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Bible Lesson 17 (BTJ)

1. Introduction

This important lesson introduces the coming of the Deliverer to the Jews. It is an exciting lesson because it introduces how God worked step-by-step in history to fulfill his promise that he would send a Deliverer to save people from their sins.

After hundreds of years of silence, God's servant, an angel, appeared to Zachariah and announced that he and Elizabeth would have a son who would be the forerunner to the Deliverer. This special son was to be named John. The angel gave to Zachariah special instructions for raising John.

Then God spoke through Gabriel to Mary and announced that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. That child that she would give birth to would be Jesus, the Deliverer.

John was born according to the angel's announcement. Then Mary gave birth to the Deliverer, Jesus. God was working to fulfill the promise which he had made many years ago to Adam and Eve and reiterated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This lesson also teaches how Satan worked to stop God's fulfillment of his promise concerning the coming Deliverer. Satan's instrument to resist God's plan was wicked King Herod. This lesson shows how God knows everything and is sovereign in the affairs of mankind. This lesson makes it plain that no power or being is ever able to stop God from doing what he intends to do. God is sovereign and supreme.

The Deliverer, though in a human body, was fully human and fully God. His mother, Mary, was a person like we are with a sinful nature. The Deliverer, Jesus, did not have an earthly father of procreation. Mary conceived Jesus because the power of the Holy Spirit came upon her for this purpose. When Jesus, the Deliverer, was born he did not have a sinful nature like we have. That means Jesus, the Deliverer, never sinned. He did not sin when he was a child, a young man, nor later as an adult because he was divine.

2. Review

Setting: Raymond and Deborah were telling Teacher what they had learned from the Bible stories. The story of Jonah was especially interesting to them because it showed God's mercy, grace, and love to the wicked people of Nineveh.

Raymond: When I was a little boy, I did not know about the Bible. I just knew the things our ancestors passed on to my parents. They taught me what their parents taught them. Sometimes I felt something was missing from our beliefs. Now I know that the truth of the Bible was missing and that is why our lives were so empty.

Deborah: That is true. We did not know that God created and owns everything. We believed we controlled everything. However, we could never stop death and we didn't know why.

Raymond: We were deceived. We believed the lies of Satan because we did not know about God. Now we are hearing God's truth in the meetings and I believe all that we are being taught.

Deborah: Teacher, you told us that God sent you here to teach us the Bible stories. When he sent you here, did you act like Jonah and try to run away from him? Jonah knew what God wanted him to do but he ran away. He did not want to preach to the wicked people of Nineveh.

Teacher: I am here because God wants you to believe in him. He wants to save you from the penalty of sin. Once I knew that God was sending me here, I did not act like Jonah. No, I wanted to come here so that you would hear God's message and believe it. I hoped you would be like the people of Nineveh and believe God's message. Now I am teaching you and watching you respond in a good way to the teaching. I am very glad that you are believing the Bible's message.

Raymond: I am glad that you are here teaching us. I am like the people of Nineveh when they heard Jonah's message. I know that I am a sinner. I have turned away from sinful things I have done. I used to offer sacrifices to false gods. I have destroyed them because they were made by people and are worthless. I am anxiously waiting to learn about the Deliverer. I want him to save me from my sin's guilt and penalty.

Deborah: When I heard that God spared the people of Nineveh I thought to myself, "God is so merciful and good. He showed favor to the people who believed Jonah's message even though they were not his chosen people." Then I realized that he was showing mercy

to me too and I cried because God is so good and merciful to me a sinner who deserves death.

Teacher: I am so happy to hear how you are understanding the story of Jonah. God wants you to believe the rest of the Bible stories that I will teach you. If you believe God's message, he will help you in a very special way. He will forgive you of your sins and you will not have to pay the penalty for having sinned. Please continue to come to the meetings so that you can learn more about God's wonderful story for you.

3. Nations Conquered the Jews

Setting: The people were gathered for the next meeting to hear more of God's Word.

After the Israelites returned from their captivities in Assyria and Babylon they lived in the promised land again. At Jerusalem, they built a new temple to replace the one the Babylonian army had destroyed. They also rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem so that the city would be secure from enemies.

During that time some of the Jews truly followed God. They went to the temple and offered blood sacrifices to God because they believed in him. They showed their faith in God by this practice. They believed that God would send a Deliverer to save them from their sins and longed for that day. They brought their sacrifices to the temple because they knew they were guilty sinners who deserved death. They did not try to make themselves appear to be righteous. They knew that they were the ones who should have died instead of the sacrifices. They believed the sacrifices they offered were substitutes who died in their place. These people came to God as he had instructed them.

