claim a political kingdom. He spoke of the "Kingdom of God," which means "of the heart," where people acknowledge God's rule over them. He said it was a matter of keeping God's commandments, and that living in this kingdom was more important than anything else. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," He taught, "and all these things will be given you besides." (Matthew 6:33) He told many parables describing this kingdom as a hidden treasure, a great banquet, or even a lot of yeast that changed the dough in which it is placed.



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Have the students **read the third paragraph**. Point out that the monk who devised our calendar did not know that Herod had died in 750 AUC. Repeat that while the calendar may be wrong, the Gospel is right. Jesus was born "in the days of King Herod."

If the question of the date of Jesus' birth arises, summarize the background reading below and/or the Calendar Fact Sheet on page 216. Emphasize that Christmas is not "Jesus' birthday," but the celebration of His coming into the world.

Read the section "**Jesus, the Messiah-King**" and ask:

- Why do you think Herod was "greatly troubled" by the message of the magi? (*He was afraid that someone would depose and even kill him.*)
- Why is it easy to imagine Herod killing the boys of Bethlehem? (*He had killed his own sons.*)
- How did the priests know that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem? (*They knew it was written in the prophets.*)

Stress that previous lessons showed us many examples of how Old Testament people and events pointed to Christ. Invite the students to name some. See that at least the following would be mentioned:

- Abraham (His descendant would be a blessing for the whole world. See student text, pp. 28-32)
- Joseph (He suffered at his brothers' hands, yet was to save them. See student text, pp. 33-36)
- Ruth (She and her husband were the grandparents of Jesse, Jesus' ancestor. See student text, pp. 43-45)
- David (God promised that His house would have an eternal kingdom. Jesus is from the house of David. See student text, pp. 49-52)

Background Reading (Time of Christ's Birth):

"The angel Gabriel visited Mary in the 'sixth month.' The first month of the new Jewish year begins in mid-September, and we know that Elizabeth was in her 'sixth month' of pregnancy when Mary conceived. The Byzantine liturgical calendar is thus correct in locating John the Baptist's conception on September 23 and Jesus' on March 25. The frequently repeated idea that the feast of Christ's Nativity was set on December 25 to counteract the Roman festival of the Invincible Sun seems to take no account of these biblical numbers" (HG 420).

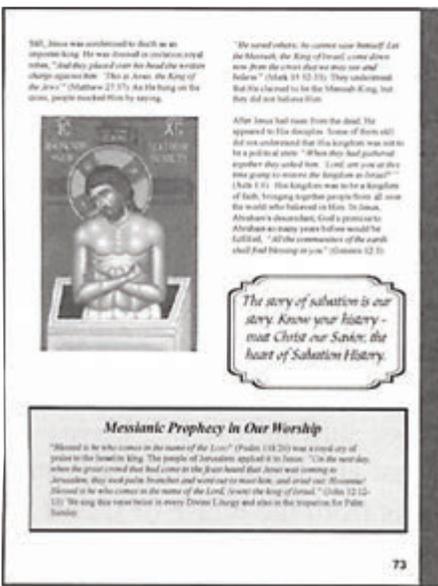


**5. The Kingdom of God
Pages 71, 73**

Emphasize that many sayings of the prophets were understood to refer to the Messiah. Look at the chart on page 72 ("**Jesus the Fulfillment**") to see some of the Old Testament prophecies that the New Testament says were fulfilled in Jesus. Note that Jesus Himself said that passages in the Books of the Prophets referred to Him (cited in first paragraph).

Refer to Activity A, which indicates twelve other prophecies which found fulfillment in Jesus.

Refer to the maps on pages 172 and 173 showing the Israelite kingdoms and the map on page 174 showing the Roman Empire. Ask the students if they can find a map of the Kingdom of God. Have the students read the first two paragraphs in the section "**The Kingdom of God**" on page 71 of their text and then tell the reason why there can be no such map (*His kingdom is not of this world*).



Note that the chief priests and other Jewish leaders could not understand what Jesus was saying about the kingdom of God and so they had Him killed.

Read the paragraphs on p. 73. Ask:

- How do you think people enter the Kingdom of God? (*Faith, baptism*)
- How do we affirm our commitment to this kingdom? (*Prayer, the Eucharist, caring for others*)

Stress that, when we "commit ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ God," we are seeking to live in God's kingdom.

Background Reading (Christmas and the Birth of Christ):

"What then is the Kingdom? It is the restoration of humanity to something like our original situation in paradise: harmony under God's provident rule. It is the overthrow of every symptom of the evil introduced into our experience by the free decision to sin. It is the fulfillment of God's OT covenant with Abraham and of His promise to David. It is the culmination of God's plan "to reconcile to himself all things, whether in heaven or on earth, making peace through the blood of [Christ's] cross" (Colossians 1:20). And until Christ comes again to fully establish the Kingdom in the final judgment, that kingdom is most present in the Church" (*HGB 62*).

