

YEAR 5: AUTUMN 2 – IS THE CHRISTMAS STORY TRUE?

RE: EVALUATE DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY AND UNDERSTAND THAT STORIES CAN BE TRUE IN DIFFERENT WAYS

TO RECALL, UNDERSTAND, DESCRIBE AND EXPLAIN

Recall/Vocabulary:	<i>Christmas</i>	<i>Nativity</i>	<i>Account</i>	<i>Version</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Wise Men</i>	<i>Shepherds</i>
	<i>Angel Gabriel</i>	<i>Bethlehem</i>	<i>Census</i>	<i>Innkeeper</i>	<i>Star</i>	<i>King Herod</i>	<i>Gold, Frankincense, Myrrh</i>	
	<i>Virgin</i>	<i>December 25th</i>	<i>Hippolytus</i>	<i>Incarnation</i>	<i>Saturnalia</i>	<i>Astrologers</i>	<i>Magi</i>	<i>Opinion</i>

Understand/Describe/ Explain:

Re-visit and revise learning from Year 4 Autumn 1:

Key concepts: Jesus as the Son of God, born to Mary

Key vocabulary: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, God, stable, star, wise men, shepherds

Revision of the Christmas Story/Nativity for Christians

The **Angel Gabriel** visited **Mary** and told her she was going to have a baby called **Jesus**. The baby would be **God's son**.

Mary told **Joseph** what Gabriel had told her; they prepared for the arrival of the special baby.

Mary and Joseph had to travel to **Bethlehem** to register in a **census**. There was no room from them as the town was very busy. An **innkeeper** in Bethlehem let Mary and Joseph stay in his **stable** for the night. Baby Jesus was born in the stable. At the same time, an angel appeared to some **shepherds**. The angel told them that the son of God had been born in Bethlehem. Far away in the East, **wise men** saw a bright **star** in the sky. They knew it meant that a new **king** had been born and followed the star. On the way they came to **King Herod's** palace. Herod was curious about the new king; he asked the wise men to tell him where the baby was. The wise men reached Bethlehem. They gave Jesus gifts of **gold, frankincense and myrrh**. That night, the wise men had a dream warning them not to tell King Herod where Jesus was. They did not return to King Herod's palace. Herod began to search for baby Jesus. He ordered that all baby boys in Bethlehem be killed. Joseph had a dream where an angel told him to take Mary and Jesus to **Egypt**. Mary and Joseph travelled to Egypt with baby Jesus and he was safe.



Nativity Scenes in Art

The Nativity scene can be found on artwork, Christmas cards and advent calendars. It is often shown with shepherds and wise men there at the same time although many accounts describe this not to be true.



THINKING POINT:

Who was present at the birth of Christ? Were they all there at the same time? Is this Christmas story true?

Different accounts of the Christmas Story in the Bible according to different people

Luke Ch. 1: 26-38

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 forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Luke Ch. 2: 1-20

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

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.

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."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." 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.

Matthew Ch. 1:18 –Ch. 2: 12

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." 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. 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: "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 shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." 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 worshiped 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.

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary and Joseph • Conception by Spirit of God (Mary was a virgin) • No donkey • Herod the Great is mentioned • Birth in Bethlehem 	<p>Luke</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in a stable • Shepherds visited – text does not say how many • No Star • Angels in the night sky • No murder of the innocents and no trip to Egypt • More detail • Return to Nazareth since they lived there already 	<p>Matthew</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in a house • Wise Men (Magi) visited – text does not say how many • Star • No angels in night sky • Murder of the innocents and trip to Egypt • Less detail • Move to Nazareth instead of back to Bethlehem for fear of Herod's son

THINKING POINT:

Whose version of the Christmas story is true? Why? Why are there different versions?

If we are questioning who was actually present during the Christmas story and when they were there, what else might be true/not true?

25th December

Along with the discussions surrounding different versions of the stories events, there is also debate surrounding the date of Jesus' birth.

Sheep in December – <http://bible.org/article/birth-jesus-christ>

The tradition for December 25th is actually quite ancient. Hippolytus, in the second century A.D., argued that this was Christ's birthday. Meanwhile, in the eastern Church, January 6th was the date followed. But in the fourth century, John Chrysostom argued that December 25th was the correct date and from that day till now, the Church in the East, as well as the West, has observed the 25th of December as the official date of Christ's birth. In modern times, the traditional date has been challenged. Modern scholars point out that when Jesus was born, shepherds were watching their sheep in the hills around Bethlehem. Luke tells us that an angel appeared to "some shepherds staying out in the fields [who were] keeping watch over their flock by night" (2:8).

Some scholars feel that the sheep were usually brought under cover from November to March; as well, they were not normally in the field at night. But there is no hard evidence for this. In fact, early Jewish sources suggest that the sheep around Bethlehem were outside year-round. So you can see, December 25th fits both tradition and the biblical narrative well. There is no sound objection to it.

Visits from a Magi

The Magi were also believed to be astrologers. This goes against the teachings of the Christian faith and so doesn't make sense as to why they would be called to be present at the birth of Jesus.

Saturnalia

Roman mid-winter festival celebrated from December 17th to 25th. Was this festival given a new meaning and materialised into Christmas?
Direct Teaching: Christians believe Jesus is the **Incarnation** of God on Earth. God gave Jesus to the Earth to show people how to lead good lives, forgive them for the things they do wrong and prove to them (through his **resurrection**) that there is life after death.

THINKING POINT:

If we are questioning the factual side of the Christmas story, can it be true in a different way?

Can stories and events have meaning i.e. can we learn from them even if they didn't happen exactly as recorded?

EXIT ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS: IS THE CHRISTMAS STORY TRUE?

EXS:

- Can you retell the events of the Christmas story?
- Can you talk about the differences in the accounts of the Christmas story?
- Can you describe what a Christian learns from the Christmas story?

GDS:

- Can you explain about Jesus being the Incarnation of God?
- Can you ask questions about the sources of the Christmas story?