Most of the Jews, however, did not follow God or worship him. Some acted like they were worshiping God but they weren't. They wanted others to see their religious works. Their hearts were deceitful and wicked and God hated their false worship. The Jews' spiritual leaders, the priests, also were corrupt and lived wickedly. After a while, God chastised them and allowed other nations to conquer them. Then they were under the authority and rulership of countries. The leaders of these countries did not serve God. They were only interested in their own welfare.

First, the Greeks conquered the Israelites. They controlled the land and taught the Jews how to speak the Greek language. The Greeks did not serve God. They believed in many false gods. They worshiped many idols and lived sinfully. Later, the Romans conquered the Greeks and they ruled the land of Israel and its cities. The Romans were wicked, powerful people who did not have any regard for God. They had many false gods and

idols. They even worshiped Caesar, their leader and king but he was just a person. The Roman empire was very large. They glorified themselves for being very powerful and took no account of God. However, they allowed the Jews to practice their own religion and worship God in the temple.

4. Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and Synagogues

During this time, there were several influential religious groups in the land of Israel. One of the groups was the Scribes. The scribes copied the original writings of Moses and the prophets so that they would not be lost. In those days, the only way to make a copy of a scroll was to reproduce it by handwriting.

The scribes carefully copied everything written in the original scrolls onto new scrolls so that God's revelation to mankind would not be lost. By doing this, God's Word was preserved for later generations. This was an important job which benefitted many people. Today we have God's Word in our hands because it was preserved in writing by the scribes.

The scribes were also known as lawyers or teachers of the law. They were very careful in their work of copying the Scriptures and made sure that every copy they produced was exactly like the original scroll. They became proud of themselves because of their important work. They thought they knew more about God's revelation to mankind than anyone else. These proud scribes failed to see that God wanted them to live according to his message, not just know about it.

Another religious sect was the Pharisees. They thought that God would accept them if they strictly followed many different rules which they made about serving God. They knew very well the Ten Commandments and other instructions which God had given to the Israelites. However, they did not teach them correctly to others. They added many of their own teachings to God's commandments. They believed the rules they added to God's commandments were equally important. That was wrong thinking because God's Word is supremely authoritative.

The Pharisees did not truly worship God. They believed that they were better than everyone else. They believed others were sinners but not themselves. They would do things that satisfied their religious beliefs. Because they were so religious, they thought that they were good enough to be accepted by God.

Pride and arrogance typified the Pharisees. They did not humble themselves before God. They had haughty attitudes toward others whom they believed were sinners. As for

themselves, they believed they were good. They believed their good works and actions caused God to be pleased with them. God hates this kind of false worship. He did not approve of the Pharisee's false worship.

The Sadducees were another group of Jewish religious leaders who claimed to worship God but did not believe some things written in his Word. They wanted other Israelites to see them as important leaders in Israel. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees were strict in their beliefs and believed that they had the right understanding of Scripture.

During this time, the Israelites built meeting houses in their towns and cities which they called synagogues. Every Sabbath day they met in the synagogues to hear the religious leaders read and explain the writings of Moses and the prophets. However, they did not clearly or accurately explain these writings to the people because they followed many of their own rules for living and imposed them upon everyone. At that time, many of the Jews continued to offer animal sacrifices in the temple. Even so, they did not believe in God nor did they truly follow him. They were loyal to their traditions and beliefs. These Jews were still living wickedly even though they professed to follow God.

During this time, there was always a group of the Jews who were true believers in God. They did not trust in themselves. They only trusted in God. They believed the promise of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would literally be fulfilled. They looked forward with much anticipation for the promised Deliverer. When they offered their blood sacrifices at the temple, their hearts were right toward God. They longed to please him. They knew that they had to come to him in his way. They trusted God to accept the animal's death in the place of their death. They did not rely on the good things they did to make themselves right before God. They knew that God alone could help them with their sin problem.

The faithful remnant believed God would truly fulfill his promise by sending the Deliverer. They waited expectantly for that day. Why? Because they knew that God cannot lie. He cannot change who he is. He always does what he says and fulfills every promise he makes. He is good, merciful and gracious. The faithful remnant hated the wickedness of the majority of the Jews. But, they never gave up their hope for the promised Deliverer because they trusted God.

5. Zachariah and Elizabeth

Although most of the Jews did not truthfully serve God, some did. These Jews waited and hoped to see the day when God would send the Deliverer. One of the prophets, Malachi, wrote that God would send a prophet to prepare the way for the Deliverer. Who

would this man be? When would he come? The Jews waited in expectation for his arrival four hundred years after Malachi wrote about this prophet.

Then, it was God's chosen time for the prophet to come. One day when Zachariah, a Jewish priest, was working inside the temple at Jerusalem, an angel of God appeared to him and said. "Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John." Zachariah was shocked to see and hear an angel speak to him. Never before had this happened to him!

