

Week 11: The People and Miracles of Christmas

John 1:1–5, 14; Luke 1; Matthew 1:18–25

Objectives

Students will . . .

- Explain the miraculous nature and importance of Jesus’s birth.
- Identify the characters of the Christmas story.

Week at a Glance

To the Teacher: Pray for your students daily and prayerfully study the verses given above.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lesson	Jesus, the Creator, as a Baby	Gabriel, Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John	Gabriel Comes to Mary	An Angel Comes to Joseph	Show What You Know
Big Idea	What is Christmas all about?	Gabriel visited Zechariah and Elizabeth.	Gabriel visited Mary.	Joseph had a dream.	Review for and administer this week’s quiz.
Videos					
Materials	A wrapped present		Optional Matching Activity	Optional Matching Activity	
Copies	Daily Bible Connection		Optional Matching Activity	Optional Matching Activity	Show What You Know Quiz

MONDAY: Jesus, the Creator, as a Baby

Genesis 1; Genesis 3; John 1

Hook:

[Bring in a wrapped present to generate interest and get students thinking.]

Discussion

What are some of the things you like about Christmas? [Ask various students.]

Answer: Answers may include things such as receiving gifts, eating or making special food, shopping, decorating, and taking a break from school.

Why do we have Christmas?

Answer: Answers may vary. Some may be well aware that we are celebrating Jesus's birth.

The reason for Christmas started all the way back in the Garden of Eden. We have been learning why Jesus had to come already this year.

Question for Comprehension: Do you remember the very first verse in the Bible? [Allow students to respond.] What words does this verse begin with?

Answer: Genesis 1:1 begins with "In the beginning."

Read Aloud: Genesis 1:1

There's another verse in the Bible that starts the same way, but it's not in Genesis.

Does anyone know where this verse with a similar beginning is found?

Answer: John 1:1

Read Aloud: John 1:1

Remember that while God is **one** God, He is also **three** distinct persons.

[Draw a triangle and ask students to recall the three persons of the Godhead.]

Question for Comprehension: What are the three persons in God?

Answer: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit [If students are unable to recall all three persons, help them as needed.]

How did God create the world?

Answer: By speaking. He used His *words* to speak creation into being.

Words are what we use to express ourselves. The most complete way God could express Himself is through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was there at the beginning with God. Jesus Christ *is* God.

While this truth is challenging for us to wrap our minds around, understanding it will help us understand all we will learn in the next few weeks about Jesus, God's Son, coming to earth.

Reading Focus: What two key words are repeated two or more times in John 1:3–5 and tell us about two of the most important ideas of Christmas? [One of the key words appears two times and the other appears three times. If students need additional help, tell them that both key words begin with the letter *L*.]

Read Aloud: John 1:3–5

Questions for Comprehension: What are the two repeated words?

Answer: *Life* and *light*

Have you noticed at Christmastime that people hang up lights around town? In North America, Christmas comes in a dark time of winter. And in many places around the world, twinkling lights fill the night with a special glow at Christmastime.

We need *light* where it is dark. We need *life* where there is death.

When God created the world, He started with *light*. And the animals and humans He created were never designed to *die*. But something happened early on that brought spiritual darkness and death—as well as physical death—into the world.

Question for Comprehension: Do you remember what happened soon after Creation that brought about death?

Answer: Adam and Eve ate from the tree God told them not to eat from.

Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil put Adam and Eve and all humans after them on the death path. On the death path all humans would not only physically die but also forever be separated from God. All humans needed someone to rescue them.

Do you remember the promise God made when Adam and Eve chose to sin against God?

Reading Focus: What would happen to the head of Satan the snake?

Read Aloud: Genesis 3:15

Questions for Comprehension: According to this promise, what would happen to Satan?

Answer: His head would be crushed.

Who would be the Head Crusher who would destroy Satan and the death he brought into the world?

Answer: The son of the woman

Eve's children grew up and had children who grew up; and Eve's grandchildren had children who grew up, and their children had children who grew up and on and on it went for thousands of years. We've been near the beginning of God's big story (show them Genesis at the beginning of the Bible), but now we are jumping ahead in the story (show them the gospels in the Bible). We have been traveling from the time of Adam and Eve to the time of Noah and the tower of Babel. Now we are zooming ahead for a few weeks so that we can understand Christmas and celebrate Jesus Christ, the hero who would be *Light* and *Life*—crushing Satan and death.

Reading Focus: How does John describe what happened at Christmas?

Read Aloud: John 1:14

Question for Comprehension: What does it mean that the Word became a human being?

Answer: Words are how we communicate. God is going to directly communicate to His human creation by sending Jesus as a human being.

