

Lesson 1

The King Is Born!

Bible Reference: Luke 1:26–56, 2

Lesson Objective

The objective in studying Jesus' birth is to see that he was born a king, albeit an upside-down king. Students will discover evidence of his royalty in the many references to his lineage from David, the town of Bethlehem, and the glorious events surrounding his birth. They will also consider the many humble circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth, which show the unusual sort of kingship he had in mind—that of a suffering servant.

Lesson Highlights

- * The day of the Lord spoken of in the Old Testament, a time of redemption for God's people, would come through a messiah.
- * *Messiah*, meaning “anointed one,” primarily meant an anointed king.
- * The Messiah was to come from David's royal line.
- * Jesus, as David's heir, made his entry in David's birthplace: Bethlehem. Yet the conditions of Jesus' birth were anything but royal.
- * His birth shows the unusual sort of kingship he had in mind—an upside-down, humble kingship.
- * For Jesus to leave his Father's side in heaven and take on human nature was itself an act of great humility.

Preparation/Materials

- ✓ Video clip of *Sleeping Beauty*, opening scene (clip can be found on YouTube)
- ✓ Visuals from *Sleeping Beauty* (optional)
- ✓ **Born to Be King** handout, one per student

Background

Jesus' birth is one of the greatest events in Christian remembrance. He was born during the rule of Caesar

Augustus, the first and perhaps the greatest emperor of Rome. Augustus ushered in the Pax Romana, a golden age of peace and achievement in Rome. Yet the humble King Jesus would bring a peace far greater than any Roman emperor could provide.

The census ordered by Augustus was significant in that it forced Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem, David's birthplace. First Samuel 16–17 speaks of Samuel's journey to Bethlehem to anoint David, son of Jesse. Now, from that same small town about six miles south of Jerusalem, a far greater king was to be born.

Keeping Jesus' lineage in mind is important because the promised messiah, or anointed king, had to be a descendant of David. Students will examine the many times that Luke reminds us of Jesus' royal lineage, but they will also see how Jesus came to be an upside-down sort of king. He was born in the humblest of conditions, in a stable or cave, to parents so poor that they could present only a poor family's offering when Jesus was dedicated at the temple. Jesus truly lowered himself by taking on all the limitations of humanity—not just middle-class humanity but the down-and-out. The greatest of kings lived a life far more humble than the lives we live today.

Lesson Steps Bridge

1. Explain that as we enter the story of Jesus' life, we will keep at the forefront the idea that Jesus came to bring God's kingdom to Earth. He was the long-awaited Messiah, the King from David's line. We begin the story of Jesus with his birth.
2. Ask students if they can recall any movies in which a new prince or princess is born. Then ask, “Why was the birth of a future king or queen such a big deal?” (The fate of the kingdom and of the people rested in their hands! Keeping the dynasty going was very important.)
3. Explain that the movie *Sleeping Beauty* opens by showing how a long-awaited royal birth was celebrated.

Lesson 1

The King Is Born!

Luke 1:26–56, 2

The Gospel of Luke offers the most detailed account of the beginning of Jesus' story. Luke explains the miraculous events of Jesus' birth, first setting the historical context. Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire; Herod acted as Judah's local ruler. Since the close of the Old Testament, the Jews had been living in a period of silence—God had not spoken through prophets or angels for hundreds of years.

Yet something was stirring! Mysterious angelic visitors began to visit ordinary Jews and tell them of momentous events on the horizon. The elderly priest Zechariah received a glimpse of coming glory when the angel Gabriel gave him the news that he and his barren wife would have a special son.

Gabriel quoted from the closing verses of the Old Testament to explain the role John would play: he would be the promised prophet like Elijah whom God would send to prepare people's hearts "before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes" (Malachi 4:5–6). When the Old Testament prophets spoke of the "day of the Lord," they meant a future time of



Seeing Shepherds by Daniel Bornell.

redemption for Israel and judgment on God's enemies. All things would finally be put right on the day of the Lord! And this redemption would come through a messiah, or an anointed one. The Old Testament had often anointed offices, such as prophets and priests, but by the time of Jesus, *messiah* primarily meant "anointed king." It was clear from the prophets that, first and foremost, the messiah would be a king from the line of David.

