

General Church Education



# Christmas: Good News for the Shepherds

Luke 2:1-20

## Lesson 30

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 2: The Lord Is Our Shepherd

For ages 7-8 years

# Christmas: Good News for the Shepherds

## Luke 2:1-20

### Ideas for Parents & Teachers

The Lord came to earth to show us the way to heaven at a time when spiritual darkness was on the earth. Most people had no desire to learn about the Lord or to try to live a heavenly life. In the familiar stories of His birth we see how the Lord can touch each of our lives today and in every age. He comes to those with good affections or loves, those who will recognize Him at once because they want to learn what is good and true. The shepherds represent this quality in people. The Lord is truly our Savior when we want to overcome temptations for evil in our lives and look to Him for power to do so.

The Lord was born in Bethlehem, which means “house of bread.” The Lord is the “living bread” that came down from heaven so that people could live and not die spiritually (John 6:31-51). We may wonder why He did not choose to be born in a more glorious place. There is beautiful meaning in the signs that the angels gave the shepherds. They were to look for swaddling cloths and a manger. The swaddling cloths represent the accommodation of His truth, the manger the accommodation of His love. With this birth, the Divine was accommodated to the humble states of people so that they could learn eternal truth from Him. On the first Christmas day the Lord gave us the greatest gift of all, the gift of Himself.

### Ideas for Children

- The Lord came on earth as Baby Jesus.
- Jesus Christ is our Good Shepherd, who came on earth to lead people to heaven.
- We can worship the Lord as the shepherds did.

### From the Writings

The Lord’s merit and righteousness are purely Divine, and things purely Divine are such that if they were to be placed near to a person he or she would instantly die. The Lord approaches angels and people with His Divine by means of light tempered and accommodated to the capacity and quality of each one, thus by means of what is brought down to a person’s level and adapted. See *True Christian Religion* 641

God became Man, and thus also became Man-God. Being then accommodated to humanity He could draw near to people and be conjoined with them. This is because the Lord our Savior is Jehovah the Father Himself in human form; for Jehovah descended and became Man that He might be able to draw near to humankind, and humankind to Him, and conjunction might thus be effected, and through that conjunction people might have salvation and eternal life. *True Christian Religion* 370

When truth Divine descends through the heavens to people, as the Word has descended, it is, on the way, accommodated to all, both to those who are in the heavens, and to those who are on the earth. Truth Divine is in quite a different form in the heavens from what it is in the world. In the heavens it is such as is the internal sense of the Word. *Arcana Coelestia* 8920

## Christmas: Good News for the Shepherds

In our last story we learned how the Lord tried to prepare people for His first coming into the world with the use of prophecies. Do you remember what a prophecy is? (A prophecy tells about something that is going to happen in the future.) The Jewish people passed on these prophecies to each new generation and people cherished the thought that the Messiah would someday come on earth.

### Baby Jesus Is Born

At this time the Holy Land of Canaan was governed by the Roman Empire, and the emperor had decreed that everyone had to go to the home of their ancestors so that a census could be taken. All the people would be counted and then taxed by the Romans. So Mary and Joseph traveled to the town of Bethlehem to be enrolled. King David was their ancestor and Bethlehem was “the city of David.”

Many others were in town for the same reason and there was no room in the inn for them. Do you remember where they stayed? They stayed in a stable with the animals and this is where the Baby Lord was born. It doesn't sound very magnificent, does it? After all, kings usually live in palaces with the finest of things around them. But this is where the Lord chose to be born!



Can you picture the scene in your mind? The stable gave them shelter and warmth. The Baby was wrapped in soft, clean swaddling cloths and laid in a manger, or a feed box for the animals. The manger was filled with sweet-smelling hay and the animals were standing around making their soft sounds. Let's read about it now.

**Read Luke 2:1-7.** This is a very peaceful scene, isn't it? How would people learn about the birth of this special Baby? Do you remember who first learned of the Lord's birth? Read the next section in Luke to find out.

**Read Luke 2:8-14.** Who were the first people to learn about the Lord's birth? (The shepherds.) How did they learn the news? (Angels appeared to them.)

