

Christmas



SAVIOR ANNOUNCED

God came into the world in human form. God the Father sent His Son to become the Savior.

LUKE 1:26-38

FIRST THOUGHTS

After four hundred years of silence, God came into the world as a human baby. His name was Jesus. His mother was a virgin. He was fully God and fully man. This is sometimes difficult to understand. We must remember that God can do anything!

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

For four hundred years, the people in Israel felt that the prophets were sleeping. They thought the Holy Spirit did not work in Israel anymore. They still studied the law and the prophets. They looked forward to the time of the Messiah, the Savior. In the New Testament, God began to speak to the people again.

Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke to tell people about Jesus. He began by telling the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah was a priest. He and

his wife were faithful to God. They were very old and had no children. One day an angel, Gabriel, appeared to Zechariah. The angel said Elizabeth would become pregnant and have a son. The son's name would be John. John would become a prophet with the spirit and power like Elijah. He would be a great man and help many people turn back to God. He would get people ready for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

Zechariah had a hard time believing what the angel said. Because Zechariah doubted, the angel told him he would not be able to speak until the baby was born. Elizabeth became pregnant just as the angel said. This was a miracle from God. God's next miracle was even greater.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (LUKE 1:26-38)

1. Gabriel Appears (Luke 1:26-29)

VERSES 26-27.

²⁶ *During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,*

²⁷ *To a virgin. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary.*

God sent Gabriel to talk to Mary. Gabriel is the same angel who appeared to Zechariah. Mary was a virgin. This means that she was a young woman who never been with a man. Mary and Joseph were engaged. In biblical times an engagement was a legal agreement. It was like a contract. If the couple wanted to break the agreement, they must get a divorce.

Luke said Joseph was from the family of David. This is important information. Prophets wrote that the Savior would be from the family of David (2 Samuel 7:12-14 and Jeremiah 23:5-6). In our study of Joshua, we learned that God always does what He says. This is another example of God keeping His promise.

VERSES 28-29.

²⁸ *The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you."*

²⁹ *But Mary was very startled by what the angel said and wondered what this greeting might mean.*

God chose Mary to be the mother of His Son. God is **Sovereign**. He can decide what He wants. He chose Mary because of His grace. She did not earn

the right to be the mother of Jesus. She was not perfect. Mary was humble and trusted God.

In the same way, God saves us because of His grace. We do not earn salvation; it is a gift from God.

What is grace?

2. The Message Given (Luke 1:30-33)

VERSES 30-31

³⁰ *The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has shown you His grace.*

³¹ *Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus."*

There are other times in the Bible when angels appeared. The people were always surprised. Why was it important for the angels to tell people not to be afraid?

The angel had important news for Mary. She would become pregnant! It is possible Mary knew the prophecy in Isaiah. Isaiah 7:14 says, "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and she will name Him Immanuel." Maybe Mary understood what the angel's message meant. But this does not mean she knew how it could happen.

The name *Jesus* means "God saves." Do you remember another name with this meaning? Joshua is the Hebrew word for God saves. Joshua gave a picture of what Jesus would do. In the Old Testament God sent Joshua to lead the Israelites into the promised land. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for a long time. God used Joshua to lead them to freedom and a new home. In the New Testament, God sent Jesus to lead His people into salvation. People in the past were slaves to sin, and people today are slaves to sin. Jesus set us free and will lead us into our new home, heaven.

VERSES 32-33

³² *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of King David, His ancestor.*

³³ *He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will never end."*

Verses 32 and 33 explain who Jesus is: 1. He will be great. 2. He will be the Son of God. 3. He is from the family of David and will rule as King. Samuel prophesied this in 2 Samuel 7:12-14 about the Messiah. 4. “He will rule over the people of Jacob.” This described the Messiah and His rule over Israel. 5. He will rule forever. Jesus will be King of all, for all time.

All the things the angel said fulfilled prophecy about the Messiah. He made it clear that Jesus would be the one for whom the Jews were waiting. They were waiting for the Messiah. Mary’s baby would answer all the prophecy.

What part of the angel’s message excites you the most? Explain.

