

24 Days of Christmas



Christ-Centered Devotionals

By Jennifer Lund

The 24 Days of Christmas

Christ-Centered Devotionals

By Jennifer Lund

These advent devotionals use 24 ornaments to help tell the true story of Christmas. The devotionals begin with the Savior being chosen before we came to earth, the Creation and Fall, and continue with the prophets who prophesied of His birth and those who typified Him. The lessons also include Christ's lineage, and other events and people in the scriptures, which lead up to His majestic birth. It is powerful to learn how all things testify of Christ and to feel the anticipation of His coming to the earth.



Each day between now and Christmas you will learn about a symbol of Christ, His mission, prophecies of his coming, and the events leading to His birth. There will also be a hymn or carol to sing. The 24 ornaments each symbolize a key part of the Christmas Story beginning with the pre-mortal council in Heaven and ending with His birth. The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi taught, “All things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of [Jesus Christ]” (2 Ne. 11:4). These types of Christ found throughout the scriptures bring us a greater knowledge of Him and can bring us closer to Him as we let these gospel truths enter our hearts.

Use pictures to enhance each lesson. The ornaments are optional, and add another level of excitement for children and help them to remember each lesson as the symbol is displayed during December. Many or all of the ornaments can be made by hand using felt. Wrap the ornaments with Christmas paper or tissue. Add a sticker with the date for when each ornament will be opened. Put the ornaments in a special box.

Every day have the children unwrap an ornament, read the story and/or scriptures that go with the symbol, sing the songs and hang the ornament on a small (3-ft) Christmas tree or hang them on a ribbon or string. The best time to hold devotionals is during normal family scripture study – either replacing it or in addition to it. On Christmas Eve, hang the last of the ornaments (the manger). Teach about it as an introduction to your Nativity program (reading Luke 2 and singing Christmas carols).



Sing “Christmas Bells” or “In a Little Stable” for the opening song. Hand out a bell to each child (you may have children alternate who chooses their bell first). Let the kids ring the bells during the song and collect them right after singing. The bells welcome the children and set apart this special learning time. Children often look forward to ringing the bells.

If kids need more motivation, offer a small treat at the end as an incentive to listen quietly. Modify the lesson length and depth to the needs of your family. Reading the material beforehand helps. The lessons are most meaningful and effective when accompanied by your personal testimony. Remember the Savior's promise “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

Introduction

The Lord has said, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” The coming of Jesus Christ – the Word that was with God from the beginning – has been established by prophets since the beginning of time on both sides of the world, in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and in the mouths of modern day prophets. From Adam down through the ages, true prophets foretold of Christ’s coming, giving us facts and details about His name, His birth, His life and mission, and His victory over sin and death.

Like the wise men, we must also seek Jesus Christ – especially today, when mankind doubts His reality and clouds the celebration of His birth with secular traditions and worldly amusements. As followers of Christ preparing for His Second Coming we should commemorate His First Coming appropriately. This is His day. We need to be careful to not let the glamour of our cultural traditions overshadow and even displace the Son of God. We must make room in our inn – our home, our hearts, and our schedules – for the Savior of the World.

I love holidays! I love the magic of traditions and stories. Let us help our families feel the *real magic* of the *real* stories and center our traditions around the true meaning of the season. It *is* called Christmas after all. Rather than only filling our children’s dreams with dancing sugarplums and presents, why not fill them with the Holy Spirit who testifies of truth? We can do this by sharing the true history, prophecies and scriptures about Christ. This can be done in a fun, enjoyable and exciting way. When we make the Christmas season a spiritual feast, we bring our families closer to Christ and can feel the long-lasting peace and joy that come from His Spirit, which is the true spirit of Christmas.

I have found that my children learn about Santa Claus without any effort on my part. At school and through media they learn songs and stories about Santa. But no one will teach my children about Christ if I do not. Focusing my time and efforts on leading my family to Christ has taught me what Christmas is truly about and how beautiful and enjoyable it can become.

President Thomas S. Monson said, “I, with you have witnessed during the past few days and weeks what has become of the years, the annual commercialization of Christmas. I’m saddened to see Christmas become less and less about Christ and more and more about marketing and sales, parties and presents. And yet, Christmas is what *we* make of it. Despite all the distractions we can see to it that Christ is the center of our celebration. If we have not already done so, we can establish Christmas traditions for ourselves and for our families, which will help us capture and keep the spirit of Christmas.... A wise Christian once urged: Let us not *spend* Christmas, but let us *keep* Christmas in our hearts and in our lives. This is my plea tonight, because when we keep the spirit of Christmas, we keep the spirit of Christ. For the Christmas spirit *is* the Christ spirit. We will block out all of the distractions around us, which can diminish Christmas and swallow up its true meaning. There is no better time than now, this very Christmas season for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the principles taught by Jesus Christ.... May His precious spirit be with us and may He ever be the center of our celebrations and indeed of our very lives” *First Presidency Christmas Devotional – December 2011*.

I hope that your family will enjoy these Christ-Centered Christmas lessons as much as we have. As you pray for the Holy Ghost to guide you in these lessons, He will testify of the truth and your family, and your home will be blessed by the Spirit of Christ, which is the Spirit of Christmas.

Jennifer Lund

Index of Songs

Day	Topic/Story	Songs	Source/Pages
0	Giver of Eternal Life & Light	Joy to the World	Hymns, 201
1	Pre-mortal Calling & Creation	He Sent His Son	Children's Songbook, 34
2	The Fall of Adam	Picture a Christmas	Children's Songbook, 50
3	The City of Enoch	It Came upon the Midnight Clear	Hymns, 207
4	Noah and the Ark	Angels We Have Heard on High	Hymns, 203
5	Abraham: Covenants & Sacrifice	Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful	Hymns, 202
6	Isaac	The Nativity Song	Children's Songbook, 52
7	Jacob (Israel) – Covenants	Beautiful Savior	Children's Songbook, 62
8	Joseph of Egypt	Silent Night	Hymns, 204
9	Moses	Hark! the Herald Angels Sing	Hymns, 209
10	Passover	Far, Far Away on Judea's Plains	Hymns, 212
11	Ruth and Boaz	O Little Town of Bethlehem	Hymns, 208
12	King David	Once in Royal David's City	Hymns, 205
13	Isaiah	Away in a Manger	Hymns, 206
14	Witnesses in the New World	The First Noel	Hymns, 213
15	John the Baptist	Baptism	Children's Songbook, 100
16	Mary: the Handmaid of the Lord	Mary's Lullaby	Children's Songbook, 44
17	Joseph: a Humble Servant	When Joseph Went to Bethlehem	Children's Songbook, 38
18	Bethlehem	If I Had Been in Bethlehem	defordmusic.com
19	Shepherds	Shepherd's Carol	Children's Songbook, 40
20	The Wise Men	With Wondering Awe	Hymns, 210 <i>or</i>
		We are the Wise Men	Night of Miracles 49-51
21	The New Star	Stars Were Gleaming	Children's Songbook, 37
22	Samuel and the Signs of Christ's Birth in the New World	The Sign	<i>The New Era, August 1980</i>
23	Restoration through Joseph Smith	Joseph Smith's First Prayer	Hymns, 26
24	Jesus' Birth	<i>Nativity Program</i>	

Index of Topics and Ornaments

Day	Topic/Story	Ornament	Timeline
0	Giver of Eternal Life & Light	Tree with white lights	
1	Pre-mortal Calling & Creation	Earth	
2	The Fall of Adam	Apple	4000 B.C.
3	The City of Enoch	Gold-painted city	3000 B.C.
4	Noah and the Ark	Ark/Rainbow	2944 B.C.
5	Abraham: Covenants and Sacrifice	Stars on Night Sky	1992 B.C.
6	Isaac	Lamb	1900 B.C.
7	Jacob (Israel)	Ladder	1840 B.C.
8	Joseph of Egypt	Coat of Colors	1800-1780 B.C.
9	Moses	Burning Bush	1567 B.C.
10	Passover	Passover Door	1487 B.C.
11	Ruth and Boaz	Stalks of Wheat	1120 B.C.
12	King David	Crown	1000 B.C.
13	Isaiah	Scroll	740 B.C.
14	Witnesses in the New World	Book of Mormon (and Bible)	600 B.C. – 20 B.C.
15	John the Baptist	Dove	2 B.C.
16	Mary: the Handmaid of the Lord	Mary	2 B.C.
17	Joseph: a Humble Servant	Joseph	2 B.C.
18	Bethlehem	Bethlehem	1 B.C.
19	Shepherds	Shepherd staff	1 B.C.
20	The Wise Men	Wise men	1 B.C.-1 A.D.
21	The New Star	Star	1 B.C.
22	Samuel and the Signs of Christ's Birth in the New World	Sword	6 B.C. – 1 B.C.
23	Restoration through Joseph Smith	First Vision	1820 A.D.
24	Jesus' Birth	Swaddling Clothes/Manger	1 B.C.



Preparation

Objects to gather:

Bells for opening song, 3' Christmas tree
White lights, Fall leaves, Globe, Crown,
Shepherd staff, Gold Frankincense &
Myrrh, Baby doll and blanket
The word "Christmas"

Books (optional)

Old Testament Stories
New Testament Stories
Book of Mormon Stories
When Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem

Flannel Board Stories (optional)

Joseph of Egypt, The First Vision

Ornaments

Red glass ball ornament(s)
Earth, Apple, Golden city of Enoch
Ark/Rainbow
Stars on Night Sky
Ram/Lamb, Ladder, Coat of Colors
Burning Bush, Passover Door
Stalks of Wheat, Crown, Bethlehem
Book of Mormon, Bible
Mary, Joseph, Dove, Shepherd staff
Star, Wise men
Sword, First Vision, Manger

Pictures:

The Resurrected Christ, GAK 239
Council in Heaven
President Benson, GAK 518
Jesus Creating World-1/02 Ensign or
Earth GAK 600
Adam and Eve, GAK 101
Enoch, GAK 120
Noah building the Ark, GAK 102
Noah and the Ark, GAK 103
"Is Anything To Hard For The Lord" by Elspeth
Young (optional)
Abraham and Isaac, GAK 105
Crucifixion, GAK 230
Jacob Blessing His Sons, GAK 122
Joseph sold by his brothers, GAK 109
Moses in the Bulrushes, GAK 106
Moses and the Burning Bush, GAK 107
Jesus Walking on Water, GAK 243
Parting the Red Sea

Moses and the Brass Serpent, GAK 123
The Last Supper, GAK 227
Resurrected Christ Appears to Mary, GAK 233
Ruth, GAK 124
David and Goliath, GAK 112
Isaiah, GAK 113
Behold the Man by Simon Dewey
The Nativity, GAK 201
Boy Jesus in the Temple, GAK 205
Childhood of Jesus, GAK 206
Jesus Blessing Jairus's Daughter, GAK 215
Second Coming, GAK 238
The Bible and Book of Mormon, GAK 326
Lehi preaching in Jerusalem, GAK 300
Nephi's Vision of Mary by Judith Mehr
King Benjamin, GAK 307
Such Great Faith by Walter Rane
Abinadi, GAK 308
John Preaching Wilderness, GAK 207
John the Baptist, GAK 208
The Annunciation, GAK 241
Flight into Egypt, GAK 204
The Presentation of Christ in the Temple by James J.
Tissot (Dec '03 Ensign)
Growing in Wisdom by Simon Dewey
Childhood of Jesus, GAK 206
Pictures of the Holy Land (In the Footsteps of Jesus)
Map of route from Nazareth to Bethlehem
Road to Bethlehem by Joseph Brickey (cover-*When Jesus
Was Born in Bethlehem*)
Pictures of Nazareth, Jordan Valley, Jericho Desert,
Bethlehem; topographical map of journey
The Shepherds, GAK 202
The Wise Men, GAK 203
Samuel the Lamanite, GAK 314
Joseph reads Bible, GAK 402
The First Vision, GAK 403
Joseph of Egypt, Moses
By the Gift and Power of God Simon Dewey
Joseph Smith, GAK 401
The Lord Appears in the Kirtland Temple by Del Parson
Madonna and Child by Ambrogio Lorenzetti

GAK in Order:

101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 109, 112, 113, 120, 122,
123, 124, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 215,
227, 230, 233, 238, 239, 241, 243, 300, 307, 308, 314,
326, 401, 402, 403, 518, 600

Timeline – Countdown to Christ’s Birth

Cut out the rows, leaving one empty square at each end (for attaching to the wall). Color the “Christ’s Birth” square green. Tape connections together. Cut out a 3.5x.5” marker from red paper. Bend marker around the timeline and tape its ends together. Move marker along the timeline at each devotional.



Pre-Mortal Council Creation	3100 B.C.	1700 B.C.	300 B.C.	1100 A.D.
	3000 B.C.	1600 B.C.	200 B.C.	1200 A.D.
	2900 B.C.	1500 B.C.	100 B.C.	1300 A.D.
	2800 B.C.	1400 B.C.	Christ's Birth	1400 A.D.
	2700 B.C.	1300 B.C.	100 A.D.	1500 A.D.
4000 B.C.	2600 B.C.	1200 B.C.	200 A.D.	1600 A.D.
3900 B.C.	2500 B.C.	1100 B.C.	300 A.D.	1700 A.D.
3800 B.C.	2400 B.C.	1000 B.C.	400 A.D.	1800 A.D.
3700 B.C.	2300 B.C.	900 B.C.	500 A.D.	1900 A.D.
3600 B.C.	2200 B.C.	800 B.C.	600 A.D.	2000 A.D.
3500 B.C.	2100 B.C.	700 B.C.	700 A.D.	2100 A.D.
3400 B.C.	2000 B.C.	600 B.C.	800 A.D.	
3300 B.C.	1900 B.C.	500 B.C.	900 A.D.	
3200 B.C.	1800 B.C.	400 B.C.	1000 A.D.	

In A Little Stable

Adapted from a song by Herman Gockel

Piano

The piano accompaniment is written in 4/4 time. The first system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff features a melody of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff provides a simple harmonic accompaniment with quarter notes. The second system continues the melody in the treble staff and includes some chords in the bass staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

1. In a lit-tle sta-ble, far across the sea
Was a little baby just like you and me.
Ding, dong. Ding, dong. Christmas bells are ring-ing.
Ding, dong. Ding, dong. Happy children sing-ing.
2. Shepherds stood around him, angels watched with care.
For the babe was Jesus lying, smiling there.
Ding, dong. Ding, dong. What do all the bells say?
Ding, dong. Ding, dong. This is Jesus' birthday.

November 30

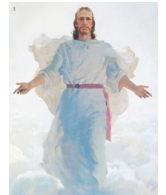
Jesus – Giver of Eternal Life and Light

Preparation: 3' Christmas tree, white lights, red ornament(s), fall leaves, picture of Christ (GAK 239)
Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing*

Show fall-colored leaves. What happens to the leaves on the trees every autumn? They change beautiful shades of yellow, orange, red and brown; they die and fall to the ground. But one tree keeps its green needles all year round – the evergreen tree.



Show picture of resurrected Christ. The evergreen trees remind us that Jesus is the giver of eternal life. Because He is the Son of God, He has power over death. He allowed wicked people to kill Him, and then three days later He brought His body to life – never to die again. Because of Him, we will all live again after we die.



At Christmastime we display evergreen trees in our homes, trimmed in a triangular shape that points toward heaven. This reminds us of the person we celebrate each December: Jesus Christ.

Have the children hold the white Christmas lights and turn them on. We decorate our trees and our homes with lights to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. In John 8:12, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” The lights symbolize the hope and peace that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings into our lives.

Turn off all the lights (or just the Christmas lights). Without Jesus Christ, our lives would be dark. When someone died, we would never get to see them again. When we sinned, we could never be forgiven and feel happy again. *Turn on the Christmas lights.* Because of Jesus, we know we will live again after we die, and be with those we love. We know that we can be cleansed from our sins through Jesus Christ. He brings hope and happiness into our lives. When we follow Him and try to be like him, we feel good inside. When life is hard, we can trust in Him and turn to Him for help. When we see Christmas lights, we can remember that Jesus is the light of the world.

Show the red ornament. What are the two colors of Christmas? (Red and green) While green represents eternal life, red represents the blood of Christ spilt for us. When we see red, like the red ornaments on the tree, we can remember Christ’s love for us. He loved us so much that He died for us. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” John 15:13. *Decorate the tree with the mini red ornament(s).*



In the Book of Mormon, the Tree of Life symbolically represents Jesus Christ, and the fruit brought forth by the tree represents His atonement (1 Nephi 11:7). Our beautiful Christmas trees can represent Christ to us. Their green color reminds us of everlasting life through Him. The ornaments on the tree can represent the fruit – His atonement – brought about by the shedding of His blood. Just as the lights add sparkle to the tree, the light of Christ can give us hope and “sparkle” in our lives if we turn those lights on by staying committed to Him. As we become more like Him, we can receive His image in our countenances (Alma 5:14) and others can feel this same love when they are around us.

Closing Song: Joy to the World, Hymns 201

Activity Idea: Ask the children what Jesus did his entire life? (Serve others.) Ask them how they feel about following Christ's example this month in finding ways to serve those around us. Make your own baby Jesus in a manger craft (available online), use the manger piece from a nativity set, or make a "service star." When anyone does an act of service for someone else in the home, they place the figure at the site of that service.



