

The Birth of Jesus Christ:

What the Prophets said

Vocabulary:

prophet: a man who get a message from God about the future and tells others.

Messiah: Savior

prophecies: words from God about the future

judge: to decide what is right and wrong

suffer: have pain

endure: to continue through difficulties

It was difficult for people in the time of Christ to understand the prophets' words about the Messiah. There were many prophets. The meaning of their words was not always easy to understand. Sometimes they did not seem to agree with one another. Many prophets wrote that the Messiah would be a great king. He would bring a time of peace. For the Jews, there had been hundreds of years of battles, war, and death. Enemies had made them prisoners. Enemies had destroyed their land. Of course the people wanted the Messiah. They wanted the words of the prophets to come true.

A. The Messiah would bring peace

The prophet Isaiah tells us that the Messiah would be born. The Messiah would bring peace. Later, Isaiah tells us what this peace will be like. This peace makes us free of fear. When Christ comes again, He will bring peace among nations for all time. The people will turn their weapons into farming equipment because there will be no war.

Read Isaiah 9:6 (page 736), Isaiah 54: 13-14 (page 792), Micah 4:3 (page 996)

B. The Messiah would be a king.

The prophets also spoke about the Messiah as a king. This king would be born in Bethlehem. The Messiah would be born from the family of David. The Messiah would rule everywhere and forever. His rule would be good and completely right. It would please God.

Read Micah 5:2-5 (page 997), Isaiah 9:7 (page 736)

C. The Messiah would be a Judge.

There were other prophecies. These messages said that this king would judge. He would judge all that is evil. The king will be absolutely right and good. He will be a wise judge.

Read Psalms 9:7-8 (page 579), Isaiah 16: 5 (page 744)

D. The Messiah would suffer.

Some prophecies also spoke about the suffering of the Lord. Isaiah wrote about the suffering that Jesus would endure. Jesus bore the pain and suffering that should have been ours. We turn from God all the time. But God placed our sins on Jesus. Jesus was beaten, arrested and sentenced to death for us.

Read Isaiah 53: 4-9 (page 790)

E. The Jews didn't understand the prophecies.

How could the Messiah be all these things? How could one man be a powerful king and a suffering servant? How could He be a strict judge and a man who brings peace?

The Jews were certain that the Messiah would be a king. He would chase away all enemies. The Messiah would give peace and freedom forever. The Jews didn't understand the prophecies so they didn't understand what Jesus did. Christ made all the prophecies come true. He made some of the prophecies come true when Jesus was born. He will make other prophecies come true when he comes back again.

Questions

1. Why did the Jews have difficulty with the prophecies about the Messiah?

2. Describe the peace the Messiah brought.

3. The Messiah would be king. Where was He born? What family was He from?

4. What would the Messiah judge?

5. How did the Messiah suffer? Why did He suffer?

The birth of Jesus Christ:

An angel comes to Zechariah

Vocabulary:

priest: a man with a special job at the temple - made the sacrifices to God
on duty: had to work
incense: a stick with sweet smelling fragrance which is lit with fire
terrified: very scared

A. Zechariah and Elizabeth

Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, loved God. Zechariah was a priest. He was on duty at the temple twice a year. Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children. In the Jewish culture, it was not good to be childless. Zechariah and Elizabeth were ashamed that they didn't have children. They prayed to God for a child for many years. But they could not have a child.

One day Zechariah was chosen to be a high priest in the temple. He had to burn incense to God in the special part of the temple. This part was called the Holy of Holies. No one was ever allowed in the Holy of Holies except the chosen high priest.

Read Luke 1: 5-10 (page 1087)

B. An angel gives a message about John the Baptist

An angel appeared to Zechariah. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified! The angel told Zechariah that he and Elizabeth would have a son. They must call his name John. He would be a very important man for God. The angel was talking about a prophesy in Malachi. John would be the returning Elijah. John would be so special that he had to live differently from other men. He could not drink alcohol and could not cut his hair. People who lived like this were called Nazirites.

Read Luke 1: 11-17 (page 1087), Malachi 4:5,6 (page 1026), Numbers 6: 1-5 (page 142)

Zechariah and Elizabeth were very old. So Zechariah could not believe the angel's message. The angel made him unable to speak until Elizabeth gave birth to her son, John.

Read Luke 1:18-25

Questions

1. What was Zechariah's job?
2. Why did Zechariah and Elizabeth feel ashamed?
3. What was Zechariah chosen to do?
4. What did the angel say to Zechariah?
5. Who were Nazirites?
6. Zechariah didn't believe. What happened to him?

The birth of Jesus Christ:

An angel comes to Mary

Vocabulary:

task: a job or activity to complete

impressed: to be strongly affected by something

dissolved: to break about/ to void a contract

humble: modest/ not proud

A. The angel tells Mary about Jesus.

Six months after the angel visited Zechariah, God sent an angel to Mary. Mary would have a son. She was to call him Jesus. The angel spoke some wonderful prophecies about Jesus. Mary knew that God had chosen her for a very special task.

There was no doubt at all about this child. The angel said quite clearly who Jesus was. The angel said that Jesus:

- was Son of the Most High God
- would be a king like King David
- would rule forever
- kingdom will never end

This message impressed Mary very much. Her answer shows that she trusted God. She was willing to obey him, although it would be hard. She would be a mother. The angel had said all of this. She could not have understood the meaning of it all.

