

Lesson One: The Birth of Jesus

taken from
Jesus Christ: A Bible Study in Simple English
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Lesson 1, Section 1

Read this story from the book of Matthew in the Bible. Look at the vocabulary list for help with new or special words and phrases (bolded words are defined below). Then write answers to the questions.

The birth of **Jesus Christ** was like this: Mary His mother had been promised in marriage to **Joseph**. Before they were married, it was learned that she was to have a baby by the **Holy Spirit**. Joseph was her **promised husband**. He was a good man and did not want to make it hard for Mary in front of people. He thought it would be good to break the **promised marriage** without people knowing it. While he was thinking about this, an **angel of the Lord** came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, **son of David**, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She is to become a mother by the Holy Spirit. A Son will be born to her. You will give Him the name Jesus because He will save His people from the **punishment** of their **sins**."

This happened as the Lord said it would happen through the **early preacher**. He said, "The young woman, who has never had a man, will give birth to a Son. They will give Him the name **Immanuel**. This means God with us."

Joseph awoke from his sleep. He did what the angel of the Lord told him to do. He took Mary as his wife. But he did not have her, as a husband has a wife, until she gave birth to a Son. Joseph gave Him the name Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25).

angel	A being from heaven with a message from God.
Christ or Jesus Christ	This is one of the names of Jesus. It means that He was chosen for a special job. (See also Chosen One in Lesson 1, Section 4.)
early preacher*	A prophet , a man who was given special messages by God for the people. This prophet was Isaiah who lived about 700 years before Jesus. The Bible has a book written by Isaiah in the Old Testament.
Holy Spirit	God Himself.
Immanuel	See Lesson 1, Question 4.
Jesus or Jesus Christ	This name means "God saves"
Joseph	A Jewish carpenter who lived about 2,000 years ago near the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea . This sea is between Europe and Asia , and Africa . (See Map 1.) He was the human father of Jesus. He taught Jesus to be a carpenter also. A carpenter is someone who makes things with wood, including roofs, doors, and farm tools.

promised husband*	Fiancée (See “promised marriage.”)
promised marriage*	An engagement . This is when a man and a woman promise to marry each other and tell others about this promise. (See also marriage in Lesson 2, Section 1.)
punishment	The bad result that comes to a person when he or she breaks a law or rule.
sins	Evil acts and evil thoughts. This word will be explained more in Lesson 2.
son of David	A man from the family of David, the old Jewish nation’s greatest king. David lived about 1,000 years before Jesus. The old Jewish nation was called Israel . (See Map 2. See also the answer to Lesson 1, Question 18.)
the Lord	Another name for God.

1. Who was the true father of Jesus?
2. Joseph learned that Mary was going to be a mother. After Joseph learned this, what did Joseph plan to do?
3. Why did the angel tell Joseph to give Mary’s son the name Jesus?
4. What name did the prophet Isaiah give to Mary’s son? What did this name mean?

Note: The Bible teaches that there is only one God. The Bible also teaches that God is three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is hard to understand. The Bible also teaches that God made the earth and everything on the earth. He also made the sun, the moon, the stars, and everything else. So we should not be surprised that it is difficult to understand God. (More Bible verses about this – Isaiah 45:21; Mark 12:28-31; Matthew 16:13-17; John 1:1-2, 14-18; John 10:25-30; John 14:26; John 15:26; 2 Corinthians 3:3, 17-18.)

5. What did Joseph do after the angel spoke to him?

Lesson 1, Section 2

Read this story from the book of Luke in the Bible. Look at the vocabulary list for help with new or special words and phrases (bolded words are defined below). Then write answers to the questions.

In those days **Caesar Augustus** sent out word that the name of every person in the Roman nation must be written in the books of the nation. This first writing took place while **Quirinius** was **ruler** of **Syria**.

So all the people went to their own cities to have their names written in the books of the nation. Joseph went up from the town of **Nazareth** in the country of **Galilee** to the town of **Bethlehem**. It was known as the city of David. He went there because he was from the family of David. Joseph went to have his and Mary's names written in the books of the nation. Mary was his **promised wife** and soon to become a mother.

While they were there in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth to her baby. Her first son was born. She put cloth around Him and laid Him in a place where **cattle** are fed. There was no room for them in the place where people stay for the night (Luke 2:1-7).