The person who finds it has to do a kind thing in secret for someone else in the family. (Having several figures circulating is useful.)

Activity variation: Whenever someone performs an act of service, they write down that service on a piece of paper (have a place set up with paper and pens) and put it in the stocking of the person they served. Family members may also write kind notes to each other and put them in the Christmas stockings. On Christmas morning, family members can read these special notes while going through the treats in their stocking.

Activity variation: Each time someone performs an act of service, they get to place a piece of straw in a manger for baby Jesus.

Christmas Tree Treat Idea: make brownies and cut into triangles or rice crispy treats (with green food coloring) and shape into trees.

Extras: Read the apostle John's testimony of Christ in JST John 1:1-16:

- 1 In the beginning was the *gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.*
- 2 The same was in the beginning with God.
- 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made.
- 4 In him was *the gospel*, and *the gospel was the life*, and the life was the light of men;
- 5 And the light shineth *in the world*, and the *world perceiveth* it not.
- 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
- 7 The same came *into the world* for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, *to bear record of the gospel through the Son, unto all*, that through him *men* might believe.
- 8 He was not that Light, but *came* to bear witness of that light,
- 9 *Which* was the true light, which lighteth every man *who* cometh into the world;
- 10 *Even the Son of God.* He *who* was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; *only* to them *who* believe on his name.
- 13 *He* was born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- 14 And the *same* word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
- 15 John bare witness of him, and cried saying, This *is* he of whom I spake; He *who* cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.
- 16 *For in the beginning was the Word, even the Son, who is made flesh, and sent unto us by the will of the Father, And as many as believe on his name shall receive of his fullness.* And of his fullness have all we received, *even immortality and eternal life, through his grace.*

For older audiences: watch "Look to the Light" (4:28) in the media library on churchofjesuschrist.org

December 1

Jesus' Pre-mortal Calling and The Creation of the Earth



Visual Aids: Council in Heaven, GAK 518 Pres. Benson, GAK 600/Jesus creating world (1/02 Ensign)

Ornament: Earth

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ's Birth: Creation



Watch “Before the Old Testament” (2:45) or show picture of Council in Heaven and teach: Before we came to earth, we lived with our perfect, immortal Heavenly Father. We were all spirits. We didn’t have bodies and we wanted to be like Him. He made a plan so we could come to earth, get a body and grow from our experiences. But while we gained experience, we would make mistakes and sin. We could not save ourselves. We needed someone to redeem us. Jesus volunteered: “And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first” Abraham 3:27. Heavenly Father chose Jesus Christ to pay for our sins and to overcome death so we could live with him again.

Show GAK 518. President Ezra Taft Benson said, “Without Christ there would be no Christmas, and without Christ there can be no fulness of joy. In our pre-mortal state we shouted for joy as the plan of salvation was unfolded to our view. [Have the children shout “Hooray!”] It was there our elder brother Jesus, the firstborn of our Father’s children in the spirit, volunteered to redeem us from our sins. He became our foreordained Savior, the Lamb ‘slain from the foundation of the world’ (Moses 7:47). Thanks be to God the Son for the offering of Himself. And thanks be to God the Father that He sent Him. ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son’ (John 3:16). Jesus was a God in the [pre-earth life]. Our Father in Heaven gave Him a name above all others—the Christ. In [the Book of Mormon] we read “that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.” (Mosiah 3:17.)” Ezra Taft Benson, “Keeping Christ in Christmas,” *Ensign*, December 1993, 2.



Watch “Jesus Makes the Earth” (stopping at 1:35) or show GAK 600 (earth) or Jesus creating the world and teach: Under the direction of Heavenly Father, Jesus and Michael (who became known as Adam), created the earth as a place for us to get bodies and gain experience. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” John 1:3. On this beautiful earth, we have a chance to prove that we will be obedient to the Lord. When we sin, we can turn to Jesus Christ, knowing that He has paid for our sins. We can repent and become clean through Him. Jesus Christ is our redeemer.



For Older Children: Pass out strips of paper marked with these scripture references (or the complete scripture strips) found on the next page. Have each person look up their scripture, and then share it and what it means with the group.

Watch: “Christ the Creator” by Neal A. Maxwell (3:05) or “The Creation” by Russell M. Nelson (5:17) from the media library on churchofjesuschrist.org

Testify: Jesus was chosen to be our Savior before we came to earth. Jesus created the earth. Heavenly Father and Jesus love us. Let us rejoice this Christmas season in the Creator of our earth, the author of our agency and the Savior of our souls. **Hang the ornament on the tree.**

Challenge: Pray to feel closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Closing Song: “He Sent His Son” Children’s Songbook, p. 34

Scripture Activity for December 1

“In the beginning was the *gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.* The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made.” JST John 1:1-3.

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.” Colossians 1:16.

“Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend” Mosiah 4:9.

“And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon” 2 Nephi 2:14.

“The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him” D&C 93:10.

“Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever. And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him” Abraham 3:22, 24-28.

JST-John 1:1-3	Colossians 1:16	Mosiah 4:9
D&C 93:10	Abraham 3:22, 24-28	2 Nephi 2:14

December 2

The Fall of Adam – The Need for a Savior



Visual Aids: GAK 101 Adam and Eve, Pits diagram

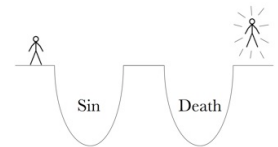
Ornament: Apple

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 4000 B.C.

Watch “Jesus Made the Earth” starting at 1:35 and “Adam and Eve” (3:18) or show picture of Adam & Eve and teach: When Heavenly Father placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He gave them 2 commandments: to have children (Moses 2:27-28) and to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Moses 3:16-17). He gave them agency to choose for themselves. Satan thought he could ruin Heavenly Father’s plan, so he tricked Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. Adam chose to eat the fruit so he and Eve could stay together and have children. “Adam fell that men might be” 2 Nephi 2:25. By eating the fruit, Adam and Eve “fell.” Their bodies became mortal (meaning they could die). They could also now have children. They had to leave the Garden of Eden and the presence of God, but this was necessary for them to become like God.



Show picture of pits. Place man on left. Since Adam and Eve fell, all of us are fallen. We will all die and we all sin. These two pitfalls prevent us from returning to Heavenly Father and becoming like Him. We need someone to help us. We need a Savior. Before we came to earth, Jesus Christ was chosen to be our Savior. He is the only way to overcome sin and death.

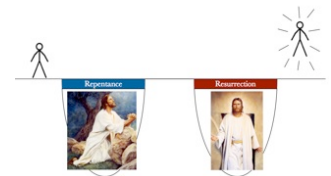


Angels taught Adam and Eve how to return to Heavenly Father. They were commanded to offer animal sacrifices to the Lord (Moses 5:5). This taught them that someday Jesus Christ would come to earth and sacrifice Himself to pay for our sins.



“And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore. And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will” Moses 5:7-9.

When Jesus Christ suffered for our sins in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, he paid for our sins (*cover “sin” with picture of Christ*). Jesus did His part, and we must do ours, which is repentance (*place bridge over first pit, move man*). When Jesus resurrected from the dead, he overcame death so we will all be able to return to the presence of Heavenly Father and have an immortal body (*cover “death” with picture of Christ, place bridge over second pit and move man*).



Adam and Eve were the first to fall. They were the first to learn of Jesus Christ. They had faith that He would come to the earth and redeem them from their fallen state. They repented and followed His teachings. Like Adam and Eve, we too must have faith that Jesus Christ did come to the earth and that through Him we can be forgiven for our sins and return to Heavenly Father.

The fruit reminds us that we are fallen and need a savior, Jesus Christ. *Hang the ornament on the tree.*

Closing Song: “Picture a Christmas” Children’s Songbook, p. 50

© Jennifer Lund – may be copied for non-commercial personal use – www.jonlund.com – lund.jennifer@gmail.com – updated 10/25/20

Extras:

Watch: “First Principles and Ordinances” (3:26) in the media library on churchofjesuschrist.org (this is a bit outdated)

President Ezra Taft Benson observed: “Just as a man does not really desire food until he is hungry, so he does not desire the salvation of Christ until he knows why he needs Christ. No one adequately and properly knows why he needs Christ until he understands and accepts the doctrine of the Fall and its effect upon mankind” (“The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 85).

Alma 12:22, 24, 33-34 “...Now we see that Adam did fall by the partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall, all mankind became a lost and fallen people. And we see that death comes upon mankind, ...which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state...which is after the resurrection of the dead. But God did call on men, in the name of his Son, ...saying: If ye will repent, and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son; Therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest.”

“As Adam and Eve’s fall brought life in mortality and the gift of a physical body to all of Heavenly Father’s faithful premortal children, the Atonement of Christ also gives life with an immortal, perfected physical body for every son and daughter of Adam and Eve. The Apostle Paul recognized this similitude when he wrote: “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [Christ] was made a quickening spirit. ...And as we have borne the image of the earthy [man], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [man]” (1 Cor. 15:45, 49). Just as Christ can be called the “last Adam,” so is the first Adam a type or foreshadowing of Christ” *Finding Christ in the Old Testament*, by Andrew C. Skinner, *Ensign* June 2002, p. 24-29.

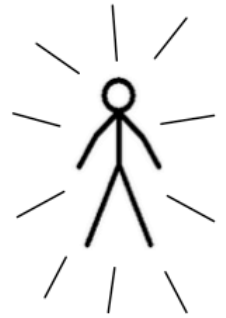
Old Testament Stories 11, 15-18



Repentance



Resurrection



Sin

Death

December 3

The City of Enoch – Becoming Holy

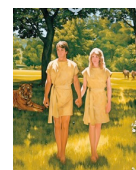


Visual Aids: GAK 101-Adam, 120-Enoch

Ornament: City of Enoch

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 3000 B.C.

Show GAK 101. As Adam and Eve's family grew, some of them continued to be faithful to Jesus Christ while others chose to be wicked. Heavenly Father continually sent prophets to the earth to teach His children about the plan of redemption through Christ. Enoch was one of those prophets.



Adam – Seth – Enos – Cainan – Mahalaleel – Jared – Enoch

Enoch was Adam's great-great-great-great grandson. His name means "teacher."¹ His father Jared "taught Enoch in all the ways of God" (Moses 6:21).

Watch "Enoch" (3:08) from the Old Testament videos on churchofjesuschrist.org.

"Enoch was twenty-five years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam... And he saw the Lord, and he walked with him, and was before his face continually..." (D&C 107:48-49). Later, the Lord commanded Enoch to go up into a mountain. As Enoch stood upon the mountain, he had a vision and said, "And I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face" (Moses 7:4). Enoch saw Jesus Christ and talked with Him.

"And it came to pass that Enoch journeyed in the land, among the people; and as he journeyed, the Spirit of God descended out of heaven, and abode upon him. And he heard a voice from heaven, saying: Enoch, my son, prophesy unto this people, and say unto them—Repent... Choose ye this day, to serve the Lord God who made you. Behold my Spirit is upon you, [Enoch], wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me" (Moses 6:26-27, 33-34). Enoch obeyed the Lord and preached repentance throughout the land.

"And he said unto them: Because that Adam fell, we are; and by his fall came death; and we are made partakers of misery and woe. Behold Satan hath come among the children of men, and tempteth them to worship him; and men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God. But God hath made known unto our fathers that all men must repent. ... And he also said unto [Adam]: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost... [Older families read also Moses 6:58-60.] And now, behold, I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time" (Moses 6:48-50, 52, 62).

When he was 65 years old, Heavenly Father called Enoch to be a spokesman. Enoch had such great faith that he moved mountains and rivers. The book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price says that when armies approached his peaceful city, "so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth

trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; ...and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch” (Moses 7:13).

Show GAK 120 (Enoch). “And the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness. ...And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion. ...And after that Zion was taken up into heaven... (Moses 7:16, 18-19, 23).

God showed Enoch what was still happening on the earth with Noah and the wicked people. The Lord wept, and Enoch asked why. Moses 7:32-33: “The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency; And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood”.

Enoch and the people in the city of Zion became so righteous, that they were taken up into heaven. Later on, the people on earth (apart from Noah and his family) became so wicked that the Lord destroyed them with a flood. As Elder Maxwell said, “The citizens of the city of Enoch chose Jesus and a way of life.... So much depends on whom and what we seek *first*.”²



How do you think it felt to live in the City of Enoch? What do you think it was like? How can we make our home more like Zion? (Zion was built on principles of unity, godliness, and charity.) We can begin to turn ourselves into Zion-like people, which were Christ-like people. Elder Maxwell said, “Like Jesus, we can decide, daily or instantly, to give no heed to temptation (see D&C 20:22). We can respond to irritation with a smile instead of scowl, or by giving warm praise instead of icy indifference. By our being understanding instead of abrupt, others, in turn, may decide to hold on a little longer rather than to give way. Love, patience, and meekness can be just as contagious as rudeness and crudeness. ...Moments are the molecules that make up eternity! Years ago, President Hinckley counseled: ‘It is not so much the major events as the small day-to-day decisions that map the course of our living. ... Our lives are, in reality, the sum total of our seemingly unimportant decisions and of our capacity to live by those decisions.’”¹

As we prepare for Christ’s second coming, we need to change our hearts and make our home like Zion. We can also remember the words of Jesus, “What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”³

Challenge: Work on becoming more Christ-like and making our home a Zion. (Make specific commitments.)

Closing Song: “It Came upon the Midnight Clear” Hymns, 207 (verses 1 and 3)

¹“Enoch: What Modern Scripture Teaches” by Richard D. Draper, *Ensign* Jan. 1998.

²Neal A. Maxwell, “The Tugs and Pulls of the World” January 2001 *Ensign*.

³3 Nephi 27:27; Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48

Extras: D. Todd Christofferson “Come to Zion” October 2008 *Ensign*.

December 4 Noah



Visual Aids: *Old Testament Stories* 26-29, GAK 102, 103, Noah flannel board story

Ornament: Rainbow or ark

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing
Countdown to Christ’s Birth: c. 2350 B.C.*

Watch “Noah” (3:14) on churchoffjesuschrist.org, show GAK 102 & 241, or tell with

Flannel board: When Noah was a prophet, the people on earth were very wicked. Heavenly Father sent Noah to tell the people to repent or they would be destroyed. Noah warned them many times, but they did not listen to his words. The Lord commanded Noah to build an ark. He gathered pairs of animals of every kind into the ark, as well as food and supplies. But Noah and his family were the only people who hearkened to the warnings of the Lord. When God sent the rain, and the world flooded, all the people and animals that were not on the ark were destroyed. Noah and his family were saved from the flood because they obeyed God’s commandments.



Show the ark ornament. What did Noah and his family do to be saved from the flood? (Get in the ark.) Was there any other way for them to survive the flood? (No. The ark was the *only* way.) The only way for us to return to live with our Heavenly Father is through Jesus Christ. We have to follow Jesus Christ and keep his commandments to be saved from sin. He is the only way.

Alma taught: “...There is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world” (Alma 38:9).

After Noah died he became the angel known as Gabriel. Gabriel is the angel who appeared to Mary and told her she would be the mother of the Son of God. He knew from his own experience what he testified to her: “For with God, nothing shall be impossible.” (Luke 1:37) The angel Gabriel also appeared to the parents of John the Baptist telling them of their miraculous pregnancy.

Closing Song: “Angels We Have Heard on High” verses 1 and 3, Hymns, 203 or “Build an Ark” by Marianne P. Wilcock, *Friend* Sep 2010.

Rainbow ornament alternative/addition: While the earth was flooded, Noah sent a dove to discover whether the waters had receded. When the dove didn’t return, Noah knew that God’s will had been accomplished, and that they would soon be able to move back onto the land. Some people refer to the flood as the “baptism” of the earth. The sign of the dove is a witness of the Holy Ghost and was given at the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist so that he would know that Jesus was the Messiah.¹

After the flood, God made a covenant, or a promise, with Noah to never send another flood that would destroy the world. As a sign of this promise, He put a rainbow in the sky.* The rainbow reminds us that when the Lord makes promises, He keeps them. The rainbow can also remind us of our baptisms. Just as the earth was washed clean from sin, we are washed clean through baptism. Let’s try to make our lives clean and come unto Christ.

Sing or read the words to the song, “When I Am Baptized,” CS 103:

I like to look for rainbows whenever there is rain
And ponder on the beauty of an earth made clean again.
I want my life to be as clean as earth right after rain.
I want to be the best I can and live with God again.

I know when I am baptized my wrongs are washed away,
And I can be forgiven and improve myself each day.
I want my life to be as clean as earth right after rain.
I want to be the best I can and live with God again.

*The rainbow also meant that when men will keep all the commandments, embrace the truth and look upward, then Zion will look downward and again come to the earth (JST Genesis 9:21-25).

¹“In the Footsteps of Jesus” by Susan Easton Black.

December 5 Abraham: Covenants and Sacrifice



Visual Aids: GAK 105 Abraham and Isaac; “Is Anything To Hard For The Lord” by Elspeth Young (optional); *OT Stories 33-41*.

Ornament: Stars on Night Sky-promised posterity

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ’s Birth: c. 2000 B.C.

