



Enter the Story

Birth of a King

A narrative about God's promise
and His presence.

THE BIBLE

Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2, John 1

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

- The gift of life is truly a miracle. Tell us about the first time (or a time) that you held a newborn. What did it feel like to hold a baby? Who did you get to hold, and how did it affect you?

Rewind the Story

- Daniel – Advisor to Kings & Lion Tamer
- Queen Ester – For Such a Time as This
- Homecoming – Nehemiah & Ezra
- Time Between Times – 400 years of silence.

Hear the Story

Scene One: Birth Announcement

In the beginning of time, Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God, and through Him, all things were made. At just the right time, almost four hundred years since God last spoke through His prophets, He planned to become flesh and live among the people.

During this time, the Israelites, called Jews, had been under the control of other nations for hundreds of years. They were now ruled by the Romans, the most powerful empire that had ever existed. The Jews were still waiting and hoping for a king who would come to save them and lead them into victory.

Finally, God sent an angel to a young woman named Mary in the town of Nazareth. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. The angel named Gabriel appeared to her and said, *“Don’t be afraid, Mary; God has chosen to bless you. You will become pregnant and have a son, and you are to name him Jesus (which means ‘God saves’). He will become a king whose kingdom will never end!”*

Mary asked the angel, *“But how can I have a baby? I am still a virgin.”* The angel replied, *“This will happen supernaturally by God’s Spirit, so this baby will be called God’s son. Remember … nothing is impossible with God!”* Mary said, *“I am God’s servant. May everything you have said come true!”* After that, Mary sang to God, thanking Him for choosing to bless her. And just as the angel had said, Mary became pregnant.

When Joseph found out that Mary was expecting a child, he decided to break off their engagement quietly. The law would have permitted him to have her killed if she had an affair. But one night, Joseph had a dream. An angel appeared to him and said, *“Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child in her is from God. You are to give him the name Jesus, for He will save the people from their sins.”* So Joseph took Mary as his wife, but he did not sleep with her until after the baby was born.

Months later, as Joseph and Mary were traveling to Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth. No rooms were available for them at the local inns, so they found an animal stable, and that is where their baby was born. They named the boy Jesus, meaning “one who saves,” just as the angel had told them. Mary wrapped Him in strips of cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough.

That night, a group of shepherds were out in the field taking care of their sheep when an angel suddenly appeared and frightened them. The angel said, *“Don’t be afraid; I am bringing good news for everyone! The one who will save you, the Messiah, has been born tonight in Bethlehem! You will know it’s him when you find a baby in a stable wrapped in strips of cloth.”*

The shepherds said to each other, *“Let’s go to Bethlehem as fast as we can to see the miracle God told us about.”* When the shepherds ran into town, they found Joseph, Mary, and the baby in the stable, just as the angel had said. After this, they went and told everyone what they had heard and seen, and the people were truly amazed.

Scene Two: Magi and A King

After Jesus was born, wise men called Magi traveled from the east to Jerusalem and asked King Herod, the ruler there, *“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star and have come to worship him.”* When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, so he called the Magi in secret and said, *“Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me so that I, too, may go and worship him.”*

So they went on their way, and the star they had seen had guided them from the east to Bethlehem and stopped over the place where Mary and Joseph were living. As the wise men entered the house, they were overcome with joy and kneeled down and worshipped Jesus. They brought him expensive gifts of gold, spices, and perfumes. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

When they had gone, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, *“Get up and take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”* So Joseph got up, took Mary and Jesus, and left for Egypt. When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in the surrounding area who were two years old and under. Eventually, after Herod died, Joseph and Mary moved back to Nazareth, where Jesus grew strong, wise, and full of God’s grace.

Scene Three: Joseph and Mary’s Lost Boy

When Jesus was twelve years old, he and his family attended the annual Passover festival in Jerusalem. On the way home, Joseph and Mary assumed that Jesus was in their caravan but traveling with some of their other relatives. Later, when they stopped to sleep for the night, they realized he was nowhere to be found.

In a panic, Joseph and Mary went back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. Three days later, they finally found him – He was in the temple courts discussing deep questions with the religious teachers. The teachers were all amazed at His understanding and insights. His parents didn't know what to think.

"Son!" his mother said, "Why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic and have searched everywhere." "But why did you need to search?" Jesus asked. "You should have known that I would be in my Father's house." But Joseph and Mary didn't understand what he meant.

So Jesus returned to Nazareth with his parents and was obedient to them. His mother thought deeply about what had happened. Jesus grew in both height and wisdom and was loved by God and by everyone who knew him.

Retell the Story

- How long had it been since God spoke to His people?
- Who did God choose to speak to? What was the message?
- Where was Jesus born? And who came to visit?
- What was Herod's reaction to Jesus' birth?
- What did Herod do and how did Jesus get away?
- What happens to Jesus as he grows up?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What were some things from this story that made you wonder?
- What did we learn about Joseph? What did we learn about Mary?

- What was unique about Jesus' birth? Where was he born?
- Do you think it was important for Jesus to be born of a virgin mother? Why?
- Who was Jesus a descendant of? How might this be significant?
- What else did you hear in this story that reminds you of what the prophets said about the promised Messiah?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What else are you noticing about God from this story?

Join the Story

1) Angels & Dreams

God has been silent for over 400 years, and all of a sudden, we have angels delivering messages and dreams warning people of danger. What do you make of this sudden increase in communication from God? Does God still use angels and dreams to communicate with people today? Explain your thoughts.

2) A Different Kind of King

Jesus was born where the animals were kept. His first visitors were the shepherds (the lowest end of the social totem pole) and the magi (mystical stargazers from faraway lands). Jesus could have been born in a palace and had celebrities attend his birth, but that didn't happen. Why didn't God display all His power for the new King? Why do you think God chose these circumstances as His entry point into our world? And what do you think this might say to us about the way God chooses to work in our lives today?

3) The Real Christmas Story

Take a minute to read Revelation 12:1-17. What is different in this version of the Christmas story? What connections or similarities do you see in the "traditional" Christmas story? What do you think might be going on "behind the scenes" in our lives today? Is there spiritual warfare? If so, where do you see it in your lives or in our world?

Pray

God,

Thank you for a change in the story! As we have looked at all that has happened to Your people, and just when we thought it was hopeless, You came to earth as the hero! Thank you for giving us a different kind of king and giving us hope through Your less-than-glamorous human birth. We are so excited to look closer at the life and ministry of Jesus. Thank You for keeping all Your promises! Amen.