



# *Imperial Academy Bible Lessons*



**The Historical World of Jesus Christ**

# The Historical World of Jesus Christ

**H**ow do you know Jesus Christ really exists? You never met Him when He was human. Your knowledge of His life comes from written records. But not every written record is accurate. Sometimes writers change facts to fit their own ideas. Before you can study the life of Jesus, you need a trustworthy source of information.

In this lesson, you will learn where to find trustworthy history about the life of Jesus Christ. You will need your Bible and a pencil for your study. Look up each scripture as you study so that you prove for yourself these incredible truths about Jesus Christ!

## **HOLY BIBLE**

The primary source of information about the life of Jesus Christ is the Holy Bible. This is the one and only totally reliable source of information on His existence.

*To see why, fill in the blanks using 2 Timothy 3:16: "All \_\_\_\_\_ is given by \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, and is profitable for \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_ in righteousness."*

This scripture says God inspired every scripture in the Bible. He caused the authors of the Old and New Testaments to write only what He wanted them to write. He guaranteed that they wrote only the truth!

*Turn to John 17:17 and fill in the blanks to see what the Apostle John said about God's Word: "Sanctify them through your truth: your \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_."*

Of course, many skeptics say these verses about the Bible being true are themselves untrue. Even skeptics, however, should be able to prove that the Bible is the true Word of God. The Bible is full of many specific prophecies about people, nations and events. Every time the Bible has predicted the rise or fall of a nation or empire, it has happened!

An ancient record like the Bible could only predict modern-day events if it is truly the Word of God. (Study this subject more deeply by requesting your personal copy of *The Proof of the Bible* by Herbert W. Armstrong.)

The Bible supplies the foundation of all knowledge human beings need to know. It does not contain all knowledge, but it contains all the necessary knowledge that humans cannot obtain for themselves unless God gives it to them. It provides the right foundation on which to build other knowledge. The Bible reveals God's awesome plan for mankind. Since this plan required the Word to come to Earth as a mortal human who could die for the sins of all mankind, the Bible reveals everything humanity needs to know about the life of Jesus Christ!

## **SECULAR HISTORY**

Even though the Holy Bible is the only infallible source of information about the life of Jesus Christ, non-biblical historians have also recorded that Jesus Christ really did once walk the Earth as a human being.

Titus Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian born in Jerusalem only a few years after Jesus was crucified. In his book *Antiquities of the Jews*, he wrote: "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man ... for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles" (Book XVIII, Chapter III, Section 3).

Josephus was not a Christian. He was not trying to convince people to follow Jesus by writing this passage. He was merely trying to write an objective account of the history of the Roman province of Judea. Many other Roman historians of that time, such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny the Younger, also record the existence of Jesus Christ.

While none of these men believed Jesus Christ was

the **Messiah** of the Bible or the Son of God, all of them knew that a man named Jesus existed as a great Jewish teacher who was crucified for preaching a message about a coming Kingdom of God.

### PROMISED MESSIAH

The Old Testament, from Genesis onward, is full of scriptures that foretell the coming of the Messiah. Despite the fact that Jesus fulfilled every single one of these prophecies, however, most people of His day did not believe He was the Christ.

Even most people today don't believe, so how can you be sure Christ was the Messiah and not just a wise teacher?

*Fill in the blanks from Matthew 11:2-6 to see Jesus's own reply to someone who asked if He was the Messiah: "Now when John [the Baptist] had heard in the prison the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him [Jesus], Are you he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which you do \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ receive their \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_ up, and the \_\_\_\_\_ have the \_\_\_\_\_ preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."*

When John the Baptist asked whether Jesus was "he that should come," he was referring to the Messiah. Notice that Jesus did not dogmatically proclaim that He was the Messiah. Instead, He pointed to the fruits of His life and ministry. John knew the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, so he could see that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies. You too can know that Christ was and is the Messiah by studying these Old Testament prophecies. The chart at the top of the next page summarizes some of the key Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled.