The Lord chose Abraham to be the one whose name is connected with His sacred covenants of salvation and exaltation – the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic covenant is extended to all people who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ as Abraham did.

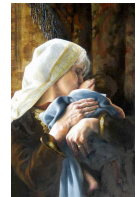
The priesthood existed before the earth. It was given to the firstborn on earth – the first man, our first father, Adam. The priesthood and its blessings were handed down from Adam to his righteous sons and to their righteous sons, and so forth. These “blessings of the fathers” were given to Noah when he was ordained to the priesthood (Abraham 1:19, Moses 8:19). Abraham sought for the priesthood as well and the Lord blessed Him to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood by Melchizedek himself.

When Abraham was a young man, Jesus Christ appeared to him and said, “Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee. . . . Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee. As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God” (Abraham 1:16, 18-19).

Watch: “Abraham” (3:10) and “Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac” (3:08) in the Old Testament videos on churchofjesuschrist.org (or for older children – preview first; it’s a little strange: “Deliverance of Abraham” (1:38) and “Abraham” (0:58).

)

Show the E. Young painting or pictures in Old Testament Stories 33-41: Abraham and his wife Sarah couldn’t have any children, which made them very sad. When Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100, the Lord finally blessed them with their firstborn son, Isaac. They loved Isaac dearly. (Abraham already had a son named Ishmael from his handmaid, Hagar. The Lord promised Hagar that a great nation would descend from their son. But. . .)



The Lord promised Abraham that his *seed* would descend from Isaac – the seed meaning priesthood holders and covenant keepers (Genesis 21:12) that would be “called by his name.”

Show GAK 105. When Isaac was a young man, God commanded Abraham to use Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham chose to obey the Lord. *Read Genesis 22:1-14.*



Abraham learned what it would be like to sacrifice his most beloved son. The Lord told Abraham: “Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: . . . I will multiply thy seed **as the stars of the heaven** . . . I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations. And I will bless them through thy name; **for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed**, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father; . . . in thee (that is, **in thy Priesthood**) . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even

with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Gen. 22:16–18; Abraham 2:9-11).

The blessings of the Priesthood and the covenants Jesus Christ made with Abraham are the same offered to all of us. As we receive the Gospel (the teachings and revelations of Christ) and are baptized, as boys obtain the priesthood, and both boys and girls enter the temple and make covenants with the Lord there, we are counted as Abraham’s seed. Through the priesthood and the covenants we make with the Lord, we and our families are blessed by all the good that comes from living Christ’s teachings, by utilizing the power of the priesthood in our lives, and by the priesthood’s sealing power. When we keep our covenants, we receive the blessings of salvation and life eternal.

*Watch “Special Witness – Elder Nelson” (3:28) on churchofjesuschrist.org (Elder Russell M. Nelson bears his testimony about the Abrahamic covenant) or “Seed of Abraham” by James E. Faust (1:11).

Having been blessed with the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the priesthood, we are part of the “Abrahamic Covenant” and must bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to all of Heavenly Father’s children.

Through his covenant with Abraham, the Lord has promised to bless all the faithful people in the earth with truth, priesthood ordinances, exaltation, and eternal increase. If we, like Abraham are willing to sacrifice for the Lord, His blessings will be as the stars in the sky.

Challenge: Think of the blessings you have as a member of Christ’s church. Remember the covenants you have made with the Lord. Pray to find someone with whom you can share the gospel.

Closing Song: “Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful” Hymns, 202 ~ *think missionary work*

December 6 Isaac – A Similitude of Christ

Visual Aids: GAK, 105 Abraham and Isaac; 230 Crucifixion

Ornament: Lamb

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing
Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 1900 B.C.*



Watch: “Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac” (3:09) in the Old Testament Stories videos on churchofjesuschrist.org

Show the pictures of Abraham and Isaac and the Crucifixion. Who knows what a “similitude” is? (It means something is *like* or *similar* to another thing.) Isaac was a “similitude” of Jesus Christ. The scriptures sometimes call Jesus the “Lamb of God.” Beginning with Adam, the faithful sacrificed their best lambs in a similitude of the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Everything about the sacrifices was symbolic of Christ and taught the faithful about His future sacrifice.



1. For the original sacrifice practiced by Adam and the most common sacrifice in the Law of Moses, the animal had to be a firstborn and a male. Just as firstborn sons were, under the Law of Moses, regarded as belonging to God, the male firstborn of animals also belonged to God. Jesus was the firstborn son of God in the spirit; the only begotten son of God in the flesh (BD-Firstborn).
2. The lamb had to be w/o blemish, totally free from physical flaws, complete, whole, and perfect. Jesus was perfect.
3. The sacrifice had to be clean (the law of Moses had rules about which animals were “clean” or fit to be eaten). In a spiritual sense, to be clean is to be free from sin and sinful desires (BD-Clean). As the Son of God, Jesus was perfectly clean and without sin.
4. The sacrifice had to be domesticated (not wild, but tame and of help to man). The offering had to be the offerer’s own property, properly acquired, so losing a helpful animal was a real sacrifice – a real loss. Jesus Christ was the most important person ever born on the earth. He “belonged” to God, and was the greatest loss to us all – a true sacrifice of goodness (BD-Sacrifice).
5. After the lamb was chosen, it was anointed by the laying on of hands, which dedicated the animal to God and made it the sacrificer’s representative and substitute (BD-Sacrifice). The Hebrew title *Messiah* and the Greek title *Christ* both mean “the Anointed One.” Christ was anointed and chosen before we came to earth to be the great, eternal sacrifice to represent us and to stand in *our* place as a substitute to pay for our sins.

On the Day of Atonement (a special day for forgiveness of intentional sins) the high priest placed the name of Jehovah upon a goat and sacrificed it for the sins of the people in similitude of the sacrifice Jehovah himself would make when he was lifted upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world.

6. The animal’s lifeblood was spilt. Jesus Christ’s blood was spilt in Gethsemane and on the cross. 1 Peter 1:18-20 For “ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,

... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world....”

Abraham was a righteous man, and, according to the laws of worship, he often sacrificed lambs to God to show His obedience and faithfulness. Abraham knew that everything about the sacrifice taught him about the future sacrifice of the Son of God. But this time, the Lord commanded Abraham that instead of a lamb, he was to sacrifice *his* own beloved son on the altar. This time, Abraham was to give up more than a carefully selected lamb. This time, the sacrifice reached the ultimate level: sacrificing Abraham’s long-awaited beloved son. How do you think Abraham felt? How would you feel?

Asking Abraham to make this sacrifice taught him what it really meant for Heavenly Father to give His own, most beloved Son as a sacrifice on the altar required to overcome sin and death for all of His children. If we remember how much Abraham loved his son Isaac, it can help us understand how much it cost Heavenly Father to sacrifice His most Beloved Son for us.

The Apostle Paul taught, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son” (Heb. 11:17). Just like Isaac was offered as a sacrifice, Jesus was offered as a sacrifice for us. Isaac was Abraham’s only child [by Sarah], and Jesus was Heavenly Father’s Only Begotten Son.

Jesus was willing to be sacrificed even though He knew the pain and price it would cost Him. He volunteered to be our Savior before we came to earth. Do you think Jesus loves you? I know He does because He gave His life for you and for me.

Nephi testified this about Christ, “...for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him.... And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam. And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day.... O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One...” (2 Nephi 9:5, 21-22, 41).

What does “sacrifice” mean? (Giving up something you *love*.) Have you ever given up something you loved? How did it feel? Often we give up things we love for the people we love.

Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, just like Heavenly Father sacrificed His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. That was the greatest gift He could give – the son whom He loved the most. How much do you think Heavenly Father loves you?

What things does the Lord command us to sacrifice in our lives for Him? (Time, tithing, talents in service, sins, sometimes our lives in standing up for Christ, all we have to build up the kingdom of God). If we will sacrifice all we have to the Lord, he will bless us with the same blessings Abraham received.

Challenge: Remember the sacrifice that Jesus and Heavenly Father made for us and the love that they showed to us. Look for ways you can sacrifice for others. This will help you become more like Christ.

Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “The Nativity Song” Children’s Songbook, p. 52

December 7

Jacob and The House of Israel – Covenant Keeping



Visual Aids: GAK 122 Jacob Blessing His Sons; *Old Testament Stories*, 42-49.

Ornament: Ladder

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing Countdown to Christ’s Birth: c. 1830 B.C.*

Watch “Jacob and Esau” (2:21) and “Jacob and His Family” (4:02) on churchofjesuschrist.org or read Old Testament Stories p. 42-49.

In the Old Testament, Jehovah is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord’s promises to Abraham were passed to his faithful son Isaac, and to Isaac’s faithful son Jacob. Although traditionally, birthrights were given to the firstborn son, Jacob (the second-born son) received his father’s birthright because he chose to keep his covenants.

In contrast to his twin brother Esau, Jacob kept the commandments taught to him by his parents. As commanded by Isaac, Jacob left his home to find a righteous bride. While on the journey, Jacob had a vision in which he saw a ladder reaching to heaven. Angels were going up and down the ladder. The Lord stood above the ladder and gave Jacob the same blessings given to his father and grandfather: “...And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 28:14).

“Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings—blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord” (Marion G. Romney, “Temples—The Gates to Heaven,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1971, 16).

We also make covenants with the Lord. The first covenant we make is at baptism. We promise to take upon ourselves the name of Christ, to serve Him and be obedient to his commandments. In return, Heavenly Father promises to forgive us when we repent and to bless us with the Holy Ghost. He also promises that we will live with him forever if we remain faithful. Baptism is the first rung of the ladder. Each Sunday, we renew that covenant by partaking of the sacrament. We promise to always remember Jesus Christ and to take upon ourselves His name. He promises to bless us with His Holy Spirit. The next covenants we make are in the temple.

Show GAK 122. Jacob was later named Israel by the Lord. He had twelve sons who are called “The Twelve Tribes of Israel” or “The House of Israel.” The posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are often called “children of the covenant.” When we enter into special covenants with the Lord at baptism and in the temple, we also become children of the covenant.



All of our covenants center around Christ’s atonement, and they all lead us back to our Heavenly Father and help us to become like Him. Making and keeping covenants is like climbing the rungs of the ladder to heaven.

Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “Beautiful Savior” Children’s Songbook, p. 62

December 8 Joseph of Egypt



Visual Aids: GAK 109 Joseph, flannel board story-Joseph of Egypt, *OT Stories*, 50-60.

Ornament: Coat of Many Colors

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing
Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 1745 B.C.*

Watch “Joseph” (2:44), “Joseph in Egypt” (3:16) and “Joseph’s Brothers in Egypt” (2:09) from churchofjesuschrist.org, use flannel boards or the pictures in Old Testament Stories to relate the following:

When Jacob journeyed to find a wife, he met a righteous woman named Rachel. He told Rachel’s father that he would serve him for seven years in order to marry Rachel. “And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her” Genesis 29:20. But at the end of the seven years, Rachel’s father gave his older daughter Leah to Jacob as a wife. Jacob then worked another seven years for Rachel’s hand in marriage.

Jacob later married two more wives and had 12 sons. Joseph was the firstborn son of his beloved Rachel. Rachel had not been able to have a baby for many years. When she finally bore Joseph, Jacob was almost ninety years old (almost as old as Abraham was when Sarah bore Jacob’s father, Isaac). Jacob and Rachel had waited a long time for this child and he loved Joseph with a special love. But a few years later, Rachel died while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. Joseph and Benjamin were living reminders of Jacob’s intense love for his wife Rachel.

Jacob loved Joseph so much that he gave him a beautiful coat made of many colors. Joseph's brothers hated how their father favored Joseph, and began to hate Joseph. Joseph had dreams in which his brothers all bowed to him. When he told his brothers about his dreams, it made them even angrier with him.



One day, Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers who were feeding flocks far from home to make sure they were all right. Joseph responded, “Here am I.”

When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming, they made plans to kill him saying, “Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams” (Genesis 37:19-20). But Reuben, the oldest brother, didn’t want to kill Joseph, and suggested that they put him into a pit so that later he could deliver Joseph to his father again. **Show GAK 109.** So when Joseph reached them, they stripped him of his coat of many colors, and put him into an empty pit. While they were eating bread, a group of Ishmeelites rode past with camels on their way to Egypt. Judah said, “What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content” (Genesis 37:26-27). So Joseph’s brothers took him out of the hole and sold him to the men for 20 pieces of silver.

Reuben was very upset when he discovered that Joseph was gone. The brothers then took Joseph’s coat, killed a baby goat, and dipped the coat in the goat’s blood. They brought the coat to their father to make him think that Joseph was dead. Jacob was devastated and refused to be comforted saying, “For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning” (Genesis 37:35).

Meanwhile, the Ishmeelites took Joseph into Egypt and sold him to a man named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh (the king of Egypt), and captain of the guard. The Lord was with Joseph, and Potiphar saw that the Lord made all that Joseph did to prosper in his hand. Potiphar was so happy with Joseph that he made him leader of all his servants. Everything went very well for Joseph until Potiphar's wife tried to tempt him to do evil things with her. Joseph refused her many times, and told her, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" At one point, she grabbed Joseph's garment (clothes), but Joseph ran away. Potiphar's wife was so upset about Joseph refusing her, that she lied to Potiphar saying that Joseph had tried to tempt *her* to sin with her. Potiphar was so angry that he cast Joseph into prison.

In prison, the Lord showed Joseph mercy, and the prison keeper put Joseph in charge of all of the prisoners, once again prospering everything in Joseph's hands. The pharaoh's butcher and butler were also thrown into prison where they had dreams. Joseph interpreted their dreams, explaining that the chief butler would be restored to his position in pharaoh's house, but the baker would be killed. That very thing happened.

Two years later, when the king of Egypt had some dreams he couldn't understand, and no one could interpret them, the butler remembered Joseph and recommended him to the pharaoh. The pharaoh immediately summoned Joseph out of prison. Heavenly Father helped Joseph interpret Pharaoh's dream, which meant that Egypt would have 7 plentiful years. After those 7 good years, Egypt would have a famine for 7 years more. The pharaoh, so pleased with Joseph, put Joseph in charge of storing and later distributing food. Pharaoh made Joseph a ruler over all the land of Egypt, second only to him. Pharaoh gave him the ring from his own hand, dressed him in gold and fine linen, gave him a wife, and had Joseph ride in his second chariot. Everyone bowed their knees to Joseph. Joseph was 30 years old then.

He had two sons during the plentiful years. He named the first Manasseh "For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction" (Genesis 41:51-52).

After 7 good years, the famine came. No food grew in all the land, and people went to Joseph to buy food. Everyone in the land was starving, including Jacob's family, so Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. When Joseph's brothers bowed before him, he recognized them, but they didn't recognize him. He was reminded of the dreams he had about them bowing to them. Joseph hid himself and wept.

After a time, Joseph told his brothers who he was. They were afraid because of what they had done to him, but Joseph told them not to be afraid, "for God did send me before you to preserve life" (to save them from dying in the famine). "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Genesis 45:5, 7-8).

Pharaoh invited Jacob's family to move to Egypt where they would be taken care of, "for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours." When Jacob found out that Joseph was alive, he was so happy! The whole family of Israel moved to Egypt where Joseph took care of them.

God spoke to Israel in a night vision and told him, "fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation." The Lord again preserved the posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with His Almighty hand.

Joseph is a similitude of Jesus Christ. ***Show pictures of Joseph and Jesus Christ to demonstrate:***



From Andrew C. Skinner, "Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament," *Ensign*, Jun 2002, 27:

- Joseph was the firstborn son of Jacob and Rachel. Jesus is Heavenly Father's oldest son; His firstborn.
- Just like Joseph's father loved him, Jesus Christ was Heavenly Father's well-beloved Son.
- When Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers, Joseph responded, "Here am I." In the premortal council, Jesus' response to Heavenly Father was, "Here am I, send me" (Genesis 37:13 ; Abraham 3:27).
- Just as Joseph's brothers rejected him, Jesus was rejected by His people, the Jews.
- Joseph was sold at the urging of his brother Judah into the hands of Gentiles. Jesus was sold by Judas and delivered to the Gentiles, the Romans.
- Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver, the price of a slave his age. Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave His age.
- Joseph was falsely accused (by Potiphar's wife) and sent to prison. Jesus was falsely accused and was crucified.
- Joseph was 30 years old when he began his service under the Pharaoh of Egypt. Jesus was 30 years old when He began His mortal ministry.
- All knees bowed to Joseph when he became a ruler in Egypt. All knees will eventually bow to Jesus.
- There was a famine in all the land, and all people came to Egypt and found life's bread in the hands of Joseph. They humbled themselves before Joseph and he delivered them and nourished them. There is a spiritual famine in the earth. To survive, all of us need to seek Jesus Christ and humble ourselves before Him. If we do, He promises us eternal life.
- Joseph generously provided food to his family. Jesus, the Bread of Life, freely offers salvation to all mankind.
- Joseph forgave his brothers – those who hated him and sold him away. While on the cross, Jesus uttered the words, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."
- The attempt to get rid of Joseph eventually led to the temporal salvation of Joseph's family. The attempt to destroy Jesus led to the Atonement and salvation for Heavenly Father's family.

