

EXPLORING LUKE AND MATTHEW'S STORIES



BACKGROUND

As we move through Advent and Christmas, children hear the birth stories from Matthew and Luke. Eventually, they notice that not every character in a Nativity scene appears in every reading. This is a great chance to teach them about scripture and why each author wrote for different audiences.

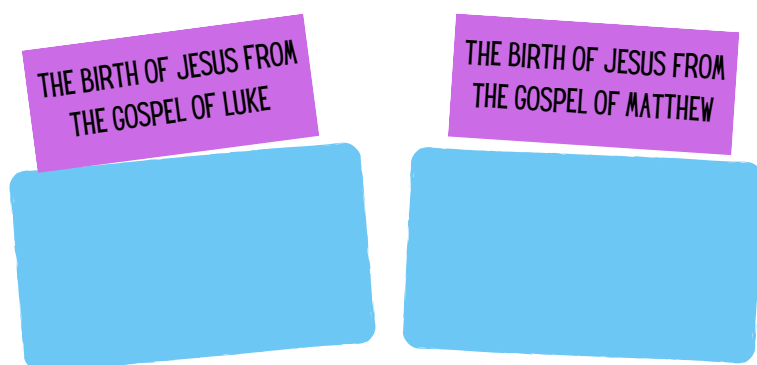
Here's a simple way to explore these differences—using Little Nativity characters to create Matthew's scene and Luke's scene.

FOR THIS ACTIVITY YOU WILL NEED:

- Little nativity characters printed on card (see following pages)
- Luke's story and Matthew's story signs printed on card
- Luke's infancy narrative and Matthew's infancy narrative (optional: can be printed and displayed)
- Two mats (or other way of designating two spaces for the characters to be placed).

SET UP:

- Lay out the two mats side by side.
- Place Luke's story and Matthew's story signs above each mat.
- Set up all the nativity characters on display together so that they can be seen by the children.



INTRODUCTION

When a new baby arrives, family members visit and each leaves with their own story to tell. These stories are often shaped for their audience—other relatives who share similar experiences. Every story adds something special about this precious new life.

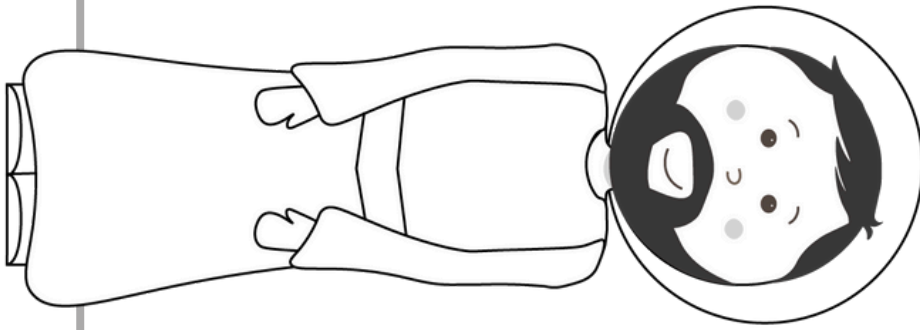
- **ASK THE CHILDREN:** Do you have any photos from when you were born? Who came to visit you? Who else is in the pictures—grandparents, aunties, uncles?
- **SHARE:** When a baby is born, visitors come from different parts of the family—Dad's side, Mum's side. Each person goes home and shares what they noticed. For example, someone might say the baby has Auntie Jen's eyes, while another says Grandad's nose. Same baby, different details, shared with different audiences.
- That's what it's like with Luke and Matthew's stories—two perspectives on the same event, told for different audiences.