### MEMORY TEST

Circle the letter next to the correct answer.

1. The primary source of information about the life of Jesus Christ is
  - a. the Islamic Koran.
  - b. the writings of the Jewish historian

- Josephus.
- c. the Holy Bible.
- d. None of the above

2. God said in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for
  - a. doctrine.
  - b. reproof.
  - c. correction.
  - d. instruction in righteousness.
  - e. All of the above
3. What did Jesus point to as proof that He was the Messiah?
  - a. His confidence in Himself that He was the Messiah
  - b. His disciples' belief in Him that He was the Messiah
  - c. The fruits of His life and ministry
  - d. None of the above

### POLITICAL WORLD

At the time of Jesus Christ's birth, most of the civilized world, with the exception of some little-known kingdoms in East Asia, was under the control of the Roman Empire.

This great world-ruling empire was the "**fourth kingdom**" described in the prophecy of Daniel 2. The head of gold on the great statue of Daniel 2 represented the Babylonian Empire; the chest and arms of silver depicted the Persian Empire; the belly and thighs of bronze symbolized the Greco-Macedonian Empire; and the legs of iron represented the Roman Empire. Rome ruled from Britain in the west to Babylon (located in present-day Iraq) in the east.

The Roman Empire was founded only a few decades before Jesus was born. After a century of civil wars and political turmoil, the Roman Republic completely collapsed when Julius Caesar declared himself dictator for life. When Caesar was assassinated by a group of senators, the Roman world again plunged into war. The war ended when Julius Caesar's nephew Gaius Octavian declared himself Caesar Augustus, emperor of Rome, in 27 B.C.

**Caesar Augustus** was the Roman emperor at the time Jesus was born.

# Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus Christ

Prophecies About the Messiah	Old Testament Scripture	New Testament Fulfillment
The Messiah would be born of a woman.	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 1:20 Galatians 4:4
The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1 Luke 2:4-6
The Messiah would be born of a virgin.	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22-23 Luke 1:26-31
The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.	Genesis 49:10	Luke 3:33 Hebrews 7:14
The Messiah would be heir to King David's throne.	2 Samuel 7:12-13	Luke 1:32-33 Romans 1:3
The Messiah would spend a season in Egypt.	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14-15
A massacre of children would happen at the Messiah's birthplace.	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16-18
A messenger would prepare the way for the Messiah.	Isaiah 40:3-5	Luke 3:3-6
The Messiah would be a prophet.	Deuteronomy 18:15	Acts 3:20-22
The Messiah would speak in parables.	Psalms 78:2-4 Isaiah 6:9-10	Matthew 13:10-15, 34-35
The Messiah would preach good news to the humble and heal the brokenhearted	Isaiah 61:1-2	Matthew 11:2-6 Luke 4:14-21
The Messiah would bring light to Galilee.	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:13-16

Augustus began an era called Pax Romana, or "Roman Peace"; no nation was strong enough to wage war on Rome. During this time, Augustus recognized a man called Herod the Great as king of the Jews. The land of Judea was part of the Roman Empire, but Augustus let King Herod rule the Jews so long as he agreed to collect a heavy tax from the people and send the money to Rome.

The Jews were a conquered people at the time Jesus was born. Many Jews wanted to get rid of the Romans and to regain their independence. Some understood from a prophecy in Daniel 9 that it was almost time for the Messiah to come. They hoped the Messiah would free them from the Romans and restore Israel to the greatness it had under King David and King Solomon. They did not understand that the Old Testament prophesied that the Messiah would come twice. The first time, He would preach

a message about the coming Kingdom and then die for the sins of mankind. The second time, He would conquer all nations and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

When the Word of God was born as the human being Jesus Christ, it was the first coming of the Messiah.

## ROMAN RELIGION

At the time of Jesus Christ's birth, knowledge about God's truth and way of life was almost nonexistent.