Why did Jesus, as God, want to make His home with us?

Answer: He loves us (John 3:16). When you love someone, you want to be with them. Jesus not only wanted to be with us but also knew He had to make a way for us to be forever with God. Jesus didn't come to *point* the way to God. He came to *become* the way to God.

What does it mean that the glory people saw in Jesus was the glory of the One and Only?

Answer: Jesus was from God. He has the glory of God because He is God.

Jesus is full of grace and truth. That means He is full of the mercy, favor, honor, and power. It also means Jesus is full of truth—there is nothing shifty or tricky or dishonest in Him.

When you look at a picture or manger scene, remember that baby Jesus who is fully God came to become fully human, so He could live with us.

Discovery Words

1. Rob and Sara were **engaged** for six months before they were married.
engaged—to commit or promise to be married
2. Jesus offers us **eternal** life.
eternal—never ending; lasting forever
3. The prophet said Jesus would be called **Immanuel**.
Immanuel—“God with us”
4. The **Messiah** came to earth as a baby.
Messiah—the promised Son of God
5. My brother came to my *rescue* when I was lost.
rescue—help offered to someone who is in distress or danger

Memory Verse

John 1:14

TUESDAY: Gabriel, Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John

Luke 1

Discussion

[Write the word *CHRISTmas* on a board for students to see.]

Connect to Prior Learning: What are we celebrating at Christmas?

Answer: The birth of Christ.

Why do we need Christmas to have happened?

Answer: Since Adam and Eve, all humans have been separated from God and on the path to death. All humans need Jesus Christ to have come so He could reconnect us with God.

God used a man named Luke to write down what He wanted recorded about Jesus.

Reading Focus: How does Luke describe the events he is going to tell about Jesus?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:1–3

Question for Comprehension: How does Luke describe what he was writing?

Answer: As an orderly report of exactly what happened.

What do these verses say were the source material for his writing?

Answer: He talked to eyewitnesses, people who saw the things that happened.

Luke was alive at the same time as Christ. He was one of Christ's disciples, His twelve closest followers.

Reading Focus: Why did Luke write such a detailed historical report?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:4

Question for Comprehension: Why did Luke write his report?

Answer: So someone named Theophilus—and anyone else who reads this book—would know what is true about Jesus.

God's Word gives us many small stories that make up the big story of Jesus's birth. In these Bible accounts we are going to get to know people that were extremely important in the life of Jesus.

Today we will look at the amazing story of the birth of Jesus's cousin.

Reading Focus: What are the names of the people we need to know?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:5

Question for Comprehension: Who was the king of Judea at this time?

Answer: Herod

Herod was *not* a good king. We will find out more about him later.

What was the name of the priest?

Answer: Zechariah. A priest was someone who had been chosen to serve in the temple of God.

What was Zechariah's wife's name?

Answer: Elizabeth

Reading Focus: What do we learn about Zechariah and Elizabeth?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:6

Question for Comprehension: What people that we have learned about in Genesis do Zechariah and Elizabeth remind you of?

Answer: Noah (and Enoch)

When people live in a way that is right before God, they don't have any problems, right? Everything goes their way, and all is happiness? No! Noah pleased God and experienced hardship. Everyone on earth, after sin entered in, has hard things happen to them.

Reading Focus: What hardship did Zechariah and Elizabeth experience?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:7

Question for Comprehension: What was hard for Zechariah and Elizabeth?

Answer: They had no children.

Why was it not likely that they ever would have children?

Answer: They were old.

Reading Focus: Where was Zechariah when something amazing happened?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:8–9

Question for Comprehension: Where was Zechariah?

Answer: In God's temple.

Zechariah was chosen to go into the temple as a representative of the people before God. This was an important job. He went inside by himself.

Reading Focus: What happened when Zechariah went inside?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:11–12

Question for Comprehension: What happened to him?

Answer: An angel appeared to him.

Imagine what your face would look like if you thought you were alone before God and all of a sudden, an angel was standing beside you.

How did Zechariah feel?

Answer: He was amazed and terrified.

Angels are not cute, fat, baby-like creatures with wings. They are God's fighting force and messengers. They are terrifying.

Reading Focus: What message did the angel have for Zechariah?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:13–14

Question for Comprehension: What was the angel's news?

Answer: That Zechariah and Elizabeth were going to have a baby boy.

What were they to name the baby?

Answer: John

This baby would be a cousin to Jesus Christ.

Reading Focus: What would John do?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:15

Question for Comprehension: What would John do in His lifetime?

Answer: Prepare the way for the Lord.

