



THINK
FAITH



SPECIAL | LESSON 2

CHRISTMAS
Years 7–12

WHY DO WE CELEBRATE
CHRISTMAS?





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CHRISTMAS SPECIAL LESSON 2

WHY DO WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

Christmas is a time to stop and reflect on God's great gift of Jesus.

'It's the most wonderful time of the year', or so the song goes! Christmas is a season of celebrations and good food, family and friends. In Australia, Christmas also means long sunny days and outdoor BBQs. Christmas also means shopping. Collectively, Australians spend \$18.8 billion over the Christmas season.¹ Yet Christmas isn't always a time of cheer. Relationships can become fractured over family feasts, or existing estrangements among relatives can feel more acute at this time.

For Christians, Christmas has a more important meaning than food, fun and festivities. Christmas is a time for Christians to reflect on the gift of Jesus, God's Son, the promised Saviour and King.

These lessons have been designed to help your students understand the story behind the Christmas trimmings: that of the real and lasting gift of Jesus.

Central to these lessons is video content produced by Scripture Union NUA which will help you and your students answer three key questions:

- Why do we celebrate Christmas?
- What was surprising about the very first Christmas?
- Why do Christians still worship Jesus today?

Important note: To gain access to the Scripture Union NUA videos that feature in this unit, you must register for access at: <https://nuafilms.com/register-for-all>.

The series we are using is NUA:Christmas. This lesson uses Episode 2: 'The Unexpected Christmas'.

There are also additional worksheets you may like to use which are accessible via the link above.

1. Roy Morgan, 2022, 'Pre-Christmas sales forecast to reach \$63.9 billion—up 3% on last year', Roy Morgan, October 13, <https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/pre-christmas-sales-forecast-to-reach-63-9-billion-up-3-on-last-year>

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Topic	Why do we celebrate Christmas?
Duration	3 lessons <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The origin of Christmas (The Old Testament) 2. The unexpected Christmas (The story of Jesus' birth) 3. The meaning of Christmas (Jesus' life, death and resurrection)
Focus	Students will consider the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do we celebrate Christmas? • What was the story of the first Christmas? • Why is Christmas especially important to Christians? • What was surprising about the very first Christmas? • What does Jesus' birth tell you about why Christians worship him? • What happened next after Jesus was born? • How was Jesus' life different from anyone before him or since? • Why do Christians still worship Jesus today?
Outcomes	See below.

NOTES

Outcomes for Christmas Special Lessons

UNDERSTANDING

Students will be able to:

- identify the key Bible stories that predict the coming of Jesus [CS.U.1]
- explain why the Christmas story is so important to Christians [CS.U.2]
- describe the events leading up to the birth of Jesus [CS.U.3]
- show how Jesus' life (as recorded in the Bible) was unlike that of anyone else before or since. [CS.U.4]

ACQUISITION

Students will learn that Christians believe:

- God worked through the descendants of Abraham and David to send Jesus as the saviour of the world. [CS.A.1]
- Jesus is the Saviour God promised. [CS.A.2]

SKILLS

Students will be able to:

- use critical thinking to reflect on the reasons Christmas is so important in our culture [CS.S.1]
- analyse the biblical story of the first Christmas and consider its relevance today [CS.S.2]
- connect between current cultural practices around Christmas and their origins in the original story. [CS.S.3]

RELATING TO GOD

Students will understand that:

- Christians believe that Jesus is the saviour God promised [CS.RG.1]
- Christians acknowledge that the whole Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) is all about Jesus [CS.RG.2]
- Christians believe Jesus' life fulfilled Old Testament promises about God's coming saviour and King [CS.RG.3]
- Christians trust in what Jesus has done for them and recognise him as saviour and Lord. [CS.RG.4]

RELATING TO OTHERS

Students will understand that:

- Christians acknowledge that sin has broken human relationships [CS.RO.1]
- Christians understand the importance of forgiveness and repentance in their relationships with God and others. [CS.RO.2]