The angel said that their son John would be a special baby. He told him how he should be raised. The angel also told Zachariah that once John was grown up he would proclaim God's message to the Israelites and tell them to repent from their wicked living. God chose John to preach to the Jews so that they would be prepared to listen to the message of the Deliverer who would soon follow him.

When the news spread that an angel of God had spoken to Zachariah, the believing Jews were happy. They were very pleased because God was showing his mercy and favor to them. They were excited because John would prepare the way for the Deliverer.

6. God Chose Mary to be the Deliverer's Mother

Six months after Elizabeth became pregnant with John, God sent one of his angels, Gabriel, to Mary, a young unmarried Israelite woman living in Nazareth. Gabriel is a good angel who refused to follow Lucifer's wicked rebellion against God. Gabriel was chosen by God to deliver this most important, special message to Mary. What do you think this message was?

Listen carefully to this true story. Gabriel, the angel, appeared to Mary and said, "You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David and he will reign over Israel forever. His Kingdom will never end!"

Mary heard the angel's announcement and asked, "How can I have a baby boy? I'm a virgin. I've never been with a man!" Mary believed in God and believed the angel's message. But, since she was unmarried and had been a pure young woman, she couldn't

help but wonder about the details of the announcement. Mary did not doubt Gabriel's message from God. She simply did not understand its full meaning.

Then Gabriel told her that God's Holy Spirit would come upon her and cause her to be pregnant. This would happen while she was unmarried and still a virgin. Gabriel said, "Your son will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God." When Mary heard all that Gabriel had to say to her, she understood that she would be giving birth to the Deliverer whom God had promised to send. Then she replied, "I am the Lord's willing servant. It is good to me that everything you have said about me will come true." Mary believed in God and wanted to be God's servant. As the creator and owner of Mary, God had the right to choose her to be the mother of the Deliverer. Then Gabriel left Mary.

Let's talk about Mary. Did Mary do something special which caused God to choose her to be the mother of the Deliverer? No, Mary did not do anything to cause God to choose her to be the Deliverer's mother. God chose Mary to be the mother of the Deliverer because he knew that she was the right person. Was Mary sinless? Did God choose her because she had never sinned? No, Mary was person with human parents just like we have. She was by nature a sinner like everyone else. Though she believed in God and trusted him, she knew that she needed God's mercy and grace to spare her from sin's penalty.

Let's think about this question: How could she become pregnant while she was still a virgin? Is it possible for a woman who has never had relations with a man to become pregnant? Do you know of anyone who does not have a mother and a father? Everyone we know has been born and is a descendant of a man and a woman. All people have had a mother and father. Since the time when God created Adam and Eve every person who has ever lived, is alive, or will be born has a mother and father.

Listen to this important point: The power of God through the Holy Spirit made Mary become pregnant. God, the creator of all people, exercised his power to cause a miracle in Mary's body. When God did this, Mary, an untouched virgin, in an instant became pregnant. Is this hard to believe? God wants you to believe that the historical account of Mary, an untouched virgin, becoming pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit is true.

All of the Bible stories are true. All of the miracles in the Bible are true and God expects everyone to believe all of them. Do you believe all of the miracles written in the Bible? God wants you to believe that he performed supernatural miracles. Remember this: If you do not have faith in God, he will not be pleased with you.

Think about the historical account of Abraham and Sarah giving birth to their son Isaac. Against all odds, Sarah who was barren and past the age of having children, gave birth to Isaac. How was it possible for God's promise to Abraham and Sarah to be fulfilled? Humanly speaking it was not possible. However, God made it happen! The awesome power of Almighty God caused her to become pregnant and she gave birth to Isaac, the

son God had promised to them. In like manner God's power through the Holy Spirit caused Mary be pregnant with the promised Deliverer.

Why did God choose to send the Deliverer as a human baby but without a human father? Let's discuss this so we can understand why it was necessary for the Deliverer to be born without a human father. The Deliverer whom God had promised to send had to be a sinless person. Who would this be? Whom would he send? How could the Deliverer come as a human being yet be sinless when everyone else was born with a sinful nature?

The Bible teaches us about God and the Spirit of God. It also teaches us about the Son of God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one God yet they are trinity. They do not have a human body like we do. In order for the Deliverer to be sinless and have a human body, he had a human mother but God was his Father. If a descendant of Adam were his father, he would have been born with a sinful nature. Can someone with a sinful nature save others from their sins? No, of course not. Anyone who is a sinner cannot save other sinners from the guilt and punishment of their sins.