ACTIVITY

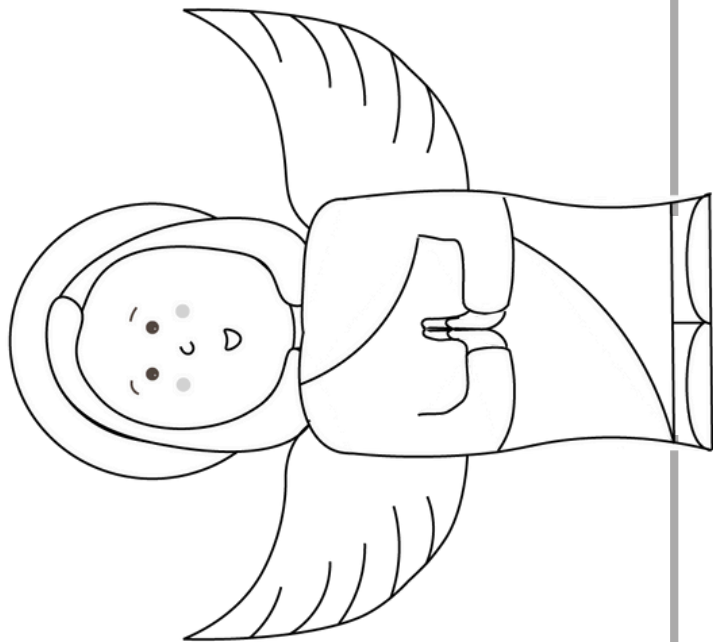
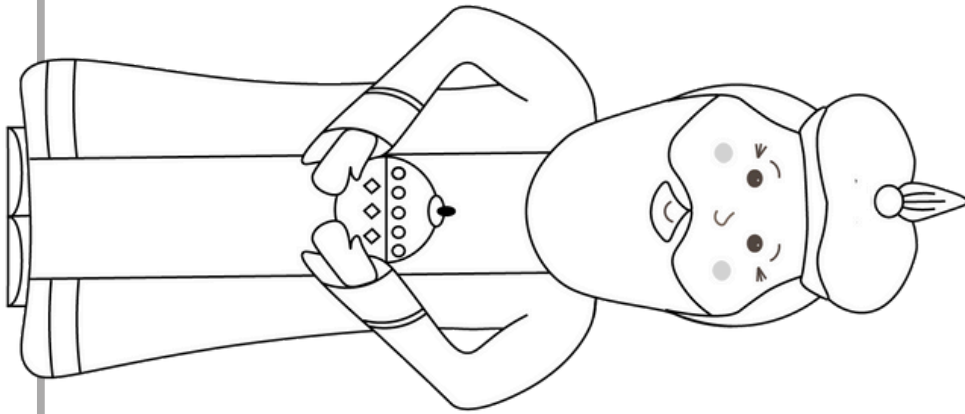
At Christmas, nativity scenes often mix all the characters. Today, we'll make two scenes—one for Matthew, one for Luke—and compare what's the same, what's different, and what each tells us about Jesus.

- **READ:** Read the scripture stories from Matthew (leave out the genealogy if you wish) and from Luke.
- **ASK:** What characters appear in both stories? What is unique to Matthew? What is unique to Luke?
- **CREATE THE NATIVITY SCENES:** Use nativity figures to build each scene. Talk about extra characters like Elizabeth or Herod, but leave them out of the final display.
- **DISCUSS:** Why do you think each writer included different details? What do these stories tell us about who Jesus is?
- **CONCLUDE:**
 - Matthew wrote for Jewish people who knew the old Bible stories. He wanted them to see Jesus as the promised King—the Messiah. That's why he included things they recognised, like Jesus' family tree linking to King David and Joseph's dreams.
 - Luke wrote for everyone. He wanted all people to know Jesus came for the whole world—not just the rich and powerful, but the poor and humble too. That's why he tells about Mary's song and the shepherds. Luke shows that everyone is welcome in God's kingdom.

