

The Beginning of the Gospel

- Genealogy of Christ
 - The Birth of Christ
 - Infancy Narratives of Christ
 - John the Baptist
 - Baptism of Christ
 - Temptation on the Mount
 - Calling the Disciples
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Luke 1a: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاي ن تاطع • LUKE 1: 1 - 25 ~ Bible Study

Outline of the Chapter

- 1-4: Prologue to the Gospel and Dedication to Theophilus
- 5-25: Birth of St John the Baptist announced to Zecharias
- 26-38: Annunciation to St. Mary
- 39-45: Visit of St Mary to Elizabeth
- 46-56: Magnificat
- 56-58: Birth of St John the Baptist
- 59-66: Circumcision of St John the Baptist
- 67-80: Zacharias' Prophecy

Prologue

¹ Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

- Exposition
 - St Luke is sending this gospel to a person named Theophilus and telling him that many people wrote narratives about the life of Christ, but this narrative is very known to me, personally.
 - It is known to him personally because he received it from eyewitnesses. Luke took upon himself the responsibility to understand perfectly the things that had happened since the very beginning and to write them accurately, so that Theophilus would know what was instructed
- Prologue
 - Gospel of Luke is the only gospel to start with a prologue, and he followed the style of prologue that was common in the literature at the time
- "Many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative"

- St Luke seems to attest that other gospels exist in his time, which are not as accurate.
- Some scholars estimate 30 or more gospels from the first two centuries.
- The Church only ever accepted four gospels.
- Origen testifies that from the very beginning, the Church only acknowledged four Gospels as being inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- The beginning
 - "just as those who from the beginning were..."
 - The life of Christ started by the Annunciation of the Birth of John to Zacharias
- Eyewitnesses and ministers of the word
 - Those who delivered these things to Luke and his contemporaries were eyewitnesses
 - Ministers of the word are the apostles
- Perfect understanding of all things
 - St Luke is saying that he has traced the traditions to their very sources and will write them in their consecutive order, that Theophilus may be fully convinced in the truth he was instructed in.
- Most Excellent Theophilus
 - "most excellent Felix" (Acts 24:3) - so "most excellent" must imply a high rank or public figure
 - Theophilus means "Lover of God"
 - Theophilus is a common name in Greek - no reason to assume that Theophilus wasn't the name of someone that Luke knew
 - Some theorize that Theophilus was a sponsor of St Luke who sponsored him to author Luke and Acts
 - Some theorize that Theophilus is a benefactor who wanted to stay anonymous, and so Luke called him "lover of God"
 - Some say that Theophilus is a noble of Antioch
 - Some suggest that Theophilus refers to all believers of Christ

Annunciation of the Birth of John the Baptist

⁵ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

- Setting the Stage
 - St. Luke sets the time period as being during the time of Herod
- Herod, king of Judea
 - By the 1st Century, Judea was not a separate state, but was under Herod with Samaria, Galilee, Idumea, etc.
- Zacharias
 - Name means "God Remembers"
- Division of Abijah
 - Aaron, the High Priest, had four sons - Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar

- Nadab and Abihu offered profane fire in Leviticus 10 and were consumed by fire
- Eleazar and Ithamar would spring up 24 families: 16 from Eleazar and 8 from Ithamar
- At the time of King David, the number of priests became too much... so King David divided them into 24 divisions and each would serve one week (1 Chronicles 24)
- Abijah is the 8th Division
- Elizabeth
 - Name means "The Oath of God"
 - Direct descendant of Aaron - this is a great honor to have both husband and wife as descendants of Aaron the High Priest
- Righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.
 - Righteous before God: not just before men, but before God, who sees the heart
 - Walking in all the commandments and ordinances: this is the evidence of their righteousness
 - Commandments were known (like the 10 commandments)
 - Ordinances are duties ordained for us to follow and fulfill (fasting, prayer, etc.)
 - Blameless: Doesn't mean they are without sin, but that they are living a life of repentance
 - If I wash my clothes every day and someone sees me with clean clothes it doesn't mean the clothes were never dirty... it means that they've been cleaned.
 - Origen: "Our Lord Jesus referred to the Church in Ephesians 5:22 as 'glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.' This does not mean that the son of the Church has never sinned, but rather he leads a life of repentance."
- They had no child
 - A family without child was considered reproach because it cuts off all hope of having the Messiah from that family
 - The Lord deigned to bring St John the Baptist in this remarkable way overcoming the two obstacles:
 - Elizabeth is barren
 - Elizabeth and Zacharias are both advanced in years

⁸ So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

- Offering of Incense
 - To offer incense was a great occasion in the life of a priest because it may never happen. With over 20,000 priests, the odds that it falls on any given one are low
 - Every evening, there was an evening incense - and the Levites would go into the holy place and they would prepare it (dump ashes from last time, trim the wicks of

the candles, etc.) in preparation for the priest. Then they would go outside and pray until the priest came out of the Holy Place. There would be one priest at the altar of offering outside and one priest at the altar of incense. And once the priest outside offered the lamb on the altar, the priest inside would dump incense on the fire of the altar of incense.

- This symbolizes many things:
 - the aroma going up at the same time as the death of the lamb symbolizes the death of Christ on the Cross as a sweet aroma to the Father
 - The raising of incense is a raising up of the prayers of all the people outside
- The angel's appearance
 - It had been 400 years since the last Divine Communication... God went 400 years without any prophecies, angels, etc. But now that the Father is going to send His only-begotten Son, He sends an angelic messengers to announce His intention; the prepare the mind of the people to receive such great news.
 - The appearance of the angel was sudden and unexpected, so Zacharias was fearful
 - The angel stood on the right side of the altar of incense

¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his 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 shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." ¹⁸ And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." ¹⁹ And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you [d]these glad tidings. ²⁰ But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

- Do not be afraid
 - When the angel says these words, there is a power associated with them to cast away any fear from the heart
- Your prayer is heard
 - The prayer for offspring ("and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son")
- John
 - Name means "God is gracious"
 - God made an oath/promise to Adam and Even ("Elizabeth" = Oath of God) and in the fullness of time ("Zacharias" = God Remembers), God fulfilled the promise by sending us Grace through His only-begotten Son ("John" = God is gracious)
- "Many will rejoice at his birth"
 - Until now, we rejoice at his birth
- "Great in the sight of the Lord"
 - All of us want to be great... for some it is to be rich, for some it is reputation and honor, for some it is prestige and position... but true Greatness is to be "Great in the

Sight of the Lord"

- Christ said about John that He is "the greatest among those born of women"
- He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink
 - No lover of wine or strong drink can be great in the sight of the Lord
- Filled with the Holy Spirit
 - John is filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb
 - Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit when John is born
 - Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit at the visit of St. Mary to her
- He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God
 - John was an instrument to turn many of the Israelites who verbally worshipped Christ but denied Him in error, superstition, etc.
 - "those who turn many to righteousness [shall shine] like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)
- John and Elijah
 - John is granted the spirit of Elijah and resembles him
 - Celibacy
 - Dress: Camel hair cloak and leather loincloth
 - Mission: Sent by God to call the covenant people to repentance
 - John stood before King Herod as Elijah stood before King Ahab
 - The Jews believed (and still do) that Elijah would come before the Messiah. We believe that Elijah will come at the Second Coming of Christ
 - "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." (Malachi 4:6)
- Zacharias demands a sign
 - "How shall I know this"
 - Gabriel reminds him of who he is - "I am Gabriel" the second archangel!
 - Zacharias had the honor of being the first one to whom the news of salvation is announced, and the first one to whom the Lord spoke in hundreds of years... and yet he asks for a sign.
 - Asking for a sign shows spiritual weakness... doubt, lack of faith.
 - Especially as coming from an angel and coming to a priest
- Archangel Gabriel
 - Name means "The hero of God" or "The might one of God"
 - One of the seven archangels who is responsible for being the messenger of good news
 - He came to Daniel to tell him about the restoration of Jerusalem
 - He came to Zacharias to declare the glorious office of St John the Baptist
 - He came to St Mary to announce the Birth of Christ

²¹ And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. ²² But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. ²³ So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. ²⁴ Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, ²⁵ "Thus the Lord has dealt with me,

in the days when He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among people.”

