

Sunday School Lesson

By Bessie Wilbon

INTRODUCTION

Luke was a Greek. He was also a doctor. He was an orderly writer, and he kept meticulous records. The point is that this account, as written by Luke, does not represent a fantasy, or mere mental meandering. It is an authentic, vital, and trustworthy account. It can be believed.

The birth of Jesus occurred at what Scripture calls "the fullness of the time (Galatians 4:4). Rome was at the height of her power. The Greek language was universal. The Jewish people, who were intensely awaiting the Messiah had been scattered all over the known world. There has never been another event for which such adequate preparation has been made. The world realizes its hopelessness. Man was enslaved physically, mentally, and spiritually. He could not free himself. He had to be delivered.

The angel who announced the event to Mary was proof that God still existed and was interested in human affairs. The intertestamentary period marked a time when God had not revealed Himself to His people. The appearance of Gabriel was auspicious. His very name means either "man of God" or "God is mighty."

THE LESSON

"In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a girl promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. The girl's name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, 'Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!' Mary was deeply troubled by the angel's message, and she wondered what his words meant. The angel said to her, 'Don't be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be called great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was, and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end!' Mary said to the angel, 'I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God. Remember your relative Elizabeth? It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God cannot do. I am the Lord's servant,' said Mary, 'may it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her." (Luke 1:26-38)

The six months refers to the pregnancy of Elizabeth. The word angel means messenger. God had sent Gabriel to Daniel (Daniel 8:16; 9:21), and to Zechariah as recorded in Luke 1:8-20. Now God dispatched him to Mary. It would seem that his missions were joyful ones to the faithful of God.

As a physician Luke would be especially interested in the virgin birth. The fact that he referred to the virginity of Mary twice in verse 27 is proof that he was convinced of it. All other believers every since have found it no stumbling block to their faith. Mary was apparently quite young, but was betrothed, or engaged, to Joseph who was a carpenter in the village. He was a descendant of David. The word house means family.

The announcement that Mary was highly favored must have come as a great surprise, as did the message that the Lord was with her. We wonder what crowded the mind of this simple maiden, and especially when the angel continued with the fact that she was blessed among women.

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." (V. 32). This verse contains three facts: Jesus would be great. Infidels, agnostics, and atheists who question His deity are forced to admit the greatness of His humanity. It is not enough to do this, however, for (2) He was to be recognized as The Son of the Highest. This seems to be more a description of God than a title for Jesus. God is far above all creation, all rule, all authority - nothing is comparable to Him. The greatness of Jesus comes in the association with the magnitude of His Father. (3) The third great fact of this verse is that God would give to Him the throne of his father David. This brings the promises, the prophecies, and the power of God into focus. Jesus was a descendant of David after the flesh (Romans 1:3) and David himself predicted the great event. (Acts 2:30). The wisdom, knowledge, and power of God can never again be questioned.

We still seek to know the certainty of the promises that are made to us. We want certified documents. We want some form of a written warranty. How much more was this true in the world of Jesus and its restricted communications and travel? Even the word of an angel had to be substantiated. It would be good if people in our day demanded bona fide proof of messengers purporting to have messages from God.

Luke does not tell us just how the wonderful event of the conception of Jesus took place. It was brought about by an action of the Holy Spirit. Whether there was some particular moment or crisis when Mary became aware that this was happening, or whether it was a sense of the constant special closeness of God over a longer period, we do not know. In a special, never-to-be-duplicated way, Jesus came into this world as God's Son. As John's Gospel says several times, He is the "only begotten" Son. We are God's "sons" by adoption, but there is only one who is the result of the mystic union of God's eternal Spirit with our human flesh.

Prior to the coming of Jesus, every person who entered the world did so as the results of the union of a man with a woman. The access of Jesus was a "first." It was a unique phenomenon, a one-time experience. It was truly, as Isaiah declared in 7:14, a sign from the Lord Himself.

