

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about the Christian festivals. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: CHRISTMAS, the Christian festival in which we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is God who took on the human nature and came to live among lost, broken and needy people. Prophets in the Old Testament prophesied his coming hundreds of years before he came. Apostles in the New Testament described what happened when he was born on earth and why his coming into the world is important for you.

**(S)      POINT 1. THE PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHESED ABOUT HIS COMING HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE HE CAME.**

First. God himself made the first promise that a Saviour would come for everyone who wants to be saved. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, God punished the devil because he had tempted them. In Genesis 3:15 God said to the devil, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." From the context it is clear that a powerful evil spirit was hiding behind the snake. God said that there would be a continuous conflict between the seed of the devil and the seed of the woman. There would be a continuous spiritual war in the world between the evil people and the people of God. Everyone who wants to be a friend of the devil and his evil people will become an enemy of God and a curse for people. And everyone who wants to be a friend of God will be an enemy of the devil, but a blessing to people.

Revelation 12:1-5 teaches that the real conflict in this world is between the devil and Jesus Christ. The devil would strike at the heel of Jesus Christ and try to kill him, because God had predicted that Jesus Christ would crush the head of the devil. Although Jesus Christ would suffer on the cross from the bite of the devil, he would finally crush the head of the devil and destroy him forever! Jesus Christ would be the final Victor!

(T) Second. Throughout the Old Testament period evil people tried to prevent the coming of this Saviour. The conflict began with Adam and raged on to the time of Noah. Adam and Eve had two children, Cain and Abel. Cain murdered Abel and it seemed as if the promised Saviour would not be born. But God gave Adam and Eve a third boy, called Seth.

Seth's family was predestined to bring forth the coming Saviour. It seemed as if the devil wanted to destroy the descendants of Seth, so that the promised Saviour would never be born. In Genesis 6:1-10 we read that the sons of Seth, who followed God, began to marry the daughters of Cain, who followed only evil human beings. The result was that wickedness on earth became exceedingly great. God decided to destroy the whole human race with a flood. It seemed as if the devil would triumph. However, there was *one* family who feared God. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. God saved Noah and his family and, through them, the lineage of the coming Saviour.

(S) The conflict raged on from Noah to Jacob. The promise concerning the coming Saviour was now given to Abraham and Sarah. Humanly speaking that promise could not be fulfilled, because they were childless. It seemed as if the devil would triumph. But then God caused a miracle to happen in their old age. God gave them a son, Isaac!

The promise concerning the coming Saviour was then given to Isaac. In Genesis 25:21 we read that also Rebecca was barren. Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph. However, God gave them two children, Esau and Jacob.

The promise concerning the coming Saviour was then given to Jacob. Because Jacob had tricked his brother out of his rights as the first born, Esau wanted to kill Jacob. Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph. However, God protected Jacob.

(T) The conflict raged on from Jacob to Moses. The devil had failed to destroy Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now he turned his attack on the Israelites or Jews, who were the descendants of Jacob. In Exodus we read how the king of Egypt ordered the killing of all the male babies of the Israelites. Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph. But God used Moses to lead Israel out of their slavery in Egypt.

Later, in Exodus 32 we read how the Israelites constantly fell into idolatry. They built a golden calf in the desert and worshipped it. God was angry and wanted to destroy all the Israelites. Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph. However, Moses interceded with God and pleaded for forgiveness and God spared the Israelites.

(S) The conflict raged on from Moses to king David. The promise concerning the coming Saviour was then given to the family of king David in the tribe of Judah. In Jeremiah 23:5 we read, “The days are coming”, declares the Lord, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.” The devil did not want this to happen and so he tried to destroy David. In 1 Samuel 18 we read how king Saul tried to kill David twice by throwing a spear at him. The devil even used David’s own wife and sons to try to destroy him, but they all failed. *The Bible teaches us that no one can prevent God from carrying out his eternal plan!*

(T) The conflict raged on from king David to king Ahaz. In 2 Kings 11:1-3 we read how Athaliah, the wicked mother of the deceased king, decided to destroy the whole royal family of king David, because she wanted to have all the power for herself. She murdered all the royal princes! Again it seemed as if the devil would triumph. But again the sovereign God prevented him from having success. Jehosheba, the sister of the deceased king, stole away one of the royal princes and hid him for six years in the temple until he became king.

