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By Rev. James M. Gray, D. D.,
Dean of Moody Bible
Institute, Chicago

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INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By Rev. William Evans, D. D., Director Bible Course Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.
LESSON FOR JANUARY 21
THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

LESSON TEXT—Luke 2:1-20.
MEMORY VERSES—10, 11.
GOLDEN TEXT—"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2:11.

Almost twenty centuries ago, in an obscure village in Palestine, an event occurred which has had more influence upon the history of the human race than any other event since time began.

A child was born—not an unusual event surely. He was no child of distinguished parents, nor a prospective ruler of a world's empire. He was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger. And yet around that lowly crib and humble birth, the life, thoughts, and love of millions have from that day to this been centered. During these two thousand years many noble births have been registered, but none so great as this. Emperors, monarchs, and mighty men have lived and died, and are forgotten; nations have risen and waned; but the birth of the Christ child is more influential in this day than on the first birthday of our age twenty centuries ago.

The announcement of Christ's birth was made by angels. What more fitting accompaniment could there be to such an august event! How interested angels are in the welfare of mankind! How gladly they told the Christmas story to a handful of poor shepherds! How free from pride they were! They were not content that one of their number should tell the story—they all broke out in that great Christmas anthem.

Do we believe in angels any more? We used to. We used to sing "there are angels hovering round." If we believe the Bible, we still believe in the ministry of angels.

Onward we go for still we hear them singing; Angels sing on, your faithful watches keeping. Sing us sweet fragments of the song above.

The announcement was made to a small band of shepherds. No angelic host went to the Sanhedrin, or to the palace of Herod and broke the news of the birth of the Christ child. Is there not a lesson here? Does not God have special regard for the lowly and the humble? Hath not God chosen the weak things to confound the mighty? If angels were willing to preach to a few farmers, should the preacher be ashamed of ministering to a small and humble people, or the Sunday school teacher to a small class?

The scholars of the land were also notified of Christ's birth. The Scripture does not say—"not any wise men are called," but "not many." It is a mistake to say that religion is good enough for women, and children, but not for strong, brainy men. The brainiest men of the ages have been Christian men.

That the birth of Christ was mysterious and miraculous need not disturb us. How Christ's body was prepared, how the divine and human could become one—who can tell? We do not even understand our own birth, let alone His. If ever anything of a miraculous nature should take place, when should it be if not now when the King of all laws is coming into the world? Let us be careful lest in denying the virgin birth, we challenge the purity of the Virgin's life.

The birth of Christ was the coming of God to and in man, not that God had never come to man before, for he had. But he had come only as a sojourner. In Christ he came to abide. His name is "Immanuel,—God with us." Whatever else the incarnation may mean, it certainly means that God took our nature and became as one of us—he came unto his own.

The birth of Christ brings to us good tidings of great joy. If the angels sang, should not we? He came to save not angels, but men. The first note of this angelic song is a note of gladness, and song has characterized Christianity.

This birth in Bethlehem shows God's attitude toward men. He has good will toward men. He is not the hard, severe judge that men so often wrongly picture him to be. Sinner, you have cursed God, but he has not cursed you back; you have lifted your hands against him, but he has not destroyed you. He has thoughts of kindness, and of love toward you. If you have wrong thoughts of God, let them die away in the music of that first Christian anthem, "good will toward men."

The Christian story brings to us also a Savior. Jesus Christ was born with a reference to sin. He was the only man that ever was born with reference to that great fact. Other great men were teachers and reformers—he alone could save men from their sins. His name shall be called Jesus and he shall save his people from their sins. This is good tidings of great joy to a sin-stricken world. If Christ the Lord cannot save you from your sins, no one else can.

He is a personal Savior—unto you he was born; he is a mighty Savior—he is Christ, the Anointed.



