

THE BIRTH OF JESUS: AN OUTLINE AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

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Lesson 1 - Introduction

Why study the narratives about the birth of Jesus?

The acquaintance of most Christians with the birth narratives is limited to one or two sermons at Christmastime and perhaps a few carols. This study is designed to deepen faith by exploring the narratives which relate the beginning of the human existence of our Lord.

Believers need to know the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. First, the birth narratives present the good news or the gospel of Jesus in miniature form. An angel tells shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2.11).¹ And the aged Simeon proclaims, “My eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2.30-32). The good news of salvation begins with the birth of God’s Messiah.

Second, the birth narratives help shape the Christian doctrine of Jesus as God (divine) and man (human). These narratives leave no doubt that Jesus was the Son of God from the moment of his conception. They also portray his physical birth by the virgin Mary, and this emphasizes the true humanity of Jesus.

Third, the birth narratives contain inspirational material for artists, musicians, and poets. People generally are familiar with these stories. So these events provide common ground for sharing the message of Jesus with others.

Fourth, the birth narratives contain so-called bizarre occurrences (for example, frequent angelic appearances, the virginal conception of Mary, the shining star that guides the magi from the East, and so forth) that are dismissed as mythological by rationalistic scoffers. Christians need to be “prepared to make a defense” to the critics of Christianity (1 Peter 3.15).

So why study the birth narratives? Paul tells us, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4.4-5). Who is this “Son, born of woman”? Who is this Jesus, the one Christians call “Savior”? The birth narratives will answer these questions. The birth narratives will help the believer know the certainty of the things that he has been taught (compare Luke 1.4), and in that certainty there is hope.

¹Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from ESV, *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Crossway, 2001).

Gospel Chronology

The four gospels relate “all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up [to heaven]” (Acts 1.1). They portray the birth, the ministry, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus. But these books are not strict biographies of the life of Jesus. We are given no information about the life of Jesus from age twelve to about age thirty. Nevertheless, these good news narratives about Jesus provide information sufficient for us to learn about Jesus, to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” and to “have life in his name” (John 20.30-31; 21.24-25). The books written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John span a period of approximately thirty years.

Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Matthew 1.18-25; Luke 2.1-7)	5 BC
Death of Herod the Great (Matthew 2.15, 19), about 4 BC	
Census of Augustus (Luke 2.1), issued 8 BC, but carried out later	
Quirinius, governor of Syria (Luke 2.2), about 12 BC to 11 AD	
Jesus Visits the Temple in Jerusalem, Age 12 (Luke 2)	AD 8
Baptism of Jesus in Jordan River (Matthew 3.13-17; Luke 3.1-2)	AD 26
15th year of Tiberius, co-regent of Roman empire from AD 11	
Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea (AD 26-36)	
Herod Antipas, tetrach of Galilee (AD 4-39)	
Herod Philip, tetrach of Iturea (AD 4-33)	
Annas and Caiaphas, high priests of Judea (AD 18-36)	
Beginning of the Ministry of Jesus in Galilee	AD 27
(Matthew 4.12-17; Mark 1.14-15; Luke 4.14-15)	
46 th year of Herod’s temple (John 2.20), begun BC 19	
The Ministry of Jesus (About Three Years)	
1 st Passover (John 2.23)	AD 27
2 nd Pasover (John 5.1)	AD 28
3 rd Passover (John 6.4)	AD 29
4 th Passover (John 11.55)	AD 30
Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus	AD 30

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Gospel Prologues or Comparison of the Opening Sections of the Gospel Narratives

Matthew 1.1

How does Matthew begin his account of the life of Jesus?

Mark 1.1

What does Mark mean by “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”? Does Mark’s statement exclude the infancy stories (as recorded by Matthew and Luke) from “gospel” or good news?

Luke 1.1-4

Who are the “many” referred to by Luke?

Who “delivered” to Luke what he plans to write about?

What was Luke’s method of research?

How did Luke plan to arrange his material?

What was Luke’s purpose for writing?

John 1.1-18

In his book about Jesus, where does John start? Is John’s “beginning” the same as Mark’s?

