



VOICES

HEARING GOD
IN A WORLD OF
IMPOSTORS

New Testament

PAM GILLASPIE

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by

pam gillaspie

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Voices: Hearing God in a World of Impostors, Old Testament

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the bride of Christ, the Church. In these last days as it becomes harder and harder to stand on truth, may you cling to the Word of God and live boldly by the power of the Spirit.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my Bible study class that has patiently piloted this material with me, to my editors and co-workers at Precept who have made its publication possible, and to my family who always puts up with me along the way.

VOICES

HEARING GOD IN A WORLD OF IMPOSTORS

There is nothing quite like your favorite pair of jeans. You can dress them up, you can dress them down. You can work in them, play in them, shop in them . . . live in them. They always feel right. It is my hope that the structure of this Bible study will fit you like those jeans; that it will work with your life right now, right where you are whether you're new to this whole Bible thing or whether you've been studying the Book for years!

How is this even possible? Smoke and mirrors, perhaps? The new mercilessly thrown in the deep end? The experienced given pompoms and the job of simply cheering others on? None of the above.

Flexible inductive Bible studies are designed with options that will allow you to go as deep each week as you desire. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and go ahead and dig all the way to China! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra that you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Beginners may find that they want to start adding in some of the optional assignments as they go along. Experts may find that when three children are throwing up for three days straight, foregoing those assignments for the week is the way to live wisely.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

Enjoy!

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Flexible inductive Bible studies meet you where you are and take you as far as you want to go.

1. WEEKLY STUDY: The main text guides you through the complete topic of study for the week.

2. FYI boxes: For Your Information boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic.

FYI:

Reading Tip: Begin with prayer

You may have heard this a million times over and if this is a million and one, so be it. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide.

3. ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes: Sidebar boxes give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These boxes give you the ultimate in flexibility.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: *torah*/law

The first of eight Hebrew key words we encounter for God's Word is *torah* translated "law." If you're up for a challenge this week, do a word study to learn what you can about *torah*. Run a concordance search and examine where the word *torah* appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn from the contexts.

If you decide to look for the word for "law" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *nomos*.

Be sure to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

4. DIGGING DEEPER boxes: If you're looking to go further, Digging Deeper sections will help you sharpen your skills as you continue to mine the truths of Scripture for yourself.

Digging Deeper

What else does God's Word say about counselors?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about counselors.

Start by considering what you already know about counsel from the Word of God and see if you can actually show where these truths are in the Bible. Make sure that the Word actually says what you think it says.

WEEK ONE

Who Will You Listen To?

“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance.”

—Jesus

Matthew 24:24-25

Has any time in history been as loud as ours? More voices call from more directions with more conflicting words than ever before. In a world of sensational spiritual claims, when do we listen and when do we just say “No!”? It's time to stop wondering and start discovering biblical answers. Over the next eight weeks, we'll look at the New Testament to discover how God communicates with His people and with others so we can learn to discern and stand firm in an age marked by radical deception.

FYI:

If You're in a Class

Complete **Week One** together on your first day of class. This will be a great way to start getting to know one another and it will help those who are newer to Bible study get their bearings.

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Week One: **Who Will You Listen To?**

REVIEW for those who have taken *Voices: Old Testament*

(If this is your first *Voices* class, skip ahead to the next section!)

How did God speak during Old Testament times?

What types of people did He speak to?

What, if any, recurring patterns did you notice?

What was your biggest takeaway from studying how God spoke during Old Testament times?

What is your biggest question as we move into the New Testament portion of our study?

FYI:

Start with Prayer

You've probably heard it before and if we study together in the future, you're sure to hear it again. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide. Jesus says that the Spirit will lead us into all truth (John 16:13).

CONSIDER the **WAY** you **THINK**

As we start our study, we need to examine our presuppositions and define terms. For now, let's consider what views we're bringing to the table.

How do you think God speaks today? Why do you believe this?

If someone said "God told me . . ." how would you respond?

What is your view on the authority of Scripture? What about the sufficiency of Scripture?