Caesar Augustus

This was the **ruler** of the **Roman** nation. A ruler tells people what to do and what not to do. He ruled many different people who spoke many different languages. So his nation was called an **empire**. He ruled the lands or countries around the Mediterranean Sea. (See Map 1.) Jesus was born in **Bethlehem**. This was a small town in **Judea**, a country at the east end of this sea. Jesus grew up in the town of **Nazareth**. This was in another country, **Galilee**, which is north of Judea. (See Map 2.) Galilee is where Joseph and Mary lived before Jesus was born. Most people who lived in Judea and Galilee were **Jews**. Jews are the main people of the Old Testament part of the Bible.

cattle

Another name for cows.

promised wife*

Fiancée (See "promised marriage" in Lesson 1, Section 1.)

Quirinius

This was a Roman leader or ruler. He ruled **Syria**, a country north of Galilee, when Caesar Augustus was ruler of the Roman Empire. Augustus told Quirinius to count the people in Syria and in Judea.

ruler

A ruler tells people what to do and what not to do. Often he or she is ruler because his or her father and mother were rulers.

6. Why did Joseph and Mary travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem?

7. When they arrived in Bethlehem, did they stay at a house or hotel? Explain your answer.

Lesson 1, Section 3

Continue to read this story from the book of Luke in the Bible. Look at the vocabulary list for help with new or special words and phrases (bolded words are defined below). Then write answers to the questions.

In the same country there were **shepherds** in the **fields**. They were watching their **flocks** of **sheep** at night. The angel of the Lord came to them. The **shining-greatness** of the Lord shone around them. They were very much afraid. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. See! I bring you good news of great joy which is for all people. Today, One Who saves from the punishment of sin has been born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. There will be something special for you to see. This is the way you will know Him. You will find the Baby with cloth around Him, lying in a place where cattle are fed."

At once many angels from **heaven** were seen, along with the angel, giving thanks to God. They were saying, "Greatness and honor to our God in the highest heaven and peace on earth among men who please Him."

The angels went from the shepherds back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see what has happened. The Lord has told us about this." They went fast and found Mary and Joseph. They found the Baby lying in a place where cattle are fed. When they saw the Child, they told what the angel said about Him...The shepherds went back full of joy. They thanked God for all they had heard and seen. It happened as the angel had told them (Luke 2:8-17, 20).

fields	Places away from towns where grass and farm plants grow.
flock	A group of many sheep .
heaven	The place where people live with God. Many angels are there, too. (See more in Lesson 2, Section 3.)
sheep	This is an animal that eats grass and has a thick coat of hair called wool . People make cloth from the wool. Many people also eat sheep. This food from sheep is called lamb or mutton . Sheep are smaller than cattle. The word "sheep" can mean one animal or more than one.
shepherds	People who take care of sheep.
shining-greatness*	This is a special light that shines from God. It is also called glory . It shows His greatness, goodness, and power.

8. Why did the shepherds become afraid?

9. Why were the words of the angel "good news of great joy"?

10. Were these words only for the shepherds? Explain what you think.

11. What many things did the shepherds do after they heard the angel's words?

12. How did the shepherds know where to find Jesus?

13. When Jesus lived, most people in Judea and Galilee did not think shepherds were important people. Do most people in your country today think shepherds are important? Explain your answer.

14. God sent His angel to tell the shepherds about Jesus. These were people not thought to be important. Why do you think God decided to tell the shepherds first?

Lesson 1, Section 4

Continue to read this story from the book of Luke in the Bible (This passage takes place when Jesus was eight days old). Look at the vocabulary list for help with new or special words and phrases (bolded words are defined below). Then write answers to the questions.

...they [Joseph and Mary] took Jesus to Jerusalem to give Him to the Lord. It is written in the **Law of the Lord**, "The first-born male born of a woman will be called **holy** to the Lord." They were to give a gift of two **turtle-doves** or two young birds on the **altar** in **worship** to the Lord. This was written in the Law of the Lord.

There was a man in Jerusalem by the name of **Simeon**. He was a good man and very **religious**. He was looking for the time when the Jewish nation would be saved. The Holy Spirit was on him. The Holy Spirit made it known to Simeon that he would not die before he had seen God's **Chosen One**. He came to the **house of God** being led by the Holy Spirit. The parents took Jesus to the house of God. They came to do what the Law said must be done. Then Simeon took Jesus in his arms.