RELATING TO THE WORLD

Students will understand that:

- Christians recognise that God is the creator of the world [CS.RW.1]
- Christians acknowledge that the world is not the way it originally was at creation due to the effects of sin [CS.RW.2]
- Christians find comfort in difficult situations in their own lives and the world around them by thinking about the future that has been secured for them through Jesus' death and resurrection. [CS.RW.3]

NOTES

LESSON 2

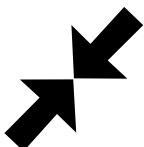


THE UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS

NOTES

Big question: How is Jesus God's surprising Christmas gift to people?

Answer: Jesus is a surprising gift because he fulfilled God's promises for a King and Saviour in ways that no-one could have predicted.

Curriculum outcomes: [CS.U.4] [CS.A.1] [CS.S.3] [CS.S.2] [CS.RG.3]

AT A GLANCE		
 CONNECTING	 EXPLORING	 FORMING
10 mins	20 mins	7 mins
Link to last lesson and introduce this lesson's 'Big question' Unwrapping challenge race	Video segment: 'The unexpected Christmas' The Bible's account of the unexpected Christmas Promises fulfilled in Jesus' life	Reflection: God's unexpected gift of Jesus

Important note: To gain access to the NUA videos, you need to register at:

<https://nuafilms.com/register-for-all>

CONNECTING



ENGAGING 3 mins

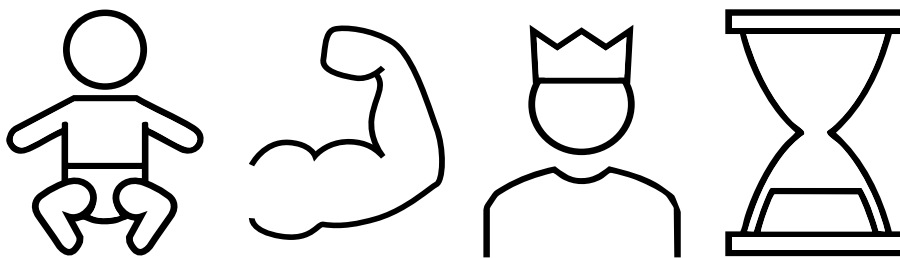
Teaching note: You might want to re-cap the expectations of a 'Fair go for all' (or your own classroom expectations) before beginning the lesson.

Link to last lesson

Last lesson we saw that God had planned the first Christmas a long time in advance.

We also saw that there were some predictions in Isaiah 9 about God's promised King. These predictions were made 700 years before Jesus was born.

You can ask if the students remember any of these, or you might prefer simply to remind them. Alternatively, use this video of Matt Redman's song version of the passage, 'His name shall be (Lyrics and chords)' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQmi_FSfJKc, or the icons below to help trigger memories (see **Teaching Resource TR 1.1**):



- A baby born in the family line of King David (the giant-slayer)
- Someone who has the power of God
- A King with unlimited authority
- A King who will rule forever.

Explain that this lesson, students will see why Christians believe that Jesus fulfils these promises, although, as we will see, he does so in an unexpected way.

Today we're going to answer the 'Big question': 'How is Jesus God's surprising Christmas gift to people?'

NOTES



ENGAGING 7 mins

Unwrapping challenge race

Teaching note: *This activity is a fun way to break the ice and get students thinking about the theme of 'surprising gifts'.*

Choose some really weird objects to wrap in multiple layers of Christmas wrapping such as one shoe, a funny hat, or anything you see for cheap at your local discount shop that would be a weird or unexpected Christmas gift.

Choose three students to race to unwrap their gift first. Before they start, have them guess what's inside.

Once they unwrap it, ask them how they would feel if they got that gift for Christmas.

If you have time, ask other students if they have had any weird and unexpected Christmas gifts.

LINK STATEMENT

Christians believe that Jesus is God's Christmas gift to everyone. Sounds a bit weird doesn't it? But over the course of this lesson, we're going to see why Christians believe this.

