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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1938 ~ Angels foretold the Birth of Jesus.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

The Old Testament section of the Bible has many prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the most specific prophecies regarding Jesus' birth are in [Isaiah, including Chapter 7, Verse 14](#): "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." 'Immanuel' means 'God with us.' And in [Isaiah, Chapter 9, Verse 6, it says](#): "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

At the end of the Old Testament around 430 BC, God's last prophet to Israel was Malachi; God never spoke to the Jewish people again after Malachi for 400 years. The [Medo-Persian Empire](#) still ruled Israel, but the Temple of God had been rebuilt. Both the Law and the priesthood of Aaron's line had been restored, and the Jews had given up their worship of pagan idols. Nevertheless, Malachi's warning to them still had good cause. The Jewish people were mistreating their wives, marrying pagans and not tithing; the priests also, were neglecting the Temple and not teaching the people the ways of God. In short, the Jews still weren't honouring God or His commands to be a holy people belonging only to Him.

In 333 BC, Israel fell to the Greeks, and in 323 BC, it fell to the Egyptians. The Jews were generally treated well during these reigns, and under the Greeks, they adopted the Greek language and many Greek customs. Jewish law and the priesthood remained more or less intact until Antiochus the Great, of Syria, captured Israel in 204 BC.

He and his successor, Antiochus Epiphanes, persecuted the Jews and sold the priesthood to a highest bidder. And in 171 BC, Epiphanes desecrated the Holy of Holies room in the Temple. This desecration resulted in an uprising led by [Judas Maccabeus](#) of the priestly line of Aaron, and in 165 BC, the Jews recaptured Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple. However, fighting continued between the Jews and the Syrians until the Romans gained control of Israel, in 63 BC.

In 47 BC, Caesar installed Antipater, a descendant of Esau, as the top official of Judea, and Antipater subsequently appointed his two sons as kings over Galilee and Judea. As the New Testament opens, Antipater's son, called King Herod the Great influenced the priesthood to become politically motivated without the line of Aaron. Politics also resulted in the development of two major factions, the Sadducees and the Pharisees among the Jewish religious leaders. The Sadducees favoured the liberal attitudes and practices of the Greeks. They held only to the Torah (which is the 1st five books of the Bible) but like all typical wealthy aristocrats, they didn't think God should have any part in governing the nation.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, were conservative zealots who, with the help of scribes, developed religious laws to govern the Jews to the point that the concerns and care of the people were essentially meaningless.

In Old Testament times, God Himself spoke about His desired close relationship with the Children of Israel.

When Moses led the Jewish slaves out of Egypt to walk to the Promised Land, God guided the people where they should go. When they arrived at Mount Sinai, God made a covenant or agreement with them there. He was to be their God and they were to be His people. They were to obey His commands and keep themselves pure for Him only. This covenant was like a marriage in its obligations. However, it wasn't too long before the people began worshipping the gods of pagan people living around them.

Many times, God brought the Israelites back to Himself, often reminding them that they were dependent on Him for all their provisions, health and blessings. As they sinned and ignored God, God often allowed them to suffer defeat at war with their enemies and lose all their possessions. When the people were utterly miserable, they then would repent of their evil ways and promise again to remain true to Him. And God would restore them as a successful nation again. But holding fast to these promises to God never seemed to last for more than a single generation at a time.

Do you ever ask yourself why God bothered to persevere with the Jewish people, after they sinned time and time again? Part of God's character is to continually love. For us humans, there's a natural kind of loving that loves lovely things and lovely people. That's logical. But there's another kind of love that doesn't look for value in what it loves but rather, it 'creates' value in what it loves. God created value in sinful people, paid for their sin Himself through the promised Messiah and made it possible for all people in the world to turn to Him. It cost God His only beloved and sinless Son, Jesus, to save people from their slavery to sin, but now God offers a new way of spiritual intimacy with Him that people of any nation can have with God.

It's important to understand that the Lord Jesus, when He was born to virgin Mary, never inherited a sinful nature from his legally adopted father, Joseph. As marriage customs and traditions differ from culture to culture and can change in ways over the generations, the Jewish marriage customs referred to in the Bible from over 2,000 years ago, need to be studied to understand some of the aspects of the coming to earth of the Lord Jesus. What makes a marriage in God's eyes? Firstly, there's aspect of vows or promises that a man and woman make to each other. They promise to be faithful to each other for as long as they both shall live. The other part is the physical union of intimacy, which completes the marriage and joins the two into one.