Yes, the shepherds were out in the fields around Bethlehem keeping watch over their flocks of sheep at night. It must have been very dark out in those fields. There were no city lights like we have today. The shepherds would have gathered all the sheep together to protect them from wild animals throughout the night. It was very peaceful there when, all of a sudden, the heavens opened and an angel stood before them. The glory of the Lord, a bright heavenly light, shone round about the shepherds.

How did this make the shepherds feel? (They were greatly afraid.)

Yes, it was most unusual! This appearance frightened the shepherds so the angel's first words to them were ones of comfort. "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."

Great joy! At long last the prophecies were coming true. Their Savior had been born! The Lord Jesus is called a Savior because He came into the world to save people from evil by telling them true ideas and showing them the right way to live. The angel was joined by a host of other angels who proclaimed peace on earth.

The shepherds were told how to find the Baby. He was near by. Let's read the rest of the story and find out what the shepherds did after they saw the Baby Lord.

**Read Luke 2:15-20.** Did the shepherds go right away to see the Baby? (Yes, it says they came with haste and found the Baby.)

What did they do when they left Bethlehem? (They glorified and praised God and told people what they had heard and seen.)

Yes, the shepherds believed right away and went immediately to see the Lord. Then they spread the news with great joy.



## A Joyful Celebration

We, too, can celebrate Christmas with great joy because we know what happened on that night in Bethlehem. We can worship the Lord as the shepherds did so long ago. The Lord wants to come into each of our lives. He wants each of us to learn His truth and see the right way to live. That is why He came to earth as a little baby and grew up among people. His story is written down in the Word so that all people of all times can know about the good tidings that are meant to bring such great joy to everyone. His message is the heart of heaven: “Peace on earth, good will toward mankind.”



### Discussion Questions

- Everyone looks forward to receiving gifts as they celebrate Christmas. What do you think is the greatest gift of all? (The Lord’s coming to earth to teach us the right way to live.)
- Remember the angels’ message. What are some ways you can make this Christmas joyful? (Answers may include ways to bring peace to your family or friends, ways to spread the good news of the Lord’s birth or to spread good will to others in your life.)
- Why do you think the Lord is called a shepherd? (Because the Lord watches over and takes care of all people, leading them to heaven, in a similar way that a shepherd guides his sheep to good pasture and safety.)
- What do you think it would have felt like to be a shepherd and see the baby Lord?

# Activity Overview | Christmas: Good News for the Shepherds

## Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will *be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Luke 2:8-14

## Song

*Silent Night, Holy Night*

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-silent-night-holy-night/>

## Activities

Choose one or two.

- Activity 1 | Make an Angel Snowflake
- Activity 2 | Paper Chain of Angels
- Picture to color

## Additional Activity Ideas

- Watch *Jesus Is Born*, a video telling the story of the angels appearing to the shepherds at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-jesus-is-born/>
- Hear the song *Bethlehem Lay Sleeping* and sing along with a video at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-bethlehem-lay-sleeping-song/>
- Act out the story using figures from a Nativity set.

## Activity 1 | Make an Angel Snowflake

Make a host of angels to welcome the Lord!

### Materials

*Easy Angel* template (copy before cutting to create a whole sky full of angels!)