NOTES

EXPLORING



INSTRUCTING 7 mins

Video segment: 'The Unexpected Christmas'

Teaching note: *This is the second video of three for this unit, but the only video for this lesson.*

Show Episode 2 of the NUA Christmas Videos, 'The unexpected Christmas'. You may also want to use the NUA handouts for students to take notes.



REINFORCING 7 mins

The Bible's account of the unexpected Christmas

Teaching note: *The aim of this activity is to have students see where the aspects of the Christmas story mentioned in the video are from in the Bible. If it's easier, you may like to provide the following verses as printouts or PowerPoints to help them.*

After the video, divide the class into groups and have them discuss from the video one of the people or groups of people who would have found what happened that Christmas to be unexpected.

Ask:

- ? What about this particular Christmas was unexpected for this person/group of people?

If it's easier, you may like to provide the following verses as printouts or PowerPoints to help students (see **Teaching Resource TR 1.3** for printouts).

Mary: Luke 2:26–35	The wise men (and Herod): Matthew 2:1–12
Joseph: Matthew 1:18–24	The shepherds: Luke 2:8–10
Mary and Joseph: Luke 2:1–7	

Below are some suggestions as to what students may find was unexpected about the first Christmas for:

- Mary (She was an unmarried teenager who was told by an angel that she was pregnant with the Son of God.)
- Joseph (He was worried about what people might think of Mary; he was tempted to call off his wedding to Mary until the angel spoke to him.)
- both Mary and Joseph (They had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem even though Mary was heavily pregnant.)
- the wise men (They didn't even make it on the night! They might have arrived some three years later.)

NOTES

- Herod (He didn't want to share his title of 'King of the Jews' with some random baby!)
- the shepherds (They were minding their own business, tending to their sheep when they were visited by angels who told them about Jesus' birth.)

LINK STATEMENT

Even though the first Christmas seems unexpected, it was actually planned by God and predicted by prophets hundreds of years beforehand. There are lots of moments in Jesus' life where he fulfilled promises that had been made about him. In fact, biblical scholars believe that there were at least 300 predictions about Jesus written in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in his life, which people today can read about in the New Testament. We're going to look at a few of these now.

Teaching note: *The aim of this activity is to point to just four of the key promises about Jesus that he fulfilled. Make sure your students know that he fulfilled many more of these—about 300!*



REINFORCING 6 mins

Promises fulfilled in Jesus' life

Remind students of the promises from Isaiah 9 that were explored last lesson. You might want to also play this video of Matt Redman's song version of the passage, 'His name shall be (Lyrics and chords)' <https://video.link/w/Y18Kc> as a reminder:

- a baby born in the family line of King David (the giant-slayer)
- someone who has the power of God
- someone who is called God
- a King who will rule forever.

These icons on **Teaching Resource TR 1.1** or PowerPoint slides 2 to 5 may help you:



Show the following verses and ask students which promises they show that Jesus fulfils. You can use PowerPoint slides 6 to 15 or **Teaching Resource TR 1.2** to help you.

NOTES

PASSAGE	FULFILMENT
<p>Luke 2:1–4</p> <p>In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. ² It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ Everyone went to their own town to be listed. ⁴ So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David.</p>	<p>A baby born in the family line of King David (the giant-slayer)</p>
<p>Matthew 8:23–27</p> <p>Jesus got into a boat. His disciples followed him. ²⁴ Suddenly a terrible storm came up on the lake. The waves crashed over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him up. They said, 'Lord! Save us! We're going to drown!' ²⁶ He replied, 'Your faith is so small! Why are you so afraid?' Then Jesus got up and ordered the winds and the waves to stop. It became completely calm. ²⁷ The disciples were amazed. They asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'</p>	<p>Someone who has the power of God</p>
<p>Matthew 27:50–54</p> <p>After Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, he died.</p> <p>⁵¹ At that moment the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook. The rocks split. ⁵² Tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs. After Jesus was raised from the dead, they went into the holy city. There they appeared to many people.</p> <p>⁵⁴ The Roman commander and those guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened. They were terrified. They exclaimed, 'He was surely the Son of God!'</p>	<p>Someone who is called God</p>
<p>Luke 24:44–48</p> <p>[After Jesus rose from the dead]: Jesus said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must come true'.</p> <p>⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, 'This is what is written. The Messiah will suffer. He will rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ His followers will preach in his name. They will tell others to turn away from their sins and be forgiven. People from every nation will hear it, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You have seen these things with your own eyes'.</p>	<p>A King who will rule forever</p>

