

Celebrate with the Patriarchs and Prophets

BIBLE STORY

Christmas Clues News

Genesis 12:1-3;

Isaiah 7:14; 9:1-7; Micah 5:2

BIBLE TRUTH

Christmas reminds us that God promised to send a Savior and He kept His word.

This lesson will help middle elementary children . . .

- Understand that God let His people know that He would send a Savior
- Feel thankful for God's faithfulness in sending the Savior
- Share the good news about Jesus the Savior

VERSE-A-MONTH CLUB

"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 1:21

Reflect on the Word

Even before the creation of the world, God planned to make us holy in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). He announced in the Garden of Eden that the serpent would be defeated (Genesis 3:15). Today's look at Abram, Isaiah, and Micah helps us see how God planned for the coming of Jesus.

Abram's original home was in Ur of the Chaldeans, along the Euphrates River, in modern-day Iraq. The soil was fertile, the growth luxuriant. There is evidence that their lifestyle was affluent. Scholars believe they were advanced in math, accounting, architecture (the Tower of Babel was located in this area), and other sciences. Religiously, it may have been the center of moon-god worship.

For Abram's family to move from the well-watered plains of Ur, to the hill country of Haran, and eventually to nomadic Canaan was very significant. It happened because Abram was obedient to God.

God clearly promised that Abram would become "a great nation" (Genesis 12:2). However, there was a problem. Very early in the story, we are told that Sarai "was barren; she had no children" (11:30). Obviously, God had made a promise that seemed difficult to keep.

As the years passed, nothing changed except that Abram and Sarai aged. Yet, God insisted that they would have a baby. This made Abram (17:15-17) and Sarai laugh (18:12). However, about a year later, the humanly impossible happened; Isaac was born. God did what He said He would.

The second part of today's study is about God's promises through Isaiah and Micah. These prophecies had two fulfillments, immediate and future.

Isaiah 7—9 was given to Judah when Israel and Syria were threatening to invade. In essence, the message was that if they obeyed God, He would protect them. God told Judah's King Ahaz that a young woman, a virgin, would have a son as a sign that God was with them (7:14). The son whom Isaiah described, however, had divine qualities, and was even called "Mighty God, Everlasting Father" (9:6). With this description in mind, Matthew said that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's message. Jesus' mother was a virgin when he was born. And Jesus is the one who is to "reign . . . forever" (v. 7).

Micah declared that a leader would arise from a small, unlikely village. That small hamlet was to become their source of victory. According to Matthew 2, Jewish scholars understood Micah's prophecy as a prediction that the Messiah would be born in the village of Bethlehem.

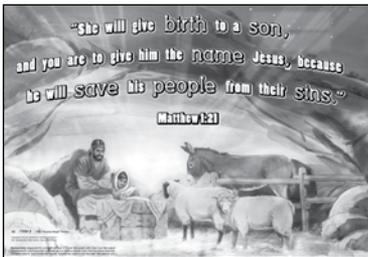
Over the centuries, God promised through many prophets (see Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Zechariah 3:8; Malachi 3:1) that He would provide a deliverer, a Savior.

Today's lesson declares clearly that in the birth of Jesus, God kept those promises. As we celebrate Christmas, we can be glad that God is trustworthy, and we can always count on His presence.

—Charlie Yourdon

Attention Getters

Use these activities to help focus the children's attention and prepare them to learn today's Bible Truth.



Kids sometimes make promises lightly, and then are not able to follow through. Encourage them to see how God was serious about promises and they should be too.



My Christmas Story

Ask children to look at *Connections*, page 1. Say, **We all have stories of interesting or unusual things that have happened at Christmas.** Share an interesting or funny story from a Christmas you remember to help children get started. Ask, **What is your favorite Christmas story?** Make sure the children understand what part of the story they should put in each blank. Encourage volunteers to share their Christmas stories.

You'll need

- *Connections*, p. 1
- Pencils or pens

Say, **Thank you for sharing your great Christmas stories!**

TRANSITION: Say, **Just like you have a special Christmas story to share; God has a Christmas story too. Let's find out what God promised and how His special Christmas story came about!**

The Promise Kept

Before class, Cut out the bookmark for this unit's memory verse. Have them ready for children to use.

