

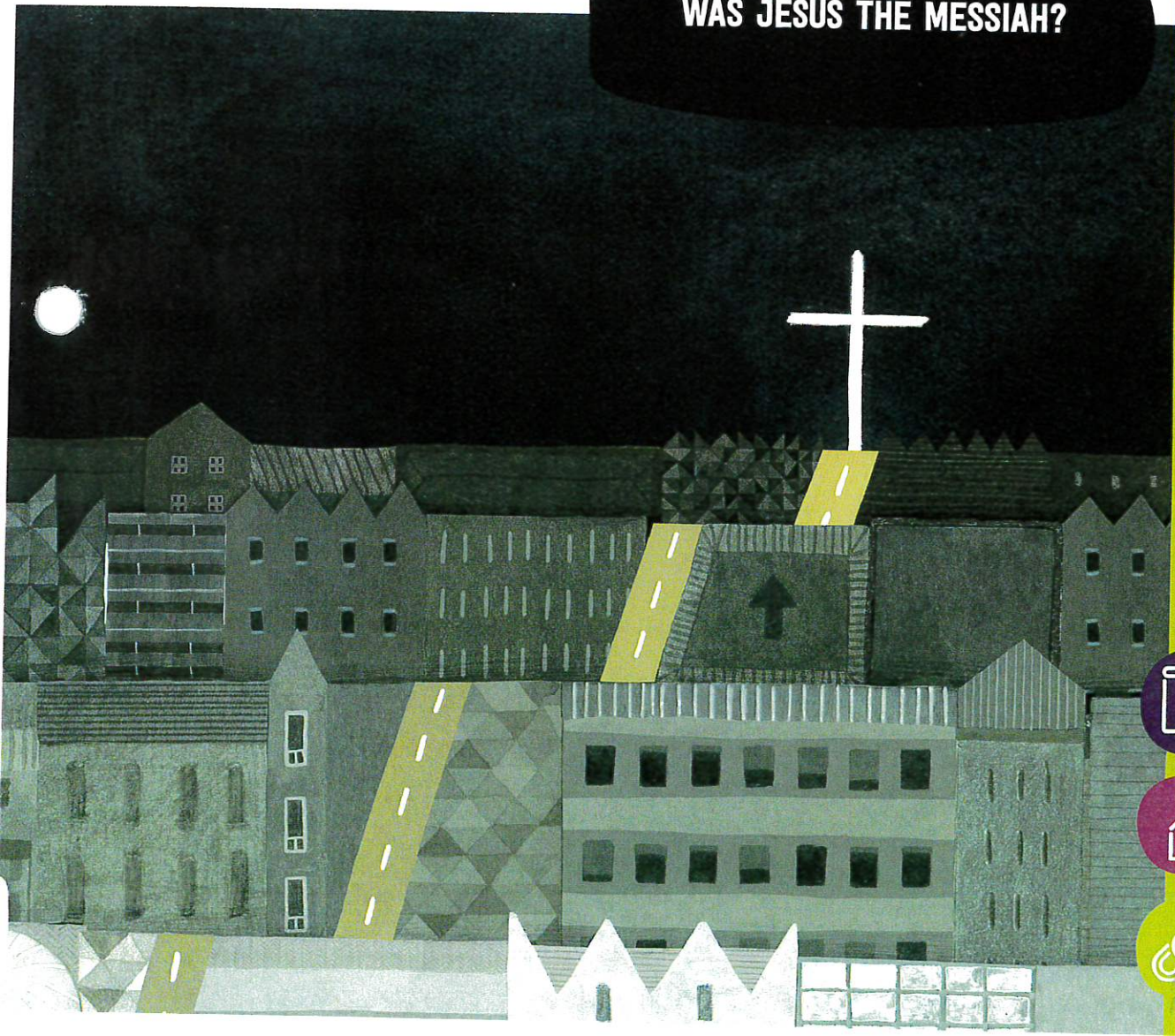
UPPER KEY STAGE 2/UNIT 2B.4

INCARNATION

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WAS JESUS THE MESSIAH?

