

Junior Soldiers

Unit 10 : Lesson 9

A Gift!



PURPOSE : To help the children to explore and understand that there are many prophecies in the Bible that show God planned to send Jesus to be with us and make things right between us and God.

'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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Matthew 1:18–2:23

Luke 2: 1–20

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:6

Christmas is not an isolated story. It is one part of the story of God's plan to make things right between himself and his people by way of his love and grace. When people choose to do things their own way, instead of God's way, they ruin their friendship with God. But God promised to send someone to save us from our own bad choices and show us how to be friends with God once more. The Old Testament refers to that 'someone' as the Messiah, the Saviour.

There were many special people over the centuries that the Israelites saw as 'messiahs'. These people fought wars and brought about justice for a time, but God had promised that he would send someone even more special: someone who would make things right forever. The Israelites thought this person would lead a war and defeat other nations and become the king of their nation. God's plan was even greater! His plan was to send his son, Jesus, to defeat sin and allow us to live with God forever.

The prophetic timeline that is used in this lesson will help the children to understand that God has been planning to give us the gift of Jesus from the very beginning and that he has kept his promise.

Note – Gift Suggestions

This lesson involves a lot of gifts for the children. Please note that these gifts do not need to be extravagant to make the point. For example, you could buy a variety pack of lollies, a box of chocolates containing different flavours, a packet of lead pencils with different designs on them, a packet of coloured markers (the clue could be 'my colour is the same as the sky' or 'I would blend in with a field of grass' etc.), a selection of bookmarks, a variety of Christmas ornaments etc.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Several gifts for the 'What am I?' Connecting In section
- Card
- A marker
- A variety of gifts, enough for each child for the treasure hunt
- Enough small gifts for each child to have one (e.g. candy canes)

For 'The Main Thing'

- Newspaper or a roll of cheap Christmas paper for wrapping the parcel
- Tape
- A set of the prophecies from the chart (do not use the blank rows for this activity)
- A roll of paper towel
- A set of the prophecies from the attached chart
- Glue or tape
- Markers
- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Paper for each child

For 'Tying In'

- Left over paper towel
- Markers
- A gift box or gift bag

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards for each child.
- Strips of coloured paper (Christmas colours would work well); enough for each child to take home at least 30 strips



Connecting In

What am I?

For this activity you will need a variety of presents, one for each round. Choose items that will be easy for the children to give each other clues about. The quantity of the items will depend on the time you have available, plan for three or four rounds/gifts.

'I have presents to give to some of you today. I think you are going to love them. But, instead of just giving them to you I want to help you get excited about them, too. So we are going to play a guessing game.'

- Ask for a volunteer.
- Have the volunteer sit on a chair with their back against the wall. Instruct them not to turn around.
- Write the name of the gift you have for them on a card and stick it on the wall above their head. (*You might like to put the chair in front of a whiteboard for this activity rather than sticking the word to the wall.*)
- Ask each of the other children to take turns giving clues about the gift that is written on the card.
- After each clue the volunteer may attempt to guess what the present might be.
- Once the volunteer has guessed the gift correctly, give it to him or her and choose another volunteer.

Link: 'I wonder if you might be able to think of a time when someone was going to give you a present that was supposed to be a surprise, but they were so excited about it that they kept giving you clues. Maybe you were the one giving the present and you were bursting with excitement and were finding it hard to wait.'

God planned right from the beginning of time to send us the best, most fabulous gift: his son, Jesus. The Israelites called him the Messiah, which means 'the one chosen by God'. They knew that the Messiah would save them. God knew the right time for Jesus to come into our world and he waited for it. God was so excited about this gift for his people that he couldn't keep the news to himself.

Over the centuries, he gave many clues to people about the gift that he would send and what it would be like. Hundreds of these clues are recorded in the Bible and they are called 'prophecies'.

Treasure Hunt...

For this activity you will need a variety of gifts, enough for each child. You will need to hide the gifts around the room before the children arrive.

Give each of the children a list of clues that describes the gift that you have for them. For example, you may use the following (but don't give the children the name of the item):

GIFT: A red toy car

CLUES: My colour matches a fire engine

I am a model of something that can be used for transport

I have four doors

I have four wheels

GIFT: A sticker book

CLUES: I can be stored on a bookshelf

You can peel parts of me off

You can create a picture in me without using pencils or crayons

'Before we started today I hid a present for each of you around the room. Each of you has been given a different set of clues that will describe the gift that is hidden for you. You need to use your clues to work out what your gift might be and then hunt for it. When you find it you can bring it to me so that I can check that you have the right gift.' *(If a child finds the wrong gift ask them to go and put it back and keep looking for theirs; they might need a few more hints if they are confused about the item they are looking for.)*

Once each of the children have found their gifts, ask them to come and sit down.

