

JESUS,
Son of God



© 2009 Virginia Theological Seminary

Shell Year—Primary, Unit II

Text by the editors of the Episcopal Children's Curriculum

Table of Contents

Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem.....	1
Wise Men Came to Look for Jesus.....	2
Mary and Joseph Cared for Jesus.....	3
Jesus Grew Up and Was Baptized.....	4
Jesus Taught in Parables.....	5
Jesus Did Great Deed of Power	6
Jesus' Last Supper	7
Jesus Was Crucified.....	8
Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!	9

CHAPTER 1

Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem

Joseph and Mary had gone to Bethlehem because the Roman ruler wanted everyone to be counted. Their names would be written down so that each family could be asked to pay taxes.

The city was filled with people. The innkeeper told Joseph that there were no more rooms. The only place where he and Mary could stay was in a stable.

While they were there, the time came for the Virgin Mary to have her baby. Only Joseph and the animals were with her. When the child was born, Mary remembered what the angel Gabriel had said. She named the little boy Jesus.

Holding him tenderly, Mary wrapped the baby in cloths and put him in a manger. What a strange place!

Mary did not understand all that had happened to her in the last year. She knew that God was near. God would care for her and Joseph and their dear son.

Deep in her heart, Mary kept her song: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

On that very night, shepherds were in the field keeping watch over their flocks. They knew that darkness brought danger to the sheep, and they wanted to keep them safe. It was a still night, with stars shining brightly.

Suddenly there was an angel with the shepherds. The angel said, "Do not be afraid. I have some good and joyful news. Tonight, in Bethlehem, a Savior who is Christ the Lord was born. You will find him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Before the shepherds could speak to one another, the sky was filled with angels. They sang together, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace. . . ."

The shepherds hurried at once to Bethlehem. They found Mary and Joseph and the child, Jesus. They told many others what they had seen. They praised God.

CHAPTER 2

Wise Men Came to Look for Jesus

When Jesus was born, Wise Men in the East saw a bright star in the sky. The star seemed to say, "Follow me."

The men packed for a long journey and set out to travel on their camels. They followed the star all the way to Jerusalem. They went at once to the palace of Herod, the king.

They said to Herod, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star and have come to worship him."

Now Herod was not a kind and good king. He heard that the Jewish people expected God to send a ruler called the Messiah (or "Christ"). Would this Messiah come to take Herod's job? That would be very bad news for him!

The Wise Men waited for Herod to answer them.

Herod asked the leaders of the Jews to meet with him. He said, "Where will your Christ be born?" They answered, "He will be born in Bethlehem."

Herod thought of a plan. He would send the Wise Men to Bethlehem. He said to them, "Look everywhere until you find the child. Then come and tell me where he is so that I may worship him, too."

The star moved on. It led the Wise Men to the little town of Bethlehem. There they found Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. They bowed down and worshiped. They opened their bags and took out gifts for Jesus. The gifts were gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Then, in a dream, the Wise Men were warned not to go back to King Herod. They left for their country by a different way.

So Herod's plan did not work. He did not find out where the baby Jesus was!

CHAPTER 3

Mary and Joseph Cared for Jesus

After Jesus was born, life was very different for Mary and Joseph. So many unusual things happened!

They took the baby to the temple, to dedicate him to the Lord—as all Jewish parents did for their sons. While they were there, they met an old man named Simeon.

Simeon was good. He had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Christ. How surprised Mary and Joseph were when Simeon took Jesus into his arms and praised God! He said this prayer:

“Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised;
“For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, . . .”

A little while later, they met an old woman named Anna who spent all her time in the temple. She, too, spoke about the child Jesus as the very One the Jewish people were expecting!

Mary and Joseph loved and cared for their son. They asked God to help them be good parents to Jesus.

Just after the Wise Men visited the Holy Family, Joseph had a dream. An angel said to him, “Get up! Take the child and his mother, and hurry to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you. Herod is about to search for him and kill him.”

Joseph did not wait for morning to come. He took his family to Egypt at once. They stayed there until they heard that Herod had died and it was safe to go back to their home in Nazareth.

It was a good thing for Joseph to obey the angel. For Herod was very angry that he had been tricked by the Wise Men. He wanted to get rid of the one who would grow up to be the Christ.