In many cultures when a man and woman agree to be married, they are called 'engaged'. If there are problems between the two before getting married, either one of them may break off the engagement.

In the Jewish culture of that time, when a young man chose a bride, there were differences. Firstly, he had to have enough money to pay for his bride. When marriages were arranged between parents, the bride had to agree to it. In front of two witnesses in the bride's house, the groom had to pay the bride's parents' asking price and make a covenant or agreement with the bride which included taking their marriage vows. This agreement was formally sealed by the bride and groom drinking a cup of wine together. They were known then as 'betrothed' as well as called 'husband and wife.'

After this ceremony, the bridegroom went back to his father's house to live. He would then build a room in his father's house or build his own house for his bride to a standard set by his father. Although most betrothals lasted for around a year, if anyone asked the groom when he was getting married, the bridegroom's response would be: "No one knows the day or the hour, only my father." The bride too, didn't know when her husband was going to collect her and take her to her new home. She had to be ready when she heard a shout that the bridegroom and his attendants were coming. This often happened at night and the burning torches showed the procession.

Mary had an amazing visit from God's angel, Gabriel. Over the previous 400 years, God had been silent to the people of Israel. But Gabriel then gave two messages for the Israelites within six months. The 1st message was to an older priest named Zechariah, telling him that his barren wife, Elizabeth, would soon have a son called John. John was to prepare the Israelite people for the coming of the Messiah. In his adult life, John was known as 'John the Baptist.' The 2nd angelic visit from Gabriel was to a young virgin, called Mary, telling her that she would conceive a son called Jesus directly by the Holy Spirit's power, and not through her betrothed husband, Joseph.

While Mary was born a sinner, just like the rest of us, how could the baby she carried be born sinless, like the Bible says Jesus was? Gabriel said because her pregnancy would come from the power of the Holy Spirit visiting her, the child would be called 'holy' and the 'Son of God'. Mary accepted this unusual assignment graciously before Gabriel left her. Mary then made preparations to visit her cousin Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife who was now 6 months pregnant with John. When Mary went to Elizabeth in the hill country she stayed with her there for 3 months before returning home.

More than 3 years before this visit from Gabriel to Mary, the head of the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus, had issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire empire. Everyone had to return to his own ancestral town and register there for paying a new tax.

In Micah, Chapter 5, Verse 2, the prophet Micah predicted where Jesus the Messiah would be born: in a small village of less than 1000 inhabitants named Bethlehem Ephrathah in Judea, which at that time was a province of Syria. However, Mary was living 110 kilometres away in Nazareth during the 2nd half of her pregnancy. Both she and Joseph had to travel from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea and then to Bethlehem, the town of King David, because they both belonged to the house and line of King David. Joseph went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him, and was now heavily pregnant with God's Son. Jesus was born in Bethlehem before the death of King Herod the Great, in 4 BC.

There is more to learn about the marriage customs of Jesus' time. After the bridegroom's wedding procession arrived at the bride's house, the bride and bridegroom would then walk back together to the bridegroom's father's house, where the wedding guests were assembled. The couple enter a room called the bridal chamber and there spend the next seven days as a honeymoon. After this time, the husband brings out his new wife to present her to the guests.

When the Lord Jesus was asked why His disciples didn't refrain from eating and drinking as a religious custom like the Pharisees did, Jesus suggested that He was the bridegroom. He said that His disciples wouldn't fast and mourn until the bridegroom was taken away. This picture of the Lord Jesus being the bridegroom started when He left His Father's home in heaven to come to earth. He paid the bride price with His own life. He then returned to His Father's home to prepare a place for all those who love and trust Him.

One future day, escorted by legions of angels, Jesus will come back for His bride, the church of believers. They will meet together in the clouds and go back to heaven together. Then the greatly longed for marriage supper of the Lamb will be held during the next seven years while the Tribulation rages on earth. The church, made up of all the true believers in Him, will be hidden during that terrible time. Then in the coming age, redeemed humans will be exalted above the angels and judge the fallen ones.

Will you be ready when Jesus comes? Now are the days for understanding what the Bible says about confessing and repenting of all known sin, for asking the Lord Jesus to be King of your life, and for dedicating yourself to being empowered by God's Holy Spirit to the good works God has planned for us to do. One day, Jesus will come with a victorious shout. Are you ready for Him to come, just like a waiting Jewish bride?

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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