Matthew's story 1
Mary, Joseph and Jesus

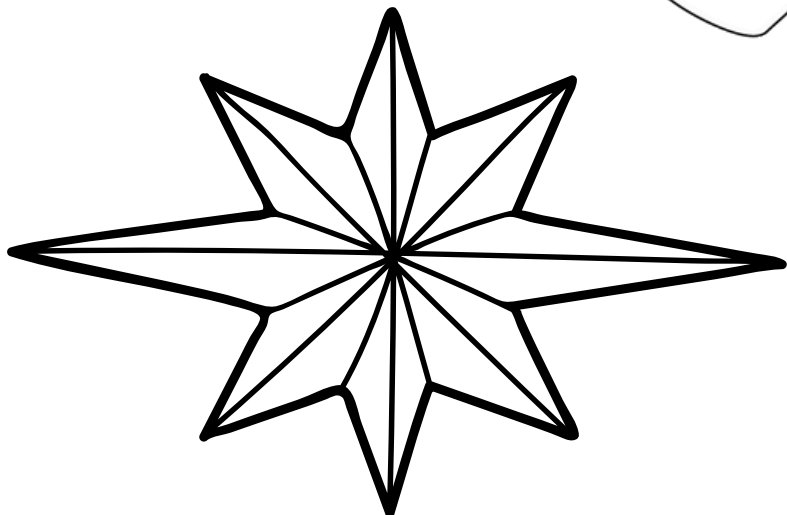
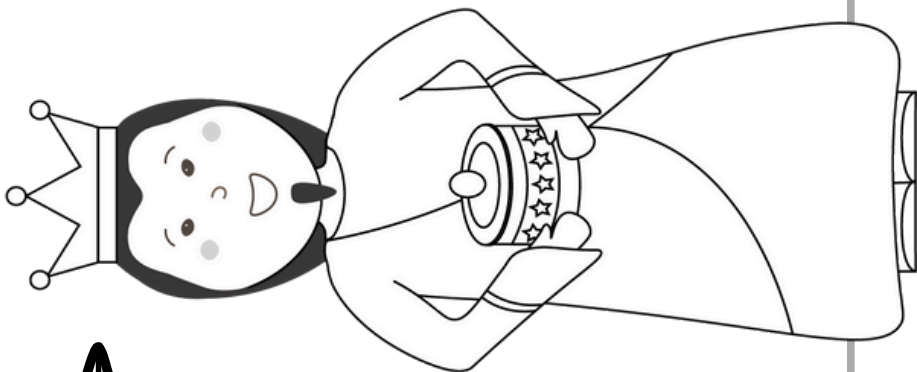
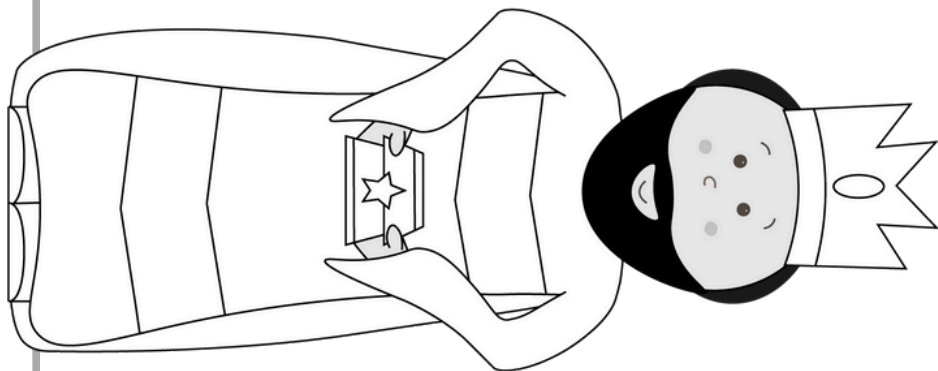