A DRAMATIC SHIFT

As we move into the New Testament portion of our study, we need to be aware that the Word itself talks about a shift that has taken place in how God speaks. Before we jump into the Gospel accounts, let's look briefly at the opening words of the book of Hebrews as we start our New Testament journey together.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Hebrews 1:1-2 and **MARK** the words *spoke/spoken*.

Hebrews 1:1-2

- 1 *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,*
- 2 *in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

How did God speak "long ago"? Who did He speak to? If you can, give some specific Old Testament examples.

How has God spoken "in these last days"? Is there any ambiguity in the statement?

The Days Before the Son

The Old Testament records mankind's history before the incarnation of God's Son and the early pages of the Gospel accounts do, too. During that time—prior to Jesus' birth and well before the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost—God announced the Good News of the coming Savior.

FYI:

Dating the Book of Hebrews

The book of Hebrews dates to the first century AD. Because of the volume of references to the sacrificial system—which seems to be in effect at the time of writing—the date is almost certainly prior to the destruction of the temple by Titus in AD70. While the days of Christ may be "long ago" to us, to the author of Hebrews' "long ago" refers back to Old Testament times.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Watch the Verb Tenses

What verb tense does the author of Hebrews use for "spoke" and "has spoken"? What is significant about it? Why does it matter? Record your findings below.

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FYI:

Luke's Record

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are often referred to as the Synoptic Gospels. These record the life and times of Jesus in a linear fashion unlike John who structures his Gospel account thematically. Luke's record is distinct from the other two, however, in its pre-birth focus on Gabriel's revelations to Zacharias and Mary. Mark opens with Jesus as an adult while Matthew focuses on God's dealings with Joseph.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Malachi 4

Luke 1:17 quotes from the prophet Malachi. If you have extra time this week, read this short chapter that closes the Old Testament and record your observations of the original prophecy below.

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Week One: **Who Will You Listen To?**

SETTING the SCENE

Before God sent word to either Mary or Joseph about Jesus, He sent an angel to an old priest with another message.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Luke 1:5-20. **MARK** every reference to the *angel* including pronouns.

Luke 1:5-20

- 5 *In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.*
- 6 *They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.*
- 7 *But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.*
- 8 *Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,*
- 9 *according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.*
- 10 *And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.*
- 11 *And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.*
- 12 *Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him.*
- 13 *But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.*
- 14 *"You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.*
- 15 *"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.*
- 16 *"And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.*
- 17 *"It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*
- 18 *Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years."*
- 19 *The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.*

20 *"And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

Briefly describe Zacharias.

What is Zacharias doing when the angel appears to him? How did he end up being there?

How does he respond when the angel appears to him? What emotion hit him?

What does the angel tell Zacharias? (Stick to the text.)

How does Zacharias respond to the angel's words? What happens as a result? How does this authenticate the message short-term?

Based on verses 16-17, what will the prophesied child do? How will this relate to the Messiah?

INDUCTIVE FOCUS:

Listing What You Learn

Making lists of significant information is an inductive Bible study skill that helps us observe the text well. If you have time this week, list everything you learned about Zacharias and Elizabeth in Luke 1:5-20.

Zacharias

Elizabeth

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ONE STEP FURTHER:

Filled with the Spirit

While the angel Gabriel speaks directly to both Zacharias and Mary, the broader text (up to v. 67) describes two people, John and Zacharias, "filled with the Spirit" and prophesying (pre-Pentecost). If you have some time this week, look into these accounts and see what you can discover. Record your findings below.

Week One: **Who Will You Listen To?**

Considering the whole passage, why does the angel come to Zacharias? Is it just a response to a personal request or something more? How does it fit into God's big picture and plan? Explain.

How clear are the prophecies? How many are empirically verifiable? Is there any call to action?

The Rest of the Story

John the Baptist, who appears in each of the four Gospel accounts, fulfills the prophecy Gabriel made to Zacharias. Born to an old priest and his long-barren wife, John is the prophesied messenger who will prepare the Lord's way.

