



INTRO: Which sound more familiar?

**SL#3**

**Luke 1:26-28**

*Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"*

**SL#4**

**Mark 15:33-39**

*Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi,*

[E.LO.I. all long vowels]

*lama* [llama – like the animal]

*sabachthani?*"

[sa.both.(not long o but short o as in sloth) a. ny]

*which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

<sup>35</sup> *Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!" <sup>36</sup> Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down."*

<sup>37</sup> *And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.*

<sup>38</sup> *Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"*

**Matthew 26:26-30**

**Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper**

<sup>26</sup> *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."*

<sup>27</sup> *Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. <sup>29</sup> But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

<sup>30</sup> *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

**MATTHEW 1**

**LUKE 1-3** – John the Baptist's Birth. Christ's Birth Annc to Mary (**vs 26-38**). Mary visits Elizabeth. John's Birth. Jesus' birth, circumcision, presentation at the temple, Anna and Simeon's prophetic words. Jesus amazes the Temple scholars with His wisdom. John the Baptist ministers (Elijah). John baptizes Jesus. Genealogy of Jesus via Mary.

**Luke 2:51-52**

<sup>51</sup> *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. <sup>52</sup> And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*



**SL#5. SL#6 – The Birth of the Messiah**

- i. The Infancy Narratives & The Passion Narratives
- ii. The Extraordinary Infancy of Christ
- iii. The Genealogies & Opening Chapter(s)
- iv. The Prophecies of Jesus' Birth

**I. The Infancy Narratives & The Passion Narratives**

What are the Infancy Narratives?

How many people know the story of Jesus death v.s. that of His birth?

**SL#7** *People who know little of Jesus, beyond his death on the cross and his resurrection, are often acquainted with the Christmas story, which accordingly offers a channel through which the Gospel can be made intelligible to them. Perhaps the most visible sign of neglect is the absence, in all the languages of biblical scholarship, of a major modern commentary which treats the two infancy narratives together.<sup>1</sup>*

- Are the Infancy Narratives a way to celebrate the Gospel with ALL people?
- Do they contain the same power and majesty as the Passion Narratives?
- How do not-yet believers respond to the Infancy Narratives? The Passion Narratives?
- How do believers REALLY respond to them? (Object of the next two weeks)

**Although they constitute a total of four out of eighty-nine Gospel chapters, the infancy narratives have an importance far greater than their length. They have offered abundant material for reflection both to Christian and non-Christian, to saint and skeptic. For orthodox Christians they have helped to shape the central doctrine of Jesus God and man. On the one hand they leave no doubt that Jesus was the Son of God from the moment of his conception; on the other hand the portrayal of physical birth (plus the Lucan reference to the manger) has underlined the true humanity of Jesus' origins.** As a provocative Gospel subject for artists, storytellers, and poets, only the passion has rivaled the infancy narratives. Nevertheless, these narratives have also been a prime target for rationalistic scoffing. The frequent angelic appearances, the virginal conception, a marvelous star guiding magi from the East, a child prodigiously endowed with wisdom—to many these are patently legendary themes<sup>2</sup>

The Infancy Narratives show Jesus as:

100% God – Where can this be seen? Where do I notice?

100% Man – Where can this be seen? Where do I notice?

**SL#8 Philippians 2:6-8** CEB. IS THIS PRESENT IN THE INFANCY NARRATIVES?

<sup>6</sup> *Though He was in the form of God,*

*He did not consider being equal with God something to exploit.*

<sup>7</sup> *But He emptied Himself*

*by taking the form of a slave [bondservant, servant, eved]*

*and by becoming like human beings.*

*When He found Himself in the form of a human,*

<sup>8</sup> *He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

<sup>1</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). [The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke](#) (New Updated Edition., p. 6). Yale University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). [The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke](#) (New Updated Edition., p. 25). Yale University Press.



### Complete Jewish Bible

Though he was in the form of God,  
he did not regard equality with God  
something to be possessed by force.  
7 On the contrary, he emptied himself,  
in that he took the form of a slave  
by becoming like human beings are.

8 And when he appeared as a human being,  
he humbled himself still more  
by becoming obedient even to death—  
death on a stake as a criminal!

9 Therefore God raised him to the highest place  
and gave him the name above every name;  
10 that in honor of the name given Yeshua,  
**every knee will bow—**  
in heaven, on earth and under the earth—  
11 **and every tongue will acknowledge**  
that Yeshua the Messiah is *ADONAI*—  
to the glory of God the Father. <sup>3</sup>

- The Infancy Narratives leave us a structure that the N.T. is built on.  
[*The Passions Narratives echo that structure, show the COST of our salvation and how Jesus chose to fulfill that structure.*]
- The Infancy Narratives were dealt with AFTER the death, burial and resurrection were established in writ and in dialogue.

### SL#9 CEB [The Human One]

**Romans 1:3-4** God promised this good news about his Son ahead of time through his prophets in the holy scriptures. His Son was descended from David. <sup>4</sup> He was publicly identified as God's Son with power through his resurrection from the dead, which was based on the Spirit of holiness. This Son is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Merry Christmas?

When did the need for understanding Jesus' backstory show in the N.T. community?  
Who did they turn to get the backstory?

- History states there may have been a Greek source of His birth narrative.

The infancy narratives tell us that story.  
But does it also show us the power of God as well?

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<sup>3</sup> Stern, D. H. (1998). [\*Complete Jewish Bible: an English version of the Tanakh \(Old Testament\) and B'rit Hadashah \(New Testament\)\*](#) (1st ed., Php 2:6–11). Jewish New Testament Publications.



**SL#10** Have I ever thought of the Christmas story as revealing Jesus as 100% Man and 100% God?

We know the passion narrative because it shows the path to our salvation.

**But what does the infancy narrative show us?**

- That Jesus is the living history of the Hebrew people.
- He also is the living history of all of mankind – our need for salvation, our ability to live our Christian faith within the power of the Holy Spirit.
- How the power of God works in and around our lives.
- The need of human obedience.
- The result of human obedience.
- How God works within relationship with mankind.
- The length God will go to communicate to His children.
- God’s love in action.
- What else can you add?

**The Passion narrative shows us:**

Power. Supernatural power of Christ to Save shown in the Resurrection.

- Was the knowledge of this power needed for the disciples to look, to be curious, to look where it may have been shown before? At His Birth.

**SL#11** **Mark 1:9-11** CEB

*<sup>9</sup> About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. <sup>10</sup> While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. <sup>11</sup> And there was a voice from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness.”*

Mark tells us WHO Jesus is before He enters into public ministry.

Did this message go unheeded? Unheard?

We now have 2 public displays of His power that seemingly go “unnoticed”. {Birth, Baptism}

- Makes one wonder what is happening around us now that we will only see through hindsight.

Mark tells us again in the Transfiguration **Mark 9:2-8** CEB Matthew 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36

*<sup>2</sup> Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and brought them to the top of a very high mountain where they were alone. He was transformed in front of them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes were amazingly bright, brighter than if they had been bleached white. <sup>4</sup> Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Peter reacted to all of this by saying to Jesus, “Rabbi, it’s good that we’re here. Let’s make three shrines—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup> He said this because he didn’t know how to respond, for the three of them were terrified.*



## The History of Christmas

November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022

<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, “This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!”<sup>8</sup> Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Human One<sup>[SON OF MAN]</sup> had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So they kept it to themselves, wondering, “What’s this ‘rising from the dead’?” <sup>11</sup> They asked Jesus, “Why do the legal experts say that Elijah must come first?”

<sup>12</sup> He answered, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. Why was it written that the Human One would suffer many things and be rejected? <sup>13</sup> In fact, I tell you that Elijah has come, but they did to him whatever they wanted, just as it was written about him.”

**SL#12** We now have 3 public displays of His power that seemingly go “unnoticed”.

- Birth – Matthew 1 & Luke 2
- Baptism – Mark 1:9-11
- Transfiguration – Mark 9:2-8 (Matthew 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36)

Yet the disciples never recognized Jesus’ glorious identity during his lifetime – struggle?

**SL#13 Mk 6:51-52**

<sup>51</sup> Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. <sup>52</sup> For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened. NKJV

He got into the boat, and the wind settled down. His disciples were so baffled they were beside themselves. <sup>52</sup> That’s because they hadn’t understood about the loaves. **Their minds had been closed so that they resisted God’s ways.** CEB

Finally, in Mark’s Gospel, we see the declaration of Jesus Holy Birth:

**SL#14 Mark 15:38-39 CEB**

<sup>38</sup> The curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> When the centurion, who stood facing Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “**This man was certainly God’s Son.**”

**SL#15**

**Am I going to echo this “not seeing Jesus for who He is” relationship that was prominent in the early life of the Disciples?**

**OR**

**I am looking for the power of the Christ and the character of Christ that is seen in the Passion Narratives and trying to figure out HOW TO respond to what I discover?**

Questions:

Not clearly “seeing Jesus” = Because I do not know Him well enough?

Looking for His power/His character = WHERE?

**Merry Christ-Mass**

**Accepting Jesus’ Holy Birth came after the embrace of the power of the Passion.**



I. The Infancy Narratives & The Passion Narratives  
II. The Extraordinary Infancy of Christ

- Begs the question whether the people surrounding Jesus as He was raised knew about His “extraordinary infancy”.

Since the writing of the Gospel of Mark, we can see that:

Matthew shows more evidence of Messianic understanding earlier in his writings:

**SL#16 Mt 14:33** *Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, “You must be God’s Son!”*  
**Mt 16:16** **CEB** *Simon Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

- Matthew and Luke apply Jesus’ Divinity to His conception [INFANCY NARRITIVES].
- Common belief that Matthew and Luke “wrote independently of each other”.
- That would mean they had a common source of some type.[Greek? Q?]

**Luke** (educated, Doctor, ...):

What did Mary say?

What did Mary keep to herself?

**Matthew** (Greek speaking Hebrew):

What did Joseph say?

What did Joseph keep to himself?

The following eleven points are shared by the two infancy narratives:

**SL#17**

- 1) The parents to be are Mary and Joseph who are legally engaged or married, but have not yet come to live together or have sexual relations (Matt 1:18; Luke 1:27, 34).
- 2) Joseph is of Davidic descent (Matt 1:16, 20; Luke 1:27, 32; 2:4).
- 3) There is an angelic announcement of the forthcoming birth of the child (Matt 1:20–23; Luke 1:30–35).
- 4) The conception of the child by Mary is not through intercourse with her husband (Matt 1:20, 23, 25; Luke 1:34).
- 5) The conception is through the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35).
- 6) There is a directive from the angel that the child is to be named Jesus (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:31).
- 7) An angel states that Jesus is to be Savior (Matt 1:21; Luke 2:11).
- 8) The birth of the child takes place after the parents have come to live together (Matt 1:24–25; Luke 2:5–6).
- 9) The birth takes place at Bethlehem (Matt 2:1; Luke 2:4–6).
- 10) The birth is chronologically related to the reign (days) of Herod the Great (Matt 2:1; Luke 1:5).
- 11) The child is reared at Nazareth (Matt 2:23; Luke 2:39).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). *The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New Updated Edition., p. 35). Yale University Press.



Each Gospel is written TO A SOMEONE.

NOTE: John – Begins with Jesus prior to creation and He quotes Jesus speaking as Divine (Jn 8:58; 10:30; 14:9;17:5).

- *The Johannine Prologue presses the Divinity of Christ back to pre-existence before creation, while Matthew and Luke press it back to Jesus' conception.*
- *The same combined ideas that early Christian preaching had once applied to the resurrection (i.e., a divine proclamation, the begetting of God's Son, the agency of the Holy Spirit), and which Mark had applied to the baptism, are now applied to the conception of Jesus in the words of an angel's message to Joseph and to Mary (respectively, in Matthew and in Luke).*
- *And once the conception of Jesus has become the 7Christological moment, the revelation of who Jesus is begins to be proclaimed to an audience who come and worship (the magi, the shepherds), while others react with hostility (Herod in Matthew; those who contradict the sign in Luke 2:34). And thus the infancy stories have become truly an infancy gospel.<sup>5</sup>*

The Passion and the Infancy contain:

- Divine proclamation
- Begetting(Causing/Creating) of God's Son
- Agency of the Holy Spirit
- Eternal Being of Christ

### SL#18

**Am I going to echo this "not seeing Jesus for who He is" relationship that was prominent in the early life of the Disciples?**

**OR**

**I am looking for the power of the Christ and the character of Christ that is seen in the Passion Narratives and trying to figure out HOW TO respond to what I discover?**

Not clearly "seeing Jesus" = Where can I look for Jesus' power? Am I settled in my experience with Him thinking I know when/where I will see it?

**Merry Christ-Mass**

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<sup>5</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). *The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New Updated Edition., p. 35). Yale University Press.





i. The Infancy Narratives & The Passion Narratives

ii. The Extraordinary Infancy of Christ

### III. The Genealogies & Opening Chapters

#### A. Matthew [Joseph]

- **14 Generations:** From Abraham to David, From David to the Babylonian Exile, from the Exile to the Christ
- Begins with Jesus to David to Abraham  
End with Abraham to David to Jesus

SL#19

#### Matthew 1 CEB

##### Genealogy of Jesus

**1** A record of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham:

<sup>2</sup> **Abraham** was the father of Isaac.

**Isaac** was the father of Jacob.

**Jacob** was the father of Judah and his brothers.

<sup>3</sup> **Judah** was the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.

**Perez** was the father of Hezron.

**Hezron** was the father of Aram.

<sup>4</sup> **Aram** was the father of Amminadab.

**Amminadab** was the father of Nahshon.

**Nahshon** was the father of Salmon.

<sup>5</sup> **Salmon** was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.

**Boaz** was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.

**Obed** was the father of Jesse.

<sup>6</sup> **Jesse** was the father of David the king.

**David** was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.

<sup>7</sup> **Solomon** was the father of Rehoboam.

**Rehoboam** was the father of Abijah.

**Abijah** was the father of Asaph.

<sup>8</sup> **Asaph** was the father of Jehoshaphat.

**Jehoshaphat** was the father of Joram.

**Joram** was the father of Uzziah.

<sup>9</sup> **Uzziah** was the father of Jotham.

**Jotham** was the father of Ahaz.

**Ahaz** was the father of Hezekiah.

<sup>10</sup> **Hezekiah** was the father of Manasseh.

**Manasseh** was the father of Amos.

**Amos** was the father of Josiah.

<sup>11</sup> **Josiah** was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers.

This was at the time of the exile to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup> After the exile to Babylon: **Jechoniah** was the father of Shealtiel.

**Shealtiel** was the father of Zerubbabel.

<sup>13</sup> **Zerubbabel** was the father of Abiud.

**Abiud** was the father of Eliakim.





**Eliakim** was the father of Azor.

<sup>14</sup> **Azor** was the father of Zadok.

**Zadok** was the father of Achim.

**Achim** was the father of Eliud.

<sup>15</sup> **Eliud** was the father of Eleazar.

**Eleazar** was the father of Matthan.

**Matthan** was the father of Jacob.

<sup>16</sup> **Jacob** was the father of **Joseph**, the husband of Mary—of whom **Jesus** was born, who is called the Christ.

<sup>17</sup> So there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen generations from the exile to Babylon to the Christ.

### Birth of Jesus

<sup>18</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. <sup>20</sup> As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

<sup>23</sup> Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,

And they will call him, Emmanuel.<sup>[a]</sup>

(Emmanuel means "God with us.")

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

## The history of Israel passes before their eyes in concentrated form.

### 1. The Genealogy is an ARROW to the Messiah.

- Thus the genesis of Jesus Christ begins with the history of Israel.
- It is a continuation of that history and includes it as its beginning.

The genealogy first of all focuses on what "son of Abraham" means:

- Jesus the Messiah is an Israelite, Abraham's descendant.
- He is a descendant of the patriarchs.

The genealogy also elucidates Jesus' Davidic sonship.

- Jesus is David's descendant and thus a Messiah of royal descent.  
That is why v. 6\* also emphasizes David as king and then lets the kings on David's throne with whom the readers were familiar pass before their eyes.
- The genealogy puts Jesus at the center of Israel's history. He is Abraham's son and royal Messiah and thus the **bearer of all of Israel's messianic hopes in accordance with God's plan.**<sup>6</sup>

The rest of the Matthean story will expand, accentuate, and change this fundamental affirmation.

In the following chapter Jesus will already come into conflict with Herod, the nation's reigning king. Later chapters will show that Jesus' royal rule is different from that ordinarily found with kings. Jesus, the son of David, is the Messiah who heals—the one who bears the weaknesses and illnesses of his people (8:17\*).<sup>38</sup> In 21:5\* he will enter Jerusalem as the "meek" king who is different. Thus with the genealogy Matthew establishes a basis for an important theme of his Gospel: Jesus, the son of David, is Israel's Messiah.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Luz, U. (2007). *Matthew 1–7: a commentary on Matthew 1–7* (H. Koester, Ed.; Rev. ed., pp. 82–83). Fortress Press.

<sup>7</sup> Luz, U. (2007). *Matthew 1–7: a commentary on Matthew 1–7* (H. Koester, Ed.; Rev. ed., pp. 82–83). Fortress Press.



## 2. WHY Include the Women? [Four ancestral mothers] Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba

- Not the usual Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel... WHY?

There are essentially three suggested interpretations that compete with one another:

### NO: 1. Were the women inserted into the genealogy as *sinner*s as a demonstration of God's grace?

The idea is appealing with Bathsheba, since the expression "the (wife) of Uriah" naturally makes one think primarily of her adultery. However, this is impossible for Ruth, who according to the OT and Jewish tradition is without blame. This interpretation is also difficult for Rahab according to Jewish witnesses; she is celebrated as a prototype of a proselyte and as an instrument of God's Spirit.<sup>43</sup> Tamar is also exonerated and for Philo is simply a symbol of virtue. Even with Bathsheba the Jewish texts are more interested in David's sin than in Bathsheba's sin.<sup>45</sup> This interpretation must be rejected.

### NO: 2. A *divine irregularity* is a common denominator among the four women. God's saving activity sometimes takes unexpected turns.

Any unexpected turn or similar ones? **Too broad?** Why list just the women if this was the target.

This interpretation would permit a connection to the virgin Mary, with whom the irregularity reached a peak, and it can hardly be refuted as long as it does not go beyond the general idea of God's providential activity. It becomes difficult, however, when one tries to define the "irregularity" more narrowly. It can lie, for example, in the special nature of the relationship of the women to their partners. But are Ruth's marriage, Bathsheba's adultery, and even Mary's betrothal at all comparable? There has also been an effort to understand all of these women as instruments of the Holy Spirit, but the Jewish sources are either late or nonexistent.<sup>47</sup> Also speaking against this interpretation is the variety among the assumed irregularities or the general and abstract nature of the common denominator. The only thing that remains is that God triumphs in a surprising way over human impediments or the "surprising newness" of God's activity with all five women.<sup>49</sup> Some have claimed that the advantage of this interpretation is that one can posit a relationship between the four women and the fifth woman, Mary.<sup>51</sup> But is that really necessary? Verse 16\* is formulated in a completely different way from vv. 3\*, 5-6\*, because the stereotypical active "begat" ends and is replaced by the passive "was begotten." The readers will naturally understand "from Mary" in v. 16\* in terms of the virgin birth. That in any case eliminates Mary as a parallel to the other four women.

### YES: 3. A third suggestion is that all four women are *non-Jews*. [Leaves Mary off of the list]

Tamar is usually, but not always, regarded in the Jewish tradition as a proselyte.<sup>52</sup> Ruth is a Moabitess, Rahab a resident of Canaanite Jericho. There are no reports about Bathsheba. Is that why she is cited not by name but as the wife of Uriah, who, as is well known, was a Hittite (2 Sam 11:3\*)? That is conceivable, but it is by no means the most obvious idea that the readers would associate with the name Uriah. Thus this sense is clear only with Ruth and Rahab. With Tamar it is quite possible, and for Bathsheba it may be possible. One can hardly posit a relationship here to Mary.

In spite of a degree of uncertainty, I regard the third interpretation of the four ancestral mothers as the best choice, and I prefer it to the alternative of different interpretations of the individual women. A unified interpretation is suggested by the "provocative" choice of the four women: since it is not Israel's well-known ancestral mothers but completely different women who are named, the readers expect an unusual message. The fourfold identical "begotten ... from ..." (ἐγέννησεν ... ἐκ τῆς ...) also speaks for a unified interpretation.

Thus the women give the genealogy a universalistic undertone. That the son of David, Israel's Messiah, brings salvation for the Gentiles is a hidden message.... One is to think not only of Abraham as Israel's father but also of the broad Jewish tradition that sees Abraham as the father of the proselytes.<sup>56</sup> The movement of Israel's salvation to the Gentiles, a dominant theme of the Gospel of Matthew, is already declared in its opening text.<sup>8</sup>

- WHY include the women? An eye towards the Passion Narrative...with just the listing of the names. Jesus sacrifice is for ALL MANKIND.

## B. Luke [Mary]

### SL#20

### Luke 3:23-38 CEB

#### Jesus' genealogy

<sup>23</sup> Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his ministry. **People supposed** that he was the son of **Joseph** son of **Heli**<sup>24</sup> son of **Matthat** son of **Levi** son of **Melchi** son of **Jannai** son of **Joseph**<sup>25</sup> son of **Mattathias** son of **Amos** son of **Nahum** son of **Esli** son of **Naggai**<sup>26</sup> son of **Maath** son of **Mattathias** son of **Semein** son of **Josech** son of **Joda**<sup>27</sup> son of **Joanan** son of

**Rhesa** son of **Zerubbabel** son of **Shealtiel** son of **Neri**<sup>28</sup> son of **Melchi** son of **Addi** son of **Cosam** son of **Elmadam** son of **Er**<sup>29</sup> son of **Joshua** son of **Eliezer** son of **Jorim** son of **Matthat** son of **Levi**<sup>30</sup> son of **Simeon** son of **Judah** son of **Joseph** son of **Jonam** son of **Eliakim**<sup>31</sup> son of **Melea** son of **Menna** son of **Mattatha** son of **Nathan** son of **David**<sup>32</sup> son of **Jesse** son of **Obed** son of **Boaz** son of **Sala** son of **Nahshon**<sup>33</sup> son of **Amminadab** son of **Admin** son of **Arni** son of **Hezron** son of **Perez** son of **Judah**<sup>34</sup> son of **Jacob** son of **Isaac** son of **Abraham** son of **Terah** son of **Nahor**<sup>35</sup> son of **Serug** son of **Reu** son of **Peleg** son of **Eber** son of **Shelah**<sup>36</sup> son of **Cainan** son of **Arphaxad** son of **Shem** son of **Noah** son of **Lamech**<sup>37</sup> son of **Methuselah** son of **Enoch** son of **Jared** son of **Mahalalel** son of **Cainan**<sup>38</sup> son of **Enos** son of **Seth** son of **Adam** son of God.

<sup>8</sup> Luz, U. (2007). [Matthew 1-7: a commentary on Matthew 1-7](#) (H. Koester, Ed.; Rev. ed., pp. 83-85). Fortress Press.



### Seven Infancy episodes in Luke:

- (1) Annunciation about JBap;
- (2) Annunciation about Jesus;
- (3) Visitation;
- (4) Birth/Circumcision/Naming of JBap;
- (5) Birth/Circumcision/Naming of Jesus;
- (6) Presentation in Temple;
- (7) Finding in Temple.

Parallelism between JBap and Jesus. It resulted in the following arrangement of two diptychs:

- I. Two Annunciations of Conception:
    1. Annunciation about JBap (1:5–23);  
plus Elizabeth’s pregnancy and praise of God (1:24–25).
    2. Annunciation about Jesus (1:26–38);  
plus Elizabeth’s praise of Mary’s pregnancy (1:39–45, 56).
  - II. Two Narratives of Birth/Circumcision/Naming and Future Greatness:
    1. Narrative about JBap (1:57–66);  
plus a growth statement transitional to his ministry (1:80).
    2. Narrative about Jesus (2:1–27, 34–39);  
plus a growth statement transitional to his ministry (2:40).
- The Book of Luke continues into the Book of Acts.
  - Luke, in Acts, shows how both geographically and theologically the focus of Christianity passed from Jerusalem of the Jews to Rome of the Gentiles.
  - Deliberately shown in scenes involving Jesus and the Jerusalem Temple (1:8 and 24:53), and Temple scenes for the infancy narrative (1:8 and 2:41).
  - Acts will bring mention of Roman emperors in both the infancy narrative and the Gospel (Augustus and Tiberius; 2:1 and 3:1).
  - Luke is not trying to make a connection (apologetics) between the O.T. to the N.T. as Matthew does (writing to the Israelites).
  - Luke is female inclusive and positive.
  - Mary dominates the Lucan infancy narrative in a way. Matthew focuses clearly on Joseph.
  - Did Luke begin writing with the birth stories, or did he begin with the account of the ministry and, as an afterthought, prefix the birth stories?



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- Matthew the structure favors that he began with 1:1 and composed the Gospel in the order in which it has come to us.
- Historiographical parallels in other Greek writing suggest that Luke 3:1–2 could well have served as the original opening of the Lucan Gospel.
- Mark/John open the Gospel story with the events of the baptism of Jesus,
- Reference to this baptism by JBap as a *beginning* in Acts 1:22 *beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.*”
- Could this mean the infancy narrative may have been prefixed to the Gospel after the Book of Acts was completed?
- The placing of the genealogy in the third chapter of Luke makes more sense if that had been done before an infancy narrative had been prefixed.
- Just like Matthew’s Gospel, none of the Lucan infancy narrative has had major influence on the body of the Gospel, so that, if the first two chapters had been lost, we could never have suspected their existence.
- Since Luke shows influence by classical historians, it is noteworthy that there is precedent for composing an infancy or early-youth narrative as part of the biography of a man whose public career was well known.<sup>9</sup>

JOHN THE BAPTIST – The bridge of Elijah? Bringing the O.T. Messiah into the N.T.?

THE INFANCY NARRATIVE – True intro to the main themes of the letter

THE APOSTLES – Principle element as they are the ‘gineua pigs’ of this:

**SL#21**

**“They were with Jesus in his ministry  
they will be the chief human agents in the early days of the Church  
The risen Jesus appears to them and instructs them,  
So that the continuity with what has preceded will be clear  
the Holy Spirit comes upon them after Jesus departs,  
so that the continuity with what follows will be clear.”<sup>10</sup>**

Do you ever wonder if the Apostles scratched their heads over what Jesus said and then, what happened?

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<sup>9</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). [\*The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke\*](#) (New Updated Edition., pp. 237–238). Yale University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). [\*The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke\*](#) (New Updated Edition., pp. 237–238). Yale University Press.



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Thus, one may wish to keep Conzelmann's analysis of three periods (Israel, Jesus, Church), but see the scriptural representatives of the three periods as: (1) the Law and the prophets, i.e., much of what we call the OT; (2) the Gospel account of the ministry, beginning with JBap;<sup>23</sup> (3) the account of the post-pentecostal period in the Book of Acts. Between (1) and (2) there is a transitional narrative, the infancy story of Luke 1–2; between (2) and (3) there is a transitional narrative, the story of the ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 1–2.

The outpouring of the prophetic spirit which moves people to act and speak (Luke 1:15, 41, 67, 80; 2:25–27) is not well attested in the ministry but resembles very closely the pentecostal and post-pentecostal outpouring of the prophetic spirit in Acts 2:17: "I shall pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy."

**The speeches of Acts and the hymns of the infancy narrative are both compositions reflecting older material, but compositions which convey to the reader the tonality of the character to whom they are attributed and which comment upon the significance of the context in which they are uttered.**

The angelic appearances which are frequent in the infancy narrative (1:11, 26; 2:9) have little parallel in the ministry of Jesus, but close parallels in Acts (5:19; 8:26; 10:3; 12:7; 27:23). The title "Messiah Lord" (*Christos Kyrios*) given by the angels to the infant Jesus in 2:11 echoes the christology of the post-resurrectional speeches in Acts, e.g., "God has made him both Lord [Kyrios] and Messiah [Christos], this Jesus whom you crucified" (2:36). The artistry that Luke manifests in the parallelism that he establishes between JBap and Jesus in the infancy narrative<sup>27</sup> is also at work in the parallelism in Acts between the careers of Peter and Paul. All of this shows that the infancy narrative is much more Lucan in thought and pattern than Conzelmann allows.<sup>11</sup>

There are three frequently proposed types of sources:

1) *A special source for the canticles or hymns*, i.e., for the Magnificat (1:46–55), the Benedictus (1:67–79), the Gloria in Excelsis (2:13–14) and the Nunc Dimittis (2:29–32). The style of these canticles is more poetic and Semitized than the style of their context; indeed, the Magnificat and Benedictus have only minor touches that make them Christian. They seem to be appendages and can be easily excised so that the reader would never miss them.<sup>30</sup> It has been suggested that these were originally Jewish hymns (even Maccabean war songs!) or Jewish Christian hymns (of the Jerusalem community which is so prominent in Acts 2–6).

(2) *Sources for one or more units in ch. 2*, e.g., for 2:1–20; 2:22–39; or 2:41–51. Chapter 2 is completely separable from ch. 1: it has its own introduction, and presupposes nothing from ch. 1, neither the virginal conception nor the identity of the parents. Although prominent in ch. 1, JBap has completely disappeared from the scene. Within ch. 2 itself, the story in 2:41–51 is quite separable from the rest. Not only does it deal with a different phase of Jesus' life, but in its emphasis on the parents' lack of understanding (2:48–50) it seems to clash with the revelations given to them in what has gone before. One could argue that 2:40 was the original conclusion and that a story of different provenance was added, requiring a second and duplicate conclusion in 2:52.

(3) *Sources for the JBap and Jesus stories of ch. 1*. Since these stories contain intimate detail about the conception of each child, those who regard them as historical often tend to trace them back to family traditions. **The thesis of a Marian source has its advocates today largely in Roman Catholic circles, and usually supposes an oral communication of Mary's experiences, upon which Luke has drawn directly or indirectly.**<sup>33</sup> Many critical scholars posit a Baptist source, sometimes thought to have had Christian origins, but more often thought to have been composed by followers of JBap.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, it is posited that the Baptist source once contained not only the material in Luke 1 that now refers to JBap but other material which has been reapplied to Jesus, e.g., the Magnificat (originally spoken by Elizabeth), the annunciation in 1:26–38 (originally addressed to Elizabeth, as a parallel to the annunciation to Zechariah), and even the presentation in the Temple in 2:22–39 (a continuation of the Samuel motif evident in the picture of JBap as a Nazirite).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). [\*The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke\*](#) (New Updated Edition., pp. 237–238). Yale University Press.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). [\*The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke\*](#) (New Updated Edition., pp. 237–238). Yale University Press.



Luke's Writing: "Rarely has theology been dramatized with more artistry and delicacy."<sup>13</sup>

## SL#22a

### Luke 1 CEB

Acknowledging others have organized and written about.

Original eyewitnesses & servants of that which has been written.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU KNOW THE DISCIPLINE THAT HAS GONE INTO WHAT YOU ARE NOW READING.

### Luke's purpose

*I Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. <sup>2</sup> They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us. <sup>3</sup> Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus. <sup>4</sup> I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received.*

The formatting of the prophetic integrates how Jesus' prophetic arrival is writ. Although, John's call never overshadows the call of Christ. Both are MIRACULOUS. (Passion Narrative Power?)

### John the Baptist's birth foretold

<sup>5</sup> During the rule of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. <sup>6</sup> They were both righteous before God, blameless in their observance of all the Lord's commandments and regulations. <sup>7</sup> They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to become pregnant and they both were very old. <sup>8</sup> One day Zechariah was serving as a priest before God because his priestly division was on duty. <sup>9</sup> Following the customs of priestly service, he was chosen by lottery to go into the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> All the people who gathered to worship were praying outside during this hour of incense offering. <sup>11</sup> An angel from the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and overcome with fear.

<sup>13</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John. <sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many people will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the Lord's eyes. He must not drink wine and liquor. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. <sup>16</sup> He will bring many Israelites back to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> He will go forth before the Lord, equipped with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers<sup>[a]</sup> back to their children, and he will turn the disobedient to righteous patterns of thinking. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? My wife and I are very old."

<sup>19</sup> The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in God's presence. I was sent to speak to you and to bring this good news to you. <sup>20</sup> Know this: What I have spoken will come true at the proper time. But because you didn't believe, you will remain silent, unable to speak until the day when these things happen."

<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he was in the sanctuary for such a long time. <sup>22</sup> When he came out, he was unable to speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he gestured to them and couldn't speak. <sup>23</sup> When he completed the days of his priestly service, he returned home. <sup>24</sup> Afterward, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She kept to herself for five months, saying, <sup>25</sup> "This is the Lord's doing. He has shown his favor to me by removing my disgrace among other people."

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<sup>13</sup> Brown, R. E. (1993). [\*The birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke\*](#) (New Updated Edition., pp. 239–253). Yale University Press.





We may note an O.T. stylizing to the story telling. It is on purpose...WHY?  
These two prophetic births are intertwined, WHY? (

### **Jesus' birth foretold**

<sup>26</sup> When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" <sup>29</sup> She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. <sup>31</sup> Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. <sup>33</sup> He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

<sup>34</sup> Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. <sup>36</sup> Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. <sup>37</sup> Nothing is impossible for God."

<sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

### **Mary visits Elizabeth**

<sup>39</sup> Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. <sup>40</sup> She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. <sup>43</sup> Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. <sup>45</sup> Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

O.T. Worship format. Connecting the Messianic from the O.T. to what is happening NOW.

### **Mary praises God**

<sup>46</sup> Mary said,

"With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

<sup>47</sup> In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

<sup>48</sup> He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored

<sup>49</sup> because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> He shows mercy to everyone,  
from one generation to the next,  
who honors him as God.

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

<sup>52</sup> He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly.

<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty-handed.

<sup>54</sup> He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,  
remembering his mercy,

<sup>55</sup> just as he promised to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

<sup>56</sup> Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.





<sup>57</sup> When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a boy. <sup>58</sup> Her neighbors and relatives celebrated with her because they had heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy. <sup>59</sup> On the eighth day, it came time to circumcise the child. They wanted to name him Zechariah because that was his father's name. <sup>60</sup> But his mother replied, "No, his name will be John."