LINK STATEMENT

Hopefully you're beginning to see how Christians believe Christmas is more than a celebration of Jesus' birth—it's a reminder of all Jesus accomplished for them in his life as well. We've looked this lesson into ways that Jesus was not the gift that people were expecting. Not only was his birth unexpected in many ways, his life and death were not the kind that people were expecting from God's King.

FORMING



REFLECTING 6 mins

Reflection: Jesus—God's unexpected gift

Teaching note: *This activity is an opportunity for students to reflect on what they have learned.*

This lesson, we have asked the 'Big question': 'How is Jesus God's surprising Christmas gift to people?' We have seen that Jesus is a surprising gift because he fulfilled God's promises for a King and Saviour in ways that no-one could have predicted.

Tell students that we've come to our final activity. Hand out something for students to write on. You may like to use a 'Ticket to leave' template from another Think Faith unit, or make your own.

Direct the students to reflect on the following sentence beginnings (you might want to share your own answers before the students start reflecting):

- The most unexpected Christmas gift I ever received was ...
- One of the unexpected parts of the first Christmas was ...

This is an opportunity for the students to reflect on what they've learned about Jesus' birth. Then have students consider their responses to the sentence beginnings below:

- At Christmas, Christians take the opportunity to celebrate not only Jesus' birth, but also his life because ...
- One thing new/unexpected that I learned about Jesus today was ...
- After the lesson today, I would like to know ...

It's a good idea to collect these reflection sheets up, mark them, and return them to students next time.



