

Sponsor's Guide

To be used with Junior High, Young People and Adult

That It Might Be Fulfilled— Prophecies Concerning Jesus, the Messiah

Quarterly Aim: To show that the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom was foretold by the prophets.

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About the Writer



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Prophecies of Christ's Birth

Lesson Text: Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-10.

Related Scripture: Genesis 3:15; Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 1:39-56; 2:4-7.

Application: The student will learn about the details of Christ's birth.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

God's Message to Mary, Luke 1:26-35.

God sent an angel named Gabriel to reveal His will for Mary's life. Mary was God's choice to be the mother of Jesus. She was a woman of faith and purity. God favored her and blessed her to be the mother of Jesus. "Found favour"(verse 30) refers to God's grace. God gave Mary the grace she needed to serve God as the mother of Jesus. After salvation, grace enables servants of the Lord to do His will by His strength.

God's message to Mary was that she would be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God, caused great fear and confusion. She was comforted by the words of the angel when he said, "Fear not" (verse 30). Her confusion was from the fact that she was a virgin. She wondered how this could be. Mary was more than just an unmarried, young woman. She was morally pure in that she had never been with a man. God's explanation revealed the Holy Spirit would cause her to conceive.

Mary was to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. She is not to be worshiped or revered as someone greater than other people. She should be commended for her moral purity and great faith in God. She was a willing servant even though the message was very unusual. She consid-

ered God's will to be the best choice for her life.

Mary gave birth to Jesus in the usual manner. She experienced all the normal things women do when they are expecting. The birth was like all others. The conception by the Holy Spirit meant the Son to which she gave birth did not have a sin nature. This was God's plan for our Kinsman-Redeemer Jesus Christ to have a sinless, fleshly body.

EXAMINING THE TEXT

Isaiah 7:14. The prophet Isaiah revealed a sign from Heaven. He gave the sign to wicked King Ahaz. The sign from Heaven was to be fulfilled by a virgin giving birth to a son. The son's name was to be Immanuel. "Immanuel" means God with us. Jesus came to be God among us, a living God in the flesh. He came to be among us to be the Savior of the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). He came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Isaiah and other prophets testified about Jesus' identity. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus promised the long awaited fulfillment of the

first promise given in the Bible (Genesis 3:15).

Micah 5:2. The prophet Micah pinpointed the place where Jesus was to be born. God revealed to Micah that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem. "Ephratah" means fruitful. Bethlehem means house of bread. Jesus the Bread of Life was born in a village about five miles from Jerusalem. The history of Bethlehem has several important events associated with it. Jacob's wife Rachel was buried there. Naomi's family lived there. David was born there. David was anointed to be king at Bethlehem. Although it was a small village, it was God's choice where important events happened. God can do great things with little. Bethlehem was called the "city of David" (Luke 2:4). It was also known as the town "where David was" (John 7:42). Jesus, the Son of God, was born into the family line of David through His mother's ancestry. Through Bethlehem, we understand God's plan for Jesus to be born of the kingly line of David.

Matthew 1:18-25. Joseph received the Lord's message about the birth of Jesus (verses 18-21). The angel's message came while Joseph was struggling with a decision concerning how to deal with Mary and her condition. To the world, it appeared as if Mary had been unfaithful and immoral. His compassion for her was so great that he did not want her situation to be an exhibition. Put "away" (verse 19) refers to divorce. The engaged woman was considered married even before they came together as husband and wife. "Was minded" (verse 19) means intending or willing. He considered it a private rather than public matter. God sent the angel to instruct Joseph concerning what he should do. The message included the fact that Mary was not immoral. Her child was the Son of God and that Joseph should take her home to live with her as his wife and name the child Jesus. The name "Jesus" (verse 21) means Savior.

The fulfillment of the prophecy was recorded for our benefit (verses 22-25).

Isaiah's prophecy and all other prophecies concerning Christ's first coming were fulfilled (Isaiah 7:14). Joseph obeyed God's instructions given to him by the angel. He received the angel's message in a dream. God had not given any words to mankind through dreams, visions or messages sent by angels or speaking audibly in over four hundred years. This time interval between the Old and New Testament is called the silent years. At the time of Jesus' birth, God used various means to communicate His will and words to mankind. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Jesus came into the world at God's right time as the Living Word.

