



KIRBY McCook

AND THE **JESUS CHRONICLES**



A 12-YEAR-OLD'S TAKE ON
THE TOTALLY UNBORING,
SLIGHTLY **WEIRD** STUFF
IN THE BIBLE, INCLUDING
FISH **GUTS**, WRESTLING
MOVES, AND **STINKY** FEET



STEVE ARTERBURN AND **M. N. BROTHERTON**

ILLUSTRATED BY **DAMIAN ZAIN**



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Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name goes all the glory.

PSALM 115:1

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I, Kirby, age 12, would like to thank all the moms and dads and others out there who buy this book—and all the kids who read it.

Thank you, television and video games, for turning our brains into mush and for reminding kids everywhere that books are WAY BETTER because they're like movies *in our minds*.

Thanks to Grandpa McCook and his library full of books from seriously brainy scholars, including Dr. Walter Kaiser, who wrote *The Messiah in the Old Testament*; Dr. Edmund Clowney, who wrote *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament*; Dr. Robert Thomas and Dr. Stanley Gundry, who put together *A Harmony of the Gospels*; Dr. John Walvoord and Dr. Roy Zuck, who wrote *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*; Dr. Craig Keener, who wrote *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*; and lots more smart dudes.

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A NOTE TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS

You'll notice a lot about Jesus in the pages to come, even as we go through some Old Testament stories. That's because this book is more than a simple retelling of the usual kid-friendly Bible stories.

It's a book that traces Jesus' involvement through the whole larger Story.

We want kids to see Jesus as the main character of the entire Bible, and we want kids to watch Jesus walk through history right from the beginning.

It's important to note that we're not primarily trying to teach morality with this book. We want to inspire kids to draw close to Jesus, to have a relationship with Jesus, and to live in light of God's holiness, sovereignty, and grace.

Here's how this Bible storybook can help:

It's comprehensive. This book looks at the life of Jesus from cover to cover, specifically helping readers see that Jesus has had an important place in God's plan for redemption from the beginning of time.

It's kid friendly and conversational in tone. This book is meant to be enjoyed by kids.

It's fun and lively, humorous but never irreverent. It meets kids on their level, speaking their language and inviting great conversations.

It's biblically and theologically whole. This book takes the whole canon of Scripture into consideration. For instance, when we tell the story of Creation, we also weave in corresponding portions of John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1, and other sections of the New Testament.

It roots and establishes a child in Jesus Christ. We want children to begin to see and think of themselves as *in Christ*. Think of this as an exhorting, identity-establishing book for children in the spirit of Colossians 2:6-7: "Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him."

It represents a full picture of the character of God. In communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Story of grace, we emphasize God's love, holiness, and sovereignty. All three characteristics of God are important.

We pray that children and families everywhere would follow Jesus, that their lives would be transformed by him, and that ultimately they would join Jesus on his mission. Life is far too short to spend it in rebellion or willful disobedience against God.

Ultimately, we pray that our readers would grow in the grace and knowledge of God. We want them to understand the bigger picture of Jesus, and we pray they would walk closely with Jesus throughout their whole lives. Amen.

I could have no greater joy than to hear that my children are following the truth.

3 JOHN 1:4

START READING HERE

Jimmy let out a sneeze louder than a motorbike with no muffler.

And we knew we were doomed.

We were sitting around in junior church that morning while the grown-ups were upstairs in big-people church. All twelve of us kids: Jimmy. Noah. Emma. Olivia. Mason. Felipe. Jayden. My sister Aggy. Aisha. Zuri-Claire. My brother Jo-Jo. And me, Kirby McCook.

The sneeze blasted out of Jimmy's nose. Ka-blaz-a-blam! His sneeze-goop slammed onto the carpet—wham!—and sat there like a pile of steaming monkey barf.

That's when our teacher, Mrs. Higgins, threw up her hands and said, "Oh! I can't do this anymore!"—and walked out.