During the time of the Roman Republic, the Romans worshiped many false gods and goddesses. They worshiped Jupiter as god of the sky, Neptune as god of the sea, Pluto as god of death, Juno as goddess of marriage, Venus as goddess of love, and dozens of other gods and goddesses. They observed special holidays in honor of these false deities, such as Saturnalia, which

later became combined with false Christianity and is now called Christmas.

By the time of Caesar Augustus, the worship of the old pagan gods and goddesses was beginning to decline. Many people started worshiping the Roman emperor himself. Augustus's official title was *Imperator Caesar Divi Filius Augustus*—meaning Emperor Augustus, son of the divine Julius. Augustus made supporting and obeying the Roman emperor a *religious duty*.

As the Roman Empire expanded, many immigrants from Mesopotamia flooded into Italy. These people brought with them the ancient Babylonian mystery religion founded by Nimrod and Semiramis. Many Romans began to practice this religion as an alternative to emperor worship. The Babylonian mystery religion was characterized by secrecy. It combined elements of Egyptian and Greek paganism to spread a myth about the death and resurrection of the pagan god Serapis, who was a combination of the Egyptian god Osiris and the Greek god Zeus.

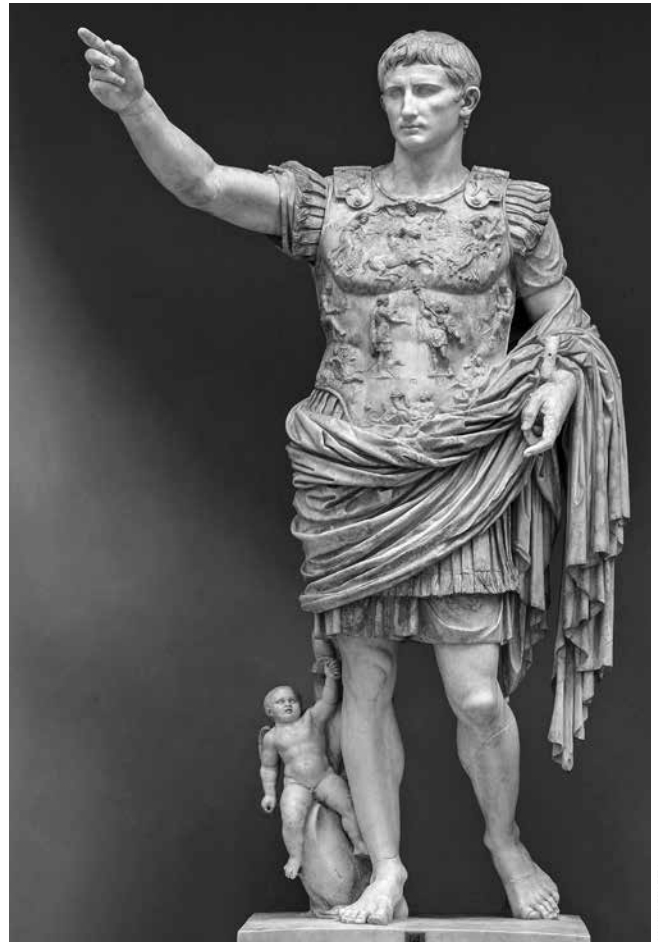
Many Romans began to adopt religious **syncretism**, which is the blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system. By incorporating the religious belief of other cultures into their own, the Romans assimilated foreign cultures into their world-ruling empire.

## JEWISH RELIGION

In Judea, religion was very different from the rest of the Roman Empire.

The Jews knew God had allowed their ancestors to be enslaved by the Babylonians because of their disobedience to God's laws. To prevent something like this from happening again, many of the Jews became very religious. However, some zealous Jews tried to improve on what God had commanded by adding a bunch of unnecessary man-made regulations on top of the eternal, perfect laws of God. The largest and most influential group of religious Jews during Jesus's time was the **Pharisees**.

