

# THE STORY

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.

## *Chapter 22: The Birth of the King*

**Key Question:** What does “the Word became flesh” mean?

### **The Word**

*Page 306–310*

At the end of our last lesson, Abraham’s descendants had returned to the land, but not to a kingdom. They’d rebuilt the temple, but not filled the Holy of Holies.

As today’s story unfolds, four hundred years have passed since Malachi foretold the coming of the day of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> Palestine is part of the Roman Empire. The people are still waiting for the Messiah, the one anointed by God to deliver the Jews from bondage and be their king.

Now we open the New Testament and read from the Gospel of John of the bigger story of how God reached out to humankind. The Apostle John begins his story long before, with someone he calls the Word.

1. (a) When did the Word exist (John 1:1–2)? With whom was the Word? Who was the Word?  
(b) What does John 1:3 tell us about the Word?

John then describes what the Word offers people.

2. (a) What does the Word have in him (John 1:4)? What was that to people? (b) What did the light do (1:5)? (c) Describe a time you needed to go someplace in the dark. Why do we need light?  
(d) Why do people who live in darkness about God need light?

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<sup>1</sup> Just as the Israelites had 400 years of silence between the prophet Joseph and the deliverer Moses, so they had 400 years of silence between the prophet Malachi and the Deliverer Jesus.

The Apostle John next explains that John the Baptist testified about the light—we'll read more about John the Baptist next week.

3. (a) To whom did the Word give true light (John 1:9)? (b) Did everyone recognize him as such (1:10)? (c) The Word came to his own people (Abraham's descendants). Did they all receive him (1:11)? (d) Who has the right to become a child of God (John 1:12)? (e) The children of God aren't born the way human children are; how are they born (1:13)? (f) Many people assume all humans are God's children. According to this passage, is that true?

We'll read more about becoming God's children next week.

4. (a) What did the Word do (John 1:14)? (b) What did John and others see? (c) From whom did the Word come? (d) With what two characteristics was he filled?

The Word became flesh—we'll read how that happened in just a bit. After this build up, John finally tells us the Word's name and title on earth.

5. (a) Who was the Word known as on earth, and what did God give through him (John 1:17)? "Christ" is the Greek word for the Hebrew word "Messiah"! (b) Whom did the one and only Son reveal to people (1:18)? (c) Where was the Word at the time of John's writing?

Through Moses, God gave the law that showed people how to live righteously before him, and demonstrated that sin carried penalties that needed to be atoned for through blood sacrifice.

Now the Word of God—who was with God and was God—became flesh and lived on earth among people.<sup>2</sup> Through him God gave grace and truth, and revealed himself in an all new way. The Word was Jesus, the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah.

## A Willing Young Woman

*Pages 310–311*

The angel Gabriel appeared to a young woman living in Galilee<sup>3</sup>: Mary. He told her not to be afraid, for God favored her.

6. (a) What did Gabriel tell Mary in Luke 1:31? (b) How did Gabriel describe the child in 1:32–33? (c) What would the child be called (1:35)? Why? (d) How, then, did the Word become flesh?

Mary's child was conceived of God's Spirit, not of a physical union. Yet she would be looked upon as an unwed mother who disobeyed God's law. She likely wondered who would believe her story.

7. (a) Despite the difficulties she faced, how did Mary respond (Luke 1:38)? (b) What qualities did Mary have to be able to respond like this? (c) Briefly describe a situation in which serving God might have brought you hardship. How did you respond? (d) How can you respond like Mary in a situation today?

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<sup>2</sup> Jesus is with God and is God. Christians describe this with the term *Trinity*: in the nature of the One God are three eternal Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Bible refers to the three individually in several places, including in Jesus' great commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

<sup>3</sup> For most of the New Testament period, much of what was formerly Israel and Judah was divided into three Roman provinces: Galilee to the north, Samaria in the middle, and Judea to the south.

## The Savior's Birth

*Pages 311–313*

When Mary's fiancé, Joseph, learned she was pregnant, he planned to break off their engagement quietly so she wouldn't face public disgrace. But God had something else in mind.

8. (a) How did God let Joseph know the truth about Mary's situation (Matthew 1:20)? (b) What did the angel tell Joseph about the child (1:21)?

Joseph obeyed the angel of the Lord and took the pregnant Mary as his wife

9. (a) What hardships might Joseph's obedience have caused him? (b) How did Joseph's obedience help Mary? (c) Describe a time when someone's obedience to God helped you. (d) Who is someone you could help today?

Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem, and there she gave birth in a stable. Heavenly angels didn't let this momentous event go unnoticed on earth.

10. (a) What did an angel tell shepherds about who the newborn was (Luke 2:10–12)? (b) What did a great number of angels then proclaim (2:14)? (c) The shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. What did they then do (2:17–18)?

## A Father's Protection

Pages 313–315

When King Herod<sup>4</sup> heard the king of the Jews had been born in accordance with prophecy, he tried to kill the child. He asked Jewish leaders where the Messiah would be born. Quoting Micah 5:2, they replied, “In Bethlehem.”<sup>5</sup>

11. (a) How did God protect his Son (Matthew 2:13–15)? (b) Briefly describe a time God protected you. Is it possible to know all the times God intervenes to protect us? (c) What family from the Old Testament went to Egypt to escape death (see lesson 3)?

Matthew says Jesus' stay in Egypt fulfilled Hosea 11:1, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” This passage tells of God calling the Israelites out of Egypt. The young nation of Israel was born in the Promised Land, traveled to Egypt to escape death, was later called out of Egypt to establish a covenant, and returned to the Promised Land to fulfill its purpose of making God known. Matthew presents Jesus' life as paralleling significant parts of Israel's past, and thus fulfilling this prophetic word.<sup>6</sup>

## The Father's House

Pages 315–319

Joseph and Mary accidentally left the twelve-year-old Jesus behind in Jerusalem.

12. (a) Where did his parents find Jesus (Luke 2:46)? (b) Where did Jesus say he was (2:49)? What does this tell us he already knew? (c) What was young Jesus doing there, and why were people amazed (2:46–47)? (d) What does this tell us about Jesus?

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<sup>4</sup> Herod the Great was Idumean (a descendant of Edom—Jacob's twin brother). The Idumeans had been forced to convert to Judaism around 125 BC; Herod considered himself Jewish and called himself King of the Jews.

<sup>5</sup> This is an example of *predictive* prophecy.

<sup>6</sup> Israel was a *type* of Christ, so events in Israel's history foreshadow events in Jesus' life. The Bible uses many types that point forward to something greater. Some scholars call Hosea 11:1's fulfillment here *typological* prophecy, for it referred to a past event that was a type of a greater future event.

Mary must have had some tough years, but God sent her many precious reminders of what he was doing and how he could let others know the truth about her Son at any time.

13. (a) What did Mary do with God's reminders (Luke 2:51b)? (b) What is something from God you have treasured in your heart?

14. (a) All the women mentioned in Jesus' genealogy had something about them people considered questionable: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary (pages 318–319). What does that tell you about how God viewed them? (b) Many people believe they have things about them that others consider questionable. If God isn't embarrassed to have "questionable" women related to Jesus, is he embarrassed about the things that we might fear are questionable about us? (c) What advice do you have for Christians struggling with a questionable background?

15. The shepherds to whom the angels appeared went to see the Savior child. They "returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen." Write a prayer below that glorifies and praises God for the things you've heard about Jesus this week.

Next week we'll see what happens when people begin to recognize the Messiah.

## Timeline: Abraham to Jesus (2000 BC–AD 0)