SETTING the SCENE

Zacharias isn't the only person who encounters Gabriel. The angel sent to bring news of a son to Zacharias in the temple is sent shortly thereafter to bring news of another Son to Mary in Nazareth.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Luke 1:26-38 and **MARK** every reference to the *angel* and to *Mary*.

Luke 1:26-38

- 26 *Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,*
- 27 *to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.*
- 28 *And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."*
- 29 *But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.*
- 30 *The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.*
- 31 *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.*
- 32 *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;*

- 33 *and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."*
- 34 *Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"*
- 35 *The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.*
- 36 *"And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.*
- 37 *"For nothing will be impossible with God."*
- 38 *And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

Briefly describe Mary.

How does Gabriel address Mary? What message from God does he bring to her?

What will this Son be called? What will He do?

What does Mary ask? How does the angel answer her? What evidence does He give her that God can do these things?

Again, reviewing the entire passage, why did God send the angel? Was it just a personal matter or something more? Explain.

INDUCTIVE FOCUS:

Marking the Text

Marking the text is a simple way to help see key words. When marking one word, a circle, underline, or highlight works great. If you decide to mark multiple words in a passage of Scripture, you may choose to use different colored pencils, symbols, or a combination of the two.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Other Prophecies Fulfilled

If you have some extra time this week, compile a list of Old Testament prophecies Jesus fulfilled. Sure, you could Google it, but don't. Instead take some time to think through what you know of the biblical text and see how you can do on your own. There are hundreds to find, so be careful not to spend *all* your homework time working on this sidebar assignment, but do take the opportunity to stretch your brain across the pages of Scripture to start tying some of the threads together on your own! Compiling a list from Google will be boring; piecing it together from what you've already learned will be gratifying!

Week One: **Who Will You Listen To?**

How many promises were quickly fulfilled and thus quickly verified? Was there any call to action?

The Rest of the Story

Mary goes to see the formerly barren Elizabeth who, the angel said, was already in her sixth month of pregnancy (with John the Baptist). She eventually conceives and bears Jesus, the promised Messiah, exactly the way the angel had foretold.

SETTING the SCENE

Luke recounts the first two direct messages from God that people received during New Testament times. The angel Gabriel delivered both, one as we've seen to Zacharias, the other to Mary. God's message to Joseph takes place later and has some distinctive features. Let's take a look.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Matthew 1:18-25 and **MARK** every reference to *angel*. **UNDERLINE** any sleep-related words (*dream, awoke, sleep*).

Matthew 1:18-25

- 18 *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.*
- 19 *And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.*
- 20 *But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*
- 21 *"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."*
- 22 *Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:*
- 23 *"BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."*
- 24 *And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,*
- 25 *but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

According to verse 19, what is Joseph planning and why?

When does the angel of the Lord appear to Joseph? What are the circumstances?

How does this appearance differ from the appearances to Zacharias and Mary? How is it similar?

What counsel does the angel bring? What information does he give?

How does this message compare to those given to Mary and Zacharias?

Again, reviewing the entire passage, why does God send the angel? Is it just a personal matter or something more? Explain.

Mid-Way Recap . . .

Consider the overall similarities and differences in the ways God communicated with Zacharias, Mary, and Joseph. How quickly did each one align their thinking with God's? Do you quickly align your thinking with God's revealed Word in Scripture? Why and why not? (i.e. explain both your promptnesses and delays.)

INDUCTIVE FOCUS:

What is a Key Word?

A key word or phrase unlocks the meaning of a text. Key words are usually repeated and are critical to understanding. In Luke 2:8-20 the following subjects are key—*angels, shepherds, and Lord*.

If you have a hard time identifying key words right away, don't worry. I'll help by pointing out some as we go.

Identifying key words is a skill that develops over time, but you practice by observing carefully so keep your eyes opened. You will get it; just keep praying and keep looking.

FYI:

Just One Savior

"I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me."