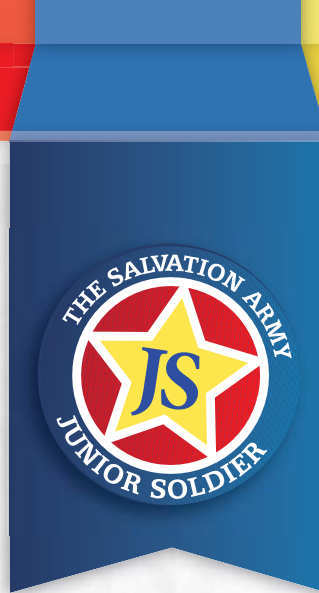
Link: 'I wonder if you might be able to think of a time when someone was going to give you a present that was supposed to be a surprise, but they were so excited about it that they kept giving you clues? Maybe you were the one giving the present and you were bursting with excitement and were finding it hard to wait? In his excitement, God gave his people clues about the coming of Jesus.

'The clues or prophecies that God gave us have another very important purpose. Lots of men over the years claimed that they were the Messiah, the special gift that God would send. People were able to look at the clues and see if they fitted this person. Only Jesus fitted all of the clues that were given.

'That is, imagine if I said *(leaders, include five details from your life)* a baby girl would be born in Box Hill in 1978; she would have two brothers called Jason and Mark; she would have a purple bedspread on her bed when she was 15; she would marry a man called Stephen, and she would have the middle name of Kelly. What are the chances of two or more girls having all of those things true about them? I'm pretty confident that I'm the only one who meets all of those conditions.

'Well, there were hundreds of prophecies made in the Old Testament that all came true in Jesus' life. The chances of two people fulfilling all of those prophecies is just impossible.

'This means that we can be sure that Jesus was who he said he was, the Son of God, the Messiah, the one who would make things right between us and God. He was the only one who filled all the prophecies.'



The Main Thing

Prophecy Pass the Parcel...

For this activity you will need to prepare the parcel beforehand. To do this, wrap the bundle of small gifts in the wrapping paper. Tape the last prophecy from the list provided to the outside of this parcel (i.e. the row containing Malachi 3:11, and 1 Chronicles 17:11–14). Then wrap this parcel in another layer of paper. Tape the next prophecy to the outside of this parcel (working backwards) and so on until all of the prophecies listed below have been included.



- Ask the children to sit in a circle.
- Give the parcel to one of the children and start some music playing to begin the game.
- Ask the children to keep passing the parcel, as it comes to them, to the next person in the circle.
- After a short time, pause the music.
- The child who is holding the parcel must open the first layer of wrapping paper.
- As each layer is unwrapped ask the children to read out the 'clues' or prophecies that God gave about the gift that he was going to be sending.
- Restart the music and continue on until all of the layers have been unwrapped.

'The 'clues' that we have read during the game were given by God to tell people about his gift, Jesus. These prophecies are spread throughout the Old Testament books of the Bible. Today we are looking at just a few of the hundreds of prophecies that can be found in the Bible.

'Let's look a little closer at one chapter now that tells us lots about Jesus, God's promised gift. Lets look together at Isaiah 53. (*Have a leader or a confident child ready to read through some or all of the chapter. Hand out some paper and textas for each child.*) As the verses are being read, listen carefully for clues that point to Jesus. Keep a tally on your paper and let's see how many we can find.'

- How many clues did you hear in the chapter?
- I wonder what you think is the most important clue about Jesus that God gave in these verses. Why?

Prophetic Timeline

To prepare for this section of the lesson, you will need to do the following:

Unroll 30 squares of the paper towel without breaking off any pieces/sections. Print off the prophetic timeline and cut into sections. On the inside of the first square stick the information regarding the oldest prophecy on the chart i.e.

1	1450-1400	Genesis 12:3	The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham	Mat 1:1
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Continue sticking one row on each square of paper towel. Include the blank rows as they will give a more accurate picture of the timing of the prophecies. On the last square write, 'THE FIRST CHRISTMAS – THE GIFT IS GIVEN'. Wind the towel carefully back onto the roll.

- Ask someone to stand at one end of the room and hold the end of the prepared roll of paper towel.
- Slowly unwind it as you move along the room.
- You might like to use some tape to stick it to the wall or simply lay it on the floor.