- It happened before that some priests died while making their offerings (i.e. because of their sins), so they got worried when he didn't come out
 - Leviticus 10
 - Numbers 16
 - Numbers 40
 - 2 Chronicles 26
- Days of his service = one week (Sabbath to Sabbath)
 - 2 Kings 11:5
- Elizabeth hid herself five months
 - Maybe she was amazed at the angelic announcement and went into isolation in order to meditate on the wonderful goodness of God and to praise God in rejoicing
 - Maybe she considered how she could best do her part to train this child and be the best mother
 - Maybe she kept herself hidden lest she exposes herself to ridicule before knowing for certain it was reality
- Take away my reproach among people
 - In those days, having children was a blessing from God... the Messiah could come from these children!
 - Rachel, mother of Joseph, said "God has taken away my reproach" when she was barren and gave birth to Joseph

Luke 1b: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاين تاطع • LUKE 1: 26 - 38 ~ Bible Study

Annunciation of the Birth of Christ

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord *is* with you; blessed are you among women!" ²⁹ But ^[1]when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then 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 bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; 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 of His kingdom there will be no end."

- Sixth month
 - Sixth month of the pregnancy of Elizabeth (this sentence follows the one before it)
 - St John the Baptist is 6 months older than Christ
 - The Coptic Synxarion on Paone 29/30 (July 7) celebrates the Nativity of St John
- Mary
 - In Hebrew it is Miriam
- Nazareth
 - An insignificant village of lower Galilee
 - Not mentioned in the Old Testament
 - Not mentioned in any ancient text before the New Testament
 - Not mentioned in Josephus' writings
 - "A city of Galilee named Nazareth" - this kind of language indicates that St Luke is writing to people unfamiliar with Palestine
 - St Mary and St Joseph lived in Nazareth and Christ spent most of His life living in Nazareth - thus, He was called the Nazarene (Matthew 2:23, Mark 1:24)
 - Nazareth means "branch"
 - So when Matthew said "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene'" he was talking about Isaiah 11:1 "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."

- Virginity of St Mary
 - In Hebrew, the same word is used for "virgin" and "young girl."
 - In Greek, "Virgin" is Παρθένος which is different from "young girl."
 - When Simeon the Elder was translating the book of Isaiah to Greek for the Septuagint, he read it in Hebrew and didn't know if he should use "virgin" or "young girl" - but upon a revelation from God, he used Παρθένος ("virgin"). And the Evangelists used the same Greek word: Παρθένος.
 - Betrothed
 - Betrothal was a ceremony of great importance and usually took place a year before the marriage
 - It is like a civil marriage but without consummation
 - St Matthew calls her "his wife" and this is considered true because she was legally his wife
 - Although Mary was betrothed, she vowed her virginity. She had an agreement with her betrothed that she would remain a virgin... so the betrothal is simply to protect her civil rights.
- Mary is related to Zacharias and Elizabeth
 - Mary has a link to the priestly bloodline because Elizabeth is a direct descendant of Aaron
 - And of course she has a link to the kingly bloodline being a descendant of King David
- Greeting of Archangel Gabriel to St Mary
 - "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!"
 - The greeting of the angel to Mary is different from his greeting to Zacharias - she gets an honorary title "highly favored" and "full of grace"
- She was troubled
 - The fact that she was troubled by his greeting is evidence of her humility - "who am I to receive such a greeting?"
- Do not be afraid, Mary for you have found favor with God.
 - Calling her by name signifying that he knows her
 - Do not be afraid - these words carry power
- The Divine Message
 - She will be a mother of a Son
 - The angel is reminding her of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."
 - This Son will be called "Jesus"
 - Jesus (Joshua, Hosea) means "Savior"
 - He will be great
 - This is a fulfillment of the Prophecy by Isaiah
 - "For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of *His* government and peace
There will be no end,

Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

- He will be called the Son of the Highest
 - "Highest" was one of the Titles of God the Father
 - Genesis 14:19
 - Mark 5:7
 - Psalm 92:1
 - Psalm 83:18
 - "Son of the Highest" is "Son of God"
 - Peter called Him "You are the Christ, the Son of God"
 - Centurion at the Cross said "this is truly the Son of God"
 - God called Jesus His Son
 - "You are My Son today I have begotten You"
 - "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"
 - Only-begotten
 - We are all sons of God by adoption
 - But Christ is the only-begotten of the Father [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
- The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.
 - Echoes the promises that God gave to King David (2 Samuel 7:9-16, 2 Samuel 23:5)
 - Even the temporal kingdom of Israel belonged to Christ by hereditary right
 - Promises
 - Abraham: The Messiah would be his Seed
 - Moses: Jesus will be the Prophet (deliver message from God to us... Hebrews 1:1)
 - David: Jesus will be the King and establish the Spiritual Kingdom on earth
 - Joachim, father of St Mary, was a descendant of King David
 - Anna, mother of St Mary, was a descendant of Aaron
- He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His Kingdom, there will be no end
 - forever = spiritual kingdom
 - St Paul in 1 Cor 15 talks about the Kingdom of Christ
 - Christ is ruling now from the day of the Crucifixion, until the Second Coming when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" ³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.* ³⁶ Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

- Perpetual Virginity of St. Mary

- St. Mary was a virgin before the annunciation
- She was a virgin during the pregnancy
- She was a virgin during the birth and labor
- She continued in her virginity even until the day of her death
- If she intended to marry, she wouldn't have said "How can this be?" but rather "When will this be?"
- Why was Zacharias punished, but St Mary was not (although she asked 'How can this be?')
 - St Mary has a legitimate question - how can this be? I have not known a man, I have vowed my virginity...
 - If she was planning to get married, she wouldn't question because she would understand that this was all to take place after her marriage...
 - Never in the history of the world was it heard of that a virgin gave birth
 - Look at her attitude when she got the answer "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word"
 - Zacharias's question - by what sign?
 - This question came from doubt
 - It happened many times in the past that a barren woman gave birth (e.g. Hannah the mother of Samuel), and an elder couple had children (e.g. Abraham and Sarah had Isaac)
- The Holy Spirit will come upon you
 - This conception will be done by the power of the Holy Spirit; it is a divine conception; it is above and beyond our understanding
- The power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God
 - Again using "the Highest" to refer to God the Father
 - Again about "the Son of God"
- Pregnancy of Elizabeth
 - Elizabeth's pregnancy was a deviation from nature because she was barren and old
- With God nothing is impossible
 - Even for a Virgin to be pregnant
- Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word
 - Many Church Fathers believe that at this moment, as soon as she said this word, she became pregnant - because it was not possible for the Incarnation without her will. God respects and sanctifies human freedom
 - Some attack titles that we give St Mary (especially in praises):
 - "The salvation of our father Adam"
 - If we assumed (for sake of discussion) that St Mary said to Gabriel "No, I cannot accept this." God will never impose Himself on a person refusing Him. God wants to give us the gift of salvation - a free gift. St Mary, by accepting the gift of salvation, we call her "the salvation of our father Adam."
 - If there is a very poor family and some godly person wanted to give them a gift of money... or wanted to offer a job. If the father of that family rejected that gift of money, or rejected that job, then the family would continue to be poor. But if the father of that family accepted the job that was offered freely to him, then the children can say to the father "you

saved us from hunger and poverty" because he received the gift.

