

Open Bible Stories - The Birth of Jesus

Introduction

Key Idea

The story of the birth of Jesus teaches us how God sent his Son, the Messiah, at the perfect time in human history in order to save his people from their sin.

Core Belief Verse

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

Galatians 4:4-5

God's Big Story

The eternal God created all things in six days.

He made a good and perfect world.

He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation.

But humans rebelled against God and ruined God's creation.

God set to restore his world through his promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless all nations through Abraham.

God kept his promises across the generations.

God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac.

God gave Isaac a wife and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau.

God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation.

God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, and used him to rescue his family.

God caused his people, the Israelites, to multiply in the land of Egypt; eventually, they became slaves.

But, God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to deliver his people from their slavery.

God sent judged the Egyptians with harsh plagues; in the final judgment, he passed over his people who covered their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

Then, God delivered the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

God made a covenant with the Israelites and made them his people.

God tested Israel in a series of wilderness wanderings and eventually brought his people into the promised land of Canaan.

God raised up deliverers to lead Israel and rescue them from their enemies.

God formed Israel into a kingdom. He made a covenant with King David and promised to send a king that would rule his people forever.

Many of Israel's kings were evil and the kingdom of Israel divided into two kingdoms.

God sent prophets to warn his people of God's judgment and call them to repent.

When Israel did not repent, God sent his people into exile. After many years, he brought them back to the land.

Throughout the Old Testament, God promised to send his Messiah to deliver his people from their sin.

After many years, the prophet John was born. He would prepare people for the coming Messiah.

At the perfect time, God sent his Son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin Mary.

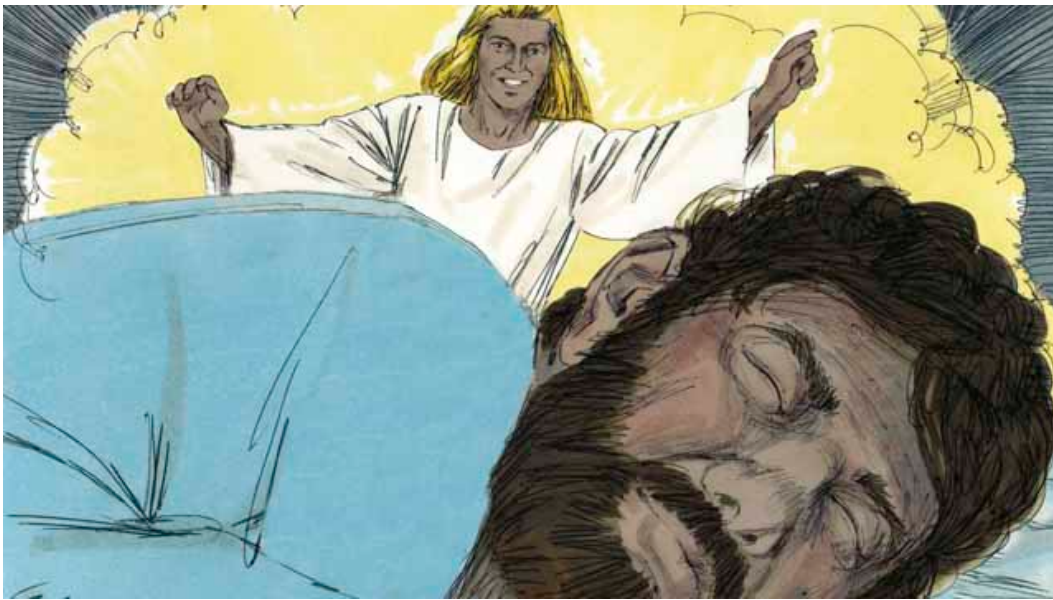
The Story: The Birth of Jesus

23-01



Mary was engaged to a righteous man named Joseph. When he heard that Mary was pregnant, he knew it was not his baby. However, he did not want to shame Mary, so he decided to have mercy on her and to divorce her quietly. But before he could do that, an angel came to him in a dream and spoke to him.