"Joseph was the favored son of his father, sent by the father on a mission to his rebellious brethren. His brethren, resenting his closeness to the father and his teachings to them, reject his message, maltreat him, and eventually take his life, as it were. The next phase of his life, beginning with his descent into the pit and concluding with his experience in prison in Egypt, may be compared ... with the descent of Christ into the pit of hell and his mission to the spirit prison. Ultimately, he is brought out of the prison and given a position of power second only to the ruler of the kingdom. His coat, which his brethren had taken from him (a symbol of his flesh), is replaced with a majestic robe, and every knee is made to bow to him. In his new exalted position he becomes the savior of his brethren, extending forgiveness, and feeding them, as it were, with the bread of life" Arthur R. Bassett, "Joseph, Model of Excellence", *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, 9.

Closing Song: "Silent Night" Hymns, 204

Extra: Watch "Joseph in Egypt" (1:52) by Ezra Taft Benson in the media library on churchofjesuschrist.org (message about choosing God first)

¹Much of the wording for the summary at the beginning of this lesson came from "Joseph, Model of Excellence" by Arthur R. Bassett, *Ensign*, September 1980.

December 9 Moses



Visual Aids: *Old Test. Stories* p. 65, GAK 106, 107, 243; Parting The Red Sea; GAK 123 (Moses and burning bush, Jesus Walking on Water; Moses and Brass Serpent)

Ornament: Burning Bush (or 10 Commandments)

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing*

Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 1571 B.C.

Watch “The Baby Moses” (2:29) and “The Prophet Moses” (5:17) or relate this: The posterity of Israel, the Israelites, grew into a great nation in Egypt. Two centuries after Jacob’s family moved to Egypt, the new pharaoh forgot what Joseph had done for the Egyptians, and did not like the Israelites. He thought that there were too many of them and he was afraid they would take away his land from them. So Pharaoh made the Israelites slaves. Joseph of Egypt saved the Israelites by leading them into the land of Egypt. Heavenly Father sent Moses to save them by leading them out of Egypt.

Show GAK 106. Moses was born into a family of Hebrews. At that time, Pharaoh decided to keep the Israelites from becoming any mightier. He told the midwives to kill all of the baby boys right after they were born. When the midwives said they could not do it, Pharaoh decreed that all sons born to the House of Israel were to be drowned in the river. Moses’ mother couldn’t bear to drown her son, so she hid him for three months. When he was too large to hide, she made a basket of bulrushes and coated it with sticky sap to keep out the water, laid her baby inside, and set it in the river. Moses’ older sister Miriam watched from a distance to see what would happen to the baby.



Pharaoh’s daughter came to the river to bathe and saw the basket in the water. She sent her maid to fetch it. When she opened it, she saw the baby, and the baby started crying. She had compassion on him, and knew he was a Hebrew child. Miriam came forward and offered to find a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby. She returned with Moses’ mother. Pharaoh’s daughter then paid her to take the baby away and nurse him for her. After the child grew, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh’s daughter so that he could become her son. Pharaoh’s daughter called him Moses because she had pulled him from the water.

Moses grew up in Pharaoh’s court and was raised like royalty. But when he looked on the burdens of his Hebrew brethren and saw an Egyptian hitting a Hebrew, he slew the Egyptian. When Pharaoh heard about it, he tried to slay Moses, but Moses ran away. Moses met his wife in Midian and started a family. Back in Egypt, the pharaoh died and the children of Israel cried to the Lord for deliverance from bondage.

Show GAK 107. While tending his father-in-law’s flocks, Moses hiked up a big mountain. There an angel of the Lord appeared to him “in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush... and the bush was not consumed” (burned up). The voice of God spoke to Moses saying, “Moses, Moses.” And he said, “Here am I.” God told Moses to move back and take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. When God identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, “Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land ...a land flowing with milk and honey.... Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.”



Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee..." Exodus 3:6-12.

God called Moses as a prophet to deliver the children of Israel from slavery saying, "I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior" (Moses 1:6). Moses taught the children of Israel that the Messiah (Jesus) would be like him: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15).

Show pictures one at a time and ask the kids to figure out the similarities. (It helps to number them:

1. Both Moses and Christ were foreordained in pre-mortal life.
2. Both were saved from death when all the other baby boys in the land were killed.
3. Both were known as the meekest of men.
4. Moses delivered the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. Jesus delivers us from the bondage of sin and death.
5. Both were lawgivers and judges. Moses gave the Law of Moses to prepare people for the coming of Christ. This law, with all its types and shadows, testified of the one who would come to save his people. Jesus fulfilled that law and gave us higher laws to prepare us for His Second Coming.
6. Both had control over the elements, especially the waters.
7. Both provided food for their people. In the wilderness, the children of Israel were given water through a miracle by Moses, and were fed manna from heaven. Jesus turned water into wine and fed thousands of people with just a few loaves and fishes. Moses received his power from Jehovah.



The great miracles performed by Moses taught the people about Jehovah's power and foreshadowed His life. Like all true prophets, Moses testified of Christ and prepared the way for His coming.

This story shows one way the children of Israel learned about Christ through Moses. **Tell the story on the back of GAK 123.**



Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" Hymns, 209

Extra: Watch "I Am a Son of God" (6:30) by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland in the media library on churchofjesuschrist.org

December 10

The Passover – A Great Symbol of the Atonement



Visual Aids: *Old Testament Stories*, p. 66-70; GAK 227 The Last Supper, 230 Crucifixion, 233 Mary
Ornament: Passover door

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 1450 B.C.

Watch “The Passover” (3:35) or show OT Stories, p. 66-70 and teach: When Moses was called as a prophet, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. They were forced to build cities for the Pharaoh. Life was extremely hard for them and they were not free to do what they wanted. Moses plead with Pharaoh many times to release the children of Israel, but Pharaoh refused. Moses told Pharaoh, “Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: ...Let my son go, that he may serve me” (Exodus 4:22-23). God sent plagues to the land of Egypt and its people (like frogs, boils on their skin, lice, bugs, etc.), but Pharaoh continued to harden his heart. The Lord then sent one last plague to Egypt: that all the firstborn in the land of Egypt would die. To protect His covenant people, God commanded every household of Israel to find a male lamb without blemish. They had to kill the lamb without breaking any bones, take its blood and paint on the two side posts and above the door of their home so that the angel of death would *pass over* their home. Everyone whose door was painted with blood was saved.

The Jews celebrated the Passover every year after their escape from Egypt. They ate symbolic foods like bitter herbs, reminding them of the bitter life in Egypt, unleavened bread, reminding them of the haste of preparation, which did not allow enough time for bread dough to rise. They also ate lamb in remembrance of the lamb whose blood marked the doorways of their homes. The Passover commemorates the passage of a people from subjection and bondage to freedom and deliverance.

Show The Last Supper. Jesus’ last supper was the Passover meal. Nearly fifteen hundred years after the first Passover in Egypt, Jesus sat down with his disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem. After eating the sacrificial lamb from the Passover feast, Jesus instituted the sacrament, teaching them that the bread symbolized his body and the water, his blood.



Show GAK 227, 230, 233. Shortly after the Passover meal, Jesus became the Great and Last Sacrifice. He suffered for our sins in Gethsemane, died on the cross, and rose again the third day. By becoming the Passover Lamb, He fulfilled the ancient law of Moses. President Howard W. Hunter said, “No more would men be required to offer the firstborn lamb from their flock, because the Firstborn of God had come to offer himself as an ‘infinite and eternal sacrifice.’ This is the majesty of the Atonement and Resurrection, not just a passover from death, but a gift of eternal life by an infinite sacrifice” (“Christ, Our Passover”, Howard W. Hunter, April 1985 General Conference).



The Passover feast day was the day of liberation. On the same day that the Jews celebrated Pharaoh’s release of the Israelites from their captivity, the Savior declared liberty to the captives in the spirit prison after their long period of spiritual bondage. Then, after His resurrection, when Jesus appeared to the Nephites, he said, [read 3 Nephi 15:4-5, 8-10].

Jesus Christ *is* the Lamb of God – a male without blemish or broken bone. He was perfect. He was the Firstborn of God in the pre-mortal existence, and was slain just like the firstborn of Egypt. Because of his sacrifice, we can live eternally with Him and our families. At Christmastime, we remember that the Lamb of God, in accordance with His mission, was born in a humble stable around the same time as the lambs that would be used for sacrifice in the temple at the Passover.

Closing Song: “Far, Far Away on Judea’s Plains” Hymns, 212

December 11 Ruth and Boaz

Visual Aids: GAK 124 Ruth, *Old Testament Stories*, p. 95-98.

Ornament: Stalks of Wheat

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing Countdown to Christ’s Birth: c. 1210 B.C.*



Watch “Ruth and Naomi” (3:04) or show GAK 124, read *Old Testament Stories* or this summary:

Ruth was a Moabite who had converted to the gospel (the Israelite faith), though she and her husband still lived in the land of the Moabites. When her husband died and also her father-in-law, she was faced with the decision of staying with her family in Moab or going with her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehem (Naomi’s home land). *See section for older children (below).



Ruth could have stayed in her own country with her own family, but she chose to go to Bethlehem with Naomi. “And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” Ruth 1:16.

In the days of the Bible, most women couldn't get jobs, so poor women would go to the fields and take the grain that the farmers left behind. Ruth went to the field to gather grain, and there she met Boaz, a kinsman (relative) of Naomi's, who took care of them. Boaz and Ruth married and had a son and Naomi was happy. She knew that God had not forgotten them.

The Hebrew word *go’el* means “kinsman” and literally means “redeemer.” Boaz took Ruth out of poverty, restoring to her former married status and financial security, and gave her children. Boaz was a redeemer to Ruth and Naomi, restoring them to all they had lost. In the same way that Boaz loved and redeemed Ruth, Jesus Christ redeemed us by his atonement because He loves us. He is our “near kinsman” – our elder brother. Through His atonement, we are raised from our fallen state, restored to our proper status with God and are blessed with future security and eternal increase (children).¹ Jesus Christ is the family member who redeems us – the destitute.

Ruth and Boaz’s son was named Obed. When Obed was grown, he had a son named Jesse. Jesse's son was David. The great-grandson of Ruth became the King of Israel, King David. Jesus Christ was later born into this same family line.

Since Ruth and Naomi returned to Bethlehem, where Ruth met and married Boaz, the roots of David are in Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to register in the census of Augustus because Bethlehem was the residence of their ancestors (Luke 2:1-5). This was a fulfillment of prophecy!

The wheat reminds us that just as Ruth was redeemed from her lower estate, Christ redeems us from our fallen state and allows us entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “O Little Town of Bethlehem” Hymns, 208

¹Old Testament Student Manual-1, p. 263

For Older Children: These are some things she was probably thinking about:

1. As a woman, the only place in society was of wife and mother. Her husband was dead, and she had no child. Therefore, to be restored to having status within the community, she must marry and (hopefully) bear children.
2. She was a convert to the gospel, but the only men around whom she could marry were Moabites who were idol worshippers (who sacrificed their children to the idols!). How could she return to a way of life that she no longer believed in?
3. Naomi, whom she loved, needed help as well, being an older woman who was "too old to have a husband" (Ruth 1:12).
4. Ruth was Moabite and not allowed to be part of Israelite society: "[A]...Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever:" (Deut 23:3) So by her birth, Ruth was not just a second-class citizen in Israel, but was not allowed at all. The reasons were that not only did the Moabites refuse aid to Israel as they came out of Egypt, they also led the Israelites into idolatry. Ruth, however, did the opposite of both of these: She aided Naomi at the peril of her own life, and she converted completely from idolatry. Boaz and the community all recognized this: "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust" (Ruth 2:12).
5. Ruth realized that it was better for her to go with her mother-in-law to take care of her, and to choose to serve her God than to try to return to a way of life (idolatry) that she knew was wrong (Ruth 1:16-17).

December 12 King David



Visual Aids: crown, shepherd staff, GAK 112 David and Goliath, *Old Testament Stories*, p. 109-114

Ornament: Crown

Opening Song: Christmas Bells (CS, 54) – *let children ring bells while singing
Countdown to Christ’s Birth: c. 1047 B.C.*

Watch “Young David” (2:02), “David and Goliath” (2:32) and “King David” stopping at 1:12 or tell the story of David being chosen as king (*Old Testament Stories*, p. 109-111).

Have a child wear a crown and hold a staff. Young David was, in many ways, a similitude of Christ.

1. Both were born to families of humble means, yet they were royalty.
2. David was a shepherd who looked after his sheep. Jesus is called “The Good Shepherd” and watches over all of His sheep.
3. David was anointed to be the king when he was a boy. Jesus is called “The Anointed One” and was chosen before we came to earth to be our savior and king.
4. David became a king when he was 30 years old. Jesus began His mortal ministry at age 30.
5. Appointed by a prophet, David served as the king of Israel for forty years. He was a good king when he listened to the Lord’s guidance. Heavenly Father trusted him to take care of His covenant people, the children of Israel. Appointed by His Father, Jesus is called the “King of Kings.” He is the King of all the earth, which He created. He has always watched over His covenant people. He listened to His Father’s will and fulfilled it.
5. As king, David fought and won many wars. He delivered his people from political and military powers. Christ as our Savior and King delivers us all from sin and death.

King David was an ancestor of Christ. “Mary and Joseph were both descendants of King David. The New Testament states that Joseph was of Bethlehem and ‘of the house and lineage of David.’ So Jesus, though not a blood descendant of Joseph, inherited legal status as a son of David through him. At that time, the Jews were ruled by Rome, and the rights of the royal Davidic family were not recognized. ‘Had Judah been a free and independent nation, ruled by her rightful sovereign, Joseph the carpenter would have been her crowned king; and his lawful successor to the throne would have been Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews’ (*JTC*, p. 87)”. (*Robert J. Matthews, “Mary and Joseph,” Ensign, Dec 1974, 13*).

Show GAK 112 and if you didn’t tell the David and Goliath story, explain that this is the same David who slew Goliath. Think of what an obstacle Goliath was to the Israelites. He seemed overpowering and impossible to defeat. But with faith in the Lord, David, a shepherd who later became a king, slew Goliath with one stone and a sling. Jesus Christ, a shepherd and a king defeated death and sin. With our faith in Him, and by following His example, we can overcome both and return to live with our Heavenly Father.



Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “Once in Royal David’s City” Hymns, 205

December 13 Isaiah's Prophecies of Christ



Visual Aids: GAK 113, 201, 205-6, 227, 230, 215 and 238; Handel's Messiah, scriptures
Ornament: Scroll

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 740 B.C.



Watch "The Prophets Tell about Jesus" (2:12). Heavenly Father continued to send prophets to the people of Israel. The prophets reminded people that God had promised a savior. They gave the people hope that no matter how bad things might be here on earth, God had not forgotten them. He was going to send a child who would grow to be the world's savior. One of these prophets was Isaiah. **Show GAK 113.** He lived about 740 years before Jesus was born on earth. But a prophet can know of things before they happen because Heavenly Father tells them about it. Let's read a few of his prophecies.



Make sure all children have Bibles. As you play the following tracks from Handel's Messiah, tell the children the chapter in Isaiah while they scripture chase to find the verse. After they find it, turn the volume down and talk about the scripture with the music in the background. (If you don't have the music, just pass out the slips of paper with the references, look up, read and discuss the scriptures.)

Display the following pictures. After the scripture is found, have the kids choose which picture is represented: GAK 201, 205, 215, 230, 238, *Behold the Man* by Simon Dewey

- Track 8 – Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”
 - GAK 201
 - Who did Isaiah prophesy would be the mother of Jesus? (A virgin means a pure woman.)
 - What does Immanuel means? (Immanuel means “God is with us” Matt. 1:23. When Jesus lived on the earth He was Immanuel – He was God living with us.)
- Track 11 – Isaiah 9:6 “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”
 - GAK 205 (This isn't the greatest picture for this. Find a new one.)
 - How did Jesus come to earth? (as a baby)
 - He was the posterity of King David, so the throne was upon His shoulder.
 - What other names did Isaiah use to describe Christ?
 - What do these names tell us about Jesus Christ?
- Track 16 – Isaiah 35:5-6 “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”
 - Jesus always lifted those around Him.
 - GAK 215
- Track 20 (40 sec in) – Isaiah 53:3
 - Behold the Man* by Simon Dewey (Christ with Pilate)



5. Disc 2 Tracks 1 & 2 – Isaiah 53:4-5 “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... with his stripes we are healed.”

- GAK 230
- Even though others were mean to Him, Jesus always showed kindness.
- *Summary for little children:* Isaiah said that God’s Son would be despised, afflicted, and oppressed by many people, yet He would not speak against those who would hurt and kill Him. He would suffer for our sins and sorrows.



6. Isaiah 25:8 “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.” *For this song, look up the scripture in Revelation 19:

Disc 2 Track 17 – Revelation 19:6, 16 “Allelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. ...King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.”

- GAK 238
- Isaiah saw Jesus’ victory over death and the joy and hope it would bring to the world.



Read Alma 42:1-27

6“...they became fallen man...

9 “...it was expedient that mankind should be reclaimed from this spiritual death....

14 “And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence.

15 “And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made, therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.

23 “...and mercy cometh because of the atonement...”

26 “And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world. And thus cometh about the salvation and the redemption of men, and also their destruction and misery.