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UPPER KEY STAGE 2/UNIT 2B.4

★ OUTCOMES

BY THE END OF THIS UNIT, PUPILS ARE EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO:

-  Explain the place of Incarnation and Messiah within the 'big story' of the Bible.
-  Identify Gospel and prophecy texts, using technical terms.
-  Explain connections between biblical texts, Incarnation and Messiah, using theological terms.
-  Show how Christians put their beliefs about Jesus' Incarnation into practice in different ways in celebrating Christmas.
-  Comment on how the idea that Jesus is the Messiah makes sense in the wider story of the Bible.
-  Weigh up how far the idea that Jesus is the Messiah – a Saviour from God – is important in the world today and, if it is true, what difference that might make in people's lives.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING BLOCKS

PUPILS WILL KNOW THAT:

- Jesus was Jewish.
- Christians believe Jesus is God in the flesh.
- They believe that his birth, life, death and resurrection were part of a longer plan by God to restore the relationship between humans and God.
- The Old Testament talks about a 'rescuer' or 'anointed one' – a messiah. Some texts talk about what this 'messiah' would be like.
- Christians believe that Jesus fulfilled these expectations, and that he is the Messiah. (Jewish people do not think Jesus is the Messiah.)
- Christians see Jesus as their Saviour (See Salvation).

NOTE: Teachers should read the Essential Information pages before teaching this unit.

➔ YOU MIGHT LIKE TO START WITH...

Think about what sort of person would be needed to help in different situations:

- If your school wants to take Year 5/Year 6 away for a residential.
- If you are being bullied.
- If a mum can't find a job and is increasingly worried about feeding her children.
- If the boss of a large company won't promote employees who are from different faiths.

Discuss the sorts of qualities a person might need to solve each situation – who might help out or 'save' the situation?

MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT

- Recap the 'big story' of the Bible so far (see story outline in the Introduction and Essential Information). How far can pupils describe and explain the big story? Can they sort the core concepts alongside the Frieze? Explain that we are just about to begin studying the New Testament, but need to think about the time at the end of the Old Testament first.
- **Examine the situation:** The People of God were taken into exile in Babylon in 586BCE. They return after about 50 years, but their Promised Land is still occupied by foreign forces. They begin to have a New Hope – God *will* rescue them! He *will* send a rescuer, a saviour – a Chosen One or Messiah. This is the situation when the Old Testament ends. However, the land remains occupied by different forces – at the start of the New Testament, this is by the beastly Romans. The people have been waiting a long time – and some are despairing, but some still hope.
- **What kind of saviour?** Introduce to the pupils their role as an investigative journalist, employed to answer the question: Was Jesus the hoped-for Saviour? Was Jesus the Messiah? Ask pupils to list the characteristics this person will need to have – a Saviour who could rescue the People of God in their current situation.
- **The first clues: Examining written evidence.** As investigative journalists pupils have received a list of what the Jewish people are expecting in a messiah (Resource Sheet 1a gives some prophecies, and Sheet 1b summarises the key points.) Ask pupils to create a 'Wanted' poster or radio advert based on these expectations. Ensure that there is a link to each of the Messianic expectations: for example, wears a crown, holding a family tree with King David marked on it, birth certificate with place of birth as Bethlehem, and so on.
- **A written report from the scene (Matthew 1:18–24, 2:1–12).** The Jewish followers of Jesus gradually began to believe that Jesus was this Messiah, and that he fulfilled the prophecies. Get pupil investigators to look for and highlight some of the evidence in Matthew's Gospel that led Christians to believe this (Resource Sheet 2). What clues are there that Jesus is the promised Messiah? Link each of the expectations by highlighting or drawing a line to one or more clues in the text. (Most Jewish people at the time did not believe Jesus was the Messiah – and Jewish people today still do not think he was.) There is not evidence for all of the prophecies in the text.



MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT

- **Interview some witnesses.** Joseph and Mary would have been familiar with the prophecies. Use some imaginative play to explore what it would be like for Mary and Joseph; for example, do a hot-seat activity with Mary and Joseph in the hot seat. Pupils in the role of investigative journalists question them about the events: How do they feel? What might this mean? Does anything scare them? Do they feel privileged? Do they think their son was the Messiah? Why?
- **The final report.** What is the evidence to suggest that Jesus was the Messiah. Ask pupils to write and illustrate a newspaper report claiming that the Messiah has arrived, and is Jesus, comparing it with the Jewish expectations expressed in their 'Wanted: Messiah' advertisement.



UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT

For Christians, Christmas is a time of celebration of the arrival of the Messiah. Many Christians argue that Christmas has lost its real meaning – Jesus is lost in the tinsel, turkey and TV. The Christian Church use Advent as a time of preparation for the arrival of Jesus.

- Ask pupils in groups to list all the words they can do with Christmas – gather a class list. Count how many are to do with Christianity and Jesus. See what explanations pupils can offer for this.
- Some Christians have turned to advertising campaigns to get the message across about the 'true meaning' of Christmas. Ask pupils to come up with some quick ideas about how they might sell the true message of Christmas, linking them to the ideas they have learned about the Messiah and Christian beliefs about Jesus' birth.
- Show pupils some examples of church ad campaigns (for example, Christmas Starts with Christ ... and so on – see Resources for link). What is the message they are putting across? Which ones are most effective? Which ones make good links with the idea of the Messiah or Saviour?
- It is crucial to recognise that Christians do not just believe that Jesus was an Old Testament prophet, or a messenger – they are convinced that Jesus was God in the flesh. Explore this idea by reminding pupils about Jesus' baptism (see Unit 2a.3), belief in God as Trinity (see Unit 2a.3), and the place of Jesus in the 'big story' of the Bible – God's rescue mission to bring people back to him, healing the effect of sin. Get pairs of pupils to record some of these key ideas on a mind-map.
- Ask pupils to come up with three good reasons why Christians want to make Christmas about Jesus Christ ('Christ' is the Greek word for 'anointed one', or 'Messiah').
- Find out what Christians do at Christmas: all the usual celebrations, with presents and so on. How do some Christians bring peace, good news, and show Jesus' love to others at Christmas? You might want to look at the work of www.presentaid.org/ or Christmas dinner on Jesus www.urbanoutreach.co.uk/christmasdinneronjesus.
- Ask pupils to write a script for, or act out, a dinner table conversation about Christmas plans. Hold one conversation for a non-Christian household and one for a Christian household. What do they plan to do, and why (remember, it's not only Christians who help others!)? What might motivate a Christian to make Christmas Day not just about being with family, eating good food, watching TV, and giving and receiving presents?







MAKING CONNECTIONS

- Ask pupils to reflect on their learning from this unit to answer the key question: Was Jesus the Messiah? In pairs, see if they can come up with some clear reasons why Christians believe that he is, with examples of how they show this.
- To make wider connections, recall the 'big story' of the Bible, and why the People of God needed a rescuer. Give pupils some key theological terms (for example, Creation, Fall, People of God, Messiah, Incarnation, Gospel, Salvation), and either get them to come up with definitions and links, or match them to given ones.
- Get pupils to use the ideas explored in this unit, and the revision of the key concepts in the 'big story' above, to answer the question, 'Why do Christians believe the world needed a "Saviour"?' Include some of the key words revised above. Give them a writing frame to help them with a selection of sentence starters.
- Not everyone thinks Jesus is the Saviour from God, but why might people think that the world needs one? Imagine that there is a God: if this God sent a new messenger to Earth in the twenty-first century, what would the messenger say? It would need to be a message for all people, not just those who believe in God! Use Resource Sheet 3 as a starting point. Compare pupils' ideas with Jewish and Christian beliefs.

★ OUTCOMES

BY THE END OF THIS UNIT, PUPILS ARE EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO:

-  Explain connections between biblical texts and the idea of Jesus as Messiah, using theological terms.
-  Make clear connections between the texts and what Christians believe about Jesus as Messiah; for example, how they celebrate Palm Sunday.
-  Show how Christians express their beliefs about Jesus as Prince of Peace and as one who transforms lives, through bringing peace and transformation in the world.
-  Weigh up how far the world needs a Messiah, expressing their own insights.

🧱 KNOWLEDGE BUILDING BLOCKS

PUPILS WILL KNOW THAT:

- The Old Testament pieces together the story of the People of God. As their circumstances change (for example, from being nomads (Abraham, Jacob) to being city dwellers (David)), they have to learn new ways of following God.
- The story of Moses and the Exodus shows how God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt.
- Christians apply this idea to living today by trying to serve God and to bring freedom to others; for example, loving others, caring for them, bringing health, food, justice, and telling the story of Jesus.
- Christians see the Christian Church as part of the ongoing story of the People of God, and try to live in a way that attracts others to God, for example, as salt and light in the world.

