

## The Life of Christ Pt. I

### The Birth of John the Baptist and the Birth of Christ

#### I. The Early Years of John the Baptist

##### A. John's Birth Foretold to Zacharias (Luke 1:5-25)

##### 1. Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to be living during the reign of Herod the Great

- These events took place 15 months prior to the birth of Jesus in late 5/early 4 BC (Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant when Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit and Mary's pregnancy lasted 9 months making it September/October 6 BC)
- They are both of the priestly line of Aaron
- They both are described as godly and elderly people who had no children

Luke 1:6 And they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. 7 And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

##### 2. Zecharias was a priest and his turn came to offer incense in the Temple

- The priests were divided into 24 orders of priests and they each served 1 week twice a year (I Chron. 24:4-19)
- Zecharias was chosen for the high honor of offering incense on the altar of incense. (most would never experience this honor)
- The altar of incense was kept burning perpetually just in front of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place
- One priest would offer the incense once in the morning and in the evening while the other priests of his Order waited outside the Holy Place in prayer.

##### 3. An angel appears to Zecharias and announces the birth of John the Baptist

- The angel Gabriel appears to Zecharias on the right of the Altar of Incense and Zecharias is frightened,

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. 14 "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he

will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb. 16 "And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 "And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

NB: Note the *ministry* of John the Baptist foretold (v. 16) and his *role* as forerunner of Jesus Christ (v17)

- Zecharias doubts the message of the angel and Gabriel takes away his voice as a sign until John the Baptist is born

Luke 1:18 And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." 19 And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. 20 "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time." 21 And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. 22 But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. 23 And it came about, when the days of his priestly service were ended, that he went back home.

- Zecharias finished his priestly service and then he and Elizabeth returned home until Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist

## B. Jesus' Birth Foretold to Mary (Luke 1:26-38)

### 1. The Angel Gabriel announces the birth of Christ to Mary (Luke 1:26-33)

- In the 6<sup>th</sup> month of Elizabeth's pregnancy the angel Gabriel appears to Mary in the city of Nazareth (in Galilee)
- Mary was betrothed to Joseph and Luke emphasizes that Mary is a virgin
  - The Gr. *parthenos* (cf. Heb. *almah*)
- Gabriel announces the divine blessing upon Mary:

Luke 1:28 And coming in, he said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be.

NB: The phrase, "favored one" literally means "full of grace"

- Gabriel then announces the conception and birth of Jesus:

Luke 1:30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

NB: Sons bear the resemblances of their fathers. Therefore, “Son of” the Most High God indicates that he will be equal to His father. (The angel said of John the Baptist that he would be a “*prophet of the Highest*” (Luke 1:76). Here, Gabriel says that Jesus would be the “*Son of the Most High God.*”

This prophecy also indicates that Jesus will sit on the Davidic throne. Jesus will one day sit on the literal throne of David in the Millennial Kingdom. (II Sam. 7:13-16; Ps. 89:26-29)

## 2. The Holy Spirit comes upon Mary and she conceives (Luke 1:34-38)

- Mary questions Gabriel about his announcement and Gabriel describes what was going to happen to accomplish the virgin birth

Luke 1:34 And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” 35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.

NB: The significance of the virgin birth cannot be overstated. The virgin birth was essential to enable Jesus to be both actually born of Mary (a woman) and escape the depravity of nature that is passed on to all humans from Adam.)

- Gabriel tells Mary that Elizabeth also has conceived and is 6 months pregnant. This was intended to be understood as a sign that God was at work:

Luke 1: 36 “And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

- Mary responds to Gabriel’s divine announcement

Luke 1:38 And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

## C. Mary’s Visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45)

1. Mary departs for the hill country of Judah to visit Elizabeth whom Mary now knows to be pregnant

Luke 1:39 Now at this time Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. Elizabeth responds to Mary

42 And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, “Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 “And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 “For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. 45 “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.”

D. Mary's Song of Joy (Luke 1:46-56)

1. Mary's response to Elizabeth is recorded in what has come to be known as "*The Magnificat*." (after the first word in the Latin translation of the same passage)
  - This record of Mary's thoughts contains numerous quotations and allusions to Old Testament passages pertaining to the covenant promises of God

46 And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

NB: Mary acknowledges Jesus as her *Savior*. Nothing in this passage or the rest of the Bible indicates that Mary was *immaculate*—born without the taint of original sin. Further, nothing in this passage indicates that Mary thought of herself as worthy of special adoration or reverence.

