



7

The Messiah's Messengers

Key Theme

- God is faithful to His promises.

Key Passages

- Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:5–7, 1:11–15, 1:26–31; Psalm 103:20–21

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the manner in which Zacharias received the message of the birth of John the Baptist.
- Describe the manner in which Mary received the message of the birth of Jesus.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will review the memory verse by finishing the Memory Verse Review Sheet and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: The Messiah's Messengers Class Notes

Students will complete the Messiah's Messengers Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

God sent an angel to deliver the good news to Zacharias that he and Elizabeth would have a son. This son would prepare the hearts of the people for the Messiah promised by God so long ago. And God sent an angel to tell Mary that she would miraculously conceive a son who would be Jesus, the Promised One, the Messiah John would be preparing the people for.



Activity 2: Messengers of God Match-Up

Students will turn over, read, and try to match the characters from this lesson with their descriptions in a game similar to "concentration."

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO



COME ON IN

- Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



THE MESSIAH'S MESSENGERS CLASS NOTES

- Print one The Messiah's Messengers Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- The Messiah's Messengers Class Notes for each student
- The Messiah's Messengers Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



MESSENGERS OF GOD MATCH-UP

- Print and cut out one set of Messengers of God Match-Up Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. Print cards on cardstock if possible.

- Student Take Home Sheets

- Messengers of God Match-Up Cards



Memory Verse

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above along with this background.

As we move ahead in our study of the life of Jesus, we will begin at the beginning—not His birth, but the angelic announcements of His birth. These are significant announcements because of the supernatural way God conveyed them and because they verify Old Testament prophecies made about Jesus and the one who would prepare the way for Jesus. You see, God sent His messengers—angels—with these announcements.

The people of Israel knew of the promised Messiah. They had read of Him in the Scriptures, and some were waiting for this one who would redeem Israel (Isaiah 53:4–6, 61:1–3). The people also knew that before the Messiah appeared, God would send a messenger—one who would come to bear witness to the true Light (John 1:6–8). This messenger would prepare the way for the Messiah. A faithful remnant of the Jewish people waited for “Elijah,” the prophet who would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:5–6) and who would prepare the way for the Lord whom they had waited for (Malachi 3:1).

Little did Zacharias, the aged priest who served in the Temple of the Lord, know that he would have a son in his old age who would be the forerunner for the Messiah, as prophesied by Malachi. Nor could he have imagined how he would learn of this truth. You see, Zacharias was a righteous man. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had never been able to have children (Luke 1:5–7). But that was soon to change in a most amazing way. How? God sent a messenger—the angel Gabriel—to Zacharias while he was ministering in the Temple. The angel told Zacharias not to be afraid. He said Zacharias and his wife would soon have a son, whom they were to name John. John would be great in the sight of the Lord, and many would rejoice at his birth (Luke 1:13–15).

As God’s messenger, the angel testified that the son, John, would come in the power and spirit of Elijah. He would fulfill the prophecy of Malachi 4:5–6. He would make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:17). This son, John the Baptist, was not the Christ but came to give witness to the Christ (John 1:20). John the Baptist was the bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and He would make straight the way of the Lord (John 1:23; Isaiah 40:3).

In another, more spectacular announcement, God

again sent His angel Gabriel, this time to the city of Nazareth, to a young woman, a virgin, who was betrothed to be married to Joseph. The angel assured her not to be afraid, for she had found favor with God. She would conceive a child, a Son, who would be called Jesus, for He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). This child would be great, called the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:26–32). What a mystery! Mary was not yet married to Joseph and had never known a man physically (Luke 1:34). But Mary would conceive in a miraculous way by the power of the Holy Spirit. And thus the prophecy of Isaiah—that a virgin would conceive a Son and name Him Immanuel, which means God with us—was fulfilled (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

The angel Gabriel also told Mary that her Son would reign over a kingdom that would never end. And He would reign over the house of Jacob forever (Luke 1:32–33). Again we see in Jesus Christ the fulfillment of a promise made long ago through God’s prophet Nathan to King David that a house and kingdom would be established through his descendant forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

