



MARCH 22, 2026

## PREPARING FOR THE MESSIAH

ISAIAH 40; MALACHI 3; LUKE 1; JOHN 1

### CHRIST CONNECTION

God spoke through His prophets in the Old Testament, like Isaiah and Malachi, and shared His plan to send Jesus into the world to save people from sin. When the time had come, God called John to be a witness for Jesus. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved.

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION

What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.

### MEMORY VERSE

John 20:31

# PREPARE



Take time to reflect on today's lesson.

## LEADER BIBLE STUDY

As we turn the page in the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we remember that the Bible tells one grand story, and at the center of that story is Jesus. From Genesis to Malachi, the Old Testament weaves a story of God's love and compassion for His people and of their inability to be faithful to Him. The Old Testament leads to the moment when God sent His Son to fulfill His plan to save people from their sin.

The first verse of John echoes the first verse of Genesis, reminding us of the cohesiveness of the Old Testament and the New Testament. This echo also reveals that Jesus is not merely a prophet or a teacher—He is God Himself, who became human. The Word of God, who spoke creation into existence, humbled Himself, taking the form of man, and dwelt among sinners so that those who believed in Him would become children of God (John 1:11-14).

In another Gospel account, Luke 1 introduces us to another person vital to God's plan. An angel appeared to a priest named Zechariah. Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, like many couples in the Old Testament, had not been able to have children. The angel told Zechariah not only would they have a child, but their child would have the power of Elijah and would be the forerunner to God's Messiah. John's birth and ministry was the fulfillment of Isaiah and Malachi's prophecies, where God promised to send a messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah. John's ministry can be viewed as a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Reflect on the foreshadowing of Christ seen all throughout the Old Testament and help kids see how it revealed what was to come in the New Testament. The sacrifices of the law point toward the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. To David, God promised an everlasting kingdom—a promise that finds its fulfillment in Christ's everlasting reign. Jesus is the Prophet, Priest, and King that Israel longed for throughout their history. The Savior God promised in the Garden of Eden—the One who would crush the serpent's head—had finally come. Jesus would defeat evil and sin and make the way for people to be saved. But this victory would come at a great cost—His own life.

# WELCOME



Connect with kids as they arrive.

## OPENING ACTIVITIES

Greet each kid as they arrive. Use this time to build relationships and help new kids connect to your group. Before heading to Large Group, you can play a game, chat with kids, or do the Memory Verse Activity below as a group!

## MEMORY VERSE

...but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**John 20:31, ESV**

## MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY

Each month, we'll have a new memory verse that goes with the lessons we're learning from the Bible. Choose one of the provided activities in your room's Memory Verse folder to review the verse with the kids.

*Note: Our next Bible Bucks Day will be on April 26!*





## PREPARING FOR THE MESSIAH

God spoke through a prophet named Isaiah and a prophet named Malachi to tell people that He would send a messenger to prepare the way for the promised Messiah.

*A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

**- Isaiah 40:3-5**

*"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.*

**- Malachi 3:1**

After 400 years of silence, an angel appeared to a priest named Zechariah in the sanctuary of the Lord, and he was afraid! But the angel said, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because God has heard your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you will name him John. He will have the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and make the people ready for the Lord." This was spoken to fulfill what Isaiah and Malachi said would happen!

Soon after, Elizabeth became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Zechariah praised God, saying, "Blessed is the Lord because he has provided salvation for his people. You, my son, will be called a prophet of the Most High, and you will go before the Lord and prepare his ways."

When John grew up, God sent him to be a witness for Jesus in the wilderness of Judea so people might believe in Jesus. John said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said."

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** God spoke through His prophets in the Old Testament, like Isaiah and Malachi, and shared His plan to send Jesus into the world to save people from sin. When the time had come, God called John to be a witness for Jesus. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved.

# ACTIVITIES



Do crafts and games with kids after Large Group.

## MAIN ACTIVITY

Create a path about one foot wide on the floor of your room using painter's tape, then spread out the rest of the provided materials around the room.

Choose two kids from the group and designate one as the messenger (John the Baptist) and the other as "Jesus". Everyone else will be the people.

Quietly give the messenger one of the provided prompts such as "Jesus can only walk on BLUE things". The messenger will then guide the people to prepare the way for Jesus by telling them to place blue things on the path. When they're done, quietly tell "Jesus" that he can only walk on blue things.

"Jesus" will then walk down the path following the rule that he can only walk on blue things. When the round is over, play again, this time picking a new "messenger" and a new "Jesus".

## CONNECT THE DOTS



Isaiah and Malachi said God would send a messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah (Jesus Christ). John the Baptist was that messenger! John spread the news and prepared the way for Jesus to come and fulfill his earthly ministry.

## BIBLE SKILLS

We're finally starting the New Testament! Today, spend some time reviewing the New Testament and play either the New Testament Scavenger Hunt game or the New Testament Scramble game (both are provided on the TVs in your room).

# CLOSING ACTIVITIES



Continue to engage kids before parent pick-up.

## BIBLE STORY REVIEW

**Ask the following questions and lead your small group to discuss.**

1. Zechariah remembered God's promises to provide salvation for His people and he praised God. What Old Testament stories can you remember that point to Jesus?
2. How does the Old Testament point to Jesus?
3. Why was John called a prophet of the Most High?
4. How did John's birth fulfill God's words in the Old Testament?
5. John was a witness for Jesus. How can you be a witness for Jesus?

## HAVE EXTRA TIME?

If you have extra time or your group needs to get out some energy, play one of the games/activities in your extra time bin in the cabinet or the "extra time" folder on the TV.

If there's a new game or activity you want to have available for your group in the future, let Taylor know!

## BEFORE YOU GO...

**Second service leaders, please clean up by doing the following:**

1. Put all extra supplies and binders back in the curriculum bins.
2. Clean all trash off the tables.
3. Put all crayons, markers, etc. back in the appropriate containers and cubbies.
4. Erase the whiteboards and put markers/erasers back in the holder.
5. Turn off the TVs as you leave.

**THANK YOU FOR SERVING WITH US!**