48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. 49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. 50 "And His mercy is upon generation after generation Toward those who fear Him.

51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. 52 "He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. 53 "He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich empty-handed. 54 "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his offspring forever."

E. John's Birth (Luke 1:57-66)

1. The time came for Elizabeth to give birth and John was born
  - As soon as John was born and his name given as John (not Zecharias as the relatives wanted), Zecharias received back his voice and he immediately began praising God
  - All the surrounding areas were frightened at these events surrounding the birth of John because they knew something special was happening:

Luke 1:65 And fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. 66 And all who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

F. Zacharias' Prophetic Song (Luke (1:67-79))

1. Zecharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied what has come to be known as the *Benedictus* (after the first word in the Latin translation:

Luke 1:67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant — 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old — 71 Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us; 72 To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, 74 To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. 76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; 77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, 78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, 79 To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

G. John's Growth and Early Life (Luke 1:80)

Luke 1:80 And the child continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

III. The Early Years of Jesus Christ

A. The Birth of Jesus Christ

NB: The Angel Gabriel had announced the supernatural conception and coming birth of Jesus to Mary when her relative Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant with John the Baptist. Mary—and presumably Joseph--had traveled to Judea to see Zacharias and Elizabeth and to be with them for the birth of John the Baptist.

Shortly after the birth of John the Baptist Joseph and Mary returned home to Nazareth. This would make Mary now 3 months pregnant.

One of 2 things then happened:

- Sometime during this time period Mary told Joseph she was pregnant. She then also would have told him of the announcement by the angel Gabriel and of the supernatural nature of the birth.
- However, the other alternative is that Joseph found out about the matter when it became obvious that Mary was pregnant—she was gaining weight! Perhaps this is why Matthew relates it this way in Matt. 1:18:

“. . . When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together *she was found to be with child* by the Holy Spirit.

- Perhaps too this is why the Angel *explained* to him in Matt. 1:20:

“... *for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*”

- At any rate, an angel appears to Joseph to confirm that Mary is pregnant through supernatural means

1. The Circumstances of Jesus’ Birth Explained to Joseph (Matt. 1:18-25)

- Matthew asserts that while Joseph and Mary were betrothed—but before they had “come together--Mary “was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.” (v. 18)
- Matthew then says:

Matt. 1:19 “And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly.”

- An angel of the Lord then appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying:

Matt. 1:20 “. . . Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 “And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.” 22 Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”

NB: There are several points to emphasize here:

1. The angel says (imperative mood) that His name *shall* be called “Jesus.”

From EBC: “Jesus” (*iesous* ) is the Greek form of “Joshua.” In the Old Testament Joshua occurs in a long form, *yehosua* (“Yahweh is salvation”) and in a short form, *yesua* (“Yahweh saves”). The Angel identifies Mary’s Son as the one who brings Yahweh’s promised salvation.

The angel explains the significance of the name Jesus by alluding to Psalm 130:7-8:

“7 O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is lovingkindness, And with Him is abundant *redemption*. 8 And He will *redeem* Israel From all his iniquities.”

2. The angel identifies the supernaturally conceived child as the fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 about a virgin conceiving and bearing a child who was to be called Immanuel.

3. The significance of the baby Jesus also being called “Immanuel” in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 is seen in the meaning of Immanuel—“God with us.”

- Joseph then did what the Lord had commanded and kept her a virgin until Jesus was born.

## 2. The Birth (Luke 2:1-7)

- Luke then records that the time came for Mary to give birth:

Luke 2:1 Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6 And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

**NB:** Caesar Augustus reigned from 27 BC to 14 AD

Regarding the “census” under Quirinius, there were evidently 2 periods during which Quirinius was governor of Syria and during which he took a census. . Once from 4 BC to AD 1 and a second time from AD 6-10.

From EBC, see in support:

“Luke clearly intends to secure the historical and chronological moorings of Jesus’ birth. Ironically, it is precisely this that has led some to question Luke’s accuracy.

The first census (i.e., enrollment prior to taxation) known to have occurred under the governorship of Quirinius took place later (i.e., A.D. 6) than usually reckoned as the time of Jesus’ birth. Reference to this census is found in both Acts 5:37 and Josephus (Antiq. XVIII, 26 [ii.1]). Many have supposed that Luke confused this census of A.D. 6 with one he thinks was taken earlier, but which lacks historical support. The most satisfactory solutions that have been proposed follow.