NOTE: Teachers should read the Essential Information pages before teaching this unit.



➔ MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT

YOU MIGHT CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO TEXTS:

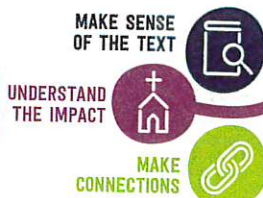
The Entry into Jerusalem, Matthew 21:1-9

- Read the whole text to the class, or ask different pupils to read each individual section to the class: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-10, 11. Explain to the pupils that verse 5 is a direct quote from Zechariah 9:9 in the Old Testament. Discuss what would be important if you wanted to put this scene in a film called *The Messiah*. What would you need the director and actors to understand: for example, that the disciples didn't know why they were fetching a donkey, that the prophecy is important to keep in the story so readers can see that Christians think this fulfils a prophecy about the Messiah.
- Get groups of pupils writing the actors' and director's notes onto the story board (Resource Sheet 4) for this section of a film called *Messiah*. Ensure that the director is clear which of the parts of the text she is creating are part of the Gospel and which are prophecy, i.e. come from the Old Testament, which will need to be shown as a flashback. Ensure that they include all the clues that might suggest Jesus is the Messiah. Afterwards, you might show a clip from a film to compare their ideas. Discuss what the director conveys through the film, and how.

The Transfiguration, Matthew 17:1-13 or Luke 9:28-36

- Recap what Jewish people hoped for in a messiah or saviour, and what Jesus' followers were starting to believe about him. Ask the class which two things would make them believe that someone was sent by God to save people. Create a list.
- Read the Transfiguration text. This is a good text to act out in groups. Ask the audience as they watch each group's performance to comment on what they think is happening and what it might mean. List the things they see which seem to offer clues that Jesus is the Messiah. What indications are there that Jesus is more than that – the Son of God? Explore links to the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the passage.
- Look at some artworks expressing this scene, for example, comparing Raphael (www.artbible.info/art/large/613.html) and Bellini. (www.artbible.info/art/large/21.html). Discuss with the pupils whether they can see: shining white, Moses and Elijah, the mountain. What do they think each of these might mean? Ask pupils to write the description to be put under the art when it is displayed in a gallery. They must include the connections to the text, the meaning of this story for Christians, and the clues this text gives that Jesus is more than the expected Messiah, and actually the Son of God.
- Pupils should think about all the clues to identity of Jesus they have heard. Which would be the most persuasive for people at the time, do they think, and why? Why were some people not convinced, or even hostile?

SELECT AND WEAVE TOGETHER ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE THE OUTCOMES





UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT

YOU MIGHT CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO TEXTS:

The entry into Jerusalem

- The story of Jesus entering into Jerusalem is celebrated every year in Christian churches, just a few days before the end of Lent (explored in Units 1.5 and 2a.5). It is an important way for Christians to mark the start of Holy Week, when they consider who Jesus is, what happened to him, and what that means to Christians (i.e. Jesus as Saviour and Messiah). Although Jesus is treated like a king as he enters Jerusalem, he behaves in a humble and peaceful manner by entering into Jerusalem on a donkey, not like the idea of a regal king or someone who is going to fight off the Romans. Christians need to learn that their Messiah was humble and a peacemaker.
- Discuss with pupils how Christians should demonstrate that they too are peacemakers like their Messiah. Discuss what being a peacemaker means.
- Share information about some contemporary Christians. Research into them and present a one-minute contribution to an imaginary programme called 'Followers of Jesus... how do they show peace?' Some examples of people you can look into are the Amos Trust home-rebuilding programme in Palestine, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the life of Owen Thomas. These three are outlined on Resource Sheet 5, or you might find some examples of your own.