BIBLE SKILL: *Look at Several Verses*

Jesus’ mother was human. She was a virgin. Jesus’ father was God. Jesus, then, was fully human and fully God. Read the list below of things that happened in Jesus’ life. Some of the examples show that Jesus did things that only God could do. Write God by those examples. Other examples show that Jesus was human. He experienced the same things that we do. Write Human by those examples.

Jesus cried (John 11:35). _____

Jesus healed a blind man (Mark 8:22-26). _____

Jesus was tired (John 4:5-6). _____

Satan tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). _____

Jesus calmed the sea (Matthew 8:23-27). _____

Jesus ate (Mark 2:16). _____

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44). _____

Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 10:39-41). _____

3. Questions Answered (Luke 1:34-37)

VERSE 34

³⁴*Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I am a virgin?"*

When Gabriel told Zechariah that Elizabeth would become pregnant, Zechariah asked, "How can I know that what you say is true?" (Luke 1:18). He did not believe the angel. Mary had a different response. She believed Gabriel, but she was curious. She wanted to know how she would become pregnant. She was a virgin. She had never been with a man. Maybe she thought she would get pregnant after she and Joseph married. She wanted to understand.

VERSE 35.

³⁵*The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. For this reason the baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God."*

God had a wonderful plan. The birth of His Son would be different from any other birth. The angel explained that Mary would become pregnant from the power of God. The Holy Spirit would "come upon" Mary. Acts 1:8 tells how the Holy Spirit gives Christians power. This is a similar idea to how the Holy Spirit worked in Mary.

The angel explained how Mary's baby would be holy. Jesus would be different from any other child. His Father would be God. Jesus would be the Son of God, the Messiah.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Holy*

The word holy is used in different ways in the Bible. Sometimes holy means "set apart." Holy items, in this case, were things God used for a specific job or purpose. Holy can also mean "pure and without sin." Jesus was holy in both ways. God set Jesus apart for a purpose. Jesus came into the world to save sinners (Matthew 1:21; 18:11). He had a special job. Jesus was also holy and good (Acts 3:14). He never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15).

Read 1 Peter 1:15. What does God expect from His people?

What does a holy life look like?

VERSES 36-37

³⁶ *Now Elizabeth, your relative, is also pregnant with a son though she is very old. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months.*

³⁷ *God can do anything!”*

The angel told Mary about her relative, Elizabeth. There was no Facebook or Twitter during biblical times. Mary did not know about Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Gabriel gave Mary the news. It was a miracle. Elizabeth was very old and had no children. But now she was six months pregnant. The angel reminded Mary that God can do impossible things. God would do a bigger miracle with Mary.

Why was it important for Mary to know about Elizabeth?

How does knowing God is working in other people’s lives encourage us?

4. Willing to Follow (1:38)

VERSE 38

³⁸ *Mary said, “I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!” Then the angel went away.*

Mary did not worry about what people would say about her. She did not complain that this might ruin her marriage. She was engaged. When Joseph found out she was pregnant, he could have divorced her. He could have blamed her and said she had been with another man. But Mary trusted God. She was happy to serve the Lord. She was willing to follow God’s plan. Mary

is a good model for us. We should be willing to do what God says. We should be ready to serve Him.

Why do we sometimes worry about how hard it might be to serve God?

What can we learn from Mary about serving God?

God was gracious to Mary. He let her meet people who supported her. They knew that God had worked in Mary's life. After the angel left, Mary went to visit her relative, Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary talk, the baby inside her jumped. The Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth. She said to Mary, "God has blessed you more than any other woman, and He has blessed the baby to which you will give birth. Why has this good thing happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? You are blessed because you believed that what the Lord said to you would really happen" (Luke 1:42-45).

Notice that Elizabeth called Mary the "mother of my Lord." Elizabeth knew that Mary's baby was the Son of God. She knew that Jesus was the Lord. Imagine how Mary felt for Elizabeth to say these words.

When Jesus was born, the shepherds came to worship Him. Later, the wise men came to see Jesus and brought gifts.