In class, Review the Faith Words for today's lesson with the students. Say, **The prophets gave God's message to the people long ago. This verse tells about the fulfillment of one of those prophecies.** Display *Resources*, Item 2. Say the verse, pausing after every few words so the children can repeat after you. Repeat the verse together three times. Finally, cover one of the highlighted words with a Post-it note (cut to fit over word) and ask the children to say the verse, filling in the missing word. As they succeed, cover more highlighted words each time until they can recite the verse correctly without reading the words.

Ask, **What famous Bible story is this verse from?** (*Jesus' birth*) **What does the verse say Jesus came to do?** (*Save people from their sins.*)

Hand out the unit bookmarks to the students. Let them add ribbon or yarn and place the bookmark in their Bibles. Encourage them to use it to memorize the verse and write prayer requests in the space provided.

TRANSITION: Say, **Let's find out what the prophets in the Bible said about the Savior God promised to send. Listen to find out what those prophecies were and why we believe Jesus is that promised Savior.**

You'll need

- *Connections*, outside back cover
- *Resources*, Item 2, "The Promise Kept" Poster
- Small Post-it notes
- Scissors
- Ribbon or yarn
- Hole punch

It Came True

Let children look through the cards to become familiar with them. Mix the cards and place them facedown in a stack. Choose a child to begin.

The first child guesses out loud which card is on top of the stack and picks up the card. If the guess is correct, the child gets a point and the next child takes a turn. If the guess is incorrect, the child places the card on the bottom of the stack and the next child takes a turn. Play as long as time allows.

Ask, **Was there any way you could know for absolute certainty what the next card was in the stack without seeing it?** (*Most likely no*) **Why?** (*We don't know the future. We can only guess what will happen next. The cards were mixed to make it difficult.*)

TRANSITION: Say, **We can't see what will happen next, but God can! Let's discover how God prepared His people by telling them what would happen hundreds of years in the future.**

You'll need

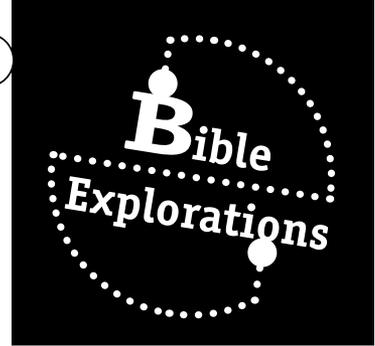
- Children's card game



Bible Story

Before class, Using half sheets of construction paper, create clue cards. Fold each sheet in half. Separate the pieces in *Resources*, Item 3. Glue the clue numbers on the front and the matching silhouettes on the inside. Hide the cards around the classroom. Display the *Bible Trek Time Line*.

In class, Ask, **Did you know that God made a special promise to His people thousands of years ago? To find out who God gave His promise to, find the clue cards hidden in this room.** After the children have found the cards, let them guess what the pictures on each card represent. Then read the following stories that explain each card as volunteers show them. Ask children to find each story's location on the *Bible Trek Time Line*.



Use these activities to help the children learn from the Bible story.

You'll need

- *Connections*, pp. 2-3; inside front cover
- *Resources*, Item 3, Christmas Clues
- *Bible Trek Time Line*
- Construction paper or card stock
- Glue
- Scissors
- Magnetic strips



Christmas Clues News

Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 7:14; 9:1-7; Micah 5:2

CLUE 1 (silhouette of Abram/Abraham)

Many thousands of years ago, God gave a special promise to Abram. God told Abram to go to a new land that He would give to his descendants. God said, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (*Children find "Patriarchs" on the Bible Trek Time Line*)

CLUE 2 (silhouette of groups of people)

Abram became the father of the nation of Israel. He was also their first leader, chosen by God. Time passed. God made another covenant with Abram. God changed his name to Abraham. Thousands of years later, a special baby was born in Israel. That baby was born into Abraham's family tree. God sent this baby to keep His promise to bless all the people on the earth who ever lived. That baby blesses us today!

