

Begat Who: *What's in a Name?*

Genealogy of Jesus Matthew 1 and Luke 3

Introduction: I must admit that when I'm reading the Bible and I come to a list of names, I am often tempted to gloss over them too quickly. I've been challenged stop, and I'd like to invite you to join me in this study. In Matthew 1 and Luke 3 we are given list of names that within their presentation tell us of many magnificent features of Jesus Christ's birth.

If you are brave! Read Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38.

The chart below provides a parallel *short-cut* through the names. I'm confident that you will find many more truths than we can cover here. Aside from their reverse orders, and the fact that Luke's goes back to Creation while Matthew's begins with Abraham; there other differences.

<p>Matthew 1:1 This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:</p>	<p>Luke 3:23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, (Mary)</p>
<p><u>Abraham > Isaac > Jacob > Judah</u> <u>> Perez (mother: Tamar) > Hezron > Ram</u> <u>> Amminadab > Nahshon > Salmon</u> <u>> Boaz (mother: Rahab)>Obed (mother: Ruth)</u> <u>> Jesse > King David</u> > Solomon (mother: Uriah's wife) > Rehoboam > Abijah > Asa > Jehoshaphat > Jehoram > Uzziah > Jotham > Ahaz > Hezekiah > Manasseh > Amon > Josiah > Jeconiah, at the time of the exile to Babylon.</p> <p>After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah > <u>Shealtiel</u> > <u>Zerubbabel</u> > Abihud > Eliakim > Azor > Zadok > Akim > Elihud > Eleazar > Matthan > Jacob > Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah.</p>	<p>< Heli < Matthat < Levi < Melki < Jannai < Joseph < Mattathias < Amos < Nahum < Esli < Naggai < Maath < Mattathias < Semein < Josek < Joda < Joanan < Rhesa < <u>Zerubbabel</u> < <u>Shealtiel</u> < Neri < Melki < Addi < Cosam < Elmadam < Er < Joshua < Eliezer < Jorim < Matthat < Levi < Simeon < Judah < Joseph < Jonam < Eliakim < Melea < Menna < Mattatha < Nathan < David < Jesse < Obed < Boaz < Salmon < Nahshon < Amminadab < Ram < Hezron < Perez < Judah < Jacob < Isaac < Abraham</p> <p><u>Abraham</u> < Terah < Nahor < Serug < Reu < Peleg < Eber < Shelah < Cainan < Arphaxad < Shem < Noah < Lamech < Methuselah < Enoch < Jared < Mahalalel < Kenan < Enosh < Seth < Adam, the son of God.</p>

Before we address some of the differences, I invite you to join me in committing to trust in the Word of God as reliable and factual in everything it intends. And while there are times when I cannot explain the text, the problem isn't with the text it is with my understanding. With that being said, let's look a some of the textual features.

Different Names:

In portions of the genealogies that overlap, there are different names. Both are equal between Abraham and David, and both contain other similarities, but mostly diverge during the divided kingdoms era.

The first answer is that each genealogy follows a path leading to a different parent. Both are in the line of King David. But, from Solomon forward they diverge (one through Rehoboam the other through his brother Nathan). Unexplained biblically are the reasons for other intersections (like Shealtiel and Zerubbabel) but inter-marrying in the royal lines can explain these.

The point remains that Mary and Joseph were both in the Line of David. And, as we know, each gospel writer had a different purpose. Matthew was to show the royal and legal claim Jesus had on the throne of David, while Luke related his humanity.

Numbers of Generations:

The two genealogies do not match in number of generations, nor do they line up exactly with biblical records. These features are also easily explained.

First, with regards to numbers of generations: Matthew appears to omit some kings of Judah from his genealogy, and of Luke's we might not know if he made similar leaps since his genealogy is through less renowned descendants of David.

First, Matthew followed an accepted tradition of his day to omit *bad-seeds* from the family. This is a practice that God says He will apply in the Torah:

Deuteronomy 29:20 The Lord will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the Lord will blot out their names from under heaven.

The final acceptable reason for un-matched genealogies is that Matthew followed an accepted Hebrew tradition of keeping numbers balanced to make oral transmission easier. While the Jews were among the most literate race of humans, books and scrolls were expensive. As such, they depended upon *The Oral Torah* in many of their gatherings. Matthew making each generation sum-up to an easy to remember number (14=7x2) facilitated the oral telling.

