

GOD WITH US



LESSON #11



CHRONICLES OF
REDEMPTION

God With Us

Excerpts from the Gospels

INTRODUCTION

From beginning to end, the Bible is one story. Its authoritative words are authored by God. Its grand theme is world redemption. Throughout the Old Testament, chapter by chapter, book by book, God unfolded His saving purpose for mankind. He exposed the need for man to be saved from the curse of sin and devised a plan by which He would graciously rescue the sinner. He called forth a channel through which He promised to send a Redeemer and sealed His Word with a covenant. He guided and guarded Israel, His channel, through the centuries until the close of the Old Testament. But the story does not end there! The drama continues in the New Testament—a glorious chronicle of fulfilled promises and answered longings of God’s people. Moreover, the New Testament is the grand display of the grace and power of God to accomplish His overarching purpose: **the purchase of world redemption.**

Four centuries bridge the Old and New Testaments. These are often called “*the silent years*” because God did not speak through His prophets during this time. Though God did not speak, He moved—decisively and sovereignly—to set the world stage for the arrival of the promised Messiah. History progressed exactly as God planned it with world domination passing first from Persia to _____ and then from Greece to _____. When all pieces were in place and the precise time had arrived, the chosen One was born. To better understand the world in which He lived, we will briefly trace the evolution of Jewish life from the exile years...



The years following the Babylonian captivity...

During the years of captivity the exiles first began to be called _____, a title identifying them with the southern kingdom of Judah. The name later came to refer to all the descendants of Abraham. The remnant of faithful Israel realized that the nation had been

chastened for despising the covenant they had made with God to keep His commands. Once back in the homeland, God raised Ezra the priest to leadership. Ezra's reverence for the Law of God, and his desire to know and teach it, began a spiritual _____ among the people (cf. Ezra 7:10).



“Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square...and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses... Then he read from it in the open square...from morning until midday...and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.”
“Then all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen!’ while lifting their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground...All the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law.”

Later, the Jews “*entered into an oath*” of obedience to the commandments of the Lord. This covenant expressed a renewed love for God and a growing respect for His Law which had a profound effect on Jewish life. Even though the temple had been rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Jews who lived scattered throughout the country met in _____ houses of worship called *synagogues* to hear and study Scriptures. Men who devoted themselves to the study, interpretation, and defense of the Law became known as *Scribes*. *Rabbi* was a title of respect the Jews gave to their religious teachers.





The times of Messiah...

At the time of Messiah's birth, Israel was dominated by Rome and had been reduced to the satellite province of *Palestine*, a mere fragment of land between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas. The temple in Jerusalem remained the center of Jewish life, even though many Jews still lived as colonists, scattered in cities throughout the empire. Palestine was locally ruled by the figurehead king *Herod the Great*. However, the _____ religious and civil leaders were an elite group of orthodox Jews called *Pharisees*. Literalists in their interpretation of the Law, and legalists as to its practice, the Pharisees placed heavy external demands on their people in their worship of God. Another group of religious leaders at this time were the *Sadducees*. Unlike the legalistic Pharisees, these leaders were more liberal in their views of the Scripture, even to the point of denying or rationalizing the supernatural.



The Four Gospels...

The first four books of the New Testament are the gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each of these books records the biography of one life, Jesus Christ. Though not exhaustive, the gospels are accurate and historical, each bringing a unique viewpoint to a unified identity of Messiah. The word *gospel* is taken from the Anglo-Saxon *god spell* and simply means _____ . The good news of the gospels is that God has purchased redemption for man: "*These things are written that...you may have life*" (John 20:31).



Angelic Announcements



Read Luke 1:5-17



Announcing the birth of Messiah's forerunner

- "*And an angel of Lord appeared*" (1:11).

God had not spoken to Israel through prophets, visions, or angelic messengers for 400 years. Now the silence was suddenly broken by the appearance of the angel _____, a heavenly messenger whose name means “strong man of God.”

- ***“...Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John” (1:13).***

In spite of the social stigma of Elizabeth’s barrenness, the old priest Zacharias and his wife were a devout couple, pleasing God in every way. God would bless this childless couple, who were well beyond their childbearing years, by miraculously giving them a son. They were to name the boy _____, meaning “*The Lord has shown grace.*”

- ***“...He will be great in the sight of the Lord” (1:15).***

God revealed through the angel Gabriel, and later through Zacharias, His intent for the future life work of this unique child (cf. 1:67ff).

1 ***He was filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15).***

From his conception onward, God was intimately involved in the life of John.

2 ***He was the fulfillment of prophecy (1:17).***

Centuries earlier Isaiah and Malachi prophesied concerning Messiah’s forerunner (cf. Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1).

3 ***He would prepare Israel to receive the Messiah (1:16-17).***

By turning the peoples’ hearts back to God, from disobedience to righteousness, John would “*make ready the way of the Lord*” (cf. Matt. 3:3).