It was such a sad time for Jewish families. Mary and Joseph thanked God that Jesus was safe. He grew strong. People said that he was wise. They expected he would do great things. Surely he was favored by God.

CHAPTER 4

Jesus Grew Up and Was Baptized

Every year Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went with them as usual. But he stayed behind after the celebration.

Mary and Joseph had started on their way home. The roads were filled with travelers, and they thought Jesus must be with friends in the crowd.

The next day they began to worry. No one knew where Jesus was.

Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem. They found him still in the temple and talking with the teachers there. They were amazed at how much Jesus understood and how well he answered their questions.

Mary asked, "Son, why have you treated us this way? Your father and I have been so worried!"

Jesus said, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know I must be in my Father's house?"

He went home with his parents and obeyed them. But Mary never forgot that Passover.

The years went by.

When Jesus was thirty years old, his cousin, John, was preaching to great crowds of people. John said he was preparing the way for the Messiah. "Repent!" he shouted. "Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins."

John said One would come who would be much greater. "I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit," John said.

Jesus knew he must now do all that God wanted him to. He asked John to baptize him in the River Jordan. John said, "You should be baptizing me instead!" But Jesus insisted. When he came up out of the water, a voice came from heaven: "You are my beloved Son. With you I am well pleased."

At once, Jesus went into the desert to be alone. He was there forty days, fasting and praying. He was tempted by Satan, the Evil One, but he stood firmly. He would serve only God.

CHAPTER 5

Jesus Taught in Parables

Jesus called twelve to be his disciples. First he chose four fishermen: Peter and Andrew, who were brothers—and James and John, also brothers. The other disciples were Philip, Matthew, Thomas, James the Less, Bartholomew (also known as Nathanael), Simon the Zealot, Jude (Thaddaeus), and Judas Iscariot.

The disciples left everything behind in order to follow Jesus. They listened to everything he said. They hoped he was the Christ who would change the lives of the Jewish people.

Jesus was called “rabbi,” which means “teacher.” He taught his disciples in a new way. He told stories called parables. The stories were like nothing the disciples had heard before. Each story made them think. Many times they wondered what Jesus meant.

One of the first parables Jesus told was about a farmer who planted seeds.

Some of the seeds fell on the path and were eaten by birds.

Some of the seeds fell among rocks. They came up but did not grow well because the soil was not deep enough. The sun burned the plants. They died.

Other seeds fell among thorns. They could not grow.

Other seeds fell on good ground. They took root and grew well. The plants produced much grain!

When Jesus finished this story, he said, “If you have ears to hear, then hear what I have said.”

The disciples wondered what it all meant. They asked Jesus to explain. Jesus then told them that people who hear the word of God are like the seed and the soil. Some turn away from God. Some follow for a while and then no more. Some allow cares and riches to keep out God's word. But others hear God, accept what they hear, and “bear fruit.”

Jesus told more than thirty other parables. We can read them in our Bibles, in the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*.

CHAPTER 6

Jesus Did Great Deeds of Power

Jesus was more than a teacher and preacher. He also did many deeds of power that caused crowds to follow him. People would say, "Surely this man is from God." Others whispered, "He must be the Christ for whom we have prayed so long."

Jesus was known as a healer. By touching the sick, the lame, and the blind, he could make them well.

At a place called Bethsaida, people begged Jesus to touch a blind man. Jesus took the man outside the village, spit on his eyes, and laid his hands on him. "Do you see anything?" Jesus asked.

The man said he could see people, but he could not make out how they looked. They seemed like trees that moved. Jesus touched him again. This time the man could see everything clearly. He was well again! Jesus asked him not to tell anyone about the miracle.

Once, Jesus went to the home of his disciple, Peter. Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. Jesus touched her, and the fever went away. She got out of bed and served a meal. That very evening, many other people were brought to Jesus for healing.

Crowds grew larger. Sometimes, Jesus needed to get away. He was troubled because people were more interested in his power to do wonderful things than they were in the God who sent him.

Another time, a synagogue leader named Jairus came to beg Jesus to visit his daughter. She was twelve years old, and she was dying. Jesus started to the man's house. A messenger came to say that the girl was dead.

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. Just believe, and the girl will be well."

