

The Story of

CHRISTMAS

Date: 12.1.24 | Title: Jesus was Promised to Mary and Joseph |
Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38, and Luke 1: 46-56

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

Middle School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

High School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God is a righteous judge.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

Jesus gave His life for us on the cross and He is the only way for salvation.



MEMORY
VERSE

"Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will be great joy to all people. The Savior- yes, the Messiah, the Lord- has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! Luke 2:10-11

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BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

About four centuries after the last OT book was written, the long-awaited Messiah was born. Prophets had foretold many details about his life and ministry, so Israel had expectations for a deliverer. No one knew exactly what kind of Messiah to expect or specifically when He would come.

The book of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ. The word “genealogy” is the Greek word “genesis” which means “beginning”, “origin”, or “birth”. The book of Genesis has this title because it is a book of beginnings, an introduction of newness. The birth of Jesus represents a new beginning with the arrival of the Messiah, the rescuer the world has been waiting for.

A new era in Israel’s history begins with the story of Jesus’ conception. God sends the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a young virgin named Mary. Mary was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph. The custom of betrothal was different from “engagement” in modern society. Customarily the parents of a young man chose a young woman to be engaged to their son. A second stage of betrothal involved official arrangements and a prenuptial agreement before witnesses, which was a legally binding contract and could be broken only by a formal process of divorce. Betrothed partners were referred to as husband and wife though they were not yet considered married. Sexual unfaithfulness during betrothal was considered adultery, and under the Mosaic law carried the death penalty by stoning.

Mary was living in a small town far removed from the center of religious life in Jerusalem and was about four months pregnant, having spent three months with Elizabeth, her “relative” (Luke 1:36, 56).

Gabriel, the angel of the Lord, greets Mary by telling her she is “highly favored” by the Lord and that the Lord is with her. This troubles Mary and she doesn’t understand. The angel tells her not to be afraid and again repeats she has found favor with God. He tells her she will have a child and that she is to name him Jesus. Mary learns that her son will be no ordinary child. She is instructed to name Him “Jesus”. His name reflects His mission to rescue people from sin. Jesus, she is told, will be “great” and will be called “the Son of the Most High God,” indicating that He is God’s chosen Messiah and His kingdom will never end”.

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BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Mary wonders how this can be because she is a virgin. Gabriel tells her that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her and will perform this great miracle of pregnancy in a virgin. This is a miraculous beginning ordained by God's power alone. Jesus' holiness derives from His being conceived by the Holy Spirit. Though Jesus was a genuine human, He did not inherit a sinful nature and disposition from Adam, as all other human beings do.

Mary tries to absorb the shock that her baby will be the Savior, Son, and King. Mary's response to this startling news was nothing short of amazing: "I am the Lord's servant," she tells the angel. "May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38).

In Luke 1:46-56, Mary sings a song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord ("the Magnificat"). Mary's entire being is caught up in praise to God. Mary's song speaks of what her son's birth means for believing Israelites.

In the first-century world of Palestine, honor and shame were extremely important community values. Honor was all about respect and peer approval. Shame, by contrast, was the removal of such respect and the disapproval of peers due to some action looked down upon in the society. People were motivated to attain honor and to avoid shame. Joseph and Mary faced a huge social dilemma since pregnancy prior to marriage was a shameful situation. Joseph must balance his love for Mary with the necessity of upholding his honor and reputation as a righteous man. God intervenes through a dream and tells him to accept Mary as his wife.

When Joseph, Mary's future husband, finds out Mary is pregnant, he plans to quietly send her away. Joseph intends to maintain his personal righteousness, yet he desires to show compassion even though Mary appears to be an adulteress. The angel of the Lord, Gabriel, speaks to Joseph in a dream and explains that the baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit. "She will give birth to a son," the angel said, "and you are to give him the name of Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that a virgin would give birth to a child, and His name would be Immanuel, or "God with us." Joseph was familiar with the Scriptures and knew of the prophecy, so when he woke up, he immediately did what the angel said and took Mary as his wife.

The name Jesus means "Yahweh saves". Salvation from sins was a repeated promise in OT prophesy (Isaiah 40:2, 53:6, Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek. 36:25-27, Dan. 9:24, Zech. 13:1).

The prophecy in Matthew 1:23 is from Isaiah 7:14. The name "Jesus" specifies what God does "God saves", while the messianic title "Immanuel" specifies who He is, "God with us".

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LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



**TELL
THE
STORY**



Locate the scripture in the Bible: Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38, and Luke 1: 46-56

Tell the story: Use the background info for leaders to help tell the story.

Re-tell the Bible Story: Have students re-tell the story as best they can.

Attributes of God: Determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true, change the way we live in Christ?

Share the GOSPEL: According to Luke 2:10-11, the announcement of the birth of Jesus was the beginning of the Good News that will bring great joy to all people! The promised Messiah, Yahweh or "Jesus Saves" was finally almost here!



Read directly from Scripture, use the message, or the summary provided in the lesson



Put the events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc...



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“Storying” Questions: As you ask these questions, have your students find the answers in the actual verses of scripture instead of recalling them from your re-telling of the story. We always want to encourage all of our students to go directly to God’s Word over a commentary on or summary of scripture. Use the Bible Study Bookmark Questions as well as these questions to help students understand the text:

1. Who was Mary? Describe what was going on in her life.
2. Who came to Mary and told her what God was going to do?
3. How do you think Mary felt when she saw this messenger?
4. What are some of the things the angel told Mary?
5. How did Mary respond?
6. What made Jesus special and different from other people? Who was His true father?
7. How did Joseph feel about what Mary told him?
8. Who came to Joseph and told him about God’s great plans?
9. How did Joseph respond?
10. What does the name Immanuel mean?
11. What is the Good News?
12. How does the Good News give us great joy?

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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - god is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.

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PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank you for the gift of Your Son Jesus! Thank you for making a way for our salvation. Thank you for being a God who is the King who will reign forever while also coming to earth as a human in the humblest way. We praise you for the Good News and are so grateful for the great joy we have in Christ!

IF TIME ALLOWS:

Help the students in your group practice memorizing the books of the Bible:

- Torah: Genesis-Deuteronomy
- History: Joshua-Esther
- Poetry: Job-Song of Solomon
- Major Prophets: Isaiah-Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea-Malachi
- Gospels: Matthew-John
- Paul's Letters: Romans-Philemon
- General Letters: Hebrews-Revelation

MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

For the month of December, we will be collecting money for the Lottie Moon Christmas offering. Students can put their donations in the giving funnel in the top of the lobby.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Work on memorizing this weeks verse with the students in your group. You can use the first letter of each word in the verse to help with this. For example, the unit verse would look like this:

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Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD

- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD

- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND

- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?

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Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?