We are blessed to have the words of the prophet Isaiah in both the Bible and Book of Mormon! ***Hang the ornament on the tree.***

Closing Song: *Away in A Manger* Hymns, 206

*The Scripture chase with Handel’s Messiah is Jessica Ragsdale’s idea. Thank you, Jessica!

*I used George Frideric Handel’s Messiah, conductor Sir David Willcock with The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and NightPro Symphony Orchestra

1. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

2. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)

3. “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” (Isaiah 35:5-6)

4. “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:3-5)

5. “For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” (Isaiah 25:4)

6. “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.” (Isaiah 25:8)

December 14 Witnesses of Christ in the New World



Visual Aids: Bible, globe, GAK 326 Bible & Book of Mormon; GAK 300 Lehi, *Nephi's Vision of Mary* by Judith Mehr, 307 King Benjamin, *Such Great Faith* by Walter Rane, 308 Abinadi

Ornament(s): Book of Mormon and Bible

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ's Birth c. 600 B.C. – 20 B.C.

Show Jerusalem on the globe. The people in the Bible lived in what we call “The Old World.” Jerusalem is the holiest city in the “Holy Land” where the covenant people of the Lord were concentrated, and where Christ later lived. Many of the words of the prophets in the Old World are found in the Bible (show ornament). **Show books of Isaiah and Jeremiah in the Bible.**

GAK 326. The main prophet in Jerusalem after Isaiah was Jeremiah. About this time (600 B.C.), the prophet Lehi also prophesied in Jerusalem about the coming of Christ and told the people to repent or they would be destroyed. The Lord warned Lehi that the people wanted to kill him. Obeying the Lord, Lehi fled Jerusalem with his family. They journeyed across the ocean to the Promised Land – to “The New World” in the Americas. Lehi, Nephi, and many other prophets in The New World engraved their testimonies of Christ on metal plates, which later became The Book of Mormon (show ornament). *Move the timeline marker along as you read these testimonies.*

600 B.C. Lehi – Show GAK 300. Nephi told of Lehi’s witness: “Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world” 1 Nephi 10:4.



600-592 B.C. Nephi – Show GAK 303 or *Nephi's Vision of Mary*. An angel showed Nephi a vision of Mary. “And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white. And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou? And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins. . . . And he said unto me:

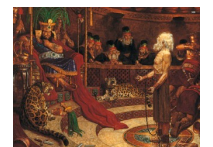


Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh. And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!” (1 Nephi 11:13-15, 18-21)

544-421 B.C. Jacob (Nephi's brother) – “For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for this cause it is sanctified unto us for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son” Jacob 4:4-5.

399 B.C. Jarom (grandson of Jacob) – “Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as though he already was. And after this manner did they teach them” Jarom 1:11.

148 B.C. Abinadi – Show GAK 308. “And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people” Mosiah 15:1.



124 B.C. King Benjamin – *Show GAK 307.* “For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. . . . And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people. And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary” (Mosiah 3:5, 7-8).



90 B.C. King Lamoni – “And it came to pass that he arose, according to the words of Ammon; and as he arose, he stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said: Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou. For as sure as thou livest, behold, I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name...” Alma 19:12-13.



83 B.C. Alma the Younger – “I say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true; and I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name. Yea, thus saith the Spirit: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power, and dominion. Yea, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the Spirit saith: Behold the glory of the King of all the earth; and also the King of heaven shall very soon shine forth among all the children of men” Alma 5:48, 50.

“For behold, I say unto you there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people. And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” Alma 7:7, 10.

74 B.C. Amulek – “And now, behold, I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall atone for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it. For it is expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made. For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice” Alma 34:8-10.

30 B.C. Helaman – “O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world” Helaman 5:9.

23-20 B.C. Nephi – “But, behold, ye not only deny my words, but ye also deny all the words which have been spoken by our fathers, and also the words which were spoken by this man, Moses, who had such great power given unto him, yea, the words which he hath spoken concerning the coming of the Messiah. Yea, did he not bear record that the Son of God should come? And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come. And as many as should look upon that serpent should ^alive, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal. And now behold, Moses did not only testify of these things, but also all the holy prophets, from his days even to the days of Abraham” Helaman 8:13-16.

All of these prophets who lived so many years before Christ was born anticipated His coming with faith. We are blessed to have their prophecies in the Book of Mormon, another witness of Jesus Christ. **Hang the ornaments.**

Closing Song: “The First Noel” Hymns, 213

*”Noel” means “Christmas” or “birth”

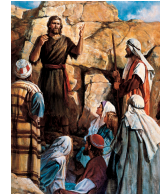
December 15 John the Baptist



Visual Aids: GAK 207 John Preaching Wilderness, 208 John the Baptist, NT Stories p. 12-13, 16-17
Ornament: Dove (or shoe's latchet-prepared the way)

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 2 B.C.

Show GAK 207. The scriptures foretold that someone would come before Christ to prepare the way for Him. This person had to descend from Aaron and hold the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood. The Lord chose to send this special prophet to Zacharias, a priest of the family of Aaron, and Elisabeth, his wife, one of the “daughters of Aaron.”¹ This special prophet was John the Baptist.



Show GAK 208. John the Baptist was Jesus' second cousin. He was born about six months before Jesus, and his birth was also a miracle.



Watch “Elisabeth and Zacharias” (1:03) and “John the Baptist is Born” (1:24) or show the pictures in NT Stories p. 12-13 and 16-17. Elisabeth was Mary's cousin. She was married to Zacharias. They had never been able to have children, and were very old. The scriptures say that, “they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6). Zacharias was a priest. One day, while he was working in the temple, an angel named Gabriel appeared to him and told him, “Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.” The angel told Zacharias that his son would be “great in the sight of the Lord” and would be “filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb” and would go before Christ “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Zacharias was amazed and wondered how it was possible that they could have a baby since he and his wife were very old. The angel told him that since he didn't believe, he wouldn't be able to talk until the child was born. When Zacharias left the temple that day, he couldn't speak.

Elisabeth did get pregnant, even though she was an old woman. “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). When Elisabeth had her baby, the people of the town were going to name him after his father, but Elisabeth said that the child's name would be John. When they asked Zacharias, he wrote down, “His name is John” and immediately began to speak again, praising God.



Zacharias said, about his son John, “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins” Luke 1:76-77.

When King Herod ordered the death of all male babies age 2 and under, Joseph took Jesus and Mary to Egypt for safety. John being only six months older than Jesus was also in danger. From the Teachings of Joseph Smith, we learn that Zacharias had Elizabeth take John into the wilderness and raise him there for his safety. When Zacharias refused to disclose their hiding place, he was slain in the temple by Herod's order.² John grew up in the desert until it was time for his ministry to prepare the way for Christ.

John the Baptist testified boldly and with power about the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior that God had promised the people so many years ago. John baptized those who believed in the river Jordan. Many people listened to John, and they were ready to believe in and follow Jesus Christ.

Since John held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, Jesus came to him for baptism. When he baptized Jesus, John saw the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, witnessing to John that Jesus truly was the Son of God.

John was sent to prepare the way for Christ. We have been born in this day to prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ. We can be missionaries like John by testifying of Christ, by sharing the gospel with others and striving to be like Jesus. ***Hang the ornament on the tree.***

Closing Song: “Baptism,” CS 100

¹ “In selecting the mortal lineage through which John would come, ancient law and procedure had to be fulfilled. He who should labor in Israel to announce and to identify the great High Priest who was the long-awaited Messiah must be (according to law) a descendant of Aaron and legally entitled to act in his priestly office in Israel. The Lord chose Zacharias, a priest of the family of Aaron, and Elisabeth, his wife, one of the “daughters of Aaron,” to be the mortal parents to provide the right lineage necessary to complete the inheritance—to bring about the proper combination of body and spirit” “John the Baptist: A Burning and a Shining Light” by Robert J. Matthews, *Ensign* September 1972.

² Joseph Smith: “When Herod’s edict went forth to destroy young children, John was about six months older than Jesus, and came under this hellish edict, and Zachariah caused his mother to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locusts and wild honey. When his father refused to disclose his hiding place, and being the officiating high priest at the Temple that year, was slain by Herod’s order, between the porch and the altar, as Jesus said” *Teachings*, p. 261.

December 16

Mary: the Handmaid of the Lord



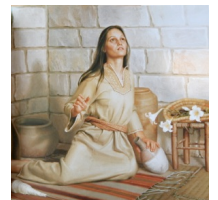
Visual Aids: GAK 241 The Annunciation, *When Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem* book p. 6
Ornament: Mary

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*
Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 2 B.C.



GAK 241. What kind of person do you think Heavenly Father would choose as the mother of his Beloved Son? (The very best.) An apostle of the Lord said, “As there is only one Christ, so there is only one Mary. And as the Father chose the most noble and righteous of all his spirit sons to come into mortality as his Only Begotten in the flesh, so we may confidently conclude that he selected the most worthy and spiritually talented of all his spirit daughters to be the mortal mother of his Eternal Son.”¹

Hundreds of years before Mary was born, prophets testified of her sacred role. Isaiah said, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” King Benjamin prophesied, “And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.” And the prophet Alma declared, “And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.”



Because Jesus’ mortal lineage would come through Mary, in order for all prophecy to be fulfilled, she had to be born herself into the royal line of David.² Heavenly Father would also want His son to be born to a faithful, righteous woman – one who would teach Him from the scriptures and demonstrate faith and obedience to God.

Watch “Mary and the Angel” (0:40) and “Mary the Mother of Jesus” (2:26) or teach: Mary and Joseph were both very righteous people. While they were engaged to be married, an angel appeared to Mary and said: “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.” And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 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: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:28-38).

The angel then told her about her cousin Elisabeth who was very old, but was 6 months pregnant: “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” And Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” Mary believed the angel and was submissive to the Lord’s will. She was probably scared. In Jewish law, a woman could be stoned to death if she was pregnant, but not married. But Mary had faith in the Lord. People who knew Mary, but did not know of her angelic visit and her divine calling most likely judged her harshly and thought she had sinned. Mary undoubtedly endured persecution and false judgment, but was willing to do the will of the Lord.

After Mary was pregnant, she visited her cousin Elisabeth. When she entered the house, the baby inside Elisabeth jumped and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. Elisabeth said with a loud voice, “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” Elisabeth knew that Mary was carrying the Son of God. Mary responded, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name” (Luke 1:46-49).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said of Mary, *“I’ve thought of Luke’s careful phrasing about that holy night in Bethlehem: The days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and [she] wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and [she] laid him in a manger.”* (Luke 2:6–7.) Those brief pronouns trumpet in our ears that, second only to the child himself, Mary is the chiefest figure, the regal queen, mother of mothers—holding center stage in this grandest of all dramatic moments. And those same pronouns also trumpet that, save for her beloved husband, she was very much alone. I have wondered if this young woman, something of a child herself, here bearing her first baby, might have wished her mother, or an aunt, or her sister, or a friend, to be near her through the labor. Surely the birth of such a son as this should command the aid and attention of every midwife in Judea! We all might wish that someone could have held her hand, cooled her brow, and when the ordeal was over, given her rest in crisp, cool linen. But it was not to be so. With only Joseph’s inexperienced assistance, she herself brought forth her firstborn son, wrapped him in the little clothes she had knowingly brought on her journey, and perhaps laid him on a pillow of hay. Then on both sides of the veil a heavenly host broke into song. *“Glory to God in the highest,”* they sang, *“and on earth, peace among men of good will.”* (Luke 2:14, Phillips Translation.) But except for heavenly witnesses, these three were alone: Joseph, Mary, the baby to be named Jesus. At this focal point of all human history, a point illuminated by a new star in the heavens revealed for just such a purpose, probably no other mortal watched—none but a poor young carpenter, a beautiful virgin mother, and silent stabled animals who had not the power to utter the sacredness they had seen. How true it is that many of the greatest moments of motherhood are quiet and sacred. Since most of ours are not accompanied by stars and angels, they are often unnoticed by the rest of the world, but not by God. It makes sense that *“Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.”*²

How can we be like Mary?

1. We can remember that the Lord has foreordained us to do special things during our time on earth. We can seek for ways to become and do all He wants us to be and do. *While our own personal missions may not be as magnificent as Mary’s, her story bears witness that our Father in Heaven places us on earth when and where he needs us and creates the circumstances in which we can reach our potential and achieve our royal destiny.*²
2. We can submit to the Lord’s will and do what is right, even when it is hard. We can take notice of the blessings brought into our lives from our obedience.
3. Nephi said that Mary was “fair and beautiful.” She was “virtuous, lovely, and praiseworthy,” and had the kind of beauty that radiates from obedience and spiritual light. The Hebrew word for “fair” can mean “goodly” and implies righteousness and covenant keeping. Parley P. Pratt taught that the Holy Spirit “develops beauty of person, form and features.” We all know women who are absolutely beautiful because of their goodness and the spirit of attractiveness; Mary was such a woman.² As we develop our spirituality and Christ-like characters, we can develop that inner “fairness” as well.
4. We can ponder spiritual experiences in our hearts.
5. We can know and love the scriptures. “Raised as a devoted Jew, Mary would have known and understood the prophecies of the coming Messiah. Both during and after the annunciation visit from Gabriel, Mary showed an understanding of who Jesus Christ was to be. Her questions centered on her own part, but she believed and rejoiced about arrival of the long-prophesied Savior. ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour’ (Luke 1:46-47). . . . Mary [certainly] played an important role in teaching and testifying about the scriptures and helping young Jesus recognize and understand his own mission.”²
6. We can love and attend the temple faithfully like Mary. Shortly after Jesus’ birth, Mary and Joseph presented him to God at the temple. “There they were met by Simeon and Anna, who both bore testimony that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah and the Son of God. Not only did this confirm His mission, but it reaffirmed hers.” When we faithfully attend the temple, we can be reminded of the things Heavenly Father wants us to do.

Closing Song: “Mary’s Lullaby” Children’s Songbook, p. 44-45

¹ Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Bookcraft, Inc., 1965, vol. 1, p. 85.

² Stephanie: <http://diapersanddivinity.com/2012/12/12/lessons-learned-from-mary/>

Extra: Watch the Bible Videos “Mary, the Mother of Jesus” (2:26) and “An Angel Foretells Christ’s Birth to Mary (4:07) from churchofjesuschrist.org

December 17

Joseph: a Humble Servant



Visual Aids: *When Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem* book, p. 8, GAK 204 Flight into Egypt; *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple* by James J. Tissot, Dec. 2003 Ensign inside cover; Boy Jesus in the Temple, GAK 205, *Growing in Wisdom* by Simon Dewey; Childhood of Jesus, GAK 206

Ornament: Joseph (or carpenter's square)

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*

Countdown to Christ's Birth: c. 2 B.C.

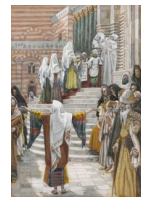
“What kind of a person would Heavenly Father select as the husband of Mary and the guardian, counselor, and earthly model for Jesus? We must believe that our Heavenly Father made careful selection in his choice of Joseph.”¹

Watch “Joseph and the Angel” (0:45) or show the picture of Joseph. While Joseph and Mary were engaged (not yet married), she was expecting Heavenly Father's son. Not aware of this, Joseph could have been angry and had Mary stoned, but he was a good man and wanted to protect her and spare Mary the punishment given to a woman found pregnant without a completed marriage. Joseph intended to “put her away privily” meaning he would enter “a private agreement, attested by a written document known as a bill of divorce or certificate of dismissal.”² While Joseph pondered these things, the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:18-25). Joseph believed the angel and exercised his faith. He married Mary, took care of her and her child, and helped her raise the Son of God.



Presentation of Christ in Temple Joseph and Mary were faithful in keeping all of the commandments. Hebrew law dictates that when a baby boy is eight days old, he must be circumcised as a sign of the Abrahamic covenant.² Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary obeyed this law. Their baby was different from all other babies born to faithful families, because this was the spirit who made that covenant with Abraham and this is the baby who would grow into the man who would fulfill that covenant. Only by fulfilling his life mission could “all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:9-11).

“Thirty-two days later, ‘when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished,’ they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present him before a priest serving at the Gate of Nicanor on the Temple Mount—the House of God.”² It was there that Simeon, a devout man who had been promised by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ, took Jesus up in his arms and blessed God, and said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him (Luke 2:25-33). Anna, an elderly woman who “departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day” also “spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36-38).



In keeping with the Law of Moses, “40 days after the birth of a son (80 days in the case of a daughter), the mother was to offer a special sacrifice—a lamb or two turtledoves or pigeons, which Mary did.”¹ Joseph and Mary kept all of the commandments in the Law of Moses. They were faithful, devout followers of God, and were humble.

GAK 204. As the leader of their family, Joseph protected Mary and Jesus, and set a strong example for Jesus to follow. “Joseph was an example to Jesus of being spiritually sensitive and kind. Joseph hearkened to divine guidance through the ministrations of angels and by dreams.”¹ Joseph was warned in another dream to take Mary and the young child Jesus to Egypt “for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” (Matthew 2:13). After the wise men visited them and failed to return to King Herod, Herod was very angry, and in his wrath he ordered the slaying of “all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under” (Matthew 2:16). Because Joseph obeyed the Lord, Jesus was protected. After Herod died, the Lord again visited Joseph in a dream and told him to return to the land of Israel. He led his little family to Nazareth where Jesus “grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).