Jimmy wiped his nose on his shirtsleeve, elbowed Jayden in the guts, and said, "Go see where she's going." So Jayden slunk out to follow Mrs. Higgins from a distance, and that's the last we saw of him for a good eleven minutes till he came back and said, "Guys—she's gone."

"Gone?" Jimmy said. "What do you mean?"

← *Yep! That's Jimmy.*



“Slammed-her-car-door-and-roared-down-the-road gone,” Jayden said. “I saw Kirby’s Grandpa McCook talking to her before she left, but she still left. I don’t think she’s coming back. Remember what Mrs. Higgins told us last time Jimmy treated us to a blasto sneeze?”

Aisha sighed. “Mrs. Higgins said her blood pressure went up. ‘Way, way, way, way, WAY up.’ Whatever that means.”

“That’s five whole ‘ways,” Jayden said knowingly. “It means we don’t have a teacher anymore. We’re sunk.”

Trembling, Mason said, “Oh no. If we don’t have a regular teacher, we’ll get Mr. Cowburn as a substitute again. He’ll bore us to death!”

Everyone started talking at once, really freaking out.

“HERE’S THE PLAN,” Jayden said. He has a real big voice, like his dad, the pastor, so we all got quiet and looked at him. “One of us kids hasta teach junior church today. And the rest of us better listen, because our parents will ask what we learned. Maybe Mrs. Higgins will come back next week.”

“So who’s going to teach?” said Felipe.

Fifteen silent seconds passed. Then every eyeball looked at me, Kirby McCook, age 12.

“You do it, Kirbs,” Jo-Jo said. “You’ve been in church forever. You should know something by now.” I looked him square in the eye and said, “Nuts to you, potato-boy, I’m not teaching anything.”

“But you have to,” Zuri-Claire said. “You’re THE BEST.” And she gave me a little grin.

“OKAY, I’LL DO IT,” I said quickly. Way, way, WAY too quickly. (I have a secret crush on Zuri-Claire. If you tell anyone, I’ll punch you in the nose.)

Before my face went ketchup-colored, I walked to the front, and with as much coolness as you ever saw, I said, “Okay, class, what shall we study?”

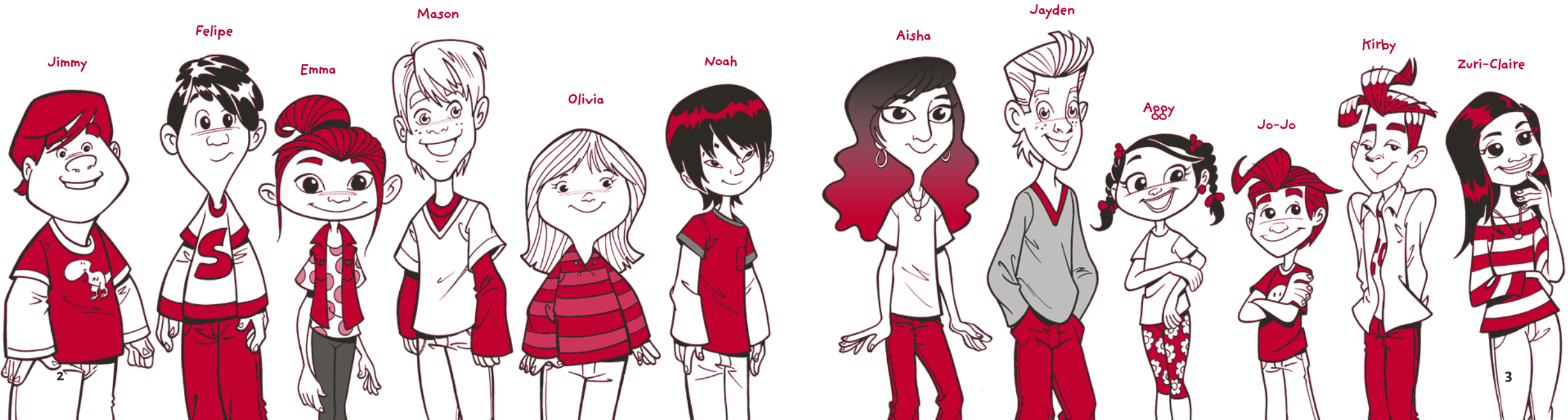
“Dinosaurs!” Jimmy shouted.

