

The Word Who Became Flesh: Understanding the Birth of Jesus

Scripture taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011)

Day	The Word Became flesh	Verse reference	Questions
1	<p>The woman said, ‘The snake deceived me, and I ate.’ So the LORD God said to the snake, ‘Because you have done this, ‘Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.’</p>	Genesis 3:13–15	Arguably the first anticipation of Jesus in the Bible. Who is receiving this curse? How is the serpent crusher anticipated? Why is he born of a woman? This immediately sets up the mission of Jesus, what does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
2	<p>“‘The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: when your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son.</p>	2 Samuel 7:11–14	The promise of the rescuer became attached to a king born in the line of David. What do we learn about the future King? What is his part in the plan of God? Who is this anticipating? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
3	<p>Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.</p>	Psalms 2:10–12	The Psalms anticipate the coming king. What is the wrong way of responding to God’s king? What is the right way to respond to God’s king? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus? How should we respond to Jesus?

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4	<p>For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.</p>	Isaiah 9:6-7	<p>Isaiah looks forward to the birth of God's King. What do learn about him? What will he come to do? Matthew's Gospel links this to Jesus, what do we learn about the birth of Jesus? How should you respond to Jesus?</p>
5	<p>The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.</p>	Isaiah 61:1-3	<p>Isaiah looks forward to the ministry of God's Messiah. What is he born to do? Jesus applies this passage to himself in Luke 4, what does this teach us about Jesus self-understanding of his mission? How should we respond to Jesus?</p>

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6	...and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.	Matthew 1:16-17	Genealogies teach us about our family history. What do we learn about the family tree of Jesus? What is significant about having Abraham and David in your family tree? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
7	In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'	Luke 1:26-33	What was the role of the angels in the birth of Jesus? What did the angels know about Jesus? How did Mary respond to this message? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
8	This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'	Matthew 1:18-21	Matthew records the birth of Jesus? Why was Joseph reluctant? What did he need to learn? What is the significance of the name given to the baby? What was he born to save us from? How did he save us from our sins? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
9	All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us'). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.	Matthew 1:22-25	Matthew applies the words of Isaiah to Jesus? What is the significance of linking Jesus to the name Immanuel? How did Joseph respond to this news? Why didn't Joseph leave Mary? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?

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10	After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.' When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written.'	Matthew 2:1-5	How were the wise men from the east alerted to the birth of Jesus? The wise men landed in Jerusalem, why did they go to Bethlehem? Why was King Herod and his court disturbed? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
11	When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.' The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'	Luke 2:27-35	What was Simeon waiting for? How does he respond to baby Jesus? What does it mean Jesus a light for the Gentiles? How did Mary and Joseph respond to Simeon? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
12	There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.	Luke 2:36-38	What was the prophetess waiting for? How did she respond to the baby Jesus? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
13	Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' 'Is that your own idea,' Jesus asked, 'or did others talk to you about me?' 'Am I a Jew?' Pilate replied. 'Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?' Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.' 'You are a king, then!' said Pilate. Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.'	John 18:33-37	A surprising birth reference at the trial of Jesus. How does Pilate respond to Jesus? What why was Jesus born? How does Pilate respond to this revelation? How do you respond to it?

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14	<p>Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.</p>	Romans 1:1–6	<p>The New Testament letters show us the early church’s understanding of the birth of Jesus? What does Paul teach about the birth of Jesus? Why is being a descendant of David significant? What is at the heart of the Christian good news? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?</p>
15	<p>Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Here is a trustworthy saying:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful,</p>	2 Timothy 2:8–13	<p>How does this contribute to our understanding of the birth of Jesus? Why is the birth of Jesus at the centre of the good news? What was Jesus born to do? How does this teach us to respond to Jesus? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?</p>
16	<p>Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.</p>	1 Timothy 3:16	<p>Paul encourages Timothy with these words that Jesus is at the heart of God’s mystery revealed. What do we learn about Jesus? What is significant that he shared our ‘flesh’? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?</p>

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17	So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.	Luke 2:4-7	Luke records the birth of Jesus. Why were they in Bethlehem? What significant about being in the line of David? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
18	And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'	Luke 2:8-12	The angels return to celebrate the birth of Jesus? Why did they long to see this moment? What was their message for the shepherds? Why did angels appear to shepherds, a lowly underclass? What do we learn about Jesus from the angels? How should we respond to Jesus?
19	When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.' So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.	Luke 2:15-20	How did the shepherds respond to the angel's message? How would you have felt if you were them? What did the shepherds find? How did Mary respond to this visit? How did the shepherds respond to Jesus? How do you respond to Jesus?
20	After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.	Matthew 2:9-12	The wise men arrive later in the chronology of the birth of Jesus? How did they respond to the child? What do their gifts demonstrate? What can we learn about responding to Jesus from the wise men?

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21	In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!	Philippians 2:5–8	Paul writes to the Philippians about Jesus. What did Jesus give up to become human? What did Jesus take on by becoming human? Where does his humility take him? How is Jesus a role model for us?
22	But there is a place where someone has testified: ‘What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet.’ In putting everything under them. God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.	Hebrews 2:6–9	The writer to the Hebrews highlights the significance of the humanity of Jesus. How is Psalm 8 applied to Jesus? What do we see about humanity in Jesus? Why was Jesus born to suffer? What does he do for us? How should we respond to Jesus?
23	That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.	1 John 1:1–4	John celebrates the humanity of Jesus. Why is it important that Jesus was born fully human? What did John see with his own eyes and senses? Why is it significant that John was an eyewitness to Jesus? How does he share that with us?
24	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.	John 1:1–5	What do we learn about the pre-incarnate Jesus? How can Jesus be fully God and Fully man? How is Jesus the light and life of the World? How should we respond to Jesus?

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25	<p>The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.</p>	John 1:9–14	<p>John gives us this glorious commentary on the significance of the birth of Jesus? How are we invited to marvel at the Word became flesh? What do we learn about Jesus? What are the different responses to Jesus? How do you respond to Jesus in this passage?</p>
26	<p>‘Where did this man get these things?’ they asked. ‘What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?’ And they took offence at him. Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.’ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few people who were ill and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.</p>	Mark 6:2–6	<p>How did the people of Nazareth respond to Jesus? Why was Jesus family origin a stumbling block? What did they misunderstand about Jesus? What warning is there here for us?</p>
27	<p>The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.</p>	Colossians 1:15–20	<p>What glorious things does this teach us about Jesus? Why was Jesus born human? How do you respond to Jesus being fully Man and Fully God? How did Jesus make peace between us and God? Why was it necessary for Jesus to be born human? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?</p>
28	<p>But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.</p>	Galatians 4:4–7	<p>Paul’s letter to the Galatians adds a new dimension to the birth of Jesus. Why was it necessary for Jesus to be “born of a woman”? What does God offer us through the ministry of Jesus? How does the language of adoption work here? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?</p>

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29	Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.	1 Peter 1:10-12	Peter shows us what the old testament prophets and the angels longed to see? How is Jesus at the centre of this? What were the things angels longed to see? What is at the heart of the good news? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?
30	The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who 'will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre.' And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.	Revelation 12:4-6	The book of Revelation celebrates the birth of Jesus in the spectacular language of apocalyptic. What is the dragon's response to the child? How is the serpent crusher theme seen here? What do we learn about the child born? How should we respond to Jesus?
31	But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.	Hebrews 9:26-28	The writer to the Hebrews reminds that Jesus was born to take away the sins of his people. What is anticipated in the second coming of Jesus? What does this teach us about the birth of Jesus?