Matthew 2:1-10. The wise men came from the East (verse 1). The eastern country probably was in the region of Persia. In that land, they made a great study of the stars. They also had the prophecy of Balaam. "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth" (Numbers 24:17). At the time Christ came into the world, the prophet's message about a star in Israel would be fulfilled. The Bible does not reveal how many wise men came. The words "wise men" (Matthew 2:1) mean scientist or magician. Although they brought gifts fit for a king, the Bible does not declare that they were kings. The time and place of Jesus' birth is certified in the Scripture as Bethlehem during the time of Herod's rule. Sufficient details are given to prove the account is factual.

Their question concerned the birthplace of Jesus (Matthew 2:2). They knew something Herod did not know. A male child had been born that had been identified as the King of the Jews. Jesus is

a legitimate heir to the throne of Israel through the royal line of David by His mother Mary. Joseph the stepfather of Jesus was of David's family, as well, but from the accursed part that no longer had any claim to the throne. Herod's rule was appointed by the Roman government. Jesus' right to the throne was established by God through the promise made to David to have the kingly line among His descendants. Herod did not know the birthplace of Jesus the King of the Jews although it was a part of Micah's prophecy. The question must have caused great anxiety to Herod who went to great lengths to find and destroy the new King. His efforts to kill the infant King fulfilled Old Testament prophecy about sorrow or weeping in Bethlehem.

The biblical order of events explains how God's plan worked (verse 2). God's plan had three parts. The first thing that had to occur was the birth. After the birth, the star appeared. When the star appeared, the wise men began their journey. God planned the birth of Jesus for His exact right time. "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). The word "fulness" means accomplished or fully come. The Bible declares it was "the time"—God's exact moment. According to Old Testament prophecy, a "Star" was to arise (Numbers 24:17). When the wise men saw the new star, they used it as a guide to make their journey. Ship travel already used the stars to maintain the right direction. The study of the stars was very popular in the East. When the wise men saw the star, they knew its existence was very important.

The answer was discovered in the Old Testament (Matthew 2:3-6). Herod had to make an investigation to find out where the child was to be born. He made an inquiry of the chief priests and scribes. The chief priests knew Micah's prophecy. The scribes also knew where the place was. Their knowledge made it possible

for them to immediately give Herod the correct answer. "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). God chose a seemingly insignificant village for the place in which His Son was to be born. His humble circumstances as a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger did not detract from the wonder of Jesus' birth. God's Word held the key to the answer to Herod's question.

Herod's request was a deceptive one (Matthew 2:7, 8). He claimed a desire to also go and worship the Lord. He discussed the matter thoroughly with the wise men. He needed to know when the star appeared. The wise men studied the stars so diligently that its appearance was a great matter to them. If Herod knew when the star appeared, he could estimate the age of the child. By the time the wise men came to Jerusalem, months had passed. The long journey of the wise men was not over when they reached Jerusalem. They had to travel a little farther in order to come to the place where Jesus was. They revealed a great desire to see Jesus. They allowed nothing to hinder them from achieving their goal. The wise men did not have to make a great search to find Jesus. God led them from the East all the way to Jesus' location. The wisdom and power of God made the occasion possible.

The wise men rejoiced when they saw Jesus (verses 9, 10). He was no longer in the manger. They came to the house where He was. "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way" (verses

11, 12). Worship should always include rejoicing at coming into the presence of the Lord. Their joy was unparalleled. "Exceeding great" (verse 10) refers to a very high degree, a mega amount. The wise men teach us about worship. Their worship was not a matter of convenience, but their greatest priority. They came to give honor, praise and thanksgiving to the Lord by their giving. They were able to give because God had blessed them.

RELATED SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:15. The first promise of the Bible gives a promise of the coming Messiah and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the Seed of the woman. Satan's seed are the children of the devil. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 John 3:10). "Enmity" (Genesis 3:15) means hostility or hatred. Satan's children hate the children of God. The word "bruise" (verse 15) indicates a violent conflict. Jesus defeated Satan by His death, burial and resurrection.