In 2 Kings 16 we read how the kingdoms of Israel and Aram made a plot to destroy Judah. However, in Isaiah 7:14, God gave a promise to king Ahaz, “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.” God promised that whatever the difficult circumstances in history may be, no one will be able to prevent the Saviour from coming into the world! The coming Saviour will be called “Immanuel”, which means “God with us”. Again the devil failed to triumph. The Bible teaches that no evil nation and no evil leader can prevent God from carrying out his plan!

(S) The conflict raged on from king Ahaz to Esther. During the fifth century BC the Jews lived under the rule of the Medo-Persian Empire. The wicked Haman had tricked the king to sign a decree ordering the murder of all Jews in the empire. In Esther 3:13 we read, “Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews - young and old, women and little children - on a single day ... and to plunder all their goods.” All the Jews in exile were threatened by extinction. If Haman had succeeded, then the devil would have triumphed and God’s plan of salvation would have been prevented. When you read the whole book of Esther, you will see how God prevented this catastrophe. The devil did not triumph!

(T) The conflict raged on from Esther to Bethlehem. When finally the time arrived for the Saviour of the world to be born in Bethlehem, the devil made one final attempt to prevent this to happen. In Matthew 2 we read how the wicked king Herod was afraid when he heard that the coming Saviour had been born. He thought that the Saviour would threaten his earthly kingdom and so he ordered the murder of all male babies under the age of two years in Bethlehem. But God’s eternal purpose cannot be frustrated. In Matthew 2:13 we read how an angel came in the night to Joseph and told him to flee to Egypt, because Herod intended to kill the child, Jesus Christ.

*In this conflict between the devil and Jesus Christ throughout history, Jesus Christ triumphed!* This whole conflict is described in two Bible verses in Revelation 12:4-5, “The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he may devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” Jesus Christ was born in the world. He lived in the world, cast out demons, healed the sick, raised the dead, taught the truth and refuted the lies of false teachers. He died on the cross, was resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven from where he rules triumphantly!

(S) Third. The prophets in the Old Testament prophesied much about the coming Saviour.  
The prophets prophesied that the coming Saviour would be the Greatest Prophet, the Greatest High Priest and the Greatest King.

In Deuteronomy 18:15-19 God says, “I will raise up for them a *prophet* ... I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him ... You must listen to him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.” Jesus Christ is *the Greatest Prophet*, because he spoke the very words of God. God demands that all people obey him.

In Psalm 110:4 is written, “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a *priest* forever, in the order of Melchizedek’.” Jesus Christ is *the Greatest High Priest*, because he offered himself as a sacrifice to make atonement for sins. After his resurrection from the dead he lives forever to pray for us.

In Isaiah 9:6-7 the prophet Isaiah 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. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” Jesus Christ is *the Greatest King*, because he rules with the power of God. The prophet Isaiah says that there will never come an end to his kingdom of righteousness. And the prophet Daniel says that his kingdom will grow until it fills the whole universe (Dan 2:44).

(T) The prophets prophesied that the coming Saviour would be born in Bethlehem. In Micah 5:2 is written, “You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times.” Thus, more than 700 years before the coming Saviour came to the earth, the prophet Micah prophesied that Jesus Christ would be born in the city of Bethlehem. More than 1000 years before he came, David prophesied that he would be crucified. More than 1400 years before he came, Moses prophesied that he would be the Greatest Prophet. And right at the beginning of human history, God prophesied that he would crush the devil through Jesus Christ.

(S) **POINT 2. THE IMPORTANT EVENTS AROUND THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.**

The incarnation. The eternal God becomes a human being in Jesus Christ. In John 1:1-18 we read that Jesus Christ did not begin his existence when he was born. No, he existed from the beginning with God and was God himself. According to Galatians 4:4 and Philippians 2:5-11, when the right time came, Jesus Christ took on a second nature, the human nature, and was born on earth as a human being. From that time onwards, Jesus Christ not only had a divine nature, but also a human nature. He was completely God and completely human. While he was on earth, people could touch him, see his miracles and sinless life, hear his teachings and experience his mercy, healing and salvation.