There was something well-nigh miraculous in the conception of John. The fact that his father Zechariah is described as an old man (Luke 1:7, 18) would seem to suggest that it was by a miracle that his reproduction capacity was restored.

Philip Morris Corporation Meets With Black Press

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

Post publisher Bill Johnson was one of 93 black publishers from around the country to meet with corporate officials of Philip Morris recently in New York.

"The main thrust," explained Johnson, "was to get a better understanding and more viable working relationship between the black press and Philip Morris Corporation."

In wide-ranging discussions, conference participants sought to broaden what was referred to as "a long-term and mutually beneficial partnership," build even closer cooperation, and assess the effects of anti-smoking campaigns.

Data from Philip Morris indicate that 35 percent of all cigarettes are purchased by blacks.

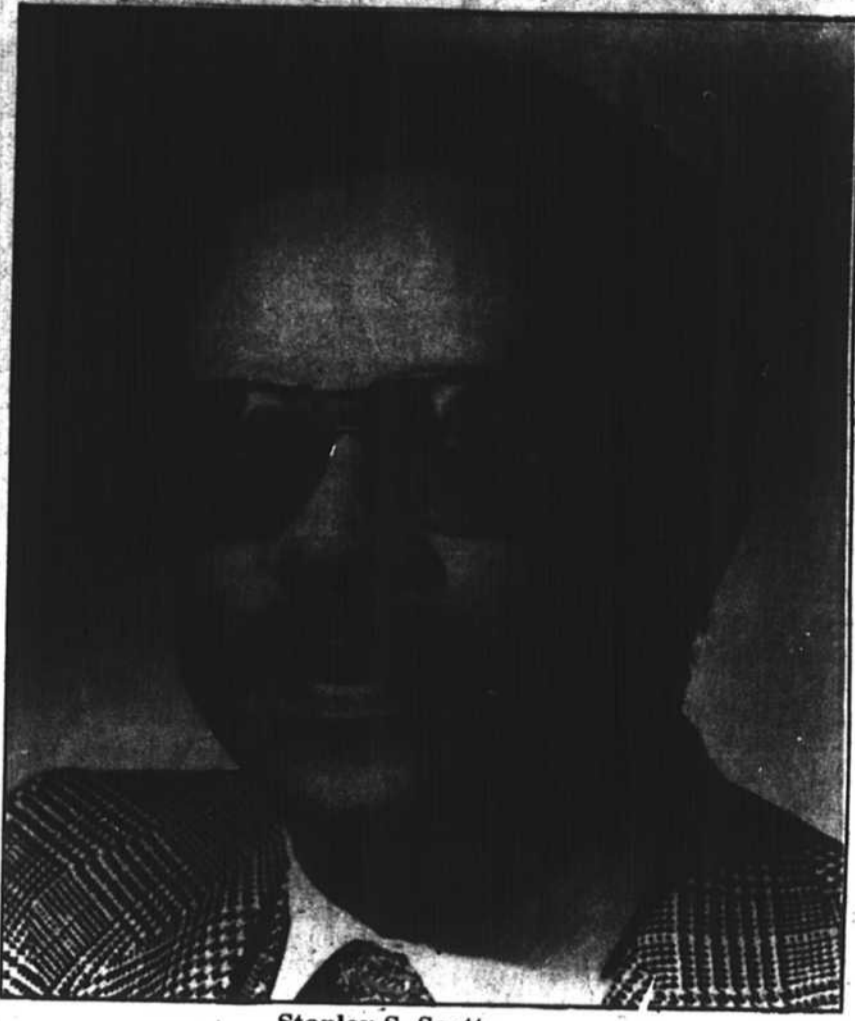
Philip Morris is the nation's largest tobacco company.

Vice President and Director of Corporate Affairs, Stanley S. Scott, was the conference convener. Scott, a former editor of The Memphis World, stated, "Your markets are our markets. We need to discuss with you both our successes and our challenges, and to reassure you that we will never take you for granted."

According to Frank Resnik, President and Chief Executive Officer of Philip Morris U.S.A., the company had been the first national advertiser to use black newspapers.