What does John call the Word (verse 4)?

Who testified about the light?

From whom did the Word come? To whom did the Word come?

How was the Word received?

What did the Word become?

What did the Word bring (in his person) when he came?

What did the Word do when he came?

Comparison of the Testimony of Matthew and Luke

Note that Mark tells us nothing about the birth or youth of Jesus. He confines his narrative to the time between the baptism and the resurrection of Jesus (compare Acts 10.37-41).

Note also that John tells us nothing directly about the birth or youth of Jesus. John develops his Christology or teaching about Jesus from the preexistence of the Word.

The events surrounding the birth of Jesus are recorded solely by Matthew and Luke. Four basic reasons can be cited for the recording of these events: (1) to satisfy the curiosity of believers who lived in the first century AD; (2) to defend the Christian faith against false charges made by unbelieving Jews and pagans (for example, that Jesus was an illegitimate child); (3) to proclaim Jesus as Messiah (Matthew's emphasis) and as the Savior of the world (Luke's emphasis); and (4) to obey the guidance of God's Holy Spirit (see 1 Peter 1.12).

How did Matthew and Luke know the details concerning the birth of Jesus? The apostles were eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus but only from soon after his baptism until his death and his resurrection (see Acts 1.22; 10.41; 1 Corinthians 15.3). How then did they know about these events? Were there other eyewitnesses (for instance, friends and relatives from Nazareth)? The indication seems to be that the people among whom Jesus grew up knew nothing about a birth that was out of the ordinary (see Matthew 13.53-58; Luke 4.31-32, 36-37). Could these details have come from Joseph? Probably not, for Joseph never appears during the public ministry of Jesus, and it usually is assumed that he already was dead by this time. Could these details have come from Mary? Yes, for she was part of the early Christian community (see Acts 1.14), and she could have handed down these details about the birth of Jesus to the apostles. Scripture itself tells us that she "treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2.19; compare verse 51). Who was better qualified to relate these things to Matthew and Luke than the one who was so intimately involved in the birthing, nursing, and parenting of the baby Jesus?

Similarities between Matthew and Luke²

1. The parents to be are Mary and Joseph who legally are engaged or married but have not yet come to live together or had sexual relations (Matthew 1.18; Luke 1.27, 34).
2. Joseph is of Davidic descent (Matthew 1.16, 20; Luke 1.27, 32; 2.4).
3. There is an angelic announcement of the forthcoming birth of the child (Matthew 1.20-23; Luke 1.30-35).
4. The conception of the child by Mary is not through intercourse with her husband (Matthew 1.20, 23, 25; Luke 1.34).
5. The conception of the child is through the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1.18; Luke 1.35).
6. There is a directive from the angel that the child is to be named Jesus (Matthew 1.21; Luke 1.31).
7. An angel states that Jesus is to be Savior (Matthew 1.21; Luke 2.11).
8. The birth of the child takes place after the parents have come to live together (Matthew 1.24-25; Luke 2.5-6).
9. The birth takes place at Bethlehem (Matthew 2.1; Luke 2.4-6).
10. The birth chronologically is related to the rule of Herod the Great (Matthew 2.1; Luke 1.5).
11. The child is reared at Nazareth (Matthew 2.23; Luke 2.39).

Differences between Matthew and Luke

What Matthew alone mentions—the star, the magi, Herod’s plot against Jesus, the massacre of the children at Bethlehem, and the flight of the family into Egypt.

What Luke alone mentions—the story of Elizabeth, Zechariah, and the birth of John, the census which brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the honoring of the baby Jesus by the shepherds, the presentation of Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem, and Jesus in the temple at age twelve.

²Adapted from Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 34-35.