At Jairus' house, Jesus asked Peter, John, James, and the girl's parents to come with him to the girl's bed. Jesus took her by the hand and said, "Child, arise." She got up and was given something to eat. Jesus said, "Tell no one about this."

CHAPTER 7

Jesus' Last Supper

After three years of teaching, preaching, and healing, Jesus was very well known. His disciples and other followers expected him to say aloud that he was the Christ. But he did not say it.

Jesus knew he must go to Jerusalem to the Passover celebration. This one would be different!

As Jesus and his disciples came to the city, he asked them to bring a donkey from a village nearby.

Jesus sat on the donkey and rode straight ahead. People gathered in front and behind, and at his sides. They cut palm branches and laid them on the road. They shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom . . . that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!"

Would Jesus now be their Messiah, a king who ruled?

The following week was tense.

Jesus went to the temple. It made him angry to see so many money-changers there, selling pigeons for sacrifices. Jesus turned over their tables! He said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den or robbers."

The religious leaders were upset by all that Jesus was doing and teaching that week. They tried to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowds.

The time was nearing to prepare for the Passover meal. Jesus and his twelve disciples went to the upper room of a house to eat together. After the meal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it. Giving it to his disciples, he said, "This is my body, given for you." Then he took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and shared it. "This is my blood of the New Covenant," he said.

The disciples wondered among themselves. What was Jesus really saying? But Jesus understood very well. He knew he would be arrested and put to death.

CHAPTER 8

Jesus Was Crucified

After the Last Supper, Jesus went with his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. Telling the others to wait, he took Peter and James and John with him.

Jesus was deeply troubled. He prayed to his Father in heaven, "For you all things are possible. If you will, save me from facing death. Still, I want only what you want!"

Far into the night he prayed. The disciples could not stay awake.

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, came into the garden. He was leading a crowd who had swords and clubs. (Judas had been paid thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus.) He said to the crowd, "The one I shall kiss is the man. Take him away and guard him."

Jesus was taken to the high priest of Jerusalem. Many other priests and leaders were there as well.

They heard witnesses who said false things about Jesus. Finally, the leaders said to him, "Are you the Christ?"

Jesus said, "If I tell you, you will not believe me." The leaders were very angry, for they were sure he could not be the Messiah. They said that Jesus should be put to death at once.

When daylight came, the leaders met again. They decided to take Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate thought hard. He asked, "Are you king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "You have said so." He said no more.

Pilate decided to do what the crowd wanted. He beat Jesus with a whip and sent him off to die a cruel death on a cross. Jesus was crucified between two thieves.

As he died, he said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

The body of Jesus was taken from the cross and placed in a tomb that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. A heavy stone was rolled against the door of the tomb.

CHAPTER 9

Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!

Jesus was betrayed on Thursday night. Friday, he died. The next day was the Jewish sabbath. It was very, very quiet.

The disciples' hearts ached. The Teacher was dead. They remembered all he had said and done. How they hoped he was the Christ!

Peter was very sad. Jesus had told Peter, "You will not tell the truth when you are asked if you are my disciple." And that is just what happened. Not once but three times, Peter said he was not a follower of Jesus! Peter wept as he remembered.

What could the disciples and all Jesus' other followers do now?

Early the next morning—on the first day of the Jewish week—Mary Magdalene and another Mary (not Jesus' mother) went to the tomb. They wanted to put sweet-smelling spices on the body of Jesus. "Who will move the stone for us?" they wondered.

When they came to the tomb, the stone was rolled away! They went inside. An angel spoke to them: "Do not be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen."

The women trembled. They ran as fast as they could to tell the disciples. No one believed what the two Marys told them.

But Peter wanted to see for himself. He went to the tomb. As he looked in, he saw only the cloths that had been around Jesus' body.

The same day, two followers of Jesus walked toward the town of Emmaus. A stranger joined them. He wanted to know what they were talking about. They spoke of Jesus' death, and told about the empty tomb.

At the end of the day, the stranger stayed with the two men for supper. He took the bread, blessed it, and broke it. The men's eyes were opened. The stranger was Jesus! He disappeared from their sight, but there was no doubt that he was alive. Their Lord was risen from the dead. He was the Christ!