“Not again!” yelled everybody. Jimmy always wanted dinosaurs.

I said, “I’ll tell you what we’re going to study—Jesus.”

“JESUS?” everybody said, like that was such a surprising topic for junior church.

How could I go wrong with that subject? Right?



1. JESUS—RIGHT FROM THE START

Ahem.

Everybody listening? Jimmy? Olivia?

Okay. We'll learn about Jesus right from the start. The story of Jesus doesn't start with a baby in a manger. Nope. Not with a shining star hung over a stable, not with shepherds watching sheep sleep. And it certainly doesn't start with three wise guys and their gold, Frankenstein, and myrrh.

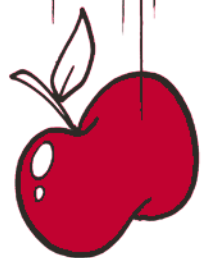
Every kid thinks Jesus' story starts at Christmastime, because we like Christmas presents. *Yahoo!*

But Jesus' story actually starts before the beginning of time. Long before there were books or bathtubs or skateboards or purple shag carpets. Long before cheeseburgers or pizza or cookies with sprinkles. Long before anything ever was, Jesus was.

Jesus existed before anything was created. In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God.

Now we all gotta get really brainy here—even Jimmy the Astonishing Sneeze Machine—because usually we just say that God was there before anything else, and when we say “God,” we're thinking about God the Father.

But here's this mysterious idea to wrestle with—God in Three Persons, aka the Trinity.



My Grandpa McCook once told me that there's God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and all three were there as the Great One before anything else existed. That means Jesus' story starts way back when, because Jesus is God the Son. Well, Jesus' story actually has NO START, because he's eternal, which means any start point you can name, Jesus was there before that.

We don't know exactly what God's Son did back then, but he didn't just hang out in heaven, killing time until he wrapped himself in a human body and came to earth as a baby. Nope.

The Bible says that Jesus is "supreme over all creation," and that God created everything through Jesus. Jesus made the things we can see and the things we can't see. Hey, just because you can't see something doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

Think about it: we can't see gravity, but it's real. Throw an apple up and stand directly underneath it. You'll know gravity is real when that apple lands on your head. *Thud-thunk!* Gravity is something Jesus created.

We can't see air, or love, or hate, or radio waves, or subatomic particles like those whatchamacallits—quarks. Thanks for shouting that out, Jimmy. You do use that incredible brain sometimes. Quarks are even tinier than atoms. And all those unseeable things are real.

We can't see God the Father, but he's real. What's one way we know God is real? Because Jesus is the "visible image of the invisible God." Jesus radiates God's glory and expresses God's character.

God the Father had a job for Jesus in the beginning. Jesus gave life and breath to everything. That's right. Jesus was the Designer and Creator.



Jesus was the Amazing Person who made this whole universe out of—get this—*nothing*. Yep, his raw material was a big bunch of nothing.

We don't know exactly how Jesus did it. But we know for sure that when the universe came to be, the Father started it all through Jesus.

The bell rang, and we all noticed Grandpa McCook talking to Mr. Javier, the children's minister, outside our classroom window. We all silently left, eyes wide, wondering what would happen next week.



KIRBY'S NOTES

STICK INSIDE YOUR BRAIN

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-16

WANNA READ MORE?

John 1:1-3

Acts 17:24

Hebrews 1:2-3, 10

8.

JESUS—CHAMPION WRESTLER

Zuri-Claire is acting really cool. And I don't mean COOL cool. I mean cold as ice. She won't even look at me. What did I do wrong?