Matthew 1:17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

1. List some of the names of kings of Judah (and queens) that are omitted from Matthew's list

2. Do you see a reason why they were left out?

Trouble with the Law:

There is another historic problem with Messiah's lineage... read this prophecy in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 22: 28 Is this man Jehoiachin a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know? 29 O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord! 30 This is what the Lord says: "Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah."

3. Describe what the problem is here: _____

Some see this as a contradiction in the Bible, however there are allowances in the Torah for daughters to pass along inherited rights, so long as they marry within the tribe.

Read Number 27:1-11 and Numbers 36. Summarize the situation and solution:

4. How does this law apply to the situation with Jesus, Jehoiachin and the throne of David?

Last Word:

The fact and accuracy of the Bible's account of Jesus' birth is not in question. Our Scripture today shows how God delivered on His intentions to bring Messiah through the line of King David. Both Mary and Joseph are members of David's family, as such are prince and princess of Israel.

The Christmas Season is a time to celebrate our Lord's birth, it is also a time to remember the other prophecies God set down about Jesus. The virgin birth, born in Bethlehem, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Simeon and Anna, Herod's crime, and travel to Egypt. All of these and others made the birth of God's Son an unmistakable and unmissable event!

One question remains. If all the 300 (or so) prophecies about Jesus' Advent came true; how must we receive the other eight hundred prophecies about His Second Coming?

The Greatest Miracle: *pre-Incarnation*

Preincarnation of Jesus John 1:1 and Colossians 1:15

Introduction: At Christmas we celebrate the most miraculous birth in History. Jesus Christ, Son of God *first-born* seed of a Woman, fulfilling God's prophecy in Genesis 3:15. In Fact Jesus' birth fulfilled so many OT prophecies about Messiah, that it takes much effort and ingenuity to deny them all.

We are shown repeatedly in Scripture how OT predictions narrow the field of candidates, until Jesus emerges as the only possibility. Coincidence that with angelic communications, visions, Holy Spirit filled prophecies; all the events encompassing Jesus' birth leaves no doubt of His credentials.

Despite this being the most monumental birth in history, that is not the most remarkable part of the story. Far more *miraculous* is the fact that the eternal God, Creator of all, took human form to live among His creation and ultimately die that they might live. That is the Greatest miracle!

Our mission today will be to discover what the Bible says about the incarnation of Jesus and to remember how much God sacrificed in order that we may return into His family.

Bibliography:

Our mission to discover what the Bible says about Jesus' pre-incarnation is the same as discovering His divine nature and membership in the Trinity. At the onset let me provide a *basic* bibliography that I hope you will consider devotionally during this season.

John 1:1-4	Hebrews 1:3	2 Peter 1:1	Romans 9:5
1 John 1:1-4			
Isaiah 9:6,7	Matthew 1:21	Isaiah 40:3	Colossians 1:15ff; 2:9
Luke 1:31-33		Matthew 3:3	
		Luke 1:16-17, 76-79	
		John 1:29, 36	

We will review other Scriptures throughout this series, but these are some of my favorites.

Scripture Reading:

John 1:1-4 ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***

1. List the descriptors John used to illustrate Jesus and God? _____

2. Don't stop now! Any other words from the rest of the chapter you particularly like? _____

There is no doubt about Jesus' divinity. Why then the Incarnation? Why did God the Son become a human? The answer: "**Atonement.**" The Bible says Jesus, because of God's love and justice, accepted the assignment of becoming the only possible sacrifice that could *repay the debt* and *receive our criminal punishment* for sinning against God.

In Hebrew this is an ancient word that has its roots in concepts like ransom, expiation and covering as in protecting and/or concealing. All meanings are appropriately related to atonement.

In the Hebrew Language two forms of the word are used in Exodus 30:

Kphr (ko'-fer) noun: payment, ransom, covering, coating, protection.

