

# Week One: ANGELS

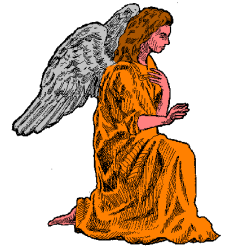
According to Scripture, God speaks to people through natural signs, dreams, angels, prophets, and the Holy Spirit. This type of communication is especially true in the birth narratives of Jesus. The wise men are guided by a star and sent home another way because of a dream that they have. The shepherds are heralded by a host of angels. Simeon and Anna prophesy in the Temple about the significance of Jesus' birth. The communication of God through angels has been chosen as a special theme for the first week of Advent. Angels bring messages to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and to the shepherds.

## 1) LUKE 1: 11-15

The angel said to Zechariah: "Do not be afraid! Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and will be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth."

## 2) MATTHEW 1: 18b-21

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she will bring forth a child and he will save his people from their sins."



## 3) LUKE 1: 26-32

The angel went to Mary and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! 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 favor with God. You will be with child 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."

## 4) LUKE 2: 9-14

An angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, 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 of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you who is Christ the Lord."

## 5) MATTHEW 2: 13-15

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up and take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child and kill him." So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. So was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

## **Week Two: WISE MEN**



**The Gospel of Matthew includes the story of the Wise Men because it wants to show how God is manifest throughout the world. The natural sign of a star along with dreams guide the wise men to and from Bethlehem. They offer gifts fitting for a king and fall down and worship Jesus.**

### **6) MATTHEW 2: 1-2**

**After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of Herod, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw a star in the east and have come to worship him."**

### **7) MATTHEW 2: 3-6**

**When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all of Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem of Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah. For out of you will come a ruler, who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"**

### **8) MATTHEW 2: 9**

**After they had heard the King, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.**

### **9) MATTHEW 2: 10-11a**

**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 worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.**

### **10) MATTHEW 2: 11b-12**

**And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their home country by another route.**

## **Week Three: SHEPHERDS**

**The Gospel of Luke includes the story of the shepherds because it wants to show how God is at work through the humble poor. On the opposite side of the political and economic spectrum of the three kings are the shepherds, who hear the good news in the middle of the night and in the middle of their work.**



### **11) LUKE 2: 8-11**

**There were shepherds 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 of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you who is Christ the Lord."**

### **12) LUKE 2: 13-14**

**A great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all peoples on whom his favor rests."**

### **13) LUKE 2: 15**

**When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."**

### **14) LUKE 2:16**

**So the shepherds hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.**

### **15) LUKE 2: 17-18**

**When the shepherds 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.**

# **Week Four: Dwelling Places of God**



The Presence of God was a particularly important issue for the people of Israel. He could be located in a cloud leading the Israelites through the wilderness, in the tabernacle, in the ark of the covenant, in the temple, above the altar, and with the exiles in Babylon. The following Scripture texts from the New Testament witness to the fact that God appears to Zechariah in the temple, beside the altar of incense, on the throne of David, in Jerusalem, and in a house.

## **16) LUKE 1: 8-10**

According to the custom of the priesthood, Zechariah was chosen by lot to go into the Temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of the incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside.

## **17) LUKE 1:11-13**

An angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. The angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name of John.”

## **18) LUKE 1: 30, 32-33**

The angel said to Mary: “The Lord God will give him the Throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

## **19) Luke 2:22-24**

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every first-born male is to be consecrated to the Lord).

## **20) Matthew 20:10-11**

When they saw the star, the wise men rejoiced exceedingly with great joy, and going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him.

# **Christmas Day: The Birth of Christ**



**The following Scriptures hail Jesus as the Son of David, as the One who will reconcile all of creation, as Immanuel, as the One who was born of a virgin, as the One who has done great things, and as the One who was born in a manger.**

## **21) MATTHEW 21:1-11**

**The disciples brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest."**

## **22) ISAIAH 11:1-3, 6-9**

**A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, . . . The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together.**

## **23) MATTHEW 1:18- 25**

**His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. This took place to fulfill what the prophet had said: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel," Joseph took Mary to be his wife, but he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.**

## **24) LUKE 1: 46-53**

**And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. . . . He who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name. . . He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."**

## **25) LUKE 2:4-7**

**So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth to Bethlehem 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. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the inn.**