Remember this: God had promised Eve and Adam that a descendant of the woman would have victory over the serpent. This promise spoke about the Deliverer who would save people from their sins. God chose Abraham to be the head of the earthly family to whom the Deliverer would be born. God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the Deliverer would be a descendant of theirs. After many years, when it was the right time, God chose Mary who was an Israelite, to be the mother of the Deliverer. She did not choose herself to be the mother of the Deliverer.

Why did God choose Mary to be the Deliverer's mother? Was she sinless? No, Mary was not sinless. Her mother and father were descendants of Adam who passed on to her a sinful nature. God chose Mary to be the mother of the Deliverer because he wanted to. He is God and can choose whomever he pleases to be his servant.

7. John's Birth

When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son and they named him John. Everyone who knew about John's birth was very happy that Zachariah and Elizabeth had a newborn baby boy. Zachariah and Elizabeth rejoiced greatly that God had shown favor to them and given them a son. He was a special child. They loved him dearly and knew that God had a special purpose for this special child. Certainly, they would try their best to raise him the right way.

Zachariah, John's father, was a true Israelite. He believed in God and looked forward to the day when God would send the promised Deliverer. He longed for the Deliverer who would deliver people from the power of Satan, sin and death. He trusted God and believed God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Zachariah did not worship idols nor did he follow evil practices.

Zachariah knew that his son John would grow up to be a mighty prophet for God. He knew that God had chosen John to preach to the Israelites and let them know that the Deliverer was coming. John's ministry was to prepare the Jews for the coming Deliverer. Zachariah praised God for John because he knew that John would prepare the Israelites for the coming Deliverer. After John prepared the way, the Deliverer would come and do his work which would be sufficient for all mankind.

Let's think about this: Many years had passed since Adam and Eve had sinned against God in the Garden of Eden. Since that time, all people have been born with a sinful nature. That means all people have sinned against God and have lived wickedly. They have not sought after God nor have they worshiped him. They have followed Satan's ways and lies and acted as though that was the right way to live. Many people have lived and died in spiritual darkness and sin. Their spirits have gone to the place of the awful never-ending fire of punishment.

When John was born, Zachariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, exuberantly praised God and prophesied that the coming Deliverer would truly make it possible for people to be saved from the penalty and guilt of being sinners. This Deliverer was sufficient for everyone. Will there ever be other Deliverers like him? No, he alone was the true Deliverer for all people for all times.

8. Joseph's Dream

Mary, God's chosen servant, became pregnant through the power of God's Holy Spirit. She had not had any relations with any man. At this time she was engaged to Joseph and they were planning to be married. Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant. What should he do? "This is not good," Joseph thought. As he pondered his situation, he decided to break the engagement without making a fuss, without exposing Mary. Joseph did not know that Mary was going to give birth to the



Show #53: An angel spoke to Joseph in a dream

Deliverer.

One night, after Joseph had decided that he would not get married to Mary, he had a dream. An angel of the Lord appeared to him and said. “Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife because she conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son whom you shall name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

When Joseph woke up he obeyed the angel’s command and took Mary as his wife though she remained a virgin until Jesus was born. Joseph feared God and served him. He was willing to be Mary’s husband and earthly father of the Deliverer so he obeyed God’s message and took Mary to be his wife and kept her a virgin until the Deliverer was born.

9. The Deliverer’s Birth

Many years earlier, Micah, one of God’s prophets wrote that the Deliverer would be born in Bethlehem. That is exactly what happened. Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem when it was time for the Deliverer to be born. Mary gave birth to her son. They named him Jesus. This son of Joseph and Mary was God’s promised Deliverer. God had fulfilled his promise at the right time. God never changes. He does not lie or mislead anyone.

When baby Jesus was eight days old, Joseph and Mary took him to the temple to offer a sacrifice to God according to the custom of the Jews. When they arrived at the temple, an old man, Simeon, was also there. God’s Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he

would see the Deliverer before he died. Simeon truly believed God and worshiped him in truth. He anticipated seeing the Deliverer. When Simeon saw baby Jesus, he took him in his arms and praised God, “I have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

Simeon praised God because he longed for the Deliverer to come and save people from the guilt and penalty of their sins. When he saw baby Jesus, he rejoiced because God was now bringing to fulfillment his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Only this Deliverer could save people from their sins. That is why Simeon was so happy to see baby Jesus.

That same day, a woman named Anna was worshiping God in the temple. She truly believed in God and looked forward to the coming of the Deliverer. When she heard Simeon’s declaration, she greatly rejoiced and praised God for his goodness. Why was she so happy? Anna was so happy because she knew that God was fulfilling his promise

that he made long ago to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. She praised God because she knew that only the Deliverer could save people from their sins.