Ahem. Hi, everybody.

Well, Jacob ran far away to the home of Laban, his mom's brother. Laban had two daughters, Leah and Rachel, and soon Jacob fell in love with Rachel. Jacob said to Uncle Laban, "I really want to marry your daughter Rachel. How about I work for you for free for seven years if you'll give her to me as my wife?"

Laban's eyes gleamed, and he said, "That sounds great to me. In seven years she's all yours."

"Good deal," said Jacob, and off he went to work. He worked and worked and worked. He was so in love with Rachel that the years just flew by.

Seven years later Jacob married Rachel . . . or so he thought. Back then a woman wore lots of wedding veils and stuff, so it was hard to see her face. The morning after

the wedding, Jacob woke up happy. "Morning, Rachel, sweetie-pie, lovie-bird, ready for breakfast?" He rolled over and looked at his wife.

BUH-NUH-NUH-NUH-NUH?!?!?

It wasn't Rachel at all! It was Leah. Jacob had married the wrong woman! Jacob didn't love Leah. He loved Rachel. Every moment of every day for seven years, he'd dreamed of marrying Rachel!

Jacob ran to Laban. "You tricked me! What gives?!"

Laban hemmed and hawed. "Well, somebody had to marry Leah. In our customs, the older daughter always gets married first. Look—here's a bright idea: marry them both. You can marry Rachel next week, then work for me another seven years—free. Everything will be fair and square."

Jacob was up a creek. "Fine!" he said. He waited a week, married Rachel, and now had two wives. What a crazy, mixed-up situation.

The two wives fought, always jealous of each other. Pretty soon Leah started having babies. In those days, more kids meant more honor. Leah had four boys—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah—boom, boom, boom, boom. Rachel wasn't getting pregnant, which drove her totally crazy. So Rachel gave her maid to Jacob as a servant-wife, because in that ancient culture any children born to the maid were considered Rachel's. Rachel's maid had two sons, Dan and Naphtali. "Ha!" Rachel said. "I am totally winning the baby war." That just goes to show you how messed up the family had become.

It had been awhile since Leah had gotten pregnant, so she decided to give Jacob her maid too. Leah's maid also had two sons, Gad and Asher. Then Leah had two MORE sons, Issachar and Zebulun. She also had a daughter named Dinah. So at this point Jacob had ten sons and one daughter.

Rachel still really wanted a baby of her own. And finally God gave her one—Joseph—a fine, healthy boy.

Finally, Jacob decided he and his bunch would go home. Jacob made some shrewd business dealings with Laban and got lots of goats and stuff. Laban wasn't happy—no

surprise—so Jacob and family fled without saying good-bye. But Laban chased them and caught up with them. He and Jacob talked it out and patched things up, and Jacob and his family went on their merry way.