<sup>61</sup> They said to her, "None of your relatives have that name."<sup>62</sup> Then they began gesturing to his father to see what he wanted to call him.

<sup>63</sup> After asking for a tablet, he surprised everyone by writing, "His name is John." <sup>64</sup> At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God.

<sup>65</sup> All their neighbors were filled with awe, and everyone throughout the Judean highlands talked about what had happened. <sup>66</sup> All who heard about this considered it carefully. They said, "What then will this child be?" Indeed, the Lord's power was with him.

O.T. Prophecy format. Connecting the Messianic from the O.T. to what is happening NOW.

### **Zechariah's prophecy**

<sup>67</sup> John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

<sup>68</sup> "Bless the Lord God of Israel because he has come to help and has delivered his people.

<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David's house,<sup>70</sup> just as he said through the mouths of his holy prophets long ago.

<sup>71</sup> He has brought salvation from our enemies and from the power of all those who hate us.

<sup>72</sup> He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and remembered his holy covenant,

<sup>73</sup> the solemn pledge he made to our ancestor Abraham.

He has granted<sup>74</sup> that we would be rescued from the power of our enemies so that we could serve him without fear,<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness in God's eyes, for as long as we live.

### **SL#22b**

<sup>76</sup> You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way.

<sup>77</sup> You will tell his people how to be saved through the forgiveness of their sins.

<sup>78</sup> Because of our God's deep compassion, the dawn from heaven will break upon us,

<sup>79</sup> to give light to those who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide us on the path of peace."

<sup>80</sup> The child grew up, becoming strong in character. He was in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.

- Have I ever equated these 4 verses as an important, integral part of the Christmas story?
- Are they read each and every year?
- The life we now within the power of the Holy Spirit is on display here = POWER.

### **SL#23**

#### **Romans 8:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.



**SL#24**

**Am I going to echo this “not seeing Jesus for who He is” relationship that was prominent in the early life of the Disciples?**

**OR**

**I am looking for the power of the Christ and the character of Christ that is seen in the Passion Narratives and trying to figure out HOW TO respond to what I discover?**

**QUESTIONS:**

- Not clearly “seeing Jesus” = Because I do not know Him well enough?
- Where can I look for Jesus’ power?
- Am I settled in my experience with Him thinking I know when/where I will see it?
- Do I scratch my head like the Disciples did during Jesus’ life...Not clearly “seeing Jesus” = ???
- What happens if I LOOK for His power/His character amidst my everydayness?

**Merry Christ-Mass**

- i.The Infancy Narratives & The Passion Narratives
- ii.The Extraordinary Infancy of Christ
- iii.The Genealogies & Opening Chapter(s)

**IV. The Prophecies of Jesus’ Birth**

Jesus fulfilled hundreds of Old Testament prophecies. Many of these prophecies involved the circumstances surrounding His birth. Below is a list of several such prophecies. Note the irrefutable similarities between the Old Testament predictions and their New Testament fulfillment.

**SL#25**

<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>Old Testament Prediction</b>	<b>New Testament Fulfillment</b>
The Messiah would be <u>the seed of a woman.</u>	Gen. 3:15	Gal. 4:4
The Messiah would be a <u>descendant of Abraham.</u>	Gen. 12:3	Matt. 1:1
The Messiah would be a <u>descendant of Isaac.</u>	Gen. 17:19	Luke 3:34
The Messiah would be a <u>descendant of Jacob.</u>	Num. 24:17	Matt. 1:2; 2:2
The Messiah would be <u>from the tribe of Judah.</u>	Gen. 49:10	Luke 3:33



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The Messiah would be an heir to the throne of <u>David</u> .	Is. 9:7	Luke 1:32, 33
The Messiah would be <u>anointed and eternal</u> .	Ps. 45:6, 7; 102:25–27	Heb. 1:8–12
The Messiah would be <u>born in Bethlehem</u> .	Mic. 5:2	Luke 2:4, 5, 7
The Messiah would be <u>born of a virgin</u> .	Is. 7:14	Luke 1:26, 27, 30, 31
The Messiah's birth would trigger a slaughter of children.	Jer. 31:15	Matt. 2:16–18
The Messiah would also come from Egypt.	Hos. 11:1	Matt. 2:14, 15

Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1997). [The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version](#) (Mt 1:19–3:17). T. Nelson Publishers.

**Closing:**

***Am I going to echo this “not seeing Jesus for who He is” relationship that was prominent in the early life of the Disciples***

**OR**

***I am looking for the power of the Christ and the character of Christ that is seen in the Passion Narratives and trying to figure out HOW TO respond to what I discover?***

- Not clearly “seeing Jesus” = Because I do not know Him well enough? (**How to know Him >?**)
- WHERE do I Look for His power? (Make a list: **Mature Tians. Scripture. Prayer. Fasting.**)
- WHERE do I see His character? (**Mature Tians. Fruit of the Spirit. Scripture.**)
- Am I settled in my experience with Him thinking **I know** when/where I will see Him? (**Y/N**)
- Do I ever just turn my head away and not want to look for Him? (**What does that look like?**)
- Do I scratch my head like the Disciples did during Jesus’ life...Not clearly “seeing Jesus” = ??? (Symptoms of scratching: Quit reading bible. Only listen to Tian music. Do not practice living scripture. ????)
- What happens if I LOOK for His power/His character amidst my everydayness? (Everyday Jesus = ???)

**Matthew 7:7** “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” [ADVENT].

**Merry Christ-Mass**



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**Matthew:**

Abraham		Asaph
Isaac		Jehoshaphat
Jacob		Joram
Judah		Uzziah
	Tamar	Jotham
Perez		Ahaz
Hezron		Hezekiah
Aram		Manasseh
Amminadab		Amos
Aram		Josiah
Amminadab		Jechoniah
Nahshon		Shealtiel
Salmon		Zerubbable
	Rahab	Abiud
Boaz		Eliakim
	Ruth	Azor
Obed		Zadok
Jesse		Achim
David		Eliud
	Wife of Uriah	Eleazar
Solomon		Matthan
Rehoboam		Jacob
Abijah		Joseph – husband of Mary

**Luke:**

Joseph

Heli

Mattha



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Levi  
Melchi  
Jannai  
Joseph  
Mattathias  
Amos  
Nahum  
Esli  
Naggai  
Maath  
Mattathias  
Semein  
Josech  
Joda  
Joanan  
Rhesa  
Zerubbabel  
Shealtiel  
Neri  
Melchi  
Addi  
Cosam  
Elmadam  
Er  
Joshua

Eliezer  
Jorim  
Matthat  
Levi  
Simeon  
Judah  
Joseph  
Jonam  
Eliakim  
Melea  
Menna  
Mattatha  
Nathan  
David  
Jesse  
Obed  
Boaz  
Sala  
Nahshon  
Amminadab  
Admin  
Arni  
Hezron  
Perez  
Judah

Jacob  
Isaac  
Abraham  
Terah  
Nahor  
Serug  
Reu  
Peleg  
Eber  
Shelah  
Caiman  
Arphaxad  
Shem  
Noah  
Lamech  
Methuselah  
Enoch  
Jared  
Mehalalel  
Caiman  
Enos seth  
Adam  
Son of God

**NotES:**



KEEP? LIST VERSES ON SLIDE? Because the passion narrative establishes why God came to earth – our need for a cleansing sacrifice. It also shows the power of God.

**CEB [The Human One]**

**Acts 2:32-36** This Jesus God raised up. We are all witnesses to that fact.<sup>33</sup> He was exalted to God’s right side and received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit. He poured out this Spirit, and you are seeing and hearing the results of his having done so.<sup>34</sup> David didn’t ascend into heaven. Yet he says,

*The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right side,  
<sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’*

<sup>36</sup> “Therefore, let all Israel know beyond question that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

**Acts 4:10** If so, then you and all the people of Israel need to know that this man stands healthy before you because of the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.

**Acts 5:31** God has exalted Jesus to his right side as leader and savior so that he could enable Israel to change its heart and life and to find forgiveness for sins.

**Acts 10:39-40** We are witnesses of everything He did, both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They killed Him by hanging him on a tree,<sup>40</sup> but God raised Him up on the third day and allowed Him to be seen,

**Acts 13:32** “We proclaim to you the good news. What God promised to our ancestors,<sup>33</sup> He has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.

**Romans 1:3-4** God promised this good news about his Son ahead of time through his prophets in the holy scriptures. His Son was descended from David.<sup>4</sup> He was publicly identified as God’s Son with power through his resurrection from the dead, which was based on the Spirit of holiness. This Son is Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Philippians 2:8-9** He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, God highly honored him and gave him a name above all names,

**Hebrews 1:1-14**

**The Son is God’s ultimate messenger**

**1** In the past, God spoke through the prophets to our ancestors in many times and many ways. **<sup>2</sup> In these final days, though, He spoke to us through a Son. God made his Son the heir of everything and created the world through Him. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the light of God’s glory and the imprint of God’s being. He maintains everything with His powerful message. After He carried out the cleansing of people from their sins, He sat down at the right side of the highest majesty. <sup>4</sup> And the Son became so much greater than the other messengers, such as angels, that He received a more important title than theirs.**

**Speaking to the Son and angels**

<sup>5</sup> After all, when did God ever say to any of the angels:

*You are my Son. Today I have become your Father?*

Or, even, *I will be his Father, and He will be my Son?*

<sup>6</sup> But then, when He brought His firstborn into the world, He said, *All of God’s angels must worship Him.*

<sup>7</sup> He talks about the angels: *He’s the one who uses the spirits for His messengers and who uses flames of fire as ministers.*

<sup>8</sup> But He says to His Son, *God, your throne is forever and your kingdom’s scepter is a rod of justice.*

<sup>9</sup> *You loved righteousness and hated lawless behavior. That is why God, your God, has anointed you more than your companions with the oil of joy.* <sup>10</sup> And He says, *You, Lord, laid the earth’s foundations in the beginning, and the*

*heavens are made by Your hands. <sup>11</sup> They will pass away, but You remain. They will all wear out like old clothes.*

<sup>12</sup> *You will fold them up like a coat. They will be changed like a person changes clothes, but You stay the same,*

*and the years of Your life won’t come to an end. <sup>13</sup> When has he ever said to any of the angels,*

*Sit at My right side until I put Your enemies under Your feet like a footstool?*

<sup>14</sup> Aren’t all the angels ministering spirits who are sent to serve those who are going to inherit salvation?

**Matthew 1:1–17**  
**(that of Joseph?)**

**Luke 3:23–38**  
**(that of Mary?)**

**Matthew**

**Luke**



The History of Christmas  
November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022

	Asa	Menna
	Jehoshaphat	Melea
God	Joram	Eliakim
Adam	Uzziah	Jonam
Seth	Jotham	Joseph
Enos	Ahaz	Judah
Cainan	Hezekiah	Simeon
Mahalaleel	Manasseh	Levi
Jared	Amos	Matthat
Enoch	Josiah	Jorim
Methuselah	Jechoniah	Eliezer
Lamech	Shealtiel	Joshua
Noah	Zerubbabel	Er
Shem	Abiud	Elmadam
Arphaxad	Eliakim	Cosam
Cainan	Azor	Addi
Shelah	Zadok	Melchi
Eber	Achim	Neri
Peleg	Eliud	Shealtiel
Reu	Eleazer	Zerubbabel
Serug	Matthan	Rhesa
Nahor	Jacob	Joanan





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	Terah	Joseph	Joda
Abraham	Abraham	(Jesus)	Josech
Isaac	Isaac		Semein
Jacob	Jacob		Mattathias
Judah	Judah		Maath
Perez	Perez		Naggai
Hezron	Hezron		Esli
Ram	Arni		Nahum
Amminadab	Admin		Amos
Nahshon	Amminadab		Mattathias
Salmon	Nahshon		Joseph
Boaz	Sala		Jannai
Obed	Boaz		Melchi
Jesse	Obed		Levi
David	Jesse		Matthat
Solomon	David		Heli
Rehoboam	Nathan		Joseph
Abijah	Mattatha		(Jesus)

**Matthew 2** Common English Bible  
**Coming of the magi**



## The History of Christmas

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<sup>2</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. <sup>4</sup> He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

<sup>6</sup> *You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,  
by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,  
because from you will come one who governs,  
who will shepherd my people Israel.*"<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." <sup>9</sup> When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. <sup>11</sup> They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

### Escape to Egypt

<sup>13</sup> When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him."<sup>14</sup> Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt. <sup>15</sup> He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: *I have called my son out of Egypt.*

### Murder of the Bethlehem children

<sup>16</sup> When Herod knew the magi had fooled him, he grew very angry. He sent soldiers to kill all the children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. <sup>17</sup> This fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet:

<sup>18</sup> *A voice was heard in Ramah,  
weeping and much grieving.  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
and she did not want to be comforted,  
because they were no more.*

### Return from Egypt

<sup>19</sup> After King Herod died, an angel from the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. <sup>20</sup> "Get up," the angel said, "and take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. Those who were trying to kill the child are dead." <sup>21</sup> Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus ruled over Judea in place of his father Herod, Joseph was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he went to the area of Galilee. <sup>23</sup> He settled in a city called Nazareth so that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled: He will be called a Nazarene.

## Luke 1 CEB

### Luke's purpose

<sup>1</sup> Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. <sup>2</sup> They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed



## The History of Christmas November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022

down to us. <sup>3</sup> Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus. <sup>4</sup> I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received.

### **John the Baptist's birth foretold**

<sup>5</sup> During the rule of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. <sup>6</sup> They were both righteous before God, blameless in their observance of all the Lord's commandments and regulations. <sup>7</sup> They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to become pregnant and they both were very old. <sup>8</sup> One day Zechariah was serving as a priest before God because his priestly division was on duty. <sup>9</sup> Following the customs of priestly service, he was chosen by lottery to go into the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> All the people who gathered to worship were praying outside during this hour of incense offering. <sup>11</sup> An angel from the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and overcome with fear.

<sup>13</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John. <sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many people will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the Lord's eyes. He must not drink wine and liquor. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. <sup>16</sup> He will bring many Israelites back to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> He will go forth before the Lord, equipped with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and he will turn the disobedient to righteous patterns of thinking. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? My wife and I are very old."

<sup>19</sup> The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in God's presence. I was sent to speak to you and to bring this good news to you. <sup>20</sup> Know this: What I have spoken will come true at the proper time. But because you didn't believe, you will remain silent, unable to speak until the day when these things happen."

<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he was in the sanctuary for such a long time. <sup>22</sup> When he came out, he was unable to speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he gestured to them and couldn't speak. <sup>23</sup> When he completed the days of his priestly service, he returned home. <sup>24</sup> Afterward, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She kept to herself for five months, saying, <sup>25</sup> "This is the Lord's doing. He has shown his favor to me by removing my disgrace among other people."

### **Jesus' birth foretold**

<sup>26</sup> When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" <sup>29</sup> She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. <sup>31</sup> Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. <sup>33</sup> He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

<sup>34</sup> Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. <sup>36</sup> Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. <sup>37</sup> Nothing is impossible for God."

<sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

### **Mary visits Elizabeth**



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<sup>39</sup> Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. <sup>40</sup> She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. <sup>43</sup> Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. <sup>45</sup> Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

### **Mary praises God**

<sup>46</sup> Mary said,

"With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

<sup>47</sup> In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

<sup>48</sup> He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored

<sup>49</sup> because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> He shows mercy to everyone,  
from one generation to the next,  
who honors him as God.

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

<sup>52</sup> He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly.

<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty-handed.

<sup>54</sup> He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,  
remembering his mercy,

<sup>55</sup> just as he promised to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

<sup>56</sup> Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.

<sup>57</sup> When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a boy. <sup>58</sup> Her neighbors and relatives celebrated with her because they had heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy. <sup>59</sup> On the eighth day, it came time to circumcise the child. They wanted to name him Zechariah because that was his father's name. <sup>60</sup> But his mother replied, "No, his name will be John."

<sup>61</sup> They said to her, "None of your relatives have that name." <sup>62</sup> Then they began gesturing to his father to see what he wanted to call him.

<sup>63</sup> After asking for a tablet, he surprised everyone by writing, "His name is John." <sup>64</sup> At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God.

<sup>65</sup> All their neighbors were filled with awe, and everyone throughout the Judean highlands talked about what had happened. <sup>66</sup> All who heard about this considered it carefully. They said, "What then will this child be?" Indeed, the Lord's power was with him.

### **Zechariah's prophecy**

<sup>67</sup> John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

<sup>68</sup> "Bless the Lord God of Israel

because he has come to help and has delivered his people.

<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David's house,

<sup>70</sup> just as he said through the mouths of his holy prophets long ago.

<sup>71</sup> He has brought salvation from our enemies

and from the power of all those who hate us.

<sup>72</sup> He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,



and remembered his holy covenant,  
73 the solemn pledge he made to our ancestor Abraham.  
He has granted 74 that we would be rescued  
from the power of our enemies  
so that we could serve him without fear,  
75 in holiness and righteousness in God's eyes,  
for as long as we live.  
76 You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way.  
77 You will tell his people how to be saved  
through the forgiveness of their sins.  
78 Because of our God's deep compassion,  
the dawn from heaven will break upon us,  
79 to give light to those who are sitting in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
to guide us on the path of peace."  
80 The child grew up, becoming strong in character. He was in the wilderness until he began his public  
ministry to Israel.

## **Luke 2** Common English Bible

### **Jesus' birth**

2 In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. 2 This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. 3 Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. 4 Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. 5 He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. 6 While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. 7 She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the **guestroom**.

### **Announcement to shepherds**

8 Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. 9 The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. 11 Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, 14 "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

15 When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." 16 They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. 18 Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. 20 The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

### **Jesus' circumcision, naming, and temple presentation**

21 When eight days had passed, Jesus' parents circumcised him and gave him the name Jesus. This was the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived. 22 When the time came for their ritual cleansing, in accordance with the Law from Moses, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the



Lord. <sup>23</sup> It's written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord." <sup>24</sup> They offered a sacrifice in keeping with what's stated in the Law of the Lord, *A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*

### **Simeon's response to Jesus**

<sup>25</sup> A man named Simeon was in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout. He eagerly anticipated the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup> The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple area. Meanwhile, Jesus' parents brought the child to the temple so that they could do what was customary under the Law. <sup>28</sup> Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said,

<sup>29</sup> "Now, master, let your servant go in peace according to your word,

<sup>30</sup> because my eyes have seen your salvation.

<sup>31</sup> You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples.

<sup>32</sup> It's a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and a glory for your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup> His father and mother were amazed by what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "This boy is assigned to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that generates opposition <sup>35</sup> so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your innermost being too."

### **Anna's response to Jesus**

<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, who belonged to the tribe of Asher. She was very old. After she married, she lived with her husband for seven years. <sup>37</sup> She was now an 84-year-old widow. She never left the temple area but worshipped God with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup> She approached at that very moment and began to praise God and to speak about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

### **Jesus as a child in Nazareth**

<sup>39</sup> When Mary and Joseph had completed everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to their hometown, Nazareth in Galilee. <sup>40</sup> The child grew up and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

### **Jesus in the temple at Passover**

<sup>41</sup> Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. <sup>42</sup> When he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to their custom. <sup>43</sup> After the festival was over, they were returning home, but the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents didn't know it. <sup>44</sup> Supposing that he was among their band of travelers, they journeyed on for a full day while looking for him among their family and friends. <sup>45</sup> When they didn't find Jesus, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple. He was sitting among the teachers, listening to them and putting questions to them. <sup>47</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed by his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup> When his parents saw him, they were shocked.

His mother said, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Listen! Your father and I have been worried. We've been looking for you!"

<sup>49</sup> Jesus replied, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?" <sup>50</sup> But they didn't understand what he said to them.

<sup>51</sup> Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. His mother cherished every word in her heart. <sup>52</sup> Jesus matured in wisdom and years, and in favor with God and with people.



## The Prophecies of Jesus' Birth

Jesus fulfilled hundreds of Old Testament prophecies. Many of these prophecies involved the circumstances surrounding His birth. Below is a list of several such prophecies. Note the irrefutable similarities between the Old Testament predictions and their New Testament fulfillment.

<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>Old Testament Prediction</b>	<b>New Testament Fulfillment</b>
The Messiah would be the seed of a woman.	Gen. 3:15	Gal. 4:4
The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham.	Gen. 12:3	Matt. 1:1
The Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac.	Gen. 17:19	Luke 3:34
The Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob.	Num. 24:17	Matt. 1:2; 2:2
The Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah.	Gen. 49:10	Luke 3:33
The Messiah would be an heir to the throne of David.	Is. 9:7	Luke 1:32, 33
The Messiah would be anointed and eternal.	Ps. 45:6, 7; 102:25–27	Heb. 1:8–12
The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.	Mic. 5:2	Luke 2:4, 5, 7
The Messiah would be born of a virgin.	Is. 7:14	Luke 1:26, 27, 30, 31





The Messiah's birth      Jer. 31:15      Matt. 2:16–18  
would trigger a slaughter  
of children.

The Messiah would also      Hos. 11:1      Matt. 2:14, 15  
come from Egypt.

**1:20 conceived . . . of the Holy Spirit:** Verses 1–17 establish Jesus as a legal son of Joseph; vv. 18–25 deny that Joseph was Jesus' physical father. The **first** was necessary to establish Jesus' lineage to David and His royal right to be King. The **second** was necessary to establish His qualifications to be the Savior of all people: Jesus was God's Son and not merely Joseph's. Matthew elaborated on Jesus' kingship while Luke detailed His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26–56).

## Word Focus

### Jesus

(Gk. *Iēsous*) (1:21; Luke 1:31; Acts 2:36; 4:18; 13:23; 17:3) Strong's #2424: The Greek name *Iēsous* is the equivalent of the Hebrew name *Yeshua*, meaning "The Lord Shall Save." Although a common name among the Jews (see Luke 3:29; Col. 4:11), the name expresses Jesus' work on earth—to save and to deliver. This is affirmed by the explanation the angel gives Joseph after telling him to name the virgin-born child Jesus: "for He will save His people from their sins" (1:21). After Jesus was crucified for the sins of His people and raised from the dead, the early apostles proclaimed Jesus as the one and only Savior (Acts 5:31; 13:23).

**1:23 Behold . . . Immanuel:** This is a quotation from Is. 7:14. In this verse, the prophet Isaiah consoles King Ahaz of Judah. A coalition of two kings, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel, was opposing Ahaz. Isaiah tells Ahaz not to fear, for the plans of his enemies would not succeed. As a sign to Ahaz, a son would be born of a woman, and before that boy reached the age where he could tell right from wrong, the two kings would no longer be a threat to Ahaz. There are several interpretations of Matthew's use of this Old Testament prophecy. Some view Isaiah's prophecy as directly prophetic of Jesus' birth and nothing else. According to this view, only the miraculous birth of Jesus can be considered a sign. Since the Hebrew noun translated *virgin* in Is. 7:14 can also mean "young woman," some have suggested that Isaiah was prophesying about a son born during the lifetime of Ahaz—perhaps Isaiah's son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Is. 8:3). Others have interpreted Isaiah's prophecy as a prediction that a virgin, a contemporary of Isaiah, would marry and have a child. The sign to Ahaz was the sudden dissolution of Rezin and Pekah in the face of Assyria. Even though uncertainty surrounds how this prophecy was fulfilled during Isaiah's lifetime, Matthew makes it clear that Isaiah's words



find their ultimate fulfillment in the virgin birth of Jesus, a sign to people of all ages that God was with them.

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### The Journeys of Jesus' Birth

The decree of Caesar Augustus required Mary and Joseph, who were from Nazareth, to register for the census in the Judean city of Bethlehem (Luke 2:1–5). After the wise men from the East had visited to worship the Child, Joseph heeded the warning of the angel of the Lord and took his family to Egypt, where they remained until the death of Herod the Great.

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**1:25** Joseph **did not know** Mary physically until **she** gave birth to Jesus. The clear implication of this verse is that Mary was a virgin only until the birth of Jesus. The brothers and sisters of Jesus were probably younger siblings born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus' birth (13:55, 56). Joseph could not have had children by a previous marriage, as some suppose, for then Jesus would not have been heir to the Davidic throne as the oldest son of Joseph.

**2:1** The events of ch. 2 probably took place some months after Jesus' birth. Several reasons may be offered to support this conclusion: (1) Joseph and Mary were living in a house (v. 11); (2) Jesus is referred to as a child, not an infant (v. 11); (3) Herod murdered all the male children *two years old and under* (v. 16); and (4) it would have been strange for Joseph and Mary to offer the sacrifice of the poor, a pair of turtledoves or pigeons (see Lev. 12:8; Luke 2:24), if the wise men had just given them gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Thus the wise men must have arrived after the ritual sacrifice described in Luke 2:22–24, 39. **Herod the king** is Herod the Great, who reigned over Palestine from 37 B.C. until his death in 4 B.C. A crafty ruler and lavish builder, Herod had a reign marked by cruelty and bloodshed. The word translated **wise men** can refer either to fraudulent sorcerers (see Acts 8:9, 11; 13:6, 8) or, as here, to a more honorable class of astrologers.

**2:2 born King of the Jews:** These words would have struck both terror and fury into the heart of Herod. **His star in the East** may refer to a star supernaturally introduced into the heavens, discernible only to students of the sky. The star reappeared to guide the wise men to where Christ was (v. 9). The fact that it was called "His star" indicates that the wise men identified the star with the arrival of the King of the Jews.

**2:4 chief priests:** This first mention of the Jewish council— "all the chief priests and scribes of the people"—reveals that the Jewish leaders were alerted early to the coming of the Messiah. Their quick recital of Mic. 5:2 showed their prophetic astuteness concerning the messianic prophecies (v. 6).



**2:5** Matthew clearly records how the Jewish religious authorities, who became Christ's enemies later, unintentionally affirmed that Jesus had fulfilled a messianic prophecy in His birth. God sometimes uses the words of His opponents to speak the truth (see John 11:49–52).

**2:10** The wise men undoubtedly would have been discouraged by their failure to find the King in Jerusalem, by the lack of knowledge concerning the birth of the Messiah among the leaders, by the disinterest among Israel, and by the weariness from the long journey. The reappearance of the star must have brought great joy and encouragement to them.

**2:11 Gold** symbolized royalty; **frankincense** was a fragrance; **myrrh** was the ointment of death. These gifts provided the financial resources for Mary and Joseph's flight to Egypt.

**2:12 warned in a dream:** Five dreams of divine guidance emphasize God's orchestration of these perilous events (1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22).

**2:15 fulfilled:** This is the second fulfillment of prophecy recorded in ch. 2. The first, in v. 6, is a direct fulfillment of Micah's prophecy about the birthplace of Jesus; this is a typological fulfillment. The prophecy quoted here, from Hos. 11:1, refers to the nation of Israel as God's son coming out of Egypt in the Exodus. Jesus is the genuine Son of God, and, as Israel's Messiah, is the true Israel (see John 15:1); therefore, He gives fuller meaning to the prophecy of Hos. 11:1.

**2:18** This prophecy comes from Jer. 31:15, in which Rachel, who had been entombed near Bethlehem some thirteen centuries before the Babylonian captivity, is seen weeping for her children as they were led away to Babylon in 586 B.C. In the slaughter of the male infants at the time of Christ's birth, Rachel once again is pictured as mourning the violent loss of her sons.

**2:22** When Herod died, his kingdom was parceled out to his three sons: **Archelaus**, who ruled over Judea where Bethlehem was; Antipas, who became tetrarch of Galilee, Perea, Samaria, and Idumea; and Philip, who was tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (see Luke 3:1). Like his father, Archelaus was violent and cruel. The Romans tolerated his savagery for ten years and finally deposed him in A.D. 6. after a Jewish delegation took their protest to Rome. Joseph, aware of Herod Archelaus's reputation and guided by God in a dream, **turned** north to **Galilee**.

### Jesus: The Nazarene

The politics of Jesus' day forced Joseph to move his family around. From Bethlehem they fled to Egypt. Their return to Israel found them skirting Judea and finally resettling in the relatively peaceful region of Galilee, in the town of Nazareth. Matthew sees God's providence in these moves. Micah 5:2 had predicted that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem (2:6); and Matthew cites another prophecy, 'He shall be called a Nazarene,' as being fulfilled when Joseph moved to Nazareth (2:23). An exhaustive search of Scripture reveals that the specific words of this prophecy are not found in any Old Testament prophet.



There have been two major explanations of this biblical mystery. Some have traced the origin of the word Nazarene to the Hebrew word for *branch* or *shoot*. The word Branch is used by the prophets to speak of the coming Messiah. For example, Is. 11:1 states that the Messiah would come out of Jesse's "roots," as a "Branch" (see Is. 53:2). Like a tree that had been cut down, the royal line of David had almost been destroyed in the Babylonian captivity; yet a twig would grow out of the stump. This is Jesus, a descendant of David and the King of kings.

Others have pointed to Matthew's use of the plural "prophets" in Mt 2:23 as an indication that Matthew was not referring to a specific prophecy, but to a concept that appears in a number of prophecies concerning the Messiah. The town of Nazareth housed the Roman garrison in northern Galilee. Jewish hatred of the Romans was so extreme that most Jews avoided any association with Nazareth. In fact, Jewish people who lived in Nazareth were thought of as "consorting with the enemy." At that time, calling someone a "Nazarene" indicated utter contempt for that person. Having come from Nazareth, Jesus was despised in the eyes of many Jews. Even Jesus' disciples initially harbored such feelings about a person from Nazareth. When Nathanael heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, he scoffed, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). The fact that Jesus was despised because of His Nazarene background aptly fits several Old Testament prophecies that speak of the humble character of the Messiah (see Ps. 22:6-8; Is. 42:1-4; Mic. 5:2). Whether the word Nazarene is associated with the prophecies of the Messiah as the Branch or the general prophecies of the Messiah's humble character, apparently Matthew's largely Jewish audience would have seen the association clearly. Otherwise Matthew would have provided further explanation.

**2:23 Nazareth** was the location of the Roman garrison in northern Galilee. Those who lived there were suspected of compromise with the enemy.

**3:1** As Christ's forerunner, **John the Baptist** preceded the Lord Jesus in birth, ministry, and death. Luke describes John's birth (see Luke 1), but Matthew jumps directly into the account of John's proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. John is called "the Baptist" because he baptized people. Unlike the common practice of proselytes and Jews administering ceremonial cleansings to themselves, John baptized those who came to him professing repentance and identifying with his message.

**3:2** The Greek verb translated **repent** indicates a change of attitude and outlook which well may result in sorrow for sins. But the basic idea is a reversal of thinking which changes one's life (see v. 8). **The kingdom of heaven** is most likely synonymous with "the kingdom of God." Both terms seem to be used consistently throughout the New Testament to refer to God's heavenly kingdom coming to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. This kingdom begins with the incarnation of Christ, continues with the inception of the church, and will be fully manifested when Christ returns. The kingdom was **at hand** because it was being offered to Israel in the



person of the Messiah. John's preaching assumed that judgment would precede the coming of the kingdom, a fact that was taught by the Old Testament prophets (see Is. 4:4, 5; 5:15, 16; 42:1; Jer. 33:14–16; Ezek. 20:33–38; Dan. 7:26, 27; Joel 1:14, 15; 3:12–17; Zeph. 1:2–18; 3:8–13; Zech. 13:2, 9; Mal. 3:1–5; 4:1–6). At this point, John assumed that the nation of Israel would repent and the kingdom would come. John was telling the Jews of his generation to repent in order to gain entrance into Christ's kingdom.

**3:3** As roads were repaired, smoothed, straightened, and leveled before a king came, so John was preparing a spiritual road for the Messiah before His arrival. The quotation is from Is. 40:3, where the prophet announces the need to prepare a highway for the return of the Jewish exiles from captivity to their homeland, Israel.

**3:7 The Pharisees and Sadducees** were two prominent groups in Judaism during the time of Christ. Both groups claimed to be true followers of Judaism, but their beliefs were considerably different. The Pharisees were primarily associated with the laymen of Israel. In doctrine, they held not only to the Law of Moses and Scriptures, but also to a whole body of oral tradition. Their activities were centered in the synagogue. On the other hand, the Sadducees were associated with the priestly caste, for whom worship was centered in the temple. Extremely conservative, they based their beliefs essentially on the Pentateuch—the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy (see Acts 23:6–10).

**3:10 the ax is laid to the root of the trees:** John likened his ministry to God's ax, clearing His orchard of dead wood—especially that which did not bear the fruit of repentance.

**3:11 He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit:** John identified people with himself and his message of repentance by water baptism; the One coming after him was so much greater that He would unite people to Himself by means of the Holy Spirit. John knew that the kingdom to come would be characterized by a great display of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people (see Is. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; 39:29; Joel 2:28; Zech. 12:10). It would be the work of the Messiah to accomplish this, to baptize His people in the Spirit. But those who rejected Him the Messiah would baptize with **fire**, which is probably a figure for God's judgment (vv. 10, 12). In His first advent, Christ baptized in the Spirit. When He comes again, He will baptize with fire.

**3:15 to fulfill all righteousness:** This phrase does not suggest that Jesus came for baptism because He had sinned; the Lord Jesus was without sin (see 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). Jesus' baptism probably served several purposes: (1) Jesus joined with the believing remnant of Israel who had been baptized by John; (2) He confirmed the ministry of John; and (3) He fulfilled the Father's will.

**3:16 the Spirit of God descending:** This was God's official recognition of Jesus as the Messiah.

**3:17 This is My beloved Son,** a reference to Ps. 2:7, implies that others heard the voice of the Father. **In whom I am well pleased** recalls the prophecy of Is. 42:1. Matthew 3:16, 17 demonstrates the simultaneous existence of all three Persons of the Godhead. This passage



also points to the Son’s voluntary humiliation, the Father’s delight in Him, and the Spirit’s desire to glorify Christ.<sup>14</sup>

See GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST.

**Genealogy of Jesus Christ.** Account of Jesus’ human descent. The NT records Jesus’ genealogy twice in great detail: in Matthew 1:1–17 and in Luke 3:23–38.