Psalms 2:6. This prophecy reveals the ultimate, worldly position of Jesus Christ the Messiah as the King over all the earth during the millennial reign. Jesus will reign for one thousand years from Jerusalem in peace and righteousness upon the earth. The "holy hill of Zion" refers more to a concept than a place. It is the rallying point of the people of Israel that they considered the most precious to defend. It is the heart of Israel which in that day will enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 9:6, 7. Jesus the Messiah came as any other child is born. The birth process was not unusual. The conception was by the power of the Holy Spirit. God gave His Son Jesus to come the first time as the Lamb. When He returns to earth, He will be recognized as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The five names listed reveal the gracious character

of God and His power to meet every need of humanity. His reign will be established in Jerusalem and will extend to the whole earth.

Luke 1:39-56. Elisabeth's words of joy spoke of Mary being blessed to be God's choice to be the mother of Jesus. Elisabeth was expecting the birth of her son, John the Baptist. The baby leaped in her womb at the presence of the Lord. Elisabeth spoke of Mary's salvation and her great faith in the Lord. Mary believed God would do as He said. She believed the message of the angel. She was willing to be used by God. Mary responded to Elisabeth's joy with her own words of praise for the Lord.

Luke 2:4-7. God was at work controlling the nations, kings, rulers and laws so that Jesus was born at the right time and place to fulfill prophecy. This shows the power of God to move in the world to accomplish His will. Jesus was Mary's firstborn. Although she had sons and daughters after Jesus, they were the children of Joseph. Jesus is the Son of God. The birth of Jesus occurred in the normal way and according to the usual number of days. Jesus was born at exactly God's perfect time.

RELEVANCE OF THE TEXT

There were many prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus the Messiah. His forerunner, John the Baptist, would prepare the way for the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3-5). It was fulfilled in Matthew 3:3. The birth of John the Baptist was an act of God that enabled Zacharias and Elisabeth to have a son after they were past the age of childbearing. Mary, a virgin, gave birth to Jesus. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. These prophecies and others were fulfilled.

The prophets prophesied concerning Jesus, His birth and the events of His life. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently,

who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10-12). While the prophets did not understand all they spoke about Jesus, they all testified of Him. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). God foretold the birth and life of the Messiah.

The reliability of the Bible, salvation and the gospel of Christ are seen in the text. If God's Word is not true, we have no trustworthy communication from God on which to base any religious beliefs. If Christ is not the sinless son of God born of a virgin, there is no salvation. The gospel message rests on the foundation that Jesus is who He said He was, that He died as the righteous substitute offered for every sinner and that His gospel does not end with Jesus in the tomb but risen from the dead and later ascended to Heaven. This text shows the power of God to provide a means for mankind to be forgiven of their sinful condition and to come to God for salvation. The blood of Jesus the sinless One is sufficient to cleanse any sinner. Jesus offered His pardon and His salvation to all people. Those who come to

God through Him by grace through faith have the assurance of an eternal home in Heaven.

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

The willingness of those personally involved in the birth and life of Jesus demonstrates a great faith. Joseph was willing to believe the angel's message that Mary was a virgin with child. Mary was willing to yield herself to God's plan to be the mother of Jesus. Zacharias and Elisabeth were joyfully willing to be the parents of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. They embraced their opportunity as childless, elderly adults past the time of childbearing. John the Baptist accepted his role as the one to introduce Jesus to the world and prepare the material for the church Jesus built. John preached the gospel and baptized believers by Heaven's authority. Jesus called out saved, scripturally baptized believers, gathered them unto Himself and established His churches during His earthly ministry. By faith, each of these people were willing to follow Jesus according to the will of God.

God has a plan for every life. His plan must be accepted by faith. It includes salvation, scriptural baptism, church membership and serving the Lord faithfully as an active, working part of a New Testament church. God's individual will for each life may require suffering, leaving one's home and family or a lifetime commitment to serving God in a particular work. We need to accept God's will and implement it in our lives according to Bible truths.