Unfortunately, Zechariah initially doubted the angel's message. But later, when people asked, "What is this child going to be?" Zechariah was able to explain that this child would be a prophet preparing the way for the Lord (Luke 1:76). He prophesied that God was finally coming to redeem Israel by raising up "a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David" (v. 68–69). The promised king would soon appear.

Immediately following this prophecy, Luke tells us about an unexpected twist that forced Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem just before Jesus' birth. The Roman census required Joseph to travel to the town of his ancestry, which happened to be Bethlehem, the town where King David had been born. It is only fitting that Jesus, King David's long-expected heir, should also make his entry in Israel's royal birthplace. God was making the message clear: Jesus is the anointed King of Israel, come to save his people.

Yet . . . how could this poor baby be the long-awaited king? The conditions of his birth were anything but royal. He was not born in Herod's palace, or announced by heralds, or attended by servants. Instead, he was born in the worst of conditions to parents who were temporarily homeless. Mary and Joseph had to use an animal's feeding trough as his cradle. They could present only a poor family's offering when they brought Jesus to the temple for his dedication.

Nevertheless, Jesus' birth was miraculous and glorious enough to show that he was no ordinary peasant. From the angel's announcements to Mary and Joseph, to the host of angels who appeared to shepherds, God was beginning to reveal his Son's glory. The angels spoke in no uncertain terms, saying: "The Lord God will give [Jesus] the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32–33). This Jesus was the promised King, the Messiah (Luke 2:11).

How amazing that the King of all kings would humble himself—not only by giving up the glories of heaven, but even by renouncing the comforts of this world. Rather than enjoying kingly riches and power, Jesus identified with the vulnerable and down-and-out of this world. What a different sort of king he is—a king so humble he would take on all the world's suffering and woe, yet so powerful that he would defeat it once and for all.

Reflection Questions

1. Both Mary's and Zechariah's songs of praise (Luke 1) speak of God helping Israel and remembering his promises to them through this coming baby, Jesus. In what way does Jesus relate to Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel? How was he going to help them?
2. Simeon's song of praise (Luke 2:29–32) quotes from Isaiah 49:6. What did Isaiah promise? How does Jesus relate to this promise?
3. Instead of beginning with Jesus' birth, the Book of Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy. To which two special people does Matthew link Jesus, and why do you think that is? Why was Jesus' lineage from these two individuals important? (See Matthew 1:17 for help.)

4. Distribute the **Born to Be King** handout.
5. Direct students to list the characteristics of a traditional royal birth in column 1 as you consider the birth of Princess Aurora.
6. Watch a video clip of the first few minutes of the movie *Sleeping Beauty* depicting how Princess Aurora's birth was celebrated (clip can be found on YouTube).
7. Ask students to list all the special forms of honor that a royal baby receives in column 1. (See answers on teacher key.)
8. Now ask students to fill in column 2 by considering the ways that Jesus' birth was far more humble than that of a traditional royal birth. (See answers on teacher key.)

Scripture Link

1. Move on to question 3 of the handout. Read aloud the directions to question 3a.
2. Either work as a class, or allow students to work in pairs, to read and record verses in response to question 3a. Then complete questions 3b and 3c.

Student Activities

1. Allow students time to privately reflect on and record answers to the four application questions.
2. Afterward, allow time for small group discussion so that students can share their insights. You may want to reconvene as a class so that students can briefly discuss answers.

Independent Practice

1. Have students read **The King Is Born!** (page 24) in the student text and answer the reflection questions.

Name: _____

Unit 2 Lesson 1

Born to Be King

1. A Traditional Royal Birth

What usually marks the birth of royalty?