- St. Mary did not actively save us, but she accepted the free gift of salvation by saying "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word"
- "The new Eve"
 - Our mother Eve became disobedient to God, so the new Eve (St Mary), by her obedience and submission, undid the disobedience of our mother Eve.
 - The first Eve disobeyed God, the second Eve obeyed God

Luke 1c: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاي ن تاطع • LUKE 1: 39 - 56 ~ Bible Study (English & Arabic - يبرع)

Visit of St. Mary to Elizabeth

³⁹ Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

- Mary goes
 - Mary goes all the way to Judah from Nazareth
 - This was a journey of 7-8 days
- The babe leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit
 - This is different from the regular motion of a baby in the womb
 - Elizabeth knew by the Holy Spirit that St Mary was pregnant.
 - St Ambrose: "Elizabeth was the first to hear St Mary's voice but John was the first to be affected by the blessing. Elizabeth knew of St Mary's coming, but John felt the presence of Christ in the womb of St Mary."
 - St Cyril of Jerusalem: "When John was filled with the Holy Spirit, he became sanctified while still in his mother's womb. Consecrated as priest to baptize the Lord."
- Elizabeth spoke out with a loud voice
 - She used the same words to St Mary that the angel used: "Blessed are you among women"
 - The words she said to St Mary were not her own words but the words of the Holy Spirit on her mouth
 - "mother of my Lord" - doctrine of Theotokos
- Why is this granted to me?
 - Who am I to deserve this? See the humility of Elizabeth

- St. Mary is the Ark of Covenant
 - "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" (2 Samuel 6:9) - King David
 - "Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" - Elizabeth
 - "The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months." (2 Samuel 6:11)
 - "And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house."
 - The ark which carried the Rod, the Tablets and the Manna represents St. Mary who carried the Way, the Truth and the Life
 - St. John the Baptist leaped in the womb
 - King David danced before the ark of covenant (2 Samuel 6:14)
- Heresy of Nestorius
 - **Nestorius' HERESY:** Mary gave birth to a human being and then after he was born as a human, the divinity dwelt in this child. He was excommunicated for this belief.
 - The Ecumenical Council of Ephesus used the statement of Elizabeth in verse 33 to confirm that St Mary is Mother of God
- Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord
- The Holy Spirit works differently in all of us
 - St. Elizabeth was very old and yet she is speaking loudly and exclaiming and very excited and saying all of these words because of the Holy Spirit's work in her
 - St. Mary was the opposite, and the Holy Spirit worked in her meekness and inner peace.

The Magnificat

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For He who is mighty has done great things for me,

And holy *is* His name.

⁵⁰ And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him

From generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm;

He has scattered *the* proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has put down the mighty from *their* thrones,

And exalted *the* lowly.

⁵³ He has filled *the* hungry with good things,

And *the* rich He has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped His servant Israel,

In remembrance of *His* mercy,

⁵⁵ As He spoke to our fathers,

To Abraham and to his seed forever."

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

- What was Mary's response to the praise Elizabeth gave her?
- She magnified the Lord. She gave glory to the Lord.
 - Although there is a difference between the soul and spirit, many times in Scripture they are used interchangeably.
 - Here, she is using her whole body and her heart and her mind and understanding, she is magnifying the Lord.
 - Praising God with our lips only is of no consequence... yes I praise Him with my tongue, but my tongue is in conjunction with my heart
- My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior
 - She knew herself to be a sinner born with original sin; she needed a Savior!
 - The Roman Catholics believe in "immaculate conception" that St Mary was born without original sin... but if that's the case, why does she need a Savior?
- For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
 - God chose St. Mary because of her humility - He regarded the lowly state.
 - St. Mary did not have an easy life and she went her whole life having made no choices:
 - She did not choose to be presented to the Temple
 - She did not choose Joseph to be her fiance
 - She did not choose to be pregnant with the Son of God
 - She did not choose to go to Egypt
 - She did not choose to live with John the Beloved
 - It is impossible for anyone to live this way if they are not humble.
- For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.
 - Why? Because God chose her and she accepted the plan of God
 - Protestants who deny veneration for saints are missing this part where St Mary said that all generations will call her blessed... It is our obligation to honor and venerate St Mary
- For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name.
 - St Mary attributes all to God and ascribes nothing to herself or her own merits
- And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation.
 - Fear of God is not submissive fear like a servant to his master, but it is reverence and respect and recognition of God's sovereignty
 - God's mercy extends to all from generation to generation
 - It is not for a certain people
 - It is not for a certain time
 - St Mary first praises God for what He has done for her, personally, but now expands to what He has done for all people
- He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
 - "His arm" refers to the mighty power of God (like after He spread the Red Sea "the right hand of God has done wonders"; plagues, destruction of Pharaoh, etc)
 - God scatters the proud like chaff or straw - Scribes and Pharisees fell from their earthly glory because in their arrogance and pride, they rejected to accept the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly.
 - St Mary is speaking prophetically and alluding to the destruction of Satan

- Those who are humble and rely on God will be exalted; those who trust in their own wisdom will be put down from their thrones.
- He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.
 - Rich refers to those who trust in their own money, resources, abilities, etc.
 - Those who are poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness - they are rewarded.
- He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.
 - Her joy in the fact that God has done great things for her rests on the fact that these great things are for all of Israel too
 - God remembered His mercy that He spoke to Abraham and the fathers
 - Jesus in her womb is the fulfillment of what God spoke to the fathers, to Abraham and to his seed
 - The seed of Abraham is not just the natural seed or according to the flesh (that's why Ishmael was not accepted)... but the children according to the Promise (Isaac). The spiritual children from the Gentiles which is all of us.

Luke 1d: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاي ن تاطع • LUKE 1: 57 - 80 ~ Bible Study (Eng/Arabic - يبرع)

Birth and Circumcision of John the Baptist

⁵⁷ Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. ⁵⁸ When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

- The nine months are now complete and St Mary had stayed with her about three months. St. Mary leaves in order to avoid the company which will be at the delivery of the child.
- Elizabeth conceiving and giving birth to John the Baptist was the fulfillment and first part of the angel's annunciation to Zacharias: "Do not be afraid Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son"
- They rejoiced with her
 - They rejoiced because God granted her a boy despite two obstacles: her barrenness, her and Zacharias' old age.
 - They rejoiced because the angelic message and annunciation of John made them wonder... who could this be that an angel is announcing his birth?

⁵⁹ So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. ⁶⁰ His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." ⁶¹ But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." ⁶² So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. ⁶⁵ Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

- Since the time of Abraham, circumcision is a was the sign of entrance into the covenant with God and to be a part of the family of God. According to the covenant between God and Abraham every male child should be circumcised on the 8th day.
 - The custom was to invite all the relatives to attend the celebration and to be witnesses that the child is formally incorporated into the covenant

- It was also the custom to name the child on the day of his circumcision
 - It was important for them to keep the tribes and the families within the tribes distinct because they were tracking the Messiah to see which tribe/family He would come from
 - In order to avoid any confusion, they would name kids in a tribe after their ancestors in that tribe
 - For example, St Paul's Jewish name was Saul because he was from the Tribe of Benjamin. So he is named after the first king of Israel, King Saul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin.
 - They wanted to name him Zacharias like his father, but Elizabeth said "No, he shall be called John" and they said "No one from your tribe or your family is called John!" So they went to Zacharias and made signs to him asking him what he would be called... Zacharias asked for a writing tablet and wrote John.
 - Tablet: Piece of wood covered with a coat of wax, and people would write with a thin instrument to kind of engrave into the wax
- John means "The Compassion of God" - Youhanna - "Yahwah 7annan"
 - Zacharias "God Remembers"; Elizabeth "The Oath of God" - God remembered His oath to the forefathers and sent His Compassion
 - Psalm of 1st Sunday of Kiahk: "You will arise and have compassion on Zion; for the time of compassion, Yes, the set time, has come." (102:13)
 - Ezekiel 16:8 "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love"
- Immediately his mouth was loosed
 - He has been mute for nine months
 - Everyone probably thought that he would never speak again... but at the birth of John, his mouth was open
 - The people witness another miracle (first, the miracle of the birth, now the miracle of the loosing of his tongue)
 - The first thing Zacharias did when his mouth was opened is to praise God
 - All the people feared God - this doesn't mean they were scared, but rather great reverence to God
- What kind of child will this be?
 - They expect that this child will be involved with the work of God

Zacharias' Prophecy

⁶⁷ Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

- This whole family was filled with the Holy Spirit:
 - John from his mother's womb
 - Elizabeth when Mary visited her (Christ in her womb)
 - Zacharias here when his tongue was loosed
- He is filled here with the Spirit of Prophecy and he will prophesy

⁶⁸ "Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel,
 For He has visited and redeemed His people,
⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
 In the house of His servant David,
⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
 Who *have been* since the world began,
⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies
 And from the hand of all who hate us,
⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers
 And to remember His holy covenant,
⁷³ The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
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 the days of our life.