These very important messages were sent through supernatural messengers by the will of God to announce the forerunner of the Messiah and the Messiah Himself. Angels are unique creations of God, spiritual beings, who do the will of God. In the accounts mentioned above, Gabriel came to herald God’s news that the Messiah was coming—very soon.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

We know from Scripture that there is a spiritual realm beyond the physical realm we live in, with both good and evil beings (1 Peter 3:22; Ephesians 6:12). Comprehending the things that are happening in this spiritual realm is hard to grasp since we don’t see or hear what is happening there. On top of that, the Bible does not give us much detail about these spiritual beings and their activities. However, we do know that these beings do God’s will, heed His Word, do His pleasure (Psalm 103:20–21), praise Him (Isaiah 6:3), worship Him (Hebrews 1:6), minister to God’s people (Hebrews 1:14), and serve God in many other ways. The Bible describes several different spiritual beings who serve God. These are not all necessarily angels, but can be described as “angelic beings” created by God. The Bible gives different names for these created

beings that include seraphim (Isaiah 6:2), cherubim (Genesis 3:24), an archangel (Jude 9), and angels (Revelation 5:11). As we continue our discussion here, we will use the term “angel” knowing that there are distinctions among them.

A comprehensive study of angels would go beyond the scope of our lesson. We do know that the basic meaning of the Greek word *angelos* is “messenger.” And in the accounts of our lesson today, we learned God used His angel Gabriel as a messenger to proclaim good news to God’s people—first to Zacharias about John the Baptist the forerunner to the Messiah and then to Mary about the Messiah Himself.

We understand that angels serve God and act as His messengers. But the Bible also tells us there are angels within the spiritual world who do not serve God, but act as His enemies. These are usually referred to as demons, and it is commonly accepted that these demons were once angels created by God who rebelled against God. It is also believed that these angelic demons were led by Lucifer who was cast out of heaven because of his sin of pride and desire to be like God (Genesis 3:5; Isaiah 14:12–15).

These fallen angels led by Lucifer are a very real threat to Christians. That is why Paul warned the Ephesians (and us!) to put on the whole armor of God. These demons appear to be organized and ready to fight. We read that there are principalities, powers, rulers, and spiritual hosts of wickedness vying for our attention and loyalty (Ephesians 6:10–13). These fallen angels serve as messengers, as well. But their messages are filled with deception, death, and destruction. The Bible even warns us that Satan can masquerade as an angel of light, leading people astray (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

Many ask the question, “When were the angels created?” The Bible doesn’t give us an exact answer in a single verse, but we can take what we know from the whole counsel of Scripture and come up with a reasonable answer. We know that God created everything in the span of six days (Exodus 20:11), and although the creation account in Genesis does not specifically mention angels, they are created beings that had to be created during the Creation Week (Nehemiah 9:6; John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16). The book of Job speaks of the “morning stars” singing and “sons of God” (also terms for angelic beings) shouting for joy as the foundations

of the earth were being created (Job 38:4–7). Consequently, the angels could have been created on Day 1, when God made the light and the darkness, on Day 2 when God separated the waters to make the firmament, or on Day 3 when God made the dry land.

Another question asked is, “When did the angels fall?” Again, we don’t know for certain. Since God proclaimed everything He made to be “very good” at the end of the Creation Week (Genesis 1:31), there could not have been any evil angels present then. And we can safely assume that it was after Day Seven since God set that day apart as holy (Genesis 2:3). God did not choose to reveal to us how long it was before Satan fell into sin and then turned to tempt Eve, but it probably wasn’t too long since there were no children born before Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden.

We do know angels are God’s creation. Some fell into sin, many did not. And after 400 years of silence from God (between the Old Testament and the New Testament), the silence was suddenly broken when God sent His angel/messenger to communicate the hope of the coming Messiah to Zacharias, Mary, and Joseph. The promises given to Malachi, Isaiah, and others hundreds of years before were about to be fulfilled! Our God is faithful to His promises as revealed in His Word. Let us continue to study that Word and share it with others as we rejoice with the angels and praise God for His goodness in sending the Savior.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Promised One, Messiah, I praise your name. How wonderful to read of the announcements God sent before your birth. Lord, you revealed your purpose for Zacharias and Elizabeth and Mary through an angel. And they trusted you and submitted to your will. My prayer is that my students and I will come to realize that you have a purpose for us, too. It’s revealed to us through the pages of Scripture. May it be our greatest joy to trust you and submit to your will for our lives. Use us, Lord, for your glory!



