

Sample: Ancient Rome

Unlike other curricula which depend on certain books, *TruthQuest History's* commentary brings depth to any reading. Our topic-specific booklists simply show the rich possibilities! Relax; choose from whatever is available. (*Starred books were in-print at the time of this writing.)

15É The Great Lord!

Here's the shocker: the Roman people began to acclaim Caesar Augustus as a god! They worshiped an image of him! This seems hard to believe, but if you stop and think about it, you'll realize the Romans *already* looked to the government—the state—as a god. We've been talking about this right along, remember? Their *Big Belief #1* was that the state was supreme authority, care-giver, and the source of all law, thus obedience to the state was sacred duty. Making an idol, a lord, out of Augustus Caesar was an outward sign of what *already* existed in Roman hearts.

You'll be stunned, I guarantee, by this greeting composed for Augustus' birthday:

This day has changed the earth. The providence which rules over all has filled this man with such gifts for the salvation of the world as to make him the savior for us and for coming generations. Of wars he will make an end...It is impossible that one greater than he can ever appear. The birthday of God has brought to the world glad tidings."²⁰

It makes my skin crawl to hear such words, for the antichrist spirit which spawned them longs for the glory due the *real* God, and thus used wording incredibly similar to the 'glad tidings' used to describe the birth and life of the One who really *was* the 'salvation of the world' and about whom Scripture had prophesied that 'of wars he will make an end.' 'One greater than he' (greater than Augustus) *did* appear—during Augustus's own lifetime! The true 'birthday of God' was actually bringing to earth the real Lord of Lords, King of Kings, and Prince of Peace—the Lord Jesus Christ!

Let's bask in the true 'glad tidings' of the greatest event in history!

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world...

So Joseph also went up...to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

²⁰ Norman Langford, *Fire Upon the Earth* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950) 10.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2:1-19).

Of all the times He could have selected, God sent Jesus to be born during the *Pax Romana*, when people weren't preoccupied with civil war, and when important news could spread rapidly because Rome had tied together most of the known world, had much of that world speaking Latin and Greek, and had built wonderful roads for quick travel! Jesus surely *didn't* come at a time when the government used easy methods of killing the condemned, but we'll get to that later! God's rich love was being poured out, the plan He'd made before time began: the mystery of redemption.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth....No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known (John 1:14 & 18).

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Let's now explore the very *centerpiece of civilization*.²¹ the greatest Person and Event of history!

15aÉ Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ

I've mentioned only a few here. You probably already have your favorites!

**Story of the World, by Susan Wise Bauer, Ch. 37a*

Gr. 3-6

**Holy Bible*

All ages

Let's show our children that the Bible is the greatest history resource!

Now You Can Read: Birth of Christ, by Elaine Ife

Gr. K-2

²¹ This phrase is from a taped presentation I heard at church some years ago. I don't know whom to credit.

- **A Christmas Story*, by Brian Wildsmith Gr. 1-3
- **The Little Drummer Boy*, by Ezra Jack Keats Gr. 1-3
- **Mary*, by Brian Wildsmith Gr. 1-3
- Mary's Treasure Box*, by Carolyn Kramlich Gr. 1-3
- **Tale of Three Trees*, by Angela Hunt Gr. 1-4
Don't miss this one!
- The Christ Child*, by Maud & Miska Petersham Gr. 1-4
Nice illustrations. This was re-issued a while back, so may be easy to find.
- Mary, Mother of Jesus*, by Barbara Hintze (BibLearn) Gr. 2-4
- **Birthdays of Freedom: Vol. 1*, by Genevieve Foster, pp. 47-48 Gr. 2-6
- **Mary's First Christmas*, by Walter Wangerin, Jr. Gr. 2-6
- **Very First Christmas*, by Paul L. Maier Gr. 7-12
Modern young person asks significant questions about Christ's birth, unveiling the story.

L. Hillyer's discussion of Christ in *Child's History of the World* is not cited here because it does not appropriately recognize His divinity or the true basis for salvation.

