

# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## WHO IS JESUS?

### LESSON 2: THE PROMISED MESSIAH AND THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH

Waiting a long time for something you really want is very difficult! To know it is coming, but to not know when or how it will come can be very stressful. You certainly would want to be very careful that you didn't miss its arrival when it finally did come, wouldn't you? How awful to be waiting and waiting just to find out it was right there in front of you!

The Israelites had been waiting for many centuries for the promised Messiah's arrival. They expected that He would come with great pomp and ceremony. However, the actual arrival of the Messiah came in a quiet, miraculous, and unexpected way that almost went entirely unnoticed.

Reading the account of the birth of Jesus in the book of Matthew is very helpful, and faith-building, as Matthew repeatedly says, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" (Matthew 1:22)

Throughout the Old Testament, prophecies of the coming Messiah fill the pages. The people knew about the one who would come as the "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, and Everlasting Father." They knew that He would be born and that He would be from the family of David. They knew He would establish a kingdom and a government that had no end (Isaiah 9). From that description alone, one might expect that the Messiah would be born in a King's palace surrounded by attendants and announced by Royal Proclamation. Rather, He was born in a stable and attended to by lowly shepherds.

Jesus' birth followed a quieter path, the details of which were also prophesied. Reading the account of the birth of Jesus in the book of Matthew is very helpful, and faith-building, as Matthew repeatedly says, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" (Matthew 1:22). From the name He was given, to the location of His birth; from the escape from Egypt, to Herod's slaughter of the innocent children, all of these details, and more, were prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled precisely by the details of Jesus' birth. Given the accuracy of the details, one would imagine that the people would recognize Christ's birth as the arrival of the prophesied Messiah, but the circumstances did not look like they had imagined, and so very many of them missed the point.

The sheer number of fulfilled prophecies is miraculous in itself, but there are other details which surround Jesus' birth that tell the most miraculous tale.

A very young woman named Mary was visited by an angel who told her that she would conceive and would give birth to Jesus. The message that the angel brought should have sounded very familiar to Mary as it was similar phrasing to that which was used in the prophecy in Isaiah 9. "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31-33)

Mary had the faith to believe that the Messiah would come and that His kingdom would have no end. The question she had was about her state, not about the divinity of Jesus. "How can this be

since I am a virgin?” she asked. The angel explained that this child would come from God the Father. The Virgin Birth is a mystery to be sure! “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be borne will be called holy—the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35)

There was no inappropriate relationship between God and Mary. There was no indiscretion on anyone’s part. This pregnancy came as a miracle. Mary remained a virgin until after Jesus was born, and so this child, borne of the Holy Spirit, was also holy! The child Jesus was fully holy as His heavenly Father is holy, and yet also born fully human. A miracle, and a mystery that our finite minds cannot fully fathom.

But what of the prophecy that said the Messiah would come from the line of David? Joseph, the man betrothed to Mary, was of the line and family of David. Being the earthly father of Jesus, and being Mary’s husband, Joseph’s lineage gave Jesus the earthly, legal position of being from the line of David (see Matthew 1).

Every prophecy surrounding the coming Messiah was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. There is not enough room in this lesson to marvel at the many, many fulfilled prophecies. However, let these few details be enough to arouse your curiosity and to stir up your faith.

The Lord has never failed to meet His promises. Reading the account of Jesus’ birth in the book of Matthew ought to build hope and trust in your heart as you see the faithfulness of God the Father to keep His word. He had a plan from the beginning and wrote it down in the Old Testament prophecies for all of us to see and to anticipate. Then Jesus was born, uniquely, amazingly fulfilling each and every prophecy.

For the people who missed His coming, the problem was not that there was a lack of evidence. The problem was that they were expecting the prophecies to be fulfilled in a different way. The King of Kings was born right in front of them, and they missed it because they were looking for, and expecting, something else.

May the Lord give us eyes to see what He is doing, and to trust in His ways. May we wait for His promises to be fulfilled without placing our expectations in a place of prominence over what the Lord intends. Let’s be watchful! The Lord always keeps His word and does His will. Let’s not miss it!

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## IN REVIEW

- The Lord has never failed to meet His promises. He had a plan from the beginning and wrote it down in the Old Testament prophecies for all of us to see and to anticipate.
- This plan was carried out through people who loved God – Mary, who was chosen to be the mother of Jesus and Joseph whom she married who was Jesus adoptive Father on earth.
- Jesus was born uniquely, amazingly fulfilling each and every prophecy spoken about Him.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- Take time this month to read the book of Matthew paying attention to each time he refers to the prophecies being fulfilled. Marvel at the accuracy of the Biblical accounts, and rejoice in the Lord who always keeps His promises.
- The story of the coming promised Messiah should fill us with deeper faith! When you consider the answers to prayer you are waiting for, or the promises from God's Word that you are waiting for, pray with great faith knowing that you are praying to a God who cannot lie, and who cannot be stopped from what He means to do. What are you praying for today?

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