Matthew's story 2
Magi x1 and Angel



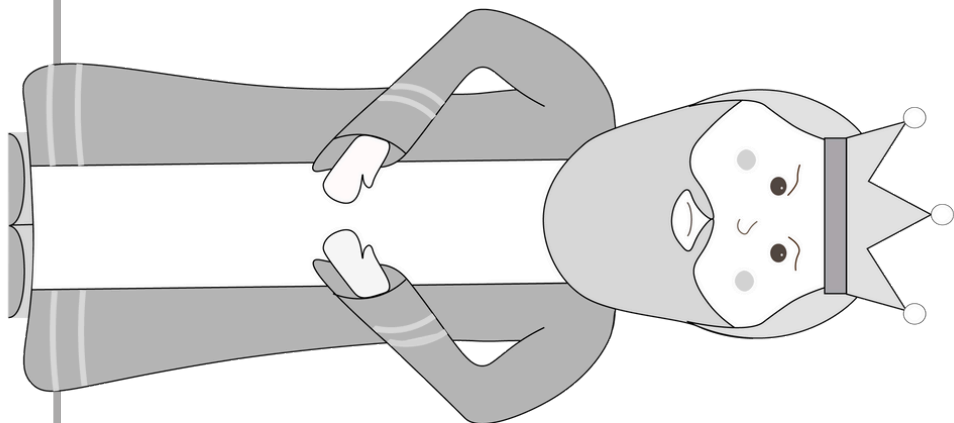
Matthew's story 3

Magi x2

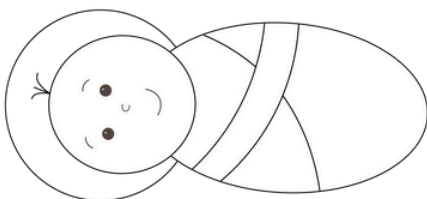
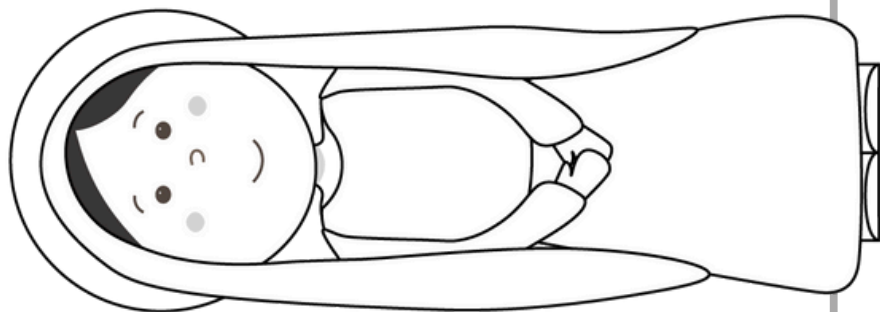
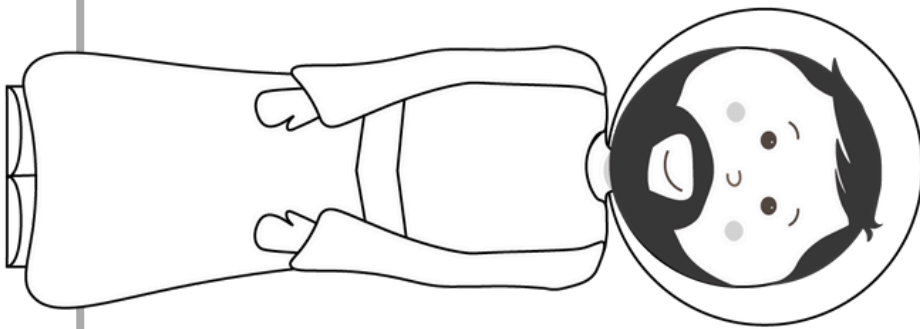