Activity A ("What the Prophets Announced")

Distribute worksheet A. Have the students form teams and let each team research six of the twelve references using their Bibles. Then have each team share its answers with the entire group.

Activity B. (The Kingdom of God)

Distribute worksheet B. Have the students form teams and let each team research four of the eight references using their Bibles. Then have each team share its answers with the entire group.

Activity C (Time Travel Through the Bible)

View the section "The Bethlehem Star" at the end of Part 1, Section 4. Stop the tape as the choir begins singing the lengthy Christmas anthem. Discuss questions 1 and 2 from the accompanying Leader's Guide.

Time Line

Refer to the time line poster. Have the students brainstorm the names of people mentioned in this lesson (*King Herod, Jesus Christ, Pontius Pilate*) and indicate the period in which each lived. Write in the names and dates under each appropriate heading. Reemphasize the idea that the Old Testament is climaxed with the coming of Christ.

9. Summary

End the lesson by summarizing the lesson from the aims on page 210, from the elements in the student text on which you focused and/or from any other points raised in the lesson.

10. Closing Prayer

Conclude with the reading of the prophetic Psalm 110 on page 74 in the student text.

Civil and Church Calendars

A - Differences in Years

There are approximately forty calendars in use throughout the world today. Besides our own, the most important are the Chinese, the Indian, the Islamic and the Jewish. Each calendar is dated according to a significant event in its history. The Western Christian calendar was formed around the supposed date of the birth of Christ (BC-AD). It has become the effective civil calendar for modern nations throughout the world. For this reason many have replaced the Christian designation with the term Common Era (BCE-CE). Other widely used eras include:

Era of Creation (AM -*Anno Mundi*): Both Jewish and Byzantine calendars are dated from "the creation of the world," based on the genealogies of Adam's descendants in Genesis. The older determination was based on the Septuagint version used by Jews from the third century BC until the end of the first century AD. It was quoted by the New Testament writers and is still the version used in the Eastern Churches. ***The Byzantine Calendar***, developed at the beginning of the fifth century AD, used this computation. The Byzantine Calendar was in common use in the Byzantine Empire until its fall in AD 1453 and in the Russian realms until the westernizing reforms of Peter the Great.

The ***Jewish Calendar*** in current use is based on the Hebrew version of Genesis accepted by the rabbis at Jamnia in AD 99 and revised in the ninth century AD (Masoretic text). In the Hebrew version the patriarchs from Adam to the father of Abraham were often 100 years younger when they begat their named son. This accounts for a difference of some 1500 years between the Byzantine and the modern Jewish calendars.

Islamic Era (AH-*Anno Hegirae*): The Islamic Calendar is dated from the flight of Mohammed from Mecca to Medina. It was then that his followers began to gather around him and begin their conquests. The year AH 1 corresponds to AD 622; but since the Islamic year is shorter than the Western year, you cannot simply subtract 622 from the Western date to find the Islamic date.

The Chinese Calendar is dated from the reign of the Emperor Huangdi, the traditional inventor of the calendar in 2637 BC. The calendar was actually developed in the fourteenth century BC.

The Indian Calendar is dated from the Saka Era, a traditional epoch of Indian chronology. The first year of the Saka Era is AD 79.

The Coptic Calendar, used in Churches of the Coptic tradition, is dated from the Great Persecution of the Emperor Diocletian, the Era of the Martyrs, which began in AD 284.

Dates on the following table are approximate, since every calendar begins its year in a different month. Thus the Byzantine calendar begins on September 1. Also some calendars have a shorter year than the 365-day year of the West.

| <i>Western</i> | <i>Byzantine</i> | <i>Jewish</i> | <i>Chinese</i> | <i>Indian</i> | <i>Islamic</i> |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 2006 | 7514 | 5766 | 4642 | 1927 | 1426 |

B - Differences in Days

Some calendars, like the Jewish or Islamic, are based on the phases of the moon; western calendars are based on the rotation of the earth around the sun. Some calendars, like the Indian, combine both systems. This is why Chinese or Jewish New Year falls on a different date each year.

The Julian and Gregorian Calendars are based on the same system. The ***Julian Calendar*** takes its name from the Roman Pontifex Maximus, Julius Caesar, but it was actually a calendar devised by Aristarchus of Alexandria in 239 BC. Caesar conquered Egypt in 48 BC and saw the advantage of Aristarchus' system over that used in Rome. There were many adjustments made to this calendar until it was stabilized in AD 4.