COME ON IN

As students arrive ...

- They will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, they will recite the verse to a friend or to the class.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided a worksheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



The Messiah's Messengers Class Notes

MATERIALS

- The Messiah's Messengers Class Notes for each student
- The Messiah's Messengers Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students complete them as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible today. Do not work ahead. We'll fill them in together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will learn how God's messengers broke 400 years of silence from God to announce the good news that a messenger would come to prepare the way for the Messiah—the one sent from God, promised by the prophets so long ago.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

We recently had a whirlwind lesson covering many of the important events in Jesus's life!

- ?
- Refer to the Lesson 5 Lesson Theme Poster. What were some of the events we talked about—things that happened in Jesus's life? Birth, early life, baptism, taught in the synagogues, healed the sick, controlled nature, taught His disciples, the last supper, His trial before Pilate, crucified on the Cross, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven.

► Use the New Testament History Poster included with your teacher kit as you teach the lesson. Emphasize that Jesus ministered only 3 years and He lived only about 35 years. Yet His life changed the world forever and brought eternal life to all who believe.

Malachi 3:1

Luke 1:5–7

? We know a lot about Jesus and what He did on earth and who He was! But do we know everything He said or everything He did? *Allow discussion.*

The Apostle John said we don't know everything there is to know about Jesus. And we could never know all there is to know about Jesus. But we do know that Jesus is infinitely perfect—a Man, Savior, Friend, Redeemer, Lamb—the eternal and everlasting God!

Refer to Year 2, Quarter 4, Lesson 12 Lesson Theme Poster. Today we are going to take a look at how God announced the coming of Jesus. Remember, there had been 400 years of silence since God's last prophet, Malachi, had given God's people a message of hope. What did God tell the people through His prophet Malachi?

Look at Malachi 3:1 on your class notes. Will someone read that for us? *Assign a reader.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? Who is speaking in this verse? You can see it at the very end of the verse. *The Lord of hosts.*

? And who was the Lord going to send? You can find that at the very beginning of the verse. *A messenger.*

? What would the messenger do? *Prepare the way before Him.*

Malachi told the people that there would be a messenger who would come to prepare the way of the Lord. Underline that phrase in Malachi 3:1 on your class notes. *Pause while the students underline the phrase on their class notes.*

That messenger would be John the Baptist. And the time had come. The messenger and the Lord would soon arrive. God was about to announce this in a spectacular way. Let's see who got the message from God and how God told them! We'll read Luke 1:5–7 in our Bibles to begin. *Luke 1:5–7. Choose students to read the verses.*

? Who was the king of Judea? *Luke 1:5. Herod.*

? Who was the priest in this verse? *Luke 1:5. Zacharias.*

? And what was Zacharias's wife's name? *Luke 1:5. Elizabeth.*

? What does Luke 1:6 say about Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth? *They were righteous, right before God, walked in His commandments.*

Zacharias and his wife believed and trusted in the one true God. They obeyed Him and loved Him.

? We learn something else about this couple in Luke 1:7. What is that? *They had no children.*

They had no children and they were quite old—it would be unlikely they would have children.

OK. Take a look at your class notes. I want you to quietly answer #1–5. Use the word bank for help if you need it. *Allow students a few minutes to answer.*

- ? Let's see how you did! *Assign different students to read #1–5 out loud.*

Zacharias was a priest in the house of the Lord, and Elizabeth was his wife. They obeyed God and were righteous before Him. They had no children, and they were old. But, that was about to change in a very unusual way!

