

K-1st Lesson

Introduction

Refer to Lesson 118 Flip Chart. In the last book of the Old Testament, we saw how God gave the prophet Malachi a message of warning for the priests who were sacrificing sick animals instead of their best ones. God wants us to have the right heart attitude showing love and respect for him and being truly sorry when we sin.

Malachi also wrote that a messenger, John the Baptist, would come to get the people ready for the Messiah. But it would be 400 years before the messenger would arrive!

Now, 400 years is a long time to wait, isn't it? To help us think about how much things can change in 400 years, let's take a quick trip back in time.

You may add/change the questions/examples below so they relate to your students (e.g., the founding of your church, city, or country).

Have students line up along the wall at one end of the room or a hallway. We'll start here, where we are today. We're in the year 20____. We have all kinds of interesting things like cell phones, smart TVs, and video games. But let's walk back in time about 50 years. Lead students to walk about ¼ the length of the room/hall. Here we are in the 1970s. And guess what; people didn't have cell phones! Show Illustration #1.

Let's go back in time 100 years to the 1920s. Lead students to ½ the length of the room/hall. Lots of things were changing in America. People were buying some of the first cars to ride in instead of using horses and wagons. Show Illustration #2.

Now, let's go back about 200 years, to the early 1800s. Lead students to ¾ the length of the room/hall. America was a new nation. There were no cars yet or TVs or even phones! Show Illustration #3.

Let's go 400 years back in time. Lead students to the other end of the room/hall. America was just starting at a place called Jamestown. At this time, in the 1600s, hardly anyone was here in America except Native Americans. There were no cities, cars, or phones, but there was a lot of exploring to do. Show Illustration #4.

Let's make our way back to the present time. Pause and refer to Illustrations as you move back through the room/hall. Now we're back in the year 20____. You can see how things have changed a lot in the last 400 years.

Show the Lesson Flip Chart. Today we'll look in the Bible at another 400 years when there were many big changes going on in the world—the years between the time of the prophet Malachi and Jesus' birth.

Daniel's Vision

Have the student with the Bible bring it up and turn to the sticky note in the section between the Old and New Testaments. Many things happened during the years between the Old Testament and the New Testament. But God was in control to make things happen just the way he wanted.

- ? What is the word that means God is in control of everything? *Sovereign.*
- ? Right. And what word means God knows everything? *Omniscient.*

Because God is sovereign and omniscient, he knew exactly when and where everything in the world would take place. He chose to share some of these important things with Daniel to show him what would happen during the 400 years before Jesus was born.

- ? Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. Who remembers some things about Daniel in the Bible? Allow discussion.

God gave Daniel visions, like dreams, of things that would happen in the future. In one vision, Daniel saw a ram (a boy sheep) with one horn that was bigger than the other. The ram raced

around all over the place with great power, and no one could stop him. But then a goat with a big horn on his head came and attacked the ram! The ram died, and the goat became very powerful. Then the goat's horn broke, and four smaller horns grew. Wow! That's a pretty strange dream, isn't it?

Daniel 8:20–21

An angel explained what Daniel's vision meant. Let's read what he said from Daniel 8. We'll start with verse 20. Read the verse.

- ? Who was the ram supposed to be in Daniel's vision? *The kings of Media and Persia.*

The kings of Media and Persia were powerful, like the ram, and took over Babylon. We talked a little about them in other lessons. King Darius the Mede was the king who threw Daniel into the lions' den. And the Persian kings were the ones who gave the Jews permission to go back to Judah.

- ? Listen to the next verse. Read verse 21. Who was the goat in the dream? *The king of Greece.*
- ? Who was the great horn on the goat supposed to be? *The first king of Greece.*

Refer to the Flip Chart. The goat from Daniel's dream stood for the kingdom of Greece that became strong. The horn on his head stood for Alexander the Great, who was a powerful ruler and warrior. As ruler of Greece, he took over many countries, including Judah, and the Greeks ruled over the Jews for about 150 years.