Matthew's story 4

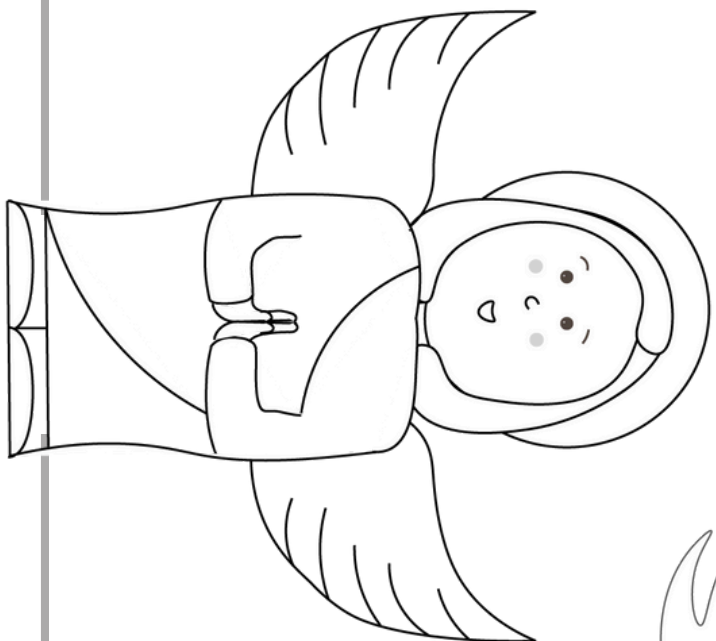
Herod



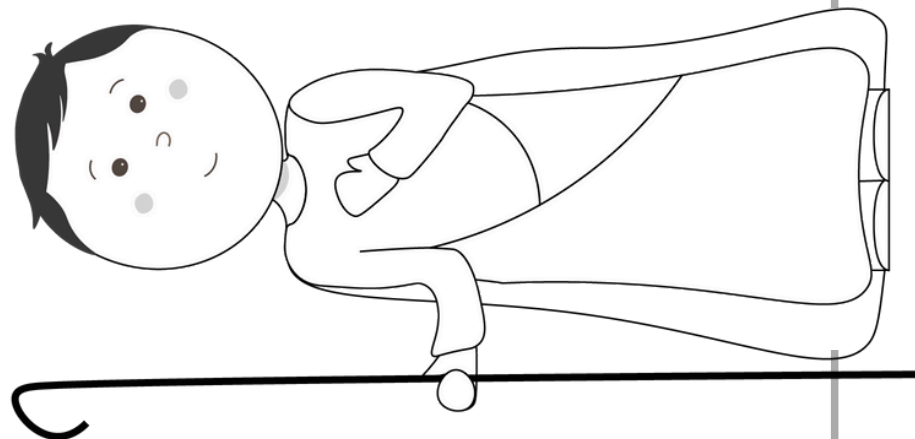
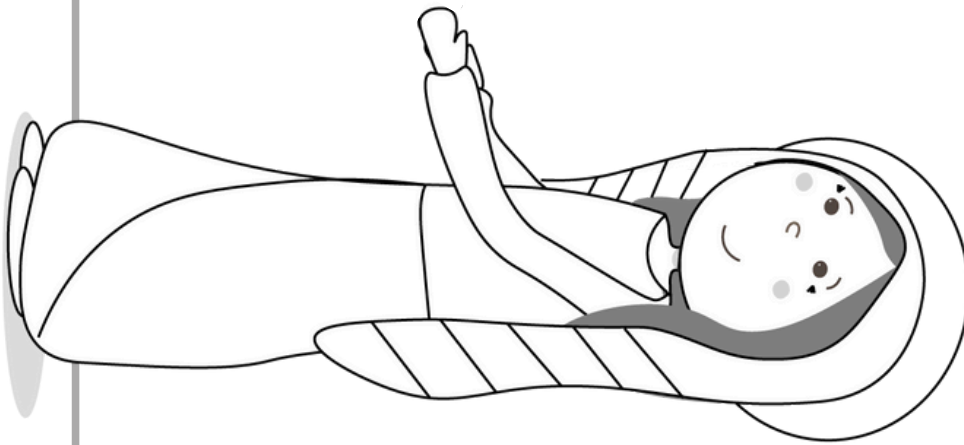
Luke's story 1
Mary, Joseph and
Jesus



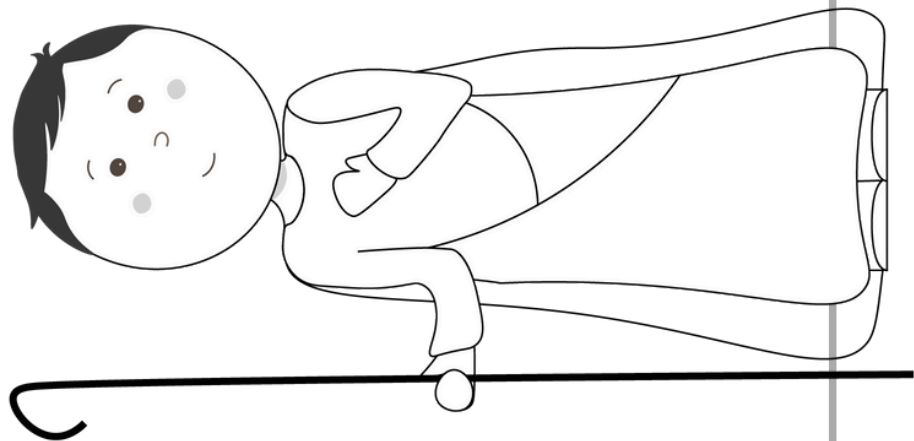
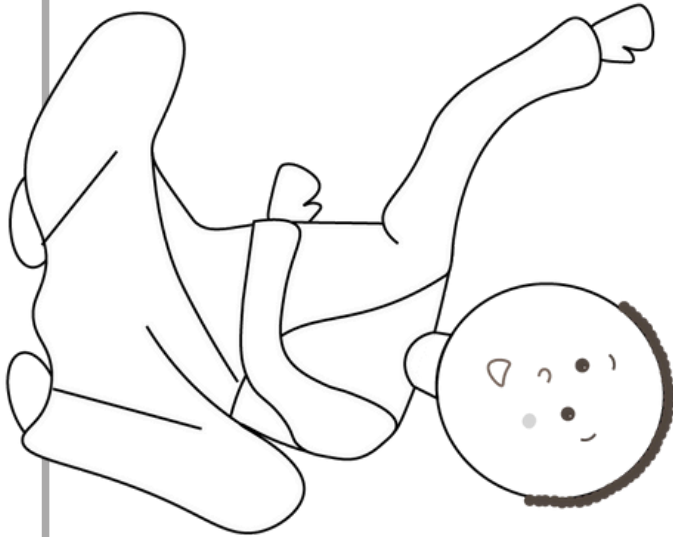
Luke's story 3
Angel Gabriel and
manger