1. Quirinius had a government assignment in Syria at this time and conducted a census in his official capacity. Details of this census may have been common knowledge in Luke’s time but are now lost to us (cf. E.M. Blaiklock, “Quirinius,” ZPEB, 5:56). An incomplete MS describes the career of an officer whose name is not preserved but whose actions sound as if he might have been Quirinius. He became imperial “legate of Syria” for the “second time.” While this is ambiguous, it may be a clue that Quirinius served both at the time of Jesus’ birth and a few years later (cf. F.F. Bruce, “Quirinius,” NBD, p. 9).

2. The word *prote* can be construed to mean not “first,” as usually translated, but “former” or “prior.” The meaning of v.2 is then “This census was before that made when Quirinius was governor” (N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1966], pp. 4; idem, *Syntax*, p. 32).

It was customary to return to one’s original home for such a census. Also, powerful as he was, Herod was only a client king under Rome and, like others, was subject to orders for a census. Furthermore, it is scarcely conceivable that Luke, careful researcher that he was (1:14), would have stressed the census unless he had reasonable historical grounds for doing so.”

### 3. The Witness of the Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)

- On the day Jesus was born an angel visited some shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks. The angel then spoke to the shepherds:

Luke 2:10 And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 “And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger.”

- Suddenly a huge number of angels appeared around the messenger angel:

Luke 2:13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

- The shepherds then quickly went to Bethlehem to see Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus lying in the manger
- The shepherds then made known to others the announcement made by the angelic messenger:

Luke 2:16 And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

### 4. The Circumcision of Jesus and His presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:21-38)

- Joseph and Mary took Jesus to be circumcised according to the Old Testament Law:

Luke 2:21 And when eight days were completed before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

- Joseph and Mary then presented Jesus at the Temple also according to the Old Testament Law.

NB: See EBC:

“It is important to understand the sequence and background of these events. According to Jewish law a woman became ceremonially unclean on the birth of a child. On the eighth day the child was circumcised (cf. 1:59; Gen 17:12), after which the mother was unclean an additional thirty-three days—sixty-six if the child was female (Lev 12:15). At the conclusion of this period, the mother offered a sacrifice, either a lamb or, if she was poor, two doves or two young pigeons (Lev 12:6-8). In addition, the first son was to be presented to the Lord and then, so to speak, bought back with an offering (Num 18:15; cf. 1Sam 1:24-28, where Hannah actually gives up Samuel to the Lord).

Luke, conflating the performance of these OT obligations into this single narrative, shows how Jesus was reared in conformity with them. His parents obeyed the Lord (1:31) in naming him. The offering of birds instead of a lamb shows that he was

born into a poor family. Perhaps this helped him identify with the poor of the land (cf. 6:20).”

- A “righteous and devout man” Simeon was living in Jerusalem during this time and he blessed the baby Jesus during His presentation at the Temple
  - Luke records that Simeon was “looking for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was upon him.”
  - The Lord had promised him that he would not die before he saw “the Lord’s Christ”
  - When Jesus was brought into the Temple Simeon took the baby Jesus and blessed Him”

Luke 2:28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 “Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word; 30 For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, 31 Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 A light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Thy people Israel.”

- Joseph and Mary are amazed at Simeon’s words of blessing. Simeon then turns to them:

Luke 2:34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed — 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul — to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

- Soon after these blessings a prophetess approached them:

Luke 2:36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with a husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. And she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. 38 And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

## 5. Jesus’ Family returns to Nazareth (2:39)

- After the temple presentation Joseph and Mary returned to their home town:

Luke 2:39 And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. 40 And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

## B. The Early Life of Jesus

1. The Visit of the Magi (Matt. 2:1-12)
2. The Flight into Egypt (Matt. 2:13-18)
3. The Return to Nazareth (Matt. 2:19-23)
4. The Early Growth of Jesus (Luke 2:40)

5. Jesus' First Passover in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-50)
6. Jesus' Adolescence and Early Manhood (Luke 2:51-52)

- IV. The Public Ministry of John the Baptist
- V. The End of John's Ministry and the Beginning of Christ's Ministry (Primarily in Judea)
- VI. The Ministry of Christ in Galilee
- VII. The Ministry of Christ around Galilee
- VIII. The Later Judean Ministry of Christ
- IX. The Ministry of Christ in and around Perea
- X. The Formal Presentation of Christ to Israel and the Resulting Conflict
- XI. Prophecies in Preparation for the Death of Christ
- XII. The Death of Christ
- XIII. The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