Refer to the Flip Chart. One Greek ruler hated the Jews. He did terrible things to the Lord's temple and tried to force the people to worship false gods. Some Jews fought against this ruler. The man who led the fight was given the nickname *Maccabee*, which means "hammer." After many battles, he took back the temple! Today many Jewish people still celebrate a special festival called Hanukkah to remember when they took the temple back and relit the lampstands to worship God again.

God was in control even over the powerful Greek leaders. One important reason God allowed them to take over many countries is

so that many people would learn the Greek language. God knew that if most people understood the same speech, it would be easier to spread the good news of Jesus when he came to earth.

Roman Rule

Refer to the Flip Chart. Now, there were two groups of Jews who didn't get along because they believed different things about God and his Word and how they should live. One group, called the Pharisees, didn't want to follow the ways of the Greeks. They were very worried about accidentally disobeying God. They wanted to stay so close to the Jewish way of life that they even made up extra laws for the Jews to obey. But the other group thought it would be okay to be like the Greek people; they were called the Sadducees.

Both the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to rule over the Jews. They fought and argued with each other for power, wanting things their way. They finally asked a Roman general named Pompey for help. The Pharisees wanted him to fight the Sadducees—and the Sadducees asked him to come and fight the Pharisees!

Refer to the Flip Chart. But Pompey wasn't a Jew; he was a Roman, so he decided to come and take over all of the Jews for his country of Rome! Now the Jews had to obey the Romans. It was during this time, while the Romans ruled, that Jesus was born.

The Romans were good builders; they built many roads and ship ports, which made travelling easier. Now people could go from place to place faster than before. Just as God allowed the Greeks to spread their language, he also allowed the Romans to come and build their roads.

Do you see how God was getting things ready for Jesus? People could spread the good news of Jesus more easily to new places with one language and many roads. Looking back through the 400 years of history between the Old and New Testaments, we have seen how God was in control so that everything happened according to his plan. God was getting the world ready for Jesus' birth.