*Fill in the blanks from Matthew 23:4 to see what Jesus had to say about the Pharisees' extra rules: "For they bind \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they \_\_\_\_\_ will not \_\_\_\_\_ them with one of their \_\_\_\_\_."*



Caesar Augustus

The Pharisees should have known that God commands men not to take away from or add to His law.

*To see this command for yourself, read Deuteronomy 4:1-2 and fill in the blanks: "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the \_\_\_\_\_ and unto the \_\_\_\_\_, which I [God] teach you, for to do them, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers gives you. You shall not \_\_\_\_\_ unto the word which I command you, neither shall you \_\_\_\_\_ ought from it, that you may \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD your God which I \_\_\_\_\_ you."*

The Pharisees added their own rules, which they thought improved God's law. This meant that the people had to go to them for the interpretation of God's law. They loved their position of power, so their rules became more important to them than actually obeying God.

Another influential group of religious Jews during Jesus's time was the **Sadducees**. They did not observe



the extra rules of the Pharisees; they accepted only the written Scriptures of the Old Testament as valid. Like the Pharisees, however, the Sadducees kept only the **letter of the law**, while ignoring the spirit of the law. They sought to do the minimum the Scriptures required without considering what God meant when He inspired the scripture.

Jesus was the Word of God, the Being who gave the law of God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The true religion He gave to the people of Israel through Moses had been corrupted by the time the Word came to Earth as a human being. This is why Jesus had to put so much emphasis on teaching God's law and proclaiming the Kingdom of God!

### MEMORY TEST

Circle the letter next to the correct answer.

1. Who was the Roman emperor when Jesus Christ was born?
  - a. Pompey
  - b. Augustus
  - c. Julius Caesar
  - d. None of the above

2. The people of the Roman Empire worshiped
  - a. pagan deities like Jupiter and Neptune.
  - b. the deities of the Babylonian mystery religion.
  - c. the Roman emperor.
  - d. All of the above
3. Which group of religious Jews added extra rules to God's law?
  - a. The Pharisees
  - b. The Sadducees
  - c. The disciples of Jesus
  - d. All of the above

### WORD MADE FLESH

Before the universe began, all that existed were two magnificent, powerful God Beings. One of these God Beings—the Word—gave up the power He had as a God to become human and to be tortured and killed for the sins of all mankind.

The Jewish people of Jesus's day were expecting the Messiah to free them from the Romans; they were not expecting Him to suffer and die. To understand why Jesus was beaten and crucified, you have to

understand God’s plan for mankind.

Long before Adam and Eve were created, God and the Word devised an awesome plan to create more God Beings. If Adam and Eve had chosen God’s way of life, they could have become spirit beings in the God Family after they developed the holy righteous character of God. Yet Adam and Eve chose to reject God’s way of life. Every human being since Adam and Eve—except for Jesus Christ—has made the same decision!

Turn to Romans 3:23 and fill in the blanks below to see this for yourself: “For \_\_\_\_\_ have \_\_\_\_\_, and come short of the glory of God.”

Only those with God’s holy, righteous character can be relied upon to always follow God’s law, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments. Since God’s way of life is the only way that causes happiness, anyone who rebels against it brings misery on himself and those around him.

Turn to Deuteronomy 30:19 to see how Moses summarized the choice every human must make: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_: therefore choose \_\_\_\_\_, that both you and your seed may live.”

To prevent humans who rejected Him from living forever in misery, God has decreed that the penalty for sin is death. Anyone who refuses to live God’s way of life can be mercifully erased from existence.

To understand what sin is, fill in the blanks using 1John 3:4: “Whosoever commits \_\_\_\_\_ transgresses also the \_\_\_\_\_: for \_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.”