- This song is an answer to the question "what kind of child will this be"
 - Before this part, we view Zacharias in a negative way - he doubted God, he was punished by being mute, etc. but in a period of 9 months of silence, he contemplated so much and spent time with his thoughts, and now he's completely different and has a prophetic spirit starting with blessing God
 - This song focuses on the Messiah who is coming to redeem His people, and how John will prepare the way for the Messiah who is coming to redeem His people, and this is the visitation of God to His people (spoken of in Ezekiel and the Psalms)
- God has visited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David
 - He starts with "God has visited and redeemed His people" and then that John will be part of the visitation of God and the economy of redemption.
 - Redemption and Salvation is the grand theme of the Holy Scripture
 - Redeem means "to buy back for himself" - that which was stolen from Him and sold into slavery and bondage ("whereby we were bound and sold on account of our sins")
 - He is the Son of God before all ages, but in the fullness of time, He became man from the seed of David through St Mary
 - "Horn" is a symbol of strength and power
 - Deuteronomy 33:17
 - Psalm 75:10
- As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began that we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us
 - Many prophecies in the Old Testament about how the Messiah will come and save them from their enemies
 - The work of salvation is deliverance from enemies (another theme in Scripture)
 - This hope and longing was since the world began - since the time of Adam and Eve in the garden
 - The Seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent
 - Christ will crush the head of Satan

- As God delivered Israel from the hand of Egypt, so He will deliver us from our enemies...
- Who are our enemies?
 - Unfortunately, in the mind of the Jews, even until the Crucifixion of Christ, they perceived the enemies to be their temporal enemies... human beings (the Romans). This is not the intent of the Scripture
 - All of the prophecies about "enemies" are about our spiritual enemies... who hates us? Satan and his armies.
- To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant. The oath which He swore to our father Abraham
 - This salvation is not because we are worthy or because we earned it.
 - It is a free gift because God loves us... because He chose to have mercy and compassion on us
 - The merciful deliverance was promised to all our forefathers in Israel
 - Holy Covenant
 - Zacharias has a certain covenant in mind... the covenant with Abraham
 - Genesis 12:1-3
 - Genesis 17:7
 - Genesis 22:16-18
 - God will bless Abraham, Abraham will be a blessing, in the Seed of Abraham **all the tribes of the world will be blessed**
 - God gave Abraham a land of his own (the Promised Land) like a down-payment for the fulfillment of His promise. In the mind of Israel, God will deliver them from Roman occupation and they will have their own kingdom and restore the Kingdom of David!
 - That's why on the day of Palm Sunday, they said "Hosanna to the Son of David" and "This is the King of Israel" - and even until now, Israel wants the land restored to them.
 - But the blessing to Abraham was not only to Abraham and his descendants, but for all the earth.
 - How are we to understand the covenant with Abraham?
 - God will bless Abraham - He is blessed because the Messiah will come from his seed
 - Abraham will be a blessing - Through the Seed of Abraham, all of us will be blessed
 - All the tribes of the world - Both Jews and Gentiles are blessed by the Seed of Abraham
- To grant us that we, being delivered from the hands of our enemies, might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life
 - We will worship God without fear
 - Biggest fear for anyone is death and what's after death.
 - Atheists say there is nothing after death, but in their heart, there is no true evidence or valid evidence that there is nothing after death. So they fear.
 - Those who believe in an afterlife is "what will be my destiny?" - "Am I going to heaven?"

- Through the redemption and salvation, we will be serving and worshipping Him without this fear.
 - "Do not be afraid little flock, for it is Your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"
 - "Now we have boldness to enter into the holy of the holies through Jesus and through the way He consecrated to us"
 - If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not afraid or fearful
- We will worship and serve God in holiness
 - I am not a slave of Satan anymore. I choose to be holy and I can live a holy life.
 - We receive the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us
 - Even when I sin, I have repentance, confession and the Eucharist to wash me and make me holy and pure again
- We will worship God in righteousness
 - Righteousness is to do what's right
 - When someone is baptized, they are dressed in white clothes - the righteousness of God that was given to them as a free gift. And it is received through the blood of Christ (hence the red ribbon)
 - Christ came and fulfilled all the requirements of righteousness that no single person on earth was able to fulfill, so through Him we receive this righteousness freely

⁷⁶ "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,

⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation to His people

By the remission of their sins,

⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God,

With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

⁷⁹ To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace."

⁸⁰ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

- John will fulfill the Jewish prophecies and will be called "prophet of the Highest"
 - He will be the greatest prophet (as Christ said "Among those born of women there is none greater than John the Baptist")
 - The Angel Gabriel told Zacharias that John will prepare the way of the Lord
 - This is why we call him the forerunner
- Two tasks:
 - Prepare the way of the Lord
 - Give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins
 - John came and preached "Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand"
 - He gave the people the true information about the deliverance of the Messiah
 - The Ministry of the Messiah was preceded by the Ministry of the Forerunner because the concept of salvation was distorted and falsified in Israel. So he came to correct this concept and give them the knowledge of Salvation

- Not carnal or moral, but spiritual salvation from the condemnation that happened at the Fall of Adam and Eve by the removal of this corruption and condemnation from us through forgiveness of sins
 - So St John the Baptist came preaching salvation by remission of sins
- Why are we granted this salvation?
 - Not of our own merit, but through the tender mercy of our God
 - the Dayspring from on high has visited us
 - Dayspring is the Lord Jesus Christ (see capital letter) because He is the agent of God the Father of redemption
 - Dayspring means a "new beginning" or a "new era"
 - There is some disagreement as to how to translate this word. Some translate this word to English as the "Dawn" or the "East" or the "Sunrise" or the "New Day"
 - Clearly we are talking about a new era here which is the New Testament
 - Jesus will bring the mercy of God when He visits and enlightens those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace.
 - We are sitting in darkness of ignorance and sin
 - We are in the shadow of death because we are under the sentence of death
 - To guide our feet into the way which will bring us to eternal peace, at last and spiritual peace in our life (fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, PEACE)
 - This passage mirrors Isaiah 9:1-6
- So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.
 - Bodily, Mental, Spiritual development of John the Baptist
 - Where did God prepare John for his ministry? In the desert, a place of solitude - like Moses and Elijah
 - John the Baptist - "A voice of one crying in the wilderness" so God prepared him in the wilderness

Matthew 1: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاي ن تاطع • MATTHEW - Intro & Ch 1 ~ Bible Study

Genealogy of Christ

20:00-33:40

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

² Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. ⁴ Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. ⁵ Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her *who had been the wife* of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. ⁸ Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

¹² And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. ¹⁴ Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. ¹⁶ And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon *are* fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ *are* fourteen generations.

- Son of David, Son of Abraham
 - St Matthew opens the Gospel with these words
 - He wants to tell them that the long-awaited Messiah who was promised by the prophets to restore the Kingdom of David, is Jesus of Nazareth
 - St Matthew traces the royal lineage (Jesus is the descendant of King David). This is one of the first things required to convince a Jewish audience that Jesus is qualified

to be the Messiah

- Although Abraham came before David, and is the father of all Israelites, he mentions David first because in the Jewish mind, the Messiah is the Son of David.
- Three sets of 14 Names
 - In Scripture in general, numbers usually have more significance than just a quantity (e.g. 7 is a symbol of perfection)
 - Gematria
 - Each letter has a corresponding number
 - So a name or a word has a number
 - D = 4
 - V = 6
 - DVD = 14 (in Hebrew, there aren't any vowels so the name David is DVD)
 - 14 = King David's Number
 - St Matthew wants to establish the link between Christ and King David
 - Three sets of 14 in the Genealogy in Ch 1
 - Total 42
 - 42 is 6x7
 - 6 is the number of man (since man was made on the 6th day)
 - 7 is the number of God (perfect number)
 - So 42 is the conflict between man and God
 - Man rebelled against God
 - But God sent His Son to reconcile man with God
- He only mentions the names of people who are ancestors of Christ
 - He doesn't mention Ishmael, Esau, the twelve sons of Jacob, etc.
- Four women mentioned
 - Three by name
 - Tamar - Genesis 38
 - Rahab - Prostitute of Jericho - Joshua 2
 - Ruth - Moabitess - Book of Ruth
 - They are named for their remarkable history
 - The fourth is "her who had been the wife of Uriah"
 - Uriah was a Hittite (i.e. a Gentile) so his wife was also likely a Gentile
 - All of them are Gentile women - in order to show that Christ came from and for both the Jews and Gentiles
- Omitted names
 - Between Joram and Uzziah, three names are intentionally omitted
 - 1 Chronicles 3:11-12 - Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah
 - It was common to omit less important names in Genealogies
 - In this case, St Matthew wanted to preserve the number 14 in each of the three sets
 - Between Josiah and Jeconiah, one name is intentionally omitted
 - After Zerubbabel, the name Abiud does not appear in 1 Chronicles
 - Some say that it was skipped
 - Others say that it was just another name
- End of the Genealogy