The Transfiguration

Jesus was a surprising person who turned expectations on their head. Christians believe he was, and is:

- A saviour who rescues through making peace with enemies
- A humble, ordinary man yet the Son of God
- Part of an older story yet the first chapter of a new story

- Imagine how Christians might celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration. Draft some ideas for the kinds of things that might be done, said or sung in a service. Show some clips to show Orthodox Church celebrations and some Orthodox icons and the blessing of the fruits at the festival – the 'first fruits' of the year (See Resources). This Orthodox feast is celebrated as a feast of the Trinity.
- Transfiguration means 'transformation'. For Christians the belief that Jesus is more than the Messiah – but God in the flesh – means that faith in Jesus can transform individuals' lives now: the Gospels are not just stories. In all the ways Jesus turned expectations on their heads, God shows Christians how their lives can be transformed. Ask pupils to list some simple ways a Christian's life might be transformed by following Jesus; for example, trying to support somebody local by doing their shopping, giving away 10% of what they earn to charity. Write to your local church and ask for some examples from the congregation. Ask for examples of testimonies of ways in which people believe their lives have been transformed by faith in Jesus.
- Think about how reaching out to others can transform both those in need and those who help. Look at adverts for child sponsorship schemes run by Christian development charities, such as the World Vision scheme: www.worldvision.org.uk/child-sponsorship (scroll down to watch a film showing how much being a sponsor means to Amanda). Record the benefits (Christians might call them 'blessings') that the child and the sponsor would gain from this.
- Christians try to reach out to others as God reached out to them in the person of Jesus. In the process of reaching out they themselves are transformed, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Write an advert or poster for a church newsletter or noticeboard advertising child sponsorship. Use the idea of transformation in the advert or poster showing how doing this will mean that they are following Jesus.



MAKING CONNECTIONS

- So Christians do think Jesus is the Messiah and Jewish people are still waiting for a messiah. Remind the pupils about why Christians think Jesus is the Messiah.
- Share the statement: 'The world doesn't need a messiah – it just needs people to love each other.' In pairs jot down three points that agree with this quote and three points that disagree with the quote. Give pupils an opportunity to weigh up different responses to the quotation, offering ideas 'on the one hand' and 'on the other hand'. Make links to their learning about Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, and come up with a balanced argument.

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS

The idea of a 'messiah', or 'saviour', is important in Jewish culture, and was central to Jewish belief in the years that Jesus lived and taught.

The land of Israel had been attacked and invaded since its creation 1,000 years previously. In 586 BCE the Jewish people were taken into exile in Babylon. Fifty years later they were allowed to return, but from then on, their land was continually under occupation by one foreign power or another. From 63 BCE, the Romans were the occupying power. The Jewish people hoped for a saviour, a messiah, who would vanquish their enemies and restore them to their homeland to live in peace under their own laws.

Expectations were high at the time of Jesus. Different groups had different hopes and expectations, but the Messiah was widely expected to be a prophet who would re-establish the line of King David on the throne in Jerusalem, site of the Temple of God, drawing all nations to God. As the extraordinary events of his life unfolded, Jesus' followers started to think he

could be the Messiah. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday, there was much excitement at the possible arrival of a king!

The difference between the traditional Jewish idea of a messiah and the new early Christian idea is an important distinction between the faiths, and is one of the major reasons which led the Jewish sect of Christianity to split from Judaism and become a separate religion. The early Christians found their Messiah in Jesus, who was not an earthly king or a warrior but a man of peace; more amazing still, Jesus was someone whose life, words and deeds made people believe that he was God in the flesh, and the culmination of God's plan of salvation.

For Christians the fact that God, as Jesus, walked the earth and lived with humans, offers an incredible vision of Salvation. To Christians it means that there is a chance of a relationship with God, and a chance to overcome human frailty and weakness.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT AND ITS MEANING(S)

PROPHECIES IN MATTHEW

The Gospels are eyewitness accounts of the people who lived and spoke with Jesus. Prophecy is a particular sort of text; it is often rather colourful and hard to understand. The prophets were often outsiders, making pronouncements and judgements about how the Jews were living. Their contact with God made it hard for them to fit into normal life. Whilst the Gospel writers were leaders within their communities, they were (in contrast with the prophets) ordinary people trying to make sense of what they had witnessed. It must have been incredible for Jesus' followers to realise that the prophecies about a messiah were beginning to apply to him. For Matthew the prophecies show a continuation of the ancient sense of God being part of human life and Jesus being part of a longer, bigger story.

