

UNIT 2: JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

THE PROMISED ONE COMES

Lesson 8: God Becomes Man

CONTENT:

1. Man cannot save himself. God became a human being in order to become one with us and redeem us. This is known as the 'Incarnation'.
2. The names given to Jesus in the birth narrative tell us who he is and what he came to do: 1. **Jesus**: 'God saves' 2. **Immanuel**: 'God with us.' 3. **Saviour**: One who saves. 4. **Christ**: (Christos, Messiah) 'Anointed One.' 5. **Lord**: 'Sovereign one- power and authority.
3. The Son of God was born in a stable and placed in a manger. His first visitors were shepherds. Thus he identified himself with the poor, rejected, insecure.
- 😊 4. As Christians, we are called to be like Christ and to be one with the weak and poor.

ASSIGNMENT: Memorize: Philippians 2:4-7. Prepare for poster-making : St. Francis of Assisi.

REFERENCES: Luke 2:1-16, 20. Matthew 1:20-23. Philippians 2:4-7.

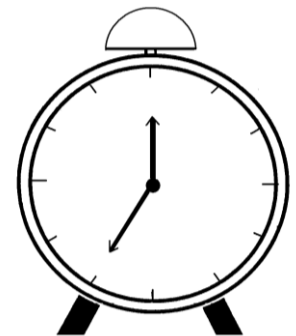
Compendium: 81,82,84, 86. 'You', Bishop Fulton Sheen. St. Paul's Publications.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts, mechanical clock, blackboard.

NB. As a meaningful follow-up to this lesson, let the students plan an 'outreach': Visit some under-privileged people, preferably children. This could be done as a class or in smaller groups. Stress the point that like Jesus, we will try to relate to the people as one of them, and not as those who are higher or better. We dress simply, show real friendship... have fun together.

I. STARTER:

[Show the students a simple clock [preferably a mechanical and not an electronic one. Or else, draw a rough sketch of a clock on the blackboard.]



- During the Second World War, Bishop Fulton Sheen, a very popular speaker, said in a radio broadcast:
“We (human beings) are like a clock whose mainspring is broken... We have the works, but we do not ‘go’.”
Repeat the quote What do you think he meant by this statement?
[Let students discuss this with their partners for a while and then give their ideas. Bring out:]

Bishop Sheen meant that sin broke something in us. Though we are made to love God and others, we cannot do this properly, because something has gone wrong inside of us due to sin.

- He went on to say, **“In order to put the clock in order 2 conditions must be fulfilled..”**
- What do you think these conditions are? [Students discuss again and suggest]
- Bishop Sheen said that the two conditions are:
 1. The mainspring must be supplied from the outside. 2. It must be placed inside the clock.
 Then he went on to explain that, just as a clock cannot mend itself, we human beings could not (and cannot!) set ourselves right. It needed someone who was not broken, someone from the outside of human nature to come to the rescue. And to do this he had to enter the world and become a human. He had to become one of us. This is what Jesus did. God became man 2000 years ago. It is known as the Incarnation. (CARNE means flesh, as in carnivorous= flesh-eating)

[Give out handouts. Write the word ‘INCARNATION’ on the blackboard and ask the students to write it under the heading ‘God becomes Man.]

II. DEVELOPMENT:

Let's read the story of how God's Son was born. We have passages from Matthew and Luke. As you read, look out for 2 things:

1. The different names used for Jesus, and what they mean.
2. The way in which the birth took place. How was it different from the way you would have planned it if you were part of the planning team of this big event.

[Students work in pairs. They read the passage and try and find the answers to the questions in the handout. [1] and [2]. They do not fill in the answers yet, but could write them at the back of the page. After about 10 minutes, they share their findings. As the following points are brought out, they enter the answers in their handouts.]

1. All the names given to God's Son tell us something about who he is and what he came to do:
 - **Jesus:** 'God saves'. The very name Jesus tells us that God has come to save us.
 - **Immanuel:** 'God with us.'
 - **Saviour:** One who saves. (This name is very close to the name Jesus.)
 - **Christ:** In Greek Christ is 'Christos' and in the Hebrew language it is 'Messiah'. It means 'Anointed One.' The Jews were waiting for many years for the Messiah, who would be anointed by the Holy Spirit for his mission. We got our name 'Christian' from this word.
 - **Lord:** 'Sovereign one' A Lord was a person who had power and authority over all those in his territory. Jesus had power over nature, demons, over sin and death, as we saw by his resurrection. He is Lord over the universe.

2. How would you have planned the event? If we had a place on the 'Planning Committee' of the birth of God's Son, we would no doubt have planned quite a different event. A reception committee with all the important people present, TV crews ready to cover the event and pass it on to the whole world; the best of doctors, nurses and hospital facilities...

What was the actual scenario? God seemed to have had quite a different idea. Mary did not have the security and comfort of being in her own home, let alone getting medical care. She had to leave her home, heavily pregnant, and journey to a far off town. There too, there was no place in the local hotels. They finally found place in a stable, where animals are kept. Instead of a cradle, the newborn baby was placed in a feeding box (manger). The first visitors were poor shepherds.

Why did God plan it this way? Perhaps he wanted to show that he was one with the poor, the rejected and insecure people. He began as he was going to live the rest of his life. Jesus once said, "I came not to be served, but to serve." *[Students write these points in the handouts]*

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

Though Jesus is great and powerful Lord, and the Christ, he came as a Saviour, to be Immanuel, one of us.. especially in our pain and suffering. Let us reflect on this famous hymn about Jesus which Saint Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians. He asks the followers of Jesus to have the same attitude as Jesus. *[Students read the passage [3] and write a prayer to God in response]*

Home assignment:

1. Memorize Philippians 2:4-7.
2. At the next class we are going reflect on the life of St. Francis of Assisi and then make posters. He is the one who planned the first Christmas 'crib' to remind people about the simple way Jesus came. He himself lived a simple life among the poor. Bring one chart paper per group and any other materials you will need: felt pens, markers, crayons, magazines, a card with a Christmas crib etc. Try and get whatever information you can about St. Francis, especially about the first crib and his simple lifestyle. (Note, we are NOT talking about St. Francis Xavier!) Your posters will be displayed around the school.
[Form groups of 2 or 3 students each]