Growing in Wisdom “It was at home that Jesus probably received his first lessons about the history of Israel and of past deliverances of his people by the hand of the Lord.”¹ How interesting would it have been for Jesus to know that *He* was Jehovah, the One who ministered to the prophets and delivered the ancient Israelites from bondage, and that He was the promised Messiah would be sent to deliver all of God’s children from spiritual bondage.

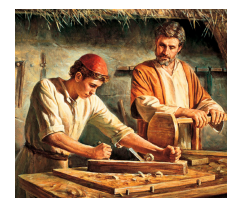


“In their home, Joseph and Mary created an atmosphere of obedience to the Lord as commanded in the divine law.”¹ The scriptures tell us that they went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. When Jesus was 12, they journeyed again, though this trip had even greater significance. “Jewish law required every twelve-year-old male to be formally presented to a priest serving on the Temple Mount. The priest... pronounced young males ‘Sons of the Law’ which gave them many temporal blessings and recognition, and also the promise that the boy would one day dine with the patriarchs of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—at a future Messianic feast.”²

GAK 205. After this monumental day, Mary and Joseph traveled toward their home again, believing that Jesus was with their large company. But when they discovered that he was missing, they returned to Jerusalem, and after searching for three days, Mary found Jesus in the temple, and was amazed to see Jesus “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:46-47). When Mary asked Jesus why he had dealt with his parents this way, Jesus responded: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). “These questions, the first recorded words of Jesus, reveal his knowledge of his true parentage.”²



GAK 206. Jesus returned home with his parents and “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). Joseph was a carpenter and taught Jesus his trade.



Heavenly Father chose Joseph because he would be the best guardian and role model for Jesus to follow on earth. As the one chosen to help raise the Savior of the World, Joseph had a great responsibility. He proved to be a valiant servant. He was another great example to Jesus and to us of submitting to the Lord’s will, and showing obedience to His commandments. If Jesus learned from Joseph’s example, we can too. Let’s be humble and obedient like Joseph and always willing to serve the Lord in whatever capacity he asks us to.

Closing Song: “When Joseph went to Bethlehem” Children’s Songbook, p. 38

¹ Robert J. Matthews, “Mary and Joseph,” *Ensign*, Dec 1974, 13

² “In the Footsteps of Jesus” by Susan Easton Black

December 18 Bethlehem



Visual Aids: Pictures of the Holy Land (*In the Footsteps of Jesus* by Susan Easton Black), Map of route from Nazareth to Bethlehem, “Road to Bethlehem” by Joseph Brickey (cover of *When Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem*), Pictures of Nazareth, Jordan Valley, Jericho Desert, Bethlehem, and topographical map.

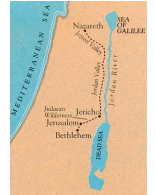
Ornament: Bethlehem

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*

The prophet Micah foretold: “But thou, Bethlehem . . . though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” (Micah 5:2.)

In the Book of Mormon, Alma also foretold the birthplace of the Savior 83 years before it happened: “And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10).

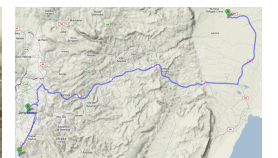
Show map. “When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she was living in Nazareth. Yet, it was prophesied that the promised Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judaea. So how could the prophecy of the birth be fulfilled in Bethlehem—nearly one hundred miles away? Surely it was not by chance that Roman administrators decided to conduct an enrollment for the purpose of taxation, which sent thousands throughout the country back to their ancestral hometowns. Joseph and Mary had to set out on an arduous journey southward to Bethlehem.”¹ The scriptures say, “And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child” (Luke 2:4–5).



Road to Bethlehem Artwork. “Both of the routes they could have taken are about 92 miles long. Normal walking pace, even with a camel or donkey, is 3 miles per hour. So a traveler can usually walk between 17 and 24 miles each day. Each route takes about 30 hours to walk—17 to 20 miles a day for 5 days. At that rate, the journey would have taken Joseph and Mary at least 4 to 5 days. We wonder where they stayed each night, where and with whom they camped along the way. It would have been a wearying journey for anyone, but especially for a pregnant woman soon to give birth. It was early spring, which can still be very chilly at night in the hill country. However, in the Jordan Valley—which is below sea level—the temperatures would have been mild and pleasant.”¹



Picture of the Jericho Desert and topographical map. Even in the journey to bring the unborn Christ child to His birthplace, the mother who carried Him, and His faithful guardian Joseph descended physically below all places on the earth, descending into the desert of Jericho, one of the lowest points on earth. “The last leg of the eastern route would have been the hardest of all. Jericho is the lowest city on the globe, and Jerusalem and Bethlehem are situated right in the top of the hills. From Jericho’s desert to Bethlehem is an uphill hike of 3,500 feet. How exhausted Mary must have been! How anxious Joseph must have been to find a comfortable room at the inn! Desperate to find adequate shelter, they may have resorted at last to a limestone cave used for a stable.”¹



“Since Jesus created the earth, He could have chosen to live anywhere. He could have selected the beautiful islands of the sea with their lush vegetation and breathtaking beauty. He could have chosen the scenery of Switzerland or Scandinavia, or He could have preferred to walk upon the acres of Africa or Australia. Instead, He selected a land with places stark and arid (bare and dry). Why would He choose that exact location? He chose the land around Jerusalem for many reasons. Jesus loved to teach using examples the people could see around them – like the geography of their land and the types of people who lived there (he used olive trees and fig trees to teach lessons, and gave parables of a sower, a servant, laborers in a field, sheep and goats, vines and branches).”²

Isaiah prophesied, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” Isaiah 53:2. Jesus declared himself to be “the root and the offspring of David” (Rev. 22:16). Jesus, this “root,” grew up in David’s homeland, a place that *literally* had dry ground and was filled with people who were *figuratively* “spiritually dry” or wicked.²

In Hebrew, *Bethlehem* means “house of bread”. In John 6:48, Jesus said, “I am that bread of life.” Isn’t it neat that the “Bread of Life” was born in the “house of bread”? And when do we eat bread in remembrance of Jesus? (sacrament) Every time we partake of that “bread of life” we are spiritually born again.

“After millennia of preparation, the long awaited event occurred. Christ was born among men. No wonder angelic choirs sang as they knew that extended centuries of death and darkness were to be relieved by the Atonement, which was finally to come through this Babe of Bethlehem.”²

As we see this Bethlehem ornament, we should remember its significance as the “house of bread” where the Lamb of God, the bread of life was brought forth by miraculous events into His mortal existence. During the sacrament, we can renew our covenant with Him and be spiritually reborn each week.

Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “If I Had Been in Bethlehem” by Sally DeFord

Extra: Watch “Mary and Joseph Travel to Bethlehem” (2:05).

¹“*The Road to Bethlehem*” by D. Kelly Ogden, *Ensign*, Dec. 1995, 13.

²“*Why This Holy Land?*” By Elder Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, Dec. 1989, 13

Activity Idea from Jessica Ragsdale: Since we are talking about “Houses of Bread” make a little town of Bethlehem out of yummy gingerbread.

If I Had Been in Bethlehem

Sally DeFord

$\text{♩} = 90$

2

4

Play both hands one octave higher for vs. 1.

1. If I had been in Beth-le-hem the
(f) I had lived in east-ern lands and
(l) did not live in Beth-le-hem that

6

8

night of Je - sus' birth, And heard a - far the an - gels' joy - ful
watched with ea - ger eyes, If I had seen his star ap - pear and
Christ - mas night of old, Or tra - vel with the wise men there to

10

12

song of peace on earth, If I had seen the shep - herds come to
blaze a - mong the skies, If I had seen the wise men go to
bring him gifts of gold, But I can give a great - er gift than

Copyright 1987 by Sally DeFord
224 Tamarron Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80919 719/260-8925
Making copies for non-commercial use is permitted.
This and other DeFord sheet music may be downloaded free at:
<http://www.defordmusic.com>

14 16

seek the ba- by fair, I think I would have fol- lowed them, and
 seek the new- born King, I think I would have fol- lowed them, my
 a- ny earth- ly gem, For all my heart and all my love will

1, 2 18

knelt be- side gifts them there.
 fin- est side gifts to bring. 2. If
 3. I

loco

20 22

3.
 be my gift to him. *8va*
rit.

rit.

December 19 Shepherds

Visual Aids: GAK 202 The Shepherds

Ornament: Shepherd's staff

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing
Countdown to Christ's Birth: 1 B.C.*



Idea from christcenteredtraditions.blogspot: Spend the evening as though you were shepherds on that wondrous night when an angel of the Lord appeared with glad tidings. Begin the evening with a dinner of "Shepherd's Pie," or eat on the floor on a blanket a more humble fare as the shepherds may have eaten such as pita bread and cheese. Spend this evening by candlelight. Have everyone dress as shepherds. Act out their story as you read the lesson.



Watch “Shepherds Learn of the Birth of Christ” (2:50) or show GAK 202. In the same country where Jesus was born, shepherds were in the nearby fields watching over their flocks at night. Then suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared and the shepherds were frightened. But the angel told them, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” The angel told them that the Savior, Christ the Lord was born that very day. He told them that they would find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes (cloths), lying in a manger (a long open box or trough for animals to eat out of). Then a large group of angels appeared and said, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” When the angels left, the shepherds said to each other, “Let us now go ...unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.” Hurrying to Bethlehem, the shepherds found Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus lying in a manger.



We can learn many lessons from the shepherds.

1. What type of men were the shepherds?

The angels chose to announce Christ's birth to humble, poor shepherds rather than the prominent or wealthy people in the region. Why do you think they chose the shepherds?

Alma foresaw the angels' appearance to the shepherds. He said, “And it shall be made known unto just and holy men, by the mouth of angels, at the time of his coming...” Alma 13:26. These men were "just and holy" and prepared (just = behaving according to what is morally right). How can we make ourselves just and holy?

2. The scriptures say that the shepherds “came with haste” to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus. Do we hasten to come close to the Savior each day? Do we put Him first? How can we remember to hasten to come to Him each day? (pray morning and night, read scriptures before other activities, act as He would....)

3. After they saw the newborn Savior, the shepherds “made it known abroad” what they had seen and heard concerning Christ. They glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen. Are we willing to share our knowledge about Jesus Christ with others, too? How can we show our joy for all of our blessings, which come from Him?

4. Jesus was known as the Good Shepherd. Shepherds remind us of being like Christ. Elder Eyring said, “A shepherd watches over sheep. In the scriptural stories, the sheep are in danger; they need protection and nourishment. The Savior warns us that we must watch the sheep as He does. He gave His life for them. They are His. We cannot approach His standard if, like a hired servant, we watch

only when it is convenient and only for a reward” (Henry B. Eyring, ““Watch with Me’,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 38). Who do you think are the “sheep” in our lives? Let us nurture a loving, caring spirit for everyone we come in contact with, just as Jesus would if He were here.

Let’s be good shepherds to those around us, especially during this Christmas time.

Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “The Shepherd’s Carol” CS, 40

Extras: Watch “Shepherds Learn of the Birth of Christ” (2:50) in the media library on churchofjesuschrist.org

Shepherd-Themed Activity Ideas

"Find the Lost Sheep" game could be played where a "sheep" hides somewhere in the house and the shepherds try to find him. The little lost sheep could cry "baa" until found. Or: Have the girls be sheep and hide, and the boys be shepherds who have to go find them.

Families with young children could make construction paper sheep with cotton balls glued on.

A small lamb from a nativity set could be hidden in the room, and the children find him and then take turns hiding him again.

The children could sleep that night as shepherd's slept, on the ground. It is fun to have a night of sleeping near the Christmas tree.

From happyhomefairy.com: Give each child a candy cane. Read “The Legend of the Candy Cane” or teach the symbolism: White = virgin birth and sinless nature of Jesus. Hard candy symbolizes the solid rock, the foundation of the Church, and firmness of the promises of God. Shape of a J = Jesus. Staff shape = “The Good Shepherd.” Red stripes to represent the suffering Christ endured in our behalf.

Drink Candy Cane Cocoa: 4 c milk, 3 oz semisweet chocolate, chopped, 4 peppermint candy canes, crushed, 1 c whipped cream, 4 small peppermint candy canes. Heat milk until steaming hot (not boiling). Add chocolate and crushed peppermint and allow to melt and become smooth. Pour into mugs and garnish with whipped cream and crushed candy canes or add candy cane stirring stick.

From christcenteredtraditions.blogspot.com:

Make Shepherd Cane cookies. Have the dough ready and let each person make their own cane:

Shepherd Cane Cookies

1 c butter	1 tsp vanilla extract
1 c powdered sugar	2½ c flour
1 egg	1 tsp salt
1 tsp peppermint extract	½ tsp red food coloring

Mix together butter, sugar, egg and extracts thoroughly. Stir in flour and salt. Divide dough in half. Blend red coloring into one half of the dough. Cover the two pieces of dough and refrigerate.

To bake: Preheat oven to 350°. For each cookie, roll 1 teaspoon of dough from each half back and forth on a lightly floured surface into 4” rope. Place 1 red and 1 white rope side by side. Press together lightly at top and twist. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and turn down top to form the crook of the

cane. Bake 9 minutes. Watch closely as they have a tendency to brown quickly. Cool on racks.

December 20 The Wise Men



Visual Aids: GAK 203 The Wise Men

Ornaments: wise men

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing
Countdown to Christ's Birth: 1 B.C.*

Have children dress up as wise men carrying battery-operated candles. Turn off all the lights in the house and have the children take a journey to find the baby Jesus (you can give them a route or you carry a light to follow). After they present gifts, they can sit in front of the baby Jesus for the lesson.



Watch “The Wise Men” (0:49) or show GAK 203. “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matthew 2:1–2).



King Herod ruled at that time, and when he heard of the wise men’s question, he was troubled because he didn’t like the idea that there was another king of the Jews. He called the chief priests and scribes together and asked them where Christ was to be born. They answered that a prophet had written that Christ would be born “in Bethlehem of Judaea.” Herod sent for the wise men and asked them about the star they had followed. He then sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also” (Matthew 2:8). Herod did not want to worship Jesus; he intended to kill Him.

The wise men followed the star and found the young Jesus, “and when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:9-11). Because the wise men had received a warning from Heavenly Father in a dream, they did not return to Herod but went by another way to their homeland.

The wise men brought three gifts for the Christ child. These gifts were very precious, practical, and also symbolic. **Gold** symbolizes kingship and royalty, and was appropriately given to the newborn King of the Earth. The gold most likely helped Mary and Joseph travel to Egypt when they needed to protect Jesus’ life from Herod.



Burning **Frankincense** repels mosquitoes and would help protect the baby Jesus from dangerous illnesses carried by mosquitoes. Frankincense was mixed with oils to anoint newborn infants and those considered to be moving into a new phase in their spiritual lives, and was a symbol of Christ’s divinity – the Anointed One, beginning His mission on earth.



Myrrh, a bitter oil, has been highly valued since ancient times for its fragrance, its medicinal qualities, as a wound dressing, and as a special perfume used in preparing bodies for burial. As such, myrrh symbolized Christ’s healing powers, the “bitter cup” He would drink, and also His death and burial.¹



We can learn many lessons from the wise men.

1. The wise men journeyed from afar following the new star and seeking the King of the Jews. We

© Jennifer Lund – may be copied for non-commercial personal use – www.jonlund.com – lund.jennifer@gmail.com – updated 10/25/20

must also follow the scriptures and the prophet and constantly seek Christ, no matter how difficult or long our journey may be. Sometimes that difficulty is much more manageable than a long journey across the desert. Our journey might be to our knees each morning and night, our struggle may be to avoid temptation and mocking of others, and our best efforts may include open our scriptures each day to seek Christ.

2. The wise men listened to the warnings they received from God and did not return to Herod. We can be wise in listening to the Holy Ghost in our lives. We can steer clear of evil and follow the light of Christ.

President Benson said, “And now, my beloved brothers and sisters, what must we do this Christmas season—and always? Why, we must do the same as the Wise Men of old. They sought out the Christ and found Him. And so must we. Those who are wise still seek Him today. ‘I would commend you,’ urged Moroni, “to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written’ (Ether 12:41). And God has provided the means—the holy scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon—that all who seek may know that Jesus is the Christ. (Ezra Taft Benson, “Keeping Christ in Christmas,” *Ensign*, Dec 1993, 2)

3. Like the wise men, we can also bring our most precious gifts to the Lord. What gifts from us does He hope for? *Decide on a gift you would like to give to Christ for this New Year.*

Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “With Wondering Awe” Hymns, 210 or *Night of Miracles* p. 49-51 (-58)

¹“We Three Kings,” *New Era*, Dec. 2009, 24-27; Wikipedia; “Thoughtful Gifts,” by Rebekah Atkin, *New Era*, Dec. 2011.

Extra: Buy real gold, frankincense and myrrh (you can find gift sets online). Let the children hold and smell each item.



Watch “The Wise Men Seek Jesus.” Watch 1:15-1:40 and 3:00-3:50. This is not very action-packed, but is nice.

Idea from christcenteredtraditions.blogspot: gift a new journal to each child with a picture of the Savior mounted in the front, in which they can record their gift to Christ and their following efforts throughout the year. Consider writing a short entry under the picture of Christ about giving a gift to Him who gave us the greatest gift of all. Have a family motto throughout the year of “Wise Men Still Seek Him” and intentionally plan ways to bring the Savior and His atonement into the forefront of your family activities.