Matthew's Gospel refers to prophecies made by the Jewish prophets Micah and Isaiah, who lived around 700 BCE. Matthew believes that these prophecies have come to fulfilment in Jesus. When they were written, these prophetic texts

would have been read as referring to someone who lived at that time (for example, a king or prophet). However, during the hundreds of years of occupation by the Romans, they were seen by Jewish people as evidence that God really did still care about them, that he had promised to come to their aid (as he did when they were in slavery in Egypt), and would fulfil his promise. So the Jews were waiting for someone like Moses or Elijah to come again.

The prophecies from Isaiah (7:14, 9:1-2, 6-7; and 11:1-5) say that a baby will be born in extraordinary circumstances, will be a descendant of King David, and will be called 'God with us'. This foretells the idea (which Christians believe although others find incredible) that Jesus is actually God incarnate (i.e. in human form). The prophecy from Micah is that a baby will be born in Bethlehem and will become a leader, and saviour, of the Jews. This prophecy not only identifies the place where Jesus was born, but affirms that the baby will be of Jewish ancestry, confirming the ideas in Isaiah.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT AND ITS MEANING(S)

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM: MATTHEW 21:1-9

The festival of Pesach (Passover) was a high point of the Jewish calendar, recalling the liberation of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. It was a moment of particular tension in Jerusalem, given the Roman occupation. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem to public acclaim, the statement that he was fulfilling the prophecy by Zechariah, and the public declaration that he was the Son of David, indicate the general belief that here was the Messiah. The Zealots – a Jewish sect who were committed to the violent overthrow of the Roman occupation – would have been hopeful that this was going to be the start of a revolution. As things seemed to go wrong later in the week, Jesus' followers had to reassess their understanding of the role of the Messiah.

THE TRANSFIGURATION: MATTHEW 17:1-9 OR LUKE 9:28-36

This is another event in Jesus' life in which his followers receive clues to his true nature (although obviously prior to the entry into Jerusalem, chronologically). They walk together on a hill top (a 'mountain') when a series of amazing things happen. Jesus shines white, he is seen accompanied by Moses and Elijah, two major prophets of Judaism, and a voice from the heavens describes him as 'my son'. This awesome event gives us an insight into a moment when Jesus' followers realised he was special, connected to the old prophecies, and a link between God and humanity.

These texts indicate where Christian beliefs about Jesus as God incarnate and the Messiah come from. There are clues throughout the Bible, and Christians believe they have come to fruition in Jesus. Although he has fulfilled the old prophecies, there are new twists to the story. The longed-for Messiah is not a warrior, but the son of a humble carpenter, who teaches his followers to love their enemies and offers to save not just the Jewish people, but the whole human race.

RESOURCES

The Bible Society's 'Nativity' DVD comes with additional free classroom ideas and resources. It explores the messianic expectations and the fulfilment of prophecies in the birth of Jesus. Watch it first to decide how suitable it is for your classes! www.biblesociety.org.uk/products/9780564039067/

Christmas advertising campaign: christmasstartswithchrist.com/#sthash.zIXKBj2E.dpuf

Clips of the Entry into Jerusalem (and some magnificent hair), taken from several films, including Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdyJO-_aAv8

Introduction to the Eastern Orthodox Church: request.org.uk/life/church/the-eastern-orthodox-church/

An example of Eastern Orthodox music and worship for the Feast of the Transfiguration, including some icons: www.youtube.com/watch?v=1M-73Zi53sg, and a blessing of the 'first fruits' at the festival: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KiJf_UR42g



GOING FURTHER

You might like to explore the diverse Jewish expectations of the Messiah at the time of Jesus. Major groups, such as the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes and the Zealots, all had differing roles in Jewish society at the time, and looked forward to different kinds of messiah. This helps to explain why not everyone was convinced by the claims of his disciples that Jesus was the true anointed one. There were others who claimed to be the Messiah before and after Jesus.

WHY NOT LINK WITH...? Exploring Jewish practices should make the point that Judaism continues as a living religion, drawing guidance and nourishment from the same biblical texts that inspire Christians in their 'Old Testament'.