

Introduction



Christian Stories



In each of the world's six main religions – Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism – stories play a very important part. They have been used for many hundreds of years to teach people about their faith in a way which makes difficult messages easier to understand. Many stories tell of episodes in the lives of religious teachers, leaders, gods and goddesses. Others explain mysterious events such as how the world was created or what happens when we die. Many have a strong moral or lesson to teach.



The collection of stories you can read in this book comes from the Christian religion. Christianity began in the Middle East about 2000 years ago. Christians follow the teachings of Jesus. They believe that Jesus was the son of God who came to Earth to teach people more about God.

The stories of Jesus's life and teaching are told in the New Testament of the Bible, the Christian holy book. The first four books of the New Testament are called the Gospels and these were written by four early Christians, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

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The Birth of Jesus

Long, long ago, in the town of Nazareth in Galilee, there lived a young woman called Mary. She was engaged to be married to the local carpenter, Joseph. One day, when Mary was busy with her daily chores, the room was filled with light and the angel Gabriel appeared before her. Mary felt very afraid.

“Don’t be frightened, Mary,” the angel said. “This is a happy day. For God has chosen you to have a baby. A very special baby who will become the saviour of the world. And his name will be Jesus.”

“I will do as God wishes,” Mary said, bowing her head. When she looked up, the angel had gone. Later he visited Joseph to bless his marriage to Mary.

Soon afterwards, Mary and Joseph were married. They settled down in Nazareth to look forward to the baby’s birth. But their settled life did not last for long. Some months later, the emperor ordered everyone to return to the town of their birth to be counted and taxed. Joseph was born in Bethlehem, a town far away and he and Mary had to go back there.

It was long and tiring journey. Mary rode on a donkey while Joseph walked in front. At night they slept by the roadside. And when at last they reached Bethlehem, the town was crowded with travellers like them. Joseph knew that the baby would

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Did you know?

Each year, Christians all over the world celebrate Jesus’s birth with church services, gifts, cards and special food. No one knows exactly when Jesus was born. The first Christians chose 25 December because this was the date of another ancient winter festival. Some Christians celebrate Christmas Day on 6 January, the day on which they remember the wise men’s visit to Jesus.



soon be born and he anxiously went from door to door, looking for somewhere for them to stay. But everywhere was full. A kindly innkeeper took pity on them.

“I don’t have a room to spare,” he said, “But you’re welcome to sleep in my stable. And, later that night, in the snug little stable, Mary had her baby. She called him Jesus, as the angel had told her. She wrapped him up warmly and laid him in a manger on a bed of soft hay. The manger

