

## Lesson 125

# Jesus' Parents

Mary and Joseph humbly submitted to God's plan.

# Overview

## Lesson Focus

After Mary was told she would be the mother of Jesus, she visited her cousin Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist. They both rejoiced upon her greeting, and Mary returned praise to the Lord. An angel visited Joseph in a dream, instructing him to take Mary as his wife, though she was with child, for the child was of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' parents were righteous and faithful, and they were obedient to God's instructions.

## Key Passages

Luke 1:41–55; Matthew 1:18–23

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

Describe how Mary visited Elizabeth.

Understand the importance of the angel's visit to Joseph.

## Memory Verse

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

## Prepare to Share

### Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

There was a surprising amount of biblical activity prior to the arrival of Jesus. Generally, these accounts are only viewed as an introduction to the Christmas story, but there is much to be gleaned from these happenings. In a single span of a year, there are at least four distinct messages from God that are recorded in Scripture. Considering that the Jews considered the past 400 years to be a famine of the word of God (Amos 8:11), this drastic increase in supernatural activity is amazing. God sent his angel to Zechariah (Luke 1:5–25), Mary (Luke 1:26–38), and Joseph (Matthew 1:18–25). He revealed truth to Simeon through his Holy Spirit (Luke 2:26). He opened the womb of a barren woman and filled the womb of a virgin. Jesus was finally about to arrive.

Luke records Mary's reaction to the news that she would give birth to Jesus; Matthew records Joseph's reaction. Mary, after humbly submitting to God's plan, went to visit her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–45). Elizabeth was already six-months pregnant with John, who would be known as John the Baptist. John was

chosen and set apart to be the forerunner of Jesus. He was to prepare the way of the Lord (Luke 1:17). When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the boy leaped within her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41). Elizabeth clearly understood the magnitude of what was happening, calling Mary and her son blessed. She also referred to Mary as the “mother of my Lord” (Luke 1:43), understanding that the child would be Messiah, whom her son would serve.

Mary immediately responded with a song of praise to God (Luke 1:46–55). Despite being called favored by the angel (Luke 1:28) and blessed by Elizabeth (Luke 1:42), Mary viewed herself as a humble servant of God (Luke 1:48). Her song begins by placing the focus on God; her purpose is to magnify him. She calls him holy, celebrates his mighty works, and praises his mercy, strength, sovereignty, provision, kindness, and faithfulness.

Matthew records Joseph’s reaction. He was a righteous man, so when he found out Mary was pregnant, he decided to divorce her privately (Matthew 1:18–25). According to Jewish law, betrothal was as legally binding as marriage, so a legal divorce would be necessary to end the engagement. According to the law, an unfaithful wife could legally be stoned (Deuteronomy 22:23–24). Joseph did not want to shame her, so he was going to divorce her quietly. But the angel explained to him in a dream that Mary’s child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and would be Jesus, the Savior. When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel commanded and took Mary to be his wife.

## Historical/Apologetics Background

An interesting implication of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth is found in the actions of the unseen character. When Mary greeted Elizabeth, John leaped within her womb (Luke 1:41). Elizabeth was about six-months pregnant at this time, but the baby was clearly viewed as a human being, filled with life and personality. In fact, the Bible’s description implies that John was aware, intelligent, and responsive. He recognized Mary’s voice and responded in joy, understanding that his Lord and Savior was near. Additionally, John is described as a baby in verse 41, and the Greek word there (*brephos*) is the same word used to refer to Jesus after he was born (Luke 2:12, 16). It is obvious that the Bible teaches that the unborn are valuable human beings with individual personhood (Psalm 139:13–16; Jeremiah 1:4–5; Psalm 51:5; Exodus 21:22–24), and this account is a perfect example of life prior to birth.

Another interesting detail is found in Mary’s song. Catholicism uses Elizabeth’s greeting to form the rosary prayer to Mary: “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.” Embedded in this prayer is the idea that Mary mediates on our behalf. This belief is closely related to the Immaculate Conception, the teaching that Mary was conceived without original sin and remained sinless throughout her life. Thus, Mary is considered holy and blessed, and she plays a role in redemption and mediation. However, Elizabeth is not intending to venerate Mary, but to celebrate the coming of the Messiah. Mary was blessed because she was chosen as the mother of the Lord, and Elizabeth’s humble claim was based on the Lordship of the child, not the holiness of the mother (Luke 1:42–43). Furthermore, Mary herself immediately responded with praise to the Lord,

speaking of herself in the humblest terms and exalting the works of the Lord. She also identifies "God my Savior" as the object of her praise (Luke 1:47), indicating that she is a sinner in need of a Savior. Clearly, neither the Bible nor Mary ever suggested that she was sinless, holy, or worthy of veneration. And Jesus is clearly the only mediator and redeemer of mankind (1 Timothy 2:5–6).

The Old Testament prophecies make it clear that God had a plan from the beginning to send his Son as the Messiah. As the New Testament picks up the narrative, the intricacy of the plan becomes apparent. The first few chapters of Matthew and Luke are filled with details of how all the pieces had to fall into place. Jesus had to be the descendant of Adam (human), a son of Abraham (Jewish), from the line of David (royal). His forerunner had to be available to prepare his way, and many prophecies had to be fulfilled in his birth. In his infinite wisdom, God chose to send his Son into the care of Mary and Joseph. May we praise him, as Mary did, for his mighty works and faithful promises.

## Limited License to Reproduce

A limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, nonsublicensable license is hereby granted to a single local church or organization to print copies of the PDF materials in the Teacher Digital Resources if 1) you are the original purchaser; 2) you are using the copies for noncommercial purposes (such as for teaching in class) exclusively within your single local church or organization (multi-campus churches, and national/regional denominations are not covered under this license); and 3) you follow the instructions provided in the curriculum pertaining to the printable materials.

This license is for the specific purchaser of the product and does not include affiliated groups or organizations, or other churches or groups in the same denomination as the purchaser, not identified as the actual purchaser. There is no limit to the number of printed copies for use within the single local church or organization which is the actual purchaser. None of the material in this curriculum may be reproduced for any commercial promotion, advertising, or sale of a product or service, or to share with any other persons, churches, groups, or organizations.

The media (audio/video) portions are copyrighted and duplication is prohibited. This license is for materials in the Teacher Digital Resources only and does NOT include reproduction rights for pre-printed teacher books, student guides, student take home sheets, or posters, except on an emergency basis when purchased quantities are not sufficient for a given week.

## Bible Version

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.