



SESSION 1  
*The Forever King*



# The Forever King - Prepare Your Heart



Read Luke 1 v 26-38

- What do these verses tell us about Mary's baby?
- What does verse 37 tell us about God's word/promises? What does verse 38 show us is the right response to this truth?

Here is one of the most familiar parts of one of the most familiar stories in the entire Western world—and so there's a danger that familiarity dims the glory and the surprise of it. So, as you prepare your heart to teach the children in your group, here are three truths about the God who lies behind all the events of Christmas—and who came to lie at the centre of Christmas.

First, he is a *surprising* God. When he sends his angel Gabriel to make this world-changing announcement, it's not to a political centre such as Rome or a religious centre such as Jerusalem. Instead it's to a backwater town so unremarkable that it is not mentioned even once in the entire Old Testament—Nazareth. Not only that, but the announcement was not for a leader, or a priest, but an unmarried girl (probably a teenager)—Mary. If we were God, we wouldn't have done it like this! But as the old hymn puts it, God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. So the first Christmas should prompt us to be open to God surprising us—to read his word ready to have our hearts and minds changed by what he says there, and to head through our days looking for God to be working in us and around us in ways we hadn't expected and perhaps cannot explain.

Second, he is a *present* God. The angel's message is that God himself, God the Son, is going to grow as a human in a womb and live as a human in his own world. The most amazing thing is not that this is a virgin birth but that it is a divine birth (v 35). Why is the divine stepping into history? To rule. He is a King (v 32) who will

reign over "Jacob's descendants" (v 33)—the promised king, the Messiah (or "Christ"), descended from David and fulfilling all the prophecies of the Old Testament. Not only that, but his kingdom will never end. Here is a forever King—a King powerful enough to keep his promises and eternal enough to keep his promises. However great (or not) the ruler of your nation is, and however great (or not) the next one will be, they will not be perfect and they will not endure. Whether by death, overthrow or democratic vote, they will leave office. Jesus is a different kind of ruler. He never disappoints, never makes a mistake, never acts selfishly and never leaves his throne. He is the perfect forever King.

And third, therefore, here is a God who is *worthy of our joyful service*—even when that's costly. Mary faced losing her impending marriage, her reputation, her hopes and dreams. She didn't know it, but she would face watching her son die. Yet she responded, "I am the Lord's servant ... May your word to me be fulfilled" (v 38). She said yes, because she trusted God and so was willing to be part of his plan. Serving God is sometimes painful, but it is always a privilege—for us just as for Mary. We will not bear God's Son, but we are called to serve him and be part of his plans for his world. What else would we want to spend our lives doing?! And who else would we entrust ourselves to?! Perhaps this Christmas would be a good time to say to King Jesus, "I am your servant. I trust you. I'm all yours."

- Look back over the past year. In what surprising ways have you seen God at work in your life or in the lives of others?
- What areas of service has God called you to? In what ways are those costly? What causes for joy have they given you, and how does reflecting on those help you to say "King Jesus, I'm all yours"?



### God's Word Tells Us...

Jesus is God's promised forever King. He will always look after his people.



#### 1. Pray

Let's talk to God before we read the story:

Dear God, please show us why Jesus is the best King ever. Amen.



#### 2. Listen

Read *The Christmas Promise* storybook from the beginning up to and including the page spread that looks like this...



To make the reading interactive, you could:

- look at the pictures on the first double-page spread and ask them the names of any famous kings or queens, presidents or prime ministers they've heard of. Or ask them where they might see a picture of a king or queen or ruler (in history books, on TV, on coins and notes, on stamps, on playing cards). You could have examples of these items to show them.
- ask how we might know if someone is a king/queen and have props for dressing a child up in a crown and a robe and

then seat them on a "throne".

- point to the picture of the castle on the first double-page spread and ask them what they think it might be like inside. When you get to the picture of Mary's home, before reading the text, ask them if it looks like the sort of place they imagine a king living. Why/why not?
- tell them to do an action such as putting on a crown every time they hear the word "king".



#### 3. Thinking

- Who promised to send a King who would be different from all other kings and queens?
- Did God keep that promise by sending Jesus?
- Is Jesus special because he is going to be King for ever?



#### 4. Game

"How long can you...?" Give the children simple physical challenges and ask them if they think they can keep going without stopping for 5 seconds, 10 seconds, 30 seconds, a minute, two minutes, five minutes...! Have fun seeing how long they can stand on one leg, run on the spot, do star jumps, spin in a circle, and so on, before they tire or topple!

Then say:

“We can’t do things for ever, but Jesus can! Jesus is the King who is going to be king for ever.”

## OR

“How long will it last?” Have various easily breakable/tear-able items in a bag. Invite children one at a time to pick something out of the bag and have a go at breaking it. Items might include a breadstick, a rice cake, a piece of dried lasagne/spaghetti, a piece of paper, a biscuit, some dried cereal, a cardboard tube... Once the final one has been removed, sneak a coin into the bag and ask a child to pull it out and have a go at breaking it. Encourage them to stamp on it or (safely!) hit it with something.