Now turn to Romans 6:23 and fill in the blanks to see the penalty of sin: “For the \_\_\_\_\_ of sin is \_\_\_\_\_; but the \_\_\_\_\_ of God is \_\_\_\_\_ through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

After Adam and Eve sinned, God told them that a Messiah would come to bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Jesus Christ is that prophesied Messiah. He bruised the head of the serpent by making it possible for human beings to eat from the tree of life if they repented and strove to live God’s way of life.

As a human being, Jesus never sinned even once. Jesus was tempted to sin just as you are, but He overcame by extreme closeness to God the Father. This

meant that He did not have to die to pay the penalty for His own sins. But He voluntarily chose to die for the sins of everyone else, including you. Since Jesus was Creator of all mankind, His life was so valuable it could pay the penalty of sin for every human ever born.

Turn to 1Peter 2:21-24 to see the example Christ set on how to overcome sin: “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also \_\_\_\_\_ for us, leaving us an \_\_\_\_\_, that you should \_\_\_\_\_ his steps: Who did no \_\_\_\_\_, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously: Who his own self \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_ in his own body on the tree, that we, being \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.”

The fact that Jesus died for your sins does not mean you can keep sinning. The fact that the Word of God became human, lived a perfect life and died for the sins of all mankind means that you now have the opportunity to repent, be forgiven, overcome and keep growing in the very character of God so you can eventually be born into the God Family.

The primary reason Jesus Christ came to Earth as a human was to pay the penalty of sin for all human beings who choose to repent and follow God. This special mission had to be accomplished before the New Testament Church could be established to prepare rulers capable of supporting Jesus Christ when He returns to Earth as the conquering King that the Jews of the first century expected!

## **GENEALOGY OF CHRIST**

The Bible refers to Jesus as the “Son of God” and the “Son of man.” He is the Son of God because God the Father begat Him using the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20). He is the “Son of man” because His mother was a woman (Matthew 9:6).

Turn to Matthew 1:1 and fill in the blanks to see another title of Jesus: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, the son of Abraham.”

Just as Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God, He is also a literal descendant of King David through his human mother Mary. Matthew 1:1-16 records that Jesus’s stepfather, Joseph, was a descendant of King

David's son Solomon, and Luke 3:23-38 records that Jesus's mother, Mary, was a descendant of King David's son Nathan. So Jesus was both legally and naturally a son of the royal house of David!

### **DIVINE ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Word of God told the Prophet Isaiah that the Messiah would be born to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). God the Father chose a woman named Mary to be Jesus's mother. She was a virgin and a descendant of King David. She was a woman of great character who took the responsibilities of being a righteous mother seriously.

*Read and summarize Luke 1:26-35 to describe how God told Mary that she was going to be Jesus's mother:*

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Notice that the archangel Gabriel told Mary that the "Holy [Spirit] shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you." Verse 35 shows that the Holy Spirit is not a person, but is the power of the Most High God (just as electricity is the power of a light bulb). God the Father used the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the Word into a human baby growing in the womb of Mary.

Mary had a very humble and obedient attitude toward God. When she heard Gabriel's announcement, she simply submitted by saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (verse 38).

It took great faith for Mary to respond in this manner. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph, and she was still a virgin. Since God had never before impregnated a woman, she knew almost nobody would believe her child was the Son of God. They would think she was a promiscuous woman who had committed adultery behind the back of her fiancé.

Yet Mary did not complain or plead with God to delay her pregnancy. She understood that it was a great blessing and honor to be chosen out of all the women in the world to give birth to the Savior of all mankind.

It is not always obvious to human beings why God chooses to do things the way He does them, but you must faithfully submit to what God does in the same way that Mary did.

### **LEGAL FATHER**

God the Father knew that Jesus would need good parents to teach Him about the God Family way of life. He would need a godly mother and a godly stepfather to raise him in a loving home with the right government structure. God took great care in choosing Mary to be Jesus's mother and in choosing Joseph to be Jesus's legal human stepfather.