- Jews carefully kept public and family records of genealogy because everyone wanted to know where the Messiah would come from.
- St Matthew must have gotten the end of this genealogy from some of those records
- Joseph
 - Although Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus, he is the legal father of Jesus (because he is the legal husband of St Mary because of the betrothal)
 - This lineage that has a long chain of kings ends with a poor carpenter
- Genealogy of St Luke
 - Comparing the two genealogies, they are different in many areas (especially between David and Joseph)
 - St Matthew gives the line of St Joseph - the legal line
 - This is acceptable to the Jews. They would not recognize this genealogy as a fulfillment of prophecies if St Matthew had used the line of St Mary.
 - St Luke gives the line of St Mary - the biological line
 - St Luke, being a Gentile and writing to a Gentile (Theophilus), he is more interested in proving that Christ is Son of David biologically.
 - Jesus is the Son of David through the legal line AND the biological line

Nativity of Christ

33:40-44:15

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

- Joseph her husband, being a just man
 - St Mary was betrothed to St Joseph
 - Betrothal was considered a civil (legal) marriage. There was a formal ceremony and it was a binding obligation. The time of betrothal was usually 1 year before the marriage.
 - Any unfaithfulness after betrothal is considered adultery
 - He found her with child, and assumed that she had committed sin.

- As a righteous man, he didn't want to ruin her reputation. He didn't want her to be stoned. He decided to divorce her in secret. This shows his righteousness.
- Angel of the Lord
 - Most likely, this was Archangel Gabriel who appeared to St Mary and Zacharias
 - "Joseph, son of David" - emphasis here by St Matthew on King David
 - The angel is preparing him for this marvelous announcement that the Son in St Mary's womb is God incarnate, the Messiah
 - "Do not be afraid"
 - You are not offending God
 - You are not bringing upon yourself any scandal
 - This conception is from the Holy Spirit
 - Jesus
 - Joshua - Hosea - Josiah are synonymous meaning "Savior" from the verb "to save" (like Hosanna)
 - Jesus is our Savior to save us from the curse of sin, condemnation and banishment
 - "He will save His people from their sins"
- Prophecy from Isaiah 7:14
 - St Matthew supports this with a prophecy from Isaiah
 - St Matthew uses this prophecy to prove to the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and King of the Jews that they are waiting for
- Immanuel
 - "God with us" - God, who is above us, became man and came and lived among us
- Joseph does not delay
 - After the angel assures him, as soon as he wakes up, he immediately took Mary back and did not take any action
- "did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son"
 - "know her" means to have relationship as husband and wife.
 - There are two words that arouse questions: "till" and "firstborn"
 - "till"
 - Does not necessarily reply that they lived differently afterward
 - "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (Psalm 110)
 - Does this mean that the Lord will sit at the right hand, but once He makes His enemies His footstool, He will tell Him "don't sit here anymore"? Of course not
 - "David did not know Michal his wife until the day she died"
 - Does this mean that after she died, he knew her? Of course not
 - "firstborn"
 - Called for the firstborn child whether there are other children or no other children
 - Using the word "firstborn" does not indicate whether there are other children or not, but of course we believe in the perpetual virginity of St Mary
 - "brothers of the Lord" that we read about in the Gospels are His cousins (as St Jerome explains in detail)

Luke 2a: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاي ن تاطع • LUKE 2: 1 - 24 ~ Bible Study

Outline of the Chapter

- 1-7: Birth of Christ
- 8-20: Praise of the Angels and Visit of the Shepherds
- 21: Circumcision of Christ
- 22-24: Presentation in the Temple
- 25-38: Simeon and Anna
- 39-40: Holy Family Returns to Nazareth
- 41-50: Boy Jesus Amazes Scholars
- 51-52: Jesus Advances in Wisdom and Favor

Birth of Christ

¹And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³ So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

⁴ 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, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. ⁶ So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷ 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.

- St Luke begins the story of the birth of Christ with "in those days" - which days?
 - The days mentioned in the previous chapter... around the time of the Annunciation of John and Annunciation of Christ and the birth of St John
 - St Luke's Gospel uses "in those days" a lot
- Luke sets the historical time for the birth of Christ
 - During the reign of Caesar Augustus as Roman Emperor (31 BC - 14 AD)
 - During the time of Quirinius as governor of Syria
- Census of Quirinius

- The rules of a census are that each person goes back to the land of their family/tribe and where they were born. The census was used by to appropriately tax each everyone in the empire
- The journey from Nazareth in Galilee (north) to Bethlehem in Judea (south) is approximately 80 miles
- Nothing happens haphazardly but all by the economy of God in order to fulfill the prophecy of Micah:
 - "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)
- Joseph's going to Bethlehem publicly declared that both him and Mary, his wife, are from the tribe of Judah and the lineage of King David
- Mary, his betrothed wife
 - Jewish tradition had three steps in a marriage:
 - Proposal/Engagement
 - Betrothal
 - Civil marriage. The legal aspects - he provides for her and she provides for him
 - Marriage
 - Consummation of the relationship
 - St Mary and St Joseph's marriage was not consummated, but St Mary was perpetually in her virginity
- Obedience of Authority
 - St Joseph and St Mary teach us to obey the authority in their obedience of the census rules
 - "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God." (Romans 13:1-2)
 - We ought to obey the authority of the law and government unless it contradicts God
 - "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)
- Firstborn
 - Title of rank and birth order of first male child, whether there are other children or not
 - Firstborn was to be dedicated to the Lord (Exodus 13, Numbers 3)
 - St Mary's Virginity remained sealed
 - "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut." (Ezekiel 44:2)
 - St Augustine describes it as Light passing through Glass
- Swaddling & Manger
 - When a child was born they were washed and then swaddled - in this, Christ was treated like any ordinary Hebrew child
 - However, he was placed in a manger
 - Manger is a feeding trough for animals. It was filled with hay. So St Mary placed Him in there so He would be warm.

- There is a beautiful meaning here which is that He is the Bread of Life, and He was placed in a feeding trough when He was born
- We see their poverty in that they were not regarded by anyone and could not even find a place to sleep

Praise of the Angels and Visit of the Shepherds

⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And ^[ε]behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this *will* be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

- Shepherds
 - God chose the shepherds to be the first on earth to hear the glorious news of the birth of the Savior of the world
 - Why?
 - As a practical example of how God "resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6)
 - In those days, shepherds were the lowest rank - they could not even give testimony in court.
 - St Mary in the Magnificat talked about how God has "exalted the lowly"
 - Christianity is not about prestige, power, money, or fame, but about humility and the lowly in heart
 - Because Christ is the Good Shepherd, the Chief and True Shepherd
 - Not just any shepherds, but these are the ones who were faithful to their sheep, watchful in the night, not idle
 - These specific shepherds in the country of Judea were the ones who cared for the lambs that would be used in daily sacrifice in the Temple... not just any sheep.