4 ***He would be called the prophet of the Most High (1:76).***

Like the prophets of old, John would announce beforehand the Divine plan. In this case, the long-awaited Deliverer was soon to come.



Read Luke 1:57-58, 80

- ***“Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she brought forth a son” (1:57).***

God, the Source of all _____, did for Elizabeth as He had done for Sarah, the wife of Abraham—He brought life to the barren womb (Gen. 21:21; 25:21; 30:22-23). Zacharias was obedient to all God commanded him through the angel Gabriel, and named the child John. “*The hand of the Lord*” was with John from his birth, preparing him for the work he was to do (cf. Luke 1:66).

»» Announcing the birth of Messiah



Read Luke 1:26-33

»» To Mary ««



An astonishing message

- “Behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus” (1:31).

Months later, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, a relative of Elizabeth from the town of Nazareth (cf. 1:36). Mary was a virgin engaged to be married, yet she was told by the angel she would give birth to a Son, and that she would name Him _____, meaning “The Lord is salvation.” The angel further delineates the identity of the Child...

- “*He...will be called the Son of the Most High*” (1:32).

The *Most High* is a direct reference to God Himself. As a son shares in the characteristics of the father, so this reference indicates that Jesus would be _____ with God.

- “*...The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David*” (1:32).

As Mary was born in the royal line of King David, so her Son would descend from his line. The Gospel of Luke records the genealogy of Jesus through Mary’s line, linking him both with _____ and Abraham (cf. Luke 3:23-38). The angel was revealing to Mary that her Son Jesus, later called the *Son of David*, would fulfill God’s covenant to David. Jesus would inherit the throne of David on which He would rule over Israel forever (cf. Isa. 9:6-7).



Read Luke 1:34-37



A miraculous conception

- **“How can this be, since I am a virgin?” (1:34).**

Clearly, Mary’s response shows that she understood the angel to mean that the conception of the Child would be accomplished _____. Gabriel answers Mary’s question by explaining how this was to come about...

- **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you” (1:35).**

God the Holy Spirit brought about the conception of the Child just as He had participated in the creation of the heavens and earth (cf. Gen. 1:2). The same power which created life from nothing, would now enable Mary to conceive a Son without a _____ father.

- **“For that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God” (1:35).**

Without a human father, Jesus would be fully _____ and fully _____. As fully God, Jesus would be a *holy offspring*, born without sin (cf. John 8:46; Heb. 4:15; 1 John 3:5). As fully Man, by virtue of His human mother, Jesus would possess characteristics common to all humanity, such as hunger, thirst, physical weakness, and emotion (cf. Matt. 4:2; John 4:6-7; 11:35). He was truly the God-Man.



Colossians 2:9

“... In [Jesus] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”



Read Luke 1:38

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2 Humble Arrival

 Read Luke 2:1-7

» Born in humility «

- “...She gave birth...and laid him in a manger...” (2:7).

_____ When the census was ordered by Caesar Augustus, the Roman _____ emperor who controlled the entire Mediterranean region, _____ Joseph and Mary were forced to make a difficult seventy-mile _____ journey most likely on foot to their ancestral home of _____. It was in Bethlehem that Mary gave _____ birth to her Son, fulfilling the words of yet another Old Testament _____ prophet.

 **Micah 5:2**
“But as for you, Bethlehem... from you One will go forth for Me to be Ruler in Israel.”

Considering the backdrop of angelic announcements and prophecies, the actual birth of Jesus Christ is almost anticlimactic in its simplicity. The One Who had been chosen from eternity past and promised in Eden, the Seed of Abraham Who would bless all the earth, the long-awaited Messiah of Israel was born into such poverty that His first bed was the feeding trough of animals. Yet this was all according to the plan and providence of _____.

 **PROVIDENCE:**
the working out of God’s will in and through human history

It is amazing and difficult to comprehend that _____ circumstance surrounding the coming of Jesus Christ was determined in the mind of God before the universe was formed. That the army of angels announced Messiah's birth to lowly shepherds rather than to the religious or political leaders of the day was a matter of God's choice. That the census, ordered by an ungodly ruler, brought Joseph and Mary to the obscure town of Bethlehem in fulfillment of a prophecy made centuries earlier was also a matter of God's choice. God works in and through the affairs of mankind to accomplish His purpose. In so doing, the awesome integrity of God's Word, as well as His power to execute His will is on display for all to see.

» Raised in obscurity «

With the exception of a solitary passage in Luke's gospel, the boyhood of Jesus is veiled from our view. He was raised in a simple Jewish home along with his brothers and sisters. Yet at the age of _____ He amazed the teachers at the temple in Jerusalem with His spiritual insight and understanding of *"His Father's business."* Until His ministry began some eighteen years later, the Bible simply summarized His life with the words *"Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"* (cf. Luke 2:40-52).