- Born into a castle.
- Surrounded by servants and advisors.
- Born into a rich, royal family.
- A holiday was proclaimed in all the kingdom in her honor.
- A parade in her honor, with banners announcing her birth.
- Everyone—from common people to troops—came to pay their homage.
- Crowds of people brought gifts and good wishes.
- Heralds and trumpets announced the birth.
- Kings and princes came to visit her.

2. A Humble Birth

In what ways was Jesus' birth humble, unlike a king's?

- Born in a stable.
- Laid in a manger, surrounded by animals.
- Born into a very poor family.
- Did not receive widespread notice or celebration.
- Visited by lowly shepherds.
- Instead of honor, received death threats from King Herod.
- Received few gifts or blessings.
- The event was largely ignored by most of society.

3. Nevertheless, a True King!

Many would not have believed that Jesus—born in such a lowly condition—could truly be a king. But Luke records many signs pointing to Jesus' kingship.

- a. Read Luke 1:26–56 and Luke 2:1–20 more closely, listing every piece of evidence Luke gives that Jesus is a royal figure: the long-awaited son of King David. Include the verse where you found it. You should be able to find 4–5 verses with royal language.
 - 1:27—calls Joseph a descendant of **King David**.
 - 1:32–33—says “God will give him the **throne of his father David**, and he will **reign forever**; his kingdom will never end.”
 - 2:4—Joseph went to the town of **David**, because he belonged to the **line of David**.
 - 2:11—says, “Today in the **town of David** a Savior has been born.”
- b. Looking back to Luke 1–2, what aspects of Jesus' birth were glorious and miraculous?

His birth was foretold to both Mary and Joseph through an angel. He was born miraculously of a virgin, by the power of God. Instead of heralds blowing trumpets, his birth was announced by angels in the sky.
- c. What does Simeon say that this young king, Jesus, will one day do? Explain your answer.

Jesus will bring salvation (verse 30). He will restore the glory of Israel and will be a light to the Gentiles (verse 32). He will do this by being a perfectly holy person who offers his life as a substitute for sinners, solving the problem of humanity and of Israel. He will complete the mission that Israel failed to do, of bringing redemption to

all nations. One day he will completely bring God's kingdom to Earth and rule over everything, wiping out all sin.

Application

1. Since Christmas is a popular holiday, many non-Christians know about Jesus' birth and may even have a manger scene on display. How do you think many people view Jesus' birth? What important aspects do they miss?

Answers will vary.
2. Philippians 2:6–7 tells us that for Jesus to become a human was an act of great humility—of lowering himself. “Being in very nature God, [he] did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” What glorious things did Jesus give up to enter human history? And what difficulties did he have to endure?

Answers will vary.
3. When you consider all that Jesus gave up and endured—willingly, for our sake—how should that impact your thinking, feeling, and living?

Answers will vary.
4. Philippians 2:5 tells us that followers of Jesus should have the same attitude of humility that Jesus demonstrated. Philippians 2:3–4 tells us, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” What are some practical ways you could begin to apply that this week?

Answers will vary.

1. *Both Mary's and Zechariah's songs of praise (Luke 1) speak of God helping Israel and remembering his promises to them through this coming baby, Jesus. In what way does Jesus relate to Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel? How was he going to help them? (Jesus was himself an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham. More than that, however, he came to fulfill the promises given to Abraham about holy people and holy place. Israel had failed to establish God's kingdom, but Jesus was going to bring them salvation from exile and finally fulfill their mission of establishing God's kingdom.)*
2. *Simeon's song of praise (Luke 2:29–32) quotes from Isaiah 49:6. What did Isaiah promise? How does Jesus relate to this promise? (Isaiah said that it wasn't enough for God's servant to restore only Israel; the servant was also going to be a light for the Gentiles. Jesus fulfilled this because he completed the mission that Israel was supposed to do: bringing salvation to the ends of the Earth, to all nations.)*
3. *Instead of beginning with Jesus' birth, the Book of Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy. To which two special people does Matthew link Jesus back to, and why do you think that is? Why was Jesus' lineage from these two individuals important? (See Matthew 1:17 for help.) (Matthew specifically links Jesus back to Abraham and David. Jesus' lineage from Abraham was important because Abraham was the beginning of the nation Israel and because God made important covenant promises to Abraham. Jesus came to be the fulfillment of Israel and of those promises of holy people and holy place. Jesus' lineage from David was also important, because God promised to establish David's throne forever. As David's descendant, Jesus—the true King—fulfilled that promise.)*