**Matthew’s Genealogy (1:1–17).** Matthew 1:1 presents Jesus Christ as “the son of David, the son of Abraham.” By those two names Matthew highlights Jesus’ earthly relationship to the Abrahamic (Gn 17:1–8) and Davidic (2 Sm 7:12–16) covenants of promise. Then beginning with the patriarch Abraham, Matthew traces Jesus’ human ancestry through King David to Joseph, “the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ” (Mt 1:16). Matthew summarizes his account: “So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation of Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations” (v 17).

An examination of Matthew’s handling of this genealogical material discloses several interesting peculiarities:

(1) The arrangement of the names into three groups of 14 seems to be an artificial device. Furthermore, there are 41 and not 42 names in the genealogy, as verse 17 implies.

(2) The list of names in the first group (vv 2–6) totals 14; the list in the second group (vv 6–11), if reckoned “from David to the deportation to Babylon,” totals 15. The third group (vv 12–16) totals 14 counting Jeconiah. If Jeconiah is restricted to the third group David has to be counted twice, as the name concluding the first group and beginning the second group.

(3) To have 14 names in the second group, Matthew omits three kings, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, between Joram and Uzziah (v 8) and one, Jehoiakim, between Josiah and Jeconiah (v 11).

(4) In the first group Matthew mentions three women: Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth; and in the second group alludes to Bathsheba, an uncommon practice in genealogies and all the more strange when it is noted that these four represent what could be regarded as moral blemishes in the history of the Davidic dynasty—Tamar, a victim of incest, Rahab, a prostitute, Ruth, a Moabitess, and Bathsheba, an adulteress.

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ			
Matthew 1:1–17 (that of Joseph?)	Luke 3:23–38 (that of Mary?)	Matthew	Luke
		Asa	Menna
		Jehoshaphat	Melea
	God	Joram	Eliakim

<sup>14</sup> Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1997). *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Mt 1:19–3:17). T. Nelson Publishers.



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	Adam	Uzziah	Jonam
	Seth	Jotham	Joseph
	Enos	Ahaz	Judah
	Cainan	Hezekiah	Simeon
	Mahalaleel	Manasseh	Levi
	Jared	Amos	Matthat
	Enoch	Josiah	Jorim
	Methuselah	Jechoniah	Eliezer
	Lamech	Shealtiel	Joshua
	Noah	Zerubbabel	Er
	Shem	Abiud	Elmadam
	Arphaxad	Eliakim	Cosam
	Cainan	Azor	Addi
	Shelah	Zadok	Melchi
	Eber	Achim	Neri
	Peleg	Eliud	Shealtiel
	Reu	Eleazer	Zerubbabel
	Serug	Matthan	Rhesa
	Nahor	Jacob	Joanan
	Terah	Joseph	Joda
Abraham	Abraham	(Jesus)	Josech
Isaac	Isaac		Semein



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Jacob	Jacob	Mattathias
Judah	Judah	Maath
Perez	Perez	Naggai
Hezron	Hezron	Esli
Ram	Arni	Nahum
Amminadab	Admin	Amos
Nahshon	Amminadab	Mattathias
Salmon	Nahshon	Joseph
Boaz	Sala	Jannai
Obed	Boaz	Melchi
Jesse	Obed	Levi
David	Jesse	Matthat
Solomon	David	Heli
Rehoboam	Nathan	Joseph
Abijah	Mattatha	(Jesus)

(5) In the first group Matthew mentions Judah's brothers and Zerach, Perez's brother. In the second group he refers to Jeconiah's brothers.

(6) In verse 6 David is called "the king."

From these data, it is obvious that Matthew does not intend to present a strict genealogy; the arrangement is contrived, and extraneous material is included, probably for some other purpose than merely to present Jesus' forebears. Matthew's arrangement of the names into groups of 14, probably guided (here as throughout the Gospel) by an interest in portraying Jesus to Jews as the promised king of Israel and rightful heir to the Davidic throne, gives a definite historical movement to the genealogy by dividing it into three periods of time. These respectively highlight the origin, rise to power, and decay of the Davidic house, the last point represented by the lowly birth of the promised heir to a carpenter of Nazareth.





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The 14 names in each group may be an effort to call attention to the thrice-royal character of Mary's son by focusing on the numerical value 14 of the Hebrew letters in David's name (d=4, v=6, d=4). This number also happens to be twice the sacred number seven, so that the whole list is composed of three sets of two sevens each. It may be, however, that the contrived groupings were merely intended to aid in memorization.

With respect to the second peculiarity—the “missing name” in the third group—one must conclude either that David or Jechoniah are to be counted twice, being the pivotal names separating the three groups, or that a name was mistakenly dropped out in a later copy of Matthew's Gospel.

The third peculiarity presents no difficulty at all. Numerous genealogies in Scripture omit some names. Ancient Near Eastern writers often used the phrase “the son of,” or the word “begat” quite flexibly, relating grandsons or great-grandsons, for instance, to earlier forebears without indicating every intervening ancestor. The modern mind should not require a precision in ancient records that ancient writers themselves did not insist on.

The women listed in the genealogy—the fourth peculiarity—may have been intended to disarm Jewish criticism about Jesus' birth (1:18–25) by showing that irregular unions were not disqualifications for the Messiah's legal ancestry.

The reason for including several brothers in the genealogy at three points—the fifth peculiarity—is not readily discernible. The mention of “Judah and his brothers” (v 2) may simply be following an established practice of speaking of the 12 patriarchs together.

Finally, David's description as “the king” (v 6) underscores the Davidic or royal character of the list.

The sources employed in compiling the first group in the genealogy, drew upon records preserved in Chronicles 1:27–2:15 and in Ruth 4:18–22. The second group followed the records found in 1 and 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles. The third group relied mainly on public or private records from the intertestamental period; the nine names from Abiud to Jacob are not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

On the basis of this genealogy, if there had been a Davidic throne in Joseph's day, the lowly carpenter would have been the legal heir to it, and Jesus stood after him as the next in line to inherit the royal seat.

It has been argued against this understanding of Matthew's genealogy that the presence of Jechoniah in the list (v 11) jeopardizes, if not completely negates, the legal claim to the Davidic throne of every one descending directly from him, inasmuch as the Lord declared of him: “Write this man down as childless, ... for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David, and ruling again in Judah” (Jer 22:30). Therefore, it is said, it could not have been Matthew's intention to represent the men from Shealtiel to Joseph as legal heirs to the throne.

This is a point which admittedly could dispose of the view that the list presents David's descendants if it were not for the fact that Shealtiel, who in Matthew's record is represented as the son of Jechoniah, appears also in Luke's genealogy as the son of Neri (Lk 3:27). Neri's name is unique to Luke's Gospel so it is impossible to check its use elsewhere to discover the actual parentage of Shealtiel. But it is not surprising in the light of Jeremiah 22:30 to find him listed in both accounts with different parents. Neri most likely was Shealtiel's real father, and while it is impossible to determine Neri's precise relationship to Jechoniah, it may be that those responsible for determining and keeping the record of the legal heirs to the Davidic throne looked to the



collateral line of Neri and selected Shealtiel as the man to be legally adopted into the line and the one through whom the line would continue. Shealtiel may well have died without a male descendant which made it necessary to look to Zerubbabel, the son of Pedaiah, Shealtiel's brother by adoption, as the legal heir to the Davidic throne. By this pair of adoptions the curse upon Jechoniah was fulfilled while an actual grandson of Jechoniah continued the line, inasmuch as the grandson was legally the son of Shealtiel, who in turn was the actual son of Neri. Jechoniah's presence in the genealogy is a strength, rather than a weakness, for the interpretation that Matthew's Gospel intended to present the legal heirs of the Davidic throne, since only a writer conscious of the problems surrounding Jechoniah's lineage, but also aware of an explanation, would present such an ancestry to a Jewish audience he was seeking to convince that Jesus was indeed the royal Messiah.

**Luke's Genealogy (3:23–38).** Luke's genealogy also has peculiarities.

(1) Some expositors have thought it significant that Luke's genealogy appears not at the beginning of the Gospel, but at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

(2) Luke's account, in contrast to Matthew's, begins with Jesus and traces his lineage back through OT history. This seems irregular, for most genealogies follow the order of succession.

(3) Luke's account, furthermore, does not end with Abraham, but goes all the way back to "Adam, the son of God" (3:38).

Some have seen the first peculiarity as a result of Luke's desire to bring a period of sacred history to its close, and to signal the beginning of another with the person and especially the ministry of Jesus. The genealogy, located as it is, sets off the work of Christ from the accounts of his birth and preparation.

Many have suggested that the regressive order in the genealogy is probably Luke's instrument to focus attention on Jesus. The fact that Luke traced Jesus' ancestry back to Adam, "the son of God," was probably due to the fact that he wrote for Romans and Greeks. By tracing Jesus' ancestry back to Adam, he shows Jesus to be related to the whole human race. In Luke's genealogy Jesus and Adam are both "sons of God;" Jesus, of course, is the son of God by nature, Adam, the son of God by having been created in God's image.

As to his sources, it is rather certain that Luke used the Septuagint version (ancient Greek version of the OT) of Genesis 11:12, which inserts the name Cainan between Shelah and Arphaxad (Lk 3:36), and the records of 1 Chronicles 1–3 for the history down to David. For the period from David to Jesus most expositors agree that Luke relied upon information probably received directly from Mary or from persons close to her. It was a common practice among the Jewish people for genealogical records to be maintained both publicly and privately. There was special concern in families of Davidic descent to preserve their ancestral records because of OT prophecies that Messiah would be born in the house of David.

Luke no doubt intended to accomplish more by his list than merely a presentation of a number of Jesus' ancestors. Since Luke did not highlight David in his list, it may be assumed that he was not zealous to present a list of legal heirs to the Davidic throne, not that the issue is of no concern to him (cf. 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4, 11). Rather a concern throughout Luke's Gospel is this emphasis—that of portraying the Christ as the savior of Romans and Greeks, indeed, of the world. Therefore, though Luke traced Jesus' ancestry through Joseph's ancestral line to David, he continued beyond David to Adam. Jesus is a member of the race to which all people belong.



***The Relationship Between the Two Records.*** Even a cursory examination of the two genealogies of Jesus will show several differences. For example, Matthew's genealogy comprises 41 generations, while Luke lists 76. Luke includes the period between Adam and Abraham, Matthew does not. While the two lists are practically identical from Abraham to David, they diverge for the period from David to Jesus, Matthew tracing Jesus' lineage from David through Solomon in 27 generations, whereas Luke traces Jesus' lineage from David through Nathan, another son, in 42 generations. Furthermore, at only one point do the lines converge during this period: at the names of Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, who are doubtless the same men in both lists. Finally, Matthew represents Joseph as the son of Jacob (1:16), whereas in Luke's account he is the son of Heli (3:23).

How are these differences to be explained? The differences between these lists stem from the purposes for which they were compiled and the meanings they were intended to convey.

A widely held explanation is that Matthew gives Jesus' ancestry through Joseph and that Luke gives his ancestry through Mary. On this interpretation Jacob was Joseph's real father, and Heli, probably Mary's father, became Joseph's foster father, that is, Joseph was Heli's "son," or heir, by his marriage to Mary, assuming that Heli had no sons (cf. Nm 27:1–11; 36:1–12). This view is certainly a possibility and should not be rejected out of hand. If Mary was a direct descendant of David, it could be literally said of any son of hers, "he is the seed of David."

On the other hand, many scholars prefer to regard Luke's genealogy as that of Joseph rather than Mary, since it is to Joseph's ancestry that Luke calls the reader's attention (1:27; 2:4). Furthermore, nowhere in Scripture is Mary said to be of Davidic descent. If the fact that Joseph was not the actual father of Jesus nullifies any value which Joseph's lineage might otherwise possess for a real son, why does Luke point to Joseph's lineage twice, and to Mary's not at all?

A major difficulty for the view that regards both genealogies as Joseph's is related to Joseph's two fathers. One solution is that Matthew gives the legal descendants of David, but Luke gives the actual descendants of David in the line to which Joseph belonged. This would mean that Heli was Joseph's real father and that Jacob was his legal foster father. How this could be is readily explainable. Assuming that Jacob's father, Matthan (Mt 1:15), and Heli's father, Matthat (Lk 3:24), are the same person, then Jacob [the elder] may have died without a male descendant so that his nephew, the son of his brother Heli, would have become his heir.

If Matthan and Matthat are not the same person, one might postulate that Jacob, the legal heir to the throne, died without a descendant and that Joseph, son of Heli, became the legal heir immediately upon the death of Heli and was counted as Jacob's son in a list of legal heirs to the throne. Possibly Heli, a relative, married Jacob's widow making Joseph, the son of that union, Heli's son and Jacob's son by levirate marriage. In other words, there are a number of possible explanations of this divergence.

One other major objection to the view that regards both genealogies as Joseph's is that, because of the virgin birth of Jesus, one may in no sense speak of Jesus as being literally the seed of David, a proposition that Scripture seems to insist upon. This objection has been adequately countered: (1) because of the realistic manner in which the Jews looked upon adoptive fatherhood; and (2) because the relationship in which Jesus stood to Joseph was much closer than a case of ordinary adoption, there being no earthly father to dispute Joseph's paternal relation to Jesus. Jesus could and would have been regarded as Joseph's son and heir with complete propriety, satisfying every scriptural demand that he be the "seed of David." The



question, therefore, whether Mary as well as Joseph was descendant of David does not need to be answered one way or the other by one who desires to defend Jesus' Davidic descent.

It is beyond human reach to discover for certain the full solution to the divergencies between the two genealogies of Jesus, or the actual relationship of Jesus to them. Enough has been said to demonstrate that they are reconcilable, and the purposes of each, suggested here, indicate that either of the ways outlined above does full justice to the Davidic descent of Jesus, as rightful heir to his ancestor's covenanted throne, and also to his virgin birth by Mary.

ROBERT L. REYMOND

See GENEALOGY; VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS; INCARNATION; JESUS CHRIST, LIFE AND TEACHING OF.<sup>15</sup>

**Virgin.** Word used only of women and (metaphorically) of places, nations, and the church. Literally, it describes a woman who has reached physical maturity but has not experienced sexual intercourse. Mary, mother of Jesus, is an obvious example (Mt 1:18–25).

The OT puts a very high value on premarital virginity. One of Rebekah's qualities which made her a suitable bride for Isaac was her virginity (Gn 24:16). The Law prescribed that priests, as men whose lives should conform most closely to God's standards, must marry only virgins (Lv 21:7, 13, 14).

Undoubtedly this reflects the whole Bible's teaching on marriage, with its ideal of exclusive faithfulness. The NT expresses that ideal by its ban on premarital intercourse (1 Cor 6:13, 18), and by its use of "virgin" language to describe Christians who remain faithful to their Lord (Rv 14:4; cf. 2 Cor 11:2).

Negatively, the OT highlights the same principle in the penalties it lays down for the loss of a woman's virginity. If the man is morally responsible, he must either marry her or compensate her father (Ex 22:16, 17). If the woman herself is to blame, the punishment is death (Dt 22:20, 21).

The OT says little, however, to commend life-long virginity. Jeremiah was told not to marry, only to reinforce God's warning of coming judgment (Jer 16:2). From the woman's point of view, it was a tragedy to remain an unmarried virgin and therefore childless for life (cf. Jgs 11:37).

The NT echoes the value of marriage but brings out more clearly the advantages of a commitment to virginity for Christian men as well as women. Celibacy for some is God's gift, declares Paul, with positive gains for Christian service (1 Cor 7:7, 25–38). And Jesus commends those who "make themselves eunuchs" for the kingdom of heaven's sake (Mt 19:12).

In praising the single life Jesus was, of course, drawing attention to his own example—denying the current misunderstanding that virgins can never experience human love and fulfillment.

See FAMILY LIFE AND RELATIONS; MARRIAGE, MARRIAGE CUSTOMS; SEX, SEXUALITY; VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS; WOMAN, DOCTRINE OF.

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<sup>15</sup> Reymond, R. L. (1988). [Genealogy of Jesus Christ](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, pp. 847–851). Baker Book House.



**Virgin Birth of Jesus.** Doctrine, from the birth narratives of Matthew 1 and Luke 1–2, which states that Jesus the Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. This doctrine has been at the heart of discussions involving the person and nature of Christ; the whole concept of the incarnation as well as of the divine and human natures focuses upon this historical event as its foundation. At the same time, rationalists and literary critics make this one of the first biblical events to be denied on the grounds of its obvious supernatural basis and so-called “mythical” form.

**Pagan Parallels.** The major pagan source is Greek mythology. Those who follow this theory argue that the early church first propounded the belief that Jesus was the Son of God and then proved it by using Hellenistic parallels. In Greek mythology Zeus as well as the other gods bore many children by human mothers, including Perseus and Hercules. These offspring were also men of heroic proportion. In addition, there were tales of the miraculous births of great historical figures, such as Plato (whose father was Apollo) or Alexander the Great (whose father, Philip of Macedon, was kept from consummating his marriage until the child, conceived of Zeus, was born). Interestingly, the church fathers often used these stories in their polemic against their Greek opponents to show that the idea of the virgin birth was not really so incredible to the Greek mind. However, the differences between the pagan and Christian forms are too great. For one thing, the lustful promiscuity of the gods starkly contrasts with the spiritual simplicity of the NT. Also, the concept of “virgin” hardly has any stress. In all cases, it is a physical union between god and human versus the spiritual conception of Jesus.

The same is true of the birth of Buddha, for the oldest records state that the entrance of the “white elephant” (representing the spirit of childbirth) into Gautama’s mother took place in a dream, and the story of an actual virgin birth is post-Christian. As for the Persian myths of the birth of Zoroaster or the birth of Mithras from a rock, there is no concept of a virgin birth. Babylonian tales do involve the goddess-mother Ishtar, but again virginity has no emphasis and is actually doubtful. In conclusion, while there are slight analogical similarities between the virgin birth of Jesus and pagan parallels, one cannot establish any genealogical connection. The source of the doctrine is found in historical event, not literary parallels.

**The Old Testament Prophecy.** Isaiah 7:14 says that a “virgin” (or “young woman”) shall “conceive and bear a son ... Immanuel,” and Matthew 1:22, 23 expressly states that this was fulfilled in Jesus’ birth. This passage has been greatly debated, especially since the RSV changed the KJV “virgin” to “young woman.” The term in the Hebrew original and the Septuagint is ambiguous. The Hebrew *’almah* refers generally to a young girl who has passed puberty and thus is of marriageable age. Virginity was not stressed (Hebrew *bethulah*), but certainly was true in that culture. The Septuagint *parthenos* does denote a virgin, but there is no proof that the translator definitely understood this as a virgin birth.

From these linguistic considerations come the following theories. (1) The “virgin” (Is 7:14) was Ahaz’s new wife and the son was Hezekiah; but the latter was nine years old when Ahaz began to reign, and this prophecy looks to the future. (2) She was Isaiah’s wife and the son was *Maher-shalal-hashbaz*, which many deem probable since the definite article with *’almah* seems to indicate that the woman was known to Isaiah and Ahaz and since verses 15, 16 seem to state that the prophecy was to be fulfilled in Isaiah’s time. The difficulty here is that Isaiah’s wife already had a son and so could not be called *’almah*.



(3) The prophecy is purely messianic. This is the traditional evangelical position, based on the naming of the child Immanuel, “God with us,” and the reference (Is 9:6, 7; 11:1–5) which points to a divine person. However, many evangelicals recently have opted for a fourth position, which fits the arguments for the historical and the futuristic positions, that is, multiple fulfillment. This view notes the historical fulfillment intended in verses 15, 16 and yet realizes the future reference noted in Matthew 1:22, 23.

**The Gospel Records.** Neither Mark nor John provides an account of the birth of Christ; the actual event is chronicled only in Matthew and Luke. Both agree that a “virgin,” Mary, conceived of the Holy Spirit and bore a son, Jesus. Matthew’s account is simpler and more direct, attributing the birth of the Messiah to divine origins and highlighting the christological significance. In the genealogy (1:1–17), Matthew uses a threefold pattern of 14 figures to stress the Davidic overtones of Jesus’ messiahship (14 is the numerical sum of the Hebrew letters for “David”). In the birth scene (vv 18–25) Jesus is further connected to the exodus account and both the meaning (“savior,” v 21) and significance stressing the divinity (“God with us”) of the Christ is brought out. The scene where Joseph decides to privately divorce Mary is added to give even greater stress to the miraculous conception. The magi story (2:1–12) emphasizes the divine revelation behind the birth of the royal Messiah, and the malevolent plot of Herod (vv 13–23) brings out the divine protection and victorious power of God behind the birth. In short, Jesus is seen as Son of David and Son of God, revealed by the Father to Jew and Gentile (the magi) alike, and divinely protected in the midst of suffering. The unifying thread binding these themes is the fulfillment of Scripture, which again points especially to the divine ordination of the event.

Luke’s chronicle is more complex, developing in several directions at the same time. Here the unifying theme is the witness of the Holy Spirit, used to show the true significance of the infant Messiah. A secondary motif is worship; the geographical core of the narratives is the temple, and Christ is pictured (throughout Luke-Acts) as fulfilling the temple worship system. Finally, Luke’s account shows parallels between Jesus and John the Baptist. The first two scenes relate the annunciations of the Baptist (1:8–25) and of Jesus (vv 26–38), and the fourth and fifth scenes concern the birth, circumcision, and naming of the two (vv 57–66; 2:1–21). The middle episode, comprising the Magnificat (1:39–56), concerns the encounter of the two mothers. In so doing, the future ministry of the Messiah is set in bold relief by comparison with the one who would prepare the way. In every case Jesus is exalted to the higher place; John was born naturally to human parents, while in 1:27 Luke twice repeats the designation of Mary as a “virgin.” The angelic messenger calls John “filled with the Holy Spirit” and “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” while Jesus is “Son of the Most High,” inhabiting “the throne of his father David ... forever” (vv 15–17; cf. vv 32–33). At John’s birth Zechariah praises God (vv 68–79, the Benedictus) but at Jesus’ birth the “heavenly host” sings glory to God (2:13, 14). The final act, the presentation in the temple (vv 22–40), sums up the theology contrasted in the preceding scenes. Both Simeon and Anna parallel Zechariah’s previous prophecy of the Baptist’s future ministry, but in so doing they are building on the angels’ previous annunciation and so summarize the worship and exaltation aspects of the incarnation. Finally, Luke demonstrates that truly pious Israel worshiped at the feet of Jesus, seen in the shepherds as well as Simeon and Anna.

**Modern Objections.** Some scholars argue on literary grounds that the virgin birth represents a theological portrait of Jesus’ significance rather than a historical event. There are two





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arguments: there are no corroborating witnesses, that is, no references in the epistles or eyewitnesses who saw the event; and there are conflicting details, such as the different episodes in the accounts (Matthew's magi and flight into Egypt, Luke's annunciation scenes and presentation in the temple), as well as contrasts (the two genealogies, Luke's omission of their original home in Bethlehem) and historical errors (the massacre of the children, not mentioned in secular history; and the census, which Luke dates 10 years earlier than secular records). According to this approach, the infancy narratives do not attempt to provide factual history but are creative midrash stories which rewrite OT episodes (e.g., the magi story parallels the Balaam account; Herod's slaughter parallels Pharaoh; etc.).

An old milestone directs the traveler to two of the most important Christian sites in the Holy Land.

Many evangelical works have been written to answer these objections. First, the so-called "silence" of the other NT works is not a final argument. While explicit allusions are missing, there are some implicit statements, such as Mark's "the carpenter" (6:3) and Matthew's "the carpenter's son" (13:55), or Paul's "born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). Many believe that strong incarnational hymns such as Philippians 2:6–8 assume the virgin birth. It is extremely doubtful that the other NT writers knew nothing of the doctrine; even liberal scholars admit that the doctrine was known during Paul's ministry (and especially John's) and that the event was not discussed for other reasons, mainly because they were proclaiming theological meaning, the gospel, more than historical data. Second, the historical inconsistencies are a misreading of the evidence. It will suffice here to state that such pessimistic conclusions are not warranted. The historicity of the virgin birth can be reasonably affirmed.

***Theological Implications.*** From the very beginning the doctrine of the virgin birth became the foundation of a high Christology. Many have pointed out that the earliest church fathers stressed this more perhaps than any other event as proof of the incarnation and deity of Christ. Justin Martyr and Ignatius defended the virgin birth against opponents at the beginning of the 2nd century, and even at that early date it appeared to be a fixed doctrine. In the acrimonious debates of the next three centuries, the virgin birth became a prominent issue. Gnostics (e.g., Marcion) contended that Christ descended directly from heaven and so was never truly human. On the other hand those groups which denied his deity, such as the Arians, concomitantly denied the virgin birth, stating that at his baptism Jesus was "adopted" as Son of God. The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 affirmed that Jesus was truly God, and then the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 stated that Jesus was at the same time human and divine, a "hypostatic union" of the true natures. These were summarized in the Apostles' Creed of the 5th century, which declares "I believe in ... Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." In most of the creeds the virgin birth is also connected to Jesus' sinlessness, inasmuch as his incarnate, divine nature is the source of his sinlessness.

From the beginning, as attested in Matthew and Luke as well as the early patristic writers, the virgin birth has been a cardinal doctrine of the church. As such it is a living symbol of the twofold nature of our Lord, born of the Holy Spirit and of woman, and uniting the human and divine into the incarnate God-man, Jesus Christ. The teaching of the NT is clear on these aspects.



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See CHRISTOLOGY; JESUS CHRIST, LIFE AND TEACHING OF; INCARNATION; GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST; VIRGIN.

**Bibliography.** T. Boslooper, *The Virgin Birth*; R.E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*; D. Edwards, *The Virgin Birth in History and Faith*; R.G. Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: Doctrine of Deity*; J.G. Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*; J. Orr, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*; H. von Campenhausen, *The Virgin Birth in the Theology of the Ancient Church*.<sup>16</sup>

**Incarnation.** Literally, “in flesh”; theologically, the doctrine that in Jesus of Nazareth God took on human flesh and became the divine God-man. Historically, the doctrine of incarnation was central in the christological debates of patristic times and has recently come to the fore again in academic circles. Biblically, it expresses the mystery of Jesus’ identity.

### ***New Testament Evidence***

*The Synoptic Gospels.* The Gospel of Mark has no account of the incarnation and stresses Jesus’ messiahship more than his deity. As a result, some believe that it represents an earlier stage in the development of the church’s theology, before the doctrine of the incarnation had evolved. That is doubtful for two reasons: incarnation passages like the Philippians hymn (2:6–11) probably antedate Mark’s Gospel; and Mark has a well-developed theology of the two natures of Christ. Although he stresses Jesus’ humanity, Mark accents it with an emphasis on divinity. Jesus was called the “beloved Son” by a heavenly voice at his baptism and transfiguration (1:11; 9:7); demons called him divine (3:11; 5:7), as did a Roman centurion (15:39). Jesus’ “Abba” prayers (14:36) indicate his sense of divine identity, and at his trial he was charged with claiming the title, “Son of the Blessed” (vv 61, 62). Thus, though the incarnation is nowhere explicitly stated in Mark, it is implicitly affirmed.

Matthew and Luke are openly incarnational. The birth narratives, of course, stress the event itself, with Matthew emphasizing Jesus’ royal messiahship and Luke, the divine witness of the Holy Spirit. Matthew’s Gospel is Christ-centered; Luke concentrates on Christ as Savior, or, more precisely, on salvation-history. Although Matthew presents Jesus’ humanity, he emphasizes his lordship (23:6–10) and divine sonship. The incarnation thus becomes the means whereby the divine becomes human in a universal sense (1:23; 18:20; 24:14; 28:18–20). Luke shows the greatest interest of the three in Jesus’ earthly life. Nevertheless, his Gospel does not stress the human side of Jesus as much as Mark’s. Luke portrays Jesus primarily as the divine Savior within history (2:11; 4:16–30). He combines Jesus’ messianic office and divine nature, showing that the incarnate Son of God suffered and was exalted in order to bring humankind to God.

The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the town where Jesus was born.

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<sup>16</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Virgin Birth of Jesus](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, pp. 2124–2126). Baker Book House.





*John's Writings.* The apostle John's doctrine of incarnation is more explicit than any of the others, teaching not only Jesus' God-man status but also his preexistent "glory" (Jn 1:1–18). Central in this presentation is the oneness between Jesus and God the Father (10:29, 30; 14:8–11; 1 Jn 2:23). The "I Am" (a major title for Jesus, taken from the OT title for the one true God and probably signifying God's personal name "Yahweh") came to reveal God to his people (Jn 1:4, 5, 14, 18). Yet John also has the most balanced presentation of the incarnation. The divine Logos or Word (7:1–18) is the exemplar of perfect humanity (4:7, 31; 11:35) who "became flesh" (1:14) to enlighten people (vv 5, 9) and generate in them "eternal life" (3:14–18; 1 Jn 1:1–3; 4:9).

*Acts.* Many argue that the Book of Acts does not exhibit an incarnational Christology but rather is adoptionist, portraying Jesus as God's appointed or anointed one with no hint of divine overtones (see e.g., 2:22; 10:38). But such OT titles as "Holy and Righteous One" (3:13, 14; 7:52), "Author of life" (3:15), and especially "Lord" (2:36; 16:31; 20:24) have a definite exalted sense. In Peter's Pentecost sermon Jesus is the Lord who has poured out the Spirit (2:33–36, 39) Other passages continue the same theme of the glorious resurrected Christ, showing the Christology of Acts as one of exaltation rather than adoptionism.

*Paul's Letters.* The apostle Paul presented the incarnation as Jesus' path to suffering and redemption. In Galatians 4:4, 5 the incarnation ("born of woman") came "in the fullness of time" or at the apex of salvation-history, to "redeem those who were under the law." In the Philippians hymn (2:6–11), the incarnation is seen in terms of preexistence ("though he was in the form of God"), humiliation ("emptied ... humbled"), and obedience ("became obedient to the point of death" NASB). The goal of the incarnation was the cross ("even death on the cross"), and its result was Christ's exaltation. The hymn is perhaps the supreme theological statement on the incarnation in the NT. Jesus' human life was an "emptying," a refusal to seize the prerogatives of his deity ("did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped").

Paul described Christ as a second Adam (Rom 5:12–19; 1 Cor 15:45–47), who brought humanity a new possibility to attain what Adam had forsaken. Through assuming the form of a man, Christ became the redeemer who reconciles people to God (Rom 3:25; 2 Cor 5:19; 1 Tm 1:15). Paul's greatest stress, however, was that the exalted Christ provides newness of life (Rom 6:4–6; 2 Cor 3:17, 18; Col 3:1–4). A hymn in the Letter to the Colossians (1:15–20) employs ideas from Jewish wisdom speculation, and possibly Greek themes, to show Christ as the "firstborn" and the "fullness of God." The one who always existed as God, through his sacrificial death, became the exalted Lord and brought humankind to God (see also the "flesh-spirit" theme in Rom 1:3, 4; 1 Tm 3:16).

*Hebrews.* The Letter to the Hebrews is strongly incarnational. The opening hymn (1:2b–4) accents Christ's exalted status as "the very stamp" of God's image, aligning it with his work of redemption ("purification for sins"). Christ is superior to the angels (1:4–9), yet he became a man in order to suffer for human salvation (2:9; 5:7–9). Once more the incarnation is aligned with sinful humankind's need for a Savior. The purpose of Hebrews is to show Christ's incomparable superiority to the OT's sacrifices, and at the same time to stress his salvific work. His real temptation (2:18; 4:15) combined with his sinlessness (4:15; 5:9; 7:26) is the human remedy for human sin. The incarnation was Christ's path to final, once-for-all atonement and victory over sin (7:28; 9:26).



**Historical Development.** The first group to challenge the traditional doctrine of the incarnation was the Gnostics, who in the 2nd century denied that Jesus was truly human. Their Greek belief that the physical creation was evil led them to deny the incarnation. They believed Christ to be a quasi-spiritual being who merely appeared human. The theologian Marcion (d. c. 160), trained by Gnostic teachers, also accepted a docetic interpretation of Christ (his humanity was only apparent). Marcion taught his doctrine as an antidote to the OT or Jewish-oriented Christianity in his day. After his excommunication in AD 144, Marcion founded his own church, and his views were widely disseminated in the next two centuries. Partly in reaction to Marcion's christological heresy, the orthodox churches unified their doctrine.

The next challenge to the orthodox view came through the Arian, Apollinarian, and Nestorian controversies in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Arianism held that the incarnation was total, so that Christ the "Logos" was no longer fully God. At the same time he was not fully human, so Christ was someone between two natures. The Council of Nicaea (AD 325) affirmed that Jesus was indeed both God and man. A further question soon arose, however, as to the relation between his two natures. Apollinarius (310?–390?) taught that only the body of Jesus was human; his soul was absorbed completely into the divine Logos. Nestorius (after 381–451) taught that the two natures must always remain distinct in the person of Christ; they functioned together but were separate in his being. The Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) affirmed the unity of the two natures in Jesus. Many opponents of Chalcedon arose, called Monophysites, who believed in one divine nature in Jesus, who was only in a sense human. That movement caused serious political and religious divisions, and the Council of Constantinople (680–681) reaffirmed Chalcedon and established the orthodox incarnation theology.

In the 8th century, Spain and France were centers of the "adoptionist" controversy. Adoptionism taught that at birth Jesus was human, but at his baptism he underwent a "second birth" and was "adopted" as Son of God. It was condemned in a series of synods and never gained many adherents until modern times. During the scholastic age Peter Lombard (1095?–1160) advocated what became known as "nihilism." The incarnation supposedly caused no fundamental change in Jesus' deity, but his human nature was both insubstantial and unessential. That view likewise was condemned by Pope Alexander III (1159–81). Another debate at that time centered on the relationship between the fall and the incarnation. Thomas Aquinas (1224–74) concluded that there was a cause-effect connection; the incarnation was necessitated by sin rather than predestined apart from the fall.

The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant reformers follow basically the same orthodox teaching about the incarnation. The conflict in the Reformation centered more on soteriology (doctrine of salvation). Several aberrant antitrinitarian movements took advantage of the breakdown in ecclesiastical authority, however. Michael Servetus (1511–53) taught a pantheistic view of the incarnation, focused on the divine Spirit becoming manifest in the human form of Jesus. Thus the Logos is not a distinct person in the Godhead, nor is it fundamentally different from a "divine spark" in every person. At the same time Laelius Socinus (1525–62) and his nephew, Faustus Socinus (1539–1604), taught a unitarian system. The incarnation was not a transferral of the divine essence, but a communication of divine authority and revelation. Christ thus did not die as an atonement, but as a moral example. Both Servetus and Socinianism were condemned by Catholics and Protestants alike.