Let's keep reading this account in our Bibles. Zacharias was in the Temple making offerings to God. Will someone read Luke 1:11–15? *Assign a reader.*

Luke 1:11–15

- ? Hmm. Something was about to change for Zacharias and Elizabeth! Who appeared to Zacharias? *Luke 1:11. An angel of the Lord.*
- ? So, how did Zacharias feel when he saw the angel? *Luke 1:12. He was troubled and afraid.*
- ? Zacharias was afraid! But what did the angel tell him? Look in Luke 1:13. *Luke 1:13. Do not be afraid.*
- ? Zacharias was not to be afraid. His prayer had been heard. What did the angel tell him about his wife, Elizabeth? *Luke 1:13. She would bear a son.*
- ? And what was this son's name to be? *Luke 1:13. John.*
- ? Who was this angel? Look in Luke 1:19. The Bible tells us his name. *Gabriel.*

Discover the Truth

God spoke through His prophet Malachi. And now the words of Malachi were coming true. The time had come for the messenger who would prepare the people for the Lord . . . for the Messiah! And God sent His angel to tell the priest Zacharias that this special messenger would be his son! This was an amazing event. The angel appeared to Zacharias and talked to him! And he told Zacharias that even though Zacharias and Elizabeth were old and had never had any children, they would have a son!

This son, John, would be filled with the Holy Spirit and his job would be to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. The Lord's coming was not far behind.

Before we continue, let's take a look at the Attributes of God Poster. In this lesson so far we learned that God was fulfilling the promise He made through Malachi to send a messenger. God answered Zacharias's prayer for a son. And God was announcing that the promised Messiah would come soon—the one who had been promised for thousands of years.

There is an attribute of God that we have talked about. It is on the Attributes of God Poster and it means that God will always keep His promises.

FAITHFUL

(Refer to Attributes Poster.)

Which attribute is that? *Faithful.*

Yes. God is faithful to His children. He will do as He says. We can trust Him. He will always keep His promises. Sometimes it seems we need to wait for Him. But that is OK. We will wait . . . and trust Him . . . and know that He is faithful.

- Now will someone read #6 on the class notes for us?
How did God announce to Zacharias that he would have a son? *Assign a reader. Angel.*



READ THE WORD

Isaiah 9:6

Zacharias's son, John, would announce the coming of another Son—one even more important than John. There is a verse from Isaiah on your class notes. It is Isaiah 9:6. Isaiah was a prophet of God. He spoke for God more than 700 years before Jesus came. What did Isaiah say? Will someone read Isaiah 9:6 from you class notes? *Choose a student to read the verse.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- Who was this child Isaiah was talking about? *Jesus.*
What did Isaiah say about Jesus? What is one name Jesus would have? *Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*
And another? *Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*
And another? *Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

► Continue to call on different students to give the names of Jesus from Isaiah 9:6.

Luke 1:26–31

Now find those words on your class notes and underline them. Isaiah said a child would be born. This was a special child—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He would change everything for the entire world forever!

So, it makes sense that God would give a special announcement by special messengers that Jesus was coming. And I think He did. We can read about it in the Gospel of Luke. We will read Luke 1:26–31. *Choose students to read the verse.*

- Who was the messenger who brought news of Jesus's coming? *Luke 1:26. The angel, Gabriel.*
That was the same angel God had sent to Zacharias. Who did the angel Gabriel go to see this time? *Luke 1:27. Mary.*
Yes. And where was Mary when the angel came? What city? Go back to Luke 1:26. *Nazareth.*
Nazareth was in Galilee. What did the angel say Mary should do? *Luke 1:28. Rejoice.*
Who was with Mary? *Luke 1:28. The Lord.*
What was Mary's reaction to all this? Look in Luke 1:29. *She was troubled.*

- What did the angel tell her in Luke 1:30? *Do not be afraid. You have found favor with God.*
She was troubled and afraid at this sight. An angel came to her, a young girl, and told her to rejoice because she was favored in the sight of the Lord!
- And then the angel gave her the really big news. What did the angel Gabriel say would happen to Mary very soon? *Luke 1:31. She would have a son.*
- And what was she to name this very special Son? *Luke 1:31. Jesus.*

Discover the Truth

An angel of God, Gabriel, appeared to this simple, godly, young woman. She would have a baby. She would call His name Jesus! Jesus, the one who had been promised for so many years. He would bring forgiveness of sins and die that many would live. The prophets of old had spoken of this day, and now all they had predicted was happening.

