

**TUTORIAL**  
**1.37**

# The Deliverer was born and grew into manhood

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Matthew 1: 18-25, 2:1-18, Isaiah 7:14, Luke 2:41-52.**

## Last time

An angel came and told a godly young Jewish woman, Mary, that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Deliverer. His name was to be Jesus and He would be completely God and completely man. Having no human father, He would not be part of Adam's lineage and so would not inherit his sin. He was the long-promised Messiah, the Christ – God's chosen and ultimate Prophet, Priest and King.

## An angel explains things to Joseph

We continue with Matthew's account of the Messiah's birth. It is, of course, a familiar story to everyone from our culture. It's regular repetition in one form or another at Christmas time does potentially take away from our appreciation of what a truly remarkable event it was. Here though we follow the account, not as an isolated story but as part of God's one, entire Narrative. And these events of Jesus' birth are the truly remarkable beginnings of the climax, the culmination, of God's Story of His interactions with man.

As we noted, Mary is engaged to a man called Joseph. According to the Jewish law and custom of the day, this engagement or betrothal is just as binding as marriage. So the betrothal ceremony has happened, but Mary is still living in her family home until the actual wedding, at which time she will move to Joseph's house and the legal tie will be consummated. (Matt. 1:18-25) When Joseph finds out that Mary is pregnant and knowing they have not slept together, he comes to the natural conclusion. At this point he has open to him the option of divorcing her and even bringing her before the authorities to have her stoned for adultery. Instead, the text says, being a good man and not wanting to disgrace Mary before the community, he decides just to quietly break off the engagement. Knowing Joseph's character and that he'll care for Mary and her special child, God explains things and draws him into His plans. In a dream, one of God's angels tells Joseph clearly that Mary has not broken

her vows. She's pregnant because God has decided she will be. The same God who spoke all things into existence has now determined that a pure, virgin young woman, will be the mother of the Messiah.

His name, *Yeshua* (Jesus) "Yahweh saves", describes perfectly what He'll do - save His people from their sins. In addition, the angel says, He'll be called *Immanuel*, a name which joins the two Hebrew words for "God" and "with us". All of this perfectly fulfills Isaiah's prophecy, some 700 years before, that a virgin would conceive a child and call Him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). Joseph's response demonstrates faith, humility and obedience. Having understood the situation he proceeds to marry Mary, and when the baby is born, he calls Him *Jesus*, as instructed.

## **Jesus' birth, the wise men, and Herod**

Matthew goes on to describe the circumstances of Jesus' birth. (Matthew 2:1-18) Events, well documented elsewhere, dictate that Joseph and Mary are away from their home town of Nazareth when the baby is due. Instead, the birth takes place in Bethlehem, today a city in the Palestinian-controlled West Bank.

Wise men from the east of Palestine – perhaps ancient Persia – following a star they'd observed in the sky, come to Jerusalem asking after "the newborn king of the Jews". The Roman-appointed king over much of the Jewish lands, Herod, when he hears of this, is shaken by the thought of a potential rival to his throne. He passes on to the wise men what the Jewish religious experts tell him – there are Old Testament prophecies about a ruler and shepherd of Israel being born in Bethlehem. Pretending that he too wants to worship the new king, he requests that they come back with a location, once they've found him in Bethlehem. They follow the star to the house where Jesus is with His mother. There they give gifts worthy of royalty and offer worship to the child. Of course this was perfectly appropriate as it was actually God himself who they were exulting. Heeding a warning from God, they head home without going back to Herod.

Meanwhile, an angel warns Joseph that he should escape immediately with Mary and Jesus to Egypt because Herod is looking for Him. They get away, just in time. Herod, furious and willing to stop at nothing to protect his throne and dynasty, has all boys two years old and under in Bethlehem killed. This brutal action by Herod is hauntingly reminiscent of the edict made by the Egyptian Pharaoh that all the newborn Israelite males were to be killed. It is not difficult to see here, as back then, the hand of Satan who would like nothing more than to destroy once and for all God's plan to send the Deliverer. It's worth remembering that even though he failed in both those attempts, not for a moment in the intervening years since has he given up the fight. He and his angel followers are just as determined as always to use every tactic available to deceive people and to stop them from hearing God's Story.