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In the 17th and 18th centuries “*kenoticism*” (from Greek for “empty”) taught that in the incarnation the Logos totally “emptied himself” (Phil 2:7) of the divine attributes. That doctrine was the final step of a dialogue from the scholastic period, about the exact communication between Jesus’ two natures. Was his human nature omnipotent? If not, how did the man Jesus exercise the divine attributes? The kenotic school believed that Jesus was fully human and that his divine nature was quiescent until after the ascension. His miraculous powers were external, given by the Spirit. Against that view the majority of theologians argued that Jesus was at all times both God and man, and that in Philippians 2:6–8 Jesus did not lay aside the attributes of deity (he still exhibited the “form of God”) but rather the majesty associated with deity.

The 19th and 20th centuries have given rise to a view that the incarnation was a “myth,” a pictorial way of describing how God spoke through Jesus. The virgin birth was not historical, nor did any of the supernatural events of the Gospels ever take place. Rather, the stories in the Gospels were concoctions of the later church, efforts to portray Jesus’ impact on the movement. The Gospels, however, have too strong a flavor of accurate history for such a view to prevail (see Lk 1:1–5; Jn 19:35; 21:24).

**Application.** Recent incarnational theology has sometimes had difficulty balancing its understanding of Christ’s humanity and deity. Some theologians have given too much emphasis to his manhood, with the result that his atoning work is neglected. He then becomes an example of God’s gracious dealing with humanity. Such theological imbalance appears in those who have reacted too strongly to the “demythologizing” movement, stressing the Jesus of history to the extent that he has become little more than an object of rational thought.

On the other hand, some modern theology focuses only on Christ’s divinity. The Bultmannian (after Rudolf Bultmann) school has separated the “Christ of faith” from the “Jesus of history,” making him a hero in the Greek style. Some evangelicals make a similar error by removing Jesus’ teachings from the real world of history and placing them in a subjective realm of religious experience. Jesus thus becomes a vague object of religious devotion having no contact with the real world.

Another group has interpreted the biblical image of the church as the “body of Christ” to mean that the church somehow continues the incarnation on earth. The NT does not teach that idea, however; it is based on a metaphor rather than on explicit biblical doctrine. Moreover, such an application of the theme can mislead the church to assume more divine authority for itself than it actually possesses.

**Conclusion.** The NT teaching on the incarnation balances the humanity and divinity of Christ. Those two facts must harmonize in any theological system, for both are absolutely necessary parts of God’s redemptive plan. In the incarnation, Jesus became a perfect human being. As God in human flesh, he suffered the divine penalty for sin as an innocent substitute. Being both God and a man, Jesus simultaneously revealed God’s will for human life and reconciled sinful people to God through his own perfect life and death. Because of the incarnation, therefore, those who believe in Christ have peace with God and new life from God.

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See CHRISTOLOGY; JESUS CHRIST, LIFE AND TEACHING OF; VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS; GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST.<sup>17</sup>

**Christology.** The study of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, first ventured by Peter at Caesarea Philippi (**Mt 16:16**), is the heart of the Christian faith. It is this confession that makes one a Christian, and all Christian theology is thinking, in the light of this confession, about the meaning of this confession. The first major theological decision of the church resulting from such believing thought was the affirmation of the essential deity of Jesus as the Son of God. As such he was declared to be of one essence with the Father and the Spirit (the dogma of the Trinity promulgated at Nicaea, AD 325). Since this affirmation was made with reference to the man Jesus of Nazareth, it forced upon the church, inescapably, the further question: How could one and the same person be both God and man? How could he who is infinite become finite; he who is eternal become temporal; he who is God become man?

The headwaters of the Hermon River at Caesarea Philippi, the place where Peter made his significant statement about the person of Christ.

To answer this question, the church embraced the doctrine of the incarnation. The statement of the doctrine was arrived at only after much controversy. In the course of the debate the church rejected all efforts, on the one hand, to preserve the deity of the Son at the expense of his humanity (docetism) and, on the other, to preserve his humanity at the expense of his deity (adoptionism). In the former category were the doctrines of those who claimed that the Son only seemed to have a human body, or, like the Apollinarians, that while he had a true body and soul, the divine Logos took the place of the human spirit. In the latter category was the doctrine of those who claimed that the man Jesus, through the process of moral development, was elevated to divine sonship and so adopted into the Godhead. Some placed great stress on Jesus' endowment with the Spirit at baptism as the moment of his adoption, while others, citing Acts 13:33—"today I have begotten thee"—believed Jesus became the unique Son of God at the resurrection. The church also rejected all attempts to resolve the problem of the Savior's divinity and humanity by suggesting that he was both a divine person and a human person (Nestorianism) or, contrariwise, that the unity of his person implied a fusion of the divine and human in one nature (monophysitism).

**The Chalcedonian Creed.** Finally at the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) the position was adopted that our Lord Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man (*vere Deo, vere homo*), "consubstantial with the Father as to his Godhead, and consubstantial also with us as to his manhood; like unto us in all things, yet without sin; as to his Godhead, begotten of the Father before all worlds; but as to his manhood, in these days, born for us men and for our salvation, of

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<sup>17</sup> Osborne, G. R. (1988). [Incarnation](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, pp. 1025–1028). Baker Book House.



the virgin Mary, the mother of God, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, known in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division; the distinction of the natures being in no wise abolished by their union, but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and subsistence. We confess not a Son divided and sundered into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only-begotten, and God-Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ.” This confession was adopted in all its essential features by the Reformers at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

Chalcedonian Christology does not remove the mystery of the incarnation but rather indicates, as it were, the boundaries of believing thought about the person of the Redeemer, boundaries that have proved significant in the history of Christian thought. As for the key terms in the creed, the following should be noted: the word “nature” (*phusis*) as used by the fathers does not have reference to the physical, material order which is the object of investigation by the “natural” sciences. “Nature” rather refers to being or reality in distinction from appearance. To say that Jesus Christ has a divine nature is to affirm that all the qualities, properties, or attributes by which one describes the divine order of being pertain to him. In short, he is God himself, not *like* God, but just *God*. So also with the affirmation that Christ has a human nature. Christ is not God *appearing* as a man; he *is* a man. He is not *only* a man nor *only* God; he is the God who *became* a man. He did not cease to be God when he became a man; he did not exchange divinity for humanity. Rather he assumed humanity, so that he is now both divine and human. He is the God-man.

The term “person” (*hypostasis*) was used by the fathers to describe Jesus Christ as self-conscious, self-determined Subject, one who designates himself by the word “I” over against a “thou.” The Mediator between God and man is *a person* who has a divine nature and a human nature. While there can be no “person” where there is no “nature,” it does not follow that there is no distinction between the terms; for there can be a “nature,” as defined above, where there is no “person.” (An object may have the properties or “nature” of a stone: grayness, hardness, roundness, smoothness. But this object, which has the “nature” of a stone, is not a “person”; it is not self-conscious and self-determined.)

In making a distinction between the “person” and the “nature” of the incarnate Christ so as to speak of him as being a “person” with a “divine nature” and a “human nature,” the fathers were teaching that while we must ascribe to Christ all the qualities which belong to the divine order of being and to the human order of being (including bodily, physical, objective being—the Word “became flesh,” Jn 1:14), we cannot say that he is “two persons.” He is a divine person with a human nature, not a human person as such. All human persons have a first moment; and wheresoever and whensoever we may identify that first moment for a human “I,” whether at conception or at fetal quickening in the womb, whether at the moment of birth, or even as late as the first moment of self-awareness in the young child, no human “I” is aware of himself as a “subject,” as an “I,” before he is conceived in the womb of his mother. The man Jesus of Nazareth, however, unlike any mere man, could say, “Before Abraham was ‘I’ am” (Jn 8:58); and this affirmation is neither the late theological invention of Christian fancy nor the claim of a man suffering from delusions of grandeur, but rather the sober truth. This person sitting on a mountainside preaching, this person standing by the sea calling fishermen to be his disciples, is a person who always was a person, even before there were any fishermen by the sea to call or any people to preach to on the mountainside—in fact, before there was any sea or any mountain.



Christ is not the Divine Logos who inspires and uniquely endows the man, Jesus of Nazareth, with moral and religious insights. Rather, this man Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and God's eternal Son has become this man, Jesus. The Son of God did not assume a man's *person* to his own *nature*, but a man's *nature* to his own *person*. He continues the same person though he now assumes our humanity. Hence he can speak both as a Subject consciously in history and as a Subject consciously transcending history, even in one and the same sentence. "*I have glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*" (Jn 17:4, 5 κJV). Here the same person Jesus speaks as a person in the world, an "I" who has done certain things in the world, and as a person before there was any world, an "I" who shared his glory with a "thou" whom he calls "Father" before all time. All efforts at rational analysis of this mystery, which the church designates by the word "incarnation," run the risk of losing the truth by explaining it. One arrives at a position in which Christ is a divine being who appears human (docetism) or a human being who either achieves divine status for himself (adoptionism) or divine worth for us (Ritschlianism).

In order to preserve fully both our Lord's deity and his humanity, the creed employs four terms in which we are told what did *not* happen in the incarnation. The union of the two natures is declared to be "without confusion," "without conversion," "without separation," and "without division." Some have ridiculed these "four bald negatives," but they are by no means wholly without value. Should any of these basic negatives be violated, we would lose what is essential to Christian faith, the "one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, complete as to his Godhead, and complete as to his manhood."

But the creed contains not only a negative affirmation—what did *not* happen in the incarnation; it also contains a positive affirmation. The union of the two natures concurs in one Person, who is the eternal Son of the Father. The union, then, of the divine and the human in Christ is a personal one; more specifically, the union is the act of the divine Person who is the Son of God. Here we approach the very heart of the mystery of the incarnation. No one can say how the infinite God could become a finite man. Naturally, however, theologians have thought a great deal about the matter; Chalcedon does not mark the end of all inquiry.

In theological parlance it has become customary to speak of the union of the divine and the human in the Person of the incarnate Redeemer as the "hypostatic" union (*unio hypostatica*), from the Greek word for "person." It is important to note not only *that* the union is personal, but *why* it is so. The theologians speak of the union as personal because it is the act of a Person, namely the Son of God, the Word who became flesh. This means that the Person of the incarnate Redeemer is divine, the object of Christian worship. He cannot, then, be a mere human being as other men are mere human beings. To worship one who is a man and only a man would be idolatry. And because this personal union of the divine and the human is truly a *union*, the Redeemer is one Person, not two. If to worship a human person would be idolatry, to worship two persons, one human, one divine, would be an absurdity. This Person, who unites in himself as incarnate the divine and the human, is often described by theologians as a "theanthropic" person, the God-man. If one does not mean that he is a hybrid—half God, half man—then this mode of speaking is unobjectionable inasmuch as it simply says that this Person, Jesus Christ, is both divine and human, which is what the creed intends.





**Christology After Chalcedon.** Matters become more difficult and unanimity less in evidence, however, when the question is raised as to the personal qualities of Christ's humanity. The formulation most consistent with Chalcedon and generally held by Protestants, a formulation defended in modern times by the Swiss theologians Karl Barth and Emil Brunner and by G. C. Berkouwer of the Netherlands, speaks of the "impersonal humanity" of our Lord.

Actually the meaning of the phrase "impersonal humanity" (*impersonalitas*) is not that in the case of the incarnate Son there is no manifestation of the personal at the human level. Rather it means that this humanity, of itself, has no independent existence apart from the divine Person who assumed this humanity in the act of becoming incarnate. So far as Jesus of Nazareth is concerned, that which is human exists in and through the Word who is God himself. There is a sense in which God is present to *all* created reality (the doctrine of the divine immanence). But howsoever we may conceive of this divine presence of power (providence) and of grace (salvation), there can be no thought of *identity* between God and the creature. Even when the church, following the usage of the NT, speaks of the Christian as "indwelt by the Holy Spirit," there is no identity of *being* affirmed; there is no ontological union of the human and the divine. But in the case of the man Jesus Christ, something absolutely unique is affirmed: this man is declared to be identical with God because he, the Person, is the "Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us." "Therefore," says Barth, "he does not only live through God and with God; he is himself God. Nor is he autonomous and self-existent. His reality, existence and being are wholly and absolutely that of God himself, the God who acts in his Word. His manhood is only the predicate of his Godhead, or better and more concretely, it is only the predicate, assumed in inconceivable condescension, of the Word acting upon us, the Word who is the Lord."

In other words, Jesus our Lord is, as man, so united with God that he exists as man only and insofar as he exists as God. The doctrine of *anhypostasy* states this truth negatively. It affirms that the human nature of our Lord does not possess the mode of its being as personal in and of itself. The doctrine of *enhyposstasy* states this truth positively. It affirms that the particular human nature which is our Lord's acquires its personal mode of being by union with the personal Son of God. It is not Jesus of Nazareth who becomes the Son of God (adoptionism) but the Son of God who becomes Jesus of Nazareth. The incarnation is a unique act of a divine Person, not a unique experience of the divine on the part of a human person. The Subject of the incarnation is a divine Subject who acts, not a human subject who is acted upon. But inasmuch as the divine Subject, the eternal Son, so acts as to become this man, Jesus of Nazareth, this man is—not just symbolizes, but *is*—the Son of God as no other man is or ever can be the Son of God.

The scriptural basis of the doctrine of the incarnation includes, of course, the entire range of data in the Gospels as well as several passages in the Pauline epistles, especially Philippians 2:6–8, which is, perhaps, the single most important christological passage in the NT. Here Paul, using the words of a primitive Christian confession, speaks of him "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

The Chalcedonian Creed does not resolve the mystery of the incarnation, and theologians have made many efforts to better understand the mystery. One of the best known is based on an inference drawn from the passage quoted above. It is known as *kenosis*, the theory that when the Son became man, he emptied himself of some aspect of his divinity. The text of Philippians does not say that he emptied himself *of* anything, but only that he emptied *himself*, a striking



figure of speech denoting condescension (“made himself of no reputation” κενω). In spite of this exegetical difficulty, kenotic theory has persisted, in one form or another, especially in British theology. Another effort at understanding suggests that our Lord’s humanity was the *incognito* (Kierkegaard’s term) which hid his identity as a divine person from all but the eyes of faith. Thus the incarnation was a revelation that veils as well as discloses the truth.

In Reformed theology the so-called “communion of attributes” has been affirmed, whereby it is proper to speak of our Lord in any way that is true of him as God or as man or both. The statement, for example, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the king (Mt 2:1) and the sentence, “Before Abraham was, I [Jesus] am” (Jn 8:58), are both true, since he who was born of Mary during the reign of Herod is the same person as he who declares that he is before Abraham, though Herod obviously lived centuries after Abraham died. Lutherans, in contrast to the Reformed, have insisted on a “communication of attributes.” According to this thesis, our Lord’s human nature is informed with divine attributes by virtue of its union with the divine nature in the person of the Redeemer. The doctrine is principally applied in the Lutheran view of the Lord’s Supper, the affirmation being made that although the risen Lord has ascended bodily into heaven, yet he is also present in the Eucharist, his body and blood being “in, with and under” the elements of bread and wine.

**Conclusion.** “Communication of attributes,” “communion of attributes,” “incognito,” “kenosis”—these and similar theological terms all testify to the impenetrable mystery at the heart of Christology: the relation of the human and the divine in the Person of Jesus Christ. There have always been those, understandably, who have sought to illumine this mystery by viewing Jesus’ uniqueness in terms of virtuosity or religious genius. Primitive attempts were made in this direction in the apocryphal gospels, which portray Jesus as something of a *Wunderkind*, the religious equivalent of the musical Mozart. (The distorted counterpart of these pious legends was the malevolent suggestion of Celsus that Jesus used Egyptian sorcery and magic.) This effort to explain Jesus as a prodigy, “one in a million,” is the ruling motif of those Christologies which are grounded in German idealism; Jesus was a consummate religious genius, the high point in the religious evolution of the human race.

We are reminded of an array of data in the Gospels that show us one who transcended these human limitations in a godlike manner. These data are not arranged so as to relieve the paradox; rather at times they are so juxtaposed as to heighten it. Asleep in a ship, exhausted—how utterly human—Jesus is awakened; he rebukes the winds with a word and the sea is calm—how utterly divine (Mk 4:38). Coming from the village of Bethany, he is hungry—a very common event; but when he finds no figs on a nearby tree, he curses it and it withers to the roots (Mk 11:12–14, 21)—a very uncommon event. He inquires of his disciples, on a certain occasion, as to how much food is available—a very ordinary procedure; when he is informed, he takes the five loaves and two fish and feeds five thousand—a very extraordinary procedure (Mk 6:38–44).

Jesus confesses ignorance; he knows not the hour when the Son of Man shall come (Mk 13:32); yet at the same time he knows what is lacking in the hearts of those who profess to believe on him (Jn 2:24, 25). It would be quite impossible to show why or how Jesus could be ignorant in the one instance and informed in another. The second Evangelist, who tells us that Jesus did not know the day of final judgment, reports a little later that he so perfectly knew the future he could tell a man who was a free and responsible agent exactly what he would do,





exactly when he would do it, and exactly how many times. (“This day, before the cock crows twice you [Peter] shall deny me thrice” [Mk 14:30].) And all of this while the man is vehemently protesting to the contrary. How could this be? To this—and a thousand other questions—we can give no satisfying answers. To speak of a “kenosis” wherein the divine is limited by the human, or of a “communication” of attributes wherein the human is exalted into the divine, creates as many problems as it relieves.

It might be suggested at this juncture that the traditional theological impasse will be relieved as the relatively new science of psychology advances the frontiers of knowledge. A pioneering attempt to understand the ultimate reality in the person of Jesus with the help of psychology was made by William Sanday (*Personality in Christ and in Ourselves*, 1911). Applying the research of William James that located the awareness of the divine in the “subliminal consciousness,” he suggested that this same faculty is the proper seat or locus of the Deity in the incarnate Son. In more recent times W. R. Matthews, in his *The Problem of Christ in the Twentieth Century* (1950), also made an approach to Christology from the perspective of psychology. Reminding us that Schleiermacher conceived his Christology in terms of Jesus’ unique “God-consciousness”; that Freud and Jung had researched the nature of the unconscious; and that investigations into extrasensory perception reveal the complexities of human consciousness, he goes on to say that it is a reproach to modern theology that so little reflection appears to have been given to the bearing of this research on the doctrine of the incarnation.

The difficulty with this approach is not that psychological theory is still in an inchoate state, and what is accepted today may be discredited tomorrow. Rather, the difficulty is the inappropriateness of the method to the problem to be investigated. The “subliminal consciousness,” the “unconscious,” “precognition,” “extrasensory perception,” “genius”—these are categories by which the psychologist seeks to understand the “exceptional” man, the man with powers beyond the ordinary. But Jesus was not an exceptional man; he was the Son of God incarnate, a divine Person who assumed our humanity. And psychology has no conceptual model with which to illumine the inner life of such a Person, since such a life is necessarily unique and without analogy.

In closing it may be said that although psychology can never cut the Gordian knot of christological difficulty, theology can never endure a Christology that is psychologically absurd. And some christological speculations and pronouncements have verged on this extremity. To say, for example, that Christ had “two distinct intellects” and “two distinct wills,” as some of the fathers insisted, would seem to make the incarnate Son an ontological split personality. Knowing that unity, integration, and wholeness are the prerequisites of a healthy psyche, we can hardly conceive of the divine and the human in the Person of Christ in terms of such division, severance, and disjunction as these formulas imply.

Our answer, therefore, to the question: Can we illumine the inner consciousness of Jesus? is: No, we cannot. Is, then, the doctrine of the incarnation an absurdity? To believe that God became a man—is such a belief a *sacrificium intellectus*? We answer that it is not absurd, but we confess that it is incomprehensible. To believe it is not to assassinate reason, but it is to admit the creaturely limitations of reason.

It should be noted in this respect that the doctrine that is contained in the term “incarnation” follows the structure of John 1:14: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” It *would* be absurd to believe that the movement could be the other way, that flesh could become the Word,



that man could cross the line that separates the creature from the Creator and become God. Since Darwin, who taught us to think of evolutionary development from amoeba up to man, it might seem that it could be so. But it is not so. The christological mystery can no more be understood with the help of evolution than with the help of parapsychology. Not man's evolutionary progress upward to God, but God's condescension in coming down to man—that is what we confess when we affirm the incarnation. *God* sent forth his Son to be born of a woman (Gal 4:4), and only because of this divine act could that son of Mary be also the unique Son of God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and only thus could that flesh *be* the Word. We cannot reverse the terms in these sentences. And this Word that became flesh, according to John's prologue, is the divine, creative, redeeming Word: the One who made the world into which he came, the One who grants to those receiving him the right to become children of God, the One who was with God and was himself God. And because this is who the Word is, therefore he can become a man. How he does it is God's secret; it is his mystery.

See INCARNATION; MESSIAH; JESUS CHRIST, LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF; WORD; PARABLE; KINGDOM OF GOD (HEAVEN); VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS; ASCENSION OF CHRIST; CHRIST; SON OF GOD; SON OF MAN.

**Bibliography.** E. Brunner, *The Mediator*; O. Cullmann, *A Christology of the NT*; J.A. Dörner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, 4 vols; F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*; W. Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*; H.P. Liddon, *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*; H.R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Christ*; W. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*; B.L. Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology*; B.B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory and The Person and Work of Christ*.<sup>18</sup>

We should keep these obscurities in mind as we turn now to the most important addition to the genealogy, the mention of the **four ancestral mothers** in vv. 3\*, 5\*, and 6\*. They should warn us against wanting to see in them in all circumstances a single uniform meaning. The choice is unusual. The great Jewish female figures are missing: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel. Is there a common denominator of just these four women?

There are essentially three suggested interpretations that compete with one another:

1. Were the women inserted into the genealogy as *sinner*s as a demonstration of God's grace? The idea is appealing with Bathsheba, since the expression "the (wife) of Uriah" naturally makes one think primarily of her adultery. However, this is impossible for Ruth, who according to the OT and Jewish tradition is without blame. This interpretation is also difficult for Rahab according to Jewish witnesses; she is celebrated as a prototype of a proselyte and as an instrument of God's Spirit.<sup>43</sup> Tamar is also exonerated and for Philo is simply a symbol of virtue. Even with Bathsheba the Jewish texts are more interested in David's sin than in Bathsheba's sin.<sup>45</sup> This interpretation must be rejected.

2. A *divine irregularity* is a common denominator among the four women. God's saving activity sometimes takes unexpected turns. This interpretation would permit a connection to the virgin Mary, with whom the irregularity reached a peak, and it can hardly be refuted as long as it does not go beyond the general idea of God's providential activity. It becomes difficult, however, when one tries to define the "irregularity" more narrowly. It can lie, for

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<sup>18</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Christology](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, pp. 434–439). Baker Book House.



example, in the special nature of the relationship of the women to their partners. But are Ruth's marriage, Bathsheba's adultery, and even Mary's betrothal at all comparable? There has also been an effort to understand all of these women as instruments of the Holy Spirit, but the Jewish sources are either late or nonexistent.<sup>47</sup> Also speaking against this interpretation is the variety among the assumed irregularities or the general and abstract nature of the common denominator. The only thing that remains is that God triumphs in a surprising way over human impediments or the "surprising newness" of God's activity with all five women.<sup>49</sup> Some have claimed that the advantage of this interpretation is that one can posit a relationship between the four women and the fifth woman, Mary.<sup>51</sup> But is that really necessary? Verse 16\* is formulated in a completely different way from vv. 3\*, 5–6\*, because the stereotypical active "begat" ends and is replaced by the passive "was begotten." The readers will naturally understand "from Mary" in v. 16\* in terms of the virgin birth. That in any case eliminates Mary as a parallel to the other four women.

3. A third suggestion is that all four women are *non-Jews*. Tamar is usually, but not always, regarded in the Jewish tradition as a proselyte.<sup>53</sup> Ruth is a Moabitess, Rahab a resident of Canaanite Jericho. There are no reports about Bathsheba. Is that why she is cited not by name but as the wife of Uriah, who, as is well known, was a Hittite (2 Sam 11:3\*)? That is conceivable, but it is by no means the most obvious idea that the readers would associate with the name Uriah. Thus this sense is clear only with Ruth and Rahab. With Tamar it is quite possible, and for Bathsheba it may be possible. One can hardly posit a relationship here to Mary.

In spite of a degree of uncertainty, I regard the third interpretation of the four ancestral mothers as the best choice, and I prefer it to the alternative of different interpretations of the individual women. A unified interpretation is suggested by the "provocative" choice of the four women: since it is not Israel's well-known ancestral mothers but completely different women who are named, the readers expect an unusual message. The fourfold identical "begotten ... from ..." (ἐγέννησεν ... ἐκ τῆς ...) also speaks for a unified interpretation. Thus the women give the genealogy a universalistic undertone. That the son of David, Israel's Messiah, brings salvation for the Gentiles is a hidden message. That suggests then a further clue for the interpretation of the "son of Abraham" in 1:1\* that looks to be so simple and yet is so unusual—a term that may be clearer for the readers after they have read the genealogy. One is to think not only of Abraham as Israel's father but also of the broad Jewish tradition that sees Abraham as the father of the proselytes.<sup>56</sup> The movement of Israel's salvation to the Gentiles, a dominant theme of the Gospel of Matthew, is already declared in its opening text.

■ **16\*** The final member of the genealogy is longer than all the others. It is thus fitting for "the Christ"<sup>57</sup> with whom the genealogy has now arrived at its conclusion and climax. It is only for his sake that the evangelist has recapitulated Israel's history in the genealogy. The passive "was begotten" and the reference to Mary let the readers think of the virgin birth with which they are familiar. How Mary's son belongs in Joseph's genealogy is still an open question. The next section, 1:18–25\*, will answer that question.

■ **17\*** The narrator's final comment gives the genealogy another key for the readers: it consists of three-times-fourteen generations. This additional observation is necessary, because the readers would probably not have counted the generations on their own initiative.<sup>58</sup> With this number they probably associate the idea of the divine plan that lies over the history of Israel that leads to Jesus.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Luz, U. (2007). [Matthew 1–7: a commentary on Matthew 1–7](#) (H. Koester, Ed.; Rev. ed., pp. 83–85). Fortress Press.



## II. THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (§ 10)

### *Translation of Luke 1:5–25*

<sup>1</sup> <sup>5</sup>In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zechariah who belonged to the division of Abijah. He had a wife descended from Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup>In God’s sight they were both upright, blamelessly observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. <sup>7</sup>Yet they had no children, inasmuch as Elizabeth was barren, and both were on in years.

<sup>8</sup>Now, while Zechariah was serving as priest, during the time that his division was on Temple duty in God’s presence, <sup>9</sup>there were lots cast according to the custom of the priesthood; and he won the privilege of entering the sanctuary of the Lord to burn the incense. <sup>10</sup>At this hour of incense the whole multitude of the people was there, praying outside. <sup>11</sup>There appeared to Zechariah an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup>On seeing him, Zechariah was startled, and fear fell upon him. <sup>13</sup>However, the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard.

<sup>13d</sup> And your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son,  
<sup>13e</sup> and you will call his name John.

<sup>14a</sup> And you will have joy and gladness,  
<sup>14b</sup> and many will rejoice at his birth.

<sup>15a</sup> For he will be great before the Lord,  
<sup>15b</sup> and he will drink no wine or strong drink.

<sup>15c</sup> And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb,  
<sup>16</sup> and he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.

<sup>17a</sup> And he will go before Him  
<sup>17b</sup> in the spirit and power of Elijah  
<sup>17c</sup> to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children  
<sup>17d</sup> and the disobedient unto the wisdom of the just,  
<sup>17e</sup> to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.”

<sup>18</sup>But Zechariah said to the angel, “How am I to know this? I am an old man, and my wife is on in years.” <sup>19</sup>The angel responded, “I am Gabriel; I stand in the presence of God. I have been sent to speak to you and announce to you this good news. <sup>20</sup>And behold, you will be reduced to silence and unable to speak until the day that these things will happen, because you did not believe my words which, nevertheless, will be fulfilled in due time.”

<sup>21</sup>Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, astonished at his delay in the Temple sanctuary. <sup>22</sup>And when he did come out, he was not able to speak to them; so they realized that he had seen a vision in the Temple sanctuary. For his part, Zechariah communicated with them by signs, remaining mute. <sup>23</sup>When his time of priestly service was completed, he went back to his home.



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<sup>24</sup> Afterwards Elizabeth his wife conceived, and for five months she kept herself in seclusion.  
<sup>25</sup> “The Lord has dealt with me in this way,” she reflected, “in the days when He looked to take away my disgrace among men.”

NOTES

1:5. *In the days of Herod, king of Judea.* In general, this is a semitized Greek expression, similar to Matt 2:1, “In the days of Herod the king,” except that Luke uses the article after “king” and before “Judea”—a rather classical touch. Most scholars assume that Luke means Herod the Great (but see Appendix VII, footnote 2). For the dates of Herod’s reign and the implications for Jesus’ age see the NOTE on Matt 2:1. Technically, Herod was king over all Palestine, not only over Judea, a smaller area eventually placed under the rule of his son Archelaus (Matt 2:22). The use of “Judea,” then may be anachronistic, or perhaps simply the use of the part for the whole, as in Luke 7:17 and Acts 10:37, where “Judea” must include Galilee. (A modern equivalent would be the tendency to use “Holland,” a province, as a name for the Netherlands.) The usage is explicable here since the action to follow takes place in Judea.

*a certain priest.* The indefinite Greek expression (good LXX style) eliminates the possibility that Luke thought of him as the high priest, despite the *Protevangelium of James* (see NOTE below).

*named Zechariah.* Literally, “by name” (*onomati*, used over twenty-five times in Luke/Acts). “Zechariah” appears as a priestly or Levite name some seven times in I–II Chronicles. The most famous “Zechariah,” the son of Berechiah, was a sixth-century prophet whose name identified the next-to-the-last book in the collection of Minor Prophets. Since Matt 23:35 confuses him with Zechariah (the son of Jehoiada the priest) who was stoned to death in the Temple court at the end of the ninth century (2 Chr 24:20–21), some have thought that the Lucan “a certain priest named Zechariah” is an imaginative creation based on such a confusion (see COMMENT). However, the parallel passage in Luke 11:51 avoids Matthew’s confusion between the prophet and the priest. That this confusion ultimately did enter the picture we see in the *Protevangelium of James* (23–24) where Herod murders the *high priest* Zechariah at the altar for refusing to disclose JBap’s hiding place. Origen compounds the confusion with his report that when, after giving birth to Jesus, Mary came to worship in the Temple, Zechariah the priest defended her for daring to stand with the virgins, as a result of which defense he was killed between the Temple and the altar (*Commentatorium Series 25, In Matt. 23:35; GCS 38:43, lines 5ff.*). This story played an important part in patristic tradition about the continued status of Mary as a virgin.

*who belonged to the division.* The noun *ephēmeria* can refer to the term of priestly service (Neh 13:30), or, as here, to the course or division of priests who were on duty (1 Chr 23:6). According to 1 Chr 24:1–19 there were twenty-four divisions of priests; however, since only four of the original twenty-four returned from the Babylonian Exile (Ezra 2:36–39; 10:18–22), it is inferred that the four were redivided into twenty-four divisions and given the old names (cf. Neh 12:1–7). Nevertheless, Josephus (*Contra Apion* II 8;#108) speaks for four families of priests, each containing over 5,000 men. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 198–206, estimates that there were some 18,000 priests and Levites in Palestine in Jesus’ time.

*a wife descended from Aaron.* Literally, “of the daughters of Aaron.” A priest did not have to marry a woman of a priestly (Levitical, Aaronic) family; but rabbinic sources reproached women descended from a priestly family who did not marry a priest (St-B, II, 68–70).

*and her name was Elizabeth.* This construction (found in the LXX of Gen 17:5, 15) is unusual for Luke, being found only in the parallel annunciation of Jesus’ birth (1:27: “and the virgin’s name was Mary”). The only Elizabeth mentioned in the OT was Elisheba, the wife of the high priest Aaron (Exod 6:23); see NOTE on Matt 1:4.

6. *In God’s sight.* Luke indicates that, while their lack of a child might be deemed by many a sign of sin or guilt (1:25: “my disgrace among men”), such was not the judgment of God.





*upright, blamelessly observing all the commandments and ordinances.* Literally, “righteous, walking in all ...” These are Semitized Greek expressions, echoing the LXX (1 Kgs 8:61). Matthew (1:19) describes Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, as “upright,” because he feels obliged to obey the Law.

*of the Lord.* In the Gospel proper Luke uses “Lord” both for God (the Father) and for Jesus; but in the OT atmosphere of the infancy narrative, of twenty-six instances only two refer to Jesus (1:43; 2:11).

7. *Yet.* An adversative “and”; despite their piety, God had not blessed them with children.

*inasmuch as.* *Kathoti* is exclusively a Lucan word in the NT, meaning “because” and “according as.”

*both were on in years.* Literally, “advanced in days,” a Hebrew expression. Technically, this clause does not explain why “they had no children,” but why they were not likely to have children. Luke is simply stressing the human impossibility.

8. *while Zechariah was serving as priest.* Literally, “in his priesting”; the same type of grammatical construction is found in 3:21.

*the time that his division was on Temple duty.* Each of the twenty-four divisions served one week every half-year.

9. *there were lots cast ... and he won.* Literally, “it happened he won by lots.” In the infancy narrative there occurs with frequency a Lucan pattern of an initial *egeneto* (“it happened”) followed by a finite verb (twenty-two times in the Gospel) or by *kai* (“and”) plus a verb (twelve times). E. Schweizer, “Eine hebraisierende Sonderquelle des Lukas,” TZ 6 (1950), 163, supplies these statistics and uses the presence of this feature in certain sections of the Lucan writings as an indication of a semitized source (see also BDF 472<sup>3</sup>). The same verb means “to cast lots” and “to win by lot,” and I have woven both meanings into my translation. During the division’s term of office, lots decided who did the various tasks. There were four lots in the morning, the third of which determined who offered incense. (The others were for the burnt animal offering, the meal offering, and the maintenance of the candlestick in the Holy Place.) The only afternoon lot was for incense. Thus was fulfilled the command of Exod 30:7–8 that fragrant incense be burned “by Aaron” morning and evening.