Read Luke 1: 26-38 (page 1087)

B. An angel appears to Joseph.

Mary was engaged to marry Joseph. After the angel appeared to her, she became pregnant. When Joseph heard about her pregnancy, he decided to divorce her quietly. In the Jewish culture, an engagement could only be dissolved with a certificate of divorce. But an angel appeared to Joseph. The angel told Joseph to take Mary as his wife. This baby boy came from God and He would be the Savior. Joseph obeyed God and did not divorce Mary.

Read Matthew 1:18-25 (page 1029)

C. God chose humble people

God had chosen a poor girl from a village to be the mother of the Messiah. John the Baptist, the son of an ordinary priest, was chosen to tell about the Messiah. The world thinks that powerful men are important. But God doesn't choose powerful people. God chooses to use humble people. These people show how powerful and great God is.

Questions

1. Who appeared to Mary?
2. What did the angel say to Mary?
3. What does Mary's answer show?
4. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, what did he want to do? Why didn't he do it?
5. What kind of person does God choose to use?

The birth of Jesus Christ:

Jesus is born

Vocabulary:

count: to see how many people were there

difficult: hard

journey: trip

manger: a wooden feeding box used for animals

awhile: for some time

foreigners: people from a different country

A. Why Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem.

The birth of Jesus was about 6 months after the birth of John the Baptist. Just before Jesus was born, the Romans decided to count the people. They wanted to know how many people would pay tax to the Romans. Every family had to return to their first home. The Roman officials would count them there.

Joseph and Mary belonged to the family of David. The family had come from Bethlehem. They had to go to Bethlehem. That was far away. It must have been a difficult journey for Mary. They were late when they arrived at Bethlehem. There were many people in Bethlehem. They had no place to sleep. There was no room anywhere. So the birth of Jesus took place in a shed or barn. Animals lived there. Mary put the baby in a manger. The prophecy said that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. This prophecy came true.

Read Luke 2: 1-7 (page 1089), Micah 5:2 (page 997)

B. Angels, shepherds and wise men

Joseph and Mary had to stay near Bethlehem for awhile. They had to take Jesus to the Temple after 40 days. Some shepherds came. The shepherd had seen angels. The angels had praised God. Christ the Lord was a baby in Bethlehem. The angels had told them this. Another group of visitors were wise men. They gave wonderful gifts.

Read Luke 2: 8-20 (page 1090), Matthew 2: 1-12 (page 1030)

C. Jesus is the Savior for people from all nations

The shepherds were Jews. But some Jews did not respect them because shepherds were poor. But, the shepherds must have been good men. They pleased God. The wise men were foreigners. They were not Jews. The wise men came from a country whose people did not know the real God. But, God guided them. Now they had found this baby. He would be greater than anyone that they had ever known. Both groups of men showed faith. They did not give honor to a prince in a palace. The shepherds saw Jesus in an animal's barn. The wise men came to a simple home. Jesus is the Messiah not only for the Jews. He is for all nations.

Questions

1. Why did the Romans need to count the people?
2. Why did Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem?
3. Where was Jesus born?
4. Who came to Bethlehem to see Jesus?
5. Who did Jesus come for?

The birth of Jesus Christ:

Jesus is humble

Vocabulary:

afford: what you can buy with the money you have

afford: gave

heir: a person who inherits from previous generation (e.g. parents)

carpenter: person who makes things from wood

greedy: a person who only cares about money

attitude: behavior towards others

A. Jesus was a poor man

Jesus lived like a very humble man. Our Lord could have been the son of a rich woman, or the son of a king. He could have been born to a very important family. But Jesus was actually the son of a poor woman. That was a humble act for Jesus, because Jesus was really the Son of God.

We know that Joseph and Mary were poor. When Jesus was 1 1/2 months old, Joseph and Mary took him to the Temple. Then they offered a gift to God. The Jewish law told people what they should give. Mary and Joseph's gift was the cheapest. It was all that they could afford. They offered two birds. Jesus was the heir to all things. But He had become one of the humblest men. From birth He was poor. He lived in a poor family. Joseph was a carpenter.

Read Leviticus 12: 6-8 (page 111), Luke 2: 21-35 (page 1090)

B. Jesus lived like a servant

Jesus chose to come as a servant. He took the humble form of a human. He chose to give up His place in Heaven. Jesus did this to obey God, His Father. He even obeyed His Father by dying on the cross for us.

Jesus did not come to earth just to make some changes in the world. He came to show a different way to live. Jesus showed that a man could be humble. He showed this by loving and serving others.

Jesus served people all His life. He made sick people better. He made worried people calm. The last time that Jesus ate with His disciples, he took a towel. He washed the disciples' feet. This attitude began at Bethlehem. He lay in the manger there among the animals.

Read Philippians 2: 6-11 (page 1242), Mark 5: 25-34 (page 1070), Luke 12: 22-31 (page 1107), John 13: 3-17 (page 1142)

Questions

1. How did Jesus live?
2. What type of family was Jesus born to?
3. What did Jesus chose to become? Why did He chose this?
4. How did Jesus show that a man can be humble?
5. Give examples of how Jesus served others.