

[SMALL PICTURE OF THE LORD IN MANGER?]

## **WHY THE LORD CAME ON EARTH**

The Lord's affection or love was Divine, and it was directed towards the whole human race which He willed to save to eternity.

(see *Arcana Coelestia* 2077:1)

As we approach Christmas, take a moment to reflect on why the Lord came into the world. His coming was essential for the salvation of the human race because people were in spiritual darkness, misinterpreting and falsifying the truths given in the Old Testament. The Lord's coming on earth and what He accomplished during this brief time made it possible for future generations to have a clearer perspective on spiritual truth and a more direct connection with our Heavenly Father and His heavenly kingdom.

**READ: "The Incarnation and Being Human," by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish**

This article (for teens and up) explains that the Lord came to live among people as a Man so that they could come to know Him and learn to respect His Word. In that miracle the Almighty and Everlasting God became Human in a form that all could see and love.

**PROJECT: A Light in the Darkness** (*ages 3-9*)

Make a collage with special papers or use yellow, orange, and white oil pastels on dark paper to show the light that the Lord brought into the world when He was born.

## **NO ROOM IN THE INN**

"[T]here was no room for them in the inn."

(Luke 2:7)

The Lord's birth into the world was imminent when Mary and Joseph reached Bethlehem, yet they found that there was no room for them in the inn. This pictures the way people had turned away from the Word, crowding their minds with purely physical concerns and no longer looking to Jehovah God for instruction.

**READ: "No Room at the Inn," an article by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss**

The inn symbolizes the part of the mind that thinks about and lives in this world. Our natural minds should have room for the Lord in them and be willing to learn about His Word. For when we read the Word and see it for ourselves, then the Lord appears to us. Then we can "see this great thing which has come to pass...."

**READ: "In Your Heart Make Speedy Room," a family talk by the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers**

It is easy for us to become so busy in our lives, that we do not have any room in our minds for the Lord. This can even happen at Christmas, which is supposed to be the celebration of His birthday.

Let us be like the shepherds and the wise men by making sure that there is room for the Lord in our minds and in our hearts.

**PROJECT: Where We Can Find the Lord** *(for ages 6-12)*

There was no room for the Lord in the inn so the Lord was born in a stable and laid in a manger. Fold a piece of paper in half and picture the Lord in a manger on one half. On the other half, show where we can find the Lord—in His Word.

**COLORING PAGE: No Room at the Inn** by Marguerite L. Acton

## **IN A MANGER**

*A manger means the doctrine of truth from the Word.  
(Apocalypse Explained 706:12)*

Mary wrapped the infant Lord in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, there being no room for them in the inn. We are told that all of the details of the Lord's life on earth have a spiritual meaning, and using the manger for the baby Lord is a good example. The manger symbolizes instruction directly from the Word. It is a place where we can get spiritual food so that we can understand what is important in life.

**PROJECT: Diorama of the Lord in a Manger** *(ages 6-12)*

A simple representation of the nativity which shows the baby Lord, Mary, Joseph, and two sheep.

**ACTIVITY: A Christmas Tableaux**

This is a script for a dramatization of the Christmas story with a narrator reading selections from the Word and the others portraying the scenes.

**PROJECT: "Stained Glass Window" of the Nativity** *(ages 6-12)*

A lovely picture drawn in the style of a stained glass window. One option is to print it on translucent paper or dab it with vegetable oil after coloring so that it looks more like stained glass.

**COLORING PAGE: The Lord Born in a Stable**

**SING: Here with the Sheep and Oxen Mild**

**COLORING PAGE: Lying in a Manger** by Robert Glenn

**SING: Away in a Manger**

## **GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY**

*"[B]ehold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."  
(Luke 2:10)*

When the angel appeared to the shepherds by night and announced the Lord's birth to them, he described the news as "tidings of great joy which will be to all people." The shepherds hurried to find Mary and Joseph and the baby Lord, and they were the first visitors to see the infant. Not

everyone would receive the Lord with joy—certainly Herod did not. But the shepherds picture the innocence of those who are willing to follow the Lord, and act on what the angel has told them.

**READ: “Where the Lord Was Born” a family talk by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss**

This family talk explains why the Lord wasn’t born in a special place where all the important people could find Him and why the shepherds were the first people to see the Lord.

**POSTER: For Unto Us a Child Is Born (Isaiah 9:6)**

To enhance your preparations for Christmas, you may wish to print out and display this quotation with a beautiful border.

**PROJECT: Bookmarks** (*ages 7 and up*)

Print out these lovely bookmarks to help you remember the key messages of the Christmas story. Children may want to use these bookmarks as gifts for adults in their lives.

**SING: “Joy to the World”**

## **SIMEON AND ANNA**

*And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon,  
and this man was just and devout...and the Holy Spirit was upon him.  
(Luke 2:25)*

Who knew that the infant Lord was the Messiah, the Savior? Mary and Joseph knew from the words of the angel Gabriel, as did the shepherds. The wise men knew and later came to worship Him. But in the interim two others recognized the Lord when He was presented in the temple and publicly affirmed His role as the Savior. One was Simeon who had been assured that he would not die before the birth of the Messiah. The other was Anna who had served the Lord at the temple for many years.