John would later be called John the Baptist. He was a prophet who went before Jesus to tell people that Jesus was God's Promised One.

Reading Focus: How did Zechariah respond?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:18

Question for Comprehension: Does it sound like Zechariah had much faith?

Answer: No. He had doubts (not faith) because God's message to him about having a baby seemed impossible.

Reading Focus: How do you think the angel felt about Zechariah's doubting this message from God?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:19-20

Question for Comprehension: What was the angel's name?

Answer: Gabriel

What did Gabriel say would happen to Zechariah because of his lack of faith?

Answer: He wouldn't be able to speak until after John was born.

Instead of praising God with his tongue, Zechariah had used his tongue to talk about his doubts. During the months of silence, the fact that he couldn't speak was like an assurance to him. There *had* been an angel. He didn't just dream it. The silence helped him remember.

Reading Focus: What happened when Zechariah left the temple?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:21-22

Have you ever played a game, like Guesstures™ or charades, in which you have to act out what something means without saying anything about it? How would you act out that you had seen an angel?

Tomorrow we will find out who else God sent the angel Gabriel to visit.

Memory Verse

John 1:14

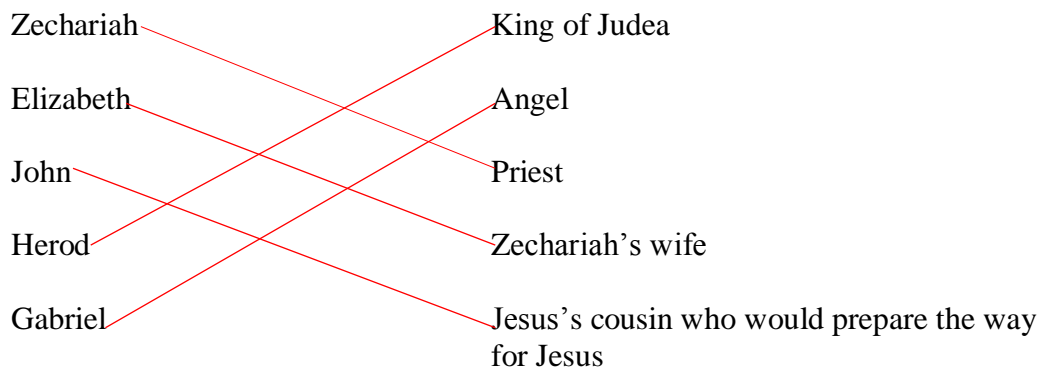
WEDNESDAY: Gabriel Comes to Mary

Luke 1

Connect with Prior Learning

Note: Display the two lists below on the board if you want to do this together as a class. Use the optional activity page if you want students to work independently on this matching activity.]

Instruct students to match each name in the first list with its description in the second list. Use these lists to review the Christmas characters students have learned about so far. This is simply review and is not intended for grading.



Discussion

Yesterday we ended with Zechariah, the priest, coming out of the temple and trying to tell the people what he saw even though he couldn't speak.

Reading Focus: What happened next?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:23–25

Question for Comprehension: What was Elizabeth thankful for?

Answer: She was going to have a baby.

What did she say the Lord had taken away?

Answer: Her shame.

In our culture many women do not have babies. In Elizabeth's culture and time very few women didn't have babies. Those who had babies were considered blessed by God. There was great shame for those who did not have babies. Elizabeth and Zechariah had lived under this childless shame for decades.

Today we are going to find out how the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth fits in with Jesus's birth.

Reading Focus: Who else did the angel Gabriel have a message for?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:26–27

Question for Comprehension: What was the name of the person Gabriel went to talk to?

Answer: Mary

Who did it say she was engaged to?

Answer: Joseph

Before we even find out Mary's name, the Bible tells us she was a virgin. That means she was not married and had not ever been immoral and slept with someone.

Reading Focus: What did Gabriel say to Mary?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:28

Question for Comprehension: What did Gabriel say?

Answer: God had blessed Mary. God was with Mary.

Reading Focus: How did Mary respond?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:29

It had to be strange for Mary to have an angel show up and talk to her. Gabriel mentioned a special blessing. She had to have wondered what he was talking about.

Reading Focus: What did the angel say next?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:30–31

Question for Comprehension: What did the angel tell her?

Answer: Not to be afraid. God is pleased with you. You will have a baby boy and name him Jesus.

Reading Focus: Who did the angel say Jesus would be?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:32–33

Question for Comprehension: What do we learn about Jesus just from this message from Gabriel?

Answer: He will be (1) great, (2) the Son of the Most High God (i.e., He is God), (3) a king who will rule *forever*. (4) He is from the line of David (i.e., a descendant of David). (5) His kingdom will never end.