When Joseph discovered that his fiancé was pregnant, he wanted to end the engagement. He thought Mary had been unfaithful to him. Yet Joseph was a kind and righteous man, so he sought to end the engagement privately. He did not want to shame Mary by making a public spectacle of her.

God knew Joseph's strong character, so He sent an angel to tell him what to do.

*To see what the angel told Joseph, read and summarize Matthew 1:18-25:* \_\_\_\_\_

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After Joseph received this message from God, he was sorry for doubting Mary, and he married her soon afterward!

### **MEMORY TEST**

If the statement is true, write "T" in the blank. If the statement is false, write "F" in the blank.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. God's awesome plan is to transform human beings into spirit beings in the God Family.





REBE ZOLLNER/ANAL

Since child rearing is extremely important, God carefully chose Joseph and Mary.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Because God is merciful, He will bring people into His Family whether or not they develop righteous character.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sin is the transgression of God’s law.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. The penalty for sin is eternal life in hell.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Jesus Christ paid the death penalty for all humanity, so we do not have to develop righteous character ourselves.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Jesus Christ was tempted to sin like all humans, but He overcame by extreme closeness to God the Father.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. According to His human genealogy, Jesus is a literal descendant of King David.

**WHEN WAS CHRIST BORN?**

The Bible does not reveal the exact month or day of Jesus Christ’s birth. This is because God does not want you to celebrate Jesus’s birthday. Instead God commands you to memorialize the date of Christ’s death on Passover.

The Bible does reveal enough detail about Jesus’s life, however, to know the year and the season of His birth. Many people think Jesus was born on December 25 in the year A.D. 1. This is not true. The abbreviation A.D. stands for *Anno Domini*, meaning *year of our Lord*. But people did not use the A.D./B.C. system until almost 500 years after Christ died. The inventor of this system, a Catholic monk, was mistaken about when Jesus was born.

The Bible says that Jesus was born “in the days of Herod the king” (Matthew 2:1). In *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus recorded that King Herod died shortly before Passover in 3 B.C., the year after the lunar eclipse of March 13, 4 B.C.

This means Jesus could not have been born after the Passover of 3 B.C.

The easiest way to determine the year of Jesus’s birth is to count backward from the year of His death. The Bible says that Christ was crucified on Passover afternoon; He was dead for three days and three nights; and He was resurrected before Mary and Martha came to visit His tomb Sunday morning (Luke 23:52-56; Matthew 28:1-8).

The only year all three of these events could have happened was A.D. 31. The Passover fell on Wednesday that year, so Christ was resurrected just before sunset on Sabbath (about 12 hours before Mary and Martha arrived).

The Bible also says that Jesus began His ministry when he was about 30 years old (Luke 3:23) and that His ministry lasted 3½ years (Daniel 9:27). Counting backward 33½ years from the spring of A.D. 31 brings you to the autumn of 4 B.C. (shortly before King Herod the Great died). This is the year Jesus Christ was really born!

Read about Jesus’s birth in Luke 2:4-18 and fill in the blanks from verse 8: “And there were in the same country \_\_\_\_\_ abiding in the \_\_\_\_\_,”

keeping watch over their \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.”

Since winter in Judea is the rainy season, shepherds traditionally kept their sheep in barns from November to March. This is yet another proof that Jesus was born in the autumn of 4 B.C.—likely before or during the fall holy days.

### WHERE WAS CHRIST BORN?

One of the key Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah concerned His birthplace. God told the Prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in the city of Bethlehem.