*the privilege ... to burn the incense.* To facilitate reading, I have supplied “the privilege.” Offering incense was a high privilege that generally came only once in a lifetime, since the priest who won it was ineligible in future selections until all the other priests of his division had had it. See A. Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (London: Clarke, 1959 reprint; orig. 1908), 157–73; also Schürer, *History*, II, I, 275, 292–99.

*entering the sanctuary of the Lord.* Here and in 1:21–22 Luke uses *naos*, the term for the Temple sanctuary, as distinct from *hieron*, the Temple in general or the Temple courts (2:27, 37, 46). The priest would enter the Holy Place, not the inner Holy of Holies (entered only by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, as described in Hebr 9:1–7). He would take the incense from a bowl, put it on the burning coals, and scatter it. The ceremony is described in Mishnah *Tamid* 3:6, 9; 6:3.

10. *the whole multitude of the people was there.* “Multitude” is so stereotyped a Lucan expression (twenty-five times) that one may wonder whether it constitutes any estimate of number. Nevertheless, from the large number of people it has been argued that we are dealing with the evening incense offering, ca. 3 P.M. That hour (the ninth hour) is called by Acts 3:1 the “hour of prayer.” The second OT appearance of Gabriel (Dan 9:21) takes place at the time of the evening sacrifice.

*praying outside.* Presumably the smoke of the incense was the signal for prayer. Except for the offering of the first fruits (Deut 26:13–15), the prayer of the people is not mentioned in the OT in the context of the times of sacrifice; yet prayers were certainly offered (1 Kgs 8:33–49; 2 Chr 6:12ff.; Ps 141:2). The people would have been in the courts of the men and the women, separated from the Temple sanctuary by the court of the priests. Of course, we cannot be sure that Luke knew the exact geography of the Temple. “Outside” is omitted by the OS<sup>sin</sup>, perhaps because the scribe recognized that it was unnecessary—the people could not have been inside.



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11. *There appeared*. Literally, “was seen”; in terms of comparative Synoptic usage, *ōphthē* is Lucan. It is used for the appearance of the “tongues as of fire” (Acts 2:3), the appearance of God to Abraham (7:2), of Jesus to Paul (9:17), and for other Pauline visions (16:9); and so one can draw from it nothing specific about the manner or reality of the appearance. The related noun *optasia*, “vision,” occurs in vs. 22. In an earlier period of Hebrew thought angels did not need to “appear” in the Temple, since cherubim and flying seraphim accompanied God’s presence in the Holy of Holies.

*an angel of the Lord*. This figure is quite common in annunciation narratives (Table VIII); and as I pointed out in the NOTE on Matt 1:20, it is not usually a personal, spiritual being intermediate between God and man, but a way of describing God’s visible presence among men. However, Luke 1:19 will identify the angel of the Lord as Gabriel; and so Luke is writing in the context of post-exilic angelology with the concept of personal, intermediate beings. This new concept in Judaism had been accepted by the Pharisees but rejected by the Sadducees.

*the right side of the altar of incense*. This altar is described in Exod 30:1–10; 37:25–29. The Temple faced east; and the right side, the place of honor, was toward the south, between the altar itself and the golden candlesticks.

12. *startled, and fear fell upon him*. Throughout the Bible this is the standard reaction in the presence of the divine, whether encountered directly, or through an angel, or through some exercise of extraordinary power (Exod 15:16; Judith 15:2; Matt 28:4; Luke 2:9; Acts 19:17).

13. *Do not be afraid*. Since the fear of the visionary is one of the five standard steps in the biblical annunciation of birth (Table VIII), the revealer must urge the visionary not to be afraid (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:30; 2:10).

*your prayer is heard*. Not directly the general prayer for Israel offered by the priest during the incense ceremony, but the unspoken prayer for a child implied in vss. 6–7. Indirectly, the prayer for Israel is also heard, since the child “will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God” (vs. 16).

*And your wife Elizabeth*. The oracular message is delivered in a semipoetic style, but it is extremely difficult to reach surety in detecting lines and strophes. Grundmann, for instance, finds here seven bicola; Sahlin finds two strophes of four cola each. In my division into three strophes, the first strophe of four lines deals with the participation and reaction of others, while the second strophe tells us what the child will do. As I shall mention in the COMMENT, the third strophe consisting of vs. 17 repeats some of the themes in the second strophe.

*you will call his name John*. For this Semitism, which appears in the parallel annunciation in 1:31, see the NOTE on Matt 1:21. The name Yehoḥanan or Yoḥanan (“Yahwen has given grace,” associated with the root *hnn*) was not uncommon at this period; it occurs in the Maccabean priestly family (for the grandfather of Judas Maccabeus in 1 Macc 2:2; and for John Hyrcanus).

15. *before the Lord*. The idea is borrowed from Mal 3:1, “I send my messenger to prepare the way *before me*” (LXX: “before my face”), even though Luke uses a different preposition (*enōpion*) from the *pro* of the LXX. Luke uses *pro* in 7:27 when he cites Malachi directly in relation to JBap, but here in free composition he resorts to his own style. *Enōpion* occurs thirty-seven times in Luke/Acts, once in John, and never in Matthew or Mark. See also footnote 36 below.

*wine or strong drink*. A set OT expression (Lev 10:9; Judg 13:4; Prov 20:1; Micah 2:11). The “strong drink” covers intoxicants not made from grapes, e.g., cider, beer.

*filled with the Holy Spirit*. The expression “filled with” occurs some twenty-two times in Luke/Acts, as contrasted with once each in Mark and Matthew. Here the Greek for “Holy Spirit” is anarthrous. (The same usage was found in Matt 1:18; see NOTE there for why it should not be rendered as “a holy spirit,” as if there had been no peculiarly Christian reflection on the Holy Spirit by the time Matthew and Luke were written, and yet why we cannot simply assume a Trinitarian concept.) In the infancy narrative Luke prefers the anarthrous form five times (1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25) to one (2:26); in Acts the usage is very mixed: eighteen times *pneuma hagion*, sixteen times *to pneuma to hagion*; and seven times *to hagion*



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*pneuma*. No theological difference can be deduced from this variety, as a comparison of Luke 2:25 and 2:26 shows.

*even from his mother's womb*. This Semitism can refer to the time when the child is still in the womb (Judg 13:3–5) or to the time of emergence from the womb (“from birth”—see the parallelism in Ps 22:11[10]). From 1:41 we know that the former is meant here.

17. *go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah*. Elijah was known for his power of miracles and his gift of the prophetic spirit, both of which were passed onto Elisha (see 2 Kgs 9:15). Just as “before the Lord” in Luke 1:15 (see NOTE) echoes Mal 3:1, so this phrase which is a specification of 1:15 echoes the specification of Mal 3:1 found in Mal 3:23 (RSV 4:5): “I send you Elijah the prophet before [*pro*] the great and terrible day of the Lord.” The parallelism with 1:15 makes it clear that the “Him” is the Lord God, not Jesus. Some have used this as an argument for the thesis that Luke was quoting from a non-Christian JBap source which preserved the original theology of JBap himself wherein his task was to precede the Lord God—a view of his role contrary to Christian theology which would have JBap precede Jesus. (See footnote 42 below.) However, even though Luke thought that JBap preceded “the Lord” in the sense that he preceded Jesus who was the Lord’s instrument and presence, he could scarcely have had Gabriel announce to Zechariah that JBap would precede Jesus, since he had not yet informed the reader of the Messiah’s coming birth. He was content to use vague OT language from Malachi (who mentions “the Lord” in both 3:1 and 4:5) which he could interpret later when it is revealed that Jesus is “Lord” (Luke 1:43; 2:11). See NOTE on vs. 6 above.

*to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*. As we shall see, Luke borrows this phrase from Mal 3:24 (RSV 4:6) and Sirach 48:10 which describe Elijah as one who will “turn the heart of the fathers toward the children.” The Hebrew of these two passages has a singular noun for “heart” and a plural noun for “children”; the LXX has two singular nouns, “heart” and “son”; and Luke has two plural nouns. Moreover, he uses a different preposition of direction, *epi*, “to, upon,” rather than the LXX *pros*, “toward.” (See the *enōpion/pro* problem in the NOTE on 1:15, “before the Lord.”)

*the disobedient unto the wisdom of the just*. The preposition *en* normally means “in.” However, parallelism with *epi* in the preceding line suggests that here *en* has the sense of *eis*, “into” (BDF 206) and justifies the translation “unto.” Note that the disobedient are turned “unto wisdom.” One would expect a change from disobedience to lawful behavior; but a change from disobedience to wisdom may reflect the atmosphere of the post-exilic sapiential literature where wisdom is identified with the Law (Baruch 4:1).

*to make ready ... a prepared people*. Grammatically, it is probable that “to make ready” in 17e is to be read in parallelism with “to turn” in 17c, and both verbs continue the “he will go before Him” of 17a. While “to make ready a people” is LXX style (2 Sam 7:24; Sir 49:12), the joining of “make ready” and “a prepared people” is odd. The latter reflects Mal 3:1 (“to prepare the way before me”) as applied to JBap in Luke 7:27—the only other passage in Luke/Acts in which the verb *kataskeuazein*, “prepare,” occurs.

19. *Gabriel*. For the departure from the “angel of the Lord” concept, see NOTE above on 1:11. The name, a typical formation in the angelic onomasticon (similar to “Michael, Raphael, Phanuel”), means “Man of God” or “God has shown Himself strong”; and in his only previous biblical appearances (Dan 8:15–16; 9:21) he is described as a man. *Enoch* 40:2 describes him as one of the four presences who look down from heaven (9:1), a holy angel (20:7), set over all powers (40:9). He is the angel set over Paradise, over the serpent and the cherubim (20:7), with the power to destroy the wicked (9:9–10; 54:6).

*I stand in the presence of God*. Besides the just-mentioned thesis of four angels in the divine presence, there was also a thesis of seven such angels (*Enoch* 20; *Testament of Levi* 8; Ezek 9:2; Tobit 12:15; Rev 8:2, 6). For the idea of angels “standing” before God, see Job 1:6; Dan 7:16.

*I have been sent*. The word for “angel” in Hebrew (*mal'āk*) has the sense of messenger.

*to announce to you this good news*. *Euangelisthai*, a verb related to *euangelion*, “gospel.” The birth of JBap is part of the Gospel.





20. *And behold. Idou*, “behold,” occurs ten times in the Lucan infancy narrative, even as it occurred six times in the shorter Matthean infancy narrative, where it featured in the pattern of angelic dream appearances (Table VI). Of the ten Lucan occurrences, four of them are in the formula *kai idou* (here; 1:31, 36; 2:25), a formula that occurs twenty-seven times in Luke and only nine times in Acts. As with the *egeneto* pattern (first NOTE on vs. 9 above), E. Schweizer would use these statistics as an indication of a semitized source. Of the six *idou* occurrences in the Matthean infancy narrative, *kai idou* appears in 2:9.

*you will be reduced to silence*. Seemingly he became deaf as well as mute, for the people have to communicate with him in signs in 1:62.

*my words which*. Luke uses the relative *hostis* (which often denotes a characteristic quality) as if it were a simple relative (BDF 293<sup>3</sup>).

*fulfilled*. The same verb that Matthew uses for his fulfillment formulas (Table V) in relation to OT prophecies.

*in due time. Kairos*, a divinely appointed time.

21. *astonished at his delay*. This may be simply a touch of pathos to lend interest to the narrative. Nevertheless, some would find here the echo of a Jewish legend: an old man appeared and went into the Temple with Simon the Just each year in association with the offering on the Day of Atonement; and one year, when the man did not come out, Simon knew he was about to die. Simon the Just was high priest about 300 B.C., but the legend of the old man (an angelic appearance?) is attested only long after NT times (TalBab *Yoma* 39b). The idea that the priest should not tarry in the sanctuary is found in Mishnah *Yoma* 5:1.

*in the Temple sanctuary*. See NOTE on 1:9 above.

22. *he was not able to speak to them*. Zechariah and the assisting priest should have pronounced the Aaronic blessing (Num 6:24–26) from the steps of the sanctuary building, as described in Mishnah *Tamid* 7:2. Luke seems to think that Zechariah was alone in the sanctuary, unless the isolation of Zechariah is part of his storytelling technique.

*they realized that he had seen a vision in the Temple sanctuary*. The seeming illogic in this guess may be solved if there was a tradition of appearances in the sanctuary. Josephus, *Ant.* XIII x 3;##282–83, tells us of a divine revelation that came to the high priest John Hyrcanus while offering incense in the Temple sanctuary (also TalJer *Yoma* 5:42c).

23. *his time of priestly service*. The period of Temple duty mentioned in vs. 8. The conclusion of the annunciation scene resumes motifs introduced in the setting (vss. 8–10).

*he went back*. Literally, “it happened he went back,” an *egeneto* construction as in vs. 9. A theme of departure terminates six of the seven Lucan infancy narrative scenes: *aperchesthai* here and in the parallel annunciation (1:38); *hypostrephein*, “return,” in 1:56; 2:20, 39; *erchesthai*, “go,” in 2:51.

*to his home*. A city of Judea in the hill country (1:39).

24. *Afterwards*. Literally, “After these days.”

*for five months she kept herself in seclusion*. That is, for the first half of her pregnancy. Although there are passages in biblical literature. (2 Macc 7:27; 2 Esdras [4 Ezra] 4:40) which refer to a nine months pregnancy, a more common reckoning seems to have been one of ten (lunar) months (Wis 7:2–3), i.e., forty weeks, 280 days. Apparently Luke follows the latter, since Elizabeth is in her sixth month at the time of the annunciation to Mary (1:36), and then Mary stays with her three months (1:56) and can still leave before the baby is born. As for the seclusion, in the *Protevangelium of James* 12:3, during the three months that Mary visits Elizabeth, it is Mary who hides herself from the children of Israel. They know her as a dedicated virgin, and yet she is pregnant.

25. *The Lord*. This verse is introduced by *hoti* which most interpret as a *hoti recitativum*, introducing a direct quotation. P. Winter, ZNW 46 (1955), 261–63, argues for a causal tone in the *hoti*, “since,” pointing to the Vulgate *quia*.



*He looked to take away my distress.* Some translations supply an object for “looked,” e.g., “on me,” or else anticipate the object of the second verb: “He looked on my disgrace to take it away.” Still other translations modify the meaning of the verb, e.g., “He condescended to take away.”

## COMMENT

Luke begins his infancy narrative with a self-contained story of a divinely prepared conception of JBap. It lends itself to a division into three parts:

- 1:5–7: *Introduction* of the dramatis personae.
- 1:8–23: *Annunciation* of the conception, delivered by an angel of the Lord (Gabriel) to Zechariah in the Temple sanctuary:
  - 8–10: Setting;
  - 11–20: Core;
  - 21–23: Conclusion.
- 1:24–25: *Epilogue* concerning Elizabeth’s pregnancy and her praise of God.

Both in structure and in features of style there are remarkable similarities between this scene and the scene that follows, i.e., the story of the divinely prepared conception of the birth of Jesus, with an annunciation by Gabriel to Mary. The similarities are so close (Table X) that they cannot be accidental. A parallel between the two stories has been deliberately established. Relatively few scholars have proposed that the annunciation of the birth of Jesus was original, and that on the basis of it Luke created the story of an annunciation of the birth of JBap.<sup>1</sup> More have proposed that the story of the annunciation of JBap’s birth was original, and that on the basis of it Luke created the story of an annunciation of Jesus’ birth.<sup>2</sup> Finally, some have proposed a simultaneous creation of both narratives, either in a pre-Lucan stage or by Luke. The first proposal, since it involves the originality of the annunciation to Mary, may be left for discussion until our treatment of the next section (§ 11). Here, as we move systematically through 1:5–25, we may test the last two proposals. Did Luke invent all the information about JBap; or did he receive it, in whole or in part, from tradition? If the latter, was the tradition a complete JBap source or only items of information? If the latter, what was Luke’s theological motif in developing the narrative of 1:5–25 from such items of information?

### A. *The Introduction (1:5–7)*

Here we are given four items of information: the time setting for the infancy story was the reign of Herod the Great; the names of JBap’s parents were Zechariah and Elizabeth; they and he were of priestly descent; they were aged and Elizabeth was barren. Is this information invented by Luke, or did he receive at least some of it from tradition (historical or non-historical)? In answering this question, I shall take the first three items together and only later turn to the fourth.

The fact that, independently of Luke, Matthew relates the birth of Jesus to the last days of Herod the Great makes it quite plausible that Luke did not invent the first item. The second and third items are more difficult since there is no other indication in the NT of JBap’s priestly stock or of the names of his parents.<sup>5</sup> Inevitably, ingenious theories have been proposed as to how



Luke might have invented such information. Since Mal 3:1 is a text frequently associated with JBap (Luke 7:27), and since Malachi addressed much of his prophetic message to priests (1:6; 2:1), it has been proposed that a chain of association led to the creation of a priestly descent for JBap. In the OT Zechariah is the name of the prophetic book that immediately preceded Malachi, and so that name is thought to have been seized upon for JBap's priest father.<sup>7</sup> The mother of JBap, who is the wife of the priest Zechariah, is thought to have been given the name Elizabeth because it was the name of the wife of Aaron, even as Mary, the mother of Jesus, bore the name of Miriam, the sister of Aaron. One can never disprove such a theory, but it demands remarkable ingenuity and fails to explain many factors. The Malachi text is applied to JBap in Matthew and Mark, as well as in Luke; yet the other two evangelists never derive from it a hint of JBap's priestly lineage. The proposed derivation of the name Zechariah from the order of the books in the prophetic canon does not explain such a *recherché* detail as Zechariah's belonging "to the division of Abijah." One has to account for the accurate knowledge shown in 1:8–10 about priestly terms of service, the incense offering, and the cult. Even the detail that Zechariah did not live in Jerusalem (1:23), but in the hill country of Judea, betrays a knowledge of the priesthood in the first century (NOTE on 1:39).

In my opinion, then, the names of the parents and the priestly lineage are better explained, along with the Herodian dating, as items of tradition (historical or non-historical) that came to Luke, rather than as the product of Lucan invention. In dealing with the annunciation itself we shall have to ask what kind of tradition: a full-scale JBap source narrating his origins, or stray items about JBap known in Christian circles? Luke mentions a group of JBap disciples in Acts 19:1–7. He also shows a knowledge of the Jerusalem Christian community which frequented the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:21, 42; 21:23–26) and to which there were converted a "great many of the priests" (6:7). Traditions about JBap's priestly lineage and details about the cult might have been known in such circles.

This may be the appropriate place to discuss a theory proposed by Wink, building upon Laurentin. He denies the existence of a full-scale pre-Lucan JBap narrative and posits only JBap tradition, probably brought over to the church by former followers. "Or, to state it perhaps more accurately, the church possessed these traditions from the very beginning by virtue of the fact that it was itself an outgrowth of the Baptist movement" On a pre-Lucan level these traditions and the traditions of Jesus' birth were worked into an artful symmetry, treating *JBap and Jesus as the two Messiahs, one from Aaron and one from David*. It is the latter point that must be examined. In the post-exilic period with the absence of a monarchy, the ceremony of anointing was shifted over to the high priest who thus became a messiah, an anointed one, and who *de facto* was the political leader in Judah. Just as before the Exile Isaiah had yearned for an ideal king, so now the pious yearned for an ideal high priest, as we see in the panegyric of Simon, son of Onias, "the pride of his people," in Sirach 50. Among the "pious ones" (presumably Essenes) who broke away from the Maccabean revolt and founded the Qumran settlement (*ca.* 150 B.C.) the idealization of the high priest descended from Zadok was heightened and "eschatologized," so that an ideal high priest of the last times was expected. He would exist alongside the Davidic Messiah, so that the full Qumran expectation involved "the coming of a prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel."<sup>11</sup> In arguing that the pre-Lucan tradition described JBap as the Messiah of Aaron, Wink points out that JBap resembles Elijah, "the great prophet priest of old." I question this hypothesis on almost every point. It is true that



in the infancy narrative JBap is likened to Elijah (1:17), but we have no datable evidence that *in this period* Elijah was already thought of as a priest. It is very dubious that Qumran would ever have identified him as the eschatological Messiah of Aaron, since there is no evidence of his having had a Zadokite lineage and that was a *sine qua non* at Qumran for legitimate high priesthood. Rather, the Qumran Essenes probably colored Elijah with some of the features of the prophet-like-Moses of Deut 18:18 and fitted him into their future expectations as the “prophet” who was to come before the two Messiahs. And it is precisely as a prophet who is to come before the one Messiah (Jesus) that JBap is presented in the Lucan infancy narrative.

Rejection of a priestly Messiah role for JBap (even on a putative pre-Lucan level) highlights an important point in interpreting 1:5–25. Although Luke gives JBap levitical parents, Luke makes nothing whatsoever of JBap himself as a priest. Thus his interest in the priesthood is on the level of *preparation* for JBap and ultimately for Jesus. This is part of his theology that the institutions of Judaism, when they were “observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord” (1:6), were receptive to Jesus and not opposed to him. Luke underlines the same motif when he has Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple to fulfill the rituals of purification and presentation (2:22–40). By the time that Luke/Acts was written, the Temple had been destroyed and the priesthood had lost much of its *raison d’être*; and Christians were beginning to look on this development as God’s punishing judgment. But Luke wants to make it clear that if opposition arose between the Temple/priesthood and the following of Jesus, it was not because there was an inherent contradiction between Christianity and the cult of Israel. Rather there was continuity, as illustrated both in Jesus’ origins and in the origins of the Church. That continuity was broken because of hostility on the part of the high priests (Acts 4:1–3; 5:17; 23:2). Combining priestly origins and blameless observance of the Law, Zechariah and Elizabeth were for Luke the representatives of the best in the religion of Israel; and as a remnant which received the “good news” (1:19), they personified the continuity in salvation history.

The fourth item of information in the introduction, namely that Zechariah and Elizabeth had no hope of children (1:7), also reflects a Lucan theological utilization of the parents of JBap (about whom he may have known little more than their names and priestly descent). Of course, historically the parents could have been aged—a suggestion that they died when JBap was young may lie behind 1:80. But the motif of barrenness is so common in OT annunciations of birth that I suspect Luke is establishing a connection with the OT rather than writing intimate family history. In particular, he has Zechariah and Elizabeth figuratively relive the careers of two OT sets of parents. The message in the annunciation (1:15) describes JBap as a Nazirite, drinking no wine or strong drink.<sup>16</sup> One of the most famous Nazirites of the OT was Samuel, and Luke draws a parallel between the parents of Samuel and the parents of JBap. The opening of the Samuel story is found in 1 Sam 1:1: “There was a certain man ... whose name was Elkanah ... and he had two wives; the name of one was Hannah.” This is quite close to the Lucan opening in 1:5: “There was a certain priest named Zechariah ... he had a wife ... and her name was Elizabeth.” The revelation to Hannah that her petition for a child would be heard comes through the priest Eli during the annual journey to the sanctuary at Shiloh to offer sacrifice (1 Sam 1:3, 17), even as it is revealed to the priest Zechariah in the sanctuary of the Jerusalem Temple that his prayer is heard (1:13). The motifs of the Samuel story will continue throughout Luke 1–2, as we shall see.



The other pair of OT parents whom Luke has in mind, and even more clearly, are Abraham and Sarah. While there are several examples of barren women who are made capable of childbearing through divine intervention, in only one other instance in the Bible are both parents incapacitated by age as well: “Abraham and Sarah were old, on in years; Sarah had ceased to have her periods” (Gen 18:11). The parallel to Luke 1:7 is obvious: “Elizabeth was barren, and both were on in years.” Another parallel is that in the Abraham/Sarah story the annunciation of birth is made to the father rather than to the mother. More parallels will be cited below in discussing the conclusion of the annunciation and the epilogue.

This parallelism with two sets of OT parents, Elkanah/Hannah and Abraham/Sarah, places the annunciation of JBap’s birth in continuity with the births of famous figures in the salvific history of Israel. I contend that JBap himself belongs to the period of Jesus in Luke’s divisions of salvific history (§ 9, B1, above); that is why this birth is accompanied with the messianic joy that surrounds the coming of Jesus. But his parents and the circumstances of his origins belong to the period of Israel. In particular, the strong Abraham/Sarah motif connects the infancy narrative with the patriarchal narratives of Israel’s beginnings in the Book of Genesis. In footnote 1, § 8, at the close of my discussion of Matthew, I pointed out that it was a common trait for Matthew, Luke, and John to turn to Genesis in their efforts to push back their understanding of Jesus beyond the beginnings of the ministry (the baptism) to his origins. It is their way of teaching us that his origins were in Israel and that his coming involves a new creation or a renewal of the covenant made with the patriarchs.

Thus, the few items of tradition in the introduction (1:5–7) have been dramatized and woven skillfully into theology. That the theology is truly Lucan will be the burden of our discussion as we turn to the annunciation itself.

### B. *The Annunciation (1:8–23)*

This part of the scene is divisible into three subsections: the setting (8–10), the core (11–20), and the conclusion (21–23). I shall not spend time on the setting since the cultic details it relates (with remarkable accuracy) have been explained in the NOTES. This setting reveals to the reader why Luke mentioned in vs. 5 that Zechariah was a priest of the division of Abijah: the annunciation to Zechariah was going to come during the incense offering, at the time when the division of Abijah was on duty in the sanctuary. The “good news” of the inauguration of God’s definitive plan of salvation was to be heralded first in the Holy Place associated with His presence in Israel.

#### 1. **Echoes of Daniel in the Appearance of Gabriel**

We have seen that Zechariah and Elizabeth recall the figures of Abraham and Sarah from Genesis, the book which stands at the beginning of the sacred writings of Israel. The angel Gabriel who appears to Zechariah at the hour of incense had his only previous biblical activity in Dan 8:16ff. and 9:21ff., and Daniel belongs to the last books of Israel’s collection. If Luke was conscious of this, he may have intended the characters involved in the annunciation, Zechariah and Gabriel, to span the sacred history of Israel from beginning to end, from the *Law* to the *Writings*. In any case, there can be no doubt that in his description of Gabriel’s appearance Luke



intends to evoke the atmosphere of Daniel. We may note the following points shared by Luke 1:8–23 and by Daniel:

- In 1:22 the appearance is called a vision; *optasia* is found six times in the Theodotion of Dan 9–10.
- In 1:10–11, as in Dan 9:20–21, Gabriel appears at the time of liturgical prayer.
- In 1:13 we find that Zechariah had uttered a personal prayer of distress (see NOTE), even as Daniel had been praying in distress (9:20).
- In 1:12, as in Dan 8:17 and 10:7, fear greets Gabriel’s appearance.
- In 1:19 Gabriel says, “I have been sent to speak to you”; in Dan 10:11 the angel refers to “the words which I am speaking to you.”
- In 1:13, as in Dan 10:12, Gabriel tells the visionary not to fear.
- In 1:20, 22, as in Dan 10:15, the visionary is struck mute.

By these echoes Luke is giving a new application to a common Christian reflection in which such Gospel motifs as the Son of Man and the Kingdom of God were related to Dan 7:13–14. In particular, the famous Danielic vision of the seventy weeks of years had figured in the Gospel reference to the “abominating desolation” in the Temple, seemingly interpreted as the Roman action against Jerusalem (Dan 9:27; Mark 13:14; Matt 24:15; Luke 21:20).

The theme of the seventy weeks of years, as interpreted by Gabriel in Dan 9:24–27, serves Luke as the background for the annunciation by Gabriel to Zechariah. In 9:21 we are told that Gabriel appeared to Daniel when he was occupied in prayer at the time of the evening sacrifice; this helps to explain the temporal setting of Luke’s account at the “hour of incense,” when “the multitude of the people was there, praying outside,” especially if Luke means the evening incense offering (see NOTE). For Daniel (9:24) the end of the seventy weeks of years is the time when “everlasting justice will be introduced, vision and prophecy will be ratified, and a Holy of Holies will be anointed.” Luke thinks that these last times have come (see Acts 2:16–17); and so he may have thought it appropriate, since Zechariah was a priest, to have the inaugural annunciation of this take place in the sanctuary (the Holy Place), adjacent to the Holy of Holies which was to be anointed. The eschatological atmosphere evoked from Daniel is echoed in the tone of the message that follows.

## 2. The Message (13–17)

In Table VIII I listed five steps in the typical biblical annunciation of birth, and I showed that all five are found in Luke 1:11–20, which constitutes the core of the annunciation scene. Having seen the coloring that comes to Luke’s model annunciation pattern from the portrayal of the dramatis personae along OT lines (of Abraham in Genesis and of Gabriel in Daniel), let us now concentrate on the origins of the material that Luke fits into the pattern, especially into the message of vss. 13–17.

THE FIRST STROPHE (vss. 13–14). The first four lines of the message delivered by Gabriel concern participation in and reaction to the birth of JBap, primarily on the part of Elizabeth and Zechariah, but then also on the part of “many.” The format in vs. 13 is almost totally that of the standard annunciation pattern (3a, c, e, f in Table VIII). Specifically, we may compare the words





to Abraham in Gen 17:19, “Sarah your wife will give birth to a son for you,” and the words to Zechariah in Luke 1:13, “Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son.” The name “John” is given before birth to signify that God has a special role for this child, but there is no explicit etymology. Some have found an implicit etymology in the joy and gladness mentioned in vs. 14, seen as a response to a name which means “Yahweh has given grace” (see NOTE); but I doubt that Luke’s Greek readers would have understood such a subtle play on a Semitic name. More simply, “joy and gladness” are sparked by the divine announcement of the birth of a child who is to have a role in salvation history and they form a response quite intelligible in the eschatological atmosphere evoked by the presence of Gabriel. If there is anything implicit in vss. 13–14, rather than a play on the name “John,” it is the end of the seventy weeks of years signaled by the reappearance of the angel who announced that time span. In § 1, A2, I have insisted that the key to understanding the infancy narratives is the realization that the christology once attached to the resurrection (and later to the ministry) has been moved back to the conception and birth of Jesus. “Joy” greets the risen Jesus in Luke 24:41; and the Psalm passage, “My heart was happy; my tongue was *glad*,” is cited in Acts 2:26 as a response to the last days ushered in by the resurrection. It is no surprise then to find the same terms appearing in the infancy narrative in order to tell the reader that the power of God which was visible in the resurrection is at work here.

THE SECOND STROPHE (vss. 15–16). The second four lines of the message concern the future career of the child and what he will do. Those who argue for a JBap source find here an exuberant language that betrays the beliefs of a sect which has made a Messiah<sup>32</sup> or even more out of JBap, perhaps by way of opposition to Jesus. But I detect nothing that goes beyond common Christian belief in JBap as attested in the accounts of Jesus’ ministry. For instance, in 15a it is promised that JBap “will be great”; this is an echo of Luke 7:28 where Jesus says, “Among those born of women, none is greater than John.” That JBap will be great “before the Lord” seems to echo the Malachi prophecy (3:1) applied to JBap in Luke 7:27, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way ahead of you.” The statement in 15b that JBap “will drink no wine or strong drink” is an echo of Luke 7:33: “JBap has come eating no bread and drinking no wine.” Of course, this ascetical motif from the ministry account has now been translated into terms that are appropriate for an annunciation of birth. Two of the most famous OT birth annunciations concerned the Nazirites Samson and Samuel. To the mother of Samson it was said by the angel, “Beware, and drink no wine or strong drink ... for you will conceive and bear a son ... the boy will be a Nazirite to God from birth” (Judg 13:4–5). When the mother of Samuel prayed “before the Lord,” she promised that, if God would give her a son, she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life; and she stressed that she had drunk neither wine nor strong drink (1 Sam 1:9–15). Using this stereotyped language, Luke is portraying JBap, traditionally an ascetic, as a Nazirite from his infancy, even as Matthew portrayed Jesus as a Nazirite from his infancy (§ 7, B3 above).

The statement in 1:15c, “He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb,” is a key passage for those who argue for a JBap source or a non-Christian origin of this material. The contention is that in the Gospel proper the Holy Spirit is associated with Jesus, not with JBap; and attention is called to Luke 3:16 where JBap says, “I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming ... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” In





Acts 19:2–3 those who have been baptized with the baptism of JBap have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. But is the association of the Holy Spirit with JBap in the infancy narrative really irreconcilable with this picture? A distinction must be made in thinking of the Spirit. It is the Spirit of Jesus that is associated with Christian baptism—a Spirit of life and power that was his during his lifetime and which he has transmitted to his followers after the resurrection. Obviously Christians would not associate this baptismal Spirit with JBap. But there is also the Holy Spirit of God associated with the prophets.<sup>37</sup> This is the Spirit that came upon Saul and turned him into a prophet (1 Sam 10:10), the Spirit that spoke through David (2 Sam 23:2), and above all the Spirit that filled the prophets Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs 2:9–16). In the Gospel account of the ministry, JBap is presented as a prophet, indeed greater than any other prophet (Luke 7:28; 20:6); and so it would follow logically that JBap was filled with the prophetic Holy Spirit. If one compares the OT passages where the *Spirit* of the Lord is said to come upon a prophet to enable him to speak God’s message (Isa 61:1; Ezek 11:5; Joel 3:1 [RSV 2:28]) with the passages where the *word* of God is said to come to a prophet for the same purpose (Isa 2:1; Jer 1:2; Joel 1:1), it becomes clear that when Luke 1:15c says that JBap “will be filled with the Holy *Spirit* even from his mother’s womb,” he is saying exactly the same thing as he says in 3:1–2: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar ... the *word* of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the desert.” These are simply alternate ways of describing the beginning of the career of a prophet. In the former Lucan statement, when the career is traced to infancy, the dominating model is that of a prophet like Samson (“a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb,” Judg 16:17; 13:7) or Jeremiah (“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you ... I appointed you a prophet to the nations,” Jer 1:14). In the latter Lucan statement, when the career is traced to the beginning of a preaching ministry, the dominating model is the standard opening of several prophetic books, e.g., “In the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, the son of Berechiah” (Zech 1:1).