Reading Focus: How did Mary respond?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:34

Question for Comprehension: What was Mary's reaction?

Answer: She was shocked and in disbelief.

Mary noticed the most obvious problem.

Reading Focus: How did Gabriel say that problem would be solved?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:35

Question for Comprehension: Who did Gabriel say would solve the problem?

Answer: The Holy Spirit would come and cover Mary, allowing her to get pregnant with Jesus.

Wow! That was the most unexpected, shocking message ever. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, all who were born naturally were born in sin. But Jesus was not going to be born naturally. He was going to be born supernaturally—to a virgin! This was totally impossible humanly speaking, but nothing is impossible for the God who created man from dust and woman from man’s rib.

Reading Focus: What did Gabriel tell Mary to help her understand how God can do the impossible?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:36–37

Question for Comprehension: What other pregnancy was proof that God can do the impossible?

Answer: Elizabeth’s pregnancy with John

Reading Focus: How did Mary respond?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:38

Question for Comprehension: What was Mary’s response?

Answer: She responded humbly as a servant of the Lord. She accepted the plan God had for her.

Wow! Do you understand what Mary said? She totally accepted the plan of God that Gabriel told her. She didn’t hesitate or try to decide if she liked the path God had chosen for her. She had pre-decided to serve the Lord and if the Lord God wanted her to have His baby—she would.

When Elizabeth found out she was having baby John, she knew that birth would take away her shame. But for Mary to become pregnant, as an unmarried woman, would mean that she would have extreme shame. People would think she had either been immoral *with* her fiancé, Joseph, or that she had been unfaithful *to* him with another man. Hardly anyone was going to believe her.

What Mary did next was head to the one person who would understand both a visit from an angel and a miraculous birth.

Reading Focus: Where did she go?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:39–40

Elizabeth was Mary’s relative. She was at least five months pregnant when Mary came to her.

Reading Focus: How did baby John respond when Mary came?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:41

Question for Comprehension: What did baby John do?

Answer: He jumped inside his mother.

Have you ever felt an unborn baby kick from inside his or her mother? Elizabeth saw Mary come in and felt her baby jump inside.

Reading Focus: What did Elizabeth do next?

Read Aloud: Luke 1:42–45

How good it must have been for Mary to feel like someone really understood. God would keep His promise to the world by sending a Savior to make a way off the death-path all humans were on. God would keep his promise to Mary just as He kept His promise to Noah. **God always keeps his promises.**

Memory Verse

John 1:14

THURSDAY: An Angel Comes to Joseph

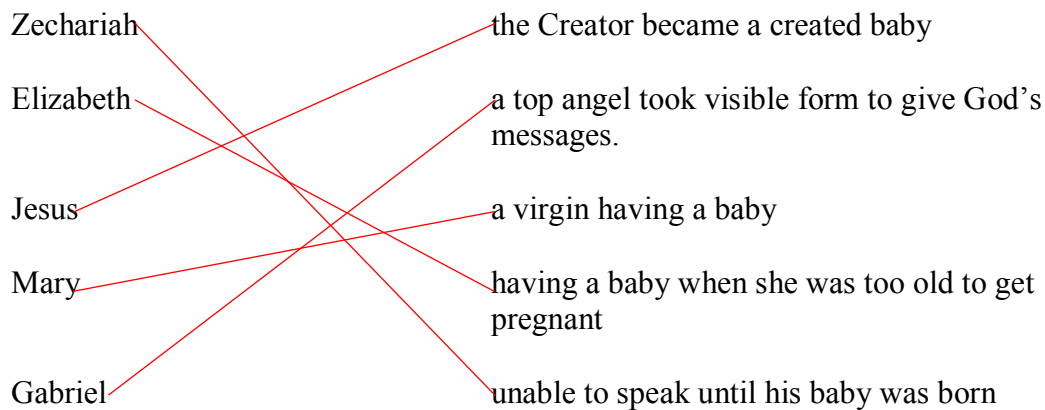
Matthew 1

Connect with Prior Learning:

Note: Display the two lists below on the board if you want to do this together as a class. Use the optional activity page if you want students to work independently on this matching activity.

Instruct students to match each name in the first list with its description in the second list. Use these lists to review the Christmas characters students have learned about so far. This is simply review and is not intended for grading.

To review what we learned yesterday, match the miracles with the people who experienced them.