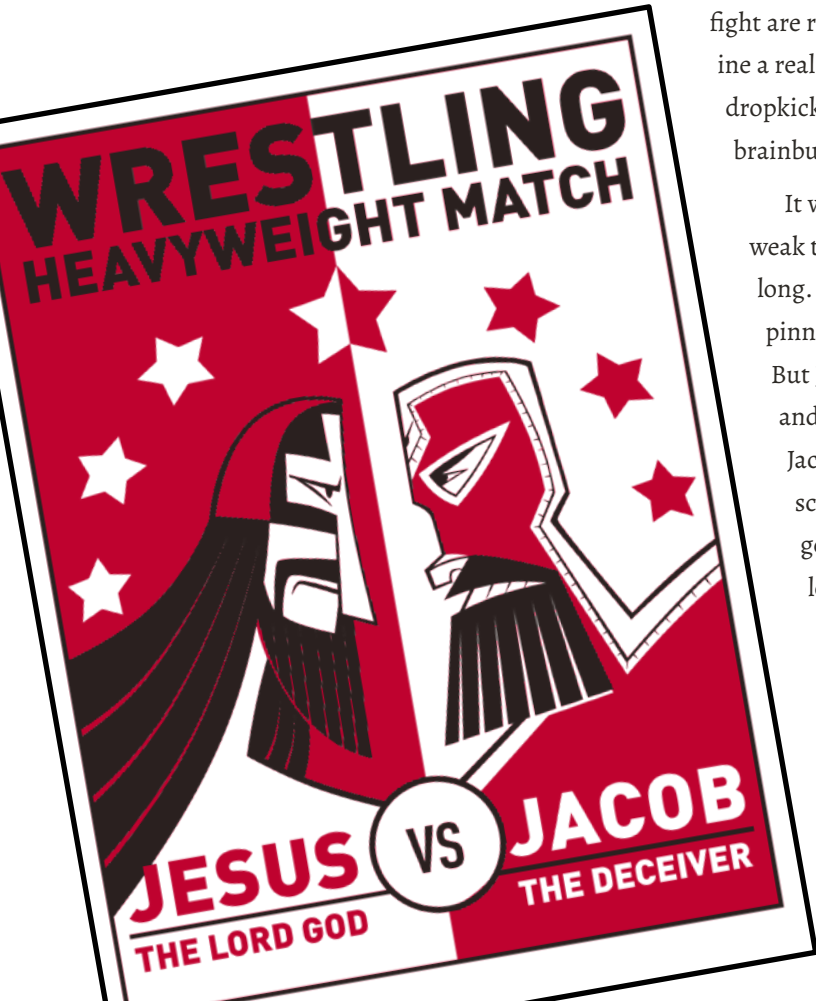
Then Jacob needed to face another angry man—his brother, Esau—who was riding toward him with an army of 400 men. Jacob was shaking in his boots. He remembered how he’d wronged Esau.

And that’s where Jesus enters the story.

The night before Jacob met Esau, Jesus came to Jacob and wrestled with him until sunrise. That’s right—God’s invisible world touched Jacob’s visible world, and Jacob fought with God. It’s another one of those Christophanies. Not many details of the

fight are recorded, but just imagine a real brawl complete with dropkicks, backbreakers, and brainbusters.

It wasn’t because Jesus was weak that the fight lasted so long. Nope. Jesus could have pinned Jacob in a second. But Jesus just let Jacob fight and fight, because that was Jacob’s nature—he was a scrapper, always trying to get his way with God. Jesus let him get it out of his system. Jesus didn’t finish the fight until the very end, when Jesus threw a blow that wrenched



Jacob’s hip right out of the socket. BAM! Ouch!

Fight over. Jacob finally learned he couldn’t beat God. *Duh.* The New Testament says Jacob actually “won,” meaning he won a blessing from God and an appreciation for God’s power. See, when the wrestling match stopped, Jacob asked for a blessing, so Jesus changed Jacob’s name.

Jacob means “deceiver”—and Jacob had certainly lived up to that lousy name. But Jesus changed Jacob’s name to Israel, meaning “God fights” or “God rules.” The course of Jacob’s life was changed. Instead of fighting against God, Jacob would now trust God to fight for him. Jacob knew he couldn’t rely on his natural strength anymore. He’d have to rely on his God. Israel would also become the name of the nation that God would build to bring the Savior.

More than ever, Jacob needed to rely on God. Because, remember, Jacob had one more tough guy to face—Esau with his 400 soldiers.

We’ll find out soon what happened.

Remember: you can fight against God, or trust God to fight for you. Which would you rather do?



KIRBY’S NOTES

STICK INSIDE YOUR BRAIN

[Jacob] met God face to face, and God spoke to him—the LORD God of Heaven’s Armies, the LORD is his name!

HOSEA 12:4-5

WANNA READ MORE?

Genesis 29–32
Hosea 12:3-6

17. JESUS AND HIS COUNTRY COUSIN

Ha!! That note never got to Zuri-Claire!!! Good thing, because it was COMPLETELY GROSS. I guess Jimmy didn't get far in reading it, because after he sneezed and wiped his nose with it, he crumpled it and threw it in the trash. Whew!