Outline of the Birth Narrative in Matthew

1. The genealogy of the Messiah, 1.1-17
2. The birth of the Messiah, 1.18-25
3. The adoration of the Messiah by magi, 2.1-12
4. The flight of the Messiah into Egypt and his return to Palestine, 2.13-23

Outline of the Birth Narrative in Luke³

I. Two announcements of conception

A. John the baptizer

1. The events surrounding the announcement, 1.5-23
2. Elizabeth's pregnancy and praise of God, 1.24-25

B. Jesus

1. The events surrounding the announcement, 1.26-38
2. Elizabeth's praise of Mary's pregnancy and Mary's song of praise, 1.39-56

II. Two narratives of birth, circumcision, naming, and future greatness

A. John the baptizer

1. His birth, circumcision, naming, 1.57-66
2. Zechariah's song, 1.67-79
3. Summary statement of the growth of John, 1.80

B. Jesus

1. His birth, 2.1-7
2. The angels' song and the shepherds' adoration, 2.8-20
3. Circumcision and predictions of greatness, 2.21-39
4. Summary statement of the growth of Jesus, 2.40
5. In the temple at age twelve, 2.41-52

³Adapted from Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 251-252.

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Lesson Two - The Announcement of the Birth of John (Luke 1.5-25)

1. Is the Herod of 1.5 the same as the Herod of 3.1? Of 23.7? Of Acts 12.1? Of Acts 23.35?

2. Who were the parents of John?

3. Does “walking blamelessly” (verse 6) mean “without sin”?

4. What does “chosen by lot” (verse 9) mean? Does God providentially determine the outcome of such selection procedures?

5. Who appeared to Zechariah?

6. For what did Zechariah pray?

7. What does the name “John” mean?

8. What is the significance of abstinence from intoxicating drink (verse 15)?

9. Explain the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” (verse 15).

10. State the predicted results of John’s prophetic ministry (verses 16-17).

11. For what does Zechariah ask (verse 18)?

12. How is Zechariah’s dumbness both judgment and blessing?

13. What caused the people’s anxiety (verses 21-22)?

14. Did Zechariah’s dumbness cause him to immediately withdraw from priestly functions?

15. Why did Elizabeth avoid social contact for the first half of her pregnancy (verse 24)?

16. How did Elizabeth view her conception (verse 25)?

Lesson Three - The Announcement of the Birth of Jesus (Luke 1.26-38)

1. How many times is Nazareth referred to in the Old Testament?

2. What was the relation between Mary and Joseph at the time of Gabriel's announcement?

3. Was Mary or Joseph of the "house of David"? What is the significance of this ancestral attachment?

4. Why was Mary troubled at the angel's greeting?

5. What does the name "Jesus" mean?

6. State the five predictions of greatness concerning Mary's son (verses 32-33).

7. Was Mary's initial response to the angel a lack of faith? Does she ask for a sign?

8. How would God cause the "impossible" to happen in the womb of Mary?

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9. Name four appellatives given to Jesus in the narrative.

10. What sign would confirm the word of the angel to Mary?

11. What was the relation between Mary and Elizabeth?

12. Is verse 37 to be taken as absolute without qualifications? Compare Genesis 18.14; Job 42.2; Jeremiah 32.17.

13. What makes the total submission of Mary to the word of God in verse 38 so amazing?

Lesson Four - Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1.39-45, 56)

1. Why does Mary go to visit Elizabeth?
2. How far is Mary's journey?
3. What two things happened when Mary greeted Elizabeth?
4. What is the significance of these two things?
5. What is Mary's special honor?
6. How did Elizabeth know that Mary was "the mother of my Lord" (verse 43)?
7. Does scripture ever use the expression "mother of God" in reference to Mary?
8. How long did Mary stay with Elizabeth (verse 56)?

Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat (verses 46-55)

Mary's song of praise is similar to and draws from several of the Old Testament psalms. One of four hymns in the first two chapters of Luke (see verses 68-79; 2.14; and 2.29-32), it later on was known as "the Magnificat" from the opening word in the Latin Vulgate translation that means "glorifies" or "magnifies." The beautiful words of praise express "God's concern for the humble and weak, along with his rejection of the proud. Note that Mary drew from Hannah's similar words in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Including this song early in his account is one of a number of ways that Luke patterned his Gospel after 1 and 2 Samuel."⁴

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

⁴*New International Version: Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Zondervan, 2003), 1643.

