

YOUTH SPECIALTIES

*Follow: Walk in the Rhythm of Jesus*  
Copyright 2009 by Kevin Johnson

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# 1. THE MAIN THING

Why Jesus showed up on earth



**Matthew 1:21**

**“You are to give him the name  
Jesus, because he will save his  
people from their sins.”**

**START** The Bible’s bold portrait of Jesus should astonish us—even if we’ve heard the Christmas story hundreds of times. More than two thousand years ago in the ancient Middle East, a baby boy came screaming into the world like any other child. Yet angels sang at his birth. Shepherds ran from their fields to greet him. Wise astronomers brought him rare gifts and knelt before him as King. Yet even more extraordinary were the facts that would unfold in time: Jesus is God in human form. He came to save the world. And he wants the whole human race to follow him.

From his birth to his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus astounded the world. Based on what you know about Jesus right now, what do you think about him?

**READ** Matthew 1:18-21

<sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

<sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>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.”

**THINK** When Joseph learned Mary was pregnant, he couldn't help but assume she had cheated on him. Her unfaithfulness could have been punished with death by stoning, and the couple's strict "betrothal" required a divorce to break. But where does Mary's baby come from?

Some ancient religious writings depict gods having sex, but that's not the picture here. The "virgin birth" (or "virgin conception") of Jesus is a miraculous act of God, a powerful intervention in the world he created and controls. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, this event was predicted by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son" (Isaiah 7:14). Jesus is more than a human child. He is "the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32).

Why did Jesus come to earth? What would he accomplish?

Don't miss the deep meaning here: The angel tells Joseph to name the child "Jesus" (*Iesous* in New Testament Greek), a form of the name "Joshua," which means "Yahweh (God) saves."

**LIVE** Why does it matter that Jesus was born to a virgin? What does that tell you about who he is?

The arrival of Jesus assumes that you and the rest of the human race need a Savior. Do you agree—or disagree? Why?

God sent a baby to rescue you. Good idea—or not? How come?

**WRAP** Jesus didn't show up on earth as a fully-formed hero of the world. Before he could save humanity, he would experience life just as we do (Hebrews 4:14-16) and learn from everything he suffered (Hebrews 2:10). Yet right from the start Jesus was nothing less than God's Son, the Savior of the world.

## »» MORE THOUGHTS TO MULL

- What do you think the human race needs to be saved from the most?
- If you were God and wanted to send a rescuer to earth, who would you send?
- The early Christians who recorded the events of Jesus' life wanted people in all places and times to believe their message. How would the extraordinary circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth have helped their cause—or hurt it? Explain.



## MORE SCRIPTURES TO DIG

- Jesus was a miracle baby, the Son of God conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit within Mary, a virgin. See this event through his mom's eyes in **Luke 1:32-35**.
- Read **Matthew 1:24-25**, which tells how Joseph heard the news that his virgin bride-to-be was pregnant with a very important child. You'll catch his biological bewilderment, his tender care for Mary, and his clear obedience to God.
- The people of Israel expected their Savior to be an earthly king, a mighty political leader who would drive out the Romans who occupied their land. While the Savior might have been difficult to spot as a baby, **Matthew 1:21-23** says angels proclaimed who Jesus truly was: He is Immanuel ("God with us") and Jesus ("the Lord saves").
- The Bible doesn't say much about Jesus' childhood. He was born in Bethlehem (**Luke 2:1-20**), brought to the temple (**Luke 2:21-40**), visited by Magi from the east (**Matthew 2:1-12**), and fled to Egypt to escape the murderous King Herod (**Matthew 2:13-18**). He grew up in Nazareth (**Matthew 2:19-23**), and as a young teen, he stumped the land's foremost religious teachers (**Luke 2:41-50**). **Luke 2:52** sums up this period: "Jesus became wiser and grew physically. People liked him, and he pleased God" (NCV).