Three Extra Gifts from christcenteredtraditions.blogspot.com:

1. Use 3 wise men figurines that are safe for little hands. Have them travel through the house each day getting closer to the baby Jesus. Take turns hiding and finding them. The wise men can occasionally leave a word of inspiration, a scripture, a quote or a treat behind.

2. Another simple game for children is to find the fancy button that fell from the cloak of one of the wise men.

3. For an art project that goes along with this theme, the wise men can be created from handprints.



The Wise Men

John A. Tvedtnes, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, Oct. 1981, 25–26

John A. Tvedtnes, specialist in ancient Near Eastern studies and instructor at the Brigham Young University–Salt Lake Center. Many are the myths surrounding the first Christmas. Most of them are designed to explain details lacking in the biblical account, but many are certainly incorrect or unsubstantiated.

We know, for example, that the wise men didn't go to a stable but to a house (see [Matt. 2:11](#)), but we are not so sure when they arrived. It probably was close to two years after the birth of Christ. Based on their information, Herod ordered the destruction of all children two years old and under in Bethlehem, the implication being that the child he was seeking was near two years old. On the other hand, Herod could have sought a margin of security and added a year or so in his death request. (See [Matt. 2:7, 16](#).)

We don't know if the wise men rode camels. We don't even know for sure how many there were. While some traditions indicate there were twelve of them, three is the most popular number because of the three expensive gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (See [Matt. 2:11](#).)

We are also uncertain about what they were and where they were from. It is possible that they were Jewish, for at that time there still lived in Babylonia and Persia a very large Jewish community—perhaps more numerous than the Jews under Herod's rule. Some traditions use Old Testament passages to support the idea that they were kings. (See [Isa. 49:7](#); [Isa. 60:3–7](#).) Others cite Psalm 72:10, 15, [[Ps. 72:10, 15](#)] as evidence that the alleged three kings were from Tarshish, Sheba, and Seba, identified in medieval times with Spain, Ethiopia, and Arabia.

Other scholars believe the wise men were from Persia because the Greek word behind the King James Version translation of *wise men* (in [Matt. 2:1, 7, 16](#)) is *Magoi*, a Persian word sometimes rendered in English texts as *Magi*. This word, the origin of our English word *magic*, refers to priests in the Zoroastrian religion of ancient Persia. Early Christian tradition associates the coming of the Magi with a prophecy attributed to Zoroaster, whom ancient Persians accepted as a prophet. (See I Infancy Gospel 3:1, in *The Lost Books of the Bible*, New York: The World Publishing Co., 1926, p. 40.)

Marco Polo's account supports the Persia theory. He reported that three Magi had set out from Saba in Persia, where their tombs were still shown in his day. Local tradition named three kings: Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. (See *The Travels of Marco Polo*, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, n.d., p. 33.) The same names are used in Christian tradition today for non-Persian wise men. The Armenian Gospel of the Infancy, chapter eleven, names the Magi as Melkon, King of Persia; Gaspar of India; and Balthazar of Arabia. (See *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. Montague Rhodes James, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, p. 83.) The names appear to be Akkadian, however, common at Babylon from whence they spread through other parts of the Persian Empire from the fifth century B.C.

Marco Polo also reported that the three Persians who went away to worship the newborn prophet took gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (*Marco Polo*, p. 34.) Christian tradition refers to these gifts as symbolic, respectively, of Jesus' kingship, divinity, and passion (myrrh being used for perfuming the dead before burial, as seen in [John 19:39–40](#)).

The star is perhaps the most puzzling aspect of the story, because the wise men are generally depicted as following the moving celestial body from their homeland (or a central meeting point) to Jerusalem, and then to Bethlehem. Our modern knowledge of astronomy makes it difficult to accept such a view. And since the new star was also seen by inhabitants of the American continent (see [Hel. 14:5](#); [3 Ne. 1:21](#)), it obviously couldn't have hovered over the wise men. Their report to Herod that they had "seen

his star in the east” (Matt. 2:2) may have meant that they themselves were in the east at the time, not that the star was in the east and moved westward. An alternate translation sometimes given to the Greek text is not “in the east” but “at its rising.”

If the wise men weren’t following the star from their homeland, how were they able to pinpoint the country where the new king would be born? We must attribute their knowledge to some tradition or prophecy in their homeland. They knew enough to come to Judea, but did not go directly to Bethlehem. Instead, they went to the palace in Jerusalem—a place where one would expect the birth of a king. When they appeared in Herod’s court, they asked, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” (Matt. 2:2.) Quite obviously, they knew they were looking for a Jew.

While there is no hint in the Matthew account that the star “led” the wise men to the west from their homeland, there was some sort of directional indication when they went from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. (See Matt. 2:9–10.) Since Herod’s people had instructed them that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (see Matt. 2:4–6), there was no need for the star to show the way there. But it would have been helpful in pinpointing the spot where they could find Jesus. (See Matt. 2:9.) We do not know exactly how it did this. It may have been a phenomenon other than the star seen two years previous, since the Nephite record makes no mention of a second appearance of the star. Interestingly, one source indicates that it was an angel in the guise of a star. (See 1 Infancy Gospel 3:3.)

The Book of Mormon indicates that the new star was accompanied by a tremendous brightness in the heavens which made the night appear as day. (See Hel. 14:2–6; 3 Ne. 1:15–21.) This phenomenon is not mentioned in the New Testament account. However, it is confirmed in early Christian tradition. In a letter from Ignatius to the Ephesians, written about A.D. 100, we read:

“How then was our Saviour manifested to the world? A star shone in heaven beyond all the other stars, and its light was inexpressible, and its novelty struck terror into men’s minds. All the rest of the stars, together with the sun and moon, were the chorus to this star; but that sent out its light exceedingly above them all.

“And men began to be troubled to think whence this new star came so unlike to all the others.” (Ignatius to the Ephesians 4:11–12, *The Lost Books of the Bible*.)

But why did God send the wise men to Bethlehem? It is true that Herod began his search for the young Messiah as a result of their visit. But news from the tale of the shepherds was bound to find its way to the court ultimately anyway. (See Luke 2:17–18.) Sooner or later, he would come searching for the child to destroy him. Joseph and Mary were poor and would not have had the means to travel out of Herod’s reach. Their poverty may, in fact, have been the reason they remained in Bethlehem rather than returning to Nazareth. But with the precious gifts brought by the wise men, they could escape into Egypt. Thus, it is likely that the arrival of the wise men was part of God’s plan for fulfilling prophecy and for preserving the family from danger.

Another purpose may have been served by the wise men. We cannot know with whom they shared their experiences, but it is possible that they spread the knowledge of the Messiah’s birth to the Jewish community throughout Babylonia and Persia.

December 21 The New Star



Ornament: star

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*

Countdown to Christ's Birth: 1 B.C.

One of the most exciting signs of Christ's birth was a new star in the heavens. Just as Christ brought light to the earth by His life and miraculous atonement and resurrection, His birth brought new physical light to the earth in the form of a beautiful new star.

“At the birth of Him who once identified Himself as the ‘bright and morning star,’ a new star appeared in the heavens. Shining brightly over Bethlehem, that star had been placed in orbit far in advance of the foretold event in order that its light could coincide in time and place with His blessed birth” (Russell M. Nelson, “Why This Holy Land?,” *Ensign*, Dec 1989, 13).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught us: “The same God that placed that star in a precise orbit millennia before it appeared over Bethlehem in celebration of the birth of the Babe, has given at least equal attention to placement of each of us in precise orbits so that we may, if we will, illuminate the landscape of our individual lives, so that our light may not only lead others but warm them as well.” Heavenly Father knows each one of us and loves us. He wants us to share the light we have with others.

The wise men followed a new star in the sky because they knew it would lead them to the Christ child. Did you know that *you* can be like that star and lead others to Jesus Christ? *Sing or read:*

I am like a star shining brightly, Smiling for the whole world to see. I can do and say Happy things each day, For I know Heav'nly Father loves me (Children's Songbook, page 163).

If you do what Jesus Christ wants you to do: love and help others, you will have a warm glow inside and out. “Other people will see this glow on your face and want to follow your example. By following you, they will be led to Jesus Christ, just as the shepherds and later the Wise Men were led to Him by the Christmas star” (Robin B. Lambert, “Like a Star Shining Brightly,” *Friend*, Dec 1997, 24).

Alma taught that when we are spiritually born of God, we receive His image in our countenances (our faces) and we experience a mighty change of heart (Alma 5:14). When we repent and try to be like Jesus every day, His spirit shines in our faces and people can feel and see a difference in us. People like to be around us when we are like Christ. Let's find ways to let the light of Christ shine through us in helping others.

Watch “Good Tidings of Great Joy: The Birth of Jesus Christ” (4:59).

Closing Song: “Stars Were Gleaming” Children's Songbook, p. 37

Activity Ideas: Perform an act of service as a family as a way to “let your light shine.” Make star-shaped sugar cookies and let the children frost them. Give some away.

December 22
Samuel and the Signs of Christ's Birth in the New World
Faith in Christ amid persecution



Visual Aids: GAK 314 Samuel the Lamanite; *Book of Mormon Stories*, 114-116.

Ornament: Sword, Bow and Arrow

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*

Countdown to Christ's birth: 6 B.C. – 1 B.C.

Watch “Samuel the Lamanite Tells about Jesus Christ” (2:28) and “The Signs of Christ’s Birth” (2:29). On the other side of the world, in the Americas, the Savior’s birth had been prophesied since the time of Lehi. 6 years before Christ’s birth, a Lamanite prophet named Samuel came to the land of Zarahemla to preach repentance to the Nephites. The wicked Nephites cast him out of the city, but the Lord told Samuel to go back and tell them about Jesus Christ. The people would not let him inside the city, so... **Show GAK 314**... Samuel climbed on the city wall and taught them in a loud voice.



Idea: Act out this scene (use the Friend story line from the Friend, Dec. 2004). Throw paper balls at Samuel.

Show Book of Mormon Stories 114-116. “And behold, he said unto them: Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name. And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day. Therefore, there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the sun and also of its setting; therefore they shall know of a surety that there shall be two days and a night; nevertheless the night shall not be darkened; and it shall be the night before he is born. And behold, there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you” Helaman 14:2-5.

Those who didn’t believe Samuel threw stones and shot arrows at him as he stood on the wall, but they could not hit him because the Lord was protecting him. Some of the people believed him, but most did not. They tried to capture him, but he jumped down from the wall and was never heard from again. Samuel bore a strong testimony of Jesus Christ even though many people were trying to hurt him.

Five years passed, and the wicked Nephites said that the time for Jesus’ birth had already passed.

Read 1 Nephi 1:6-21: “And they began to rejoice over their brethren, saying: Behold the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain. And it came to pass that they did make a great uproar throughout the land; and the people who believed began to be very sorrowful, lest by any means those things which had been spoken might not come to pass. But behold, they did watch steadfastly for that day and that night and that day which should be as one day as if there were no night, that they might know that their faith had not been vain. Now it came to pass that there was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass, which had been given by Samuel the prophet.

Now it came to pass that when Nephi, the son of Nephi, saw this wickedness of his people, his heart

was exceedingly sorrowful. And it came to pass that he went out and bowed himself down upon the earth, and cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people, yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in the tradition of their fathers. And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord all that day; and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying: Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given.

And it came to pass that the words which came unto Nephi were fulfilled, according as they had been spoken; for behold, at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because there was no darkness when the night came. And there were many, who had not believed the words of the prophets, who fell to the earth and became as if they were dead, for they knew that the great plan of destruction which they had laid for those who believed in the words of the prophets had been frustrated; for the sign which had been given was already at hand. And they began to know that the Son of God must shortly appear; yea, in fine, all the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished that they fell to the earth. For they knew that the prophets had testified of these things for many years, and that the sign which had been given was already at hand; and they began to fear because of their iniquity and their unbelief. And it came to pass that there was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day. And it came to pass that the sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order; and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given. And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets. And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word.”

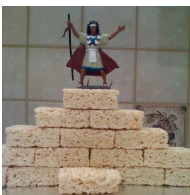
The faithful saints in the New World were protected and blessed for their belief in Christ’s coming and in the words of the prophet Samuel. We can stay strong in our belief in Christ, even when other people make fun of us or hurt us. We can have faith that all of the promises of the Lord will happen.

Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “The Sign” or “Samuel Tells of the Baby Jesus,” CS 36

Extras (from Sugardoodle): Make rice krispy treats, cut into squares, and stack into a tall wall. Put a Samuel the Lamanite figurine on the top. If you have smaller toy figures, you can put them at the bottom to represent those listening to him.

Source: http://www.sugardoodle.net/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3082&Itemid=5



The Sign

The New Era - August 1980

Moderately

The proph-et spoke, the peo-ple heard, but few be-lieved his
- threat was made that saints would die, un-less the sign shone

5

gra-cious word. The wick-ed scoffed, the right-eous mourned, be-cause the words of
in the sky. The time was set, the law was made. The wick-ed laughed; the

9 *a little faster*

life were scorned. right-eous prayed. *f* A sign was giv-en to show the day our Sav-ior
And then from heav-en His voice was heard: "To-mor-row

Music: Brent Neal Jorgensen
Words: Thomas Irving Wright

15

1. 2.

Je - sus would come their way. The to the world." The day had come,
 come I un-

22

the swords were drawn, then passed the night - with - out a dawn. The

28 *Slowly, with expression*

gift of God was not de-nied, the faith of saints was just - ti - fied.

mf

December 23

The Restoration through Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith's Birthday



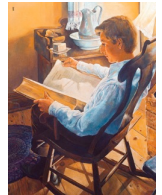
Visual Aids: GAK 402 Joseph reads Bible; GAK 403 The First Vision; First Vision flannel board story; Joseph of Egypt & “By the Gift and Power of God” by Simon Dewey; Moses, GAK 401 Joseph Smith; The Lord Appears in the Kirtland Temple by Del Parson—Jan 2010 *Ensign*

Ornament: First Vision

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*

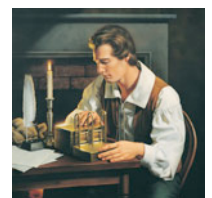
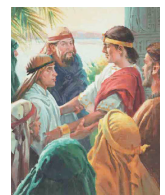
Countdown to Christ's Birth: 1820 A.D.

Show GAK 402, 403 or use flannel boards to tell the story. All true prophets who have ever lived on the earth have testified of Jesus Christ. After Jesus died, many of His apostles continued teaching the fullness of the truth. But after many years, the apostles were killed, people fell into apostasy, and the priesthood was lost from the earth for a long time. Then, in the spring of 1820, a young boy named Joseph Smith was searching for one church that had all of God's truth. He went into the woods near his home and prayed to ask Heavenly Father which church to join. He saw a light come down from heaven and rest on him. Joseph saw two people whose brightness and glory were so great that he couldn't even describe it. They were standing in the air above Joseph. One called Joseph by name, pointed to the other, and said, *"This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"* (Joseph Smith—History 1:14-17). Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.



Some people don't believe that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ would appear to anyone today. They think that only happened in the Bible. But God has said, “For behold, I am God; and I am a God of miracles; and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith” (2 Nephi 27:23). God still speaks to us through prophets, just like He did in the Bible. **Watch “How We Got the Book of Mormon” (2:56)**

Show Joseph of Egypt & Joseph Smith Translating. The ancient prophet, Joseph of Egypt prophesied about Joseph Smith. He said, “Thus saith the Lord God of my fathers unto me, A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins. . . . And unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins . . . to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them in the last days; Wherefore the fruit of thy loins shall write [Book of Mormon], and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write [Bible]; and that which shall be written . . . shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. And out of weakness shall he be made strong, in that day when my work shall go forth among all my people, which shall restore them, who are of the house of Israel, in the last days. And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father; and he shall be like unto you; **for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation**” (JST, Gen. 50:27, 30–31, 33). The food that Joseph of Egypt stored saved his family from starvation. Through Joseph Smith, the Lord brought forth the Book of Mormon, which brings spiritual salvation to all people who will accept it.



Show Moses and GAK 401. The Lord also revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai 3,000 years before Joseph Smith lived, “And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take [away] many of them from the book which thou [Moses] shalt write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again among the children of men – among as many as shall believe” (Moses 1:41). Joseph Smith was called by the Lord to be a prophet “like unto” Moses who would restore the text of Moses’ writing so his words could be “had again” among the children of men. Part of this prophecy’s fulfillment was accomplished through the Prophet Joseph Smith’s translation of the first six chapters of Genesis, now known as the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price.



Show The Lord Appears in the Kirtland Temple. Joseph Smith saw Jesus many times. After he and Sidney Rigdon saw Jesus in Hiram, Ohio, Joseph testified, “For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father – That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God... And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us – That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him;” (D&C 76:23-24, 40-42).



The world has been blessed by the faith of Joseph Smith. Today is his birthday! Through Joseph Smith, a latter-day prophet, Jesus Christ restored His true church to the earth, complete with the priesthood and all of the ordinances we need to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. We are most blessed by the life of Joseph Smith, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ that was restored through him to the earth.