Kpr (kaw-far') verb: to cover, purge, make reconciliation, to pacify or propitiate

Sacrifice and Atonement:

Throughout the Old Testament, God repeatedly illustrated **atonement** in preparation for Jesus' Incarnation and His final, permanent atoning work. For example:

God make the first sacrifice, killing an animal to use its skin to cover Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:21 ***The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.***

Before you say that sacrifices were initiated under the Law of Moses, think again. Able and Cain offered sacrifices to God (as did Noah, Job and Melchizedek). Abraham provided us with an idiom that became a type of Christ where God provides the sacrifice.

Genesis 22:8 ***Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.***

Exodus 30 contains the righteous forerunner of the Temple Tax that Jesus was so critical of during His ministry. It was originally intended to be a form of sacrifice that would remind the Jews that "God had made atonement for their lives."

Exodus 16 the annual celebration of Yom Kippur was initiated. Called **The Day of Atonement** it is still considered the holiest day on the Jewish religious calendar.

3. There are characteristics about God's atonement revealed in the rituals, look up these verses and describe what that says to you about God's atonement:

Exodus 30:15 _____

Leviticus 16:21 _____

Romans 3:21-26 _____

Luke 24:26 _____

Other Verses that describe atonement: _____

Other Reasons for Jesus' Incarnation:

Jesus spoke often about the reason He came. Here are some verses that reflect some of these. Please also share any thoughts or verses you have found that give explanation for Jesus' Incarnation.

Read the verse then in your own words describe what it says about why Jesus came:

John 6:38 _____

Matthew 5:17-18 _____

John 14:9 _____

Hebrews 9:26 _____

Hebrews 2:14 _____

Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:18) _____

John 9:39-41 _____

John 3:16 _____

Luke 19:10 _____

Luke 19:40 _____

Luke 1:32-33 _____

Any other's you'd like to add:

Last Word

To reject the deity of Jesus and His participation in the Trinity one must first reject the authority of the New Testament¹. We have dealt with the authority of Scripture before and will do so again. However, our primary mission today, is to discover what the Bible *actually* asserts, and to let that guide our actions including beliefs about who Jesus is and how we must respond to Him.

¹ Grudem, Wayne A.; Grudem, Wayne A.. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (p. 232). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Affirming that Scripture asserts Jesus is Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man and beloved member of the Trinity, we must also deal with the fact of the **Incarnation**. What caused God to want to become human and walk for a time on earth?

The answer to that question is largely for the **Atonement** of people. Atonement is a doctrine that God codified during the Exodus. It is deeply rooted in the Jewish faith and now, in light of Christmas, it is apparent that God initiated certain observances (viz. Yom Kippur) as a commemoration of God's atonement (Exodus 30:16) and as a type of Christ, foretelling His eventual sacrifice.

With the added caveat that Christ's atonement didn't have to be ceremonially repeated ever year. Rather, His atonement and redemption was/is eternal. Jesus is the perfect King-Priest.

Atonement was a huge accomplishment, but Jesus did much more with His Incarnation.

Glorifying the Father and taught about His kingdom (overcoming the lies and deceptions being portrayed by the Jewish religious elite)

Jesus performed the *King's Visitation* on His subjects to judge their worthiness to receive Him (foretold by Zechariah (9:9) and explained by Jesus (Luke 19:42))

Launch the Church as God's instrument in this Era of Grace (see Matthew 16:17, 28:18; Acts 1:8)

There are other reasons for the Incarnation. Ongoing devotional study will be greatly rewarded.

Notes and Questions from Personal Study:

Sermon Notes:

Special Delivery: *Angels have all the fun*

Special Notifications about Jesus' birth in Luke 1

Introduction: With over 300 prophecies spanning 4,000 years foretelling different aspects of Jesus' birth and work; what else did God need to do make His Son's arrival special?

Answer: He sent angels with ***Special Delivery Instructions*** to a short list of very special people.

Our mission this week will be to examine closely Scriptures in Luke 1 to discover what the Bible says about these angelic special deliveries.

Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

Luke 1:28 The angel said to Mary, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[b] the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

Two Special Births:

Our Scripture focuses on two special births that happened 6-months apart in Israel in 5 BC. The families, though related, were not living by each other. Nevertheless, in God's providence they shared exceptional qualities that resulted in God selecting them to serve Him at this important time.

The situation that ensnared Israel was corrupt. Four-hundred years since exile, Jews were divided. Amidst religious factions, only a small minority were loyal to God. The majority, whether secular or liberal or fundamental, it mattered not. They used power gained through religious institutions to enrich themselves, get and keep power, and mistreat the ubiquitous underclasses that in God's economy should not have existed. This is the environment in which Jesus was born.