Lesson Five - The Birth of John (Luke 1.57-80)

1. Relate verse 57 to verse 20.

2. Relate verse 58 to verse 14.

3. Why was the child circumcised on the eighty day (compare 2.21)? Who performed the circumcision?

4. What name did the relatives of Elizabeth give to the child? Why?

5. What name did Elizabeth give to the child? Why (see verse 13)?

6. How did Elizabeth's relatives respond (verses 61-62)?

7. What name did Zechariah give to the child? What happened as a result?

8. Why were the relatives astonished?

9. Had Zechariah's punishment proven to be a blessing?

10. Give the reactions of the neighbors of Zechariah and Elizabeth to these events (verses 65-66).

The Song of Zechariah (verses 67-79) - This song has been called "the last prophecy of the old dispensation and the first in the new." Note the richness of the song in Old Testament thought.

Compare the following verses:

verse 68	=	Psalm 41.13; 72.18; 106.48
verse 69	=	Psalm 111.9; 132.17; Ezekiel 29.31; 1 Samuel 2.10
verse 71	=	Psalm 106.10
verses 72-73	=	Micah 7.20; Psalm 105.8-9; 106.45; Exodus 2.24; Jeremiah 11.5
verse 76	=	Malachi 3.1; Isaiah 40.3
verse 79	=	Isaiah 9.1-2; Psalm 107.10

11. How had God visited Israel (verse 68)?

12. What did God do for Israel (verse 69a)? From whom (verse 69b)? According to what (verse 70)?

13. Identify the "enemies" of verse 71.

14. Explain the phrase "to show the mercy promised to our fathers" (verse 72a).

15. Of what significance is the oath that God swore to Abraham?

16. Once delivered from her enemies, how could Israel serve the Lord God (verses 74-75)?

17. What does Zechariah call his son (verse 76a)?

18. What would be the work of the son of Zechariah (verse 76b)?

19. Because of the tender mercy of God, who would visit Israel (verse 78)?

20. What would be the work of this one (verse 79)?

Lesson Six - The Genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1.2-17; Luke 3.23-38)*Pre-Abrahamic Period*MatthewLuke

God
 Adam
 Seth
 Enos
 Cainan
 Mahalaleel
 Jared
 Enoch
 Methuselah
 Lamech
 Noah
 Shem
 Arphaxad
 Cainan
 Shelah
 Eber
 Peleg
 Reu
 Serug
 Nahor
 Terah
 Abraham

*Pre-Monarchical Period*Matthew

Abraham
 Isaac
 Jacob
 Judah
 Perez (of Tamar) Perez
 Hezron
 Ram
 Amminadab
 Nahshon
 Salmon
 Boaz (of Rahab)
 Obed (of Ruth)
 Jesse
 David

Luke

Abraham
 Isaac
 Jacob
 Judah
 Hezron
 Arni
 [Ram]
 Admin
 Amminadab
 Nahshon
 Salmon
 Boaz
 Obed
 Jesse
 David

*Monarchical Period*Matthew

David
 Solomon (her of Uriah)
 Rehoboam
 Abijah
 Asa
 Jehoshaphat
 Joram
 Uzziah
 Jotham
 Ahaz
 Hezekiah
 Manasseh
 Amon
 Josiah
 Jechoniah
 (Babylonian Exile)

Luke

David
 Nathan
 Mattatha
 Menna
 Melea
 Eliakim
 Jonam
 Joseph
 Judas
 Symeon
 Levi
 Matthat
 Jorim
 Eliezer
 Jesus
 Er
 Elmadam
 Cosam
 Addi
 Melchi
 Neri

*Post-Monarchical Period*Matthew

Jechoniah
 Shealtiel
 Zerubbabel
 Abiud
 Eliakim
 Azor
 Zadok
 Achim
 Eliud
 Eleazar
 Matthan
 Jacob
 Joseph
 (husband of Mary)
 Jesus

Luke

Shealtiel
 Zerubbabel
 Rhesa
 Joanan
 Joda
 Josech
 Semein
 Mattathias
 Maath
 Naggai
 Esli
 Nahum
 Amos
 Mattathias
 Joseph
 Jannai
 Melchi
 Levi
 Matthat
 Heli
 Joseph
 Jesus