Watch Elder Christofferson’s special witness of the First Vision (5:46).

Hang the ornament on the tree.

Closing Song: “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer” Hymns p. 26

Activity Idea: Play the “stick pull” game (Joseph Smith was the best at this game). Sit across from your opponent with feet touching, and both people holding onto a long stick in between you. Try to pull the other person over.



December 24 Jesus' Birth



Visual Aids: the word “Christmas,” baby doll, blanket, *Madonna and Child by Ambrogio Lorenzetti*
Ornament: manger

Opening Song: In A Little Stable – *let children ring bells while singing*

Countdown to Christ's Birth: 1 B.C.

Tell the children that you are going to show them a magic trick. Find a book with the word “Christmas” on it or print out the word. Showing the word, say, “This is Christmas.” Now cover up “mas” and say, “This is Christ.” Say “This is *Christ*,” uncover “mas” and say “This is *Christmas*.” Repeat this until the children understand: This is *Christ*, and this is *Christmas*. Christmas is a holiday to celebrate the coming of Christ into the world.

After thousands of years of waiting, the time finally came for the Son of God to be born into the world! Luke recorded, “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7).

Watch “Jesus Christ is Born” (1:27) and/or “The Nativity” (5:52) or “The Nativity” (7:53) – new.

Show painting of *Madonna and Child*: Swaddling is an age-old practice. After an infant was born, the umbilical cord was cut and tied, and then the baby was washed, rubbed with salt and oil, and wrapped with strips of cloth. These strips kept the newborn child warm and also ensured that the child's limbs would grow straight (Wikipedia). It was commonly believed that this was essential for the infants to develop proper posture (to grow strong and straight).



We can think of these swaddling bands as symbols of Christ growing up in the right way and doing what is right. ***Show the children how to swaddle a baby in a blanket and have them try. You could also get inexpensive dolls for each child with their own strips of swaddling bands to wrap their baby in.***

Every baby during that time was wrapped in swaddling clothes, but only Christ was laid in a manger. Mary and Joseph were far away from their home in Nazareth, and could only find refuge and privacy in a stable. Having no bed for Jesus, they made use of a manger, a feeding trough for animals. Although Jesus was a king, the creator of the earth, and the greatest of us all, he was born into very humble circumstances.

Jesus called himself “the bread of life.” “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world” (John 6:33). Food and water sustain our physical lives. This manger carried the food of eternal life for all.

Our heavenly family waited thousands of years for Christ to be born on earth. That day did come 20__ years ago. The angels rejoiced at His birth, and miraculous signs appeared all over the earth. We celebrate tonight His choice to descend below all things and be born as a mortal baby here on earth. We celebrate His life of example and teachings that we can follow. We celebrate His redemption of all mankind from sin and death. Joy to the World, the Lord did come!

Hang the ornament on the tree. Close with a Nativity Program (Luke 2, carols) and family prayer.

December 25

The Gifts of Christmas*

Special Activity

Wrap five special boxes and put them under the tree to be opened last. Label and fill them with the objects explained below. Print the explanations and include in the boxes.

Giving gifts is one way we show our love for each other. (Express your love and your hope that your family feels your love today.) *These* gifts from our Heavenly Father and from the Savior are the greatest gifts they could give, and demonstrate their love for us. *Have the children take turns opening each gift. Read the text and discuss. If the children are old enough, have them teach about what is in their box and share their belief in or testimony of that concept.*

Gift #1 – The Savior’s Birth – *“Heavenly Father gave us His Son, a Savior for the World.”*

- Object – Baby Jesus from a Nativity set
- “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3:16.
- “Heavenly Father gave us the gift of a Savior, His perfect son, the Lamb without blemish” President Henry B. Eyring, December 2011.



Gift #2 – The Gift of the Restored Gospel – *“Jesus restored the fullness of the gospel.”*

- Object – Temple/framed picture of your temple wedding
- “For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language...” D&C 90:11.
- “By personal appearance of the Father and the Son and through angels He has restored the Church of Jesus Christ in the latter days. He has called prophets and apostles to guide us to safety in this life and eternal life in the life in the world to come” President Henry B. Eyring, December 2011.
- Because the gospel was restored to the earth, we have another witness of Christ in the Book of Mormon, we have modern prophets and apostles to lead and guide us, we have the priesthood and saving ordinances, we have the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and we have temples which enable us to live forever as families.

Gift #3 – Jesus’ Teachings – *“Jesus taught us how to live righteously.”*

- Object – Scriptures, heart, 10 commandments
- Scripture: “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” John 13:15.
- “Because He came to earth, we have the perfect example to follow. As we strive to become more like Him, we will have joy and happiness in our lives and peace each day of the year. It is His example, which if followed serves within us more kindness and love, more respect and concern for others” President Thomas S. Monson, December 2011.



Gift #4 – Forgiveness and Repentance – “Jesus made it possible for us to be saved from sin.”

- Object - Olive branch, cross, snowflake
- Scripture: “For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent” D&C 19:16.
- “[The Savior gave us the gift of] forgiveness. Even though our sins and imperfections be as scarlet, they can become white as snow because of Him – He is our Savior” President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, December 2011.
- “Without repentance, there is no real progress or improvement in life. Pretending there is no sin does not lessen its burden and pain. Suffering for sin does not by itself change anything for the better. Only repentance leads to the sunlit uplands of a better life. And, of course, only through repentance do we gain access to the atoning grace of Jesus Christ and salvation. Repentance is a divine gift, and there should be a smile on our faces when we speak of it. It points us to freedom, confidence, and peace. Rather than interrupting the celebration, the gift of repentance is the cause for true celebration” Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011.



Gift #5 - Immortality and Eternal Life – “Jesus made it possible for us to be resurrected.”

- Object – Round stone, glove (represents body and spirit)
- Scripture: “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time” Alma 11:43
- “Jesus Christ was crucified and resurrected that we may live again, that we may be purified and cleansed from sin, prepared for the glorious light of eternal life” President Henry B. Eyring, December 2011.
- “[The Savior gave us the gift of] Immortality. Because the Savior overcame death, *all* men and women, both the just and the unjust, will live forever. [He gave us] Eternal Life – the greatest gift of all. Because of the atonement of Christ, not only are we guaranteed an infinite quantity of life, but he offers the possibility of an unimaginable quality of life as well” President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, December 2011.
- The gift of immortality gives us hope in knowing we will be with our loved ones again after this life, and that our resurrected bodies will be perfect. The gift of eternal life gives us cause to rejoice, knowing that we can become like our Heavenly Father and live with Him forever.



Conclusion:

“May we always remember to bring gifts to Him who has given His all for us. May we always remember and be grateful that in the birth of that child, the universe rejoiced. And may each Christmas season remind us to lift up our voices and fill our hearts with joy and gratitude that Christ the King has come. Christ lives. He is real. He is our redeemer at Christmas and always” President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, December 2011.

“May His precious spirit be with us and may He ever be the center of our celebrations and indeed of our very lives” President Thomas S. Monson, December 2011.

**Influences on this lesson: December 2011 First Presidency Christmas Devotional
<http://www.oneshetwoshe.com/2010/12/family-night-christs-gifts-to-us-our.html>*

December 25 Christmas Day

Additional Ideas for including Christ in Christmas Day celebrations

- Children wake up parents on Christmas morning by singing Christmas carols.
- Children hunt for the baby Jesus (a baby doll or a figurine from your crèche), which is hidden somewhere in the house. The first to find the baby wins a prize (or gets to open the first present, or share a prize with everyone – to avoid tears or anyone feeling bad). Put the baby Jesus in a manger or (gather around the spot he was found) and share scriptures and a carol or two in His honor. Have a family prayer.
- Before (or after) opening presents on Christmas morning, kneel as a family to thank Heavenly Father for the greatest gift of all – our Savior and His atonement.
- Children get to go through Christmas stockings while breakfast preparations are finished. If you have done a service activity with stockings (written down service acts put in stockings), family members get to read these notes of love and accounts of service along with the goodies in their stockings.
- Decorate a streusel cake with candles to remember Christ’s birthday. Blow out the candles. After breakfast, clean up together quickly so you can get on to present opening.
- Wrap up a box and lid with fancy paper (so you can open the lid and it’s still decorated). The first FHE of December have a lesson on the true meaning of Christmas, how Jesus gave us the best gift of all: eternal life, and what we can give to Him in return. Write down on pieces of paper those things that **we** want to give **Him** for Christmas. Suggestions: *obeying parents, sharing, being honest or patient, laughing, spending quality time with kids, giving hugs to family members, forgiving a grudge, etc...* Put paper slips paper in the box put under the Christmas tree with Jesus’ name on it. On Christmas day, open the gift and read what you’ve written to see if you did the things that you said you would do for Jesus. What gifts will you be giving to Jesus this year?
- Include a nice set of thank-you cards in each child’s stocking. Then, on the last day in December, the family writes the notes to extended family members and relatives.
- If grandparents or other family members are deceased, visit and decorate their graves (with holly and other kinds of greens) on Christmas Eve day... as a way to visit them.

Extras

Tip: After Christmas, use wrapping paper scraps to re-wrap the ornaments. Cut file folder label stickers in three parts and label with numbers 1-24. Wrap and label each ornament and place it in a box so it will be all ready for next year.



Read Isaiah 1:1-2 “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” Jesse had seven sons, the youngest of which would someday become King David. Jesus was a descendant of King David. People waited for many years for the birth of the Savior, Jesus

Christ. Talk about waiting and how difficult it is sometimes. And now we wait for Christmas so we can celebrate His birthday! Unwrap the first ornament: the Stump of Jesse.

Abel

“Abel’s death was a similitude of the death of Jesus Christ. Satan and Cain conspired in Abel’s premeditated murder, and Abel was delivered by Satan into the hands of a wicked man (see Moses 5:29). In parallel fashion, Jesus was delivered by Satan into the hands of wicked men (see Luke 9:44) and was crucified as a result of a conspiracy. Furthermore, Satan “entered into” Judas Iscariot, the instrument of Jesus’ betrayal (see John 13:27; Luke 22:3). Just as Abel’s death resulted in the shedding of his innocent blood, so too Christ’s sacrifice and death were accomplished by the shedding of His innocent blood” *Finding Christ in the Old Testament, by Andrew C. Skinner, Ensign June 2002, p. 24-29.*

Melchizedek

“The Apostle Paul taught that Christ was “after the similitude of Melchisedec” (Heb. 7:15). There is much we do not know about this great patriarch, but his name, *Melchizedek*, means “King of Righteousness.” He was also known as the Prince of Peace, the King of Peace, and the King of Heaven (see Alma 13:14-19; JST, Gen. 14:26-36, Bible appendix; JST, Heb. 7:1-3, Bible appendix). These name-titles not only refer to Melchizedek as the king-priest of Salem, but also denote names for the Lord Jesus Christ. The high priesthood, originally called the “Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God,” was renamed the Melchizedek Priesthood (see D&C 107:2-4). Thus, “the priesthood held by Melchizedek is the very priesthood promised [to] the Son of God during his mortal sojourn, which is to say that Christ was to be like unto Melchizedek” *Finding Christ in the Old Testament, by Andrew C. Skinner, Ensign June 2002, p. 24-29.*

Elijah and Elisha

“The lives and ministries of these two mighty prophets foreshadowed the life of Christ in many impressive ways. Both Elijah and Elisha multiplied a widow’s food supply to sustain her family (see 1 Kgs. 17:10-16; 2 Kgs. 4:1-7), episodes that foreshadowed two of Christ’s great miracles, the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000. Elisha fed 100 men with only 20 loaves and some grain, with food left over, much like Christ (see 2 Kgs. 4:42-44; Mark 6:33-44; 8:1-9). Like Christ, Elisha healed the sick (see 2 Kgs. 5). Elijah and Elisha raised young boys from the dead (see 1 Kgs. 17:21-22; 2 Kgs. 4:32-35) as Jesus raised a widow’s son (see Luke 7:11-17) *Finding Christ in the Old Testament, by Andrew C. Skinner, Ensign June 2002, p. 24-29.*

Other Types

There are many other prophets and priests in the Old Testament who are types of the Messiah, such as Noah, Joshua, Samuel, and Jeremiah. . . . The prophets and priests of the Old Testament represent a small fraction of the similitudes of Christ waiting to be discovered and pondered. To search for and find them is to open a wellspring of new thoughts and feelings relative to the Atonement. The Lord has told us the celestial kingdom will be populated with righteous individuals, who are similitudes of the Savior (see D&C 76:56-59; 138:38-49). May all of us so live that we may be among them” *Finding Christ in the Old Testament*, by Andrew C. Skinner, *Ensign* June 2002, p. 24-29.

Jonah

The three days Jonah spent in the belly of “a great fish” are meant to remind us of the three days between Christ’s death and resurrection (see Matt. 12:39–40). When we think of Jonah, we can remember that because of Christ’s death, and resurrection 3 days later, we can repent of our sins, too.

Ideas:

Have children read the scriptures in the lessons.

Print nice strips of paper (backed with cardstock) with all the names of Jesus. Display them on a wall along with pictures. OR Print the names of Christ on paper, cut them out in circles, back with pretty paper and hang on a ribbon garland.

Moses 6:63 “All things bear record of Christ.”

“The Wondrous and True Story of Christmas,” President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, December 2000, p. 2-5. (“He Took My Lickin’ For Me”) – great testimony from President Hinckley on p. 5.

*Notes on Timeline:

OT Student Manual-Gospel Dispensations: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Israel’s Deliverance; Ruth (timeline)

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph: “Notes and Commentary on Genesis 24-36”

<http://churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-genesis-2-samuel/genesis-24-36?lang=eng&query=did+isaac+live%3f>

Daniel

Jeremiah

Joshua

Joshua 1:1-3, 9-11

The name Joshua means “God is help.”

After Moses died, Joshua became the prophet to lead the Israelites. With the Lord’s help, he prepared the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land. “Just as Moses, in his role as prophet, lawgiver, mediator, and deliverer, was a type of Jesus Christ, so Joshua, who led Israel into the promised land, was also a type of Jesus who leads all the faithful into the ultimate land of promise, the celestial kingdom. Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, was first called *Oshea* or *Hoseah*, which signifies *saved*, a *saviour*, or *salvation*; but afterwards Moses, guided no doubt by a prophetic spirit, changed his name into *Yehoshua* or *Joshua*, which signifies *he shall save*, or *the salvation of Jehovah*; referring, no doubt, to his being God’s instrument in *saving the people* from the hands of their enemies, and leading them from victory to victory over the different Canaanitish nations, till he put them in possession of the promised land.”¹

The Lord promised Joshua that the original extent of the land promised to Abraham was to be given to Israel, but other people inhabited these lands at the time. The Lord commanded Joshua to lead the Hebrews in battles for the Promised Land.

The Lord told Joshua to “be strong and of a good courage” and to obey His law “...turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:6-7). “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” Joshua 1:9. When we keep the commandments of God with exactness, driven by our love for God, we are deeply blessed.

When Joshua told his people the Lord’s command to go to battle for the Promised Land, they responded, “All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go” (Joshua 1:16”

Tell the story of the waters of the River Jordan parting for the children of Israel from the moment the carriers of the ark of the covenant set foot into the river (Joshua 3-4).

Read Joshua 5:13-15 about Joshua meeting the captain of the Lord’s host – Jesus Christ².

Read Joshua 6 about conquering Jericho or Old Testament Stories p.91-94.

“The inhabitants of Jericho knew full well of the powerful destruction that Israel had directed against the kingdom of the Amorites east of Jordan. Therefore, it is no surprise that they shut up their walled city against Israel. The prevalence of the number seven in the Lord’s dealing with Jericho’s defense is significant. Throughout the law of Moses, seven was used numerous times to signify the covenant. Its association with the covenant probably stems from the idea that ‘seven... is associated with completion, fulfillment, and perfection.’ By patterning the conquest of Jericho in sevens, the Lord taught Israel that their success lay in the covenant with Jehovah; his perfect power brought conquest, not their own.”³



“The horn blown was the Hebrew *shofar*, or ram’s horn. Scholars are generally agreed that the *shofar* was the oldest musical instrument in Israel. After being flattened by heat, the horn of a ram was forced

to turn up at the ends. This shape thus created a most unusual and easily recognizable sound. In early times the horn was used to warn of approaching armies, to give the signal for attack, or to dismiss troops from the field.”³

“As the ark of the covenant symbolized the presence of God in the tabernacle’s Holy of Holies, so it symbolized his leadership of the armies of Israel as they carried it before them while they marched around the city. This was not a mere mortal conflict: Canaan was to be destroyed by the very God of Israel. This truth was impressively taught to Israel by the presence of the ark.”³

Joshua died at the age of 110 and was buried in his own city, Timnath-Serah. He is the highest type of the devout warrior.

As we keep God’s laws today amidst the wickedness surrounding us we must be strong and have great courage trusting that God is with us withersoever we go! Let’s follow Joshua’s example from Joshua 24:15 “...Choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

¹Old Testament Study Manual 21-2, p. 235-236

²Old Testament Study Manual 21-12, p. 238

³Old Testament Study Manual 21-13, p. 238-239

Fun ideas:

Make miniature shofars out of polymer clay:

Eat “Bugles” chips

Make sugar cookie shofars