CLUE 3 (silhouette of a pregnant young woman)

God gave another promise about the special baby to a man named Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet. God told Isaiah that a young woman would have a special baby boy. One of the baby's names would be Immanuel. Immanuel means "God is with us."

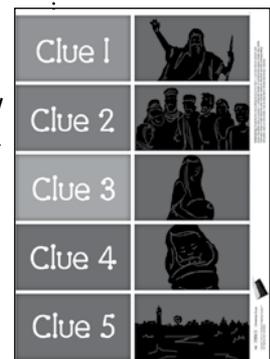
CLUE 4 (silhouette of baby wrapped in strips of cloth)

Isaiah lived in the city of Jerusalem in Judah. Judah's enemies planned to hurt them. Isaiah spoke God's promise, which gave the people hope for salvation. They could look forward to God keeping His promise! One day the people would be able to say, "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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." God promised that this baby would become the King. (*Children find "Prophets" on the Bible Trek Time Line*)

CLUE 5 (silhouette of city of Bethlehem)

God promised the prophet Micah that the baby would be born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was a small town, but it would be very special because God's promised Son would be born there. Do you know the name of this special baby? (*Children find "Life of Christ" on the Bible Trek Time Line*)

Underlined words are from Genesis 12:2-3; Isaiah 9:6.



God does not experience time like we do, so He is able to see all of our past, present, and future. To see the past, present, and future would overwhelm us, so God gives us hints to help us know what to look forward to. He gave hints to Abraham and to the prophets to help the Jews prepare for the Savior that they so desperately needed. A Savior we need.



After the story, Ask, **How do we know that God kept His promise? (Jesus was born.) God knew that His people needed a Savior. They needed someone to save them from their sins. That is why God promised to send Jesus; so He could save them from their sins.** Hand out the tree figure from the inside front cover of *Connections*. Have the students read the Bible Truth, **God kept His promise to send His Son to be our Savior.** Let children make a magnet as directed and take it home to remind them of the truth of Christmas.



Faith Words

ADVENT: A word that means “coming.” The four weeks before Christmas are the **Advent** season when Christians prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ.

JESUS: God’s only Son, the Savior of the world. **Jesus** is fully God and fully human.

PROPHECY: A message from God to people. Some **prophecies** tell what will happen in the future.

PROPHET: Someone God has chosen to receive and deliver His messages to people. A **prophet** speaks for God.

SAVIOR: Someone who rescues another from difficulty, danger, or harm. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be our **Savior**. He died for the sins of all people. When we trust Him as our **Savior** He rescues us from the harm and punishment sin brings.



Use these activities to help students connect the Bible Truth to life.

Say, **On the time line, point to where God made His first promise.** Children point to the “Patriarchs.” **Now point to when Jesus was born.** Children point to “Life of Christ.” **Look at how many years passed before God kept His promise. God always keeps His promises. God used all those years to prepare the people for the Savior’s birth. It’s kind of like how we prepare during advent to celebrate Jesus’ birth.** Use the Faith Word definition to talk about advent and its meaning with the children.

Bible Story Review

Before class, Create a bulletin board using the title from *Resources*, Item 1. Attach a length of yarn to the “Abram” star. Write each of the answers to the Review Questions on a separate index card.

In class, Ask the following review questions. Children take turns answering the questions by selecting the correct answer from among the index cards and clipping it on the yarn, starting at the top.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. **To whom did God first give the promise of the Savior?** (*Abram*)
2. **Who did God promise to bless through Abram?** (*All the people in the world*)
3. **What was Abram the father of?** (*The nation of Israel*)
4. **What did God change Abram’s name to?** (*Abraham*)
5. **What ancient family was Jesus born into?** (*Abraham’s family*)
6. **Who did Isaiah say would have the special baby?** (*A young woman*)
7. **What does Jesus’ name “Immanuel” mean?** (*God is with us.*)
8. **What did God promise the baby would become?** (*King*)
9. **Where did Micah say Jesus would be born?** (*Bethlehem*)

You’ll need

- *Resources*, Item 1, “Sharing Christmas Joy” Bulletin Board
- Index cards
- Pen
- Yarn
- Paper clips
- Tacks or Plasti-Tak

Christmas Clue Hunt

Before class, Prepare the clue cards as instructed in the Bible story preparation. Hide the clues outside the classroom. With each clue card, also include a location hint to help children find the next clue card.