Simeon and Anna's response to seeing baby Jesus, the Deliverer was very good. They praised God for sending the Deliverer because they believed in God and longed for the Deliverer to come. They trusted God and knew that he would fulfill his promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When they saw baby Jesus, the Deliverer, they were excited to know that this was the one who would make it possible for people to have their sins forgiven.

Are you excited about this story? Are you rejoicing to know that this baby Jesus was the one that God had promised to send to save people from their sins? God wants you to believe in him and trust him. He wants you to listen carefully to the story about the Deliverer. He wants you to be saved from the penalty and guilt of your sins so that you will be with him forever. He does not want you to live and die in unbelief. God wants you to be saved from the guilt and penalty of your sins. If you do not believe the Bible's teachings, when you die your spirit will go to the place of the never-ending fire of punishment. Then it will be too late for you will be separated from God forever.

10. The Wise Men See Jesus

After Jesus, the Deliverer, was born, some men from another country came looking for him. They traveled a long time in their search for him. They wanted to worship Jesus. These men were educated and wise. When they saw a new star shining over the land of Israel, they knew that it was a sign that the King of the Jews had been born in Israel. They wanted to see this baby and worship him. But, they did not know where he was so they traveled to Jerusalem to search for him. They inquired of King Herod, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We have traveled here to worship him."

When King Herod, who ruled over Jerusalem, heard this, he was very upset and angry. Why was King Herod so angry? He was the political king of Israel and ruled over the land. King Herod was jealous and afraid lest someone take his position as king over the Jews. He wanted to be the king who ruled the Jews and be a powerful, unchallenged king over the Jews. It does not make sense that King Herod was afraid that a very young child would usurp his political position as king of Israel. Herod was an evil man who did not worship God. He only thought about his own interests.

King Herod gathered the chief priests and scribes and asked them, "Where is the Messiah to be born?" They told him that the Scriptures said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Then King Herod called the wise men and asked them about the star they had

seen. He pretended to be interested in knowing more about the newborn King of the Jews. Deceitfully, King Herod said to the wise men, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!” King Herod was not telling the truth. He was a wicked, evil man who did not honor or believe in God. He was afraid that he might lose his political kingship to this special child. He was already planning to get rid of him.

Do you think evil King Herod could overrule God’s plan for the Deliverer? Was there even a slight chance that he might thwart God’s plan for the Deliverer’s work?

Listen carefully to the next part of the story. The wise men left King Herod and went on their way to Bethlehem. The star they had seen in the east went ahead of them and guided them to Bethlehem. It stopped over the place where the very young Deliverer was. Then the wise men entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary. When they saw him, joyfully they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they honored him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh which they had brought along from their home country. These wise men were overjoyed and awed to be in the presence of this special child sent by God to be the Deliverer of all mankind.

God knew about King Herod’s wickedness and his evil plan to harm young Jesus. When the wise men were ready to leave for their home country, God warned them in a dream to follow another route to their homeland. God did not allow wicked Herod to harm Jesus, the Deliverer. No ruler or king could stop God’s purpose for Jesus, the Deliverer.

Why did wicked Herod want to harm Jesus, the Deliverer, who was still a young child? Where did this evil plan come from? Herod, no doubt was very upset to hear the wise men call Jesus the title of King of the Jews because he did not want any competition to his job. Who else would have been very angry with the Deliverer? Satan, the enemy of God, worked through King Herod to agitate his mind and make him jealous and fearful of this young child. Satan hates God and continually fought against God in history. Satan did not want Jesus to be the Deliverer who would save people from their sins.

All of Satan’s ways are evil. He does not want you to hear the story about Jesus, the Deliverer. He wants people to die in their sins and go to the place of the never-ending fire of punishment. Have you been tempted to not listen to this teaching? Who is tempting you to stay away? It is Satan because he wants all people to be ignorant about the Deliverer and his work to save people from their sins.

11. Flight to Egypt

After the wise men were departed from Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and warned him about wicked King Herod's plan to kill Jesus. The angel instructed Joseph to immediately go to the land of Egypt with Mary and Jesus to get away from Herod. God knew that wicked King Herod would try to kill Jesus even before he gave orders to his soldiers to do so. God knows everything. He knows about future events as if they had already happened.

Joseph awoke from his dream and immediately made preparations to leave for the land of Egypt. Then he told Mary what they needed to do. That night Joseph, Mary, and young Jesus left for the land of Egypt. Once they arrived in Egypt, they were safe, out of the

reach of wicked King Herod. When Herod found out that the wise men had returned to their home country without telling him the whereabouts of Jesus he was infuriated. In great anger and rage, he commanded soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under. He hoped that young Jesus would be among the young boys killed by the soldiers.