23-02



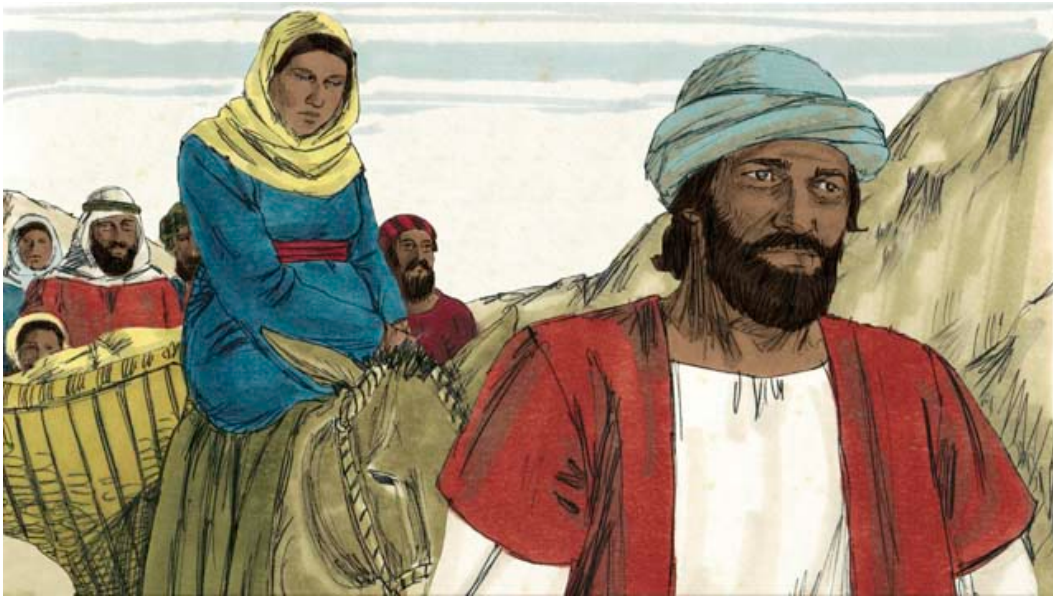
The angel said, "Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby that is in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son. Name him Jesus (which means 'Yahweh saves'), because he will save the people from their sins."

23-03



So Joseph married Mary and took her home as his wife, but he did not sleep with her until she had given birth.

23-04



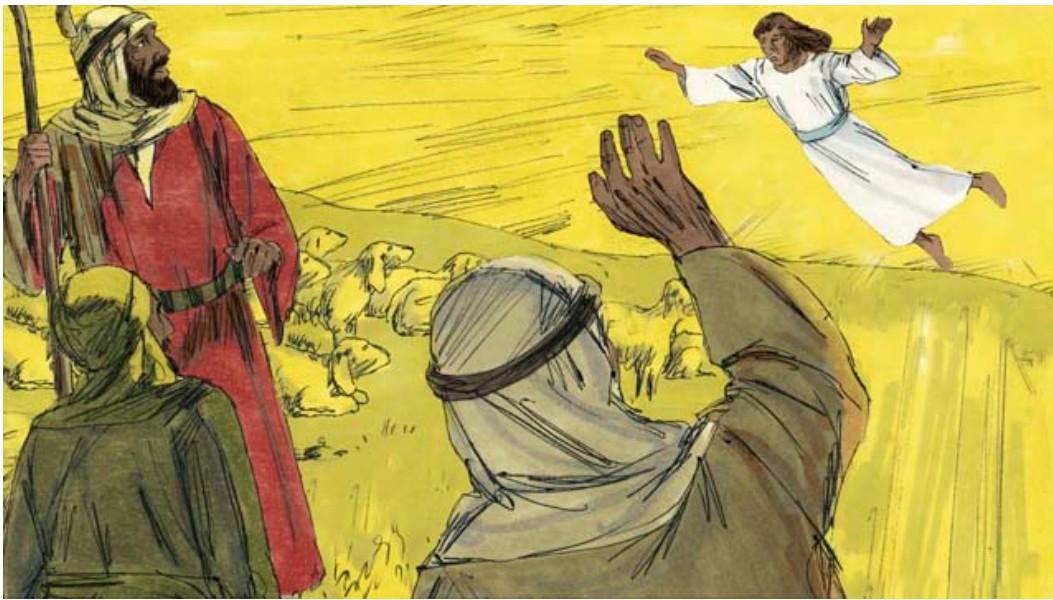
When the time was near for Mary to give birth, she and Joseph made a long journey to the town of Bethlehem. They had to go there because the Roman officials wanted to count all the people in the land of Israel. They wanted everyone to go to where their ancestors had lived. King David had been born in Bethlehem, and he was the ancestor of both Mary and Joseph.

23-05



Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem, but there was no place for them to stay except for where some animals were kept. It was there that Mary gave birth to her baby. She laid him in a feeding trough, since there was no bed for him. They named him Jesus.

23-06



That night, there were some shepherds in a nearby field guarding their flocks. Suddenly, a shining angel appeared to them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Do not be afraid, because I have some good news for you. The Messiah, the Master, has been born in Bethlehem!"