In vs. 16 Luke begins to specify the role that this forthcoming prophet will have: “He will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.” The idea of “turning” or “returning” to the Lord God is standard OT language for the repentance of a people (Deut 30:2; Hosea 3:5; 7:10); and sometimes such a “turning” is proclaimed by a prophet upon whom the Spirit of God has come (2 Chr 15:1, 4). The idea that JBap’s prophetic task is to affect Israel (see also 1:68, 80) appears in the words attributed to him during the ministry in John 1:31: “I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel.” In summary, the second strophe (vss. 15–16) transposes to the conception and phrases poetically the ministry portrayal of JBap as an ascetic prophet calling upon Israel to repent, an image found in Luke 3:1–3 and 7:24–35.

THE THIRD STROPHE (vs. 17). More specifically, the final strophe of the angelic oracle proclaims that JBap will carry out his prophetic mission of repentance and reconciliation “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” Again we seem to have an anticipation of a theme that is common in the Synoptic accounts of the ministry. For instance, in the Gospel of Mark (9:13), Jesus says, “I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.” Whatever this vague statement may have meant on Jesus’ own lips, it is probable that Mark interpreted it as a reference to JBap, since he has described JBap as wearing Elijah-like clothing, and he has dramatized the violent death of JBap (6:14–29), a death suffered precisely because, like Elijah, JBap dared to challenge kings (Herod and Herodias resemble Ahab and Jezebel).



Matthew removes all doubt by offering an interpretation (17:13) of the saying of Jesus: “Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of JBap” (see also Matt 11:13–14).

But if, by attributing to JBap the role of Elijah,<sup>44</sup> Luke is voicing a Synoptic theme in his infancy narrative, this very identification raises another question about the harmony between the infancy narrative and the Gospel proper. In his account of the ministry does Luke give JBap an Elijah-like role; or does he hold a position similar to that of John 1:21 where JBap denies that he is Elijah?<sup>45</sup> Wink asserts, “Luke has retained nothing of JBap’s role as Elijah.”<sup>46</sup> The fact that Luke gives no parallel to Mark 9:9–13, where Jesus says that Elijah has already come, has been looked upon as a deliberate omission directed against the thesis of JBap equaling Elijah. And Luke 4:25–26 and 9:54 have been invoked as proof that for Luke it was Jesus, not JBap, who had the Elijah role.<sup>47</sup> Yet in 7:27 Luke follows “Q” in applying to JBap Mal 3:1, a passage associated with Elijah (see Mal 4:5 below). Perhaps one may speak of traces in Luke of two different Christian views of the Elijah role (see footnote 42). An earlier stage, dominant in Luke’s account of the ministry, would have identified Jesus as the Elijah-like eschatological prophet of the last times (7:16). A later stage, dominant in the Lucan infancy narrative (perhaps composed after the Gospel and Acts), would have stressed Jesus as God’s Son. Such a shift would have freed the Elijah role for JBap, an association only hinted at in the Lucan account of the ministry but made specific in the infancy narrative.

If 1:17b gives us this specific association of JBap and Elijah, that association is echoed in the other lines of 17. To see this, let us recall a series of OT texts:

Mal 3:1: “I send my messenger to prepare the way before me,  
and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His Temple.”

Mal 3:23–24:  
(RSV 4:5–6) “I send you Elijah the prophet  
before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.  
He will turn the heart of the fathers toward the children,  
and the heart of the children toward the fathers,  
lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”

Sirach 48:10: “[Elijah], it is written, you are destined in time  
to put an end to wrath before [...]  
to turn the heart of the fathers toward the children  
and to restore the tribes of Jacob.”

Luke 1:17a: “And he will go before Him  
17b: in the spirit and power of Elijah  
17c: to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children  
17d: and the disobedient unto the wisdom of the just,  
17e: to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.”

In studying these texts, we see that, while the “messenger” in Mal 3:1 was not identified (and was perhaps an angel), by the time that Mal 3:23 had been appended, the messenger had been identified as Elijah. Also the coming of the Lord had been interpreted as the coming of “the great and terrible day of the Lord.” Both Mal 3:24 and Sirach 48:10 gave Elijah a task of



reconciliation before that terrible day. Thus Luke 1:17a, b is simply following an established exegesis in introducing the Elijah motif as part of the association between Mal 3:1 and JBap. And Luke 17e is also an example of established exegesis when it associates Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3. The first time that JBap is introduced in Mark (1:2–4), the OT text that is applied to him is Mal 3:1 combined with Isa 40:3 (“The voice of one crying in the desert: ‘Make ready the way of the Lord.’”). The parallel Lucan scene (3:4) has only the Isaiah text, and some have attributed the omission of the Malachi text to Luke’s refusal to give JBap an Elijah-like role (despite the citation of the Malachi text in 7:27!). But there is a simpler explanation. Luke agrees with Mark that the combined Malachi/Isaiah text should be applied to JBap when he is first introduced, to serve as a leitmotif. However, Luke introduces JBap not at the baptism but in the annunciation; and so 17e both continues the Malachi motif (“prepared”) and begins an Isaiah motif (“make ready for the Lord”). It is this combination that explains the awkwardness of this line mentioned in the NOTE.

The most difficult lines in this third strophe are 1:17c, d. To understand them we must recall that the third strophe (vs. 17) is a specification of the second strophe (vss. 15–16). If vs. 15a stated that JBap would be great before the Lord, 17a, b specifies that JBap will “go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah.” If 16 promised that JBap would “turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God,” 17c, d specify how that turning will take place in order to make ready a prepared people. The wording of vs. 16 echoed the last line of Sirach 48:10 (“to restore the tribes of Jacob”), while 17c, d has a phrasing close to the penultimate line of the Sirach passage (“to turn the heart of the fathers toward the children”), which in turn recalls Mal 3:24. That leads us to compare the peculiar phrasing of Luke in the light of Malachi:

Mal 3:24: “He will turn the heart of the fathers toward the children,  
and the heart of the children toward the fathers”

Luke 1:17c: “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children  
17d: and the disobedient unto the wisdom of the just”

The Lucan parallelism is difficult; for, while the two lines in Malachi clearly involve a reciprocal turning, that is not clear in Luke. To achieve a reciprocal turning one must read the Lucan lines chiasmically, with the last mentioned group in the second line (“just”) corresponding to the first mentioned group in the first line (“fathers”), so that the disobedient children are turned unto the wisdom of the just fathers. It would be more normal, however, to read the Lucan lines in synonymous parallelism whereby the “disobedient” are the fathers, and the “just” are the children.

While this second interpretation may seem strange, one may find some interesting support for it in Lucan theology. In Luke’s view of salvation history, most of the Jews rejected Jesus, while large numbers of Gentiles accepted him (Acts 28:25–28). Thus, while the “fathers” were disobedient, the unexpected “children” of Abraham, the Gentiles, were justified and found the wisdom of God (11:49) in Jesus. Is it accidental that most of the vocabulary of Luke 1:17c, d occurs in Gospel passages involving JBap and castigating the lack of acceptance on the part of the Jewish crowds? In a “Q” saying which Matt 3:7 has addressed to the Pharisees and Sadducees but which Luke 3:8 addresses to the crowds, JBap warns, “Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our *father*,’ for I tell you God is able from these stones to raise up *children* to Abraham.” In Luke 7:31–35 Jesus says by way of rebuke: “To what then shall



I compare the people of this generation?... For JBap has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon.' ... Yet *wisdom is justified by all her children.*" One may put these passages together so as to mean that an acceptance of JBap's challenge (which is reinforced by Jesus) produces a new generation of children who possess the wisdom of the just, while those who think of the patriarchs as their fathers are disobedient and not justified in their wisdom. But, whether or not this is the correct interpretation of 17c, d, its language seems to be a borrowing from Malachi and Sirach, reinterpreted with terms that appear in the Lucan ministry accounts of JBap.

In summary, looking back on the angelic message in 1:13–17, I recognize that there is no real way to disprove the theory that Luke drew it in whole or in part from a JBap source. However, I find no convincing reason *by way of content* or *by way of theology* for such a hypothesis, since everything said therein echoes or is consonant with what Luke will say of JBap in 3:1–20 and 7:18–35. The slight differences of tone can be explained by the fact that this material has been fitted into an annunciation of birth pattern and that Jesus has not yet been mentioned.

### **3. Zechariah's Response (18–20) and the Conclusion (21–23)**

The basic pattern of the biblical annunciation of birth is continued in vss. 18–20, i.e., steps 4 and 5 in Table VIII: the objection by the visionary as to how this can be, and the giving of a sign. The coloring of these steps comes from the specific OT antecedents that we have already seen as Lucan background. Thus, the Lucan wording of Zechariah's objection, "How am I to know this?", is a verbatim quotation from Abraham's reaction to divine revelation in Gen 15:8. And so that the reader will not miss this allusion, Luke has Zechariah continue in vs. 18 with a reminder of his own and his wife's age—the feature in which Zechariah and Elizabeth most resemble Abraham and Sarah (Gen 17:17). In giving the sign the angel explicitly recalls the Daniel background of the annunciation by identifying himself as Gabriel (Dan 8:16; 9:21) who stands in the presence of God (Dan 7:16); and, as mentioned above, the sign of being struck mute echoes Dan 10:15. The recognition of the extent to which Luke is following a stereotyped pattern and an OT background makes otiose the question of whether Zechariah's punishment was just. Many of the Church Fathers wrote severely about the stubborn disbelief implied in Zechariah's question (vs. 18); and yet it is not noticeably different from the objection that Mary will pose in 1:34, and she is not punished. The literary pattern virtually required a sign, and the parallel with Daniel suggested the sign of being struck mute.

The conclusion (vss. 21–23) forcefully brings us back to the atmosphere of the Temple that was so dominant in the setting of the annunciation in vss. 8–10. Gabriel has promised Zechariah something positive, that his wife Elizabeth will bear him a son, and something negative, that he will be struck mute. The fulfillment of the positive promise requires a lapse of time; but Luke uses the people's expectation of a blessing and the inability of Zechariah to respond (NOTE on vs. 22) to demonstrate the immediate fulfillment of the negative promise. If Luke's Gentile readers can be presumed to have known that the phrase "he was unable to speak to them" meant that Zechariah was unable to bless them, we have here a remarkable instance of Luke's love of symmetry. The priestly blessing that could not be given at the beginning of the Gospel by Zechariah will be given at the end of the Gospel by Jesus. In 24:50–52 we are told that Jesus



led his disciples out to Bethany, lifted his hands over them, and blessed them; then they worshiped him, and returning to Jerusalem with great joy, they were continually in the Temple praising God. It has been recognized that this ending of Luke is remarkably like the ending of the praise of the ideal high priest, Simon son of Onias, in Sirach 50:19–23. There we are told that the high priest, when he completed his service of offering sacrifice, would come down (the Temple steps) and lift his hands over the congregation of Israel, and bless them; meanwhile the people would be prostrate in worship and would be urged to praise the God of all who would grant them joy of heart. It is not farfetched to think that Luke has attached to the risen Jesus the fulfillment or replacement of the Temple ritual. That theme is explicit in Hebrews and is hinted at in the Gospel accounts of the death of Jesus (e.g., Mark 15:38).

The final detail in the annunciation scene, the notice that Zechariah “went back to his home” (vs. 23), supplies a connection to the epilogue where Luke will tell us how the positive side of Gabriel’s promise worked out and Elizabeth conceived a child. As I pointed out in the NOTE, the theme of departure is Luke’s way of marking the termination of scenes in the infancy narrative.

### *C. The Epilogue (1:24–25)*

These brief verses have been the subject of considerable discussion. Among those who argue for a J<sup>Bap</sup> source, some contend that vss. 24–25 may once have been followed by what is now in vs. 57 (“Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth”), so that Luke has broken the original sequence of the source to insert the annunciation of Jesus’ birth and the visitation. Other proponents of the source theory suggest that the abruptness and obscurity of the epilogue results from the omission or loss of pre-Lucan J<sup>Bap</sup> material, e.g., of an annunciation to Elizabeth which would have come after vs. 23 (and which Luke may have converted into an annunciation to Mary). Such theories are just as difficult to disprove as to prove.

But several facts are worth noting. That Elizabeth conceives without receiving an annunciation corresponding to the annunciation to her husband is not strange; the same is true in the Abraham/Sarah story of the birth of Isaac. Also the sequence from vs. 23 to vs. 24 is plausible and shows no sign of omission. In fact Luke’s statements, “He went back to his home. Afterwards Elizabeth his wife conceived,” seem to echo once again the theme of the parents of Samuel: “Then he went to his home at Ramah ... and in due time (his wife) Hannah conceived” (1 Sam 1:19–20). Among the words I omitted from this Samuel citation are “The Lord remembered her,” which are quite close to Elizabeth’s first words in Luke 1:25: “The Lord has dealt with me in this way,” even as the rest of her words (“He looked to take away my disgrace among men”) echoes Rachel’s reaction to conception in Gen 30:23: “God has taken away my disgrace.”

Much of the theorizing that something has been omitted before or after the epilogue depends on the supposed obscurity of the detail that for five months Elizabeth kept herself in seclusion. Commentators have seen here various theological motifs, e.g., a response of awe and silence before the workings of the divine, corresponding to her husband’s fear (1:12) and inability to speak (1:22). The mention of the “five months,” combined with references to “the sixth month” (1:26), “three months” (1:56), and “eight days” (2:21), has induced the more imaginative to read into Luke a calculation that would total out 490 days, corresponding to the



Danielic seventy weeks of years. Personally I see no need to posit any mystique or obscure purpose in the Lucan mention of the five months of seclusion: it is a literary device to prepare for the sign to be revealed to Mary in 1:36: “And behold, your relative Elizabeth, despite her old age, has also conceived a son; indeed this is the sixth month for a woman who was deemed barren.” Since Elizabeth had been in seclusion for five months, no one could have known of her pregnancy; and therefore the angel’s knowledge of the otherwise unknown increases the sign value of the annunciation to Mary and helps to show that the conception of JBap really was the work of God. This close connection between 1:24 and 1:36 shows that the epilogue is totally a Lucan composition.

Indeed, in the theory of composition proposed on pp. 251–52 above, I suggested that, rather than being an awkward addendum, the epilogue was part of Luke’s original plan. The annunciations of the births of JBap and of Jesus (Table XI) were each followed by an epilogue in which the work of God in the respective conception could be praised (1:24–25; 1:39–45). The “Afterwards” (literally, “After these days”) introducing the first epilogue is matched by the “At this time” (literally, “In these days”) introducing the second epilogue. And each epilogue is dated by a time reference to Elizabeth’s pregnancy (five months in 1:24; three months in 1:56).

#### *D. The Relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus*

If Luke was drawing upon a JBap source which contained an annunciation of birth, there is little reason to ask why 1:5–25 appears in the Gospel in its present place and form. But if Luke was composing the infancy narrative freely on the basis of a few items of information (see A above), then one must ask why he composed an annunciation of JBap’s birth and inserted it at the beginning of his narrative. In the next section (§ 11), drawing upon points of similarity between Matthew and Luke, I shall suggest that there was a pre-Gospel tradition of an angelic annunciation of the birth of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah; and I think that Luke used the annunciation of Jesus’ birth as a pattern in composing the annunciation of JBap’s birth (Table XI). However, what theological insight would have led him to do this? Why did Luke not begin, as Matthew did, with the annunciation of Jesus’ birth?

To answer this, let me attempt a brief critical reconstruction of the historical relationship between the careers of JBap and Jesus, probing beneath the later rethinking of that relationship in the Gospels.<sup>62</sup> Historically, Jesus was baptized by JBap and may have gone so far in identifying himself with JBap’s movement as to have become temporarily a disciple of JBap or, at least, to have imitated his baptizing ministry (John 3:22, 26). But after JBap’s arrest, Jesus went his own way with a ministry of preaching and healing. And so in Palestine in the late 20s there were two salvific figures, each proclaiming the imminence of God’s eschatological action and each dying a martyr’s death, after having had contact with each other during their ministries and having shared a certain harmony of thought. The last observation is justified not only by Jesus’ having accepted baptism from JBap, but also by an acceptance of Jesus on the part of some of the followers of JBap.<sup>65</sup> Because of this harmony we find no tendency in the Christian records to excise the memory of JBap.

However, there was a tendency among Christians to reinterpret these almost parallel careers by subordinating JBap to Jesus, so that he was seen as a forerunner of Jesus or one who prepared the way for Jesus. While one can find some historical basis for this view in the fact





that JBap began preaching first and died first, the idea that he was preparing the way for the Messiah whom he identified as Jesus (John 3:28, most explicitly) is a Christian adaptation of JBap's own thought that he was preparing the way for God. As part of this Christian reinterpretation, JBap was attributed the role of Elijah through an exegesis of Mal 3:1, 23, combined with Isa 40:3, with Jesus seen as the Lord whose coming was thus heralded. The "Q" passage in Matt 11:2ff. and Luke 7:18ff. is a good example of the Christian attempt to work out the relationship between JBap and Jesus in a way that does justice to JBap's having had a preparatory role without understanding it.

If the struggle to fit JBap into a schema of salvation history was a necessary step in the process of Christian self-understanding, the results may also have been meant to persuade unconverted disciples of JBap. Yet, as time went on and some of those unconverted disciples seemingly turned hostile to the Christian movement, the motif of subordinating JBap became stronger in Christian writing, so as not to offer ammunition to possible rivals. This is particularly apparent in the Fourth Gospel where it is underlined that JBap was not the light (1:8), not the Messiah nor Elijah (1:20–21), and was to decrease while Jesus increased (3:30). Indeed, he becomes an incipient Christian, for the whole purpose of his ministry was to testify to Jesus (1:7, 30–31). Such apologetics does not cause JBap to be mentioned less. Rather, the historical fact that JBap preceded Jesus is freely admitted and indeed insisted upon, so long as the proper subordination is recognized. This is seen in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel. The christology that was once associated with the beginning of the ministry of Jesus has here been moved back to the incarnation of the pre-existent Word. However, since JBap had preceded the beginning of Jesus' ministry in order to prepare the way for the divine christological announcement at the baptism, it is seen as logical in the Prologue that JBap should prepare the way for the incarnation (1:6–9, 14)—absurd from the viewpoint of chronology but very perceptive from the viewpoint of salvation history!

Such Christian theological developments regarding JBap are reflected in the Lucan infancy narrative in a most graceful way. If the Fourth Gospel has moved the christological moment (i.e., the moment of the revelation of who Jesus is) back to the incarnation of the pre-existent Word (1:14), Luke has moved it back to the virginal conception (1:35). If the Fourth Gospel has JBap prepare the way for the incarnation, Luke has the conception of JBap prepare the way for the conception of Jesus.<sup>67</sup> Subordination is preserved because the miraculous element in Jesus' conception (without a male parent) will be greater than that in JBap's conception (aged, barren parents). When the two pregnant mothers meet, Elizabeth will praise Mary as "the mother of my Lord"; and JBap will add his testimony by jumping with gladness in Elizabeth's womb (1:41–45). There is no rivalry between the two figures in salvation history since God sends the same angel Gabriel to announce both conceptions. If in the Fourth Gospel JBap has become an incipient Christian, Luke also brings JBap firmly within the Christian sphere by presenting him as a relative of Jesus on his mother's side (1:36). This latter detail is never suggested anywhere else in the four Gospels, and is very difficult to reconcile with John 1:33 where JBap says that he did not even know Jesus. Indeed, family relationship would make the critical reconstruction given above almost unintelligible, and would make rivalry between the disciples of JBap and disciples of Jesus very hard to understand. But family relationship would be quite intelligible as a symbolic Lucan etiology of the historical relationship between the JBap movement and the





Jesus movement, and of the relationship that should exist between the disciples of the two groups.

Thus, without a JBar source, I think it quite possible to attribute to Luke the literary form, the position, the theology, and most of the content of 1:5–25.

### SECTIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY (§ 10) (LUKE 1:5–25)

(Besides referring to the Bibliography for the whole Lucan infancy narrative in § 9, the reader should consult the Bibliography in § 11, since many treat the two annunciations together when studying the annunciation to Mary.)

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### III. THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS (§ 11)

#### *Translation of Luke 1:26–38*

**1** <sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee known as Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin betrothed to a man of the House of David whose name was Joseph, and the virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> He came and addressed her thus: “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you.” <sup>29</sup> Now she was startled at what he said and wondered what such a greeting might mean. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

- 31a        And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son,
- 31b        and you will call his name Jesus.
- 32a        He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High.
- 32b        And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David;
- 33a        and he will be king over the House of Jacob forever,
- 33b        and there will be no end to his kingdom.”

<sup>34</sup> However, Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have had no relations with a man?”

<sup>35</sup> The angel responded,



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- 35b “The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
35c and power from the Most High will overshadow you.  
35d Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—Son of God.

<sup>36</sup> And behold, your relative Elizabeth, despite her old age, has also conceived a son; indeed, this is the sixth month for a woman who was deemed barren. <sup>37</sup> Nothing said by God can be impossible.” <sup>38</sup> Mary answered, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel went away, leaving her.

### NOTES

1:26. *In the sixth month.* That is, of Elizabeth’s pregnancy; see NOTE on 1:24. As she had hid herself for the first half of her pregnancy, no outsider could have known that she was pregnant; and it will be revealed to Mary (1:36) before it becomes public.

*to a city of Galilee known as Nazareth.* In Matthew the annunciation to Joseph apparently takes place in Bethlehem where the child is born (2:1) and where the parents live in a house (2:11). Only after the return from Egypt are we told that Joseph “went off to the district of Galilee ... to dwell in a city called Nazareth” (2:22–23—for the name and history of the city, see NOTE there). The fact that “known as Nazareth” is omitted from Luke in Codex Bezae and an OL ms. has contributed to the suggestion of Leaney, “Birth Narratives,” 161–62, that originally Nazareth was named only in the stories in Luke 2.

27. *to a virgin betrothed to a man ... whose name was Joseph.* Mary’s marital status is described by the same verb (*mnēsteuein*) used in Matt 1:18, “Mary had been betrothed to Joseph,” and in Luke 2:5, “Mary, his betrothed, who was pregnant” Although the situation is not spelled out in Luke as it was in Matthew, the fact that Mary is both a virgin and betrothed means that she has exchanged consent with Joseph but not been taken to live with him. For an explanation of this custom, see NOTE on Matt 1:18.

*a man of the House of David.* In Matthew’s annunciation too it was specified that Joseph was a Davidid (1:20). Luke’s phrasing is not totally clear; Origen understood “of the House of David” to refer to Mary, and John Chrysostom took it to refer both to Mary and Joseph. Grammatically it stands closer to Joseph; and if Luke meant it to refer to Mary, he would not have needed to reintroduce her as subject in the next clause (“and the virgin’s name was Mary”). Elsewhere Luke refers only to Joseph as a Davidid, e.g., in 2:4 he tells us that Joseph went to Bethlehem “because he was of the house and lineage of David,” and in 3:23 it is Joseph whose genealogy is traced to David.

If this phrase does not apply to Mary, there is really no other NT evidence that she was a Davidid. The argument that Joseph, a Davidid, would have married within his own tribe and house is offset by the fact that Luke gives to Mary a relative of the House of Levi or Aaron (1:5, 36—note also the name “Levi” among the ancestors of Jesus as seen in ##4, 32 in Table I). The Church writers were divided on this issue. Attributing to Mary a Davidic origin were the *Protevangelium of James*, 10:1; Ignatius *Ephesians*, xviii 2; and Justin *Dialogue* xlv 4; while there are hints of at least partial levitical origins (usually through Mary’s father or grandfather) in Hippolytus and Ephraem. The latter position is often involved with identifying the Eli of the Lucan genealogy (#2 in Table I) as a relative of Mary. Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* xxxiii 9, takes the trouble to deny that Mary was a priest’s daughter. On this question, see Fischer, “Abkunft” Both derivations, Davidic and Levitical, reflect theological conceptions. Gentile writers often did not understand how Jesus could be truly a Davidid through Joseph who did not beget him and so were forced to think of Mary as a Davidid. On the other hand, the designation of Jesus as a priest tended toward the creation of levitic ancestry. We have no idea where the *Protevangelium of James* (1:1; 2:1), which is clearly unhistorical on many points, got the tradition that the names of Mary’s parents were Joachim and Anne; but certainly it patterns Anne on her namesake, Hannah the mother of



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Samuel. For another, unreliable tradition about the names of Mary's forebears, see footnote 7 in Appendix V.

*and the virgin's name was Mary.* See NOTE on 1:5, "and her name was Elizabeth."

28. *Hail, O favored one.* In the Greek expression *chaire kecharitōmenē*, words of closely related stems are involved. *Chaire* is related to the noun *chara*, "joy." *Kecharitōmenē* is from the verb *charitoun*, a factitive verb, "to make one favored, to give one grace," of the same stem as *charis*, "grace, favor." If one presupposes an underlying knowledge of Hebrew in the account, *kecharitōmenē* virtually translates the name Hannah and may be an echo of motif of the birth of Samuel found in these chapters.

*the Lord is with you.* The Greek has no verb, and some translators would give it a subjunctive tone ("be with you"). However, W. C van Unnik has made a minute study of this formula in *New Testament Essays in Memory of T. W. Manson*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (Manchester University, 1959), 270–305; and he points out (p. 283) that (a) in the instances where a verb is supplied, the note of certainty is stronger than the subjunctive note of wish or possibility; and (b) when a verb is not found (as here), the phrase is practically always a declaration. While the phrase assures Mary of God's support, it does not mean that the Lord Jesus is within Mary's womb. After this phrase the Codices Alexandrinus, Bezae, and many of the versions, including the Latin, add: "Blessed are you among women." This is almost certainly a scribal borrowing from 1:42, but it has influenced the "Ave Maria" prayer.

29. *she was startled.* A stronger variant of the verb which was used in 1:12. Codex Alexandrinus follows it by adding: "when she saw (him)"; but the Vulgate is closer to Luke's meaning when in some mss. it adds: "when she had heard." Many psychological explanations have been advanced for Mary's reaction: a human being's reaction to the presence of an angel; a maiden's reaction to the presence of a man; Mary's modesty. However, disturbance is part of the literary pattern of an angelic annunciation of birth (number 2 in Table VIII); and Mary's wonderment is a reaction to the great grace or favor that the angel has announced. See A. M. Lobina, *Revista Bíblica* (Argentina) 21 (1959), 15–21.

*might mean.* Literally, "might be"—an optative. BDF 65<sup>2</sup>: "The optative appears only in the Lucan corpus with any frequency," and only Luke employs the optative in indirect discourse (BDF 386).

30. *you have found favor with God.* The noun is *charis*; see NOTE on "favored one" in vs. 28. The expression "to find favor" is a Semitism, e.g., "Noah found favor before the Lord God" (LXX of Gen 6:9).

31. *And behold.* See NOTE on this expression (*kai idou*) in 1:20.

*you will conceive.* As we saw in footnote 44, § 5, the Hebrew participial expression in announcements of birth can be understood as either a present (already pregnant) or a future. Luke's future verb cannot be explained away as a misunderstanding of a putative Semitic original, for the verbs in 1:35 are also future.

*you will call his name.* A Semitism as in 1:13; see NOTE on Matt 1:21. This is a command and not a simple continuation of prophecy. In Matt 1:21, 23 it is Joseph who does the naming; but there are many OT antecedents for the naming of children by divinely favored women, e.g., Hagar (Gen 16:11), Leah (Gen 30:13), the mother of Samson (Judg 13:24), and the mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1:20). This naming by Mary constitutes no proof that Luke thinks of Mary as a Davidid. Actually in 2:21 it is not specified who did name the child.

*Jesus.* For the meaning of this name, see NOTE on "for he will save" in Matt 1:21.

32. *will be called.* In this instance, "calling" brings to expression what one is, so that it means no less than "he will be." Interchangeability of the two phrases is seen by comparing Matt 5:9, "they will be called sons of God," and Luke 6:35, "you will be sons of the Most High."

*Most High.* In the NT this name for God is encountered most frequently in Luke (1:35, 76; 6:35; Acts 7:48; etc.).

34. *How can this be ...?* The textual evidence for omitting this question is negligible. See B. Brinkmann, *Biblica* 34 (1953), 327–32, refuting H. Vogels, ZNW 43 (1950–51), 256–60. It is omitted by the OL ms. b, dating from the fourth or fifth century. Perhaps the scribe was embarrassed by the



attribution to Mary of seeming disbelief. Or he may have understood the question to mean (as does the curious RSV translation), “How can this be, since I have no husband?”, a question that would contradict 1:27 and 2:5 (where this ms. reads “his wife”)—Mary has a husband. The eighth-century writer John of Damascus (PG 95:188c) has been cited as evidence for omitting the “since” clause from the question, but his commentary goes on to mention that Mary asked a question about the manner of the conception.

*since*. The causal conjunction *epei* occurs only here in Luke, and has been used as proof that this verse is non-Lucan. However, it is not a frequent conjunction in the Gospels (Matthew three times, Mark once, John twice), and three times Luke/Acts uses the closely related causal conjunction *epeidē*.

*I have had no relations with a man*. Literally, “I do not know a man.” The verb “to know” is a Semitism for sexual relations; see Matt 1:25: “He did not know her until she brought forth a son.” While the tense is present, it describes a state resultant from a past pattern of behavior, as the OL recognized by using a perfect tense (*novi, cognovi*)—see the series of articles by Quecke. The word for “man” is the specific *anēr*, “male, husband,” not the generic *anthrōpos*. Here it should not be translated “husband” since Luke’s intent is wider: Mary has not known *any* man and so is a virgin (1:27).

35. *The Holy Spirit*. This expression is anarthrous as it was in the Matthean annunciation (1:18). See NOTE there justifying the supplying of an article in translation.

*will come upon you*. *Eperchesthai* is a Lucan verb, occurring seven times in Luke/Acts, as compared with twice in the rest of the NT. In Acts 1:8 it is used proleptically of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples at Pentecost. See also Isa 32:15: “until the Spirit comes upon you [or us] from on high”; and 1 Sam 16:13: “The Spirit of the Lord came upon David.” These parallels make it clear that the sense is not sexual.

*power*. In this abstract sense *dynamis* occurs some seventeen times in Luke/Acts, as contrasted with twice each in Matthew and Mark. The combination of spirit and power is very Lucan, occurring in Luke 1:17; 4:14; Acts 1:8; 6:5, 8; 10:38. Not knowing the rules of parallelism in biblical poetry which make it clear that “power from the Most High” is synonymous with “Holy Spirit,” some patristic and medieval theologians thought that the references in 35b, c were respectively to the Third and Second Persons of the Trinity, so that “power” was the Second Person descending to take flesh in Mary’s womb. As we shall see, there is no evidence that Luke thought of the incarnation of a Pre-existent

*will overshadow you*. In the COMMENT I shall discuss the use of *episkiazein*, “overshadow,” in the OT to describe God’s presence in the sanctuary, and in the Gospels at the transfiguration—a somewhat literal usage where a cloud of glory overshadows. Two other suggestions have been made, however, which should be discarded. Occasionally, the power overshadowing Mary has been interpreted as a euphemism for a quasi-sexual union, a *hieros gamos*. Strangely enough this appears in one form in the Spanish post-Reformation theologian Cardinal Toletus (1532–96). A modern variation is the thesis of D. Daube, ZNW 48 (1957), 119–20, who sees an allusion to a rabbinic debate over Ruth 3:9 where Ruth presents herself at night to Boaz as his *handmaid* (cf. Luke 1:38) and asks him to *spread* (*periballein*) his mantle *over* her. As I reported in footnote 24, § 3, some saw this as seduction and an invitation to sexual relations. The rabbis denied it by arguing that *ṭallîṭ*, “mantle,” had been misread for *ṭallēl*, “overshadow.” It is difficult to see how this would affect Luke’s meaning; and it is even more difficult to think that Luke was making a subtle allusion to a debate supposing the knowledge of Hebrew or Aramaic, especially since the evidence for the debate is medieval. There is no real evidence for the sexual use of *episkiazein*; and, if anything, the Lucan language of virginal conception is less open to sexual interpretation than Matthew’s “begotten ... through the Holy Spirit” (NOTES on Matt 1:16 and 1:20). Another dubious suggestion was made by H. Leisegang, *Pneuma Hagion* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1922), 14–71, esp. 25–33. He sees here a reflection of Hellenistic mystery religions with a spirit-demon overshadowing the mind or spirit of Mary, so that she was possessed by God almost as if she were a mantic or a sibyl. However, there is no other echo of such a pagan context in the scene; and parallelism



suggests that overshadowing by the power of the Most High is no more mystical (or sexual) than having the Holy Spirit come upon Mary—a symbolism that, as we saw, is quite biblical. Dibelius, “Jungfrauensohn,” 19–22, gives an important refutation of both the sexual and mystical interpretations of *episkiazein*.

*Therefore.* Of the nine times *dio kai* occurs in the NT, three are in Luke/Acts. It involves a certain causality; and Lyonnet, “L’Annonciation,” 61<sup>6</sup>, points out that this has embarrassed many orthodox theologians, since in pre-existence christology a conception by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb does *not* bring about the existence of God’s Son. Luke is seemingly unaware of such a christology; conception is causally related to divine sonship for him.

*the child to be born.* This translates *to gennōmenon*, a neuter passive participle, present tense, of *gennan*, “to beget (as a father), to bear (as a mother)”]; see the NOTES on this verb in Matt 1:16, 20 and footnote 23 in § 5. In itself, the translation “the one begotten” is equally possible, and certainly the aorist passive participle has the meaning “begotten” in Matt 1:20. But the situation in Luke is quite different from the situation envisaged by Matthew where Joseph is worried about the paternity of the child. Everything in Luke is from the viewpoint of the virgin mother, and paternity is not even mentioned. Consequently the verb seems to mean “born” here. In that case the present participle must have future significance (BDF 339<sup>2b</sup>), as recognized by the Vulgate’s *quod nascetur*. Why a neuter? This is probably more an instance of the general possibility of using the neuter for persons. BDF 138<sup>1</sup> suggests that we are to understand an implied neuter noun for “child,” such as *teknon* (or *paidion*, as in 2:40). A. Fridrichsen, in *Symbolae Osloenses* 6 (1928), 33–36, argues that the participle used by Luke is a recognized idiom for “the child (in the womb),” and that the whole question of “born” or “begotten” can be bypassed. Yet Vicent, “La presunta,” insists that the verbal sense is not lost, so that “the child” is not an adequate translation. Greek mss. of minor importance and some versions insert “of you” after *to gennōmenon*. This reading represents the cross influence of Matt 1:20: “the child begotten *in her*.”

