

WINTER 2025–2026

The Incarnation

LESSON 11

FEBRUARY 15, 2026

LESSON TEXT

Luke 2:25–38

FOCUS VERSE

Luke 1:35

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

Through the Incarnation, God came to be in covenant with us.

MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT

I will make my commitment to King Jesus the core of my identity.

COVENANT CONTEXT

Four thousand years of prophecies and practices have pointed to this moment: the Incarnation. God had come in human flesh. The coming of the Messiah was a common theme throughout the Old Testament and was fulfilled in Jesus' birth. His coming ushered in a New Covenant with God through the gospel, available to all humanity.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: Who is the most important person you know personally?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to what it must have been like for Mary to realize the messianic prophecies all pointed to her Son.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. JESUS' BIRTH

A. Jesus Born in Bethlehem as the Son of David

DISCUSS: *What do the circumstances of Christ's birth tell us about Him? As King, why would He come in such a way?*

B. Angels Declared Messiah Is Here

DISCUSS: *What do we learn about God when we see He chose to make His birth announcement to shepherds in a field?*

C. Like the shepherds, I will seek the Messiah.

DISCUSS: *Why do you think the angels' announcement warranted such a quick response?*

II. JESUS' DEDICATION

A. Faithful Observance of the Law and Formal Bestowal of a Name

B. Simeon and Anna

C. I will prayerfully await God's fulfillment of His promises.

DISCUSS: *Why is patience so important as it relates to God's promises?*

III. MESSIAH HAS COME

A. The Glory of Israel and the Light of the Gentiles

B. The Redeemer and King

DISCUSS: *If you were Mary, how would you have responded to Simeon's announcement?*

C. I will make my commitment to King Jesus the core of my identity.

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to fill each heart with His love
- For God to reveal His passionate desire for lordship in each life

LESSON CONNECTION

James grew up in drugs, violence, and domestic abuse. His rough upbringing fitted him with a set of dark lenses, blinding him to the possibility that things could be different. He would continue in poverty like his parents, brokenness like his siblings, and anger like all the other young men in his life. James saw life as a war to be fought.

Much of James's life during those years in the '70s was a blur (mostly because of drug addiction). He had a few good friends left who checked on him from time to time or gave him a place to stay when he needed to "sleep one off." The best of these friends was Stephen. Stephen believed in God. He was one of "those" Christians who talked often about how God could change our lives. But as long as James had a place to sleep, he would listen to just about anything.

One day James crashed through Stephen's door needing a place to recover. As he entered the living room, he saw Stephen kneeling over a yellowed, floral couch, and he seemed to be crying. Uncomfortable with emotion, James recoiled quickly with, "You OK, dude?" Wiping tears from his eyes, Stephen faced James, standing now, and spoke with boldness James had not seen in his friend before: "I've been praying for you, man, and God told me to tell you, 'It is time to repent.'"

James stood still and silent. Seeing an opening, Stephen continued: "James, you have lived a life of anger and brokenness long enough. God is willing to forgive you and rewrite your story, but you must repent and turn to Jesus." Regaining his bearings, James felt a familiar anger rising up in him. He turned and left the house in a huff, all the while thinking to himself, *Who does he think he is talking to me like that? He doesn't know what I have been through. He doesn't know who I am. Life made me this way. If God wanted it different, why didn't He do anything to change it?*

Just then, Stephen called to James. Startled from his internal stewing, James turned quickly to face his friend, "Man, I know you're all about that Jesus stuff, but I'm not, OK?"

"You may not be about Him, James, but He is about you," Stephen replied softly. "In fact, Jesus came and died for

you. He died so you could live a new life. You don't have to hold onto anger anymore."

James wanted to ward off his persistent friend, and he tried to answer quickly. "It's all I...," James's voice broke. "It's who I...," he began again.

Seeing his friend fighting back tears, Stephen placed his hand on James's shoulder and said, "I know, but it doesn't have to be." Feeling the weight of Stephen's words, James collapsed into his friend and wept.

BIBLE LESSON

I. JESUS' BIRTH

A. Jesus Born in Bethlehem as the Son of David

The birth of the Messiah surprised so many. Jesus was not wrapped in silk cloth, laid in a golden crib, and given a silver pacifier. No, Jesus was born into less-than-royal accommodations. Nevertheless, even if His birth took a surprising shape, His arrival was not unexpected. The prophets had long predicted the arrival of their King who would possess certain moral characteristics and be anointed by God Himself (Isaiah 11:1–5). The prophesied Savior would bring peace, comfort, and power to govern the people of God (Isaiah 9:6–7). His job description included setting captives free, restoring joy, and proclaiming God's favor over humanity (Isaiah 61:1–3).

Specifically, this King would come from the line of the greatest king Israel ever knew—King David—and would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David. It is no accident that Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus began with: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, *the son of David, the son of Abraham*" (Matthew 1:1; compare to Luke 1:32). After the Magi were tasked with finding the newly born Jesus, they followed a star and found Jesus exactly where He was supposed to be—in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1–11).