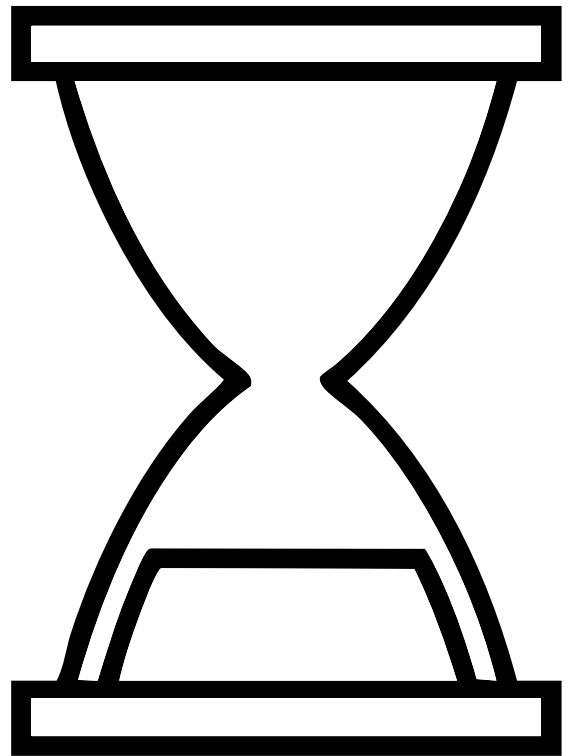
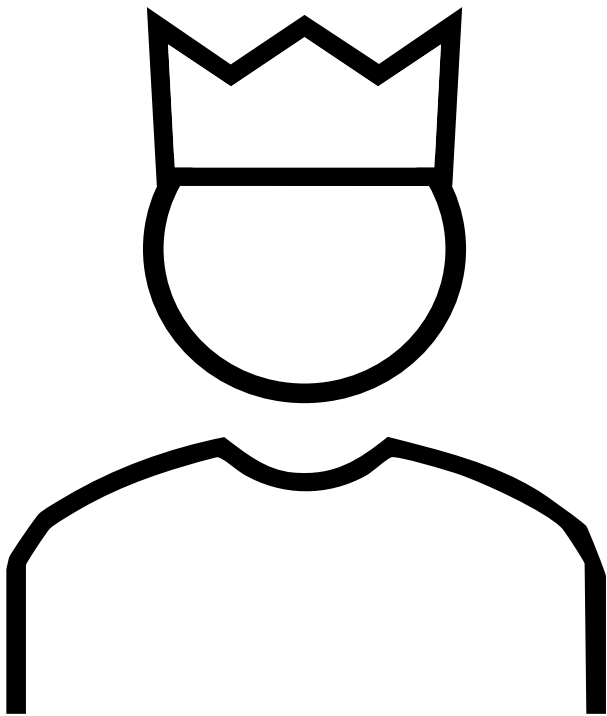
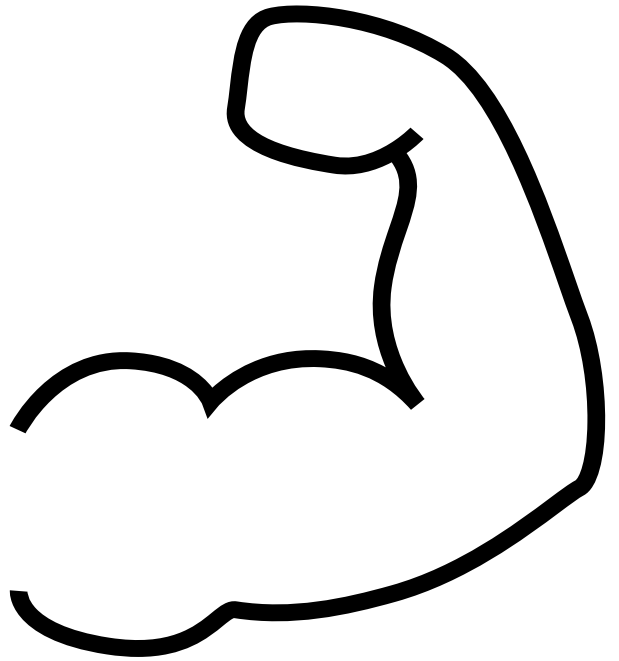
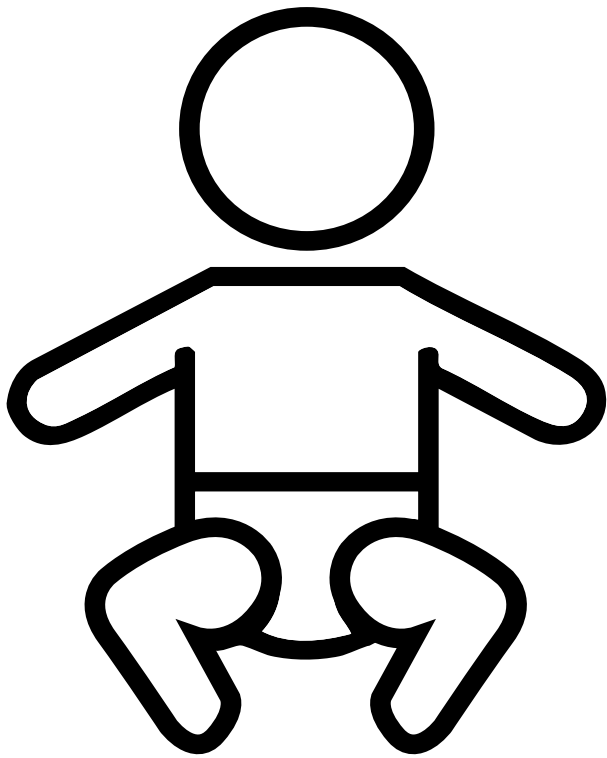
INSTRUCTING 1 min

Farewell

After collecting the reflection tickets, spend some time farewelling the students. This may be an opportunity to link to local churches.