*Fill in the blanks for this prophecy from Micah 5:2: “But thou, \_\_\_\_\_ Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of \_\_\_\_\_, yet out of \_\_\_\_\_ shall \_\_\_\_\_ come forth unto me that is to be \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”*

To fulfill this prophecy, God shaped events so that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

*Read Luke 2:1-19 to learn the circumstances surrounding Jesus’s birth and fill in the blanks using verses 1-7: “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ that all the world should be \_\_\_\_\_. (And this \_\_\_\_\_ was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be \_\_\_\_\_, every one into his own city. And \_\_\_\_\_ also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into \_\_\_\_\_, unto the city of \_\_\_\_\_, which is called \_\_\_\_\_; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ his espoused wife, being great with \_\_\_\_\_. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her \_\_\_\_\_, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

Joseph was a descendant of King David, so he had to travel to the city where his family was originally from to be counted and taxed by the Roman Empire. Since Jesus Christ was born in the early autumn, it is likely that many of the Jews were traveling to Jerusalem at this time to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Bethlehem

is only a few miles south of Jerusalem, so this would explain why all the inns were full. Events worked out perfectly so that the Messiah was born in the city of David (verse 4), just as God prophesied hundreds of years before!

### EARLY LIFE

Some time after Jesus was born, Joseph moved his family into a house in Bethlehem. While Joseph and his family lived in this house, a group of “wise men from the east” came to visit Jesus.

*Read Mathew 2:1-12 to fill in the blanks below and learn about this intriguing visit: “Now when Jesus was born in \_\_\_\_\_ of Judea in the days of \_\_\_\_\_ the king, behold, there came \_\_\_\_\_ from the east to \_\_\_\_\_, Saying, Where is he that is born \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_? for we have seen his \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_, and are come to \_\_\_\_\_ him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was \_\_\_\_\_, and all \_\_\_\_\_ with him. And when he had gathered all the chief \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the people together, he \_\_\_\_\_ of them where \_\_\_\_\_ should be born. And they said unto him, In \_\_\_\_\_ of Judea .... Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to \_\_\_\_\_, and said, Go and search diligently for the \_\_\_\_\_; and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the \_\_\_\_\_, which they saw in the \_\_\_\_\_, went before them, till it came and stood over where the \_\_\_\_\_ was. When they saw the \_\_\_\_\_, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ his \_\_\_\_\_, and fell down, and \_\_\_\_\_ him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.”*

Notice that these wise men did not come visit Jesus in the manger where He was born. They came to visit

Him sometime later, after Joseph had already moved his family into a house in Bethlehem.

These wise men were likely descendants of the lost 10 tribes of Israel, who were living in the Far East. The Bible does not say how many wise men there were. They knew enough about the prophecies of the Old Testament to know it was time for the Messiah to be born. So they traveled to Judea to ask King Herod where the newly born Messiah was living. The scribes of King Herod told the wise men that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. But Herod was worried that the Messiah would replace him as King of the Jews. So he told the wise men to report back to him when they found the baby. Herod planned to kill Jesus before He could grow up. But God warned the wise men in a dream to leave Judah without meeting Herod again.

God warned Joseph in a dream that King Herod desired to kill Jesus and told him to take his family and flee to Egypt (verses 13-15). Joseph obeyed God and left Judah with his family. King Herod became enraged when he heard that the wise men had left the country, and he ordered the killing of all children younger than 2 years old in the area around Bethlehem in an attempt to kill Jesus. Soon after this horrible slaughter of the children of Bethlehem, King Herod died.

After Herod's death, an angel told Joseph it was safe to return to the land of Israel. Joseph did not want to go back to the Bethlehem area, because King Herod's son was now the ruler. Instead, he took his family to the city of Nazareth in Galilee, about five days' walk north of Jerusalem. Jesus Christ spent His childhood in Galilee, working with His stepfather, Joseph, and learning the skill of carpentry.

*The only information the Bible gives us about Jesus's childhood is in Luke 2:40-52. Fill in the blanks below from verse 40: "And the child grew, and \_\_\_\_\_ strong in \_\_\_\_\_, filled with \_\_\_\_\_: and the \_\_\_\_\_ of God was upon him."*

*Now fill in the blanks of verse 52: "And Jesus increased in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and in \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."*

Even though Jesus was only a child at this time, God was working with Him and developing character in Him so that He would be ready when the time came for Him to begin His ministry. You will learn about the beginning of Christ's ministry in the next Bible lesson.