DISCUSS: *What do the circumstances of Christ's birth tell us about Him? As King, why would He come in such a way?*

B. Angels Declared Messiah Is Here

The precise fulfillment of Scripture up to this point should be enough, but God was not finished. The Gospel of Luke records a seminal night in the shepherds' field. As a group of shepherds tended their sheep, the skies ignited with light and an angel appeared to them. Understandably afraid, the shepherds needed to be calmed, which took the form of an announcement. Thankfully, the angel of the Lord had not come to destroy them but to bring good news. The angel declared: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Immediately after the angelic announcement, a host of angels appeared and continued the celebratory moment with praise to God and a proclamation of peace and good will toward humanity.

Remarkably, the angels' words help break four hundred "silent" years. How wonderful! Some of the first words from God that broke the silence heralded the covenant Messiah and the good will of God toward humanity. It was not a word of judgment or rebuke; it was a word of hope and salvation. The salvation of God had arrived in Bethlehem as promised, and all of humanity would benefit. Glory to God, indeed.

DISCUSS: *What do we learn about God when we see He chose to make His birth announcement to shepherds in a field?*

C. Like the shepherds, I will seek the Messiah.

The shepherds immediately hurried to Bethlehem to see this newborn King. The moment all Israel—indeed, the world—had been waiting for had come. They had no more reason to wait. The announcement created a moment of urgency—not of fear—and anticipation. Since the Incarnation (how we refer to Jesus' birth) means God is with us, our response should mirror that of the shepherds. We should *now*, with eagerness, seek Jesus the Messiah. Delay seems to be a poor response to the offer of God's salvation. Like the shepherds, we must seek after the Messiah to "see this thing which is come to pass." In other words, we should go see for ourselves that God's Word is true: God came in human flesh to be with us.

DISCUSS: *Why do you think the angels' announcement warranted such a quick response?*

II. JESUS' DEDICATION

A. Faithful Observance of the Law and Formal Bestowal of a Name

The Jewish people were a covenant people, and their covenant with God had certain ways to mark people as part of that covenant. One of these markers was circumcision, which happened on the eighth day of a male child's life. Mary and Joseph faithfully kept covenant with God and followed this command exactly. Additionally, they offered the required sacrifice associated with firstborn males (Exodus 13:2, 12; Leviticus 12:8; Luke 2:22–23). (And we thought hospital paperwork was complicated.)

During all this covenant keeping in the holy city of Jerusalem, Mary's Son was given a name: Jesus. But Mary and Joseph did not just think of His name on their own; God Himself assigned the name through an angelic messenger, for the name holds significant, prophetic, covenant meaning. We hear the angel's words through Matthew's Gospel: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: *for he shall save his people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21). As the Gospel of Matthew continues, we read that this event—Jesus' birth through Mary and the presentation of His name—fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). The King was coming, and He would rescue God's people. In other words, Jesus' God-given name (translated "Jehovah saves") marked Him as the one in whom God's covenant salvation had arrived.

B. Simeon and Anna

As Mary and Joseph entered the Temple in Jerusalem, two witnesses—both enabled and led by God's Spirit—met them, which further confirmed the importance of the Christ child. Simeon, the first witness, took Jesus into his arms and praised God for His salvation through this newborn baby. This child was meant to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of...Israel" (Luke 2:32). Anna, the second witness, praised God "likewise" and "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). Both witnesses bore a similar description; each of them was faithful in waiting for God's kingdom to arrive. Moreover, each of them believed their long wait was over. In Jesus, God had come to save.

C. I will prayerfully await God's fulfillment of His promises.

God rewarded the prayer-filled patience of the two witnesses. While God's promises may seem far off, they are always sure. Nothing in Simeon and Anna's world suggested salvation was on the horizon, except for John the Baptist's message of the kingdom of heaven. Nevertheless, Israel was still occupied by a ruthless Roman government. The Jewish religious system was in cahoots with the Romans, and many of the Jews of that day thought compromise was the only answer. In the face of this mounting opposition to their own faith in God, Simeon and Anna maintained trust and patience as they waited for God to fulfill what He had promised.

Thankfully, these two important characters of Scripture are not the only persevering believers rewarded for their faithfulness, nor is the entire cast of faithful biblical characters the only group of people to experience God's faithfulness. History is full of Jesus followers who have met their reward after a time of patience. Does this take trust? Yes. Does it require prayerful watching to maintain a calm mind and spirit? Yes, but God always keeps His promises. So, like Simeon and Anna, let us prayerfully await the fulfillment of God's Word to us.

DISCUSS: Why is patience so important as it relates to God's promises?