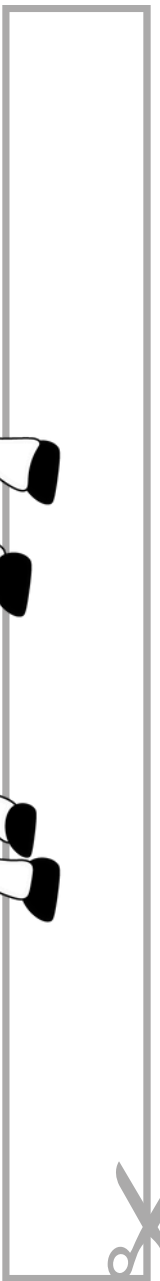
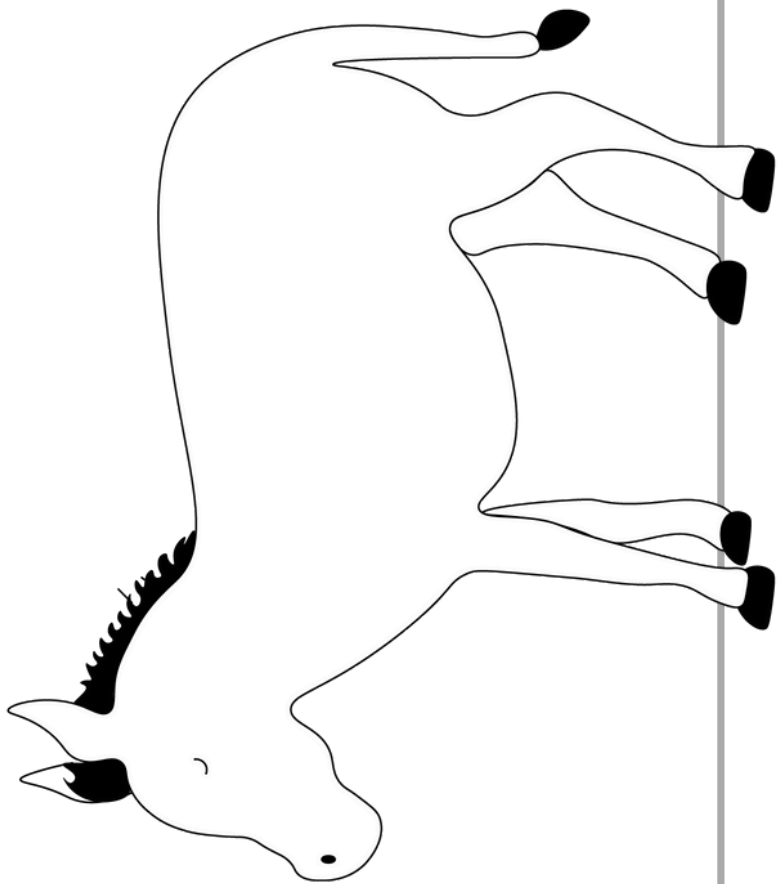
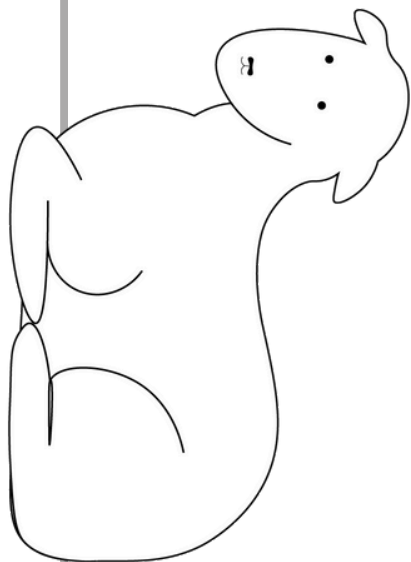
Luke's story 2
Elizabeth and
Shepherd



Luke's story 2
Shepherds



Luke's story 4
Stable animals



Luke's story 4
Multitude of
angels



**THE BIRTH OF JESUS FROM
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**THE BIRTH OF JESUS FROM
THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

THE BIRTH OF JESUS FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke 1:26-56 CEV

An Angel Tells about the Birth of Jesus

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you." Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not even married!"