Discussion

We've been reading from the books of the Bible named John, Luke, and Matthew. The books are named for the people who wrote them. When baby Jesus grew up, He chose twelve close followers. Matthew, Luke, and John were three of the twelve close followers (disciples) of Jesus Christ when He lived on earth. All three tell what they learned from God as they talked to people like Jesus's mother, Mary, and others who were alive when these events happened.

Reading Focus: What did Matthew have to tell us?

Read Aloud: Matthew 1:18–19

Question for Comprehension: What person is Matthew, the human author, focusing on in the verses we are looking at today?

Answer: Joseph

Who was Joseph?

Answer: Mary's fiancé

In the time of Joseph and Mary, if a couple was engaged, it was a sure thing; they were going to get married. Breaking an engagement actually took a divorce.

(One purpose of engagement in their day was like a pregnancy test. They didn't have pregnancy tests like we have, so they waited more than nine months to get married to make sure the woman was not going to have a baby. This was a way to show that she had kept herself pure for her husband.)

Joseph may not have wanted to divorce Mary, but to get married to someone who had been immoral would have put him in a place of deep shame. People would assume he had gotten her pregnant.

Reading Focus: What changed Joseph's thinking?

Read Aloud: Matthew 1:20–21

Question for Comprehension: What did the angel tell Joseph to do?

Answer: Take Mary as his wife

What did the angel say Joseph should name the baby?

Answer: Jesus

Reading Focus: What did the angel tell Joseph to help him understand what was happening?

Read Aloud: Matthew 1:22–23

The angel assured Joseph all this was as God had pre-planned it. In Isaiah, an Old Testament book, God had said that a virgin was going to have a baby boy who would be "God with us."

The angel was helping Joseph understand how he was part of God's big story of crushing Satan's head and making a way to rescue humans from the death-path.

Reading Focus: What is another name that Jesus would be called?

Read Aloud: Matthew 1:23

Question for Comprehension: What was the name?

Answer: Immanuel

What does Immanuel mean?

Answer: "God with us"

Reading Focus: What did Joseph do after this angel visited him in a dream?

Read Aloud: Matthew 1:24–25

Questions for Comprehension: Did Joseph obey all that God told him to do?

Answer: Yes

Do you think it was hard for Joseph to obey?

Answer: Yes

He took on all the shame of having a wife who people thought was immoral and a Son who people thought was illegitimate. In this culture Joseph's decision would forever change how people viewed him. His engagement and marriage and life were not going to happen the way he had planned it. Following God's plan would make Joseph's life hard in many ways—but God's plan would also be the rescue plan for Joseph and every other human. Joseph would be forever saved by the Son who he would help raise. While it was an honor to be entrusted with raising and

training the Son of God, it was an honor that brought much shame while on earth. Joseph took on the challenge of doing God's will, not his own.

Memory Verse

John 1:14

FRIDAY: Show What You Know (Key)

Multiple Choice: Choose the letter that best answers the question and write it in the blank.

A. 1. When we were dead in sin, who was the Son of God who came to be *Life* and *Light* into our spiritual death and darkness?

- A. Joseph B. Judea C. Jesus

A. 2. The birth of Christ is celebrated at

- A. Christmas B. Easter C. Valentines Day

Fill in the Blank: Read the verse below and write a word in each blank to complete each sentence.

Genesis 3:15 says, “I will make you and the woman hate each other. Your children and her children will be enemies. Her son will crush your head. And you will bite his heel.”

3. Satan is the heel biter.

4. Jesus is the head crusher.

Matching: Choose a character from the list and write a letter in the blank to match the character with his or her saying. The following sayings are not all actual quotations, but they are based on what happened. Some letters may be used more than once.

- A. Mary B. Joseph C. Elizabeth D. Zechariah E. Gabriel F. Herod

F 5. “I am the king of Judea.”

C 6. “I’m going to have a baby even though my husband and I are old.”

D 7. “How will I know that what you are telling me is true?”

E 8. “Your wife Elizabeth will have a child.”

A 9. “May it happen to me just as you said it would.”

E 10. “Do not be afraid... God is very pleased with you.”

B 11. “When I woke up, I did what the angel ... commanded me to do.”

C/D 12. “His name is John.”

C 13. “As soon as I heard . . . your voice, the baby inside me jumped for joy.”

Fill in the Blank: Write a word in each blank to complete the sentence.

According to John 1:14 . . .

14-15. The Word became a human being.

16-17. The Word was full of grace and truth.

Essay: Write your answer to the question in the space provided. Be sure to use complete sentences.

18-20. What does the account of Adam and Eve’s sin have to do with Christmas?

Answer should include something about how—because of Adam & Eve’s sin—all humans are separated from God and are on the path to death. Jesus had to come so He could reconnect us with God.