Fiction/Historical Fiction

- **Last Straw*, by Frederick Thury Gr. K-3
I've not seen this story of the camel who carries the gifts of the wise men; sounds good!
- **Crippled Lamb*, by Max Lucado Gr. 1-3
A crippled lamb is honored to help keep Baby Jesus warm.
- While Shepherds Watched*, by Jenni Fleetwood Gr. 1-3
A shepherd boy is touched by seeing Baby Jesus. Recently in-print.
- **The Beasts of Bethlehem*, by X.J. Kennedy Gr. 1-8
The animals around the manger share poems.
- The Boy on the Road*, by Marguerite Vance Gr. 3-7
A poor boy has seen Baby Jesus!
- The Day Christ was Born*, by Jim Bishop Gr. 6-12
This novelized telling of Christ's birth has long been admired. Just went out-of-print, but is probably still in most public and church libraries.

- **Two from Galilee*, by Marjorie Holmes Gr. 7-12
 This is a novel about Mary & Joseph, leading up to Christ's birth and making their lives and world so real! The sequel, *Three from Galilee*, is not recommended for youth.

Films

- **StoryKeepers: Starlight Escape!* Gr. K-3
- **Crippled Lamb*, based on the story by Max Lucado Gr. K-6
- **The True Christmas Story*, featuring Ray VanderLaan Gr. 7-12
 This esteemed teacher takes viewers to Herod's palace and a cave to find the reality of Christ's birth.

15bÉ Life of the Lord Jesus Christ

Again, you probably have family favorites which reflect your unique theology. I won't mention many here, therefore, but please don't take that to mean this topic isn't the most important of all!

- **Holy Bible* All ages
 Let's show our children that the Bible is the greatest history resource!
- He Was One of Us*, illustrated by Rien Poortvliet All ages
 This book contains Poortvliet's powerful, moving drawings about Christ's life.
- Life of Christ*, illustrated by Rembrandt All ages
 Collection of paintings by Rembrandt on the life of Christ, with relevant Scripture. (I noticed one painting containing female exposure when Mary is about to nurse.)
- **Who is Jesus?* by Kathleen Bostrom Gr. K-2
- Now You Can Read Bible Stories* series, by various authors, including: Gr. 1-2
Childhood of Jesus; Stories Jesus Told; Jesus's Wonderful Miracles; Wonderful Easter; etc.
 Now out-of-print, but may still be in church libraries. It's good for early readers.
- **Jesus*, by Brian Wildsmith Gr. 1-3
- **Who is Jesus?* by Carolyn Nystrom Gr. 1-3
- Jesus' Story*, by Maud & Miska Petersham Gr. 1-6
 Beautiful illustrations accompany Scripture about Christ's life in this rare, older book.
- Jesus: God's Son, Savior, Lord*, by Eugene Chamberlain (BibLearn) Gr. 2-4
 This is part of another series that is still in many church libraries, I'm guessing.

The Life that Changed the World, by John Drane (Bible World) Gr. 2-8
This is part of another series that is still in many church libraries, I'm guessing.

**I Want to Know about Jesus*, by Rick Osborn Gr. 3-9
"Heritage Edition" version (four from this series bound together) is still in-print.

Fiction/Historical Fiction

Jesus, by Lee Roddy Gr. 7-12
Jesus' life in novel form.

**Titus: A Comrade of the Christ* and **Stephen: A Soldier of the Cross* (sequel) Gr. 7-12
both by Florence Kingsley
Two, touching, inspiring novels!

Films (Parents should decide age-appropriateness.)

**Jesus*

**Jesus of Nazareth*, starring Robert Powell

**Faith Lessons: Sets 3 & 4*, featuring Ray VanderLaan
This video series makes Christ's life vividly real. It gives such meaningful insight into His Roman surroundings, that the gospel becomes even more potent and poignant.

*There is also a children's animated series on the life of Christ available from Family Entertainment Network, and possibly from Nest.

15cÉ Stories of people who met the Lord Jesus Christ

Now You Can Read Bible Stories series, by various authors, including: Gr. 1-2
John the Baptist; Mary and Martha, Friends of Jesus; etc.

**Through the Eyes of Jesus*, by Mack Thomas Gr. 1-8
Gorgeous!

John the Baptist: Forerunner of Jesus, by Johnnie Human (BibLearn) Gr. 2-4
This is part of another series that is still in many church libraries, I'm guessing.