He said that Philip Morris had also been the first cigarette company to hire blacks in sales.

Dr. William Lee, First Vice President of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, agreed that Philip Morris had been a better



Stanley S. Scott
...Philip Morris vice president

friend to black papers than many other corporations.

Johnson thought the conference accomplished its goals "to a degree."

He added, "Here is a major corporation who apparently understands the influence and strength of the black press, who said, let's sit down and work closely together to

develop a more amicable working relationship."

In closing, Scott remarked, "Philip Morris is proud and happy to count this valued American resource as a friend."

"Jingle Bell Jaunt"

Invites Participants

Attention, walkers, runners, joggers, and crawlers! You are invited to participate in the "Jingle Bell Jaunt" in Uptown Charlotte and Fourth Ward on Sunday, December 15.

This family even lets you choose either a one- or three-mile course starting at the Salvation Army Corps Community Center, 314 N. Poplar St. For the three-mile "jaunt," there's a water station at Trade and Tryon.

This is a non-competitive activity. Holiday costumes and extra bells are encouraged. Special recognition will be given for the best individual costume and the best group costumes. Everyone is invited to the Holiday Festivities immediately following at the Salvation Army Community Center, where refreshments and Christmas goodies will be served.

Registration for adults is \$4.50; for children under 10, \$2.50. Proceeds will benefit the American Lung Association of North Carolina and the Central Branch YMCA Outreach Program.

The first 500 adults and 100 children registered by December 9 will receive long-sleeved T-shirts and jingle bells.

For information on how to register, call 537-5776.

Holiday Season Is Time Of Thanksgiving, Worship, Unity

By Ruby Hooper, R.D.
Special To The Post

The holiday season is a time of thanksgiving, worship, family unity, and, of course, good food. At this time of year, overindulgence and improperly handled and prepared food can lead to discomfort or illness. However, food-related illness can be easily prevented during the holidays and throughout the year.

By following simple, common sense steps, we can prevent the nausea and upset stomach that are a result of eating improperly handled food.

I recommend the following ways to safeguard your holiday meals: Purchase food that is of good quality; thaw food in the refrigerator; have clean work surfaces, clean sinks, clean utensils and other work equipment; wash hands thoroughly before beginning work and as often as necessary while preparing or serving foods; avoid direct hand contact with food that is ready to eat; provide serving spoons, knives, forks, or tongs to eliminate contamination of food by others; keep food hot or cold (avoid leaving meats, gravies, casseroles, vegetables, creamed desserts at room temperature for extended periods of time); store food to be refrigerated no more than three inches deep to permit it to chill rapidly; wash all fresh produce and fruit thoroughly before serving.

Any food can be a source of infection, but the foods we traditionally eat at this time of year can be very dangerous if not handled carefully before, during, and after preparation.

Meat, seafood, poultry, dressings, gravies, puddings, cream pies, and other dishes should not be left at room temperatures for long periods of time.

Food should be kept either hot or cold, not only to maintain its appeal, but to keep it safe for those who eat it. Bacteria grows very rapidly at Luke warm temperatures; but keeping food hot or cold will help to control bacterial growth. Those who eat food served to them by others have a right to expect it to be safe to eat.

It may take two or three hours for a turkey to thaw in the refrigerator but this is the safest method. After washing the turkey it is important to clean the sink thoroughly with cleanser to avoid the risk of contamination of other foods or equipment with salmonella bacteria. All poultry and meat are a potential source of salmonella, which can cause a serious stomach upset. Turkey dressing is safest to eat when baked separate and not used as stuffing inside the turkey cavity. Dressing, after being mixed, should be kept in the refrigerator until time for it to be baked. A turkey should not be put in the oven and left overnight at a low temperature. This can be very dangerous because it creates an ideal medium for bacterial growth. Following the directions on the wrapper that comes with the turkey is the smart thing to do.

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Stores everywhere closed Thanksgiving Day.

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