—Isaiah 43:11

SETTING the SCENE

Unlike anyone else who has ever lived, Jesus enters the world with an amazing symphony of pre-announcements:

- the Old Testament Scriptures prophesy His coming.
- the angel Gabriel announces to Zacharias the birth of the one who will be His herald.
- the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive a Child by the Holy Spirit.
- the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream and confirms what Mary has told him.

In our next collection of texts, we'll read about the various voices Scripture records after Christ's birth.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Luke 2:8-20 and **MARK** in a distinctive way every reference to *angels* and *shepherds* including pronouns. Also **MARK** every occurrence of *Lord*.

Luke 2:8-20

- 8 *In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.*
- 9 *And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.*
- 10 *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;*
- 11 *for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*
- 12 *"This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*
- 13 *And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*
- 14 *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."*
- 15 *When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."*
- 16 *So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.*
- 17 *When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.*
- 18 *And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.*
- 19 *But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.*

20 *The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

Who are the main characters in this section?

Describe the angel. What does he do? What message does he bring? Who is it for?

In what ways is the angel's message authenticated?

Using your marking of the word "Lord" as your guide, make a list of everything the text says about the "Lord."

Does "Lord" refer to more than one person in this passage? Explain.

Describe the shepherds. How do they respond to the angel and his message?

What do they do about it? What long-term effect does it have on them? On others?

What effect has it had on you? Is this message one we can still share today?

FYI:

The Lord has said to my Lord

"What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "*The son of David.*" He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET"'? "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?"

—Matthew 22:42–45 (Cf. Psalm 110:1)

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Digging Deeper

Start Reading through the Gospels

During our first two lessons we'll cover the Gospel accounts of people who heard from God. You'll get the most out of the study, though, if you lock in on the context and the entire narrative. This doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. If you have the time, read or listen to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark this week. Next week we'll have a Digging Deeper on Luke and John. As you read or listen, jot down the instances you note of God speaking to people and the contexts in which they happen.

Observations on Matthew:

Observations on Mark:

SETTING the SCENE

When Mary and Joseph bring the infant Jesus to the temple, they hear about yet another message that had come about Jesus prior to His birth.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Luke 2:21-35 and **MARK** every reference to *Jesus* (include phrases used to describe Him). Also **MARK** every reference to the *Holy Spirit*.

Luke 2:21-35

- 21 *And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.*
- 22 *And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord*
- 23 *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD"),*

- 24 *and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS."*
- 25 *And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.*
- 26 *And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*
- 27 *And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,*
- 28 *then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,*
- 29 *"Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word;*
- 30 *For my eyes have seen Your salvation,*
- 31 *Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,*
- 32 *A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,*
- And the glory of Your people Israel."*
- 33 *And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.*
- 34 *And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—*
- 35 *and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

When is Jesus brought to Jerusalem? What do the texts say?

What do Mary and Joseph do according to the Law of Moses?

Who is Simeon? What does he know? How does he know it?

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: Consolation

The Greek word translated "consolation" in Luke 2:25 may surprise you. If you have some extra time this week, find the corresponding Greek term (you can use its Strong's number) and see where else and how else it is used in the New Testament. Record your findings below.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: "had been revealed"

If you have some extra time this week, find the Greek word that translates the phrase "had been revealed" in Luke 2:26. Once you've found the word, note what kind of verb you've found and see where else it shows up and how it is used elsewhere in the New Testament. Record your findings below.

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Week One: **Who Will You Listen To?**

How is this account distinct from the others we looked at?

What phrases does Simeon use to describe Jesus? According to 1 Samuel 15:29 who is the glory of Israel? According to Isaiah 43:11—and other texts—who is the salvation of Israel?

Briefly recount Simeon's message and Mary and Joseph's response.

SETTING the SCENE

Following directly on the heels of the account about Simeon, Luke introduces us to a woman who confirms the old man's words.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Luke 2:36-38 and **MARK** every reference to *Anna* including pronouns. Also **MARK** all time-related phrases that help answer the inductive question "When?"

Luke 2:36-38

- 36 *And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,*
- 37 *and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.*
- 38 *At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

Describe Anna. What is she like? What does she do?