The Genealogy of Jesus - Comparison of Matthew and Luke

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Luke</u>
1. Lists names from Abraham to Jesus “Father to Son” [“ . . . begat . . .”]	Lists names from Jesus to Adam “Son to Father” [“ . . . son of . . .”]
2. Mentions Five Women	Mentions No Women
3. Stylized as Three Sets of 14 Generations	No Overall Pattern & More Exhaustive
4. Has “Gaps” in the Genealogy	Any “Gaps” in the Genealogy?
5. Lists Kings of Judah	Lists No Kings of Judah
6. Gives Lineage from David to Jesus through Solomon–28 Names	Gives Lineage from David to Jesus through Nathan–43 Names
7. Calls Joseph the “husband of Mary” (1.16)	Calls Joseph the “supposed” Father of Jesus (3.23)

Gaps in Matthew’s Genealogy

1 Chronicles 3.5ff.

David (1010-970)
Solomon (970-931)
Rehoboam (931-913)
Abijah (913-911)
Asa (911-870)
Jehoshaphat (873-848)
Joram (853-841)
Ahaziah (841)
Joash (835-796)
Amaziah (796-767)
Azariah (791-739)
Jotham (750-731)
Ahaz (743-715)
Hezekiah (728-686)
Manasseh (697-642)
Amon (642-640)
Josiah (640-609)
Jehoiachim (609-597)
Jechoniah (597)

Matthew

David
Solomon
Rehoboam
Abijah
Asa
Jehoshaphat
Joram

Uzziah
Jotham
Ahaz
Hezekiah
Manasseh
Amon
Josiah

Jechoniah

The Genealogy of Jesus - Possible Explanation for Differences in Matthew and Luke

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Luke</u>
ABRAHAM DAVID SOLOMON (Royal House)	ADAM ABRAHAM DAVID
JEHOIACHIN JACOB JOSEPH	NATHAN HELI MARY
JESUS	
1. Gives Physical Lineage of Joseph, but NOT Physical Lineage of Jesus	Gives Physical Lineage of Mary, AND Physical Lineage of Jesus
2. Shows the Legal Right of Jesus to the Throne of David through Joseph	Shows Jesus to be A True Physical Descendant of David through Mary
3. Matthew Records the Physical Lineage of Joseph from King Solomon	Lukes Records the Physical Lineage of Mary through Nathan

Note Matthew 1.16, “and Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary” (King James Version).

Note Luke 3.23, “Jesus . . . being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, . . .”

Luke is careful to indicate no physical connection between Joseph and Jesus, and possibly no physical connection between Joseph and Heli. In this view, Joseph stands in place of Mary in Luke’s genealogy.

Another possible explanation is that “Matthew traces the legal descent of the house of David, using only heirs to the throne, while Luke traces the direct bloodline of Joseph to David—perhaps the preferred view.” The view that Matthew follows the line of Joseph (the legal father of Jesus) and Luke follows the line of Mary (the flesh and blood mother of Jesus) is not as likely “since Luke here so explicitly names Joseph (verse 23), without any reference at all to Mary.” Tracing the genealogy of a child through the mother’s side would be unusual, but so was the virgin birth.⁵

⁵See comments on the book of Luke by Lewis Foster in the *New International Version Study Bible* (Zondervan, 2011), 1709.

Lesson Seven - The Birth of Jesus According to Matthew (Matthew 1.18-25)

1. When do the events of Matthew 1.18-25 occur? Where?

2. What was the relation of Mary to Joseph when her pregnancy was discovered? Why is Mary called the “wife” of Joseph (verses 20, 24)? Why is Joseph called “her husband” (verse 19)?

3. Explain “before they came together” (verse 18).

4. How is Joseph described in verse 19? What is he called?

5. What are Joseph’s reasons for wanting to divorce Mary “quietly” or secretly?

6. Is this course of action by Joseph contrary to or in accordance with Old Testament law (see Numbers 5.11-31; Deuteronomy 22.23, 24; 24.1-4)?