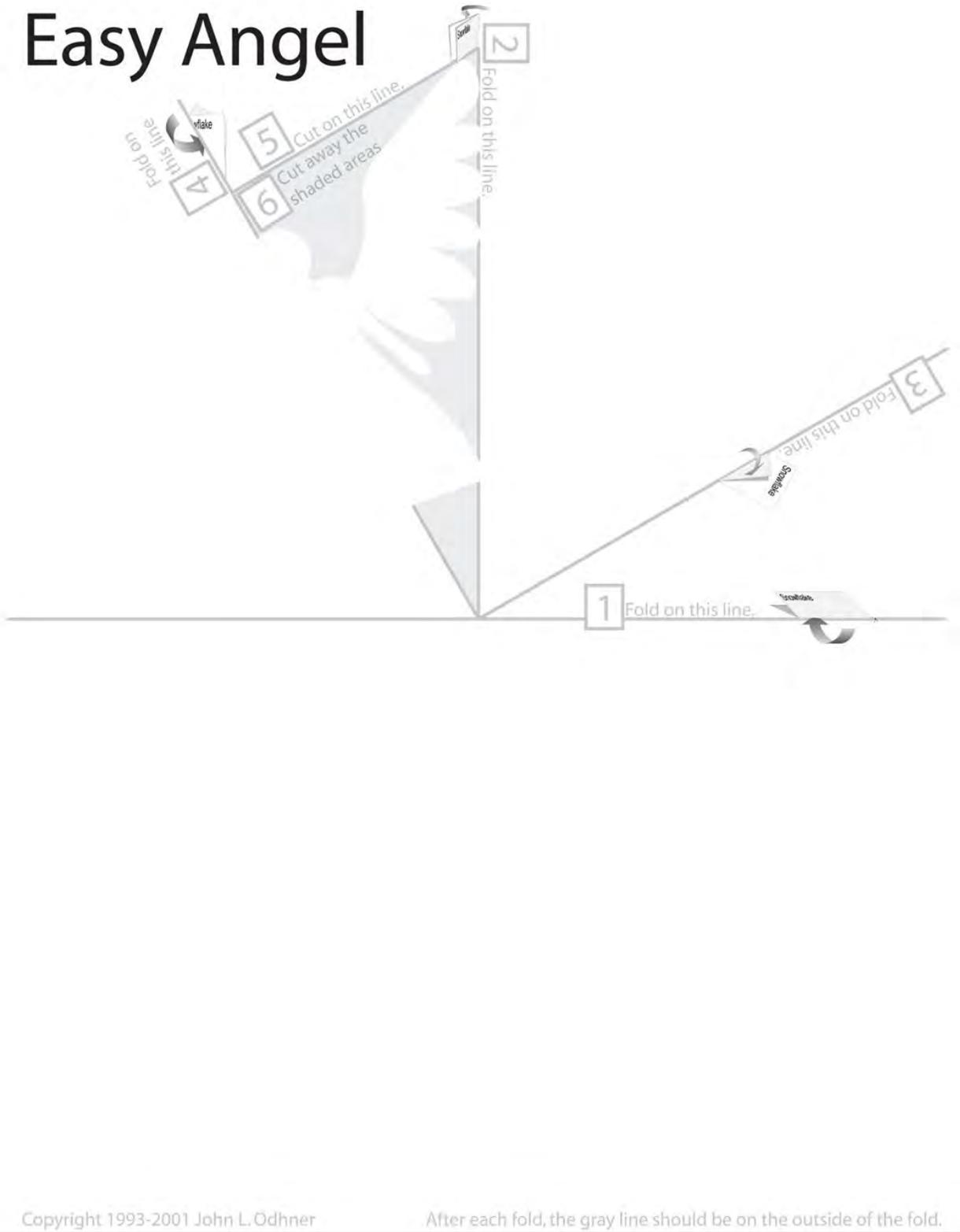
sharp scissors

*optional*: glue and glitter for decorating

### Directions

1. Using a sharp pair of scissors, cut out the *Easy Angel* snowflake.
2. Follow the cutting directions carefully, being sure not to cut on the folds, except where indicated.
3. *Optional*: decorate with glue and glitter.
4. Mount angel snowflakes on a window.

# Easy Angel



## Activity 2 | Paper Chain of Angels

Make a chain of angels to decorate your home or Christmas tree.

### Materials

*Paper Chain of Angels* template (copy before cutting to make a long chain of angels!)

scissors

colored pencils, or markers

*optional:* glue and glitter for decorating

### Directions

1. Make enough copies of the *Paper Chain of Angels* template to make a paperchain of the length you want.
2. Color each angel. Angels in heaven wear clothes of many colors. Make the angels as bright and colorful as you wish.
3. Cut out each angel. You will be folding the angels at the trumpet. Be careful not cut the two trumpets apart.
4. Cut the rectangular shape out of each angel's clothing.
5. Make a chain of angels by threading one angel through another as shown below.