## MEMORY TEST

Circle the letter next to the correct answer.

1. Jesus Christ was born
  - a. on Christmas of A.D. 1.
  - b. on Passover of A.D. 3.
  - c. in the autumn of A.D. 4.
  - d. None of the above
2. We know Jesus Christ was not born on December 25, because
  - a. God doesn't want us to know the exact day of Jesus's birth.
  - b. shepherds were in the field the night Jesus was born.
  - c. counting backward 33½ years from Passover places His birth in the autumn.
  - d. All of the above
  - e. None of the above
3. The wise men visited Jesus
  - a. on the day He was born.
  - b. after Joseph moved his family into a house in Bethlehem.
  - c. after Joseph moved his family to Egypt.
  - d. All of the above
  - e. None of the above

# BIBLE MEMORY

John 3:6

John 3:16

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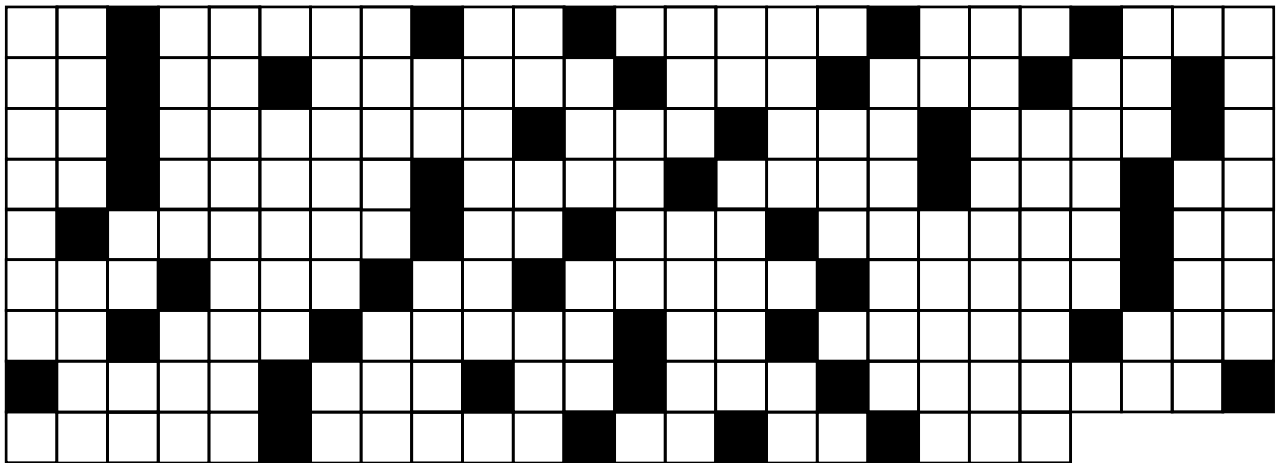
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## Puzzle Title

Fit the letters in each column into the boxes above them to reveal a scripture (two verses) referenced in this lesson. Each letter is only used once, and they are in random order.

The black squares represent the end of a word.



O	L	V	E	H	A	N	H	H	U	L	F	G	E	H	L	O	O	I	N	D	O	D	D	R
V	E	E	R	R	A	D	A	D	L	F	S	N	R	U	N	H	A	E	N	D	R	F	O	H
L	H	T	T	R	O	A	E	A	B	E	A	H	O	S	E	T	S	C	L	E	M	O	O	A
H	R	D	S	E	G	H	L	O	G	E	V	B	H	F	T	F	K	O	I	G	N	F	T	V
T	E		H	I	N	L	H	L	O	I	E	E	H	T	I	S	T	A	H	O	D	S	M	T
E	I		S	H	E	S	N	S	T	S	D	H	D	E	A	J	E	A	H	B	R		H	G
E	E		B	E		L	E		L	O			I	L	N		R	E	O	I				A
H	D		H	A		C	L		E				A						N	N				