(T) The announcement to Zechariah. In Luke 1, an angel appeared to Zechariah and announced that in his old age, he would get a son and that his son would be the forerunner (herald) of the coming Saviour! After God’s word was fulfilled, Zechariah sang a song of praise, saying that the coming Saviour would be the One through whom God would fulfil his covenant with Abraham (72-73)! The covenant of God’s unmerited grace would become a reality within all the nations of the earth through Jesus Christ.

(S) The announcement to Mary. In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced to her that she would become the mother of the coming Saviour. God’s Holy Spirit would cause her pregnancy and therefore, the Holy One to be born would be called the Son of God (35). By his birth, Jesus did not become God, but the eternal God became man! Jesus was always God and now took on the human nature as well. Although this had never happened before in the history of man, the angel said that nothing was impossible with God (37). Mary did not doubt God’s word and submitted herself to God’s plan with her life.

(T) The announcement to Joseph. In Matthew 1, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and announced that Mary, with whom he was engaged, would become pregnant by a miracle of God’s Spirit working in her (20). Joseph should give the child the name “Jesus”, which means “Saviour”, because he would save his people all over the world from their sins (21). Joseph believed God’s word. He did not reject Mary and also had no intercourse with her until Jesus was born (25). Joseph and Mary travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem in order to be registered under the census. The baby Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

(S) The announcement to the shepherds. In Luke 2, an angel announced to the shepherds that the coming Saviour had been born in Bethlehem and that he was the expected Saviour (11). Then thousands of angels appeared and sang that God was going to bring peace on earth to all the people on whom God’s favour rested. Everyone who would accept the grace of God would get peace with God! After the shepherds had visited Jesus, they went around telling everybody about it. On the eighth day Jesus was circumcised.

(T) The announcement to Simeon. Later, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to the temple in order to present him to the Lord. In Luke 2, we read that the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the coming Saviour. When he saw Jesus in the temple, he prophesied that Jesus would be the revelation of God to people, that many people would speak against him and that he would separate the people of God from evil people (32-34).

(S) The announcement to the wise men from the East. In Matthew 2, God guided some wise men from the regions of modern Iraq and Iran through a star to the birthplace of the Saviour. These wise men were probably acquainted with the prophecies in the Old Testament, which they had heard when the Jews lived in exile in the East. After they had found Jesus, they gave him gifts, which consisted of their costly treasures and they worshipped him. They were the first to bow their knees before Jesus. Philippians 2:9-11 says that at the end of history, everybody, who has ever lived on earth, will bow his knees before Jesus! After God warned the wise men in a dream not to tell anything to the wicked king Herod, they returned by another way to the East.

(T) The flight to Egypt and the return to Israel. An angel warned Joseph to take his family and flee to Egypt, because the wicked king Herod wanted to kill Jesus. Joseph, Mary and the child Jesus fled to Egypt, while Herod killed all the male babies under the age of two years in Bethlehem.

After king Herod had died, an angel again appeared to Joseph directing him to return to Israel. They returned to Nazareth, because they feared the son of Herod, who lived in Judea. Jesus grew up in Nazareth in Galilee.

(S) **POINT 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR YOU.**

The first meaning of Christmas. Jesus Christ was born to save people from their sins. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." *Christmas is the festival of God's love.* In his great love, God gave his greatest gift, Jesus Christ, to save people. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ will definitely not perish, but have eternal life!

(T) The second meaning of Christmas. Jesus Christ was born to judge the wicked. Luke 2:34-35 says, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." *Christmas is the festival of men's separation.* Jesus Christ separates believers from unbelievers. Jesus Christ will become the foundation-stone for believers, but a stumbling-stone for unbelievers. Therefore everyone must make a choice. No one can remain neutral with regard to the coming of Jesus Christ into the world!

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Teach people that Christmas is the festival commemorating the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".