But now I gotta write another note.

A better one. What do you think I should write?

Ahem.

Four hundred years went by with Jesus not showing up in person and with no prophets getting any more words from God. People were just supposed to keep reading and believing the words they already had.

Remember I told you a horrible thing is coming? But first, a really cool thing happens. And to get from here to there, we'll look at a guy with a really



boring middle name—John THE Baptist. I mean, how crazy would it be if I was called Kirby THE McCook??

John's parents were named Zechariah and Elizabeth. They were both descended from Jewish priests, and they both followed God wholeheartedly.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were old folks—like Grandpa McCook old—and they'd never had a baby. They both wanted one, but figured it was never going to happen now. Zechariah worked as a priest, and one day he was serving God in the Temple. It was his turn—the opportunity of his lifetime, because there were so many priests he'd probably never get a turn again—to enter the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense. A big crowd stood outside and prayed.

While Zechariah was inside, an angel appeared to him and said, "Don't be scared, Zechariah. God's heard your prayers. Your wife, Elizabeth, will have a son, and you need to name him John. He'll be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth, and he'll prepare people for the coming of the Lord."

Zechariah was like, "Um, wow, but I'm an old geezer—and my wife is no spring chicken. It's pretty doubtful that we could have a baby."

The angel said, "I'm Gabriel! From the very presence of God! He sent me to bring you this good news. But since you didn't believe it, you won't be able to speak until your kid is born."

Sure enough, Zechariah came out of the Temple and couldn't speak. He could only wave his hands and play charades to tell people what happened. They didn't get it. But soon, Elizabeth became pregnant. They both were really happy about that, although Zechariah only said, "Mmmfff, armmm, shaa."

Meanwhile, not far away in Nazareth, a tiny village nobody cared about in the region of Galilee, lived Elizabeth's cousin Mary. Mary was already engaged to a dude named Joseph.

Mary and Joseph were swell folks, both descendants of King David, but not kings or queens or anything. Joseph worked as a craftsman, building tables and chairs and probably boxes to keep stuff in and maybe wheels for go-carts.

The same angel—Gabriel—appeared to Mary and said, “Hello there, favored woman! The Lord is with you. Don’t be afraid—I’m here to say that you’re going to have a baby boy. He’ll be great. His name will be Jesus. God will give Jesus the throne of his ancestor David—and Jesus’ Kingdom will never end!”

Mary was like, “What?! Who?! How?! I’m not even married yet. How can I have a baby?”

Gabriel responded, “Don’t worry. The Holy Spirit will arrange it all, and the baby will be holy and will be the Son of God.”

Mary said, “Okay, then. I’m God’s servant. Whatever God wants for me is what I want too.”

Mary went to Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Mary walked through the doorway and said hi, and the baby inside Elizabeth’s womb jumped for joy. Mary just burst out in song: “Wahoo—praise the Lord!! He fills the hungry with good things and remembers his promise to our ancestors.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months. They probably talked a lot about baby stuff. Then Mary went home.

Elizabeth’s baby was born. All the neighbors thought the baby would be named Zechariah, after his dad, because that’s what people did back then. But old man Zechariah, who still couldn’t speak, waved his hands for something to write on and wrote, “The kid’s name is JOHN!”

Which surprised everybody. But instantly, Zechariah could speak, and the first thing he said was, “Praise God!” Then he added, “God has visited and redeemed his people and sent us a mighty Savior. And you, my little son, will prepare the way for the Lord.”



KIRBY’S NOTES

STICK INSIDE YOUR BRAIN

Mary responded, “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!”