Looking Ahead

Have students read Matthew 3–4:11 in preparation for Lesson 2.



Enrichment

- ▶ **Music.** Ask students to brainstorm a list of Christmas carols and hymns that emphasize Jesus' humility and others that refer to his kingship. Or consider printing off the text of "Once in Royal David's City" or "Thou Who Was Rich Beyond All Splendor" and having them ponder the text of these carols.
- ▶ Allow students to complete the activity above by researching Christmas carols and hymns online.
- ▶ Have students blog or create a short narrative about how your ancestry has influenced you.

Lesson 2

Jesus Relives Israel's Story

Bible Reference: Matthew 3–4:11

Lesson Objective

The objective in studying Jesus' baptism and wilderness temptation is to learn that Jesus needed to "fulfill all righteousness"—in other words, perform every act of righteousness that Israel (and all humanity) should have done. He did this by entering into the same experiences as Israel (and as humanity) and emerging perfectly righteous. We will focus on the wilderness temptations, where we see that Jesus had a very similar experience to Israel, yet he succeeded where others failed.

Lesson Highlights

- * Before Jesus began his public ministry, he was baptized by John and was tempted in the wilderness.
- * Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He performed every act of righteousness that we humans should have done.
- * Jesus lived the life that Israel, and that all of us, should have lived.
- * Jesus did not just fulfill certain Old Testament prophecies; he fulfilled the entire story of Israel.
- * Jesus' testing in the wilderness intentionally contained many parallels to Israel's testing in the wilderness.
- * Jesus symbolically relived many aspects of Israel's story. In every area that Israel had failed, Jesus was righteous.

Preparation/Materials

- ✓ **Jesus: The True Israel** handout, one per student
- ✓ **Wilderness Temptation** handout, one per student

Background

Here students will be learning that, in order for Jesus to fulfill God's plan of redemption, he had to relive the story of Israel. Many threads begun in the Old Testa-

ment had been left hanging and broken—so many symbols and stories had never come to a satisfying close. God had communicated a glorious vision for the temple, for the king, for Israel itself—but the reality had never matched up. Now, for Jesus to tie up the Old Testament story and complete God's kingdom dream, Jesus had to pick up each of these threads and weave them together in himself. By studying Jesus' baptism and wilderness experience, students will consider more deeply the ways that Jesus was "recapitulating" Israel's history, by going through the same experiences Israel had gone through but fulfilling them perfectly this time.

This idea of fulfillment revolves around the concept of typology or double fulfillment—that there were many themes in Israel's story that had true meaning back then but would have an even greater meaning in Jesus. For instance, Matthew uses many direct quotations from the Old Testament—more than in any other Gospel—and he speaks of "the word of the prophet" being fulfilled. But this sort of fulfillment of prophecy may not be quite what we expect, since the prophets Matthew quoted were often not making a prediction about a future messiah per se. Instead, they were summarizing and explaining events in Israel's history: how God had called Israel his son and rescued Israel from Egypt (quoted in Matthew 2:15), how Israel's mothers had watched their children carried away or killed in the exile (Matthew 2:17), etc. In all these Old Testament passages, Matthew sees something that—though it had an original meaning back then—Jesus fulfilled in an even greater way. The passages he quotes were not immediately about the messiah, but he nevertheless sees these events having a second, greater fulfillment in Christ—a double fulfillment.