**Fourth Wise Man*, by Susan Summers Gr. 2-5
Abridged, picture-book version of VanDyke's *Story of the Other Wise Man*.

**Bronze Bow*, by Elizabeth George Speare Gr. 3-12
One of the most important and moving books your kids will ever read! **Please don't study Rome without immersing yourselves in this one.** It makes a fabulous read-aloud for the whole family!

- **The Story of the Other Wise Man*, by Henry Van Dyke Gr. 4-12
- Tamar*, by Gladys Malvern Gr. 4-12
 Sorry, I don't know the specific content of this book; I don't own a copy. But the author usually writes good material. This story is set during the earthly life of Jesus.
- **Joel, a Boy of Galilee*, by Annie Fellows Johnston Gr. 5-10
- Nathan: Boy of Capernaum* **and** *Stephen: Boy of the Mountain*, both by Amy Lillie Gr. 5-12
- Bold Galilean*, by LeGette Blythe Gr. 8-12
 I was told by one reader that this is a bit dry. Hopefully, others disagree!
- People in Palestine*, by Olivia Coolidge Gr. 8-12
 Stories set at the time of Jesus which emphasize the era's Roman culture.
- **Ben Hur*, by Lew Wallace All ages
 Both the full and abridged versions are available. There is even a classic film version!

Film/Audio

- **Ben Hur*, starring Charlton Heston
- **The Fourth Wise Man*, starring Martin Sheen
- **Ben Hur*, audio drama presented by Focus on the Family
 These are thrilling presentations.

15dÉ Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Romans certainly knew how to put people to death, as you can guess from all you've learned so far. Yes, indeed, a crucifixion was intensely gruesome, but God *chose* the Roman time for Jesus Christ's earthly life. My mother once told me, though, that crucifixion spilled *all* Christ's blood, and the salvation He offers is total and complete. *This* sacrifice, not the deeds of kings or painters or inventors or poets, is the crux of history. As I mentioned earlier, I heard a minister refer to Jesus Christ as the *centerpiece of civilization*. That title haunts me, for it perfectly and succinctly sums up the entire essence of history, this subject in which you're investing so much time and energy. And subsequent history is really the story of the spreading of that good news and its impact on civilization. This brings to mind some of my theme verses for *TruthQuest History*:

God raised him [Jesus Christ] from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church (Eph. 1:20-22, "Message" version chosen in this instance for ease of communication with children).

Let's keep all this in mind as you learn more!

- **Story of the World*, by Susan Wise Bauer, Ch. 37b Gr. 3-6

- **Holy Bible* All ages
Let's show our children that the Bible is the greatest history resource!
- **The Easter Story*, by Brian Wildsmith Gr. 1-4
The Holy Week beautifully illustrated.
- **He is Alive!* by Helen Haidle Gr. 1-5
- **Journey to the Cross*, by Helen Haidle Gr. 2-6
- **Peter's First Easter*, by Walter Wangerin, Jr. Gr. 2-6
Great storytelling and luminous paintings.
- **Very First Easter*, by Paul L. Maier Gr. 7-12
Modern youth asks questions about Christ's death & resurrection, unveiling the story.

Fiction/Historical Fiction

- **The Colt and the King*, by Marni McGee Gr. K-3
Colt who carried Jesus looks back on the great event. (I've not seen this.)
- **Benjamin's Box*, by Melody Carlson Gr. 1-5
Young boy follows Jesus through the last week of His earthly life.
- **Vinegar Boy*, by Alberta Hawse Gr. 5-12
Fictional story of scarred boy who delivers vinegar to Golgotha.
- The Centurion*, by Leonard Wibberley Gr. 7-12
Fictional novel of the Roman centurion who crucified Jesus.
- **The Day Christ Died*, by Jim Bishop Gr. 7-12
This powerful novel takes the reader through the final day, hour by compelling hour.
- **The Robe*, by Lloyd Douglas Gr. 8-12
This is the famed, fictional, but moving, novel of the man who wins Christ's robe after lots were cast for it at the foot of the cross. It has a profound impact on the man's life, and he must find out more about this Christ, thus leading him to the early church!

Films/Audio

**You Are There: Easter*, by Jim Grant
Christian audio tapes.

All ages

**The True Story of Easter*, by Ray VanderLaan

Gr. 7-12

**The Robe*, starring Richard Burton

Film version of the abovementioned novel. Excellent!

Parental decision