The Special Birth of John the Baptist:

Review Luke 1:5-20 when Gabriel spoke with Zechariah, then consider these questions.

Special Mission:

1. Read vv. 14-17, what special qualities did the angel say John would have?

2. Look up Malachi 4:5-6 and Isaiah 40:3, how do these relate to John?

Special Family:

3. Luke reports interesting facts about John's parents. List the ones you think are most important.

4. Some believe Zechariah was a Zadok Priest and in line to be High Priest. Extra credit if you can tell why or how it might be relevant (hint Ezekiel 44:15-16).

Special Delivery:

5. The angel tells Zechariah something he can't believe? What was it? _____

6. Does Zechariah's special delivery remind you of anyone else (hint Genesis 18:11)? _____

Summary of Special Delivery #1:

John's parents were righteous at a time when it was very rare among the religious elite. Circumstantial evidence, including hints from DSS, say Zechariah could have been of the line of Zadok and therefore the rightful High Priest. As such, John (the Baptist) would have been in the line of succession.

Filled with the Holy Spirit before birth, observing a form of Nazarite devotion, living and ministering after the model Elijah who preached repentance and return God. By the time Jesus was ready to start His public ministry, John already had a significant following.

As one commentator aptly states "[Scripture] warns us against the common tendency to treat him (John the Baptist) merely as a "warm-up act" before the main character comes on the stage.² John was a formidable prophet and priest in his own right, he just had to diminish as Jesus grew.

² France, R. T.. Luke (Teach the Text Commentary Series) (p. 8). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Special Birth of Jesus Christ

Review Luke 1:26-38 when Gabriel appeared to Mary, in preparation to consider these question.

Special Mission:

7. Read vv. 32, 33, 35 what did Gabriel say about the person, life and work of Mary's Son?

8. Have all the prophecies Gabriel spoke to Mary come true? Y N If not by now, when?

Special Family:

9. How did Gabriel greet Mary and how does that reflect God's assessment of the young lady?

10. How would you describe the qualities of the members of Jesus' earthly family?

Special Delivery:

11. Gabriel stunned Mary with the startling news. How would you say she took it? Explain:

12. What do you think life was like for Mary after her pregnancy became public?

Summary of Special Delivery #2

Mary was an exceptional young woman, little more than a teenager. Chosen by God for the biggest job in history. God correctly saw fit to limit the information we have on Mary's life. Still, we can surmise some things from Luke's report.

First, as a daughter of David she should have been a princess of the royal court. Unfortunately, Rome didn't recognize the Jewish royal family, so she (and Joseph for that matter) were rejected.

Mary was also highly biblically literate. It is evident when you hear the Torah text she quotes during the Magnificat. That level of literacy wasn't the norm for a girl, she had to work hard to get it.

It also appears that she had a quiet resolve and trust in God. Nothing worse can happen to a young bride than to show up pregnant before the wedding! In spite of that, Mary took everything in stride. A lesson to us all. Despite how crazy things appear, God remains in charge and in control. Whether or not I can see the *light at the end of the tunnel*, I know that God is standing there holding one.

Last Word

Angels have all the fun! (Actually, Gabriel may be the only *special messenger* on God's staff). Still, how fun would it be to announce God's spectacular achievements like these two *special deliveries*?

Remember, angels are not omnipotent like God, so they **can** be surprised!

Do you think Gabriel was surprised by Zechariah's doubt, or was he impressed by Mary's resolve? We'll have to ask in heaven someday, but for now it enlivens the holidays to consider such things.

From our Scriptures we have recognized that Zechariah and Elizabeth were special people. Zechariah might have been high priest had the politics of the day been different. Their son John was also an accomplished prophet. Extra biblical literature indicates he might have been head of a School of Prophets; and could also have been a practicing priest among the Zadok priests housed in Qumran.

Gabriel's appearance to Mary is stunning. A 13–16-year-old girl approaching the most important day of her life is told she is pregnant! This is devastating, the kind of news that ruins peoples' lives. We don't know a lot about Mary (for good reason) but from this exchange and her encounter with Elizabeth, we can tell that she was articulate, more literate than one would expect a girl to be in the 1st Century.