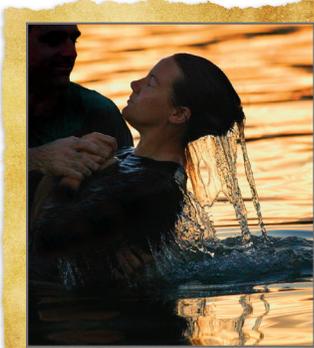
A classic example of this is Matthew's quotation of Isaiah telling the king of Judah that the birth of a child would serve as a sign, proving that God would destroy the kings to their north: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Matthew 1:22–23). The immediate context of Isaiah 7–8 suggests that this immediately referred to Isaiah's son, but Matthew sees that this passage had a second, greater fulfillment in Christ. He, too, was born of a young woman—but this time, a true virgin! Isaiah's words back in the 600s B.C. were fulfilled once through

Lesson 2

Jesus Relives Israel's Story

Matthew 3:4-11

The Gospel of Matthew tells of the events leading up to the start of Jesus' public ministry. Matthew explains that two important events preceded the start of Jesus' preaching: his baptism and his temptation in the wilderness.



John prepared the way for Jesus by preaching and baptizing.

John the Baptist began preparing the people of Judea for Jesus' ministry, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (3:2). He preached that judgment was coming to all who did not repent, even calling out the spiritual leaders (Pharisees and Sadducees) for their lack of true faith and true repentance. He offered a baptism symbolizing confession of sin and repentance (3:6, 11).

We understand, then, why John was so surprised that Jesus came to be baptized. Jesus had never sinned, so why would he need to be cleansed with water? Yet Jesus gave this reason for desiring baptism: "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15).

We notice this language of "fulfilling" many other times in Matthew. For instance, Matthew says that Jesus left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum "to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah" (4:14). Jesus obviously knew the Old Testament Scriptures and was sent to fulfill them.

In the opening chapters Matthew speaks five times of Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament prophets. But this is not the sort of "fulfilling of prophecy" we might think of. The prophets Matthew quoted were usually not making a prediction about a future messiah. Instead, they were explaining events in Israel's history: how God had called Israel his son, how he had rescued Israel from Egypt, how Israel's mothers had watched their children carried away or killed in the exile, etc.

Now Matthew quotes the Old Testament prophets to show that Jesus is fulfilling these events in a much greater way. Just as Israel was called God's son, so Jesus is uniquely and eternally God's Son (Matthew 3:17). But whereas Israel was a sinful and rebellious son, Jesus is the righteous and ultimate Son. Matthew shows Jesus reliving Israel's story but doing so perfectly, to fulfill all the righteousness they had failed to achieve. Jesus, just like Israel, was called out of Egypt (Matthew 2:15). He, too, lived through a time of Israel's mothers weeping (Matthew 2:17). And he, like Israel, was tested in the wilderness—his 40 days in the desert were reminiscent of their 40 years. That generation of Israelites failed their wilderness test by rebelling against the Lord. Jesus withstood far greater testing, yet he emerged from it completely righteous. He was fulfilling all that Israel should have done the first time around!

Jesus does not just fulfill, for example, 200 Old Testament predictions about the messiah, but he fulfills the entire Old Testament story. The roles of prophets, priests, and kings—he fulfills those. The sacrifices, laws, symbols, and festivals—he fulfills those. But even more, he fulfills the whole story of Israel that stretches from Genesis to Malachi. Israel—this nation called to be God's son, called to be a light to the Gentiles—failed to remain faithful to God. But Jesus, God's perfect Son, resisted every temptation. He alone was able to fulfill the mission given to Israel.

Reflection Questions

1. Other than what was mentioned, summarize at least three things that God desired Israel to be or to have—goals he had in mind for them. How did Jesus fulfill those perfectly?
2. Why do you think John criticized the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:7?
3. John speaks of Jesus coming with a "winnowing fork" in Matthew 3:12. Explain what this image of winnowing wheat and chaff is meant to convey. If you need help, look at the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13.

his own child but fulfilled again in a greater way in Christ. Just as Isaiah's child served as a promise of redemption, so Christ would be an even greater sign of redemption—the final fulfillment of that person and event back in Israel's history. God's sovereignty was at work in history to bring all the threads of the Old Testament together in Jesus.

