

THE ORIGINAL CHRISTMAS STORY

The Story of the Birth of Jesus

From the Bible



New International Version

The Original Christmas Story

The Story of the Birth of Jesus

1. Jesus Christ's Eternal Preexistence **John 1:1-5**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.



2. To Us a Child is Born
Isaiah 9:2,6,7

about 730 B.C.

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

3. A Promised Ruler from Bethlehem
Micah 5:2,4,5a

about 730 B.C.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of
Judah,

out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.”

He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.
And he will be their peace.



***4. The Birth of John the Baptist foretold**
Luke 1:5-25

a year and 2 to 3 months
before the birth of Jesus
(early October, 6 B.C.?)

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside.

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be

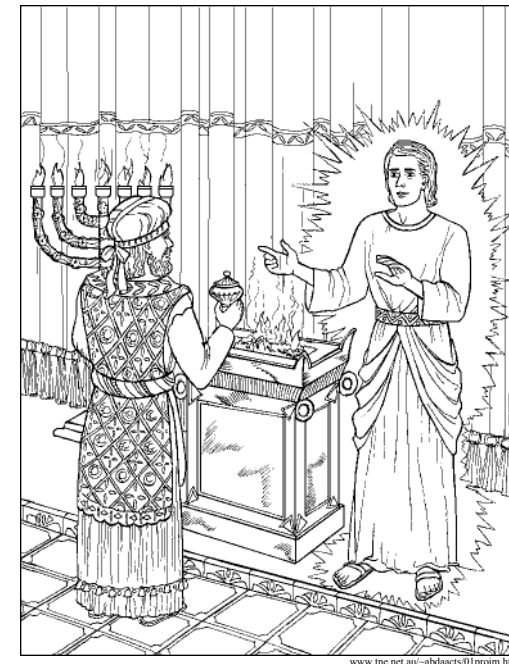
* These starred sections are about John the Baptist's birth. If this material is being read aloud as part of your family's Christmas celebration, these sections may be omitted, if desired. However, in many ways they form an integral part of the story, and you may want to include them.

The dates given to the right of the text are as accurate as is possible, and are not conjectural. The more specific dates in parentheses, on the other hand, are conjectural, being just one of a number of possibilities.

filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous —to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."



www.tnc.net.au/~abdaacts/01prom.htm

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

When his time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. “The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

5. The Birth of Jesus foretold Luke 1:26-38

9 months before the birth of
Jesus (late March, 5 B.C.?)

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.



6. Mary Visits Elizabeth Luke 1:39-45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”

7. Mary's Song

Luke 1:46-56

And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for
me—
holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their
inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
even as he said to our fathers.”

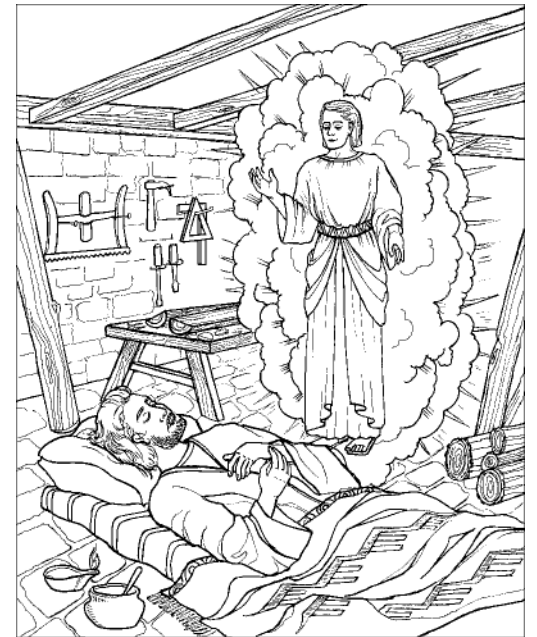
Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months
and then returned home.

8. Mary and Joseph Matthew 1:18-25a

6 months before the birth of Jesus, after
Mary's return to Nazareth (late June, 5 B.C.?)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about:
His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but
before they came together, she was found to be with child
through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was
a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public
disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.^a

But after he had
considered this, an angel
of the Lord appeared to
him in a dream and said,
“Joseph son of David,
do not be afraid to take
Mary home as your wife,
because what is conceived
in her is from the Holy
Spirit. She will give birth
to a son, and you are to
give him the name Jesus,
because he will save his
people from their sins.”^b



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^a Now at this point Mary and Joseph were engaged, not married. But “in the Near East betrothal is almost as binding as marriage itself. In the Bible the betrothed woman was sometimes called ‘wife’ and was under the same obligation of faithfulness, and the betrothed man was called ‘husband’.” (New Bible Dictionary, p. 788) The punishment by Jewish law for an unfaithful fiancée was death. (Deuteronomy 22:23-24)

^b “Jesus” means “He will save” in Hebrew.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”^c—which means, “God with us.”