God knew about King Herod's wicked scheme to kill Jesus. He was so wicked and did not believe in God. He wanted to control everyone in Israel just like many years earlier Pharaoh wanted to control the Israelites in the land of Egypt. In vain he fought against God and tried to kill Jesus, the promised Deliverer. God knew how to care for Jesus, the promised Deliverer. There was no way that any person or being would thwart God's plan for Jesus to be the Deliverer who saves people from their sin.

12. Return to Nazareth

Joseph, Mary and Jesus lived in the land of Egypt away from the power and authority of King Herod. There he could not find them. They lived in the land of Egypt until wicked King Herod died. Then one of God's angels appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, "Get up and take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel. The one who was trying to kill the child is dead." Wicked King Herod was now dead. His evil plan to harm Jesus, the Deliverer, failed because God had protected him.

Joseph obeyed the angel's command and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. Once they arrived in the land of Israel, they went to a town called Nazareth and lived there. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: "He will be called a Nazarene." Now Joseph, Mary and Jesus were living in the promised land again.

Joseph obeyed God's commands which he received through the angel because he believed in God. He did not argue with God, he just obeyed him. Joseph knew that Jesus

was a special child. God wanted them to take care of him so that he would grow up to be the Deliverer of all mankind. God loved Jesus very much because he had a very important mission for him.

The example of Joseph and Mary obeying God is a good one for us to follow. Just like they obeyed God's commands without delay, so too must we believe the Bible stories we are hearing without doubting them.

13. Jesus' Early Years

Jesus continued to grow and mature as all children do. He was God in a human body so he grew physically and mentally like everyone else. God, his Father, cared for him and guided him all the time. In many ways, Jesus was like us because he had a body like we have. But, there was one important difference about Jesus. He did not have a sin nature like we have. He was divine.

Do you think Jesus ever sinned while he was growing up? No, Jesus did not commit any sins anytime. Remember, he was God living in a body, however, his father was not a descendant of Adam. Mary, his mother, had become pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was born, he did not have a sin nature like we have. That is why he always did what was right. He never disobeyed God because he was God living in a human body. Joseph and Mary raised and trained Jesus as he was growing up. Joseph treated him like a son, he loved him and took good care of him.

Every year Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. Many others also traveled to Jerusalem for this event. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went with his parents to Jerusalem to observe the annual feast of the Passover. After the feast of the Passover was over, Joseph, Mary and the others who traveled with them, started home to return to Nazareth. Jesus, however, stayed behind in Jerusalem.

At first, his parents didn't miss him because they thought he was with some of the other travelers. That evening he didn't show up so they started looking for him among their relatives and friends who were traveling with them.

Joseph and Mary couldn't find Jesus so they went back to Jerusalem to search for him. After looking for him for three

days, they found him in the Temple. He was sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. This was quite unusual for a boy who was only twelve years old. Those who heard him talk with the religious leaders were amazed at his understanding and his answers. At that time, the people Jesus talked to did not know that he was the promised Deliverer, the Son of God.

When Joseph and Mary found Jesus in the temple reasoning with the religious leaders, they didn't know what to think. Mary, very concerned about Jesus, wondered what he had been doing and questioned him about his whereabouts. "Why have you done this?" she asked. "Your father and I have been searching for you everywhere." Jesus answered them, "Why did you need to search for me? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?" Jesus understood at that young age that God was his father.

Then Jesus returned to Nazareth with his parents. He continued to grow in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people. He was a person whom others liked. Most important, God was pleased with him. He would accomplish his mission of being the Deliverer who would make it possible for people to be saved from the guilt and penalty of their sins.

After the Meeting

Setting: Raymond and Patrick were talking about the teaching after the meeting.

Patrick: A long time ago, God promised that a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would come to be the Deliverer. When we first heard that teaching, I wanted to learn about the Deliverer. I wondered how he would come.

Raymond: First God made it possible for Zachariah and Elizabeth to have a baby boy whom they named John. He was sent to prepare the way for the coming Deliverer.

Patrick: When Gabriel spoke to Mary, she was frightened. But, she was willing to be the one to give birth to the promised Deliverer.

Raymond: Mary became pregnant by the power of God through his Holy Spirit. It is hard to understand all of that, however, I believe it really happened because God's message for us is true. God created Mary and had the power to cause her to become pregnant without her ever having been with a man. That is truly an awesome miracle of God.

Patrick: Joseph and Mary must have been excited when Jesus was born. I was excited to hear about his birth, but unhappy about Herod's evil plan to kill him.

Raymond: God knows everything. Before Jesus was born, he knew that wicked King Herod would try to kill Jesus. I think Satan was working through Herod because he did not want Jesus to be the Deliverer. Herod was a very evil man who fought against God.