III. MESSIAH HAS COME

A. The Glory of Israel and the Light of the Gentiles

As Simeon's words continued to ring in Mary and Joseph's ears, they likely considered what the words meant; Mary had already pondered others' words about her Son in her heart. The Messiah as the glory of Israel made perfect sense, but a light to the Gentiles seemed odd to a people currently occupied by the strongest of the Gentile nations. Even still, the words of Simeon recalled one of Israel's favorite prophets, Isaiah, and pointed his prophecies toward Jesus. Perhaps speaking of Israel as a nation at first, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed God's desire to use His servant Israel to be a light to the nations, to call the Gentiles to covenant with God (Isaiah 49:6; 60:3). As Isaiah continued this theme, it becomes clear the prophet was pointing to the Messiah, not just the nation of Israel. The Servant of God who would call the entire world into covenant would not be a nation of people; He would be a man, a man born as a baby boy in Bethlehem.

B. The Redeemer and King

One of Isaiah's most memorable prophecies of the suffering Servant, now identified by Simeon as Jesus, was as a man of sorrow. But His sorrow was not because of His own wrongdoing; He would carry all humanity's griefs and

sorrows. Isaiah 53 powerfully details the role of the Servant's suffering: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4–6).

Because Jesus was willing to carry all our sins, sorrows, griefs, even sicknesses, we can be redeemed from our sins and called into covenant with Almighty God. Although Jesus came as a Lamb at His incarnation, when He returns, He will return as the King of all the earth. The same Isaiah who prophesied Jesus would suffer also prophesied He would be exalted. In fact, one day kings will stand speechless in the presence of the Lord when they see Him for who He is. (See Isaiah 52:15.)

Others listening to Simeon's prophecy must have rejoiced that their King had been born to one day set them free, but Mary and Joseph must have felt the pang of fear, knowing what that freedom would cost their Son. To Mary, Simeon grimly announced: "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul" (Luke 2:35). Here at the birth of Christ, we learn of His death, which would bring about life for so many and would lead to His coronation. Before any of it had happened—while Jesus was yet a newborn in His mother's arms—we learn that Jesus is both our Redeemer and our King.

DISCUSS: *If you were Mary, how would you have responded to Simeon's announcement?*

C. I will make my commitment to King Jesus the core of my identity.

God's desire for covenant relationship finds no better portrait than that of the King enthroned and crowned on a blood-stained hill. He was first enthroned on a cross and crowned with thorns, but He was still as powerful as He has ever been. He was still on the throne of Heaven even when He was on the cross. The Jews considered it scandalous and the Greeks thought it foolishness that Jesus was crucified, but to us who believe, the gospel is the power of God. Believing in this glorious gospel is who we are. Like the apostle Paul, we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Since King Jesus forgave our sins and saved our souls, let us share this glorious gospel with others around us. God wants to invite them into covenant with Him as He has invited us.

Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how the gospel still changes lives. The following story may be a continuation of the Lesson Connection or a stand-alone story.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

After Stephen and James collected themselves, they agreed that crying on the street wasn't exactly cool. They returned to Stephen's house where James could get the rest he needed. After James awoke, Stephen was quick to continue their sidewalk conversation. "James, you need a Bible study."

"A what?" James replied, confused. "A Bible study," Stephen firmly replied. "You need to know what the Bible says about Jesus."

Content to hear his friend out, James agreed. Stephen grabbed his Bible from the table near the yellowed, floral couch and opened it to the Gospel of Matthew and began to read. Confused by all the names and family trees, James fell into a glazed trance. Stephen rebuked his friend for not taking the Bible seriously; he had no patience for any perceived irreverence, even if James was literally "fresh off the street." Feeling to defend himself, James retorted, "What do you expect? This stuff is confusing."

Seeing that one Bible study would not be enough, Stephen dismissed their meeting for the night and set up a time to meet each week after Stephen got off work. In the meantime, Stephen promised James room and board if he would do his best to get off drugs, get a job, and go to church with him. As James didn't really have any other options, he cautiously complied with his friend's request. James got a job and attended church with Stephen. The drugs presented a more difficult problem, as addictions often do.

One Sunday, Stephen's pastor happened to be preaching on the meaning of the name Jesus from the opening of Matthew's Gospel. "The name of Jesus means Jehovah saves," the preacher exclaimed. "The name of Jesus means God is with us," the now jumping man continued. "And how do we know He is true to that name?" The man peered over the large wooden pulpit at his congregation as if expecting a reply. "Because He saved then, and He is still saving now." The congregation erupted in passionate applause; even Stephen was compelled to raise his hands in

agreement.

“But how did He save?” the preacher asked with sincerity in his voice. “He saved by dying on a cross in our place, so we could experience a new life in Him. And how do we take hold of that new life?” James was leaning forward in his seat, wanting to know the answer. The preacher continued, “By repenting of our sins, by being baptized in that wonderful name of Jesus, and by receiving His Spirit, which we will know has happened when we speak in tongues.”

More desperate for change than confused by what it meant to speak in tongues, James walked forward, repented, took on the name of Jesus in baptism, and came out of the water speaking in tongues, just as the preacher had said. James wouldn’t know until months later, but he was freed from drugs that day.

Returning to his house, Stephen kneeled at his yellowed, floral couch and began to weep in prayer, saying, “Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus.”