'These are the prophecies that we read during 'Pass the Parcel'. These clues about Jesus are recorded from as far back as 1450 BC. Sending us the gift of Jesus was not a last minute decision or some sort of back-up plan—God had certainly put some thought into the preparation of his gift the whole way along. God promised in the prophecies to send a Messiah and he kept his promise. On the very first Christmas he gave us the gift of his Son.'

Tying In

God keeps his promises...

'God kept his promise that he would send us a special gift, a Messiah, which was Jesus. He still keeps his promises today.'

For this section you will need to unroll some more blank squares of the leftover paper towel.

- I wonder if you can think of some other promises that God has made to us. *(Allow the children some time to brainstorm as they respond to this.)*

For example:

- He promises to be with us
- He promises to give us his Holy Spirit to help us
- He promises us life forever
- He promises to always love us
- He promises to watch over us
- He promises to understand us

Use markers to write the suggestions on the blank squares

Prayer...

For this prayer section you will need to have a gift box or bag available for the children to put their piece of paper towel into.

- Tear off the squares that have promises written on them.
- Ask the children to choose a promise and place it in a gift box, saying a prayer, 'God I thank you for your promise to ...'

Dear God,

We are about to celebrate Christmas again. Thank you for your Christmas gift to us, Jesus.

We can see from the clues in the Bible that you had had this gift planned for a long time. Thank you for keeping your promise to send a Messiah that would help to fix our relationship with you.

Amen

Home & Beyond

Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week. For this 'Home & Beyond' you will need to provide each child with at least 30 strips of coloured paper (Christmas colours would work well) to make a paper chain decoration with (you can cut your own strips of coloured paper or you can purchase packs of pre-cut strips from most craft or educational suppliers). You might also like to give each child a list of the promises that you used for the timeline so they can add them to the chain and remember how long before Jesus was born that people were talking about him in the Bible.

Paper chain promises...

- This week as a family, use the coloured paper strips to make a paper chain Christmas decoration.
- You might like to use the list of promises from the timeline to add to your paper chain—making a timeline of your own. This will help you to remember how long before Jesus was born that people were talking about him in the Bible.

OR

- You might like to write some of the other promises that God has made and celebrate them together as a family.



List of Promises about the Messiah: Prophecy Pass the Parcel Game

Genesis 12:3

The Messiah would be a descendant (i.e. a relative) of Abraham [Matthew 1:1]

Numbers 24:17

The Messiah would be considered 'King' of Israel [Numbers 24:17, John 19:19]

2 Samuel 7:12–14

The Messiah would be a descendant of David [Matthew 1:1]

Joel 2:32

The Messiah would offer salvation to all people [Romans 10:12–13]

Isaiah 11:1–4

The Messiah would not judge on the basis of how people looked [John 7:24]

The Messiah would treat poor people fairly [Mark 12:41–44]

Isaiah 35:5–6

The Messiah would heal people who were unable to see, hear, walk or speak [Mark 10:51–52, Mark 7:32–35, Matthew 12:10–13, Matthew 9:32–33]

Isaiah 53:1–12

The Messiah would have the appearance of an ordinary man [Philippians 2:7–8]

The Messiah would be hated and rejected [Luke 4:28–29, Matthew 27:21–23]

The Messiah would have great sadness and suffering [Luke 19:41–42]

The Messiah's death would provide peace between man and God [Colossians 1:20]

The Messiah would be silent before people who accused him wrongly [Matthew 27:12–14]

The Messiah would be killed [Matthew 27:35]

The Messiah would be buried in a rich man's grave [Matthew 27:57]

The Messiah would be resurrected and live forever [Mark 16:16]

The Messiah would give up his life to save mankind [Luke 23:46]

Micah 5:2

The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem [Matthew 2:1–2]

Jeremiah 23:5

The Messiah would be a descendant of David [Luke 3:23–31]

Daniel 7: 13–14

The Messiah would rise up into heaven [Acts 1:9–11]

The Messiah would be given power and glory [Ephesians 1:20–22]

The Messiah would rule forever [Luke 1:31–33]

Zechariah 9:9

The Messiah would be greeted with rejoicing in Jerusalem [Matthew 21:8–10]

The Messiah would be seen as King [John 12:12–13]

The Messiah would bring great victory [Luke 19:10]