In class, Give children a location hint to find the first clue card. As they find each card, ask different children to read the corresponding story portion from *Connections*, pages 2-3.

You’ll need

- *Resources*, Item 3, Christmas Clues
- *Connections*, pp. 2-3

Thankful Christmas

Ask, **This Christmas, for what are you thankful?** Look at *Connections*, page 4. Write your answers on the first tree. Give children a few minutes to work. Ask for volunteers to share their answers.



Ask for volunteers to share their answers.

Say, **This is our Bible Truth today: Christmas reminds us that God promised to send a Savior and He kept His word. Because God kept His promise, you can enjoy all of the Christmas things you wrote on the first tree. Now on the second tree, write a thank you to God for sending Jesus as your Savior.** When they are finished, let volunteers share their thank-you notes.

You’ll need

- *Connections*, p. 4
- Pens or pencils

Promise Puzzle

Before class, Print one copy of a colorful nativity scene on the photo paper for each child.

In class, Ask, **What was God's promise to His people?** (*He would send a Savior to be born as a baby.*) **Since you know that God kept His promise, should you keep it to yourself?** (*No*) **How can you share it with others?** (*Children share ideas.*) **Here is a fun way you can share the good news about Jesus with others.**

Hand out the photo cards. Show the children how to cut the card into five puzzle pieces. On the back of each piece, children write one of the clues and then draw and color corresponding pictures (display the Bible story clue cards as example pictures): Prophets, All the People in the World, Mary, Baby Jesus, Bethlehem.

Next, children punch a hole in the top of each puzzle piece and thread and knot a loop of string through each hole.

Say, **Hang these puzzle pieces as ornaments on your Christmas tree or around your home. Let your family and friends find the ornaments. While they are putting each piece of the puzzle together, use the pictures on the back to tell the story of how Jesus was born as our Savior!**

Closing and Prayer

You'll need

- *Kid Zone* and *Parent Connections* for each child
- Photocopier and paper

Before class, Photocopy *Parent Connections* for Unit 1 from pages 91-92 front to back for each child.

In class, Say, **God kept His promise. He promised to send a Savior, and He did! When God does something for us, our response to Him should be to thank Him. First, let's pray. When we finish praying, clap your hands to show that you're thankful to God.**

Pray and thank God for keeping His promise to send Jesus the Savior. Then clap and cheer at the end of the prayer.

Hand out *Kid Zone* for each child to take home and enjoy with family. Also distribute *Parent Connections* for each family.

Singing Christmas Joy

You'll need

- CD of Christmas carols
- CD player

Before class, Choose a popular Christmas carol that describes Jesus' birth, such as "Away in a Manger" or "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

In class, Ask, **What did we learn today?** (*God promised to send a Savior and He kept His Word.*) **Yes, Christmas reminds us that God promised to send**

a Savior and He kept His word. Other people need to hear that good news too! When we sing Christmas carols, we are telling the story of Jesus' birth. Let's practice singing a Christmas carol now! Sing as many Christmas carols as you have time available. You can invite the children to request favorite Christmas carols. You may want to have a songbook or hymnal available to help in remembering favorite songs.

You'll need

- *Resources*, Item 3, Christmas Clues
- Nativity picture
- Photo paper
- Color printer
- Markers
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- String



Show children how to put the puzzle together on top of stiff cardboard. Place another piece of cardboard on top of the completed puzzle, and flip the puzzle over while pressing tightly. Then lift off the top cardboard to see the completed picture! Or, children can use old puzzles. Just glue the nativity picture over the puzzle picture. Then use an X-Acto knife to score the picture along the cut lines for the children to separate the pieces.