*will be called holy—Son of God.* See NOTE on “will be called” in vs. 32; it is tantamount to saying “he will be.” And so I cannot follow those theologians who try to avoid the causal connotation in the “Therefore” which begins this line by arguing that for Luke the conception of the child does not bring the Son of God into being, but only enables us to call him “Son of God” who already was Son of God. The translation of this line is difficult because it is not certain whether the neuter form *hagion*, “holy,” modifies the subject (“The holy child to be born will be called Son of God”) or is a predicate. If it is a predicate, the translation I have given is more likely than: “The child to be born (will be) holy; he will be called Son of God,” since that involves an implicit verb, and an unusual word order for the second clause. The subjectival use of *hagion* is slightly favored by the rhythm of the line and by the fact that it makes “Son of God” the only predicate of “called,” thus matching 32a: “will be called Son of the Most High.” However, if one examines 32a carefully, a strong argument can be made for the predicate translation I have adopted—in 32a there are two predicates, “great” and “Son of the Most High,” even as there are two predicates here, “holy” and “Son of God.” Moreover, the logic of vs. 35 favors the child being called holy, since the Holy Spirit comes upon Mary. If one looks ahead to 2:23, one finds “holy” as a predicate for the child: “Every male child who opens the womb will be considered consecrated [called holy] to the Lord.” Indeed, “to be called holy” is a LXX expression found in Isa 4:3, a passage that, as we saw in § 7, B3, may be the background for Matthew’s “He will be called a Nazorean” (2:23). Jesus is called “the Holy One of God” in Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; and John 6:69; see also Acts 3:14.

36. *And behold.* For the *kai idou* pattern, see NOTE on 1:20, which is exactly parallel to this verse, in terms of giving a sign to Zechariah.

*your relative Elizabeth.* The degree of family relationship is vague; it was Wycliffe who popularized the idea that “cousin” was meant. For the historical problems raised by Luke’s statement, see § 10D.

*despite her old age ... deemed barren.* Both these factors were mentioned in 1:7; but only age was mentioned in Zechariah’s objection in 1:18.





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*this is.* For the *kai houtos* construction, see Luke 16:1; 20:28.

37. *Nothing said by God can be impossible.* Literally, “Because not impossible will be every word [*rēma*] with God.” This OT maxim (cf. Gen 18:14; Job 42:2; Zech 8:6) contains several Semitisms, e.g., the reversed negative pattern of the sentence, and the use of *rēma*, “word,” reflecting *dābār*, “word, thing”—I have tried to catch this double meaning with “*Nothing said.*” See NOTE on “event” in 2:15 for a further play on *rēma/dābār*.

38. *handmaid.* The feminine form of *doulos*, “servant”; see Acts 2:18.

*Let it happen to me.* Optative; see NOTE on “might mean” in vs. 29. An element of wishing is involved.

*according to your word.* *Rēma* as in vs. 37.

*the angel went away, leaving her.* This is an ordinary feature of angelic appearances, since such a heavenly presence has to be temporary (Judg 6:21; Acts 12:10). However, there is a special Lucan pattern whereby departures terminate the scenes of the Lucan infancy narrative; see NOTE on “he went back” in 1:23.

### COMMENT

I shall begin with the structure and pattern of this second Lucan annunciation narrative, comparing it to the annunciation of JBap’s birth and various OT annunciations. Then I shall concentrate on features that are peculiar to the annunciation of Jesus’ birth.

#### A. *The Structure and the Annunciation Pattern*

The annunciation of the birth of Jesus is parallel in many ways to the annunciation of the birth of JBap. In Table X I have printed side by side the texts of the two annunciations so that the reader can see the parallels in the actual Gospel wording. In Table XI I have analyzed the parallels in terms of diptych which makes the differences apparent as well. The JBap side of the diptych reminds the reader of the structure of the JBap annunciation scene as spelled out at the beginning of the COMMENT in § 10. The Jesus side of the diptych shows a somewhat different structure. There is no full scale introduction corresponding to 1:5–7, for the presentation of the dramatis personae in 1:27 is very brief and flows right into the narrative of the angelic appearance. The epilogue of the first stage of Lucan composition (1:39–45, 56) was enlarged through the insertion of the Magnificat to form a separate scene, the visitation, which I shall discuss in the next section (§ 12). And so the real structural parallel is between the central part of the JBap annunciation (1:8–23) and the whole of the Jesus annunciation.

The JBap side of the diptych in Table XI shows how I subdivided the central part of that annunciation into a setting, a core, and a conclusion. Such a subdivision is not possible for the Jesus annunciation. The appearance of Gabriel to Mary in 1:26–27 mentions only time and place; it is scarcely equivalent to the detailed setting in the Temple for the appearance of Gabriel to Zechariah in 1:8–10. Nor in the Jesus annunciation is there a detailed conclusion corresponding to 1:21–23. The fact that the same angel appears in both annunciations helps Luke to emphasize the unity of God’s salvific plan, but the Danielic atmosphere is absent from the second annunciation. And so we may narrow further the observation made above and say that the real structural parallel is between the *core* of the JBap annunciation (1:11–20) and the whole of the Jesus annunciation (1:26–38). I have led the reader through this close comparison



to make intelligible why I suggested in the previous section (§ 10) that the core of the JBap scene, i.e., the annunciation itself, might have been composed by Luke on the analogy of the Jesus scene. Comparison in itself will, of course, not establish the priority of the Jesus scene in the Lucan process of composition; but it is quite clear that the Jesus scene is the simpler structure.

TABLE X: THE TWO LUCAN ANNUNCIATION NARRATIVES

*Annunciation of the Birth of  
John the Baptist*

Luke 1:5–23

**1** <sup>5</sup> In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zechariah who belonged to the division of Abijah. He had a wife descended from Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup> In God’s sight they were both upright, blamelessly observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. <sup>7</sup> Yet they had no children, inasmuch as Elizabeth was barren, and both were on in years.

<sup>8</sup> Now, while Zechariah was serving as a priest; during the time that his division was on Temple duty in God’s presence, <sup>9</sup> there were lots cast according to the custom of the priesthood; and he won the privilege of entering the sanctuary of the Lord to burn the incense. <sup>20</sup> At this hour of incense the whole multitude of the people was there, praying outside.

<sup>11</sup> There appeared to Zechariah an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the

*Annunciation of the Birth of  
Jesus*

Luke 1:26–38

**1** <sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee known as Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin betrothed to a man of the House of David whose name was Joseph, and the virgin’s name was Mary.

<sup>28</sup> He came and addressed her thus: “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you.” <sup>29</sup> Now she





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altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> On seeing him, Zechariah was startled, and fear fell upon him.

<sup>13</sup> However, the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard.

<sup>13d</sup> And your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son,  
<sup>13c</sup> and you will call his name John.  
<sup>14a</sup> And you will have joy and gladness,  
<sup>14b</sup> and many will rejoice at his birth.  
<sup>15a</sup> For he will be great before the Lord,  
<sup>15b</sup> and he will drink no wine or strong drink.  
<sup>15c</sup> And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb,  
<sup>16</sup> and he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.  
  
<sup>17</sup> And he will go before Him  
<sup>17b</sup> in the spirit and power of Elijah  
<sup>17c</sup> to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children  
<sup>17d</sup> and the disobedient unto the wisdom of the just,  
<sup>17e</sup> to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.

<sup>18</sup> But Zechariah said to the angel, “How am I to know this?”

was startled at what he said and wondered what such a greeting might mean. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

<sup>31a</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son,  
<sup>31b</sup> and you will call his name Jesus.  
<sup>32a</sup> He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High.  
<sup>32b</sup> And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David;  
<sup>33a</sup> and he will be king over the House of Jacob forever,  
<sup>33b</sup> and there will be no end to his kingdom.”

<sup>34</sup> However, Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I



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I am an old man, and my wife is on in years.”<sup>19</sup> The angel responded, “I am Gabriel; I stand in the presence of God. I have been sent to speak to you and announce to you this good news.”<sup>29</sup> And behold, you will be reduced to silence and unable to speak until the day that these things will happen, because you did not believe my words which, nevertheless, will be fulfilled in due time.”

<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, astonished at his delay in the Temple sanctuary. <sup>22</sup> And when he did come out, he was not able to speak to them; so they realized that he had seen a vision in the Temple sanctuary. For his part, Zechariah communicated with them by signs, remaining mute. <sup>24</sup> When his time of priestly service was completed, he went back to his home.

I would now ask the reader to study the Jesus side of the diptych in Table XI against the background of the pattern of angelic annunciations of birth in Table VIII. As indicated by the numbers in the diptych, the five basic steps of the angelic annunciation are all present: (1) the appearance of the angel; (2) fear; (3) the message; (4) the objection; (5) the sign. Within the message seven of the eight usual items are present; the only absent feature is the etymology of the name Jesus (“g” in the enumeration of Table VIII).

From this perfect adherence to literary pattern I would draw two observations. The first is that the stereotyped details in which Luke repeats the pattern need little further commentary. The real concern in this section must be to comment on the material in the Lucan annunciation that is *not* explained by the literary pattern—in other words, the material used by Luke to fill in the pattern. *In particular, this consists of the peculiar manner of the conception (virginal), the description of the future accomplishments of the child (32–33, 35), and the portrait of Mary in 34 and 38.* These three items will serve as subject headings in the treatment to follow, in § 11 B, C, and D, respectively.

have had no relations with a man?”<sup>25</sup> The angel responded,

<sup>25b</sup> “The Holy Spirit  
will come upon you,  
<sup>25c</sup> and power  
from the Most High will  
overshadow you.  
<sup>25d</sup> Therefore, the  
child to be born will be  
called holy—Son of  
God.

<sup>26</sup> And behold, your relative Elizabeth, despite her old age, has also conceived a son; indeed, this is the sixth month for a woman who deemed barren. <sup>27</sup> Nothing said by God can be impossible.”

<sup>28</sup> Mary answered, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel went away, leaving her.



The second observation is that such a perfect adherence to literary form raises a question about the historicity of the stereotyped features in the Lucan story (as distinct from the filler material mentioned in the preceding paragraph). Of course, one may argue that the annunciation pattern really reflects a reasonable way of procedure. If an angel did appear to Mary, in what other way could Luke (or Mary) have described it? But one may also argue to the opposite effect. If Luke had little more than the idea of a pre-conception proclamation of Jesus' birth, he could fashion a narrative around this idea by incorporating it within the five standard steps of an OT annunciation of birth narrative without any assistance from historical memory. He could read the birth stories of Ishmael, Isaac, Samson, and Samuel and emerge with the story of an appearance of an angel of the Lord<sup>3</sup> to Jesus' mother, fear on her part, an address calling her by name and describing her with a qualifying phrase ("favored one"), a message telling her that she would conceive and bear a son and call his name Jesus, an objection on her part, and a reassuring sign. Luke's tendency to fashion such a story would be even more understandable if in pre-Lucan circles, popular reflection had begun to develop an annunciation tradition about the birth of Jesus.

TABLE XI: ANNUNCIATION DIPTYCH (FIRST STAGE OF LUCAN COMPOSITION)  
1:5–25 1:26–45, 56

**Annunciation about JBap**

*Introduction* of the dramatis personae: Zechariah and Elizabeth, of priestly family, aged, barren (5–7).

*Annunciation* of the conception of JBap delivered by an angel of the Lord (Gabriel) to Zechariah in the Temple (8–23).

Setting (8–10): The priestly customs: Zechariah's turn to offer incense.

Core (11–20):

1. Angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah
2. Zechariah was startled

**Annunciation about Jesus**

The angel Gabriel sent to Mary, a virgin betrothed to Joseph of the House of David (26–38).

Annunciation of the conception of Jesus delivered by Gabriel to Mary in Nazareth.

1. Gabriel came to Mary
2. Mary was startled



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3. The message:

- a. Zechariah
- c. Do not be afraid
- e. Elizabeth will bear you a son
- f. You will call his name John
- h. He will be great before the Lord, etc. (15–17)

4. How am I to know this?  
The angel's response (19)

5. The sign: Behold you will be reduced to silence.

Conclusion (21–23): Zechariah emerged from the Temple unable to speak. He went back home.

*Epilogue:* Elizabeth conceived; she reflected in seclusion in praise of the Lord (24–25).

3. The message:

- a. Hail ... Mary
- b. Favored one
- c. Do not be afraid
- d. You will conceive
- e. and give birth to a son
- f. You will call his name Jesus
- h. He will be great, etc. (32–33)

4. How can this be?  
The angel's response (35)

5. The sign: Behold your relative has conceived.

Mary responded with acceptance and the angel went away.

*Epilogue:* Mary went to the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth, who was filled with the Holy Spirit and proclaimed the praise of the mother of the Lord, Mary returned home (39–45, 56).

It is here that we should bring into the discussion the Matthean annunciation narrative which has many of the same stereotyped features, but quite different filler material (except for



the virginal conception and Davidic descent). As I argued in § 5, C1, there is reason to posit a pre-Matthean annunciation of birth; and I suggested that this pre-Gospel annunciation tradition upon which both Matthew and Luke drew concerned the birth of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. Motivated by this tradition, independently each evangelist fashioned a narrative of the annunciation of Jesus' birth which would suit the main lines of the respective infancy narrative. Matthew fashioned the story of an annunciation to Joseph because he was working with an infancy narrative based on the careers of the patriarch Joseph and the baby Moses in Egypt. Luke fashioned the story of an annunciation to Mary in whom he saw symbolic possibilities as a representative of the "poor" remnant of Israel (the *anawim* to be discussed in § 12, C2 below). In footnote 45, § 4, and footnote 74, § 5, we saw OT antecedents for the variation between Joseph and Mary as recipients of the annunciation.

The judgment that the Lucan annunciation pattern may have been borrowed from OT models and that therefore the appearance of an angel to Mary may not be historical tradition should not be equated with a denial of divine revelation pertinent to the birth of Jesus. The discussion of the material that Luke has fitted into the annunciation pattern will begin with the topic of the virginal conception. Precisely since this is a feature that cannot be explained from the OT annunciation pattern, we have to seek other origins for the concept of a virginal conception; and history may enter at this point. If there was a historical factor in the virginal conception (and I show in Appendix IV that this suggestion must be taken seriously), seemingly Mary should have received some divinely given insight. My contention is that, if there was such a revelation, the way in which it could be pictured and described was supplied to Luke by OT birth narratives.<sup>5</sup>

### B. *The Virginal Conception (1:34)*

In 1:27 Luke tells us twice that Mary was a virgin at the time of the annunciation. This detail is not something that can be explained from the literary pattern of OT annunciations of birth since none of the classic instances cited in Table VIII concerned a woman who was a virgin. A conception by a virgin who had not known a man (1:34) would be something more startling in the biblical record than the oft-attested conception by a set of parents whose barrenness God had overcome. It would be consonant with a theology of a new creation wherein God's Spirit, active in the first creation of life (Gen 1:2), was active again.

However, the existence of the theme of a virginal conception in Luke has been sharply challenged in different ways; and before we can move in the theological direction I have just indicated, we must settle several questions. First, does the present Lucan account truly contain the idea of a virginal conception? Second, if it does, has this idea been secondarily introduced into an account that originally did not contain it? Third, how are we to understand the logic of the question asked by Mary in 1:34?

#### 1. Does the Present Account Contain a Virginal Conception?

While an affirmative answer has usually been assumed, recently J. A. Fitzmyer argued: "When this account is read in and for itself—without the overtones of the Matthean annunciation to Joseph—every detail of it could be understood of a child to be born to Mary in



the usual human way....” What has made such an assertion possible is the fact that Luke has no explicit statement that Mary did not have sexual relations with Joseph after the annunciation, a statement comparable to Matt 1:25. Theoretically, if Mary and Joseph had relations and the child was naturally conceived, Luke might still have looked upon the conception as the work of the Holy Spirit, on the grounds that an angel had foretold the conception and that the child was to have a unique role as God’s Son.

I would agree with the majority of scholars that Luke *does* intend a virginal conception; but before I present my reasons, I must mention a common argument that in my judgment is not convincing, namely, that the Lucan narrative clearly refers to a virginal conception because it has woven through it an exegesis of Isa 7:14. Two features are often selected as linking Luke 1:26–38 and Isa 7:10–14: (a) In Luke 1:27 Joseph is said to be of “the House of David,” and the Isaian sign is addressed to the “House of David” (7:12). (b) In Luke 1:27 Mary is twice called a “virgin,” and in 1:31 Mary is told, “You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you will call his name....” This is thought to echo Isa 7:14: “Behold, the virgin will conceive and will give birth to a son, and you will call his name....” By way of general comment, let me first note that Matthew added Isa 7:14 to a scene that *already contained* the virginal conception (§ 5, B2), and so we cannot presuppose that only through meditation on that text did Christian writers come to the idea of Mary’s virginity. Moreover, the two features that seemingly link Luke and Isaiah are far from convincing. The first feature involving the concept of Davidic descent is shared with Matthew’s annunciation scene and may have been part of the pre-Gospel annunciation tradition about the birth of the Messiah, without any necessary reference to Isa 7:14. As for the second feature, much of it is not peculiar to Isa 7:14 but is common to OT annunciations of birth. To Hagar it is said, “Behold, you are with child and will give birth to a son, and you will call his name ...” (Gen 16:11). And so I would agree with Fitzmyer that there is no way of knowing that Luke was drawing upon Isa 7:14.

However, in disagreement with Fitzmyer, I would use another argument to show that Luke was thinking of a virginal conception. As I indicated in § 10D, while the NT writers admit that JBap preceded Jesus, they make him subordinate to Jesus; and Luke extends this outlook to the infancy narrative by placing an annunciation of JBap’s birth before the annunciation of Jesus’ birth. Here too JBap comes first, but Jesus is greater. We can see this by comparing the respective descriptions:

- JBap is “great before the Lord” (1:15a), but Jesus is “great” without qualification (1:32a).
- JBap is “filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb” (1:15c), but the very conception of Jesus involves the Holy Spirit who “comes upon” Jesus’ mother (1:35b).
- JBap will “make ready for the Lord a prepared people” (1:17e), but Jesus will actually rule over the house of Jacob/Israel and possess an eternal kingdom (1:33a, b).

Now this build-up of the superiority of Jesus would fail completely if JBap was conceived in an extraordinary manner and Jesus in a natural manner. But it would be continued perfectly if Jesus was virginally conceived, since this would be something completely unattested in previous manifestations of God’s power. It is to the virginal conception rather than to a natural conception that Elizabeth refers when she says of Mary: “Fortunate is she who believed that the Lord’s words to her would find fulfillment” (1:45). No belief would really be required if Mary was to conceive as any other young girl would conceive.



Moreover, a study of the literary pattern of the two Lucan annunciations points to a virginal conception. In the JBap annunciation, when he introduces the two parents (1:7), Luke tells us of the human difficulty in their lives that prevents conception; and it is precisely that difficulty which is resumed in Zechariah's "How" objection to the angel in 1:18. In the Jesus annunciation, when he introduces Mary (1:27), Luke mentions twice that she is a virgin; and it is that factor which is resumed in Mary's "How" objection to the angel in 1:34: "I have had no relations with a man." If the age and barrenness of Zechariah and Elizabeth were divinely overcome in the conception of JBap, the human difficulty of the virginity of Mary must be overcome by divine power in the conception of Jesus. It was creatively overcome without loss of virginity through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, the "power from the Most High" (1:35), with the result that Jesus was only the "supposed son" of Joseph (3:23)—a designation that makes no sense if Jesus was the natural son of Joseph. Indeed, the totality of the emphasis on Mary in ch. 1 of Luke is curious if Joseph was equally the parent of Jesus.

## 2. Did the Original Account Contain a Virginal Conception?

While acknowledging that the present account implies a virginal conception, many scholars have suggested that this concept was added as an afterthought in vss. 34–35 to an account that did not originally contain it. (Often this theory contains the supposition that without Mary's question in vs. 34, the conception would be described as natural.) Of this group relatively few think that the addition was post-Lucan, i.e., by a redactor or scribe; and in my judgment Taylor has shown conclusively that the language of 34–35 is Lucan. The real question is whether 34–35 was added by Luke himself to a previous account (Lucan or pre-Lucan) that did not contain those verses.

In proposing his thesis that Luke received the tradition of a virginal conception after he had composed the annunciation narrative and that he intercalated this tradition in 34–35, Taylor has brought forward arguments for an addition; and the following are the most important: (a) 1:30–33 may be smoothly joined to 1:36–37, resulting in a long angelic message similar to that in 1:13–17. However, to argue from the parallelism of the two annunciations backfires in my judgment. The biblical pattern of the annunciation of birth (Table VIII) provides for a "How" question to be posed by the recipient and to be answered by a sign. It is farfetched to posit an earlier annunciation of Jesus' birth which just happened to be missing a regular feature of the annunciation pattern, and that Luke came along with an entirely new theological notion which he was able to fit in by inserting the missing feature. Luke 1:34–35 is perfectly parallel to 1:18–19, and is just as integral to its respective annunciation. (b) The parallelism between 1:34 and 1:18 has been challenged, since Mary's "How" question receives no punishing response, while Zechariah's does, in the form of his being struck mute. This difficulty disappears, however, if one regards both narratives as basically Lucan constructions to fit his theological interests. As I showed in § 10, B1, Luke modeled the Gabriel-Zechariah interchange on the Gabriel-Daniel interchange—Daniel was struck mute, and so was Zechariah. Luke has modeled Mary closely on Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and Mary's Magnificat will echo Hannah's canticle in 1 Sam 2; and so it does not fit Luke's purpose to have Mary afflicted in any way. (c) It is argued that vs. 35 has a different christology from vss. 32–33. In the earlier passage Jesus is called "Son of the Most High" in a context of Davidic expectations, while in 35 he is called "Son of God" in a





context of divine begetting. Thus, it is suggested that we have a Hellenistic addition to a Jewish description of the Messiah. This contention is dubious on every score. An Aramaic fragment from Qumran puts “son of the Most High” and “son of God” in parallelism, and so the terminology scarcely proves Jewish and Hellenistic differences—a somewhat dubious distinction in any case at this period of history. Moreover, below when I discuss the sequence of the Davidic Messiah in vs. 32–33 and the Son of God in 35, I shall stress that it reproduces a sequence in early Christian creedal formulae, such as Rom 1:3–4. Thus, the christology in the Lucan annunciation narrative offers no reason for suspecting a secondary addition.

The lack of persuasiveness in these three arguments leads to the logical conclusion that the whole annunciation scene was composed by Luke and that vs. 34–35 were always part of it. However, there remains a fourth and more difficult argument against integrity, namely, that the peculiar way in which Mary’s “How” question is phrased in 34 makes little sense in the present context. Let us concentrate on that problem now.

### 3. The Logic of Mary’s Question in 1:34

At the risk of simplifying unduly, I shall divide the scholarly responses to this problem according to whether the emphasis is placed on the psychological or on the literary.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS. In the present sequence Mary is betrothed to Joseph; yet she is a virgin, and this means that she has not yet been taken to her husband’s home where she would have had marital relations with him (NOTE on “betrothed” in Matt 1:18). When she is told by the angel that she will conceive a child, why does she raise a “How” question, as if there were some difficulty? Why does she not assume that the conception will occur when she is taken to Joseph’s home and has relations with him? If we leave aside the naive suggestion that she did not know “the facts of life,” how can we explain the psychology of her question.

A famous ancient solution is that Mary had already committed herself to a lifetime of virginity. Her question in 34, which reads literally, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?”, is taken as if the verb were future: How can this be, since I shall not have sexual relations with a man? Such a theory became popular as part of a belief that Mary remained a virgin all her life, even after the birth of Jesus. It presupposes that her marriage with Joseph was a mutually agreed upon marriage of convenience in which he had agreed to respect her resolve of virginity and to lend her the protection of marriage, lest she be annoyed by more ardent suitors. To support this picture Joseph is portrayed as an elderly widower, in harmony with his statement in the *Protevangelium of James* 9:2: “I already have sons and am old, but she is a girl.” This approach flourished at a time when Christian women were entering ascetic or monastic orders to live a celibate life; and so it was even proposed that Mary made a vow of virginity as if she were a nun. The oldest attestation of the vow theory in the East is Gregory of Nyssa in 386 (PG 1140D–1141A), but it spread to the West through Ambrose and Augustine and became the classic interpretation of 1:34. As late as 1975 John McHugh feels compelled to assure his Roman Catholic readers that Mary’s vow of virginity need not be considered an infallible teaching of the Church. While such a vow or intention of virginity<sup>25</sup> might make Mary’s question in 1:34 intelligible, it is totally implausible in the context supposed by Luke. In our knowledge of Palestinian Judaism, there is nothing that would explain why a twelve-year-old



girl would have entered marriage with the intention to preserve virginity and thus not to have children. Luke (1:25, 48) uses the words “disgrace” and “low estate” to express what the Jewish mentality toward such childlessness would be. This theory really only makes sense in subsequent Christianity where the virginal conception, plus the virginity of Jesus and Paul, have led to a re-evaluation of celibacy.

Some Roman Catholic scholars have sought to defend the theory of an intention of virginity with more sophisticated arguments. It is claimed, for instance, that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows that there was a sect of Jews that placed value on virginity or celibacy. Actually the Scrolls say very little about this question, and our evidence largely comes from descriptions of *Essene* celibacy by Josephus, Philo, and Pliny. The most plausible explanation of Essene (Qumran) celibacy is that it was an extension of the abstinence from intercourse demanded of Jewish priests before they offered sacrifice in the Temple; and probably the celibacy was often temporary since the community had to preserve the Zadokite priestly line by having children. Such celibacy practiced in an ascetic, quasi-monastic community withdrawn from the mainstream of Palestinian life throws no light whatsoever on the supposed resolve of virginity made by a young village girl *who had entered matrimony*. Another explanation of Mary’s determination to remain a virgin is that she had meditated on Isa 7:14 and had understood that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin. A sophisticated form of this thesis is that the angel’s annunciation in vs. 31 reminded her of Isa 7:14, and that her question in 34 is really a question about how the virgin mother of the Messiah was to conceive: “How is this conception to take place, since according to Isa 7:14 I am not to have relations with a man?” This explanation in both its simple and its sophisticated form fails if there is no reference to Isa 7:14 in vs. 31, or if Jews did not understand Isa 7:14 as a reference to the Messiah, or if Isa 7:14 says nothing about a virginal conception—all three conditions are probably true, as we have seen.

A curious variant of the intention-of-virginity theory anticipates the literary explanations to be discussed below. McHugh recognizes that vs. 34 is a Lucan literary device; but he suggests that Luke wrote the words “since I am not to have relations with a man” (note the future) in light of his knowledge that Mary remained a virgin all her life. In other words Mary’s words do not reflect a pre-annunciation resolution to remain a virgin, but a resolution that was a response to the annunciation of a virginal conception—a resolution deduced after the fact by Luke. Obviously this theory will have little appeal to Christians who do not accept the lifetime virginity of Mary. But even Christians who do accept it may react negatively to the dubious methodology of assuming without proof Lucan knowledge of Mary’s lifetime virginity. There is no indication whatsoever that any NT author had an interest in Mary’s marital relations after Jesus was born. Such an interest is the hallmark of a later Christianity and cannot plausibly be invoked to interpret a crucial verse in the annunciation scene.

If one abandons the hypothesis of a married girl’s resolution or vow of virginity as quite unlikely on the Palestinian scene, other attempts to find psychological plausibility suppose a misunderstanding. One theory is that Mary understood the angel’s words in vs. 31 to mean that she was immediately becoming pregnant or was already so—not “you will conceive” but “you are conceiving,” or “you have conceived.” Since the child was or is conceived without relations with her husband, Mary is forced to ask the angel, “How can this be, since I have had no relations with a man?”<sup>32</sup> It is true that the Hebrew participial expression in the annunciation of



birth narratives can be understood as either a present or a future (footnote 44, § 5), but Luke's Greek is clearly future. Any theory that Luke has mistranslated in vs. 31 is made unlikely by the presence of more future verbs in 35: the conception is yet to happen. And indeed it would violate the genius of the Lucan narrative to have the conception take place before Mary has given her consent in vs. 38.

Another theory posits a misunderstanding introduced by Luke. In a putative original story Mary was an *unmarried* virgin; and so when she was told that she was going to conceive a child, she naturally asked how "since I have no husband" (see NOTE on this translation for vs. 34). However, in the process of incorporating this original story into his infancy narrative, Luke was anxious to connect it to an independent narrative in ch. 2 wherein Mary was Joseph's wife. To make the connection obvious, Luke borrowed from the phraseology of 2:4–5 (Joseph was "of the house and lineage of David"; Mary was "his betrothed") and introduced a modifying clause into 1:27: "to a virgin *betrothed to a man of the House of David whose name was Joseph.*" This unfortunate addition created a problem for understanding 1:34 which previously made perfect sense. Simple and attractive as this explanation may be, it causes more problems than it resolves. It is always risky methodologically to assume that a writer does not see the contradictions in his own narrative. It is implausible that haphazardly Luke created a situation for Mary exactly like that in Matt 1:18, namely, that she conceived as a virgin betrothed to a Davidid named Joseph. If there was no relationship to Joseph in the original story, how was that story pertinent to the birth of a *Davidic* Messiah? The parallelism that we have seen between the annunciations of JBar and of Jesus favors the originality of the present Lucan form in which both parents and their tribal origin are mentioned in the introduction (compare 1:5 and 1:27).

In the long run, the various attempts to make Mary's reaction in 34 more intelligible by positing a misunderstanding are no more acceptable than the attempts to posit a resolve or vow of virginity.

LITERARY EXPLANATION. This approach contends that 1:34–35 make perfect sense in the context of the annunciation and that these verses were always part of a Lucan scene which would make little christological sense without them. However, it abandons the idea that the scene has a primary concern with Mary's psychology, as if it were meant to explain how she gained a knowledge of the way in which her child was conceived. It is rather meant to tell *the reader* how the child was conceived and hence to explain his identity.

Intrinsic to this explanation is the contention that vss. 34–35 reflect standard features in biblical annunciations of birth. In Table VIII I showed that the fourth step in the annunciation pattern contained an objection by the visionary as to how the divinely announced conception could take place (in light of the human obstacles), and that the fifth step involved an angelic reassurance. Such steps enabled the biblical authors to explain to the readers how God's plan was going to work out. Although there was a pre-Gospel tradition of an annunciation of the birth of the Davidic Messiah, it was the (respective) evangelist who shaped that tradition into its present narrative form. And so the phrasing of the "How" question in 34 and the angelic response in 35 is determined by Luke's intention. He wished in these verses to explain the identity of the Davidic Messiah whose birth the angel had proclaimed in 31–33, namely, that he is the Son of God begotten through the creative power of the Holy Spirit. Mary's objection in vs. 34 vocalizes in dialogue what the reader has already learned in narrative in 1:27 (i.e., she is a



virgin), even as Zechariah's objection in 1:18 vocalized in dialogue what the reader had learned in narrative in 1:7. The objection in each case calls attention to the human impossibility to be overcome by God. The problem of why Mary would mention her virginity as an obstacle to conception (since she could have had sexual relations with Joseph to beget a child after the annunciation) disappears once we shift away from the psychological quest—Luke phrases Mary's objection the way he does because he has the tradition that the divine plan excluded a human begetting of the child. With male agency excluded by the "since" clause in vs. 34, the "How" part of the objection opens the way for the angel to explain the divine creative begetting in 35. Mary is a spokeswoman for Luke's christological message even as Gabriel is a spokesman; and between them they fill in the picture of the Messiah's conception as God's Son, a conception not through marital intercourse (Mary's contribution) but through the Holy Spirit (Gabriel's contribution).

This interpretation of the logic of 1:34–35 is not purely literary as if Luke could have fitted any content he wished into steps 4 and 5 of the standard pattern. His narrative was determined both by the pre-Gospel tradition of the annunciation of the Davidic Messiah's birth (which dictated the general literary form) and by the pre-Gospel tradition of the christology of divine sonship through begetting by the Holy Spirit—a christology which had been applied to Jesus' birth in terms of a virginal conception. From my analysis of Matthew's narrative of the annunciation to Joseph (§ 5, C2), I concluded that already on a pre-Gospel level these two elements had been joined, and that the popular tradition of the annunciation of the Davidic Messiah's birth had become the vehicle of a christological statement about the begetting of God's Son, which thus became the message (step 3) in the angelic annunciation of Jesus' birth. I think that this literary explanation in which a pre-Gospel tradition plays a role offers a totally satisfactory explanation for Mary's question in 1:34.

### *C. The Future Accomplishments of the Child (1:32, 33, 35)*

In A above when I was studying 1:26–38 in the light of the standard annunciation pattern, I pointed out the features in the narrative that are standard to OT annunciations, and I said that our real concern here must be to comment on the material that is *not* totally explained by the annunciation pattern. I mentioned three such items, the first of which (the virginal conception) we have just finished discussing. At the end that discussion led me to mention the content of the angelic message to Mary (step 3 in Table VIII), which constitutes the second of the items to be Commented upon. The message consists of vss. 31–33 and 35. Verse 31 needs no comment for it is the standard announcement of pregnancy (step 3, items d, e, f). Verses 32, 33, 35 constitute item h in step 3 (the future accomplishments of the child), but we must determine whence Luke derived his description of those accomplishments, even as we had to discuss the background of the Lucan description of the future accomplishments of JBap in 1:14–17. In that discussion (§ 10, B2) it seemed that the message about the future of JBap was consonant with and even derived from what Luke knew of JBap in the body of the Gospel describing the ministry of Jesus, i.e., from a Christian picture of JBap which gave him an Elijah-like role as a forerunner of Jesus. Similarly, I shall argue here that Luke composed his description of the future accomplishments of Jesus upon the basis of Christian christological reflection.