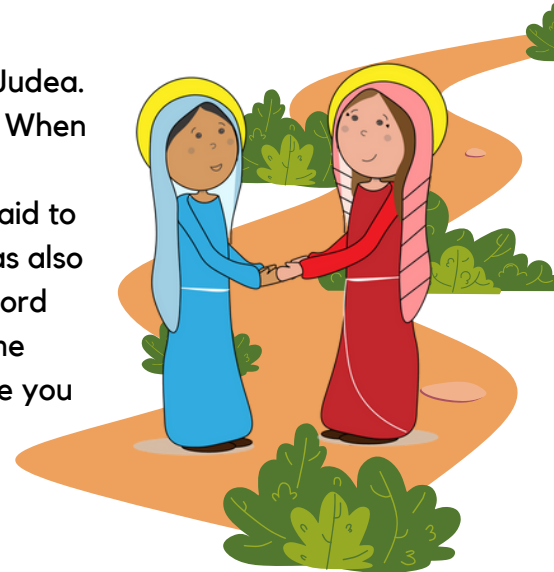
The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible for God!"

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." And the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

A short time later Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea. She went into Zechariah's home, where she greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, her baby moved within her.

The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth. Then in a loud voice she said to Mary: God has blessed you more than any other woman! He has also blessed the child you will have. Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby became happy and moved within me. The Lord has blessed you because you believed that he will keep his promise.



Mary's Song of Praise

Mary said:

With all my heart I praise the Lord, and I am glad because of God my Savior. God cares for me, his humble servant.

From now on, all people will say God has blessed me.

God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy.

He always shows mercy to everyone who worships him.

The Lord has used his powerful arm to scatter those who are proud.

God drags strong rulers from their thrones and puts humble people in places of power.

God gives the hungry good things to eat, and sends the rich away with nothing.

God helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people.

The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever!

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months. Then she went back home.

About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books. These first records were made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family. Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Shepherds

That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay." Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said: "Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God."

After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about." They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and they saw the baby lying on a bed of hay. When the shepherds saw Jesus, they told his parents what the angel had said about him. Everyone listened and was surprised. But Mary kept thinking about all this and wondering what it meant.

As the shepherds returned to their sheep, they were praising God and saying wonderful things about him. Everything they had seen and heard was just as the angel had said. Eight days later Jesus' parents did for him what the Law of Moses commands. And they named him Jesus, just as the angel had told Mary when he promised she would have a baby.



THE BIRTH OF JESUS FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew 1:1-24, 2:1-12

Jesus Christ came from the family of King David and also from the family of Abraham. And this is a list of his ancestors. From Abraham to King David, his ancestors were: *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and his brothers (Judah's sons were Perez and Zerah, and their mother was Tamar), Hezron; Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz (his mother was Rahab), Obed (his mother was Ruth), Jesse, and King David.*

From David to the time of the exile in Babylonia, the ancestors of Jesus were: David, Solomon (his mother had been Uriah's wife), Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram; Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, and Jehoiachin and his brothers.

From the exile to the birth of Jesus, his ancestors were: Jehoiachin, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim; Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, and Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

There were 14 generations from Abraham to David. There were also 14 from David to the exile in Babylonia and 14 more to the birth of the Messiah.

The Birth of Jesus

This is how Jesus Christ was born. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph from King David's family. But before they were married, she learned that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit. Joseph was a good man and did not want to embarrass Mary in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call off the wedding.

While Joseph was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit. Go ahead and marry her. Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel," which means "God is with us."



After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do. But they did not sleep together before her baby was born. Then Joseph named him Jesus.

The Wise Men

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote,

'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea.

From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.' "

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star.

He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I also want to go and worship him."

The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