Then say:

“Lots of things break. Things don’t last for ever. But the coin is more like Jesus: Jesus is strong. Jesus will be there for ever. Jesus will be a strong King for ever.”

## 5. Summary Statement

Jesus is the King who God promised. Jesus will be King for ever.



## 6. Listen to God from the Bible

We know this because in Luke chapter 1 verse 33 the Bible tells us that Jesus “will rule forever over his people” (NIRV).



## 7. Pray

Let’s talk to God again now:

Lord Jesus, you are the King who will be in charge for ever. You will never change or stop loving us. Wow! Amen.



## 8. Craft Ideas



- Give the children the colouring page of Mary and the angel from the activity book for them to colour/stick on household items (see downloadable sheet).
- Give each child a paper or card crown with “JESUS is the FOREVER King” on it. They can decorate it with pens/stickers/tissue paper/craft jewels etc. before you tape/staple it to fit them.
- Make paper-plate or cardboard-tube angels. (There are lots of simple ideas for how to do these on the internet.) Prepare speech bubbles containing the words “Jesus is God’s promised forever King” for children to stick on.
- As the children enjoy crafting, you could ask them what makes Jesus different from other kings. What made him different from other babies?!



SESSION 1

# The Forever King

**5-12**  
year-olds



**God’s Word Tells Us...**

God promised to send a King unlike any other. Jesus is that King. There is no limit to the length of his righteous reign—he will be all-powerful and always perfect for all time.

**So What?**

The good news is that Jesus is the best ruler we could ever hope for. A right response is to joyfully entrust ourselves to his good rule.



SECTION	PURPOSE	SUGGESTED ACTIVITY
 <p><b>Let’s Get Ready</b> Introduction</p> <p>Opening prayer</p>	<p>Establish that no earthly rulers rule perfectly and none last forever.</p> <p>Introduce series aim: to look at God’s promise to send a King who would be unlike any other.</p> <p>Pray for the session.</p>	<p>Brief discussion of the children’s answers to an opening question about famous historical rulers.</p>
 <p><b>Let’s Hear God’s Promise</b> Bible teaching and discussion</p>	<p>Show that the King God promised to send would be God himself and that he would rule perfectly and for ever. He would be unlike any other ruler there has ever been.</p>	<p>Age-appropriate discussion or Bible study of Isaiah 9 v 6-7. Both could be done in smaller groups.</p> <p>Note: This section is intended to be a shorter Bible teaching segment than the second one.</p>

 <p><b>Let's Play a Game</b></p>	<p>Provide a break for concentration.</p> <p>Reinforce the idea that normal rulers don't last forever OR that normal rulers have weaknesses as well as strengths. Jesus is unlike other rulers.</p>	<p>Two game options depending on time / space limitations.</p>
 <p><b>Let's See God's Promise Kept</b> Bible teaching and discussion</p>	<p>Show from Luke 1 that God kept his promise by sending Jesus: Jesus is the forever King whom God promised in Isaiah 9. He is unlike any other king because he is God himself.</p>	<p>Tell the story of Gabriel's visit to Mary using Bible verses and interactive storytelling, and involving actors and/or props if possible, drawing out the significance of what the angel says.</p> <p>An example of what this might involve is given below and can be adapted to suit your age group and/or resources.</p>
 <p><b>What Does This Mean for Us?</b> Application</p>	<p>Discuss what makes Jesus the best possible ruler. Consider what a right response to Jesus—the perfect, forever King—involves, using Mary's example.</p>	<p>Group discussion and guided questions for use as a whole class or in smaller groups.</p>
 <p><b>Let's Talk to God about That</b> Prayer</p>	<p>Give opportunities to praise our promise-making, promise-keeping Father, and Christ, the perfect, forever King.</p>	<p>A number of different options depending on the circumstances of the group.</p>
 <p><b>Let's Get Creative</b> Reinforcement</p>	<p>Enjoy an activity together that picks up on an element of the story, giving time for conversation with the children to hear their thoughts about what they've learned.</p>	<p>Craft activities: Various options requiring different levels of resourcing.</p>
 <p><b>At Home</b></p>	<p>Provide ways for families to continue thinking together about the wonder of God's promised forever King.</p>	<p>Various possible activities that pick up on/reinforce this session.</p>

## Let's Get Ready

... by thinking about some famous rulers.

① *Put children in pairs or small groups.*



Here are six pictures of famous rulers from around the world and throughout history.

- In your pairs/groups, I want you to try to name as many of them as you can and see if you can think of one thing they are famous for.

① *Display pictures/portraits of six monarchs and/or national rulers you think the children are likely to recognise and know a little about. This will depend on your country and context (and possibly school curriculum!), but here are some suggestions: Elizabeth II, Queen Victoria, Henry VIII, Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, Nelson Mandela, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Barack Obama. If you have a range of ages in your class, spread older children through the groups. You will need to know how long each person ruled for. For younger children you might have facts already prepared for the children to match to a picture, for instance: "Which king is famous for having six wives?"*

- What can you tell me about each person? / Which ruler is famous for...?
- Which of them do you think ruled for the most time? Who do you think ruled for the least?