He gave honor to Him and thanked God, saying, "Lord, now let me die in peace, as You have said. My eyes have seen the One Who will save men from the punishment of their sins. You have made Him ready in the sight of all nations. He will be a light to shine on the people who are not Jews. He will be the shining-greatness of Your people the Jews" (Luke 2:22-32).

altar	A table or place where people can put gifts for God or do other acts of worship . To worship God is to honor Him and pray to Him. To honor someone is to see him or her as higher and more important than yourself. To pray is to talk to God and listen to Him, giving honor to Him at the same time.
Chosen One*	This is the meaning of Christ, the other name of Jesus.
holy	Given a special job or use by God. It can also mean without sin.
house of God	This is a building where God is worshipped. It is called a temple .
Law of the Lord	Often this means the Old Testament. Here it means the first five books of the Old Testament. It is also simply called the Law.
religious	Wanting to do what God wants. (See also Lesson 3, Section 1.)
turtle-dove	A kind of bird. (See also dove in Lesson 2, Section 4.)

15. Two turtledoves or young birds were the smallest gift to give thanks to God for a new baby boy. What does this tell us about how much money Joseph and Mary had?

16. Why was Simeon waiting at the house of God?

17. What did Simeon tell Joseph and Mary about Jesus? What was the special job that Jesus was born to do?
18. Simeon said that Jesus will give light to certain people. Do you think you are a part of these people? Explain your answer.

Lesson One Answers

1. God was the true father of Jesus. More information: God made a baby start to grow inside Mary. This baby was God the Son and was named Jesus. This is true but hard for the human mind to understand. But it is what the Bible says. (See also the note after Lesson 1, Question 4.)
2. Joseph planned to end his engagement with Mary. He planned to do this without people knowing it.
3. The angel told Joseph to give Mary's son the name Jesus because He will save His people from punishment for their sins. The name "Jesus" means "God saves."
4. The prophet Isaiah gave Jesus the name "Immanuel." This name means "God with us." More information: This means that Jesus was both man and God. Isaiah also wrote this about Jesus: "For to us a Child will be born. To us a Son will be given...His name will be called Wonderful, Teacher, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, Prince of Peace"(Isaiah 9:6). Isaiah wrote this 700 years before Jesus was born.
5. Joseph did what the angel told him to do. Joseph married Mary but did not take her home to be his wife until after Jesus was born. Joseph named the baby Jesus.
6. They traveled to Bethlehem because Caesar Augustus told his people that they must have their names written in the books of the Roman nation. To do this, people had to go to the towns where they were born. Joseph was born in Bethlehem, the city of David. Joseph took Mary, his new wife, with him.
7. They did not stay at a house or hotel because there was no room for them. Bethlehem was full of people because of the word from Caesar Augustus. So Joseph and Mary stayed in a place where cattle were kept.
8. The shepherds became afraid because an angel appeared and a special light from God shone around them.
9. The words of the angel were "good news of great joy" because a baby boy called Christ the Lord was born nearby in Bethlehem. This baby boy would grow up and become the One who saves people, including the shepherds, from punishment for their sins.
10. No, the angel's words were not only for the shepherds. The angel said his words were for all people.
11. After the shepherds heard the angel's words, they decided to go to Bethlehem. They went there quickly, found Jesus, and told Mary and Joseph what the angel had said. Then the shepherds were full of joy and went back to the fields and their sheep. The shepherds thanked God for what they had heard and seen.
12. The shepherds knew where to find Jesus because the angel had told them He was born in Bethlehem. The angel also said that the baby was lying in a place where cattle are fed.
13. The answer comes from the reader's thoughts.
14. The answer comes from the reader's thoughts.
15. Joseph and Mary were not rich. They were poor.

16. Simeon was waiting at the house of God because God told him that he would not die before he saw God's Chosen One, or the Christ. Good Jewish parents brought their new babies to the house of God to give thanks to Him. So the house of God was a good place for Simeon to wait.
17. Simeon told Joseph and Mary that Jesus was God's Chosen One. Simeon said that Jesus will save people from the punishment for their sins. This was the special job that Jesus was born to do. Simeon also said that Jesus will be a light to shine on the people who are not Jews and will be the shining-greatness of the Jews. He will give light to all nations. (This will be explained in later lessons.)
18. Yes, you are a member of the people to whom Jesus gives light. This is true because either you are a Jew or you are not a Jew. Simeon said that Jesus gives light to both kinds of people. So Jesus gives light to all people. He gives light to everybody. More information: The prophet Isaiah also wrote these words from God about His Chosen One: "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the **family groups of Jacob**, and to bring back those of **Israel** I have kept safe. I will also make You a light to the nations, so that men over all the earth can be saved from the punishment of their sins" (Isaiah 49:6). ("Family groups of Jacob" were people from the twelve sons of Jacob, the father of the Jews. Israel is another name for Jacob.)