

**TUTORIAL**  
**1.36**

# God was about to fulfill His promises concerning the Deliverer

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Luke 1: 26-31, Matthew 1:1, Deuteronomy 18:15-18, Psalm 110:4, Isaiah 9:7.**

## Last time

One of God's messengers, Malachi, described another prophet who would come just before the long-promised Deliverer. 400 years followed in which God seemed silent, but during which - we can now see - He was creating favourable conditions for the arrival of the Deliverer throughout that entire region of the world. In time, a child called John was born to a Jewish couple. His life-task, it was foretold, would be to bring a message that would prepare Israel for the arrival of the Messiah. Incredibly, this coming one would be the Lord Himself.

## A woman called Mary is to be the mother of the Messiah

In a small town in northern Palestine, a young woman has become engaged to a man who, like her, can trace his lineage back to King David. Mary, like all descendants of Adam, is a sinner, but she is one of those Jews who is earnestly waiting for the arrival of the Deliverer. Now, God sends an angel to inform her that God has chosen her to be the mother of the Deliverer. (Luke 1:26-31) The Narrative will show that she is someone who humbly recognises her sin and approaches God on His terms, conscious of her need for forgiveness. But she has not *earned* the wonderful privilege of being the Messiah's mother. God's choice to involve her in His plans is yet another instance of His grace. The angel goes on to tell Mary that when her son is born, she is to give him the name Jesus, English for the Hebrew Yeshua, meaning *Yahweh saves*. Jesus will, the Angel says, be the Son of the Most High.

## Jesus will be completely God and completely man

The second person of the three-in-one God is to become a man. God, a spirit, unrestricted by time or space, the all-powerful Creator, is to be born as a human baby. He will now restrict Himself to a human form with its limitations and frailties. Completely human, he will also be completely God. This is how God will bring about the rescue effort He'd promised back in the special garden, when man first turned away from Him...when sin and death entered. The angel also tells Mary that her son will reign as King forever. Some 6 centuries before, God had foretold these things through His prophet Isaiah. He wrote that a child would be born, a son given. He would be called things like Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. He would inherit the throne of King David, but His fair and just reign would never end.

Mary, of course, has questions. How can this happen? How can she give birth to a son? She has kept herself pure. She's a virgin. The angel reassures her that this is something that God will bring about. God who initiated life, the life-creator and giver, will simply see that a child grows in her womb and is born in the normal way. At the same time, He will most definitely *not* be a normal human child in some immensely significant ways. Having no human father, He will not inherit Adam's sin. He will be the one exception to the hard and fast rule that all humans are moving in a trajectory *away* from God. He will not, like other humans, assume a self-centred position in the world, even though He created it. He will not attempt to be His own storyteller, as people invariably do, even though He is God's greatest Storyteller. He will always take a humble place, always put His Father's wishes above His own, always eagerly point people to the Father and not to Himself. The Narrative will demonstrate these characteristics in dramatic ways.

Mary, with straightforward faith accepts that God can and will do everything the angel has told her will happen.

## **Matthew says that Jesus will be *the Christ***

One of God's appointed storytellers for Jesus, Matthew, would also be one of His companions on earth. At the beginning of his account (Matthew 1:1) in introducing a record of Jesus' lineage, he calls Him *Jesus the Messiah*.

Messiah is our English version of the Hebrew word Moshiach. In Greek, this term for *the anointed one* was translated *Kristos*, which became our English, *Christ*. So what does it mean when the Narrative calls Jesus "the Messiah" or "Christ"? We've already noted that it means anointed, but what is the significance of this? Anointing was an ancient ritual which involved pouring oil over someone's head to indicate they were chosen, set apart, for a particular task or purpose.

So when Matthew refers to Him as Jesus the Messiah, or the Christ, it alludes to the fact that He is God's chosen or anointed one.

Fifteen centuries before, Moses had passed on a message to the Israelites from God that He would one day raise up a **Prophet** from among the Israelites. God said that He would put His words in the mouth of this Great Prophet and that He would tell the people everything He commanded Him to say (Deuteronomy 18:15). Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy – he was anointed, specially chosen by God as the greatest of his Storytellers, the ultimate Prophet.

David, Israel's greatest human king and also one of God's prophets had written in a Messianic song, or Psalm, that the Promised One would be an eternal High Priest. (Psalm 110:4) The High Priests in the Levitical system came with the blood of animals to sprinkle on the atonement covering. But they, of course, had to do this year after year, generation after generation.

Jesus, as we'll see in the Narrative, was to be God's chosen **Priest** who would bring a one-time offering that would never have to be repeated.

As we already read, the prophet Isaiah – some 700 years before – had said that a descendant of David's would come and rule with justice and fairness forever. (Isaiah 9:7) Jesus was God's appointed **King** to rule all of creation. So the Messiah, the Christ, had been anointed or set apart by God to be His ultimate Prophet, Priest and King.

These instances from 3 of God's prophets - Moses, David and Isaiah - are just a few of many prophecies about the Deliverer. With God existing outside of the limitations of time, He was able to effortlessly weave into His Story threads which would re-appear in full clarity later in the Narrative. So throughout the record of His interactions with humans before the Messiah came – the Old Testament – numerous prophecies were made about the lineage, birth, life, character, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Narrative, which is now picked up by 4 of Jesus' companions and contemporaries, eyewitnesses to these events, will demonstrate God's commitment to completing even the smallest details of what He says He'll do.



## DISCUSSION POINTS

*God was about to fulfill His promises concerning the Deliverer*

1. Without going beyond what has been covered so far in the Biblical narrative, explain in your own words why the long-promised Deliverer *had* to be both God and man.
2. The Biblical narrative has repeatedly highlighted the fact that God communicates – that this is an essential part of who He is. With that as a backdrop, reflect on the Incarnation and the fact that, as the Christ, Jesus was God's ultimate Prophet to man. What do you think this actually means? Does it really have any relevance to our society in the 21st century?



## ACTIVITIES

*God was about to fulfill His promises concerning the Deliverer*

1. Find 3 different instances in the Old Testament where something or someone is *anointed*. Briefly describe the circumstances and the purpose of the *anointing*.
2. Choose one of the names for the Messiah mentioned in Isaiah 9:6 (Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace). Describe what you think might have come to mind for an 8<sup>th</sup> century BC Israelite when they heard that name. Then briefly describe your own thoughts and response to that name.