

Lesson 1 – Jesus’ Birth and Early Life

Text: Matthew 1-2; Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-52

Main Characters: God, Mary, Joseph, Jesus

Key Passages:

- Luke 1:35 – “For with God, nothing is impossible.”
- Luke 2:10-14 – Jesus’ birth would be good news to all people across the earth.

Main Storyline:

About 400 years after the close of the Old Testament (Malachi), the New Testament begins with the story of the birth of Jesus, the son of God. A young woman, Mary, was betrothed (engaged) to a man, Joseph, who was a descendent of David. One day, an angel, Gabriel, appeared to Mary and told her that the Lord was with her. Mary was afraid and did not know what to say. Gabriel comforted her, explaining that she would soon conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to a son, to be named Jesus. Jesus would be great, the “Son of the Highest,” and would be given the throne of David, his father. Mary was confused, as she was yet a virgin. Gabriel reassured her, “...with God, nothing is impossible.”

When Joseph found out about Mary’s pregnancy, he believed that she had been unfaithful to him. He was about to put her away, but since he was a righteous man, he wanted to do it secretly so as not to make her a public example. While he was still thinking about the situation, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him not to be afraid to marry Mary, reassuring him that Mary had been faithful to him; the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The angel told Joseph that the son, to be called Jesus, would save the people from their sins (note the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14).

When Mary was nearly ready to give birth to the child, she and Joseph needed to go to Bethlehem to register for a census being conducted by the Roman Empire. They left Nazareth, their hometown in Galilee, and went to Bethlehem, because Joseph was of the house of David. While they were there, it came time for Jesus to be born. Since there was no room in any of the inns there, after giving birth to Jesus in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), she laid him in a manger (an animal feeding trough).

Nearby, some shepherds were watching their flocks through the night. Suddenly, an angel appeared to them, frightening the shepherds. The angel reassured them and informed them that a savior had been born that day, Christ the Lord. The angel told them that they would find the baby lying in a manger. Suddenly, a multitude of angels began praising God. After the angels left, the shepherds went into Bethlehem, found Jesus, and began spreading the word about what the angel had told them.

Eight days after Jesus’ birth, he was circumcised. After the period of uncleanness for Mary, she and Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem to be presented to God. They offered a pair of birds, as permitted by the law for poor people (Leviticus 12:1-4, 6, 8). A man named Simeon and a prophetess named Anna spoke concerning Jesus while they were in Jerusalem. Later, they returned to Nazareth.

Some time later (perhaps up to 2 years), the king of the land, Herod, tried to find out about Jesus, whom he perceived to be a threat, from some wise men. The wise men eventually found Jesus, but they were warned by God not to return to Herod. When Herod found out, he decreed that all males in the area around Bethlehem that were two years old and younger be killed. God warned Joseph to take his family to Egypt to hide until Herod died, at which point he returned to Nazareth.

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature day by day. His understanding and abilities were clearly seen when he spent days away from his parents (without their knowledge) listening and asking questions of the teachers in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus said he needed to “be about his Father’s business.”

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) With God, nothing is impossible (Genesis 18:14; Matthew 19:26; Romans 8:28, 31; Philippians 4:13).
- 2.) Just as Jesus’ priority was doing the will of God, so must ours be (Matthew 6:33; Matthew 26:39).
- 3.) All of God’s promises and prophecies about the Messiah were to be fulfilled by Jesus.