OLD Testament

1
Malachi



2
Greeks



3 Maccabee/Hanukkah

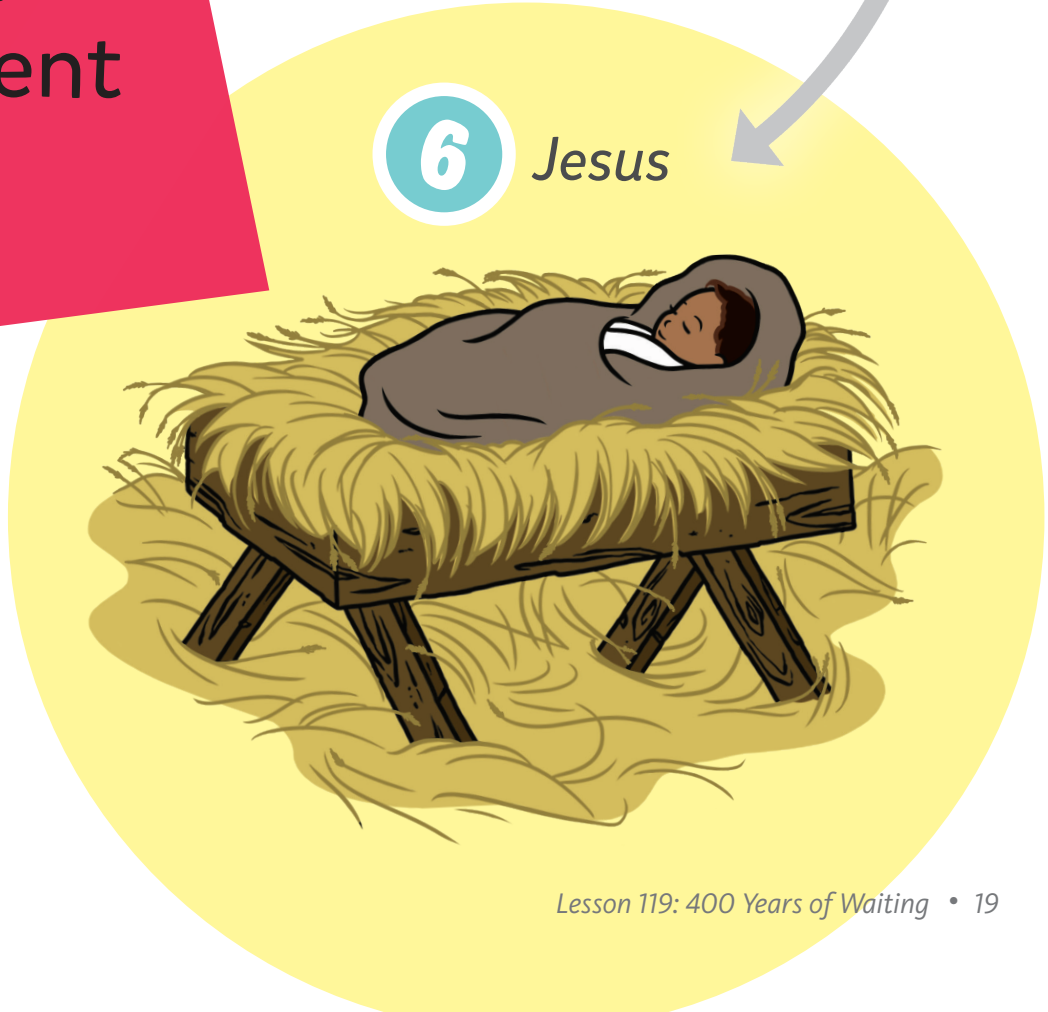


5
Romans

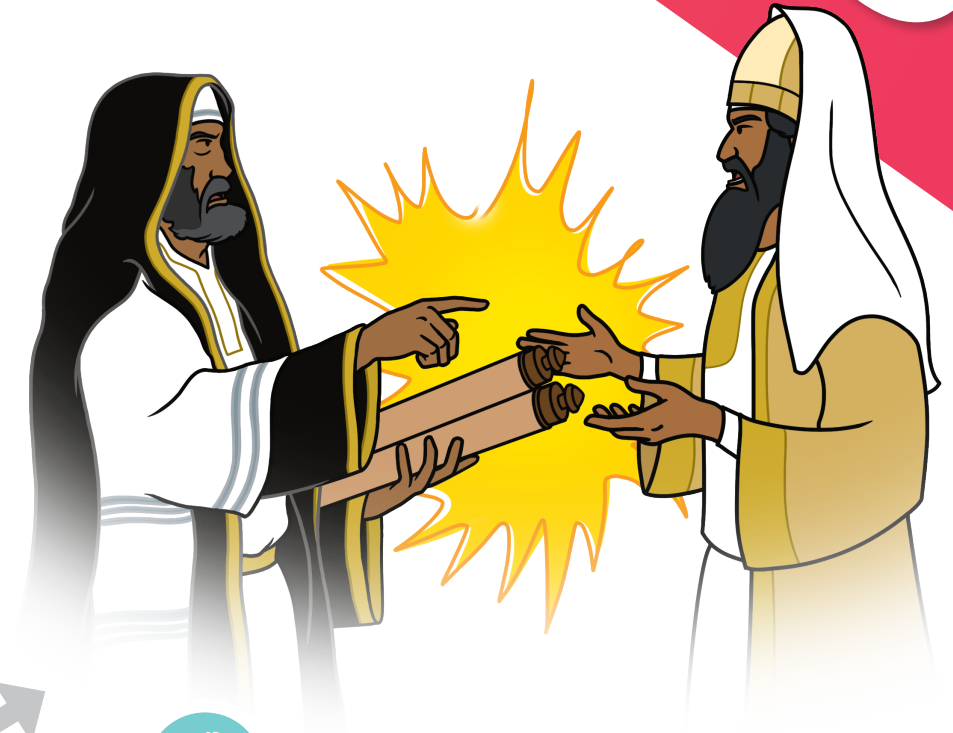


NEW Testament

6 Jesus



4 Pharisees/Sadducees



400 YEARS