Matthew also quotes some prophecies that were predictions entirely about the future—such as Micah 5:2–5 (in Matthew 2:6). Micah is speaking of a future king "Whose origins are from of old," who would come from Bethlehem, and whose "greatness will reach to the ends of the Earth." Certain prophecies like these refer to only a single, future fulfillment, but these cases are in the minority. More often Jesus fulfilled an event, symbol, or theme in Israel's story in a double way. Consider the prophet Zechariah writing about 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:7–13). This meant something back then: God's people thought that their shepherd, Zechariah, was worth only 30 pieces of silver, showing how little they valued him. But Matthew and the other Gospel writers see that God has brought this thread back into the story in a second, even greater way. Jesus, an even greater shepherd than the Old Testament prophets, was also valued at only 30 pieces of silver. This number is not just coincidental; this is God's sovereign hand at work, taking themes from the Old Testament and bringing them all together in Jesus.

Matthew and the other New Testament authors demonstrated that Jesus fulfilled not just a limited number of specific predictions but the entire story of Israel, with all its themes and symbols. We will see that most of the ways Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament were not the result of happenstance: He specifically chose to pick up the mantle of Israel and of Israel's king. He purposefully reenacted many of their experiences, because he knew he was the true Israel, the true King. Thus, he intentionally took the words of King David on his lips at the cross; he purposefully rode a donkey into Jerusalem, in full knowledge of the Old Testament and of how these identified him with Israel's messianic king. Though others could try to claim messianic status through actions such as these, only Jesus the God-man was capable of making good on these claims—of being the one who could fulfill God's plan of redemption. Only in Jesus did all the threads of the Old Testament come together: prophet, priest, king, sacrifice, temple. And only he could "recapitulate the history of Israel" and "prove faithful where the nation had been faithless."

Name: _____

Unit 2 Lesson 2

Jesus: The True Israel

To complete God's plan of redemption begun in the Old Testament, Jesus needed to "fulfill all righteousness"—to bring to completion and perfection all that Israel should have done. Read aloud the passages and listen for parallel language used for Israel and Jesus. How is Jesus shown to be the true Israel?

Jesus' Baptism

	Scripture	Israel	Scripture	Jesus
A similarity	Hosea 11:1 (also Exodus 4:22)	Called God's son, loved by God.	Matthew 3:17	Called God's son, whom God loves.
A difference	Hosea 11:2-4	Israel went far from God and worshiped other gods.	Matthew 3:17	God says he is well pleased with Jesus.

Jesus' Temptation

Read the passages in both columns. Underline any words or ideas that are similar between the two columns. Highlight quotations that are similar.

(See next page.)

Israel in the Wilderness	Jesus in the Wilderness
<p>Deuteronomy 8:2-3 Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 6:13-16 Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. ¹⁴ Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; ¹⁵ for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. ¹⁶ Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massah.</p> <p>Psalms 78:15-32 He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them water as abundant as the seas; . . . ¹⁷ But they continued to sin against him, rebelling in the wilderness against the Most High. ¹⁸ They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved. ¹⁹ They spoke against God; they said, "Can God really spread a table in the wilderness? . . . ²¹ When the Lord heard them, he was furious; his fire broke out against Jacob, and his wrath rose against Israel. ²² For they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance. ²³ Yet he gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens; ²⁴ he rained down manna for the people to eat, he gave them the grain of heaven. . . . ²⁸ In spite of all this, they kept on sinning; in spite of his wonders, they did not believe."</p>	<p>Matthew 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.</p>

Lesson Steps

Bridge

- Read aloud these two statements. Ask students to explain the difference between these statements.
 - "Jesus came to fulfill certain prophecies written in the Old Testament."
 - "Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament."
- Allow for discussion. Then ask, "Which one is the bigger claim? Why?"
- Help students see that the second claim is the bigger one, because it means that Jesus did not just fulfill, for example, 200 Old Testament predictions about the messiah, but he fulfills everything in the Old Testament story (the roles of prophets, priests, kings, sacrifices, laws, symbols, festivals—all of the holy people, the holy place, and kingdom themes).