Throughout history there have been famous rulers—kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers. Some of them ruled for many decades. Some ruled for only a few years. Some ruled just for months, weeks or even days! Some of them are famous for great deeds and good character. Some of them are famous for what terrible rulers they were. But as we look back over history we see one ruler after another after another. Rulers come and rulers go, because no king or queen lives forever!

BUT, long ago, God made a promise. He promised to send a King who would be unlike any other ruler there has ever been. The Old Testament—the first part of the Bible—is full of details about God's promised King. Lots of them are found in the book of Isaiah.

Over the next few weeks, we're going to look at some of those promises in Isaiah to discover what this promised King is like. And we're going to look at the Christmas story in the New Testament to see how God kept his promise at the first Christmas.

## Let's Pray

... before we start.

Mighty, everlasting Father, please excite us about your promised King and show us why he is so much better than other rulers. Amen.

So, what was different about God's promised King?



## Let's Hear God's Promise

... that God gave to his people through his messenger, a man called Isaiah.



- i* The tasks below are based on the ICB version and may need to be adapted. Share the tasks among your group. Give each task (and especially the "name" activity) to multiple children where possible. Downloadable resources are provided that you can use for visual support. You will need to print and cut the pictures ahead of time and have means of sticking them up somewhere.

### For Younger Children

I am going to read two verses from a promise God made through his messenger Isaiah. God promised to send a special child. As I read it...

- you need to listen out for at least one NAME this child will be known by. (If you can remember two, three or even four, that's amazing!)
- you need to listen out for a word beginning with the letter/sound "p" that gets said twice.
- you need to listen out for any words that mean the same as "mighty".
- you need to listen out for a word that means the opposite of evil.
- you need to listen out for a word that means the opposite of unfair.
- you need to listen out for how long he will be king for.

- i* Read Isaiah 9 v 6-7 slowly and clearly, emphasising key words.

*If you're using the pictures provided, stick up the picture of the baby. As you ask the relevant children/groups the following questions, stick up the relevant pictures to summarise the different facts they pull out about the promised King.*

- What names for this child did you hear? (*Wonderful Counsellor, Powerful God, Father who Lives For Ever, Prince of Peace*)
- i* Stick the crown over the baby's head.

God promised to send a child who would be a Prince, a King. God promised to send a child who would be God himself!

- What word beginning with "p" gets said twice? (*Peace*)
- i* Stick up the smiley face.
- What word did you hear that means the same as "mighty"? (*Powerful*)
- i* Stick up the strong arm.
- What word did you hear that means the opposite of evil? (*Goodness*)
- i* Stick up the heart.
- What word did you hear that means the opposite of unfair, or unjust? (*Fair*)
- i* Stick up the big tick/check mark.

- God promised that this King’s reign would be powerful, always good, always fair and full of peace. Does that sound to you like a good kingdom to live in or a bad kingdom to live in?
- How long did Isaiah say this King would be king for? (*For ever / for ever and ever*)

① *Stick up the arrow.*

God promised a King unlike any other. God promised a King who would rule powerfully and perfectly. Other rulers have some power. Other rulers rule well sometimes. But none are all-powerful. None are always perfect. And even when they’re doing an ok job of ruling, none of them are everlasting! But the King God promised is all those things. And he is all those things because he IS God himself. God promised that HE was going to come into the world to be the forever King—to be God with us.

## For Older Children



① *Give older children a copy of the biographical details card to fill in based on Isaiah 9 v 6-7. You could divide the categories among the group if time is short. They read the verses and pick out the names from v 6, the characteristics of his rule from v 7, and the length of his reign.*

*Once they have picked out that information and you have discussed the answers, ask:*

- What do those names reveal about this King? (*Possible answers include: he is God himself; he will bring supernatural wisdom; he is powerful and eternal; he is loving—a Father; he brings peace.*)
- What sounds appealing about living in his kingdom? (*Possible answers: there will be peace, justice/fairness and righteousness/goodness; those things will never end—nothing will spoil them; there’ll be no fear of change / of things getting spoiled; he will be powerful, so he can protect his people and give them what they need.*)
- What makes him different from all other kings and rulers? (*Possible answers: he is always good and always fair; his rule won’t feature evil or injustice; he will reign forever—he won’t leave us or let us down; his rule won’t feature uncertainty or doubt or upheaval.*)

God promised a King unlike any other. God promised a King who would rule powerfully and perfectly. Other rulers have some power. Other rulers rule well sometimes. But none are all-powerful. None are always perfect. And even when they’re doing an ok job of ruling, none of them are everlasting! But the King God promised is all those things. And he is all those things because he IS God himself. God promised that HE was going to come into the world to be the forever King—to be God with us.



## Let’s Play a Game

### OPTION 1

① *An active game that picks up on the idea that kings come and go. Depending on space/numbers, you could play various four-player games on separate grids simultaneously. Play for a set amount of time. The winner is whoever is occupying the top position at the end of the time.*

*Four Square/King Square: in a grid of four squares marked out with cones/tape, one*