7. Who appears to Joseph and how (verse 20)?

8. What does the angel call Joseph (verse 20)?

9. Contrary to the thinking of Joseph, what was the cause of Mary's pregnancy?

10. Why would Joseph be afraid to "take Mary as [his] wife" (verse 20)?

11. The name "Jesus" means what?

12. In 1.22-23, Matthew declares the statement of Isaiah 7.14 to be fulfilled. In what way is this prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled in the birth of Jesus? See 2.15; Hosea 11.1; compare also 2.17, 23; 3.3; 4.14; 8.17; 12.17; 13.35; 21.4; 27.9.

13. Of what significance is the name "Immanuel"?

14. How does Joseph respond to the angel's message (verse 24)?

15. Explain "he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son" (verses 24-25).

16. Who named Jesus (verse 25)?

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Lesson Eight - The Birth of Jesus According to Luke (Luke 2.1-7)

1. Who was emperor of Rome at the time of the birth of Jesus?
2. What did the decree of the emperor call for?
3. What was to be the extent of this census?
4. Who was the governor of Syria at this time?
5. What did the census require of the inhabitants of Palestine?
6. Where did Joseph and Mary go (verse 4)? Why?
7. Why is Bethlehem called “the city of David”?
8. Why did Mary go to Bethlehem with Joseph?

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9. Why does Luke refer to Mary as the “betrothed” of Joseph (Revised Standard Version; “engaged” in New American Standard Version; “pledged to be married” in New International Version)? Compare Matthew 1.24-25.

10. What happened while Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem (verse 6)?

11. What is the baby called (verse 7)?

12. In what was the baby wrapped?

13. Where was the baby laid? Why?

14. What differences and similarities do you see between Matthew’s record of the birth of Jesus and Luke’s record?

Lesson Nine - The Adoration of the Infant According to Matthew (Matthew 2.1-12)

1. Where was Jesus born?
2. When was Jesus born?
3. Who are the “wise men” of verse 1?
4. From where did these wise ones come and for what reason?
5. In contrast to Herod, how did Jesus become “king of the Jews” (verse 2)?
6. What is the significance of the “star” in verse 2?
7. What troubled Herod? What did he do?
8. On what prophecy did the Jewish scholars base their answer to Herod’s question?

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9. Why do you suppose Herod commissioned the wise men to search for the child?

10. What guided the wise men from Jerusalem to Bethlehem?

11. Where did the wise men find the child and Mary (verse 11; compare Luke 1.7)?

12. Who do the wise men worship (for worship of Jesus in Matthew, compare 2.2; 4.9, 10; 8.2; 14.33; 15.25; 20.20; 28.9, 17)?

13. What gifts did the wise men offer to the infant?

14. Did the wise men return to Herod?

15. What is Matthew's key points in this section?

Lesson Ten - The Adoration of the Infant According to Luke (Luke 2.8-20)

1. Where were the shepherds of verse 8?

2. What were they doing? When? Is this unusual?

3. Does verse 8 give any indication of the time of year of the birth of Jesus?

4. Who appeared to the shepherds? What is their reaction?

5. Explain “the glory of the Lord” (verse 9).

6. What does the angel first tell them (compare Luke 1.13, 20)?

7. What is the angel’s gospel or “good news” (verses 10, 11)?

8. Explain the title “Christ the Lord” (verse 11).

9. What is the sign (verse 12)? For what reason is the sign mentioned by the angel?

10. What appears with the angel (verse 13)? How?

11. What is the twofold praise of the heavenly host (verse 14)?

12. Where did the angels go (verse 15)?

13. Who ultimately revealed these things to the shepherds (verse 15b)?

14. What did the shepherds decide to do? How did they do it? Compare Luke 1.39.

15. Were the activities of the shepherds in Bethlehem public (known to several inhabitants of Bethlehem) or private (known only to Joseph and Mary)? State the reasons for your answer.

16. Give the three results of these events (verses 18, 19, and 20).

Lesson Eleven - The Circumcision and the Presentation in the Temple (Luke 2.21-38)

1. Where and when was Jesus circumcised?

2. Why did Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to Jerusalem? Give two reasons.

3. Compare verse 22 with Leviticus, chapter 12. Explain “their purification.”

4. Compare verse 23 with Exodus 13.2, 12. Read Numbers 3.12; 18.15, 16. What do these verses tell you about the firstborn of Israel?