FYI:

Repetition, Authentication, Confirmation

As we study, continue to keep your eyes open for the ways that God repeats, authenticates, and confirms His messages. Nothing is spoken in a vacuum.

Look closely at the time-related phrases. How long does she speak about Jesus and to who?

How do her words compare and relate to Simeon's? Why is this significant to Mary and Joseph? To us?

SETTING the SCENE

Although the magi stand alongside the shepherds in many nativity scenes and movies, the men from the east were later visitors to the Christ child and His family. "Where?" is a major question in this section.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Matthew 2:1-12 and **MARK** every reference to *the star* and to *the magi*. Also **MARK** references to location that help answer "Where?"

Matthew 2:1-12

- 1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,
- 2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."
- 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
- 4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.
- 5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:
- 6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH,
ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;
FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER
WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.' "
- 7 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.
- 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."

Week One: **Who Will You Listen To?**

- 9 *After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was.*
- 10 *When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*
- 11 *After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*
- 12 *And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

Approximately when do these events take place?

Where do the magi find the Child?

How are the magi different from all the others who have heard the news about the Christ? In what ways does God lead them?

How do the magi respond to the star? How does this compare to Herod's response?

How do the magi respond to the dream?

Based on what you know of biblical history, why would people from the east be watching for the rise of a great King of the Jews?

INDUCTIVE FOCUS:

Questioning the Text

The key to exegesis (the fancy word meaning to draw meaning out of Scripture) is questioning the text. The basic investigative questions *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?* are your framework. Not every question can be addressed to every verse, and most verses require several variations on the same question. As we study God's Word together, realize that not every question that can be asked will be asked, but don't let that stop you from asking other questions and exploring further on your own. We will never run out of questions to ask and answers to glean from God's Word! If you're at a loss for what questions to ask, pay attention to the words that you've marked. Go to your key words and start there with your questions! Marking not only helps you see the main idea, it always helps in asking questions.

Digging Deeper

The Magi and God's Witness to the Nations

If you have some extra time this week, see what you can discover about the magi. Start by carefully examining the text of Matthew, then read through the book of Daniel for a possible link to how men from the east knew of a coming Jewish Messiah.

Observations on Matthew:

What specifics does Matthew give us about the magi?

What commonly held "facts" about them aren't in Scripture?

Observations on Daniel:

What role did wise men play in eastern culture in Daniel's days?

What did the different nations Daniel served learn about the Hebrew God?

What had the nations been learning about the God of the Hebrews throughout His dealings in history? (Feel free to go beyond the book of Daniel on this one.)

SETTING the SCENE

Matthew 2 records back-to-back dreams. In these dreams God tells the magi to return home by way of another route and then Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to go to Egypt.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Matthew 2:13-23 and **MARK** every occurrence of *dream*.

Matthew 2:13-23

13 Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

Week One: **Who Will You Listen To?**

- 14 *So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.*
- 15 *He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."*
- 16 *Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.*
- 17 *Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:*
- 18 *"A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH,
WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING,
RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN;
AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED,
BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE."*
- 19 *But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,*
- 20 *"Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."*
- 21 *So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.*
- 22 *But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee,*
- 23 *and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

How many significant dreams does God give Joseph according to this text? What does God specifically tell Joseph in these dreams?

How does Joseph respond?

How does Joseph's state of mind before his third dream compare with his state of mind before the first two he had?

Was Joseph's thinking "on track" before the third dream? What practical benefit did the third dream give him?

What prophecies does Matthew say are fulfilled in this series of events?

@THE END OF THE DAY . . .

Take some time to page back through the lesson and compare the different ways God spoke and the different people He spoke to. What commonalities did you see? What differences?

How did each of these people know they had encountered a Word from the Lord? How did each respond?

How are you doing at responding to the known Word of God in your life? Are you a Zacharias? A Mary? A magi? A Joseph? A Herod? And why?

NOTES

Week One: **Who Will You Listen To?**

VOICES
HEARING GOD
IN A WORLD OF
IMPOSTORS
New Testament