- The Angel
 - The Scripture did not reveal to us who the angel is or which angel
 - The shepherds saw an appearance that was extraordinary and unusual, so they were afraid
 - They were likely considering "who are we that the glory of God manifests in front of us"
- The Angel's Address
 - There is power in the word from the angel when he says "Do not be afraid"
 - Do not be afraid because I bring good news
 - The great joy is for all people: Both Jews and Gentiles
 - The Angel gives three titles for Christ:
 - Savior
 - The Savior Whom God appointed from the beginning of time, and Who was promised even from the time of Adam and Eve
 - People expected a Savior and Salvation
 - Salvation from sin, from Satan; Restoration of our fellowship with God that was lost in the Garden of Eden
 - Christ
 - Chrismated One, Anointed One, Messiah, El messi⁷
 - This Babe is the fulfillment of all Old Testament Prophecies:
 - The Anointed One
 - The Seed of Eve
 - The Prophet spoken of by Moses
 - The Suffering Servant of Isaiah
 - The Messiah
 - The Promised Son of David
 - Lord
 - Hebrew Jehovah
 - Lord of all creatures
 - Lord of lords
 - The angel gives a sign
 - "You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths"
 - This is not the sign - this could refer to any Hebrew child
 - "lying in a manger"
 - This is the sign - this is the unusual part
 - This is the third sign so far in this gospel
- Multitude of Heavenly Hosts
 - Thousands of thousands and ten thousands times ten thousands of heavenly hosts; angels, archangels, etc.
 - Some Church Fathers say that ALL of the angels were present at the birth of Christ to glorify and adore Him
 - "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'" (Hebrews 1:6)
- Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!
 - Zacharias' praise in Luke 1 prophesied that the Messiah would lead the people to the peace of God, and now the angels are echoing his prophecy

- What is goodwill toward men?
 - It is the goodwill of God to send the Messiah to introduce peace on earth and to remove and abolish the enmity that sin has raised between us and God and restore a peaceful communication between us and God
 - If we are at peace with God, all peace will result from this. Peace is the foundation of goodwill.
- Some translations: "And on earth peace towards men of goodwill"
 - Men of goodwill, who are willing to be reconciled with God
- The Shepherds did not doubt
 - Not for a moment
 - They did not say "Let's see if it's true" or make any discussions
 - This is another reason God sent the angel to them - they have a spirit of faith
 - They went with haste
 - Many times God gives us opportunities, but we have to accept them quickly because in delaying we may lose them
- They were the first to proclaim the good news
- Following these events is the narrative in Matthew 1-2 with the Magi
- All who heard it marveled
 - They all marveled, but none of them came to see... none of them came to worship Him. This is the attitude of many today who hear great news and marvel and wonder... but that's it.
 - When St Mary appeared in Zeitoun in the 1960s, she was seen first by the non-believers... and the news of her appearance spread around the world. For three years she was appearing on and off for long periods of time. Everyone who saw it marveled... but not all of them worshipped God. Not all of them repented. Not all of them changed their lives.
- St Mary kept and pondered
 - Kept
 - She kept detailed records of all of these events (everything in Luke 1 and 2).
 - No doubt she shared these records with St Luke (maybe while he painted her portrait)
 - Pondered
 - She continually meditated and reflected on these things
 - St Luke is calling us here to do the same: to reflect on these events and on their meaning in MY Life
 - Christ the Savior came to save ME Personally
 - Christ the King is MY King which means I am loyal to Him and abide by His law
 - Christ the Lord is MY Lord that I worship and that I love
- The Shepherds glorify God
 - Because everything the angel said came to pass
 - Because they counted themselves unworthy to be first to witness His birth

Circumcision of Christ

²¹ And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

- The Jews had a tradition of naming the child on the day of his circumcision since that was the day he becomes dedicated to the covenant with Abraham and part of the community of believers
 - Jesus was named on the day of His Circumcision
 - He is called Jesus which means "Savior" - the name given by the angel
 - See the obedience of St Mary and St Joseph to the angel
- Did Jesus need Circumcision?
 - Since He is the Law-Giver, He is not bound to the Law
 - But He was incarnate and born under the Law
 - "But when the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." (Galatians 4:4)
 - He came to fulfill all righteousness and do the things that those under the law should have been doing
 - By Circumcision He declares to us that He is the son of Abraham according to the flesh
 - God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed
 - Christ came, as a son of Abraham according to the flesh, so that we can be sons of Abraham according to the spirit
 - Children of Abraham are those who walk according to the faith of Abraham

Presentation of Christ in the Temple

²² Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

- Two Practices here:
 - Purification of St Mary
 - Presentation of the Lord in the Temple
- Purification of St Mary
 - Laws of Ritual Confinement are found in Leviticus 12:1-6
 - 40 days or 80 days confinement to witness to the fact that every child born in this world is born with the corrupted nature inherited after the sin of Adam and Eve
 - The waiting was unnecessary for St Mary because Christ was not born with corrupted nature or sin. Absolutely not.
 - Out of obedience to the Law, she performed it
 - Many people argue about it now, yet St Mary, the one who didn't have to do it, did it in obedience
 - The offering was a lamb and a pigeon... but there was an alternative for the poor: two doves and two young pigeons.
- Presentation of the Lord in the Temple
 - Firstborn sons had to be redeemed according to the Law

- When God struck the firstborns of Egypt (10th plague), God said to Moses that all the firstborn children who He saved from this plague, are His, so they have to be redeemed.

Luke 2b: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاين تاطع • LUKE 2: 25 - 40 ~ Bible Study

Simeon's Praises

²⁵ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹ "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³² A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel."

³³ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵ (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

- Simeon
 - His name means "The Listener"
 - He was a devout Jew waiting for the fulfillment of the prophecies
 - Holy Tradition tells us that Simeon was one of the Seventy Jewish Elders asked by Ptolemy to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek Language (Septuagint)
 - The Septuagint is the official translation of the Orthodox Church
 - All the New Testament writings when they quote the OT are quoting the Septuagint
 - When Simeon was translating Isaiah "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."
 - The Hebrew word can be translated to "young girl" or "virgin" (two different words in Greek).

- Simeon decided to translate to the Greek word "young girl."
- In a vision, he was told to use the word for "virgin" (παρθένος) and he was assured that he would not die until he sees this Babe who is born of a Virgin
- Matthew's Gospel used παρθένος (Virgin) when quoting Isaiah
- Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit to go to the Temple right now
- Just and devout
 - Just means he is observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless
 - Devout means he is observing the Law faithfully
- Considered a Prophet because he prophesied about St Mary and the Lord Jesus Christ
- Tradition says he was about 360 years old - now he is eager to be released from this world after he witnessed the salvation of the whole world in Christ
- Blessing of Simeon
 - The Holy Spirit granted to him to witness the prophecy that he translated
 - Those who are led by the Holy Spirit and come to the Church to worship will undoubtedly meet with God
 - Simeon identified this Babe as the Messiah and Savior of all people
 - Now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word
 - Now I know for sure that this prophecy was "Virgin" - Now I have peace because I have witnessed the assurance of salvation for the world.
 - He is talking here about his death - but we know that because of Christ and the Cross, death lost its sting. Death even lost its name - as we say now "there is no death for Your servants but a departure" and Simeon uses this word.
 - For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples
 -
 - A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles
 - The Gentiles were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death because they did not know God
 - Those who are separated from God, until now, are sitting in darkness and ignorance
 - "light of the Gentiles" is also mentioned throughout the Old Testament
 - Isaiah 49:6
 - Isaiah 42:6
 - And the glory of Your people Israel
 - He came to Israel first (He came to His own and His own did not receive Him)
 - Israel here does not refer to the nation of Israel, but refers to the people of God... we, Christians, are the new Israel and God is our glory.
 - Clearly, St Mary memorized this prayer and kept it in her heart and mentioned it to St Luke for him to record it for us.
- Simeon Blessed Them
 - Them refers to Mary and Joseph only
 - In Arabic it says "barekhoma" which means "Blessed them (two)" as opposed to "barekhom" which means "Blessed them (plural)"

