The Story of Jesus' Birth

TEACHERS' CHEAT SHEET

Angel Gabriel's visit to Mary and Mary's visit to Elizabeth: **Luke 1:26-56.**
The angel's visit in a dream to Joseph: **Matthew 1:18-25.**
Jesus' birth including the angels and shepherds: **Luke 2:1-20.**
Jesus' presentation in the temple, Simeon and Anna's testimony of Jesus: **Luke 2:21-40.**
The wise men or magi's visit to Jesus: **Matthew 2.**

Recommended Bible Memory Verse: **Luke 2:10-11** (Or Luke 2:11 for the younger kids)

Here are some highlights from this story:

(Please note: Zacharias and Zechariah are two different versions of the same name, found in different Bible versions. Please use whichever name is found in your preferred Bible version.

After the creation of the world, Adam and Eve sinned against God and disobeyed Him. They rejected Him as their Creator God. This sin resulted in spiritual death and separation from God. Sin was passed down to all people through Adam and Eve. There is nothing that we can do on our own to be saved from our sins.

Throughout the Old Testament (and for about 4,000 years from Adam and Eve to when Jesus was born), God had been promising to send a Savior that would take away the sins of God's people.

Zechariah was an elderly priest of the Lord. He was married to Elizabeth. They had never been able to have children, though they had prayed for children. There were now too old to have children.

Zechariah was offering a yearly sacrifice in the temple when he saw the angel Gabriel. Gabriel told Zechariah that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child who would fulfill God's prophecy as one who would go before God's promised Savior in the spirit and power of Elijah. This baby's name would be John and he would make ready a people prepared for the Lord and turn many people's hearts back to God.

Zechariah had a hard time believing these words because Elizabeth was past the child bearing years. Because of his unbelief, Gabriel said that Zechariah would be unable to speak
until after John was born. Zechariah returned home, and his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, just as Gabriel had said.

Meanwhile, Gabriel also came to a young woman named Mary who was engaged to be married to Joseph. Gabriel told Mary that she would bear a child named Jesus. This child would be great and would be called the Son of the Most High God and would be the promised Savior and forever King from the line of David. Jesus would be conceived by the Holy Spirit. He would have no earthly father. Mary humbly agreed to all that Gabriel told her and believed his word. This situation would have put Mary in a very difficult and shameful position of being a young, unwed mother, despised and rejected in her society.

Perhaps in light of this, God told Gabriel to tell Mary to go to Elizabeth, Mary's relative, who was pregnant with John. Mary went and when she came to Elizabeth, John jumped in Elizabeth's womb. Elizabeth called Mary, "the mother of my Lord", showing that Elizabeth fully understood that Mary's baby Jesus would be Elizabeth's Lord. Mary praised God in what is called her "Magnificat".

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about 3 months, then returned home.

Elizabeth gave birth to John. Her relatives wanted to name the boy Zechariah after his father, but Elizabeth and Zechariah both insisted that the baby be named John according to Gabriel's instructions. After Zechariah wrote that the baby's name would be John, his tongue was loosed and he prophesied through the Holy Spirit about Jesus' coming work: "God has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people! God has granted us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days." Because of Jesus, God's promised Savior, we would no longer be separated from God by our sin! We could experience forgiveness of our sins and we could serve God without fear in righteousness!

Meanwhile, an angel visited Joseph, the man engaged to marry Mary, in a dream. Joseph had already discovered that Mary was pregnant and was planning to quietly end the engagement because he didn't want to disgrace her but he wasn't the baby's father. The angel assured Joseph that the baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that Joseph was to take Mary as his wife. Mary would give birth to a Son, and His name would be Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. The angel referenced another prophecy (Isaiah 7:14) when he said that Jesus would also be called "Immanuel" which means "God with us." Joseph obeyed God and married Mary, but kept her a virgin until after Jesus was born.

While Mary was pregnant, Caesar Augustus sent out a decree saying that everyone must return to his own city of origin to be counted. Mary and Joseph had to travel down from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Sometime after they arrived in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the "inn."
Interesting note: The "inn" was probably not a hotel, but rather a guest room. Traveling family lodged with family. Because of the census, many people from extended families were all converging at once. It may have been that there was no room in the family home guest room, so Mary and Joseph were actually lodging in the bottom story of the home that also housed the animals. Other Bible scholars have suggested that there was no room in the guest room because the family was disapproving of Mary's being pregnant before her marriage to Joseph. You can read more information on the ideas about the "inn" here: https://answersingenesis.org/holidays/christmas/christmas-no-room-for-an-inn/

That same night, God sent angels to announce Jesus' birth to some shepherds watching their flocks in the field. After hearing about the birth of the Savior, the shepherds quickly ran to see Jesus for themselves and worship Him. They come away, glorifying God and praising Him for all that they had seen and heard.

Far away in the east, the wise men or magi observed a special star in the night sky, indicating the birth of a King. They made plans to go to Israel to worship this infant King.

Eight days later, Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple to be circumcised according to the Jewish law. While there, an elderly man named Simeon, who was waiting for the promised Savior, saw Jesus and prophesized through the Holy Spirit that this was God's plan of salvation, "a Light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of God's people Israel." Mary and Joseph were amazed at the things Simeon said about Jesus.

As Simeon was speaking, an elderly woman named Anna came up and heard him. She started giving thanks to God and telling all of the people who were looking for God's promised Savior about the baby Jesus.

When the wise men arrived in Israel some time later, they went to Jerusalem expecting to find the new King there. They headed straight to Herod's palace first - but King Herod had no knowledge of an infant King. King Herod called the Jewish religious leaders - but they hadn't heard anything about a new King. They did tell Herod that if God's promised Savior had come, He should have been born in Bethlehem, about 5 1/2 miles away from Jerusalem. Imagine the discouragement of the wise men as they left King Herod's palace. Had they traveled all that way for nothing? Were they mistaken? Was God not faithful to His promises? As they came out, they looked up and saw the star once again. They were filled with great joy. God Himself led them the last few miles of their journey. King Herod and the Jewish religious leaders missed the chance to worship Jesus because they did not go the few miles to investigate. Their hearts were unwilling to worship God's promised Savior.

After the wise men worshiped Jesus, they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod because Herod had decided to kill the baby Jesus. King Herod didn't want anyone taking his throne. God protected Jesus by sending Mary and Joseph and Jesus to Egypt for a time.