

# From Prophecy to Reality: The Journey to Christmas

## Session 2 | The Announcements

### *Discussion Guide*

The Jewish people had been awaiting the arrival of the Messiah for hundreds of years. And, indeed, there had been a 400-year period where God's people did not hear from God at all, as they had throughout their history. But then, they did. After so many years of silence, God spoke once again, this time through angels and the Holy Spirit, to announce the coming of the Son of God, the Messiah. In the Gospels, we see many announcements of Jesus' birth to various people: Mary, Jesus' mother; Joseph, Jesus' father; the magi, non-Jewish stargazers; and Jewish shepherds. And we see announcements of Jesus' birth to Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, and Simeon, an old, devout, Jewish man.

In this Session, we'll look at these announcements and see not only how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies we studied last week, but also who Jesus is to our world today.

### - OPENING COMMUNITY BUILDER QUESTIONS -

*Select one or more of the questions below to get your group discussion started.*

1. What's your favorite Christmas song? What do you like about it?
2. If someone had to introduce you to a group of people, what would you want them to say?
3. What is the best announcement you've ever heard?

If you think your group needs a little bit more warming up before diving into the Bible passages for this week, try discussing this community-building question:

- Tell us about someone you look up to. What it is about that person that causes you to respect and admire them?

**- THE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO MARY & JOSEPH -**  
**LUKE 1:26–38, MATTHEW 1:18–25**

*Study Questions*

**Read the Scripture passages referenced above aloud as a group. Then select a few of the questions below to discuss.**

1. Read Gabriel's announcement to Mary a second time.
  - What stands out to you most about this announcement? Why?
  - Identify the words and names Gabriel uses to describe the baby Mary would bear. What do each of the words and names reveal about the baby's identity?
2. Read the angel's announcement to Joseph a second time.
  - What differences do you notice between the announcement to Mary and the one to Joseph?
3. What do Mary and Joseph's responses to the angels' announcements reveal about them?
4. Notice Matthew's reference in verse 23 to Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 (which we read last week). Why do you think Matthew included this reference in his Gospel account?
5. What aspect of Jesus' identity do you need to be reminded about most? Share why.

**- THE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO THE MAGI & SHEPHERDS -**  
**MATTHEW 2:1–10, LUKE 2:8–15**

*Study Questions*

**Read the Scripture passages referenced above aloud as a group two or three times each. Then select a few of the questions below to discuss.**

1. What stood out to you in the passage about the magi? Why? What is unique about the announcement of Jesus to them?
2. What does the fact that Jesus' birth was also announced to Gentiles mean about Jesus' identity and mission? (Think back to God's promise to Abram in Genesis 12:1–5 that we read last week).
3. Why do you think the magi were drawn to find the King of the Jews and worship Him?
4. Notice Matthew's reference in verse 6 to Micah's prophecy in Micah 2 (which we read

last week). What does this reference say about Jesus' identity?

5. What stood out to you most in the angel's announcement of Jesus' birth to the shepherds? Why?
  - Identify the aspects of Jesus' identity and mission that the angel revealed to the shepherds.
  - What do you think it would have meant to the shepherds to hear of an earthly peace coming to those upon whom God's favor rests (verse 14)?
6. What does it mean for your life today that Jesus is the "king of the Jews", "the Messiah", "Savior", and "Lord"?

## - ANNOUNCEMENTS OF ZECHARIAH & SIMEON - LUKE 1:67-80, LUKE 2:25-35

### *Study Questions*

**Read the passages of Scripture referenced above aloud as a group two times each, slowly, and include multiple readers. Then select a few of the questions below to discuss.**

1. What stood out to you most as we read these passages? Why? What emotions did you feel as we read them?
2. Where do you see references to Old Testament prophecies in Zechariah's song and Simeon's words?
3. What impact has studying the announcements of Jesus' birth had on your faith? What more do you want to know? What's confusing or unclear?
4. As you consider who Jesus is, as revealed in the Scriptures we've studied this week, how would you share who Jesus is to a friend?

## - CLOSING THOUGHTS -

As your time comes to an end, remind your group members when you're meeting next and to read the third week of devotionals that will be sent out via email this week in preparation for that meeting. Close your time together by praying for whatever difficulties or needs were shared during your gathering.