The apostle Paul is here speaking of Jesus Christ as the one in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells and by whom it pleased the father to reconcile all things unto himself. By "all things," however, he does not mean all things universally or absolutely, for that would include not only the souls of the

condemned, but the demons in hell and even Satan himself. But he means all the things which it has pleased the father from the beginning thus to reconcile. The definite article in the Greek suggests this as the thought, which is made clear by the other teachings of the Bible on the same subject. Among those things which it pleased the father to reconcile to himself are the believers on Jesus Christ, and it is of their reconciliation especially that Paul here speaks.

I. First he shows our need of reconciliation, by telling us that we were "sometime alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works." "Sometime" covers the whole period of our lives from physical birth to our new birth by the holy spirit. All that time the natural man is alienated from God. And not only alienated, but hostile to God, an enemy, as the text says.

What Are Wicked Works?
This enemy need not show itself necessarily in giving way to the lower and baser appetites of the body. There are cultivated men and women who are able to control these appetites, but who are at the same time enemies to God in their mind—i. e., in their modes of thought and feeling, which are contrary to his revealed will. And this enemy must in the very nature of the case, show itself in "wicked works."

II. Second, he shows the source of our reconciliation, which is God himself. "Yet now hath he reconciled us." The very one from whom we were alienated and against whom we were enemies is the one who reconciles us.

"He who might the vantage best have took Found out the remedy."

This is grace, especially when we understand that it does not mean primarily that we became reconciled to God, but that God became reconciled to us. This he did by taking that sin, out of the way which was the barrier to his reconciliation.

III. This leads Paul to speak in the third place of the means of our reconciliation which was the work of Christ for us on the cross as our substitute Savior, "in the body of his flesh through death." Why say "the body of his flesh"? Why not say "his body" without adding "flesh"? Because there was a heretical sect in that day which denied the materiality of Christ's body. They believed in a spiritual, but not a material, mediator-ship.

But Christ had a real body and real flesh and real blood which he offered in propitiation for our sin, he passed through real suffering and died a real death. Such is the teaching of this verse.

IV. And this brings us to the fourth point, which is the result of our reconciliation, presented "holy and without blemish and uncharged in God's sight." This is true immediately of every believer the moment he accepts Christ by faith as his Saviour. Oh, if every body in this sin-cursed and sin-weary world only knew and believed that! If they would only pause in the rush of things and listen to it for a single moment!

The Battle of Concord Bridge.
At the battle of Concord bridge, at the beginning of the revolution, when John Buttrick gave the command to fire it was to British subjects he gave it, but it was obeyed by American citizens. In other words, in that instant their condition became changed, though the experience of that change was a thing of growth. So the instant a man takes Christ as his Saviour, he stands before God free from the guilt of sin, without blemish and without charge. And this is grace!

REACHED LIMIT OF TORTURE

Real Reason Why Burglar Gave Evening Papers Chance to Use Effective Headline.

A burglar broke into a New York mansion early the other morning and found himself after wandering about the place in the music room. Hearing footsteps approaching, he took refuge behind a screen. From eight to nine the eldest daughter had a singing lesson. From nine to ten the second daughter took a piano lesson. From ten to eleven the eldest son got his instruction on the violin. From eleven to twelve the younger boy got a lesson on the flute and piccolo. Then, at twelve, the family got together and practiced music on all their instruments. They were fixing up for a concert. At twelve-thirty the porch-climber staggered from behind the screen. "For heavens' sake, send for the police!" he shrieked. "Torture me no longer!" And in the evening paper there was the headline: "Nervy Children Capture Desperate Burglar."

IN AGONY WITH ITCHING

"About four years ago I broke out with sores on my arms like boils. After two months they were all over my body, some coming, and some going away. In about six months the boils quit, but my arms, neck and body broke out with an itching, burning rash. It would burn and itch, and come out in pimples like grains of wheat. I was in a terrible condition; I could not sleep or rest. Parts of my flesh were raw, and I could scarcely bear my clothes on. I could not lie in bed in any position and rest. In about a year the sores extended down to my feet. Then I suffered agony with the burning, itching sores. I could hardly walk and for a long time I could not put on socks.

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