

The Birth Narratives

KEY VERSES

Luke 1:31–33





Lesson Overview (TEACHER)

TRANSITION

Years 1 and 2 chronicled the Old Testament, which depicted God rebuking Israel's sin and indifference and promising the future Messiah Himself. Year 3, Lesson 1 begins the New Testament. After centuries of waiting, God starts to fulfill the ancient prophecies as angels announce the miraculous birth of Jesus, the long-awaited Savior and King.

CENTRAL TRUTH

God fulfills His promises miraculously.

KEY TEXTS

Luke 1:1–4, 26–56; 2:1–52; 3:23–38; Matthew 1:18–2:23

SPOTLIGHT ON THE GOSPEL

Jesus was born of a virgin and conceived by the Holy Spirit; this made Him fully man and fully God. Jesus is the prophesied Savior who came and died for the sins of His people. Believe in His death and resurrection and be saved!

Family Devotional (PARENT)

This section explains what the Family Devotional covers for parents to use with their children each day of the week. Each devotional reinforces the lesson taught in Sunday School.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

- Day 1 **The Birth Narratives (Sunday School review)**
Luke 1:1–4, 26–56; 2:1–52; 3:23–38; *Matthew 1:18–2:23*
- Day 2 **Announcement to Mary and Her Song of Praise**
Luke 1:1–4, 26–56
- Day 3 **Genealogies of Jesus**
Matthew 1:1–23; *Luke 3:23–38*
- Day 4 **Jesus' Birth**
Matthew 1:24–25; *Luke 2:1–21*
- Day 5 **Testimonies of Simeon and Anna**
Luke 2:22–38
- Day 6 **The Wise Men**
Matthew 2:1–23
- Day 7 **Jesus' Childhood**
Luke 2:39–52

LAST WEEK

Review 9
Lessons 44–49

NEXT WEEK



The Birth Narratives

THE BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY AND JOSEPH

NOTE: Do not read this commentary aloud to the children. The commentary is designed to help educate and prepare the teacher for the lesson. The teacher's goal in studying the commentary is to better understand the lesson.

The story of Jesus' birth and boyhood is told in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Luke began with a prologue (Luke 1:1–4) that promised to give “an orderly account” of the whole of the life of Jesus. Matthew began with a genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:1–17) through the line of David, tracing back to Abraham. This genealogy was intended to affirm that Jesus is the rightful “Christ” (v17)—the long-awaited Messiah. Luke also wrote a genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:23–28) to highlight that He is truly a man descended from Adam (v38).

The story of Jesus' birth is told through a series of announcements. The first announcement was given directly to His mother, Mary (Luke 1:27), by the angel Gabriel (v26). Mary's hometown was Nazareth in Galilee (v26) and was a virgin (v27) betrothed to Joseph, who was a descendant of David—these are pertinent details for the narrative that follows. The angel's greeting (v28) startled her, and she was “greatly troubled” (v29a), but the angel reassured her and said, “Do not be afraid, Mary” (v30). However, she was not fearful, but she was perplexed about the meaning of the angel's words (v29b). He had called her “favored one” who had “found favor with God” (vv28,30). She was favored because she would miraculously conceive (v31) and have a son who would be “the Son of the Most High” (v32). He would be a descendant of David (v32) and eventually a king Himself (v33), and “the Son of God” (v35); these titles meant that her son would be the Messiah! Mary was still concerned because she was a virgin (v34), so how could she have such a son? The angel delicately told her that the “power of the Most High” (v35) would accomplish this because “nothing will be impossible with God” (v37). Confirmation of the angel's words came when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth (vv39–40), and she was also expecting a child, despite being barren and “advanced in years” (see vv7,13,24,36,41). At their meeting, Elizabeth's child “leaped” in her womb (vv41,44), so Elizabeth blessed Mary (v42) because she knew Mary's child was her Lord (v43). Mary's joy overflowed in a song of praise called the Magnificat (vv46–56). This was a song of praise to the Lord for His might (vv49,51,52) and mercy (vv50,54). Mary understood that the birth of her son meant the Lord was fulfilling His promises “to Abraham and to his offspring forever” (v55; see Gen 12:1–3; 15:18–21; 17:6–8).

The second announcement of Jesus' birth was given to Mary's betrothed husband, Joseph (Matt 1:18–22). This came after Mary was pregnant with the promised son (v18). This would have been devastating news to Joseph before he understood God's purposes and who this child would be. But Joseph was “a just man,” so he did not want to shame Mary and planned to “divorce her quietly” (v19). However, “an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream” and told Joseph to marry Mary because this child was “from the Holy Spirit” (v20). *This child's name was to be “Jesus,” which means Savior, because He was born to “save his people from their sins” (v21).* Joseph was told that this was in fulfillment of a prophecy (Isa 7:14) which promised a virgin would give birth to the Messiah (see Matt 1:22–23). Joseph was obedient to the angel's instruction (vv24–25).

