

**Year 6 Unit 2B: CHRISTMAS**

**Weeks 5 & 6**

**Title: The two Nativity stories**

**Learning Intentions:**

**AT1:** To understand why different parts of the Christmas story are told in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels.

**AT2:** To think about what inspires and influences my choices.

**Assessment:**

AT1 L3: I can describe the key similarities and differences between the two Gospel accounts of the Nativity.

AT1 L4: I can demonstrate my understanding of the reasons for the differences.

AT1 L5: I can explain how the differences illustrate distinctive beliefs of the writers.

AT2 L3: I can describe some of the things that influence my choices.

AT2 L4: I can describe what is a priority for me, and what inspires and influences my choices and those of others.

AT2 L5: I can explain the challenges of making choices, both for myself and for others.

**Key Words:**

Gentile  
Gospel  
incarnation  
Jew  
Luke  
Matthew  
Messiah  
Nativity

**Resources:**

Good News Bibles  
The Scroll – The Tabloid Bible  
Selection of Christmas cards depicting the Nativity story or themes/symbols from the Gospel Christmas stories.  
Teacher's Information Sheet.

**Activities:**

**WEEK 5**

- Group activity - ask pupils to write out the Nativity story. Did they have any difficulties fitting the story together? (AT1)

- Half of each group should then read Luke chapters 1:26-38 and 2:1-20. The other half should read Matthew chapters 1:18 – 2:23. They should note down the order of events and then discuss again in the group. Do they notice the similarities and differences between the two Gospel accounts? (AT1)
- Working on their own or in pairs, they should draw two columns and list the similarities and differences between the two accounts. (AT1)

*(NB Did they spot that the annunciation takes place to Mary in Luke's Gospel, but everything is told to Joseph through dreams in Matthew's Gospel? Did they notice that there is no suggestion that Mary and Joseph started in Nazareth and travelled to Bethlehem in Matthew's Gospel? The big differences are that Matthew's Gospel has the story of the Wise Men and the star, and Luke's has the shepherds and angels.)*

- As a class, list the different people mentioned in each Gospel account. Who are mentioned by both Matthew and Luke? Discuss pupils' ideas as to why Luke mentions the shepherds and not the Wise Men; and why Matthew mentions the Wise Men and not the shepherds. Ask what may have influenced Matthew and Luke when they were writing their accounts – what were their priorities? What information did they want people to have? Who were they writing for? What was their motivation? The teacher should explain how this is typical of these two Gospels. (See Teacher's Information Sheet) (AT1)
- Group activity - use the illustrations on a selection of Christian Christmas cards to separate the parts of the story that are told in Luke and the parts that are told in Matthew. (Sometimes they are conflated.) (AT1)
- Pupils should think about which Gospel account they prefer and why. They should then design a Christmas card to reflect that account of the Nativity. Inside, they should write a greeting that reflects that Gospel's Christmas message. (AT1)

## **WEEK 6**

- Matthew and Luke each had to make choices of what to include in their Gospels and why. Now consider the choices made by the characters in the Nativity stories. What choice did Mary have and how did it affect the rest of the story? What choice did Joseph have when he learnt that Mary was pregnant, and how did his decision affect the rest of the story? What choice did Joseph have when he dreamt that he should take his family into Egypt, and how did this affect the rest of the story? (AT1)
- What choices do we have in the way we behave? Take examples from the pupils. Use role play to give pupils the opportunity to explore the consequences of choices. (AT2) *Contd.*

- Discuss what influenced Mary and Joseph in their decisions, and what influences us. How do we know what God wants us to do? What makes moral choices challenging and why? (AT2)

## **Teachers' Information Page**

### **THE CHRISTMAS STORY - Year 6**

When we read the two Nativity accounts in the New Testament – in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke - we notice that there are some similarities and many differences. Parts of the story are mentioned in both Gospels, but there are a great many differences between the accounts. This is not simply because the two Gospel writers heard and recorded different parts of the same story – each writer chose to focus on specific parts of the story to bring the message alive for their readers.

#### **LUKE'S GOSPEL**

We don't know much about Luke. It is presumed that he was also the author of Acts, and the same Luke that Paul mentions as his companion in some of his letters. The very beginning of Luke's Gospel shows that Luke had read and had access to other written sources about the life of Jesus Christ – these accounts handed to him by 'eyewitnesses and servants of the word.' Luke wrote his Gospel between AD 50 and AD 90 – just as the Roman forces were destroying Jerusalem in AD 70 and many of the surrounding sites where Jesus had been seen and known. So Luke had great motivation to get this written during a time of war and change. Luke was writing to Gentiles (non-Jews) – those who may not have been brought up in the traditions of the Jewish faith.

Luke chooses the focus for his Gospel to highlight the plight of women, children, the poor, the sick and the oppressed – those who were marginalised or outcast by society. Luke's account of the Nativity mentions the shepherds. Shepherds were not considered full members of society – they were poor, dirty and smelly, and spent most of their time out on the surrounding hillside. And yet we see that God chose to reveal the miracle of the incarnation to shepherds – the lowest of the low. Why? Luke wants to make it clear that the Good News of Jesus Christ is available to everyone – rich, poor, Jew, Gentile, male, female.

## **MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

This Gospel account has been attributed to Matthew the apostle and tax collector. Again, it is not known for certain when it was written – probably between AD 50 and AD 100. Matthew is writing for his fellow Jews. He therefore concentrates on Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, hence the long list of family genealogy in Chapter 1 and the Old Testament quotations from the prophets Micah, Hosea and Jeremiah. The Jews were expecting the Messiah be a political leader and to release them from Roman rule and Matthew focuses on what Jesus says about his kingdom – the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew is concerned with highlighting the majesty and kingship of Jesus.

Whereas Luke's account of the birth of Jesus focuses on Mary, Matthew focuses on Joseph and his human dilemma. Matthew doesn't mention the lowly shepherds but the wisdom of the astrologers – the Magi or Wise Men. They knew what the new star meant, that the promised king of the Jews had been born. But cruel Herod was none too pleased at this news and ordered the massacre of baby boys. Herod the Great ruled from 40-4 BC. (It is likely that Jesus was actually born in 6 BC – there was a miscalculation by a 6<sup>th</sup> Century monk.)