Scripture Link

- Explain that today we'll explore this idea of Jesus fulfilling the whole Old Testament as we study his baptism and wilderness temptation—the two major events that came before the start of his public ministry.
- Have a student read Matthew 3:1–12 aloud.
- Ask the following questions:
 - "What did John's baptism symbolize, from verses 6 and 11?" (Confession of sins in 3:6, repentance in 3:11.)
 - "Why was it so surprising, then, that Jesus came to be baptized?" (Jesus never sinned, so he wouldn't need to confess or repent of anything. John said that he, not Jesus, was the one who needed it.)

Name: _____

Unit 2 Lesson 2

Wilderness Temptation

Similarities between Israel and Jesus

Were Jesus' experiences (in the right hand column) an echo of what Israel had gone through? If so, list what the similarity was, as well as the biblical reference.

Reference	Israel	Reference	Jesus
Deuteronomy 8:2	Forty years in the desert.	Matthew 4:1-2	Forty days in the desert.
Deuteronomy 8:2	God led them there.	Matthew 4:1	The Spirit led him there.
Deuteronomy 8:2	Tested to see how they would respond.	Matthew 4:1	He was tempted or tested.
Deuteronomy 8:3	Became hungry (much more quickly).	Matthew 4:2	He became hungry after fasting 40 days.
Deuteronomy 8:3	Tempted regarding food/bread.	Matthew 4:3-4	Tempted regarding food/bread.
Deuteronomy 6:16; Psalm 78:18	Tempted in the area of testing God.	Matthew 4:5-7	Tempted in the area of testing God.
Deuteronomy 6:13-16	Tempted in the area of worship.	Matthew 4:8-10	Tempted in the area of worship.

Different Outcomes

Jesus responded to his wilderness testing far differently from Israel. Consider the many ways that Israel fell short and failed, while Jesus—undergoing even worse testing—proved to be righteous. Use the prompts to jog your memory, helping you consider the differences between their wilderness experiences.

Prompt	Israel	Jesus
Miraculous bread	Israel received manna, miraculous bread from heaven. This was supposed to produce trust and worship in God, yet they nevertheless grumbled against God.	Jesus did not allow himself even miraculous bread; he endured much longer and tougher testing, yet he actually trusted God fully.

Prompt	Israel	Jesus
"Man does not live on bread alone"	Israel was supposed to learn that "man does not live on bread alone" but on God's Word. But instead of learning to trust God, they only rebelled against God again later.	Jesus actually believed that "man does not live on bread alone." He relied on God's words to get him through the testing. He showed that he did have the kind of faith that God had been looking for all along.
Testing God	Israel did test God in the way they complained against him and wanted to "force" him to do things the way they wanted.	Jesus refused to test God by complaining or by forcing God to do what he wanted.
How do you think God and Satan viewed the overall wilderness experience?	God was angry with Israel because they kept turning away from him no matter how many times he blessed or provided for them. Satan must have felt a victory.	God was pleased with Jesus because Jesus was perfectly righteous. God sent angels to minister to him afterward. Satan was defeated. He eventually stopped tempting Jesus and fled, because there was no more he could do.

Application Questions

- Whose "wilderness testing" do you think was harder: Israel's or Jesus'? Give evidence for your position.

We might think that Israel's testing was harder because they were in the wilderness for 40 years, not just 40 days. But they actually proved very quickly—right after leaving Egypt—that they had rebellious hearts. The long 40 years was the punishment for their rebellion, not the cause of it. We might think that Jesus' testing was easier because he was not a sinner and so didn't really feel that tempted. In reality Jesus experienced a level of testing much more intense than anything Israel experienced. Because he refused the devil at level 1, the devil kept increasing the pressure (level 2, level 3, etc.), making it as intense as possible. The Israelites caved in quickly to temptation, so they never had to feel that intense pressure.