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Finally, the time for Jesus' birth arrived; however, it did not happen in the couple's hometown of Nazareth but in Bethlehem. This must have been a difficult trip since Mary was late in her pregnancy, but it was necessary because a decree from the Roman Emperor (Luke 2:1) required Joseph to be registered in his ancestral hometown,

Bethlehem (v3)—“the city of David” (v4). This also fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2; Matt 2:5–6). *After Mary had given birth to Jesus (Luke 2:6), she “wrapped him in swaddling cloths,” which was meant for a newborn baby, and “laid him in a manger,” a feeding trough for animals (v7).*

THE SHEPHERDS OF BETHLEHEM AND THE MAGI

Yet another announcement came, this time from an angel of the Lord to shepherds who were “keeping watch over their flock by night” (Luke 2:8). *The startled shepherds were given great and joyous news: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (v11).* They were instructed to find a “baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger” (v12). A heavenly host of angels appeared and praised God (vv13–14). When the shepherds arrived in Bethlehem, they found everything as the angel had told them; they glorified and praised God (vv15–20). After eight days, Jesus was taken by His parents to the temple to be circumcised and was given the name “Jesus” in obedience to the announcement they had received (v21). At the temple, they were met by a man named Simeon (v25) who confirmed that this child was “the Lord’s Christ” (v26) and the one who would bring “salvation” (v30). They also met a prophetess named Anna (v36), who testified about this child to “all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem” (v38) because Jesus would bring that redemption.

After Jesus was born, “wise men from the east” (Matt 2:1b), called Magi, came looking for one they said had “been born king of the Jews” (v2a). At first, they traveled to Jerusalem, which was the logical place for the king of the Jews to be born; they explained that they had come to worship this king by following a special star (v2b). Herod was king in Jerusalem at that time (v1a), and the Magi’s inquiry about another king of the Jews alarmed him (v3). Herod asked the priests and scribes where the Messiah was to be born, and they informed him in “Bethlehem of Judea” (vv4–6). He told the wise men and asked them to report back to him once this new king was found (vv7–8). The Magi resumed their search, aided again by the star (vv9–10). After arriving in Bethlehem, they gave gifts to the child (v11). The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they used a different route and returned home (v12). When Herod realized that the Magi had “tricked” him and ignored his command (v16a), he ordered the slaughter of the male children in Bethlehem to try to destroy the newborn king as well (vv16b–18). However, God had sent an angel to warn the family to flee to Egypt, and the child was saved (vv13–15). Later, the family returned to Nazareth (vv19–23; Luke 2:39–40), where Jesus grew up. His upbringing was that of a normal young man (vv40,52); however, on one occasion, He seemed to have an awareness that He had a special mission. Each year, His family took a trip to Jerusalem for Passover (v41). On this yearly trip, when Jesus was 12 years old (v42), it was discovered that Jesus was missing as the family was returning to Nazareth (vv43–45). His parents returned to Jerusalem to search for Him, and they found Him in the temple “sitting among the teachers” (v46). On that occasion, “all who heard him were amazed at his understanding” (v47). When His parents mildly reprimanded Him for not being more attentive (v48), He said to them, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (v49; indicating He knew that He had a special relationship to God the Father).

LESSON SUMMARY

Luke 1:26–38 and Matthew 1:18–25 record angelic announcements of Jesus’ miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit. Mary, a virgin, and Joseph, her betrothed, obediently accepted their roles in God’s plan for the Davidic King and Son of God. Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem and fulfilled the prophecies of being from David’s line and being born in the city of David. Shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and magi recognized and worshiped Him as the promised Savior.

The following section is provided for you to use as a devotional. This will help you prepare for your upcoming Generations of Grace lesson time. *Check off your progress as you go.*

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Additional Resources

gracecurriculum.org

Teaching Outline

This section is designed to be used as a clean copy of your notes for teaching the lesson. Follow the teaching outline below as a step-by-step guide during your Sunday School lesson.



- ☐ **PRAY** with your class that the children would understand the central truth and gospel message, and that you would teach the children effectively.
- ☐ **REVIEW** last week's lesson and the central truth to begin your lesson.
- ☐ **INTRODUCE** this week's lesson and the central truth using the selected introduction, illustration, or application from our additional resources page.

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- ☐ **READ** the key texts from Scripture you selected that connect to the central truth.

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- ☐ **TEACH** your class using your summarized notes and questions from the **LESSON OUTLINE**. The points provided are the main headers from the commentary. Use the visual aid you selected and always connect your lesson back to the central truth.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. THE BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY AND JOSEPH (LUKE 1:26-38; MATTHEW 1:18-22)

- Who came to visit Mary and told her she would have a very special Baby?

2. THE BIRTH OF JESUS (LUKE 2:1-7)

- What unusual place did Mary lay Jesus in after He was born?

3. THE SHEPHERDS OF BETHLEHEM AND THE MAGI (LUKE 2:8-38, 41-52; MATTHEW 2:1-52)

- Who did the angel tell about baby Jesus' location first?

- ☐ **CONCLUDE** this week's lesson with the spotlight on the gospel and tie it into the central truth and the lesson you just taught.

- ☐ **PRAY** for the children hearing this lesson that they would be saved and follow the LORD.