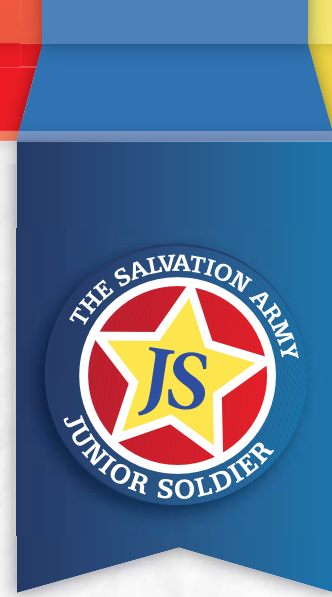
The Messiah would come to Jerusalem riding on a donkey [Matthew 21:6–9]

Malachi 3:1

A messenger would prepare the way for the Messiah [Matthew 11:10]

1 Chronicles 17:11–14

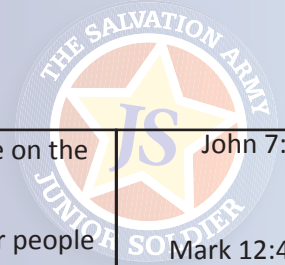
The Messiah would be the Son of God [Matthew 3:16–17]



Sections for Timeline:



	Date	Prophecy Reference	Content of Prophecy	Record of Fulfillment
1	1450-1400	Genesis 12:3	The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham	Mat 1:1
2	1400-1350	Numbers 24:17	The Messiah would be King of Israel	John 19:19
3	1350-1300			
4	1300-1250			
5	1250-1200			
6	1200-1150			
7	1150-1100			
8	1100-1050			
9	1050-1000			
10	1000-950			
11	950-900	2 Sam 7:12–14	The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Mat 1:1
12	900-850			
13	850-800			
14	800-750	Joel 2:32	The Messiah would offer salvation to all people	Rom 10:12–13



15	750-700	<p>Isaiah 11:1-4</p> <p>Isaiah 35:5-6</p> <p>Isaiah 53:1-12</p>	<p>The Messiah would not judge on the basis of appearances</p> <p>The Messiah would treat poor people fairly</p> <p>The Messiah would heal people who were unable to see, hear, walk or speak</p> <p>The Messiah would have the appearance of an ordinary man</p> <p>The Messiah would be hated and rejected</p> <p>The Messiah would have great sorrow and suffering</p> <p>The Messiah's sacrifice would provide peace between man and God</p> <p>The Messiah would be silent before his accusers</p> <p>The Messiah would be killed</p> <p>The Messiah would be buried in a rich man's grave</p> <p>The Messiah would be resurrected and live forever</p>	<p>John 7:24</p> <p>Mark 12:41-44</p> <p>Mk 10:51-52</p> <p>Mk 7:32-35</p> <p>Mat 12:10-13</p> <p>Mat 9:32-33</p> <p>Phil 2:7-8</p> <p>Lk 4:28-29</p> <p>Lk 19:41-42</p> <p>Col 1:20</p> <p>Mat 27:12-14</p> <p>Mat 27:35</p> <p>Mat 27:57</p> <p>Mark 16:16</p> <p>Luke 23:46</p>
16	700-650	Micah 5:2	The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem	Mat 2:1-2
17	650-600	Jeremiah 23:5	The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Luke 3:23-31
18	600-550			
19	550-500	Daniel 7: 13-14	<p>The Messiah would rise up into heaven</p> <p>The Messiah would be given power and glory</p> <p>The Messiah would rule forever</p>	<p>Acts 1:9-11</p> <p>Eph 1:20-22</p> <p>Luke 1:31-33</p>



20	500-450	Zechariah 9:9	<p>The Messiah would be greeted with rejoicing in Jerusalem</p> <p>The Messiah would be seen as King</p> <p>The Messiah would bring great victory</p> <p>The Messiah would come to Jerusalem riding on a donkey</p>	<p>Mat 21:8–10</p> <p>Jn 12:12–13</p> <p>Luke 19:10</p> <p>Mat 21:6–9</p>
21	450-400	<p>Malachi 3:1</p> <p>1 Chron 17:11–14</p>	<p>A messenger would prepare the way for the Messiah</p> <p>The Messiah would be the Son of God</p>	<p>Mat 11:10</p> <p>Mat 3:16–17</p>
22	400-350			
23	350-300			
24	300-250			
25	250-200			
26	200-150			
27	150-100			
28	100-50			
29	50-0			

Home & Beyond

Paper chain promises...
This week as a family, use the coloured paper strips to make a paper chain

- This week as a family, use the list of promises from the timeline to add to your Christmas decoration.
- You might like to use the list of promises from the timeline to add to your paper chain—making a timeline of your own. This will help you to remember how long before Jesus was born that people were talking about him in the Bible.

OR

- You might like to write some of the other promises that God has made and celebrate them together as a family.

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