

Jesus' Birth

The announcement and birth of John are powerful, but nothing compares to the weight and significance behind the announcement and birth of Christ. His coming broke the 400 years of silence. This child would grow and become the Savior of Israel. However, not every Israelite actually descended from Israel. Yes, Christ came to save the whole world, and this is how it began. Today we'll look at Luke 1:26-56; 2:1-52

Gabriel & Mary (26-33)

- It's the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy.
- Mary is a young woman (virgin) legally pledged to marry Joseph. If Mary was like most girls, she could have been around 15 years old (little younger or older). Joseph would have saved money, chosen a mediator, who would have accompanied his parents to Mary's home. Parents would offer them a drink, but they would not accept it until an agreement was made (price of dowry & bride's consent). Her parents would choose a mediator, and once the agreement was made, they would accept the drink and celebrate. Betrothal lasted around a year. It could only be broken by divorce or death.
- Gabriel visits Mary, and she's troubled, but favored by God.
- Fun fact: I learned that "Ave Maria" is based on the phrase "Greetings, you who are highly favored."
- His name would be Jesus. Fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. See Matthew 1:21-23 when an angel speaks to Joseph in a dream.
- Zechariah's son would be called the Prophet of the Most High. Mary's son would be called the Son of the Most High.
- Jesus will have David's throne and reign forever.

Mary's Response (34-38)

- Mary didn't understand how such a thing could occur.
- The Spirit would come upon her, and the power of the Most High would overshadow her.
- She learns how Elizabeth is with child.
- Nothing is impossible with God.

Mary & Elizabeth (39-56)

- Mary lives in Nazareth, so she travels south to the hill country of Judah to see Elizabeth (about 3-4 day journey).
- John leaps in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary's voice. This is clearly from the Lord and served as a sign.
- Elizabeth rejoices and praises God. Notice how she calls Mary the mother of her Lord.

Mary Praises God (46-56)

- Called the Magnificat. (The name comes from the first word of the Latin translation, which begins, "Magnificat anima mea Dominum" ("My soul magnifies the Lord")). "The song of Mary found in Luke 1:46-55. This poem is in the style of the OT psalms, and is strongly reminiscent of the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. At an early date it found a place in Christian worship. It was chanted in the vesper service of the Roman Catholic Church, and was carried over into Lutheran and Anglican usage. From the time of the Renaissance,

countless musical settings have been written for this beautiful canticle, both in Latin and in various Western languages." (Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Magnificat," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1377.)

- Mary's praise expresses the greatness of God and His wonderful blessings upon someone lowly such as Mary and those who fear Him. He is strong and humbles the prideful while exalting the humble. He fills those in need and leaves the rich empty-handed. He remembers Israel in mercy and made Himself known to their fathers.
- She stayed with Elizabeth for about 3 months and returned home.

It's after this time that Mary returns, and Joseph is visited by an angel in a dream. Mary would be showing at this point, and he's looking to put her away.

Jesus' Birth (Luke 2:1-7)

- This census would require the couple to travel 70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem.
- His birth will fulfill Micah 5:2.
- I read that "Inns" was more of a Roman concept. That a better understanding would be a private home. Your translation may even offer the alternative translation, "guest room," because that's what the word means (lodging place; guest room). They would have stayed in the "guest room" under the living area above. This lower section also housed animals. Thus, Mary would lay Jesus in a feeding trough.

Angels Rejoice (8-21)

- You've got to love how God reveals this birth to poor shepherds before anyone else. Shepherds are very fitting for the son of David, the shepherd boy, and Jesus the Christ and Good Shepherd. It's also used for elders in the Old Law and under the New Covenant.
- Finding a wrapped baby wouldn't be unique, but one in a feeding trough would be. God is giving, yet again, another sign to confirm His word.
- Could you imagine what that would have been like?
- Mary is taking everything in and mulling it around. What does this all mean? What's going to happen?
- Jesus was circumcised and given His name. Jesus was born under the Law like every other Jewish baby (Galatians 4:4).

Jesus Presented at the Temple (22-38)

- We remember the consecration of the firstborn to God from Exodus 13:2,12. This command came after the last and great plague against Egypt, which caused the death of every firstborn. You would redeem your son from the Lord by paying a price.
- Instructions for purification are found in Leviticus 12:1-8. After the birth of a son, the mother was unclean for 7 days and circumcised him on the 8th day. Then, she would remain in the blood of purification for 33 days. Then she would travel to the temple and offer two sacrifices: a lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or turtledove as a sin offering. If you were poor, you could offer a turtledove or young pigeon in place of the lamb. So, we learn that Jesus came from a poor family.
- Simeon is at the temple, but more importantly, he's waiting for the consolation (console) of Israel. He was told he would see the Christ before he died.
- Take note that He's a light for revelation to the Gentiles. He won't benefit the Jews only.

- He says the child will cause some to rise (be lifted up) and others to fall (He would be a stumbling block for many). The same principle is in Isaiah 8:14. He would also cause significant pain/harm in Mary's life.
- We meet Anna, a prophetess. Sounds like she was married for 7 years and then a widow until she was 84. She's a solid believer in God. She praises God as Jesus is presented in the temple. Here's a woman who had seen or felt the effects of many political battles and terrible men. It was the perfect time for a savior. She's found serving through her fasting and prayer.

At this point, Matthew records the Magi who came to Jerusalem and spoke to Herod. Joseph is told in a dream to flee to Egypt. They flee and eventually return to Nazareth, where Jesus grew up a Nazarene. All of these moves fulfilled prophecy.

Jesus in the Temple (39-52)

- They would go back home, and Jesus would grow like every other boy. Jesus grows in a physical, emotional, and spiritual way.
- Now, we find Him at the age of 12 after the Passover. One of three yearly feasts. Jews would travel together and, upon approaching Israel, would sing the Psalms of Ascent (Psalm 120-134).
- This is an important time in a Jewish boy's life. He's expected to keep the law, learn a trade, and attend a Jewish feast. We've heard of bar mitzvah, but that actually came much later. Still, it was an important age in Jesus' time as well.
- This may have been the first time Jesus traveled to Jerusalem to witness the temple, priests, sacrifices, etc.
- Imagine losing Jesus, parents!
- Q&A was a typical style for Rabbis. Imagine Jesus not only asking meaty questions but answering them as well. Was Anna, the high priest who would try Jesus a little over 20 years later, there? Hillel was said to be born in 112 B.C., and according to tradition, lived 120 years. They believe this event took place in 8 A.D. Was he there? Gamaliel was definitely alive. Was he present?
- Did they discuss the Passover? Any messianic passages? Think about it . . .
- Vs.49 shows us that Jesus was aware of His Father and was about His Father's business. These are the first recorded words of Jesus. Very fitting.
- Jesus, again, is portrayed in a very familiar way. He grew in understanding, years, and favor with people and God.