We are further invited to watch her respond. She maintains a graceful demeanor and humbly receives everything God delivers. I am inspired by Mary to do a better job when I face turmoil and difficulty. Do I really trust God enough to face difficulty with the kind of calm resolve Mary demonstrated? I hope in the future that I will.

Notes and Questions from Personal Study:

Sermon Notes:

more, Special Deliveries: *still on the job...*

Special Notifications about Jesus' Birth Matthew 1

Introduction: Last week we studied Scriptures that revealed "...how God used a very special messenger (the angel Gabriel) to make a very special delivery of a message from God to two very special families (Zechariah and Mary) about two *impending special deliveries* that each would soon experience..."

That's a tongue twister!

If you were with us last Sunday, you know what I'm talking about. If you weren't here, I recommend you go to the website and listen or watch because God showed us a lot of interesting stuff (at least to me) about the families of John the Baptist and his cousin, Jesus of Nazareth.

This week, we couldn't let the season go by without hearing how God continued to intervene to make sure that every detail of His Son's birth went exactly as planned. Exactly as the prophets had foretold.

Our study this week will look at Joseph; and how God reached out to him in a miraculous way to give him the chance to stand up and do the right thing. Begin by reading our passage and reflect on the setting and circumstance. How would you handle a midnight message like Joseph received?

Scripture:

Matthew 1:18 *This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

20 *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

22 *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

24 *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

1. What are your initial thoughts about this exchange between Joseph and the angel?

Matthew is the only Gospel writer who provides these details. Although it is thought that Jesus' stepfather was passed by the time Matthew wrote, it is believed that Matthew's source was James or Jude. Or possibly Jesus communicated with another source before or after His resurrection.

While we can't exclude the possibility Joseph confided in Mary, it is equally likely that Mary confided in Joseph her experience with Gabriel. Still, Matthew only reports Joseph's engagement and Luke Mary's. While we'll never be sure until heaven, there must be a reason for these differences.

Exciting! Isn't it?

2. Why do you think Joseph was visited in a dream, yet Mary and Zechariah got personal visits?

3. Why was Joseph considering a divorce when they weren't yet married?

It could be beneficial and interesting to research the exceptional characteristics of 1st century Jewish weddings. Not only would it help answer some of our questions, but these rituals pose symbols that God intended to illuminate a myriad of other spiritual relationships, like Jesus with the Church.

4. Mary was told before Joseph. From Scripture, what do you surmise about his frame of mind and how would you grade his actions? Is there something he should have done differently?

5. In vv. 21-23 what does the angel tell Joseph about his soon-to-be Son, Jesus? _____

6. Matthew's Gospel had for its primary focus to show Jesus as King of the Jews. Where in our Scripture do you see hints of Matthew pursuing that Goal?

Last Word

The angel's visit to Joseph in a dream is a deeply meaningful account of a good man, a righteous man who was torn between conflicting views of the *right thing to do*. How are we supposed to do the right think in these circumstances? What happens when life delivers a '*no-win scenario*'?

I hope you will explore Joseph’s options and try to prayerfully reason through his deliberations. I think you will discover that his experience was provided to both reveal God’s intervention; but to grant us a tiny yet powerful glimpse into a man doing his best to obey his God. In a situation that no one could ever have experienced before or since, Joseph blazes a trail for generations to follow about how to bring God with you into places humans have never been.

Notes and Questions from Personal Study:

Sermon Notes:

Undercover King: Messiah if Born!

The Christmas Story Luke 2:1-21 (NKJV)

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed..., so all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:
"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as they were told.

This story needs no introduction.

The report in Luke's gospel of the birth of Jesus Christ the Son of God is known by billions. As we reflect on this glorious event, let's consider a few questions to stimulate our memories and perhaps further satisfaction this season. The reason for Christmas is the birthday celebration of the **Undercover King**.

1. Shouldn't an heir in the line of King David, have been living in Judah near the City of David?

2. Does the fact he was living in Galilee tell you anything about Jewish society at that time?

Luke was inspired by the Holy Spirit to portray the human side of Jesus' story. Some think he received his information from Mary when he and she crossed paths. If that is true, Mary was a senior citizen, as it could have been 25-30 years since Jesus' crucifixion.