**READ: “Simeon: Just and Devout” by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish**

Simeon eagerly anticipated the coming of the Lord. His life pictures the part of ourselves that knows what is right and loves what is good no matter how shameful other aspects of our lives may be. This part is affirmative, optimistic, confident, eagerly expecting the help and comfort of the Lord, and in fact, being guided by the Spirit of Truth to receive Him.

**PROJECT: The Presentation in the Temple by Kent Cooper** (*ages 9-up*)

Assemble this beautiful project showing Mary and Joseph presenting the Lord at the temple.

**READ: “Simeon and Anna” by the Rev. Frank S. Rose**

**POSTER: Simeon’s Blessing (Luke 2:29-32)**

When Simeon saw the infant Lord, he was inspired to bless Him with the words quoted here.

**JOURNAL ACTIVITY: Looking for the Lord** (*teens and up*)

Simeon was a wise, old man who had been looking for the Lord. Would he have recognized the Lord, had he not been looking for Him? What are some ways that we can look for the Lord?

**SING: Lord, Now You Are Letting Your Servant Depart in Peace**

*Family Projects and Activities*

*Unto Us a Child Is Born*

**COLORING PAGES:**      **Simeon with the Infant Lord** by Robert Glenn  
                                 **Simeon Holds the Infant Lord** by Jacquie S. Bostock  
                                 **Simeon Prophecies** by Robert Glenn  
                                 **Anna and Simeon** by Robert Glenn

## **HEROD THE KING**

Then Herod...was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under....  
(Matthew 2:16)

Herod did not welcome the news of the Lord's birth. He was afraid that the Lord—who was King of heaven and earth—would take away his kingdom. So he hated the Lord and wanted to kill Him. One of the saddest stories in the Word is about the killing of very young boys in Bethlehem, picturing the destructive nature of selfishness in our lives. The sermon by the Rev. Andrew Dibb can help us better understand this story and the ways that we let Herod into our lives.

**READ: “The Slaughter of the Innocents” by the Rev. Andrew M. T. Dibb**

As we think about this story, let us envision the truths we know about the Lord as a tiny infant whom we have to protect against the Herod side of our lives.

**FOR REFLECTION: When Are We Like Herod? (teens and up)**

Herod symbolizes selfishness that threatens what is good. Are there times when we are like Herod?

## **FLIGHT INTO EGYPT**

“Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”  
(Matthew 2:13)

The angel warned Joseph in a dream that Herod wanted to kill the young Child, and told him to leave during the night and take Mary and the baby Lord to Egypt. In this story, the inner meaning of Egypt is knowledge from the Word.

**READ: “Why the Lord Was Taken into Egypt” by the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh**

**READ: “The Flight into Egypt,” an article for teens by the Rev. Norbert Rogers**

This story tells us about how the Lord was kept safe from Herod, but also how the Lord's wonderful providence keeps what is most important with each one of us safe from harm.

**PROJECT: Silhouette of the Flight into Egypt (ages 8-14)**

Cut out the pieces to show the silhouettes of Mary and Joseph taking the young Child to Egypt, then assemble on a large piece of blue paper and add stars by using glitter or small star stickers.

**COLORING PAGE: The Flight into Egypt by Marguerite Acton**

**PROJECT: Protecting What Is Precious** (*ages 12-up*)

Prepare a blown egg as a symbol of the fragility of the tender states within us that need protection. Then think of something precious within you or a member of your family that needs protecting. Perhaps it is a new truth that you've learned from the Word that you would like to hold sacred or a special prayer to the Lord. Maybe it is the desire to raise your children in a way that helps them honor marriage. Write down on a tiny piece of paper whatever it is that needs protecting, roll it up and insert it into the egg as a reminder to safeguard what is precious.

## **THE LORD'S PRESENCE WITH US**

*The Lord is present with every person, urging and pressing to be received. A person receives Him when he acknowledges Him as his God, Creator, Redeemer, and Savior.  
(True Christian Religion 766)*

How is the Lord present with us? Just as the sun shines day after day, so the Lord is with us, offering His love and wisdom to all. But it is only when we acknowledge and worship the Lord that we can really receive His light, His wisdom, and become conjoined with the Lord in love and faith (see *Apocalypse Explained* 678: 2,3).

**READ: "Making Room for the Lord's Birth" by the Rev. Mark Carlson**

This Christmas season each of us will have many guests in our inn. Will we find room for the tiny Baby and worship the Lord from a willingness to be led by Him? Will we follow the Lord in the year to come, or will we go our own way?

**READ: "The Lord's Birthday," a talk for preschoolers by the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers**

**PROJECT: Who Saw the Lord?** (*ages 7-14*)

Make a mural or accordion book showing the people who saw the newborn Lord. Be sure to show Mary and Joseph with the infant Lord, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the wise men. Make a mural or accordion book showing the people who saw the Lord and rejoiced in His salvation.

**ACTIVITY: Setting Up a Christmas Representation in Your Home**

Displaying a nativity scene in your home is a good reminder that looking to the Lord is the most important aspect of Christmas. The nativity set can also be used to illustrate the various Christmas stories to help your children learn them.

**ACTIVITY: How People Responded to the Lord** (*ages 10-up*)

Match people who saw the Lord (or were looking for the Lord) to their words or actions.

**ACTIVITY: A Spectrum of Responses** (*ages 12-up*)

Try placing people who saw the Lord onto a spectrum indicating how happy or unhappy they were about the Lord's coming into the world.

**SING: Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light**

**SING: O Come All Ye Faithful**