## Jesus' formative years in Nazareth

Matthew records that after an unspecified period, God sends an angel to tell Joseph that it's time to leave Egyptian territory and return to Israel with Jesus and His mother. Notably, more than 7 centuries before, the prophet Hosea had foretold this return after the escape to Egypt...yet another instance of God embedding evidence of His authorship for those with the eyes and ears to recognise it in the unfolding Narrative of these true events.

The family returns to Nazareth, and this is Jesus' home town for His formative years – something also foretold by the prophets centuries before. Luke, the other of Jesus' biographers we've already heard from, comments succinctly about these Nazareth years, "There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favour was on Him." Jesus' physical and mental development is typical in many regards. But His growing up is also exceptional in terms of the relationship He enjoyed with God, His Father. For the first time, with the exception perhaps of the pre-Fall days in Eden, God enjoys the kind of relationship with a human being He's always intended.

## Jesus visits the temple as a young man

Luke recounts a very instructive incident from the life of the young Jesus. (Luke 2:41-52) At 12 years of age, He goes with Joseph and Mary on their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. This of course was the yearly remembrance of the time when God had brought death to every Egyptian household but had graciously given the Israelites a way of escape.

After the festival in Jerusalem is over, Joseph and Mary set out for Nazareth. Travelling for safety on the road with a large group of festival pilgrims, they don't realize until the end of the day that the young Jesus is not with them. Not finding Him among their relatives and friends they go back to Jerusalem and eventually track Him down. To their surprise, He's sitting in the Temple dialoguing with the Jewish religious leaders. Joseph and Mary, and everyone else for that matter, are amazed - Luke records - "at His understanding and his answers". How can a kid know the Scriptures like this? Where do these insights come from?

Of course it's perfectly understandable when we remember that this 12 year old boy has an intimate relationship with God the Father, and is in fact God as well. Later, His mother remonstrates with Him, describing their frantic search. She asks Him why He's done this. His answer is fascinating and rather puzzling to them. He asks rhetorically why they would search for Him, surely they should know that He'd be in His Father's house. Nothing trite or disrespectful should be read into these comments. It seems obvious that He was encouraging them to recognise who He truly is...perhaps a reminder too of the angels' messages around the time of His birth.

We see clear evidence here of God's character. John, someone who would become a close companion and one of the 4 authors of Jesus' authorised biographies, starts out famously by calling Him "The Word" - the expression or communication of God. As the promised Messiah, He is God's greatest and, in some senses, His final, Storyteller. His revelation of Himself in human form. As we'll see in the ongoing Narrative, He constantly encourages people to consider their assumptions about God, about themselves, about others...about Him. How much of God's Story He then goes on to tell them at that point depends on how prepared they are to hear it.

This is the case here with the religious leaders, and even with Joseph and Mary.



## DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. What do you think is the image that comes to mind for many people in our society if they hear the term "angel"? Think about the way angels have been portrayed in movies, TV shows, Christmas cards, Nativity plays etc. Do you think this has made it difficult for people, including ourselves, to have anything like the correct picture of the angels who played such a significant role in the events around Christ's birth? Do some brief Bible study and describe what kind of beings these would have been.
2. The lesson makes the point that Jesus is the "centre" of history. Apart from the BC/AD dating convention, what other observations would you make about Him being the focal point of history? How would you support this claim to someone from our society who was not a believer?
3. Do the necessary research to briefly describe one or two of the main extra-Biblical theories and traditions about who the wise men were, where they came from etc.



## ACTIVITIES

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1. Study the 6 maps from around the time of Christ (in the downloadable PDF). Make sure you're familiar with the map of Palestine so you have a picture in your mind where different places are (Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Nazareth, Samaria, the route to Egypt, etc.) Then without other reference, place them on the blank map provided below. (This does not need to be submitted.)