It gives me something else to think about when I realize that this telling of Jesus' birth-story may be from the memory of His mother. It makes me smile...

3. Do you think Luke intentionally portrays Mary and Joseph's socioeconomic status in his writing? How would you describe their status? What in Luke's account gives you that indication?

4. Is there any doubt that Jesus was born a legal heir of King David's? Are there other reasons you can think of (from the Bible) that Jesus should have been born in Bethlehem?

The report of shepherds visited by angels is another of the most cherished stories in the Bible. When you think of the social status of men who tended animals outside, overnight; you can't help but get an idea that Luke was making a statement about who Jesus came to save.

As you reflect on the shepherds' experiences that night, consider these questions that will lead you to consider another love story that took place a thousand years earlier.

5. In the ancestry of both Mary and Joseph is a couple who lived in Bethlehem and were great-grandparents of King David's. Can you remember this couple? _____

This couple also eventually lived together in Bethlehem. Some scholars like to surmise that the very fields that the shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep is the same where Ruth gleaned and caught the eye of her future husband Boaz.

6. Some believe their being included in the lineage of David and Jesus is symbolic. What about Ruth and Boaz do you think are significant to the story of Jesus?

7. Now back to the shepherds, why were they honored with an invitation to Jesus' birth?

8. How many different emotions do you see the shepherds display during and after the angel's visit?

9. What did the shepherds do as they left Mary, Joseph and the baby?

10. Do you think anybody else came to see Jesus that night? Why or why not?

Last Word:

This is the most important story ever told. The Creator of the Universe is miraculously born into a working-class Jewish family in the exact fashion, at the exact place that hundreds of Old Testament prophecies predict. The richness of the symbology seems almost unending.

Even considering those parts of the story that were not foretold: shepherds in a Bethlehem field at night (as some scholars believe) during the springtime. The *flocks they were watching by night* were likely headed either for Passover sacrifice or a Paschal meal. Combine that with the symbology surrounding the story of Ruth and Boaz, who may have finalized their marriage plans in the evening in that same field...it is incredible to consider.

I have to confess that much of this is reverent conjecture. But when we get to heaven, I won't be surprised if much of it were true.

I pray that your Christmas will be wonderful, fun, loving and most of all Christ honoring.

Notes and Questions from Personal Study:

Sermon Notes:

Firstborn of Grace: *Dedication of Jesus*

Prophecies of Simeon and Anna Luke 2:22-40

Introduction: This is an endearing part of Jesus' birth narrative. Two people who were devoted to God their entire lives, who God blesses personally see the object of their devotion. In the person of Simeon, we have a representative of the formal religious order (at least the righteous part of it). Like John's father Zachariah, Simeon was a priest and prophet and likely of the Zadok order. Additionally, he was faithful and among the minority of *religious professionals* who stayed true to their faith.

Anna represents the everyday Jew. Of an unfavored tribe because of the kingdom split. She also has remained faithful in a culture mostly defined by apostasy and idolatry. In both cases we are blessed to see how God orchestrates special blessings in each of their lives.

Scripture Reading:

Luke 2:22 *When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord* **23** *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"),* **24** *and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."*

1. What does the offering Mary and Joseph brought say about their socioeconomic standing?

Simeon vv. 25-35:

25 *Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:*

29 *"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.*

30 *For my eyes have seen your salvation* **31** *which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:*

32 *a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."*

33 *The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

2. Who do you suppose Simeon was?

3. What drew Simeon to Jesus in the Temple? What does that say God's providence?

4. How does Luke emphasize that Jesus' salvation is for all people?

5. Simeon's final words to the parents were ominous, in plain language, what did he say?

Anna vv. 36-38

36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

6. What do you know about Anna from this Scripture?

7. What was she looking forward to, and what was the basis of her anticipation?

Last Word vv. 39-40:

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

8. Here and in v. 33 Luke seems intent to keep the parents view in our sights, how does that help us?

As we close this segment of Luke's narrative, I am grateful these portions were included. Simeon and Anna are devoted people who (as Luke will repeatedly expose in his gospel) are exceptions to the unfaithful elements of both the religious professionals and laypeople of the land. God is faithful and He always has some of His people around for the good and common grace of the entire community

In as much as their devotion is a refreshing juxtaposition against the dominant culture, it reminds us of the continual conflict between Jesus and those corrupt institutions. It almost appears Simeon and Anna are a righteous *calm before the storm* preparing (or reminding) the reader that a battle over the souls of humanity is about to break out over the next 30 years of Jesus' life.