Jesus' testing was also harder on several other levels. First, Israel never had to go as long without food, so Jesus was much hungrier and physically weaker going into the temptations. Also, the devil had much more direct access to Jesus, getting to tempt him "in person." Jesus was also completely isolated from others, whereas the Israelites had each other, Moses, and many reminders of God's presence to encourage them to stay faithful.

- Does it help you to know that Jesus went through the same temptations and struggles as you (and even harder ones)?

Answers will vary.

- "What reason did Jesus give for being baptized?" (He said, "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness," verse 15.)
- "What do you make of that? What does it mean to 'fulfill all righteousness'?" (Put simply, Jesus was going to do all the righteous things that needed to be done.)

- Explain that Jesus didn't need to be baptized for himself; he did it to identify himself with his people and to fulfill all the righteous acts that we need to do.
- Distribute the **Jesus: The True Israel** handout.
- Read aloud the opening instructions, working through the "Jesus' Baptism" section together as a class. Read aloud the Old Testament passages to find parallel language and fill in the chart.
- Explain that students will be doing something similar with the next section: finding parallel wording.
- Read aloud the instructions for the "Jesus' Temptation" section. Allow students to work in pairs to underline and highlight the passages.



Student Activities

- Distribute the **Wilderness Temptation** handout. Direct students to enter their answers into the two charts comparing Jesus and Israel. Then respond to the application questions.
- Allow students to work on the handout in pairs or small groups. You may want to discuss answers together.



Independent Practice

- Have students read **Jesus Relives Israel's Story** (page 26) in the student text and answer the reflection questions.
 - Other than what was mentioned, summarize at least three things that God desired Israel to be

3. Why does it matter that Jesus not only died for us but also lived a perfect life—a life that fulfilled all righteousness?

If Jesus had only erased our sins, our spiritual bank account would be back to zero. But Jesus not only took all our sins; he also gave us all his righteousness. We are now viewed as righteous in God's sight! God sees Jesus' righteousness in us (a positive bank account), and God is satisfied with what Jesus has done. Jesus has "performed" for us so that we do not have to perform; he has earned the perfect record that we never could have earned.

4. Jesus answered each temptation with Scripture. He not only knew God's Word but embraced it and aligned himself with God's will. What about you? In what areas do you tend to listen to the world's temptations instead of to God's Word? How could you better combat these temptations with the truth?

Answers will vary.

or to have—goals he had in mind for them. How did Jesus fulfill those perfectly? (Answers will vary.)

2. *Why do you think John criticized the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:7? (He seemed to think they were just coming to be baptized as a religious ritual or a good work, not truly from a repentant heart. They just wanted to pad themselves against "the coming wrath." But John says if they were really repentant, they would produce fruit in keeping with repentance. He warned them that judgment was coming and that every tree that does not produce good fruit—that is, faith—will be cut down and thrown into the fire.)*
3. *John speaks of Jesus coming with a winnowing fork in Matthew 3:12. Explain what this image of winnowing wheat and chaff is meant to convey. If you need help, look at the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13. (The wheat stands for repentant believers, while the chaff represents those who remain unrepentant. John says that Jesus will winnow, or separate, these two groups of people. He will gather the righteous together but will judge and destroy the unbelievers.)*



Looking Ahead

Have students read Mark 1:14—3:34 in preparation for Lesson 3.



Enrichment

- ▶ Allow for additional journaling or discussion on the topic of temptation. What particular temptations exist in our culture? Can Jesus really relate to those temptations, given that he didn't experience modern life? How can we be stronger in resisting temptation? Use Hebrews 4:14—5:10 in this reflection.
- ▶ Study the role of John the Baptist further, having students research what we learn about him from the other Gospels.