The Julian Calendar consists of a solar year of twelve months and of 365 days with an extra day every fourth year (leap year). However it became apparent that this adjustment was slightly inaccurate and added ten or eleven minutes to each year.

The Byzantine scholar Nicephoros Grigoras proposed a reform to the Byzantine emperor in 1325, but he rejected the idea as too controversial. His reform was carried out over two hundred years later by Pope Gregory XIII (1582). In the ***Gregorian Calendar*** a year which is divisible by 4 is a leap year unless it is divisible by 100 but not by 400 (in which case it is not a leap year). Thus the years 1600 and 2000 are leap years, but 1700, 1800, 1900 and 2100 are not. This causes a difference of often days between the two calendars in the sixteenth century; today the difference is thirteen days.

Pope Gregory, however, also revised the way of computing Easter which has never been accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Some Eastern Churches today, both Catholic and Orthodox, still use the Julian Calendar in their liturgical year. Others use the Gregorian Calendar, and still others use a combination of the two ("Mixed Calendar") observing fixed-date feasts like Christmas on the Gregorian Calendar and Pascha on the Julian Calendar.

The Julian Calendar - is used by all Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholics in Serbia, the countries of the former USSR, and the Holy Land, and by many in the West.

The Gregorian Calendar - is used by most Eastern Catholics and some Oriental Orthodox in the West and in the Middle East.

The Mixed Calendar - is used by all Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholics in some parts of the Middle East and by some Orthodox and Greek Catholics in the West.

“What the Prophets Announced”

In the Gospel of Luke we read that after Jesus' resurrection, He appeared to His followers. "Beginning, then, with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted for them every passage of Scripture which referred to Him" (Luke 24:27). Read the following passages from your Bible. Then write the New Testament reference on the line next to the appropriate Old Testament prophecy. Note: Our Bibles are translations of the Hebrew version of the Old Testament. The Evangelists quoted the Septuagint, the version made for Greek-speaking Jews. There are not always exactly the same.

Matthew 2:15; Matthew 2:17; Matthew 4:14-15; Matthew 12:17-21; Matthew 13:34-35; Matthew 21:4-5; Matthew 27:9; Luke 4:17-21; Luke 20:41-42; John 12:37-40; Acts 13:32-34; Acts 13:35.

_____ I will proclaim the decree of the LORD who said to me, "You are my son; today I am your father" (*Psalms 2:7*).

_____ Therefore my heart is glad, my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure, for you will not abandon me to Sheol, nor let your faithful servant see the pit (*Psalms 16:9-10*).

_____ I will open my mouth in story, drawing lessons from of old (*Psalms 78:2*).

_____ A psalm of David. The LORD says to you, my lord: "Take your throne at my right hand, while I make your enemies your footstool" (*Psalms 110:1*).

_____ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am," I said; "send me!" And he replied: "Go and say to this people: Listen carefully, but you shall not understand! Look intently, but you shall know nothing! You are to make the heart of this people sluggish, to dull their ears and close their eyes; Else their eyes will see, their ears hear, their heart understand, and they will turn and be healed" (*Isaiah 6:9-10*).

_____ First he degraded the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the end he has glorified the seaward road, the land West of the Jordan, the District of the Gentiles. Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness; for there is no gloom where but now there was distress. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. (*Isaiah 8:23-9:1*)

_____ Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, Upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait for his teaching. (*Isaiah 42:1-4*)

Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (*Isaiah 53:1*).

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God (*Isaiah 61:1-2*).

See, the LORD proclaims to the ends of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, your savior comes! Here is his reward with him, his recompense before him (*Isaiah 62:11*).

Thus said the LORD: GO, buy a potter's earthen flask. Take along some of the elders of the people and of the priests, and go out toward the Valley of Ben-hinnom, at the entrance of the Potsherd Gate; there proclaim the words which I will speak to you (*Jeremiah 19:1-13*).

Thus says the LORD: In Ramah is heard the sound of moaning, of bitter weeping! Rachel mourns her children, she refuses to be consoled because her children are no more (*Jeremiah 31:15*).

When Israel was a child I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son. (*Hosea 11:1*)

Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass (*Zechariah 9:9*).

I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, let it go." And they counted out my wages, thirty pieces of silver. But the LORD said to me, "Throw it in the treasury, the handsome price at which they valued me." So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the LORD" (*Zechariah 11:12-13*).

“The Kingdom of God is Like...”

Read the following parables: then write in your own words the point that you think Jesus is making in this parable.

Matthew 13:24-30 _____

Matthew 13:31-32 _____

Matthew 13:33 _____

Matthew 13:44-46 _____

Matthew 13:47-48 _____

Matthew 18:23-35

Matthew 20:1-16

Matthew 25:1-13