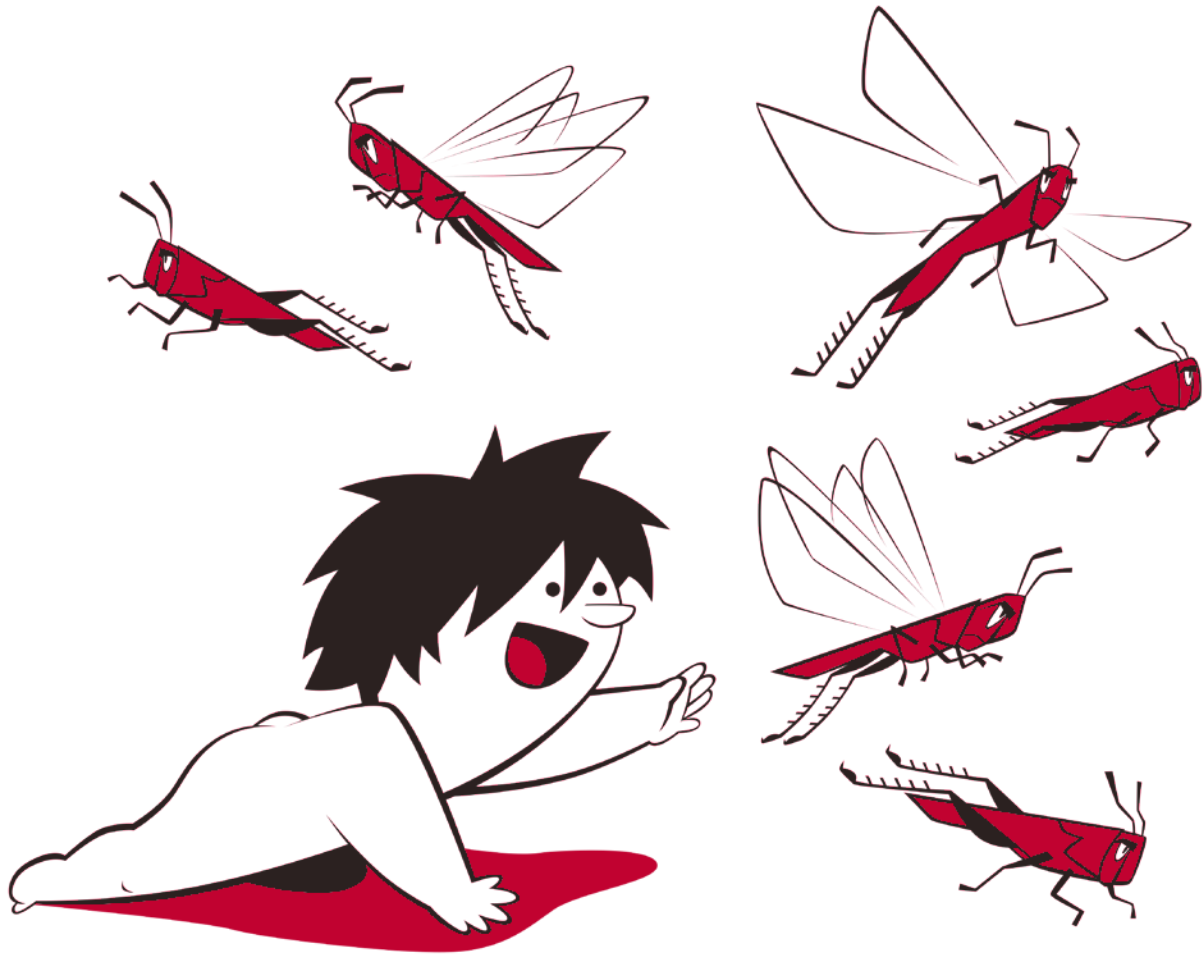
LUKE 1:46-47

WANNA READ MORE?

Luke 1
John 1:14-15

And Baby John probably thought, “Mmmm, I’m so hungry I could eat a grasshopper.”

Later John developed a real taste for grasshoppers, because he spent a lot of time out in the wilderness. We’ll learn more about that soon. Don’t you just want to eat a big old grasshopper?! Yum. So juicy.



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