- Simeon realized by the Holy Spirit that he cannot bless Jesus
- Simeon Addresses Mary
 - This is unusual because in the Jewish culture it would be more typical to address the father/man
 - This child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel
 - Fall is because Israel rejected the Messiah; but in the last days, before the Second Coming, many of Israel will believe in Christ (Romans 11:26) and this is the Rising
 - Fall and Rising refers to many who might accept Christ and many who don't
 - A sign which will be spoken against
 - The sign of the Cross: to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness (1 Cor 1:23)
 - Christians will carry this sign and will be persecuted for their beliefs
 - Sword will pierce through St Mary's soul
 - Anguish and wound of her heart when she stood by the Cross and witnessed her Son's brutal death
 - The thoughts of many hearts may be revealed
 - In times of persecution, it is revealed and clear who is Christian. Who accepts Christ and who rejects. Who is on His side and who is against Him

Anna Bears Witness

³⁶ Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷ and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. ³⁸ And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

- Anna was probably around 105 years old
- Seems to come from a very well-known family in the tribe of Asher
- She devoted her life to the temple despite her husband dying very young - she did not consider re-marrying
- The Holy Spirit guided her to come in that moment
- She declared the good news to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem

The Holy Family Returns to Nazareth

³⁹ So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their *own* city, Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

- According to the Law of the Lord: St Mary and St Joseph were obedient to the word of God
- When did Christ go to Egypt?
 - Between the Presentation in the Temple and the return to Nazareth, the events of the Gospel of Matthew happened
 - They remained in Jerusalem, the wise men visited, Herod sent to kill the children in Bethlehem, they fled to Egypt, they returned to Nazareth

- St Luke in these words understands and confirms the true Humanity of the Lord Christ. Christ is perfectly divine and perfectly human, and these two natures are united together without mingling, without confusion and without alteration.
 - The body that Christ took from St Mary is perfectly human - Human Body, Human Soul, Human Spirit.
 - Filled with wisdom - He is speaking about how Christ grew little by little in wisdom despite having perfect understanding and perfect and complete wisdom.
 - The grace of God was upon Him: He knew no sin. He lived a pure life. In the same way, if any of us live a life of repentance (i.e. a pure life), then the grace of God will be upon us.
- Why don't we have more stories about Christ's childhood?
 - The Evangelists intended to give an account of Jesus' public ministry, not His private life or His childhood
 - We don't know anything except what we read in Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2
- Christ set a perfect example for all children of all ages - He is obedient to His parents, living a life without sin.

Luke 2c: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاين تاطع • LUKE 2: 41 - 52 ~ Bible Study

The Boy Jesus Amazes the Scholars

⁴¹ His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. ⁴³ When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ⁴⁶ Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

⁴⁹ And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

- Going to Jerusalem
 - The Law of Moses required the attendance of all males at three major feasts (Exodus 23:17, Deuteronomy 16:16):
 - Passover
 - Pentecost
 - Feast of Tabernacles
 - By the First Century, this is also applicable to females
 - The scattering of the Jews relaxed the obligation for those who lived in Diaspora
 - Jewish Boys' Spiritual Growth
 - 3 Years Old - Receives his tassle garment
 - 5 Years Old - Starts to learn some of the Law (Ten Commandments, etc.)
 - 12 Years Old - Becomes a Student of the Law
 - Modern Day Childhood Development teaches that kids go through three stages of childhood
 - Infancy-6 Years Old: What
 - There is something called prayer, fasting, confession, etc.
 - 6-12: How
 - They should start to do these things

- 12-18: Why
 - They should learn why they are doing those things
 - This seems to approximately match what the Jews were doing
 - This may be the first time that they took Jesus with them to Jerusalem for the Feast now that He is 12 years old to show that He is now responsible for fulfilling all the Law
- Feast of Passover
 - Seven Days for the Feast of Unleavened Bread ("when they had finished the days")
- They are traveling in large groups with their relatives and friends, so they thought that he was with the other children
 - It was not intentional that Christ lingered behind - but maybe He missed the departure journey, or maybe He was used to going to the Temple every day that week and He went another week to learn from the scholars
 - Many of us continue in our life journey thinking that Christ is in my company, but He is not
- Christ in the Temple was listening and asking questions - when we come to the Church, let us keep this attitude
 - He wants to increase in wisdom. Although He is God, the Source of All Wisdom, He emptied Himself (Philippians 2:7). So He grew in wisdom as any young boy would.
 - Take the example of Christ, who spent His time sitting among elders and scholars trying to grow in wisdom and learn... instead of spending hours and hours on social media polluting your mind with lies, come and search for the truth in the Church of God among Godly teachers and Godly scholars.
- Christ is missing for three days in Jerusalem as He was missed for three days between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Finding Him on the third day prefigures the Resurrection.
- St Mary, has a mother, gently reproaches Him but St Joseph stood away
 - St Augustine comments on "Your father and I" - "though she obtained all this honor having God's Word in her womb, yet she behaved in spiritual modesty toward St Joseph by presenting him first then herself to follow"
 - Even though she knows for sure that Jesus is her Son only, born without seed of man, and Joseph is not His biological father... her humble spirit and modesty made her to say "Your father and I"
- Christ's Response
 - The first words of Christ recorded to us in the Scripture
 - Christ is reminding them here that He came down from heaven and had a Higher Father (Higher than the earthly parents) and even in the earthly life, He should be engaged in the work that His Heavenly Father gave Him to do. Christ repeats these words many times throughout His ministry.
 - Luke included this episode in order to highlight this verse - that even from the age of 12 (the legal age to be responsible for the Law) - He said that He is here to fulfill the work that God the Father appointed for Him
 - How did they not understand? They know all of the visions they got and all that happened at His birth...
 - Maybe they were dulled after 12 years of a regular childhood
 - "My Father's Business" cannot be understood completely at their time before the Ministry and Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ

Jesus Advances in Wisdom and Favor

⁵¹ Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

- Subject to them
 - Obedient to the commandment of honoring His earthly parents
 - Although He is the Creator and He created them, in His Incarnation, He was submissive to them
 - Many times we forget to honor our parents, or try to talk to them as equals, or even in a condescending way. But the Creator of the whole world... God, Himself, was submissive to His parents.
- St Mary's Contemplation
 - She is reflecting on these events, keeping in mind what Archangel Gabriel told her, keeping in mind what the Prophets taught, etc.
- Jesus Increased and Matured:
 - Mentally (Wisdom)
 - Physically (Stature)
 - Spiritually (Favor with God)
 - Socially (Favor with men)
- Maturity is a very important issue in our life
 - Many ask "when is the best age for someone to start serving in the Church?"
 - Mature Mentally - intellectually
 - Mature Physically - at least 16 or so
 - Mature Socially - he needs to know how to communicate
 - Mature Spiritually - Of course
 - Or "when should I get married?"
 - Mature Mentally
 - Mature Physically
 - Mature Socially
 - Mature Spiritually
- Eutychus said Jesus was not a perfect human, and His humanity was fake... this is a heresy and Eutychus was excommunicated. So if you get asked "How did the eternal wisdom of the Father and God increase in wisdom?" The answer is that He emptied Himself
- St Luke knew the stories of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 from St Mary directly since he had a relationship with her when he painted her portrait. This conclusion of the Church Fathers is obligatory because no one else could have given St Luke these details.

Matthew 2: HG Bishop Youssef

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His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاي ن تاطع • MATTHEW 2 ~ Bible Study

Wise Men from the East

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

³ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

- St Luke recorded in detail the events related to the day of the birth of Christ. But St Matthew did not mention those details.
 - St Matthew was writing to the Jews and wanted to tell them that Jesus is the King of Israel and Messiah that they are waiting for. So he didn't go into the details of the birth but chose certain events to prove to the Jews that Jesus is King
 - Wise men who followed the star to find the infant and worship Him
- Bethlehem
 - Means "house of Bread" like bet la7m in Arabic
 - John 6:35 Christ refers to Himself as the Bread of Life who descended from heaven. So it's befitting that Christ is born in Bethlehem since He is the Bread of Life.
 - This Bethlehem is the one mentioned in Judges 17:7 belonging to Judah different from Joshua 19:15 Bethlehem belonging to Zebulun.
- Jesus was born in time of King Herod, Edomite, son of Antipater who was made king by the Romans
- Wise Men
 - Proper word is Magi - priests and philosophers from Persia and Media. These were dedicated to the study of the stars as astrologers and magicians. We read about them in the book of Daniel. They lived in Iran around the region of the Euphrates.
 - Most icons and pictures portray three wise men as three. There is no biblical documentation for that assumption. We usually assume they are more than three - but because of the three gifts we usually think of them as three. It's unlikely that only three people would make that trip from Iran.
- These wise men discovered an unusual luminous star.