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

***9. The Birth of John the Baptist Luke 1:57-66**

about the same time (early July, 5 B.C., after Mary has gone home?)

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John^d.” Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it,

^c Isaiah 7:14, about 730 BC.

^d “John” means “The Lord is gracious” in Hebrew.

asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

***10. Zechariah’s Song Luke 1:67-80**

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come and has redeemed his
people.

He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago)
salvation from our enemies

and from the hand of all who hate us—
to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear
in holiness and righteousness before him all
our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the
Most High;

for you will go on before the Lord to prepare
the way for him,
to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,

by which the rising sun will come to us from
heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and
he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

*11. John's Mission

John 1:6-9

There came a man who was sent from God; his
name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning
that light, so that through him all men might believe. He
himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the
light. The true light that gives light to every man was
coming into the world.

12. The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a
census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This
was the first census that took place while Quirinius was
governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to
register.

His birth, sometime between 12 and
4 B.C. (December 25, 5 B.C.?)

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth
in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, be-
cause he belonged to the house and line of David. He went
there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be mar-
ried to him and was expecting a child. While they were
there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave
birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and
placed him in a manger, because there was no room for
them in the inn.





13. The Shepherds and the Angels Luke 2:8-20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ^e the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

^e Or Messiah. “The Christ” (Greek) and “the Messiah” (Hebrew) both mean “the Anointed One”.



Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”



So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.



14. Jesus Presented in the Temple Luke 2:21-39a

8th day (January
1, 4 B.C.?)

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”^f

40th day (Feb-
ruary 2, 4 B.C.?)

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all
people,

^f This was the sacrifice of poor people. Those who were better off were expected to sacrifice a lamb and a dove. See Leviticus 12:6-8.

a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned...



15. The Visit of the Magi Matthew 2:1-12

time uncertain (early
February, 4 B.C.?)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

““But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of
Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will be the shepherd of my people
Israel.’g”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

^g Micah 5:2 (see page 1)



After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.



16. The Escape to Egypt Matthew 2:13-18

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”



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So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”^h

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 its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

“A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.”ⁱ

^h Hosea 11:1, about 750 BC

ⁱ Jeremiah 31:15, about 600 BC.

17. The Return to Nazareth Matthew 2:19-23; Luke 2:39b-40

soon after Herod's
death, April, 4 B.C.

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.”

So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

...they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.



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18. The Meaning of Jesus' Birth

John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-11

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something
to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death— even death
on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every
name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.



Suggested Reading Schedule

The dates for each reading are indicated in the rightmost column of the following chart. The dates that are not in parentheses are for a longer reading schedule. The first parenthesized group are for a shorter schedule, not including the readings about John the Baptist. The last column is intended to fit the readings into the traditional Novena schedule.

1. Jesus Christ's Eternal Preexistence	John 1:1-5.....	December 13	(17)	(16)
2. To Us a Child is Born	Isaiah 9:2,6,7	14	(18)	(17)
3. A Promised Ruler from Bethlehem	Micah 5:2,4,5a	15	(19)	(17)
*4. The Birth of John the Baptist foretold.....	Luke 1:5-25	16		
5. The Birth of Jesus foretold.....	Luke 1:26-38	17	(20)	(18)
6. Mary Visits Elizabeth	Luke 1:39-45	18	(21)	(18)
7. Mary's Song.....	Luke 1:46-56	19	(22)	(18)
8. Mary and Joseph	Matthew 1:18-25a	20	(23)	(19)
*9. The Birth of John the Baptist	Luke 1:57-66	21		
*10. Zechariah's Song	Luke 1:67-80	22		
*11. John's Mission	John 1:6-9.....	23		
12. The Birth of Jesus	Luke 2:1-7	24	(24)	(20)
13. The Shepherds and the Angels.....	Luke 2:8-20	25	(25)	(20)
14. Jesus Presented in the Temple.....	Luke 2:21-39a	26	(26)	(21)
15. The Visit of the Magi.....	Matthew 2:1-12	27	(27)	(22)
16. The Escape to Egypt	Matthew 2:13-18	28	(28)	(23)
17. The Return to Nazareth	Matthew 2:19-23; Luke 2:39b-40	29	(29)	(23)
18. The Meaning of Jesus' Birth.....	John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-11	30	(30)	(24)

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