Read Luke 2:25-38. Who saw Jesus at the temple?

How did Mary and Joseph feel about this?

All of these people agreed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. Their support probably helped Mary and Joseph feel strong. They felt encouraged to raise their son.

IN MY CONTEXT

In Joshua and Luke we learned that God always does what He says. We can trust Him. His promises are always true. John 3:16 is a favorite verse for many people. It tells of God's love for all people. He loved us so much He sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place. Today we celebrate the gift of Jesus. Christmas is all about Jesus coming to the world to save people from sin. We were lost and dying in sin. We could not save ourselves. Jesus, the Messiah, our Savior, is the one way to a relationship with God. We only need to believe in Him. God will give us a life that lasts forever with Him.

How does God show His love to us?

What happens if we believe in Jesus?

Do you have a friend who does not know Jesus? YES NO.

Write the friend's name here.

Plan a time to visit your friend and tell him or her about God's love and His Son, Jesus. When will you go?

MEMORY VERSE

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of King David, his ancestor. He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will never end."

—Luke 1:32-33

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PLAN AHEAD

- ❑ Pray for the people in your group. Pray that they will be willing to serve when God asks them.
- ❑ Locate on the map on the inside back cover: Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. These are the places named often in telling the Christmas story.
- ❑ Use Matthew 1 to show the name Rahab (verse 5) from the recent lesson about Jacob. Also in verse 5, note the names Boaz and Ruth. We will study about them later this quarter.
- ❑ Find a “**Harmony of the Gospels**” and copy the verses that tell about the birth of Jesus.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Briefly introduce Luke. He was not one of the twelve apostles. Of the four Gospel writers, only John and Matthew were apostles. Ask someone to sign Luke 1:1-4. Luke identifies himself as a historian. His Gospel is not about what he saw, but what many other people saw and told or wrote about Jesus. Later, Luke was with Paul. In the Book of Acts, the first verse identifies Luke as the author. It is interesting to note that in Acts 16:11 he changes from “they” to “we.” This suggests Luke joined Paul at that time. Paul names Luke in Philemon 1:24, Colossians 4:14 (where Paul identifies Luke as a doctor), and 2 Timothy 4:11.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (LUKE 1:26-38)

Help the class understand that what we know as the Christmas story was told by Matthew and Luke, but each one had a different emphasis. Show them the passages from Matthew and Luke.

1. Gabriel Appears (Luke 1:26-29)

Gabriel was sent from God to **deliver** a message to Mary. He said the Lord blessed Mary and was with her (verse 28).

Gabriel was one of the heavenly messengers who brought God's special message to an individual. He appeared to Daniel to explain the king's dream and the meaning of the dream (Daniel 8:15-27; 9:20-27). He appeared to Zachariah to tell him about his son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:8-20). In today's lesson, Gabriel appeared to Mary (verse 26).

Discuss: *Do you believe angels are active in our world today? Why or why not?*

2. The Message Given (Luke 1:30-33)

Explain that the name Jesus (Greek) is the same as Joshua (Hebrew). God used Joshua to give Israel the promised land as a permanent home. Jesus came to give us a heavenly home. This was a common Jewish name. It means "Yahweh Saves." Matthew wrote that the angel said, "You will name him Jesus because He will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Discuss: *Does God speak to people like us today? How? (Bible, Holy Spirit within us, other believers.)*

3. Questions Answered (Luke 1:34-37)

Mary's first question was, "How?" How could she give birth since she was a virgin?

Discuss: *What other questions do you think Mary thought?*

4. Willing to Follow (Luke 1:38)

How did Mary answer the angel? (See verse 38. The word *servant* can also mean "slave." She said, "I am God's slave.")

Mary placed herself under God's authority as a slave. She was willing to follow God's plan.

Discuss: *What should we say when God asks us to do something? (The answer is, "Yes!")*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Encourage discussion of how we can trust God to keep His promises. Only Jesus can give salvation to people.

Guide your group to share their responses to the questions from "In My Context" (page 36). List on the board names of lost Deaf people in your community. Have a special prayer for them and for your group to be bold in witnessing to them.