This is an underappreciated portion of the Christmas story that does not inspire many songs or greeting cards. Still, it is an essential part of the story, reminding Jew and Gentile alike that God's sovereign plans and His devoted love to His loyal subjects, are intended to inspire us to accept God's Son as our Savior and Lord.

Notes and Questions from Personal Study:

Sermon Notes:

The Star is Born: *Wise Men see Truth*

The Magi's Visit Matthew 2:1-12

Introduction: Among the most celebrated and timeless parts of the Christmas Story is the visit by the Magi. How many of us can recall when we or our children sang, *We Three Kings* in a Christmas pageant?

While most are familiar with the story, it is filled with wonderful details often overlooked by the casual reader. The fact that the Magi were a world-power that Rome didn't even mess with. Or that although there were three gifts, this royal entourage was more likely a caravan of hundreds taking months if not years to put together and implement.

Most intriguing is how they knew and why God spoke to them. Where did they get their information? Was it somehow related to the Babylonian exile half-a-century before? I hope that you will search out these wonderful facts about God's intricate plans, to make this Christmas exceptional.

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 2:1-12 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

1. Where did the Magi Come from?

2. It is believed that the Maji had knowledge of Old Testament prophecy, how? (hint Daniel 2:48)

3. How many came? What was the nature of their journey?

4. Why was Herod startled and why would he see them anyway?

5. When and where did this visit take place?

6. The three gifts were symbolic and practical. Explain how:

7. What does this say about who God communicates with and uses in His plans?

8. Reading ahead, what fulfilled prophecy was financed by the wise men? (hint Hosea 11:1)

Last Word:

The Maji visiting Joseph, Mary and Jesus in Bethlehem is a wonderful story of the universal quality of God's salvation. These Gentile holy-men whose very name is the basis for our word *magicians* came to worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The timing can get a bit confusing, but with their toddler Jesus in tow (and maybe James also) Mary and Joseph were staying with relatives/friends and attending a Jewish pilgrim feast (like Passover).

With roots that extend back to the days of Daniel in exile, these Maji saw signs in the heavens that their leader had prepared them for hundreds of years earlier. This connection with Jesus and Daniel will emerge elsewhere in the gospels. It was Daniel's prophecies that pointed the Maji (and probably many faithful among Israel like the Zadok's and Essenes) to this very time when Messiah should arrive.

There are more connections with Daniel and the ministry of Jesus than we can cover in this lesson. For further study, you might want to ponder these questions realizing that some of their answers are found in extra biblical history.

For example 1) why was Daniel not a preferred book among the priests, yet a favorite with the people? 2) Daniel is one of the few men in the Bible of whom nothing evil is said. 3) Daniel met Gabriel and Michael and received more prophecies about both of Jesus' comings than almost any other prophet.

I pray your study of the Maji will enhance your joy this Christmas!

Notes and Questions from Personal Study:

Sermon Notes:

Appendix

Appendix 1, Bible records of Jesus' birth

Matthew 1

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1 This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram,

4 Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse,

6 and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa,

8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

9 Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah,

11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

12 After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

13 Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor,

14 Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud,

15 Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob,

16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Matthew 2

The Magi Visit the Messiah

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Escape to Egypt

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 “A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.”

The Return to Nazareth

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, 23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Luke 1

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. 22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home. 24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Mary's Song

46 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me
blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.

50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

The Birth of John the Baptist

57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

61 They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. 66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

Zechariah's Song

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—

72 to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Luke 2

The Birth of Jesus

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Jesus Presented in the Temple

22 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,
31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

33 The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Luke 3

The Baptism and Genealogy of Jesus

21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli,

24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,

25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai,

26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josek, the son of Joda,

27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,

28 the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,

29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,

30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,

31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,

32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,

33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,

34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,

35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah,

36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,

37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Kenan,

38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam,

the son of God.

John 1

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") 16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

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