We saw that the message of Matthean annunciation to Joseph concerned the Who and the How of Jesus' identity (§ 5A)—he was the *son of David* as the genealogy indicated; yet he was this not through physical conception by the Davidid Joseph but by divine conception through the Holy Spirit, which made him Emmanuel (“God with us”) or *God’s Son* (Matt 2:15). Luke’s annunciation to Mary has the same two facets of Jesus’ identity and the same How. Instead of speaking of Jesus as the “son of David” Luke describes him as the Davidic Messiah in vss. 32–33, but more clearly than Matthew Luke speaks of Jesus as the “Son of God” in 35.

### 1. The Davidic Messiah (32–33)

Since in my hypothesis there lay behind Luke (and behind Matthew) a pre-Gospel annunciation of the birth of the Davidic Messiah, it is not surprising to find the Davidic theme so strong in the first half of the angelic annunciation of Jesus’ future greatness. Indeed, Gabriel’s words in 1:32–33 constitute a free interpretation of 2 Sam 7:8–16, the promise of the prophet Nathan to David which came to serve as the foundation of messianic expectation. We can see this if we set the two passages side by side, italicizing the crucial phrases in 2 Samuel:

Luke 1:

- 32a: He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High.
- 32b: And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David;
- 33a: and he will be king over the House of Jacob forever,
- 33b: and there will be no end to his kingdom.

2 Sam 7:

- 9: I shall make for you a *great* name ...
- 13: I shall establish *the throne of his kingdom forever*.
- 14: I shall be his father, and he will be *my son* ...
- 16: And your *house* and your *kingdom* will be made sure *forever*.

The phrases from this promise to David are echoed also in the royal psalms pertinent to the coronation and lineage of the Davidic king, e.g., God calls the king His son in Ps 2:7 (a psalm verse which Luke applies to Jesus in 3:22); and God says in Ps 89:30(29): “I shall establish his lineage forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.”

The idea of an annunciation of the birth of the Davidic Messiah, which is pre-Lucan and pre-Matthean, may have already existed in pre-Christian Judaism; and if so, it is not incredible that the message in that Jewish annunciation would have echoed 2 Sam 7:8–16. We have interesting evidence of the messianic interpretation of it in 4QFlorilegium, a Qumran *pesher* (interpretation) of 2 Sam 7:10–14, followed by a *pesher* on lines from the psalms. Let us look at a few lines of it, first the text (italicized), then the *pesher* or interpretation:

*The Lord declares that He will build you a House (2 Sam 7:11). I shall raise up your lineage after you (7:12). I shall establish the throne of his kingdom forever (7:13). I shall be his father, and he will be my son (7:14).*



The “he” is the Shoot [*šemaḥ*] of David who will arise with the Interpreter of the Law who [will rule] in Zion in the last days. As it is written, “I shall raise up the fallen hut of David” [Amos 9:11]—the “fallen hut of David” is he who shall arise to save Israel.

We note that the Qumran interpretation takes out select lines from 2 Sam 7, just as Luke apparently did. It has shifted the focus of Nathan’s promise from a continual line of kings to a single Davidic king, the messianic “shoot”<sup>43</sup> who will arise in the last days, even as Luke has applied the Samuel passage to Jesus. The “forever” for both Qumran and Luke is, then, not an endless series of reigns by different kings, but an eschatological description. And so there is nothing distinctively Christian in Gabriel’s words in vss. 32–33 of Luke, except that the expected Davidic Messiah has been identified with Jesus.

## 2. The Son of God through the Power of the Holy Spirit (35)

It is in response to Mary’s “How” question about the conception of the Messiah (vs. 34) that Luke has Gabriel give us the more important christological aspect of Jesus’ identity:

- 35b: The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
- 35c: and power from the Most High will overshadow you.
- 35d: Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—Son of God.

Of course, even in this christological statement Luke continues to use OT terminology, for all early Christian christology was vocalized in the reinterpreted terms of Jewish expectations. And not surprisingly, the terms which Luke uses in 1:35 have a relation to the description of the Davidic Messiah he has given in 1:32, 33; Isaiah 11:1–2 describes a coming of the Spirit of the Lord upon the Davidic branch (*nēšer*). Isaiah 4:2–3 associates being called “holy” with the day of the Davidic “shoot” (*šemaḥ*). The term “Son of God” is a parallel to “Son of the Most High” (footnote 20 above), and both echo God’s designation of the Davidic ruler as His “son” in 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7. But the way these ideas are combined in 1:35 takes us out of the realm of Jewish expectation of the Messiah into the realm of early Christianity. The action of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High come not upon the Davidic king but upon his mother. We are not dealing with the adoption of a Davidid by coronation as God’s son or representative; we are dealing with the begetting of God’s Son in the womb of Mary through God’s creative Spirit. If vss. 32–33 could have been part of a purely Jewish narrative announcing the Messiah’s birth, as we saw from the Qumran parallel, the same cannot be said of vs. 35, since, as we have seen, there was no Jewish expectation that the Messiah would be God’s Son in the sense of having been conceived without a male parent.

The real parallel for the conglomeration of ideas in 1:35 is not an OT passage but the early Christian formulations of christology. I have already discussed these formulations in general (§ 1, A2) and in relation to Matthew’s annunciation narrative (§ 5, A1). There I pointed out that the Davidic king language of Ps 2:7 (“You are my son; today I have begotten you”) is reinterpreted as applicable to the resurrection in Acts 13:32–33, even as the coronation language of Ps 110:1 (“Sit at my right hand”) is made applicable to the resurrection in Acts 2:32–36. A passage that threw light on Matthean thought throws even more light on Lucan phraseology, namely, Rom 1:3–4, which describes God’s Son:





- 3: Born of the seed of David according to the flesh;
- 4: designated Son of God in power according to the Holy Spirit [Spirit of Holiness] as of resurrection from [of] the dead.

In the discussion that follows I am not suggesting that Luke drew upon this particular formula. Most scholars agree that it was pre-Pauline, and that Paul used it because it would be familiar to the community in Rome which he himself had not evangelized. If so, it may serve as an example of a widespread christological formulation and thought pattern. The movement in Rom 1:3–4 from Davidic descendant to Son of God is similar to the movement from Davidic Messiah to Son of God that one sees in comparing Luke 1:32, 33 and 1:35. The conglomeration of terms that one finds in the second half of the Romans formula (designation as Son of God, power, Holy Spirit) is remarkably like the conglomeration of terms in the second half of the angelic message reported in Luke 1:35 (called Son of God, power, Holy Spirit).

This similarity is not accidental, as may be seen from the “backwards development” of christology which I sketched in § 1, A2. The terms that the Romans formula associates with resurrection appear in the Gospels in the context of the baptism of Jesus. There the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus as a voice from heaven declares “You are my Son” (Luke 3:22), and then Jesus goes back to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (4:14). Luke summarizes the picture in Acts 10:37–38: “After the baptism which John preached, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” Thus, when the christological moment was moved back from the resurrection to the beginning of the ministry, the christological language of “called Son of God, power, Holy Spirit” was also moved back. And in the Lucan infancy narrative where the christological moment has been moved back still farther to the conception, the christological language has quite consistently been moved back too. That is what I meant when I maintained that the angelic message in 1:35 is simply the Lucan version of an early Christian christological formula. However, whereas the declaration of Jesus as God’s Son at the resurrection or enthronement in heaven or at the baptism involved a figurative begetting (see respectively Acts 13:33 and the Western text of Luke 3:22, both of which have God state, “Today I have begotten you”), the association of the christological formula with the conception involves a more literal begetting. The “coming” of the Holy Spirit in 1:35b (which explains why the child is called holy in 1:35d) and the overshadowing by the power of the Most High in 1:35c (which explains why the child is called Son of God in 1:35d) *really* beget the child as God’s Son—there is no adoption here.

Yet, as I have emphasized in the NOTES on “come upon” and “overshadow” in 1:35b, c, the begetting is not quasi-sexual as if God takes the place of a male principle in mating with Mary. There is more of a connotation of creativity. Mary is not barren, and in her case the child does not come into existence because God cooperates with the husband’s generative action and removes the sterility. Rather, Mary is a virgin who has not known man, and therefore the child is totally God’s work—a new creation. If the appearance to Zechariah, a priest, took place in the Jerusalem Temple as a sign of continuity with OT institutions, the coming<sup>49</sup> of Gabriel to Mary takes place in Nazareth, a town to which no OT expectation was attached, as a sign of the total newness of what God is doing.<sup>50</sup> If the prophetic Spirit filled JBap from his mother’s womb (1:15, 41, 44), the Spirit that comes upon Mary is closer to the Spirit of God that hovered over the waters before creation in Gen 1:2. The earth was void and without form when that Spirit



appeared; just so Mary's womb was a void<sup>52</sup> until through the Spirit God filled it with a child who was His Son. In the annunciation of the birth of JBap we heard of a yearning and prayer on the part of the parents who very much wanted a child; but since Mary is a virgin who has not yet lived with her husband, there is no yearning for or human expectation of a child—it is the surprise of creation. No longer are we dealing with human request and God's generous fulfillment; this is God's initiative going beyond anything man or woman has dreamed of. If in the message of the JBap annunciation, there was a reminder of evil to be faced ("the disobedient" in 1:17d), here the message is entirely positive, reflecting the word of the creator God who made everything good.

Perhaps the observant reader has noticed that in tracing 1:35 to early christological formulations reapplied to the conception, while I found background for terms like "Holy Spirit," "power," and "called Son of God," I did not have an example of "overshadow" applied to the resurrection or the baptism. However, this image is applied in a christological setting at the transfiguration. In all three accounts (Luke 9:34 and par.) we are told that a cloud signaling the divine presence *overshadowed* those present, and a voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my [beloved] Son." The parallelism between the baptism and the transfiguration has long been recognized: in one the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus, while in the other the cloud overshadows; but in both the divine voice speaks the same message from above. The baptism reveals the christological mystery of divine sonship to the reader; the transfiguration reveals it to chosen disciples.<sup>54</sup> From this comparison we may see that descent of the Holy Spirit and overshadowing by the divine presence were alternative ways of expressing how God was active in establishing and confirming that sonship. Thus Luke is perfectly correct in placing the two images in parallelism in 1:35b, c. And this double expression of God's activity makes it clear that when the child is called "holy" and "Son of God," these designations are true to what he is and to his origins.

If I may return to the formulation in Rom 1:3–4, there Davidic descent and designation as Son of God are contrasted. "According to the flesh" and in his lifetime Jesus was recognized as a Davidid; but "according to a Holy Spirit" and as of the resurrection Jesus was designated Son of God. In the Lucan annunciation there is no real contrast between the two parts of Gabriel's message: the Son of the Most High in whom the Davidic royal promise is fulfilled is the child to be called the Son of God, conceived through the Holy Spirit and power. By moving the christological moment from the resurrection to the conception, Luke tells us that there never was a moment on this earth when Jesus was not the Son of God. Now neither baptism nor resurrection gives a new status in contrast with what went before; these events reveal to a wider audience what was already there.

#### D. *The Portrait of Mary as Handmaid (1:38)*

Mary has two lines of response in the annunciation. We have already seen that the first line, the question-objection of 1:34, represents part of the stereotyped pattern of biblical annunciations of birth (Table VIII). It is Luke's way of calling attention to the virginal conception and offers an entrée into the christological formula of 1:35. If therefore it is likely that this verse does not constitute a historical reminiscence of Mary's reaction to the revelation of the forthcoming conception, some have sought a historical reminiscence in the final response of



Mary to the annunciation in 1:38—*ipsissima verba* expressing her humility as the handmaid of the Lord. This needs comment precisely because the type of response we find in 1:38 is not a step in the stereotyped annunciation pattern. It is lacking even from the JBap annunciation; and it constitutes one of the three items that I have said cannot be explained simply as an expected feature in this literary form.

In treating the previous scene I suggested that Luke drew the portraits of those who are not mentioned in the body of the Gospel (Zechariah and Elizabeth) from OT models (Abraham and Sarah), whereas he drew the portrait of the future JBap from what he knew of the descriptions of JBap in the Gospel story of the ministry. I suggest that he has done the same thing here, and that the portrait of Mary in 1:38 is shaped from Luke's account of her in the ministry.

Mary appears in only one scene in the common Synoptic tradition. As it is narrated in Mark 3, it has two parts. First, in 3:20–21 “his own” go out to seize him because the frenzied pace of his ministry is provoking charges of madness. Second, in 3:31–35 his mother and his brothers arrive and stand outside the place where he is, asking for him; but Jesus responds that the listeners seated around him who do the will of God are his mother and brothers. The first part of the Marcan scene reveals the attitude of Jesus' relatives toward him, and it is scarcely one of belief. The second part reveals Jesus' attitude toward family relationship. His true family is established through a relationship to God, not by human origin. (The Johannine parallel is in 2:4 where Jesus resists his mother's interference, seemingly because she has no role in the coming of his “hour.”) When the two parts of the Marcan scene are read together, the impact of 3:33–34 is very strong:

And Jesus replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!”

It is a replacement of his natural family and *might* be read as a rejection of them, especially since Mark 6:4 has Jesus complain that a prophet is without honor among his own relatives and in his own home.

Luke's parallel scene is thoroughly modified. Luke omits the first part of the Marcan scene (Mark 3:20–21) which is so hard on “his own.” He also omits the verses just quoted from the second part of the Marcan scene. The total scene in Luke 8:19–21 reads as follows:

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. He was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” But he said to them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

This is not to be read as if the hearers of the word of God replace Jesus' mother and his brothers as his real family (so Mark), but as a statement that his mother and his brothers are among his disciples. The physical family of Jesus is truly his family because they hear the word of God. Luke preserves Jesus' insistence that hearing the word of God and doing it is what is constitutive of his family, but Luke thinks that Jesus' mother and brothers meet that criterion. Unlike Mark 6:4, Luke (4:24) does not have Jesus rejected by his relatives. Luke is quite logical, then, in reporting that among the one hundred and twenty “brethren” who constituted the



believing community after the resurrection/ascension were “Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers” (Acts 1:14).

It is this Lucan tradition that already during the ministry of Jesus his mother was one of “those who hear the word [*logos*] of God and do it” which supplied the response placed on Mary’s lips at the end of the annunciation scene: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it happen to me according to your word [*rēma*]” (1:38). Luke needed no special source nor personal reminiscence from Mary for this response; he needed only to make the portrait of Mary in the infancy narrative consistent with what he knew of her from her sole appearance in the common Synoptic tradition of the public ministry. He is voicing a Christian intuition that the virginal conception of Jesus must have constituted for Mary the beginning of her confrontation with the mysterious plan of God embodied in the person of her son.<sup>65</sup> In Jesus’ lifetime and after the resurrection, according to Lucan tradition, Mary responded to that confrontation as a true disciple obedient to the word of God; and Luke assures us that her initial confrontation was also that of an ideal disciple. From the first moment that the grace of God (the *charis* or “favor” of 1:30) was proclaimed, it began to attract disciples. It is in this sense that Luke has learned from Mary as a “minister of the word” (1:2), the first Christian disciple.

Mary’s obedient, and even enthusiastic, acceptance of God’s word in 1:38 is highlighted by the context in which Luke has placed it. Verse 36 picks up the theme of the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy—the theme with which Luke introduced the annunciation of Jesus’ birth in 1:26. The news of this pregnancy is a sign because it has been hidden from all (1:24). In the annunciation of J.Bap’s birth Luke modeled Zechariah and Elizabeth upon Abraham and Sarah, and so it is not surprising to find the reference to Elizabeth’s pregnancy in 1:36 followed by a reintroduction of the Abraham motif. When Sarah heard about the conception of Isaac, she laughed in ridicule, since she knew she was too old to bear a child. God had to challenge her, “Can anything said by God be impossible?” (Gen 18:14). And *Jubilees* 16:12 tells us that it was in the *sixth month* (of the year) that the Lord visited Sarah and made her pregnant according to His word. In the same setting of the sixth month (of Elizabeth’s pregnancy) the angel repeats God’s challenge, “Nothing said by God can be impossible.” Mary’s reaction is just the opposite of Sarah’s—not a cynical laugh but a total and joyful acceptance. She is closer to Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who reacted to the news that God would grant her petition for a son with the words, “Let your handmaid find favor in your eyes” (1 Sam 1:18). Mary, the Lord’s handmaid (1:38), has already found favor in His eyes (1:30). Luke’s decision to close the scene with an evocation of Hannah is an example of his artistry. The next scene will have Mary recite the Magnificat which is closely parallel to Hannah’s canticle in 1 Sam 2:1–10.

#### E. *Mary and Old Testament Symbolism?*

In the Lucan infancy narrative the annunciation of Jesus’ birth is directed to Mary the mother, rather than to Joseph the legal father. As we have seen, this is a legitimate option within the OT annunciation pattern. However, we may ask whether, having chosen the female figure, Luke intended us to recognize OT symbolism that such a female figure might evoke. Many scholars have responded affirmatively to this question, detecting numerous implicit OT echoes in the Lucan portrait of Mary. Yet it is difficult to be certain that Luke intended all these symbolic



hints, discovered only with great effort; and so other scholars have classified these efforts as eisegesis.

## 1. Daughter of Zion in the Old Testament

The most frequent suggestion of OT symbolism attached to Mary in the Lucan account is that of the Daughter of Zion, and as a preliminary step we should review the origins of this phrase in the OT. Zion was the name of the fortified hill of pre-Israelite Jerusalem, so that David's accomplishment was to conquer the "stronghold of Zion" (2 Sam 5:6–10), i.e., the southern section of the eastern hill. As the city was enlarged to the north, Mount Zion came to designate the hill on which the Temple stood. Eventually the name was attached to the western hill. For practical purposes, however, Zion in the Bible may be said to serve as a synonym for Jerusalem. With relation to a geographical entity, "daughter" designates a subdivision, e.g., a city, town, or village. Thus, the cities of a country are the "daughters" of that country, so that Ps 97:8 speaks of the "daughters of Judah," with Zion as one of them, and Ezek 16:27 mentions the "daughters of the Philistines." The villages or suburbs of a city are the "daughters" of that city, so that Num 21:25 mentions "Heshbon and its daughters," while Josh 17:11 speaks of "Bethshan and its daughters."

It is in Micah 1:13 (*ca.* 700 B.C.) that we first encounter the phrase "Daughter of Zion"; and Henri Cazelles contends that it referred to a new quarter or suburb of Jerusalem, north of the Temple area (Zion), first inhabited about the time of King Hezekiah by refugees from the Northern Kingdom after the fall of Samaria in 721. Thus it was to a section of Jerusalem filled with poor, displaced people who needed encouragement that Micah addressed his words of hope when he spoke to the "Daughter of Zion" in 4:8, 10, 13. Eventually, since the part frequently stands for the whole, "Daughter of Zion" would become a personification of Jerusalem (which in turn would become a synonym for all Judah and even Israel); but if Cazelles is right, the connotation of the poor and the dependent may linger in the appellation.

Before we discuss the "Daughter of Zion" symbolism in relation to Mary, we should note a particular aspect of the OT picture, namely, the term "virgin" applied to Zion (or Israel). In 1:27 Luke twice calls Mary a virgin; he is preparing for 1:34 and the virginal conception of Jesus. Is he also evoking the image of the virgin Daughter of Zion or of virgin Israel, familiar in the prophets? The ravaging of nations and cities by foreign conquerors is often compared to the rape of a virgin; and so most of the specific OT references to Israel or Zion as a virgin portray her in a state of oppression, and even of waywardness, lusting after foreign lovers and untrue to her God.<sup>71</sup> A partial exception may be Jer 31:3–4: "I have loved you with an enduring love ... I shall build you again ... O virgin Israel"; but even there one may find a connotation of Israel's past unfaithfulness. Thus it would seem that the echoes of the "virgin" passages concerning Zion and Israel in the OT are quite inappropriate as background to Luke's description of the virgin Mary. She is to be identified with those of low estate and the poor (the Magnificat); but she is not oppressed or violated, and is totally faithful (1:45) and obedient to God's word (1:38).

## 2. The Salutation in 1:28



Leaving aside the OT references to virgin Israel, let us discuss the Lucan Mary simply as the “Daughter of Zion,” the poor one to whom in the prophets a salvific message of joy and hope is addressed. This is a symbolism that has been accepted by both Roman Catholic (Lyonnet, Laurentin, Benoit) and Protestant scholars (Sahlin, Hebert, Knight, Leaney).<sup>72</sup> A foundation for this symbolism is a particular exegesis of 1:28, wherein three phrases of the angelic salutation are thought to have a deeper connotation than might at first appear. Often the phrases of 1:28 are seen as expanded and interpreted in the second angelic statement of 1:30–31, and so let me set them side by side:

1:28	1:30–31
<i>Chaire</i> (“Hail”) = “Rejoice”	“Do not be afraid”
<i>kecharitōmenē</i> (“favored one”) = “Full of grace”	“You have found favor ( <i>charis</i> ) with God”
“The Lord is with you”	“You will conceive in your womb”

Let us take the three phrases one by one.

CHAIRE AS “REJOICE.” While “rejoice” is the literal meaning of the verb *chairein*, the imperative is the normal Greek secular salutation: “Hail, hello, good day, greetings.” The Latin translation of Luke’s annunciation reflected in the *Ave Maria* shows that the translators understood the equivalence between *Chaire* and the ordinary Latin greeting *ave*. Similarly the Syriac Peshitta rendering as “Peace” shows the equivalence between *Chaire* and the ordinary Semitic greeting (Hebrew *shālôm*). However, Lyonnet has made a case for translating it as “Rejoice,” so that it evokes highly theological OT passages featuring the Daughter of Zion.

He argues that if Luke wanted the angel to give Mary an ordinary greeting in 1:28, he would have used *eirēnē*, “Peace,” reflecting the Hebrew *shālôm*, as he does in 10:5 and 24:36; for that is Luke’s custom in scenes set in a Semitic background. If it is objected that Luke uses a form of *chairein* as an ordinary greeting in Acts 15:23 and 23:26, the answer is that there Luke is quoting from letters written in Greek and adapting his style to the Greek context. Before I move onto the theological significance that is drawn from *Chaire* taken as “Rejoice” rather than “Hail,” I want to point out a weakness in this interpretation of Luke’s use of greetings. Luke certainly knows that *eirēnē* translates the ordinary Semitic greeting and that *Chaire* is the ordinary Greek greeting. There is good reason to think that when he is freely composing in Greek for his Greek readers, he chooses *Chaire* as standard Greek usage. But his choice of *eirēnē* in 10:5 and 24:36 need not mean that he uses a Semitized greeting when the scene has a Semitic background; his usage there is more plausibly explained by the fact that he is following sources that contained a reference to “peace.” Accordingly, one may just as well argue that he would have used *eirēnē* as an ordinary greeting in 1:28 only if he was reproducing a source that would have directed him in this way, and that if he was composing freely in Greek (as I think) he would have used *Chaire* for the ordinary greeting. The claim that an ordinary greeting would be out of place in a revelation scene does not do justice to the influence of the standard pattern of





the annunciation narrative which is so designed as not to alarm the visionary. Laurentin, who opposes the “Hail” meaning of *Chaire* as too banal, is forced to admit that the parallel expression in 1:30, “Do not be afraid,” is part of the banal and stereotyped language of angelic appearances and has no real psychological import.

But let us move onto the use of *chairein* in the OT: there are some eighty occurrences in the LXX, about one-quarter of which refer to the joy that greets a divine saving act, announcement, or promise. In Exod 4:31 *chairein* describes the rejoicing over God’s having visited His people in their affliction in Egypt; in 1 Kgs 5:7 it expresses joy that God gave David a son and successor with the wisdom of Solomon; etc. In a particularly relevant scene in Isa 66:7 God promises that He will cause Zion to give birth and bring forth sons, and urges those who love her to *rejoice*—a promise of deliverance from the exilic and immediately post-exilic tragedies. But Lyonnet and Laurentin concentrate on the four instances in which the specific form *Chaire* is used in the LXX; or, more exactly they concentrate on three of the four<sup>78</sup> where *Chaire* is addressed to the Daughter of Zion (Zech 9:9; Zeph 3:14) or to the land of Israel, the children of Zion (Joel 2:21–23). At least one of the three passages (Zech 9:9: “*Rejoice* greatly, O Daughter of Zion, ... behold your king is coming to you ... he is meek and mounted on an ass”) was known to early Christians, for it is cited in Matt 21:5 and John 12:14–15—yet it is not cited specifically in Luke, and neither of the authors who cite it quote the *Chaire* opening.

It is particularly Zeph 3:14–17 that has been suggested as the Lucan background for 1:28, 30. For the sake of comparison, let us juxtapose the two texts, heightening the parallelism by selecting lines from the longer Zephaniah passage:

*Zeph 3:14–17:*

Rejoice [*Chaire*], O Daughter of Zion, ...  
The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst [*en mesō sou*] ...  
Take heart, Zion ...  
The Lord your God is in you [*en soi*];  
the Mighty One will save you.

*Luke 1:28, 30, 31:*

Rejoice [*Chaire*], O favored one,  
the Lord is with you [*meta sou*] ...  
Do not be afraid, Mary,  
for you have found favor with God ...  
You will conceive in your womb  
and give birth to a son.

In part the supposed parallelism is based on relating the phrase “the Lord is in your midst” to “the Lord is with you,” and the phrase “the Lord your God is in you” to the presence of the child in Mary’s womb—points to be discussed (and challenged) below. If we leave those aside for the moment, would Luke’s readers, because of the use of the word *Chaire*, be aware of the Zephaniah passage (or the other two *Chaire* passages) which has nothing to do with childbirth? *Chaire* is not always salvific in the LXX (footnotes 77, 78 above), and Luke’s readers would hear it used every day of their lives with the meaning “Hail, hello.” If a modern English writer used “Goodbye” in a farewell without any interpretative comment, would his readers recognize that





he was giving it its ancient religious value as “God be with you”? If Luke did not want a typical greeting at the beginning of the annunciation but wanted to evoke messianic joy, why would he not have used a non-ambiguous verb like *euphranein*, found in Isa 54:1 in the context of a conception, a verb that Luke uses elsewhere for joy at messianic salvation (15:32; Acts 2:26)? That verb is used in a Daughter of Zion passage in Zech 2:14–15 (10–11), “Rejoice [*euphrainou*] O Daughter of Zion, for behold I come and dwell in your midst [*en mesō sou*], says the Lord.”

In short, the *Chaire* connection is too fragile to establish either that Luke had Zeph 3:14–17 in mind or that he was thinking of Mary as the Daughter of Zion. Of course, the typical expectation of divine deliverance vocalized by Zephaniah, or indeed by Zechariah in the passage just quoted, played a role in Luke’s outlook—but that expectation is a distillation of a whole series of OT passages and not evidence of a particular symbolism. Since Luke’s *Chaire* leads into the homonym *kecharitōmenē* (“O favored one”) and a reference to God’s favor in sending the Messiah who is His Son, there may well be an element of religious rejoicing in it—but it is a joy that comes from the context of the annunciation, and not because *Chaire* should be given an unusual translation which evokes an OT passage.

“THE LORD IS WITH YOU.” Part of the case for the resemblance between Zephaniah and Luke depends on connecting this phrase to Zephaniah’s “The Lord is in your midst.” Such a connection is dubious in the extreme. Zephaniah presumably refers to the presence of the Lord in the Temple or to His presence with the forces of His people (Exod 34:9). The Lucan “The Lord is with you” is an ordinary greeting, as exemplified in Ruth 2:4 in the exchange between Boaz and the reapers. In the context of an angelic appearance, the phrase need not be totally banal when addressed to Mary; it reassures her that this divine visitation is benevolent and need not be feared. If Luke is recalling an OT passage, it is not Zephaniah but the scene of the angelic annunciation to Gideon in Judg 6:12. The opening address there, “O mighty man of valor, the Lord is with you,” is close in context and wording to Luke’s “O favored one, the Lord is with you.”

In the attempt to relate Luke to Zephaniah, particularly dubious is Laurentin’s shift from the Greek of Zephaniah to the Hebrew in seeking to read *b<sup>e</sup>qirbēk* (the phrase behind “in your midst” and “in you” in 3:15, 17) as “in your interior parts” and thus equivalent to Luke’s “you will conceive a child *in your womb*.” In the many times that the LXX uses the expression “to conceive or have a child in the womb,” the noun *qereb* is never in the underlying Hebrew. Such arguments do nothing to strengthen the case based on *Chaire*.

KECHARITŌMENĒ AS “FULL OF GRACE.” The discussion of this phrase is not directly related to the Daughter of Zion question, but it is illustrative of the tendency to eke every drop of theological and even mariological significance from 1:28. There can be no doubt that *kecharitōmenē*, which I have translated “O favored one,” does have theological significance—indeed, more obvious significance than the standard greeting *Chaire* and the salutation “The Lord is with you.” The use of a qualifying phrase describing the visionary is a standard feature in the biblical annunciation of birth (Step 3b in Table VIII), and the quality that is thus underlined usually has something to do with the message of the annunciation. The difference of rank of the two children Ishmael and Isaac is already hinted at in the different designations of the respective mothers: “Hagar, maid of Sarah” (Gen 16:8), and “Sarah, your wife” (17:15). Joseph is called “son of David” in the Matthean annunciation (1:20) because his role as a Davidid will be to



name Jesus and thus give him Davidic descent. Gideon is called a “mighty man of valor” in Judg 6:12 because God will employ his valor to liberate Israel from the Midianites. Thus, Mary’s designation in Luke 1:28 as *kecharitōmenē* plausibly has something to do with the annunciation to follow.

How are we to translate this passive participle from the denominative verb *charitoun*? Such a verb has the possibility of reflecting the various ideas contained in the noun *charis*, “grace, favor, charm.” Some have chosen the translation “beautiful lady,” since a lady who has been “graced” may be considered graceful, beautiful, charming. However, Mary’s physical beauty has nothing to do with the scene, and it is more plausible to interpret *kecharitōmenē* to refer to her as one who has been favored or graced by God. It is this interpretation of *kecharitōmenē* that explains why Mary “wondered what such a greeting might mean” (1:29). And Gabriel responded by insisting: “You have found favor [*charis*] with God” (1:30). As the reader will be told, this *charis* which makes her *kecharitōmenē* is the grace of conceiving the Son of the Most High.

Such a theological meaning of *kecharitōmenē* which seems entirely justified by the context is to be kept distinct from another interpretation which has come about by way of the Latin rendering *gratia plena*, “full of grace.” It is true that a denominative verb sometimes has the sense of plenitude,<sup>88</sup> and certainly Luke would not be opposed to regarding the grace bestowed upon Mary as a fullness of God’s favor. Some modern translations catch this by rendering *kecharitōmenē* as “highly favored one.” But “full of grace” is too strong. Luke knew that expression since it appears literally in Acts 6:8; yet he chose not to use it here. It is open to the interpretation that Mary already possesses the grace or perfection involved, whereas for Luke Mary’s special state is to be constituted by the divine favor involved in the conception of Jesus. Later theology stressed the *fullness* of grace and made it a cardinal principle of mariology, so that Mary was thought to possess every perfection possible for a creature. Indeed, it lies at the root of the axiom *numquam satis* (i.e., one cannot claim too much for Mary). No matter what one may think of this theological reasoning (and some within Roman Catholicism today would want to reconsider it), it certainly goes beyond what Luke meant by *kecharitōmenē*. On this point, as on the others, it is wise to be conservative about how much Marian symbolism Luke intended in the relatively stereotyped salutation of 1:28.

### 3. The Ark of the Covenant in 1:35?

Many of the exegetes (Lyonnet, Sahlin, Hebert, Laurentin) who think that Luke portrayed Mary as the Daughter of Zion also find the symbolism of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant or as the Tabernacle of divine glory. The key to this symbolism is 1:35c: “Power from the Most High will overshadow [*episkiazein*] you.” I have shown above (C2) that this clause and its parallel (“The Holy Spirit will come upon you”) represent the language of early christology, echoing phrases used in Gospel ministry accounts of the baptism and the transfiguration. Yet the cloud of divine presence that overshadows at the transfiguration is set against the background of Peter’s offer to build *tabernacles* for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah (Luke 9:34–35). This reminds us that *episkiazein*, “to overshadow” (along with *skiazein*, “to shadow”) was used to describe how the cloud of God’s glory cast a shadow upon the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Exod 40:35; Num 9:18, 22). Indeed, the verbs for overshadow and shadow described several forms of the divine



presence in the OT, e.g., the cloud overshadowing the renewed Mount Zion and its festal assemblies (Isa 4:5); the cloud overshadowing the Israelites when they departed from the desert camp (Num 10:34[36]); God overshadowing His chosen ones (Deut 33:12; Ps 91:4); and the winged cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat or top of the Ark of the Covenant (Exod 25:20; 1 Chr 28:18).

From this background we may deduce that Luke is thinking of a divine presence overshadowing Mary, a deduction also possible from the parallel line wherein the Holy Spirit comes upon her. The power of that presence creatively brings about the conception of the child, but that is not necessarily the same as Jesus being the embodiment of the divine presence in the womb of Mary.<sup>93</sup> I rejected above the contention that “The Lord is with you” is the same as Zephaniah’s “The Lord is in your midst.” And it is totally a guess to assume from the verb *episkiazein* that Luke thinks of Mary as the Tabernacle or the Ark of the Covenant overshadowed by or containing the divine presence. To be precise, in the OT the cherubim rather than God are said to overshadow the Ark; moreover, the Ark and Tabernacle are not the only places overshadowed by divine presence.

We have not finished the discussion of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant, for it will reappear in the next scene of the visitation (§ 12B on 1:43), even as will the theme of the Daughter of Zion. If the evidence thus far adduced for either symbolism is not convincing, the proponents argue that the evidence is cumulative. Let me reserve judgment. But in showing myself dubious thus far, I do not wish to convey the impression that in my opinion Luke did not think of Mary against the background of the OT. As I have shown in D above, he draws her dialogue from what he knows of her during the ministry. But her portrayal as a mother conceiving a child is deeply influenced by OT portraits (especially that of Hannah whose very name means “grace, favor”—see NOTE on “favored one” in 1:28), as is the whole annunciation pattern. Moreover, by stressing Mary’s acceptance of God’s word in 1:38, Luke has begun to associate her with those in Israel who were “poor ones” (*anawim*) in the sense of being totally dependent upon God for support. Luke will develop that theme beautifully in the Magnificat.

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(LUKE 1:26–38)

(See also the Bibliography for Appendix IV on the virginal conception.)

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