23-07



"Go search for the baby, and you will find him wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a feeding trough." Suddenly, the skies were filled with angels. They were praising God. They said, "May all honor be to God in heaven. May there be peace on earth to the people he favors!"

23-08



Then the angels left. The shepherds left their sheep to look for the baby. They soon arrived at the place where Jesus was and they found him lying in a feeding trough, just as the angel had told them. They were very excited. Then the shepherds returned to the fields where their sheep were. They were praising God for everything they had heard and seen.

23-09



There were some men in a country far to the east. They studied the stars and were very wise. They saw an unusual star in the sky. They said that it meant that a new king of the Jews had been born. So they decided to travel from their country to see the child. After a long journey, they came to Bethlehem and found the house where Jesus and his parents were staying.



When these men saw Jesus with his mother, they bowed down and worshiped him. They gave Jesus expensive gifts. Then they returned home.

A Bible story from: Matthew 1-2; Luke 2

Community Study: Servant of All - Viewing Our Leadership as Service

- **Key Idea:** viewing oneself as a servant
- **Key Passage:** Mark 10:35-45
- **Main Session:** OBS 23 (The Birth of Jesus)

Recite the Core Belief Verse (3-5 minutes)

The verse below summarizes the teaching of the current passage. Read the verse out loud as a community. Read it again several times as a group until the whole community can recite it from memory.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law. He did this to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. Galatians 4:4-5

OR

The Word became flesh and lived among us. We have seen his glory, glory as of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Sing a Song (3-5 minutes)

Choose a song to sing to praise God and encourage one another.

Read the Passage (3-5 minutes)

Jesus came into the world to save sinful humans. Although Jesus is greater than humans, he came to serve humans. As a community, read the following Bible passage together to understand the godly approach to leadership, power, and authority.

35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask you." 36 He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" 37 They said, "Allow us to sit with you in your glory, one at your right hand and the other at your left." 38 But Jesus replied to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup which I will drink or endure the baptism with which I will be baptized?" 39 They said to him, "We are able." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I will drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you also will be baptized. 40 But who is to sit at my right hand or at my left hand is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." 41 When the other ten disciples heard about this, they began to be very angry with James and John. 42 Jesus called them to himself and said, "You know those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be this way among you. Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be the slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:35-45

Explore the Idea (10-15 minutes)

Jesus is the ultimate example of serving others. He shows us that we should not seek to put ourselves first but to serve others. This kind of leadership calls us to sacrifice for others. As a community, use the following questions to discuss the teaching of the biblical story.

1. In this story, what did the disciples want from Jesus? How did Jesus reply to their request?
2. What did Jesus teach his disciples about leadership, authority, and ministry?
3. How is Jesus the ultimate example of this kind of leadership?

4. How will you approach your role in this ministry/work by being a servant of others?

List Names (5-10 minutes)

Spend time as a community listing the names of people that God wants you to serve. Specifically, list out church members, networks, and people groups God has put in your life to serve.

Pray to God (5 minutes)

Have each member of your community kneel down in prayer. Have each person pray that God would give him or her a servant heart.

Movement 1: Understand the Story

Read each question aloud. Give the group time to answer before sharing the answer.

Observation Questions

23-01

What kind of man was Joseph?

He was a righteous man.

Was the baby Joseph's baby?

No. When he heard that Mary was pregnant, he knew it was not his baby.

What did Joseph plan to do with Mary since she was pregnant?

Joseph planned to divorce Mary quietly because he did not want to shame her.

Who appeared to Joseph in a dream?

An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream.

23-02

What caused Joseph to change his mind and marry Mary?

An angel came and spoke to him in a dream and said, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife."

What did the angel tell Joseph about the baby?

The angel told Joseph that the Spirit caused Mary to become pregnant, the baby would be a son, and he was to name him Jesus.

What is the meaning of the name Jesus?

It means 'Yahweh saves.'

Why was the baby to be named Jesus?

The baby was to be named Jesus because Jesus would save people from their sins.

23-03

What did Joseph do with Mary after the angel gave him this message?

Joseph married Mary and took her home to be his wife.

What did Joseph refrain from doing with Mary?

Joseph did not sleep with Mary until she had given birth.

23-04

Where did Joseph and Mary go when the time was near for Mary to give birth?

Joseph and Mary made a long journey to the town of Bethlehem when it was time for Mary to give birth.

Why did Joseph and Mary make the long journey to Bethlehem?

Joseph and Mary had to go there because the Roman government told everyone to go to where their ancestors had lived in order to be counted.

Why was Bethlehem important?

King David was born in Bethlehem, and he was the ancestor of both Mary and Joseph.

23-05

What problem did Joseph and Mary encounter when they arrived in Bethlehem?

When Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem there was no place for them to stay except a place where animals stayed.

In what kind of place was Jesus born?

Jesus was born in a place where animals stayed.

What did Mary do when Jesus was born?

Mary laid the baby in a feeding trough since there was no bed.

What did Joseph and Mary name the baby?

They named the baby Jesus.

23-06

Who appeared to shepherds who were guarding their flocks in a nearby field?

A shining angel appeared to the shepherds.

How did the shepherds respond to the angel?

The shepherds were terrified.

What was the angel's message to the shepherds?

The angel told them, "Do not be afraid, because I have some good news for you. The Messiah, the Master, has been born in Bethlehem!"

23-07

What instructions did the angel give the shepherds?

The angel told the shepherds to go search for the baby.

How would the shepherds know it was the baby?

The baby would be wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a feeding trough.

Who suddenly appeared in the sky and what were they doing?

The skies were suddenly filled with angels who were praising God.

What did the angels say?

The angels said, "May all honor be to God in heaven. May there be peace on earth to the people he favors!"

23-08

What did the shepherds do after the angels left?

After the angels left, the shepherds left their sheep to look for the baby.

How did shepherds know the baby when they found him?

The baby was lying in a feeding trough just as the angel told them.

What did the shepherds do after they had seen the baby?

They shepherds were very excited. They returned to the fields, praising God for what they had heard and seen.

23-09

Who came from a country far in the east to see Jesus?

Some men who studied the stars and were very wise came from the east to see Jesus.

How did the wise men from the east know that a new king of the Jews had been born?

They saw an unusual star in the sky and said it meant a new king of the Jews was born.

What did the wise men from the east do when they saw the unusual star?

The wise men from the east traveled to see the child. They came to Bethlehem and found the house where Jesus and his parents were staying.

23-10

What did the wise men do when they saw Jesus?

They bowed down and worshiped Jesus, and gave him expensive gifts.

Movement 2: Theological Questions

What Does This Story Teach Us?

1. Who is Jesus and what has he come to do? What does the story of the birth of Jesus tell us about who Jesus is and what he has come to do?
2. What does it look like to faithfully serve Jesus? How is Joseph a godly example for us to follow?
3. What are appropriate responses to Jesus? How do the responses of people to Jesus in this story teach us about proper responses to Jesus?

Movement 3: Live It Out

Personal Implications & Applications From The Story

Guide the group to discuss practical obedience from this story and name concrete next steps.

1. What have you learned about who Jesus is and what he has come to do?
2. How is Jesus inviting you to follow and faithfully serve him?
3. Which of the characters in this story (and their responses) most challenges you to grow in your faith?
4. Think about this week. Where does "The Birth of Jesus" challenge you to obey God in a practical way?
5. How does this key idea shape one decision you need to make right now: The story of the birth of Jesus teaches us how God sent his Son, the Messiah, at the perfect time in human history in order to save his people from their sin.

Movement 4: Retell the Story

Invite the group to retell the story several times until they can tell it clearly and faithfully.

1. Can someone retell "The Birth of Jesus" from beginning to end in their own words?
2. Retell this story again, but focus on what God did at each key moment.
3. Retell the story in three parts: beginning, middle, and ending. What changed in each part?

4. If you were teaching this story to your family tonight, how would you tell it simply and clearly?

Church Ministry

Reflect on how this story can edify and mature the Christian community. Design a way to minister this story to your church community.

Ministry Preparation: Take time to consider how you could minister this story to others. What setting, audience, or approach would you use? Record your ideas below.

Ministry Implementation: Minister this story to a group of believers as you had planned. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching or lead a discussion. Record your ministry plan below.

Ministry Reflection: Think about what you learned from ministering this story to other believers. What went well? What would you do differently? Reflect on your experience below.

Movement 5: Share It

Help each person plan how they will share this story with others before the next gathering.

1. Who is one specific person you will share "The Birth of Jesus" with this week?
2. When and where will you share this story with them?
3. What is the one main truth from this story you want them to remember?

Report-back next meeting: Who did you share with, and what happened?

Mission Engagement

Consider how you will witness this story to unbelievers. Design a way to share this story and engage them in what it teaches about Christianity and the gospel.

Witness Preparation: Take time to consider how you will witness this narrative to unbelievers. What context, relationship, or opportunity will you use? Record your ideas below.

Witness Implementation: Share this story with an unbeliever. Use the information in this study to help develop a natural conversation or teaching. Record your plan below.

Witness Reflection: Think about what you learned from sharing this story with unbelievers. What did they respond to? What questions did they ask? Reflect on your experience below.