- Maybe they were originally Jewish and were familiar with Prophecies and how He is called the Star by Balaam (Numbers 24:17)
- They did not comprehend that Jesus is a heavenly king, not an earthly king. So they went to the palace to find this king.
- Why would King Herod be troubled?
 - This means a threat and danger to his throne
 - Although most rejoiced at the birth of Christ (shepherds, angels, etc) some were troubled (Herod and his friends "all Jerusalem")

⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵ So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

⁶ 'But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.' "

- He inquired of the chief priests and scribes
 - The chief priests were the 24 heads or chiefs of the priests (King David has decided the priests into 24 groups and each one had a chief) - 1 Chronicles 23, 24, Ezra 8
 - Scribes are the successors of Ezra. Ezra used to transcribe the scripture and the Scribes were the ones who transcribed it. So they knew scripture by heart since they were always transcribing and copying it. They are the Theologians.
 - Herod did well by calling these two groups because they are the right ones to answer it.
 - His question to them implies three things
 - The Jews expected the Messiah
 - The Scripture foretold His coming
 - The very place of His birth is foretold
 - They answered without hesitation they knew exactly where He would be born and quoted Micah 5:2
 - They said Bethlehem of Judah to differentiate from Bethlehem in Zebulun
 - In that prophecy, the place of his birth and the Character of the Messiah are made clear: He is a ruler and a shepherd. Though he is a ruler, he will rule with compassion as a shepherd
 - He wanted to know when the star appeared because in his mind the appearance of the star indicated when Jesus was born exactly.
 - He said he wanted to worship Him but this is a plain lie. Hypocrisy. He wants to know where the child was born in order to kill him.
 - God, who searches the minds, knew Herod's plan which is why He redirected the wise men
- He instructed the wise men to go and come back with his authority as King

⁷ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

⁹ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

- They departed immediately after talking to Herod
- St John Chrysostom said this star is not a regular star
 - You cannot follow a star and walk behind it... So this star must have been very low
 - The star was moving from the East to Jerusalem and this is against the natural movement of stars
 - This star stood in place to point out where the child was born
 - So this star must have been a heavenly or angelic power appearing in the form of a star to guide the wise men. The star reminds us of the pillar of fire that guided Israel
- They rejoiced when they saw the star because it confirmed to them that their journey was not in vain, but it must be a true revelation about where the king is to be born. Any vision or revelation from God is cause for rejoicing as the Lord said to us "I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you." (John 16:22)

¹¹ And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- It was the custom of the people of the East when they visit kings to present gifts to them.
 - Frankincense to represent his priesthood
 - Expensive fragrant gum from a tree in Arabia
 - Gold to represent his kingship and Kingdom
 - Myrrh represents his suffering.
 - It's an aromatic gum from a thorn bush in Arabia and Ethiopia that has a sweet aroma. It represents the words of the Prophets because their words are like a sweet aroma.
- God uses the magi in a prophetic way to tell us about the role of Christ.
 - Prophet because he told us about the Father. No one has seen the Father but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has revealed Him to us. Hebrews 1 "God who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son"
 - King, but His kingdom is not of this world. He is a Heavenly King who came to restore and re-establish the Kingdom of God that was destroyed by Satan
 - The High Priest who offered Himself as the Sacrifice.
- The three gifts prophetically represent the three roles of Christ as the Messiah: King, High-Priest, Prophet
 - At Theophany, the Holy Spirit came down and anointed Christ. Anointed as King of kings, prophet, High Priest

¹² Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

- Divine Intervention
 - Sometimes we are afraid because of threats of persecution or someone wants revenge on us or someone wants to attack us, but we forget that while we are afraid God has His own plan for our protection.
 - He destroyed the plan of Herod and warned the wise men in a dream, and warned Joseph in a dream.
 - Either way, if God allowed us to be killed, it's for our benefit and if He allowed us to live it's for our benefit
 - "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21)

The Flight into Egypt

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, ¹⁵ and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

- Hosea 11:1
- "Spoken by the Lord" is accurate because whatever is written in the Scripture are not the words of Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. but the words of God, Himself. The prophets were merely a channel.
- This prophecy can be interpreted in two ways:
 - Looking back to the calling Israel out of Egypt
 - Prophecy about calling the Lord Christ out of Egypt after the death of Herod
- **ἐκκλησία** - Church - literally means "called out"
 - As God called His people out of Egypt, and called His Son out of Egypt, so He is calling us out of the world
 - The Church is "not of this world"
 - "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19)
 - The Church is the Assembly of Believers which are those who are called out of this world.
- Why Egypt?
 - Egypt has an intimate connection with Biblical History
 - Some scholars say the most frequent country named in Scripture after Israel is Egypt
 - In the 1st Century, it was the closest Roman province independent of King Herod
 - Many Jews there with their synagogues
 - It is close to Jerusalem
 - It is considered a place of refuge to many prophets

- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons, Jeremiah, etc.
- We can call Egypt a Holy Land because Christ lived there for 3.5 years
 - Children start speaking at the end of their 1st year, during their 2nd year
 - We can assume that Christ's first words were uttered in Egypt
 - Many scholars assume that Christ probably spoke Coptic when He was young
- Joseph obeyed the vision immediately
 - This should be our attitude when God asks us to do something... sometimes we have a whisper in our ears. We remember to pray before sleeping or eating, or to read the Bible when we wake up... this is the Holy Spirit speaking to us. And we ignore it.

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping *for* her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more."

- Massacre of the Innocents
 - The harshness of the heart of King Herod
 - Regardless of how hardened your heart is, when you see a little child, your heart becomes soft. To kill children two years and under reflects how hard his heart was.
 - When we become so attached to the pleasures, mind, prestige of the world, it hardens our heart. All of this was done lest he lose his power and his throne
 - He became so angry feeling a mockery of his authority
 - Herod died just a little while later
- Some confuse the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation with the children of Bethlehem.
 - Of course, they are not the same.
 - Bethlehem is a small town with few people
- By slaughtering the infants at Bethlehem, the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:15 is fulfilled
 - Jeremiah is speaking back about the desolation of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar and the survivors of the Israelites were gathered at Ramah and the voice of their lamentation was heard... mothers leaving their offspring. Rachel being the mother of three great tribes: Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin
 - Jeremiah is prophesying about the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem. Rachel is buried in Bethlehem

The Home in Nazareth

¹⁹ Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." ²¹ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.
²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

- Herod left three sons and the Kingdom was divided at his death into three parts
 - Herod Archelaus: Judea, Idumea, Samaria
 - Herod Philip: Batanaea and Trachonitis
 - Herod Antipas: Galilee and Perea
 - These three are referred to frequently in the New Testament
- Death of Herod the Great was a signal to Joseph to go back to Israel
- The angel appeared to Joseph
 - He gave him freedom to choose any place in the land of Israel - he didn't tell him to go back to Bethlehem
 - "Those who sought the young Child's life are dead" - it wasn't just Herod who wanted to kill the Lord
- Joseph goes to Galilee
 - Herod Archelaus was said to be harsher than his father Herod the Great
 - Galilee was under Herod Antipas who was much more mild
 - Joseph went to a small village called Nazareth
- Nazareth
 - Was a despised village and the people of Nazareth were despised
 - And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)
 - This fulfills a prophecy:
"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground.
He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:1-2)
- He shall be called a Nazarene
 - There is no prophecy in the Old Testament that says this
 - Nazarene means "a branch" in Hebrew
 - "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1)
 - St Matthew may be using word-play in Hebrew
 - St Jerome has another opinion: That Nazarene refers to the Nazirite - people who separated and consecrated themselves to God. St Matthew says "spoken by the prophets" instead of "prophet" which he said in the previous prophecies. So he may just be referring to a general theme in the Old Testament that the Lord will be dedicated to the ministry of the Lord.