- Someone read #7 on your class notes for us. How will you answer that?
Assign a reader. Mary.
- And #8? Who will read it? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Jesus.*



Messengers of God Match-up

MATERIALS

- Messengers of God Match-Up Cards

INSTRUCTIONS

Print and cut apart the Messengers of God Match-Up Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. If you have a large class, you may need more than one set. Place the cards face down on the floor or table. Students will try to match the cards. A match will be a name matched to the correct description from the lesson. Students will take turns reading and trying to match the cards.

We are going to play Messengers of God Match-Up. This is a kind of concentration game where you have to find the cards that match each other. Some of the cards have names only. Like John the Baptist, Jesus, Mary, Zacharias, Isaiah—people we talked about in our lesson. The name cards will be matched with the description of who the person was or what that person did. You'll

take turns around the table reading the cards and trying to match them. *Play the game.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Malachi gave a message of hope that a messenger would one day come to prepare the way for the long-awaited Messiah. And then God's angel Gabriel burst onto the scene. He delivered the good news to Zacharias about a son who would be born to him and Elizabeth. This son, John, would be the one Malachi promised. He would prepare the hearts of the people for the Messiah.

And then God sent the angel Gabriel again—this time to the godly, simple, young Mary. SHE would be the one to bear the Messiah—the Son of God. This was God's plan of redemption unfolding in God's time according to God's plan!





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to the Lesson 7 Lesson Theme Poster and the New Testament History Poster. God sent the angel Gabriel to deliver the message that the Messiah was coming soon. This Messiah would be the fulfillment of prophecies made hundreds of years earlier. First, the old priest, Zacharias, received the message that he would have a son, John. God would use John to prepare the hearts of the people for the Messiah. God's angel, Gabriel, also appeared to Mary. She, too, would have a Son, and she would call His name Jesus! He would be the Messiah, the Savior, God had promised to send.

Remember that after the last prophet, Malachi, there was a period of 400 years when God was silent. That's the time that passed between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The silence was suddenly broken at this moment in time when God sent His angel/messenger to communicate the hope of the coming Messiah to Zacharias, Mary, and Joseph. The promises given to Malachi, Isaiah, and others hundreds of years earlier were about to be fulfilled! Our God is faithful to His promises as revealed in His Word.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Angels are a pretty popular subject today. You hear about them on TV shows, in books, and in movies. Some people worship them. Some people think of them as good-luck charms. And some think their dead relatives are now angels who watch over them. But the Bible doesn't tell us any of that. And we should always look to the Bible to find our answers.



How did God use the angel Gabriel in today's lesson? *He was a messenger.*

Yes. God used the angel Gabriel to bring an important message to Zacharias and Mary. So, it is safe to say that angels serve as messengers of God.

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 103:20–21. Follow along as I read, and listen to what these verses say about angels. *Read Psalm 103:20–21 aloud.*

Psalm 103:20–21

- ? These two verses tell us five things about angels. Who can give me one?
They excel in strength, are strong.
- ? And another? *They do His Word, obey God.*
- ? And another? *Heed His voice, listen to God.*
- ? And the fourth thing? *They are God's ministers, they serve Him.*
- ? And the fifth? *They do God's pleasure, what God wants them to do.*

Angels are God's messengers. They were created by God. They are strong. They do God's Word. They listen to Him. They serve Him and do what God commands them to do. We can't make up things about angels. We must go to the Bible to find out about them.

Remember these things. God created angels. People do not turn into angels. Angels are not good-luck charms. And they are not to be worshipped or prayed to! Angels do God's will—what God commands them to do!

God alone deserves our worship. We are to pray only to God. It's a sin to worship anything else or anyone other than the one true God, and that includes angels.



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God for He is good.
- Thank God because He is always faithful to keep His promises.
- Ask God to help us continue to study His Word and share it with others.

Notes