Patrick: How foolish of Herod to try to kill Jesus. No one can prevent God from doing what he intends to do.

Raymond: That's right. God saw to it that Joseph was a good man who took care of Jesus and treated him well. When Herod wanted to kill Jesus, Joseph obeyed God's warning and took Mary and Jesus to a safe place in the land of Egypt. He obeyed God's command because he believed in God. Later, King Herod died. Then God directed Joseph to return to the promised land again. God loved Jesus, his son, and guided his parents to Nazareth where he would be raised.

Patrick: Did Jesus sin when he stayed in Jerusalem after the Feast of the Passover? When Teacher told the story, it sounded like Mary was really concerned about Jesus having stayed in Jerusalem after they left for Nazareth.

Raymond: Jesus did not sin against God. By this time, he knew that his father was God.

When he was in the temple, he was in his father's house with the religious teachers asking and answering questions. Remember this: Jesus was God in a human body. He could not sin. He could never sin against God, his father.

1. **Review of the Lesson's Themes**

God is sovereign and omnipotent: God continued to work in history through the Israelites. Though disobedient to God, the Israelites were God's chosen people by whom the Deliverer would come.

God communicates with man and makes his plans known: God revealed his plan through his messenger Gabriel to Zachariah and to Mary. At the right time, God set in motion the events that had to do with the Deliverer's coming.

God is faithful. He did not forget his promise to send the Deliverer: Though many years had passed since the original promise to send the Deliverer, at the right time in history, God sent Jesus, a baby born of Mary, to be the Deliverer for all mankind.

Jesus, the Deliverer, is God and man: Though the Deliverer lived in a human body, he was fully God. His conception was caused by the power of the Holy Spirit. When Mary gave birth to him, he was fully human yet without a sin nature.

Faith in God is required for deliverance: God's sovereign protection saved young Jesus from the hands of evil King Herod. When the wisemen and Joseph were warned about Herod, they believed God and obeyed his instructions for protection and deliverance from wick King Herod.

Jesus was sinless because he is divine: Jesus, the Deliverer, had a human body so he lived like other people. His father was God so he did not have a sin nature. That means he never sinned in any way. He was perfect and sinless all the time.

2. Practice telling the Bible Stories

At the end of this lesson, practice telling the story you have just heard to each other. Everyone needs to practice teaching Bible lessons by telling the stories.

Practice telling the stories of this lesson in pairs. One pair should teach one of the stories in the lesson following this lesson's Table of Contents for divisions in the lessons.

The Table of Contents at the beginning of the lesson lists the stories for each lesson. Some of the stories or sections of a story are short so they should be combined with another section to make the exercise of practicing to teach by using stories a profitable exercise.

When you are teaching a lesson by telling the story, use culturally appropriate questions and illustrations to keep the story interesting and to make the people think about the lesson's meanings. Be prepared to engage the audience with questions which are crafted to bring out how well they understand the meaning of the story. Emphasize the important points when telling the stories.

Use visual aids or objects used in the lesson when you teach a story. Show the pictures at the right time in the story. When illustrations are used, be sure to bring them to a right and logical conclusion. If you do not make the right conclusions through telling the story, people will likely guess what it means and they could easily come to a wrong conclusion.

After you have practiced telling stories to each other, talk about ways to improve your story-telling ability. Be open to critique and be kind to each other as you work together to help each other become master story-tellers. The goal of teaching God's Word via telling Bible stories is not to merely impress your peers; it is the salvation of spiritually lost people.

As you tell the stories ascertain how well you present the stories and the themes. Does your teaching tend to highlight man or does it rightfully focus on God working in history? Do you tell the story so that God is highlighted? Or is man, in a subtle way, the main actor in the story? You need to make sure that the role of God in these stories is the main focus.

3. Teaching Tips for Teachers

General Note:

This lesson transitions from the Old Testament to the beginning of the New Testament. It briefly covers a few facts of history from the four hundred years of silence. Do not say to the audience that you are leaving the Old Testament to teach from the New Testament. Simply teach the lesson so that this whole series will flow as one story of God's work in history for the salvation of mankind.

If someone knows about the Old Testament-New Testament divisions, acknowledge what they are saying but continues teaching the lesson as a part of the big story of God working in history. This will help them to grasp the big picture of God's work in history for the spiritual welfare for all people.

As you begin to teach the sections of this lesson about the birth and early life of Jesus, the Deliverer, show excitement about what you are teaching. Why? Because this is the historical account of God fulfilling the prophecies which related to the coming of the Deliverer.

If the people understand the meaning of these lessons, it is reasonable to believe that they will come to salvation at the conclusion of this series. That's why privately, not in the public meeting, you need to ask God in prayer to open their hearts and minds to the meaning of these lessons as it applies to them. Ask God to help them believe the supernatural acts of God as recorded in Scripture. When you teach these lessons exhort the people to believe all that the Word of God teaches.