Note: If you want to hand out brochures to church events over Christmas and summer, please make sure you have approved this with the principal beforehand.

NOTES



PASSAGE	FULFILMENT
<p style="text-align: center;">Luke 2:1–4</p> <p>In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. ² It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ Everyone went to their own town to be listed. ⁴ So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 8:23–27</p> <p>Jesus got into a boat. His disciples followed him. ²⁴ Suddenly a terrible storm came up on the lake. The waves crashed over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him up. They said, 'Lord! Save us! We're going to drown!' ²⁶ He replied, 'Your faith is so small! Why are you so afraid?' Then Jesus got up and ordered the winds and the waves to stop. It became completely calm. ²⁷ The disciples were amazed. They asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 27:50–54</p> <p>After Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, he died.</p> <p>⁵¹ At that moment the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook. The rocks split. ⁵² Tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs. After Jesus was raised from the dead, they went into the holy city. There they appeared to many people.</p> <p>⁵⁴ The Roman commander and those guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened. They were terrified. They exclaimed, 'He was surely the Son of God!'</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Luke 24:44–48</p> <p>[After Jesus rose from the dead]: Jesus said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must come true'.</p> <p>⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, 'This is what is written. The Messiah will suffer. He will rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ His followers will preach in his name. They will tell others to turn away from their sins and be forgiven. People from every nation will hear it, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You have seen these things with your own eyes'.</p>	

MARY:

LUKE 2:26–35

²⁶ The Spirit had told Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ The Spirit led him into the temple courtyard. Then Jesus' parents brought the child in. They came to do for him what the Law required. ²⁸ Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said,

²⁹ 'Lord, you are the King over all.
Now let me, your servant, go in peace.
That is what you promised.

³⁰ My eyes have seen your salvation.

³¹ You have prepared it in the sight of all nations.

³² It is a light to be given to the Gentiles.
It will be the glory of your people Israel'.

³³ The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them. He said to Mary, Jesus' mother, 'This child is going to cause many people in Israel to fall and to rise. God has sent him. But many will speak against him. ³⁵ The thoughts of many hearts will be known. A sword will wound your own soul too'.

THE WISE MEN (AND HEROD):

MATTHEW 2:1–12

¹ Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea. This happened while Herod was king of Judea. After Jesus' birth, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem. ² They asked, 'Where is the child who has been born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose. Now we have come to worship him'.

³ When King Herod heard about it, he was very upset. Everyone in Jerusalem was troubled too. ⁴ So Herod called together all the chief priests of the people. He also called the teachers of the law. He asked them where the Messiah was going to be born. ⁵ 'In Bethlehem in Judea', they replied. 'This is what the prophet has written. He said,

⁶ " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are certainly not the least important among the towns of Judah.

A ruler will come out of you.
He will rule my people Israel like a shepherd'."

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the Wise Men. He found out from them exactly when the star had appeared.

⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem. He said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report it to me. Then I can go and worship him too'.

⁹ After the Wise Men had listened to the king, they went on their way. The star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them. It finally stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. ¹¹ The Wise Men went to the house. There they saw the child with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures. They gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² But God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they returned to their country on a different road.

JOSEPH:

MATTHEW 1:18–24

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph was faithful to the law. But he did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, 'Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That's because he will save his people from their sins'.

²² All this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet,

²³ 'The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel'. The name Immanuel means 'God with us'.

²⁴ Joseph woke up. He did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. He took Mary home as his wife.

THE SHEPHERDS:

LUKE 2:8–10

⁸ There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep.

⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified.

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people'.

MARY AND JOSEPH:

LUKE 2:1–7

¹ In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. ² It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ Everyone went to their own town to be listed.

⁴ So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. ⁵ He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby. ⁶ While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. That's because there was no guest room where they could stay.