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Divine Affirmation



Read Matthew 3:1-6

» The ministry and message of John the Baptist «

- ***"Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness" (3:1).***

At approximately age thirty, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth was already known as a *baptizer* of men. Preaching in the arid wilderness of the Dead Sea region, John summoned

the nation back to God to *“make ready the way of the Lord.”* His message bore witness that Messiah’s coming was _____.

- ***“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:2).***

John’s mandate from God was to preach repentance. Many Jews in John’s day believed that their ancestral link with Abraham was sufficient for a right standing with God (cf. Matt. 3:8-9; John 8:34). Consequently, their lives were corrupt, and their worship a mockery (cf. Matt. 15:7-9). But God looks on the _____, not heritage or religious affiliation. Like the Old Testament prophets, John called Israel to repent—to make a decisive turn from their sin and trust God alone for cleansing.

- ***“...And they were being baptized...as they confessed their sins” (3:6).***

Those who believed confessed their sins and were baptized. Their immersion into the river waters marked their identification with John’s message. The baptism did not remove sin or offer salvation, but rather was a public display of _____ —an internal change of heart and direction.



Read John 1:29-30, 34



John affirmed Jesus as the Son of God



- ***“Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!” (1:29).***

The public ministry of Jesus began with His baptism. Jesus, though He was sinless, was baptized to identify Himself with John’s message. As the prophet of God looked up to see Jesus approaching the water, he immediately perceived Who He was: *“Behold, the Lamb of God.”* The Passover lamb, the sacrificial lamb—the words were rich with meaning in the mind of John. His proclamation identified Jesus as the _____, the One Who would take away the sin of Israel and also of the rest of the world.

- ***“...This is the Son of God” (1:34).***

Although John was born first, he grasped that Jesus held a superior position and had existed eternally before the universe was created (cf. Micah 5:2). In the clearest terms, he declared that Jesus was the _____, a title expressing deity, inextricably linking Him to God the Father.



Read Matthew 3:16-17

» God the Father affirmed that Jesus is the Son of God «

- ***“This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased” (3:17).***

This direct affirmation from God the Father identified Jesus as His Son, the second Person of the Trinity, and referred back to Old Testament prophecy (cf. Psa. 2:7; Isa. 42:1). No devout Jew whose mind was saturated with prophecies of Messiah would miss this startling proclamation. The baptism of Jesus is the clearest biblical display of the _____: God the Father spoke from heaven to Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, pictured like a descending dove, identified Jesus and empowered Him for His public ministry.

CONCLUSION

Who is Jesus Christ? If there is one question which is critical to answer, clearly, this is it! Through the centuries Jesus has been characterized as a dynamic teacher, a benevolent humanitarian, a gifted miracleworker, a compelling iconoclast, a moral guide. But these images fall far short of the Biblical portrait. If we are to understand the true identity of Jesus Christ, we must lay aside our preconceptions and rely upon God’s Word alone to reveal Him to us.

» *Jesus*—meaning *“the Lord is salvation”* (Luke 1:31).

» *Son of the Most High*—a title equating Jesus with the Most High God (Luke 1:32).

» *Savior*—One Who would “*save His people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21).

» *Christ*—the Greek translation of *Messiah*, the anointed One (Luke 2:11).

» *Lord*—a title of deity (Luke 2:11).

» *Immanuel*—meaning *God with us*, the eternal God Who came to live as a Man among men (Matt. 1:23).

Jesus Christ is fundamentally set apart, altogether distinct from any human being who has ever lived or will live. Existing as the Second Person of the Trinity before the universe was formed, Jesus took humanity and dwelt with men. He is the God-Man, fully God and fully Man, the very embodiment of deity.

In the Bible God reveals Himself to man through the *written* Word. The Gospel of John identifies Jesus as the *living* Word, the perfect expression of God Himself. He is the exact *visible* representation of the *invisible* God. In the life of Jesus, the Word of God is lived out for all to see (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

Excerpts from John 1

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He [Jesus] was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being....”



“...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He [Jesus] has explained Him.”

» Questions

1. What were the positive effects of the Greek and Roman empires on Jewish life at the time of Christ?
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2. Who were the scribes? The Pharisees? The Sadducees?

3. What is the meaning of the word *gospel*?

4. Who was the Messiah's forerunner? What was he sent to do?

5. Why does the Bible stress the virginity of Mary at the time of Jesus' conception?

6. Explain the significance of the name *Immanuel*.

7. What is the providence of God? How was it displayed at the birth of Jesus Christ?

8. What was the message of John the Baptist?

9. What was the purpose of John's baptism? Did baptism cleanse the sinner?

 **Questions**

10. What is the meaning of the word *repentance*?

11. Why did John call Jesus the *Lamb of God*? What are the implications of this title?

12. How is Jesus Christ distinct from any other human being?

13. Explain the phrase “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*”