If you teach these lessons, especially the ones about the Deliverer, with great conviction it will likely lend to helping people see the importance of these lessons. On the other hand if you do not exude confidence and excitement in these lessons, it sends an unintentional message to the people that the lessons may not be most important. Consider the culturally appropriate manner for presenting a very important message and use it correctly for the glory of God and the salvation of those you are teaching as you teach these lessons.

Lesson Point #3-4:

These two sections contain brief information about the history of Israel in order to help the audience understand political and historical events that happened to the nation of Israel. During the time of Christ, the Deliverer, the Romans ruled Israel and the Greek language was widely used in many surrounding countries.

The religious life of the Jews was largely governed by the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. Sabbath day meetings were held in synagogues in towns and cities. Mostly, the religious life of the Jews was the formal observance of traditions which governed their religious activities.

It is important to note that a faithful remnant existed during that time in history. These people were faithful to God and looked forward to the coming Deliverer.

Lesson Point #5-6:

Point out God's sovereignty in this section. At the right time he revealed to Zachariah that he and Elizabeth would have a son who would be the forerunner to the Deliverer.

Stress God's sovereignty in choosing Mary to be the mother of Jesus, the Deliverer. It is important that the people understand that Mary was not a sinless person. God chose her to be the mother of Jesus, the Deliverer.

Emphasize that Mary remained a virgin from the time of her pregnancy to the time of Jesus' birth. Interact with people to understand whether or not they believe that the Holy Spirit caused Mary to be with child. Note this: If people do not believe that Mary's pregnancy was caused by the power of the Holy Spirit, it opens the door to disbelieving Jesus' divinity.

As the teacher, you should ask God in prayer to enable the people to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, the Deliverer. It is very important that they understand that Jesus was fully human and fully God. Do not assume that people will readily grasp and comprehend this important truth.

Lesson Point #8:

This section is short but important because it reiterates that the father of Jesus was not Joseph, but God. The angel of the Lord told him to not be afraid of Mary because she conceived by the Holy Spirit. Stress this point: God wanted Joseph to know about his supernatural work in the body of Mary which caused her to be pregnant with Jesus. That means he also wants everyone to know that Jesus was divine. His mother, Mary, was a human being whose body was used to give birth to Jesus who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Again emphasize that Jesus did not have a sin nature.

Lesson Point #10-12:

Stress the sovereignty and power of God in these sections. God is sovereign and supreme. No being or power can stop him from achieving his plan and purpose.

Emphasize the good example of the wise men who joyfully bowed before young Jesus to worship him and present to him their gifts. This is what God wants from everyone, to submit to Jesus, the Deliverer, and honor him with praise and worship because he truly is God. This is not just another historical story. It is an account of how God became a human being in order to be our Deliverer.

Point out the futility of fighting against God. Warn the people against resisting God. King Herod is an historical example of the stupidity and futility of fighting against God. Emphasize that people who fight against God are often the instrument of Satan against God's work and purposes. Stress that it is important to always submit to God's plans. The example of King Herod being an instrument of Satan who fought against God is a warning for everyone to take heed of lest they too resist the teaching which would please Satan and displease God.

Emphasize that God knows everything. God knew hundreds of years before Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fled to Egypt that this event would happen. Show how this event fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy and how it shows God's sovereignty and infinite knowledge.

Show also how God knew that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus would return to Nazareth after King Herod had died. God always knew this and had his prophet record it hundreds of years before the event. Emphasize that God knows everything and is sovereign in the affairs of mankind.

Lesson Point #13:

Exercise care when teaching this section so that you do not inadvertently present Jesus as a disobedient son. Jesus did not sin against Joseph and Mary when he remained in the temple talking to the Jewish religious leaders. Use this event to show that at the young age of twelve years, Jesus already knew who he was, who his father was, and that he needed to fulfill the mission that God had for him. Jesus never sinned. Emphasize that he lived a perfect and sinless life.

4. To the Honorable Teacher

If any part of this lesson is misunderstood, go over that part again. Play that part of the lesson again. Summarize that part briefly for the students then play that part a second time. Then ask questions to ascertain whether or not this part of the lesson is now understood correctly.

Be prepared to use proper illustrations to clarify a given lesson point. Sometimes it is helpful to use a picture and talk about what is portrayed in the picture as you teach.

Stress to the students that the important themes of this lesson must be understood before proceeding to the next lesson.

Simple drama can be useful to make a point clearer in the people's minds. Before using drama, be sure that it is culturally appropriate to do so. If people are not accustomed to understanding simple drama, it may be best to not use it.