5. Is the sacrifice offered in verse 24 for Mary’s own purification or for the ransom of her firstborn?

6. Compare verse 24 with Leviticus 12.8 and 5.11. What do you learn from this comparison?

7. Describe Simeon.

8. Explain “the consolation of Israel” (verse 25).

9. What had been revealed to Simeon (verse 26)?

10. How does Simeon come into the temple (verse 27)? What does this mean?

11. Explain “the custom of the law” (verse 27).

12. In the prayer of Simeon (verses 29-32), what is the “child Jesus” called? How and for whom was the child prepared?

13. What is the reaction of Joseph and Mary to Simeon’s blessing over their son (verse 33)?

14. In terms of fulfillment, explain the following phrases of Simeon’s prophecy to Mary (verses 34-35; from the New International Version).

“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel . . .”

“ . . . and to be a sign that will be spoken against . . .”

“ . . . so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed . . .”

“ . . . and a sword will pierce your own soul too . . .”

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15. Describe Anna.

16. What did she do (verse 38)?

17. Explain “the redemption of Jerusalem.”

18. Where did Joseph and Mary go after the preceding events (verse 39)? Does this contradict Matthew 2.13-23?

Lesson Twelve - The Flight into Egypt and Return (Matthew 2.13-21)

1. How does the angel of the Lord appear to Joseph (verse 13; compare 1.20)?

2. What was Joseph to do and why?

3. Contrast the search of the magi for the child with the search of Herod. For what reason did each search to find the young child?

4. How long did Joseph and “the child and his mother” stay in Egypt (verse 15)?

5. What prophecy is this event the fulfillment of?

6. What did Herod do when the wise men failed to return to him (verse 16)? Compare Revelation, chapter 12.

7. Why did Herod have only the male children “two years old or under” in Bethlehem and the surrounding area killed?

8. What prophecy is this event the fulfillment of (verses 17, 18)?

9. How did Joseph know when it was safe to leave Egypt (verses 19, 20)?

10. Where did Joseph first take “the child and his mother” (verse 21)?

The Early Years of Jesus at Nazareth (Matthew 2.22-23; Luke 2.39-40)

11. Where apparently had Joseph intended to take and settle his family after leaving Egypt?

12. Why did he fear to go there? Who was Archelaus?

13. Where did he finally go and why?

14. What prophecy is this event the fulfillment of?

15. According to Luke, from where did Joseph, Mary, and Jesus return to Nazareth?

16. Give four characteristics of the early years of Jesus as he grew up in Nazareth.

Lesson Thirteen - The Temple Visit (Luke 2.41-52)

1. Why did the parents of Jesus go to Jerusalem every year for the feast of Passover (verse 41)?

2. At what age did Jesus go (verse 42)? Had he been before (excluding his circumcision and presentation at the temple)?

3. Explain “when the feast was ended” (verse 43; “the full number of days” in New American Standard Version).

4. Were the parents of Jesus negligent of their son (verse 43)?

5. Explain “in the group” (verse 44a; “the company” in New International Version and “the caravan” in New American Standard Version).

6. Where did Joseph and Mary look for Jesus (verses 44, 45)? Where did they find him?

7. What was the young Jesus doing (verse 46)?

8. Describe the reaction of Joseph, Mary, and others to Jesus.

9. Was Mary's words to Jesus an indication of self-pity (verse 48)?

10. Was the response of Jesus to his mother a reproof or an expression of surprise (verse 49)?

11. Compare translations of verse 49—"my father's business" (King James Version); "my father's house" (Revised Standard Version; New International Version). The Greek text literally reads, "in the things of my father." What does this response by Jesus indicate about his relation to Joseph, to Mary, and to God?

12. Why did the parents of Jesus not understand (verse 50)? Keep in mind all the remarkable events and proclamations that surrounded the birth of Jesus.

13. Did Jesus obey his parents (verse 51)?

14. How did Jesus "increase" or grow (verse 52)?