

## EPOCH EIGHT

### THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

*The Herods are overshadowed by the great events that occurred during their time: the ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Messiah.*

**(37 BC—AD 30)**

The epoch that witnessed the Messiah's coming actually began with the rise to power of King Herod the Great. The lives of Herod and his sons were closely connected with the earthly life of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Herod the Great ordered the deaths of all male children in Bethlehem who were under the age of two (Matt. 2), an order that forced Joseph to flee, taking his wife and young Child to Egypt.

After Herod's death, his sons continued to impact the life of the Messiah. One of Herod's sons was partly responsible for the Messiah becoming known as "Jesus of Nazareth." When Joseph returned from Egypt with Mary and Jesus, he chose to avoid Judea. Herod's son, Archelaus, ruled over Judea and was worse than his father, so Joseph (with Jesus) settled in Nazareth of Galilee. Herod Antipas, another son of Herod the Great, ordered the death of John the Baptist and held a mock "hearing" of Jesus after His arrest. Despite having positions of power, the Herodian family was overshadowed by the great events that occurred during their time: the ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Messiah, bringing victory over sin, death, and the devil.

### ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PAST

Archaeological discoveries in the Holy Land from the Roman period (37 BC—AD 325) fall into two categories: those which shed light on the Roman world,

and those which shed light on the life of Jesus. Sometimes the same archaeological find fits into both categories.

The Roman period, archaeologically, is the world of Herod the Great. Among his many building accomplishments is the great seaport Caesarea Maritima. Excavations have uncovered the theater, the harbor, vast warehouses, temples, and one important inscription. A stone bearing the name of Pontius Pilate, the governor, reminds us that Caesarea was also the headquarters of Roman forces occupying the land. Military installations were placed all over Judea, since it was a border province. Roman Jericho, built on a site different from both Old Testament Jericho and the modern city, was also the work of Herod. The ruins of a magnificent palace and baths have been uncovered in Jericho's excavations.

In Jerusalem are more remains of Herod's building programs. The Wailing Wall is actually part of the great retaining wall Herod built around the Temple Mount to make a surface large enough for the temple rebuilding project. On the western side of the Old City, at a site called the Tower of David, are the remains of one of the towers Herod built to defend the city. It is probably the tower called Phasaël, as described by Josephus. Either in one of these towers, or in his great palace nearby, Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus.

The ministry of Jesus is illumined by archaeology. In Galilee, the famous "Jesus boat" was discovered in a lake during a drought. One can picture Jesus, Peter, and the others setting out across the lake in such a boat, since it is much like the ones used by fishermen of the 1st century. In Capernaum, the center of Jesus' Galilean ministry, are at least two possible links to Jesus. The synagogue that visitors see is dated to the 4th century, but more recent excavations have shown the foundations of a 1st-



century building underneath it. Since synagogues were always built on the same site, the 1st-century synagogue may have been where Jesus preached. Nearby are the ruins of an octagonal church. Archaeologists believe that this ancient church is on the site of Peter's house, and that the foundations discovered underneath the church are literally the remains of the building where Jesus stayed while in Capernaum.

Around Jerusalem are many reminders of Jesus' ministry. Just over the Mount of Olives is the village of Bethany, where we find a 1st-century tomb belonging to a wealthy family. This is the traditional tomb of Lazarus, having a vestibule chamber and a small inner chamber. Somewhere on the Mount of Olives is the Garden of Gethsemane. Whether it was located at the Church of All Nations or nearby at the "Tomb of Mary" is debated. But beyond debate is the reality that Jesus prayed in this vicinity.

Excavations at the southern end of the Temple Mount have uncovered the steps that led up to the temple. Several steps remain in an unrestored condition, and represent the way 1st-century persons, including Jesus, usually entered the temple. The steps are also identified as the "rabbi's teaching steps," meaning that Jesus likely sat on them, teaching His disciples and the crowds.

On the north end of the Old City are twin pools which possibly represent the Pool of Bethesda, where Jesus healed a lame man. The porches mentioned in John's Gospel (John 5:2) stood along the sides of the pools and on the causeway between them. Back on the south end of the city are the remains of the Essene Gate, a 1st-century gate that led into Jerusalem. Nearby the gate are the remains of the house of Caiaphas, who was high priest at the time of Jesus' trial. A dank, cold basement cell reminds us that Jesus may have been imprisoned there for at least a few hours. A paved courtyard above reminds us of Peter's denial by the high priest's house.

One of the most powerful archaeological remains is the discovery of a man who had been crucified. Johanan, the name inscribed in the stone box that held his bones, had nail marks in his wrists, and one nail driven through the heel bones. The wood of the cross had been cut apart and buried with him. Johanan's bones illustrate crucifixion, a common method of execution for the Romans, and possibly suggest the way Jesus Himself was executed.

Archaeologists almost universally agree that the site of Jesus' tomb is located inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At two points in the church, one can actually see what is left of the hill of Calvary. The traditional site of Jesus' burial is found very near other 1st-century tombs.

## THE PEOPLES AND GROUPS

Peoples outside Judea and Galilee were also prominent in this period. The Nabateans were an Arabic people, with their capital at Petra to the south. The daughter of the Nabatean king Aretas IV married Herod Antipas. When Antipas threw her over for his own sister-in-law Herodias, war broke out between Herod Antipas and the Nabateans. This was the same Herod who beheaded John the Baptist and held a hearing for Jesus at the request of Pilate.

Southeast of the Sea of Galilee were the cities of the Decapolis. Founded by Greeks and Macedonians, the Decapolis was united not by political organization, but by Hellenistic culture and institutions. Gerasa has been excavated, and one can see the city walls, temples, the marketplace, and paved streets with colonnades. The only remains of 1st-century Philadelphia are the ruins of a Roman theater, near the downtown heart of a bustling, modern city.

The Gospels mention such groups as the Samaritans, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots. The Samaritans and Jews suffered a long history of hatred for each other, going back to the fall of Israel in 722 BC. But out of this background of hatred, Jesus identified a Samaritan as one who was truly a neighbor to a Jewish person in need. The Sadducees were the priestly aristocracy in Jerusalem, the leaders of the people. They walked a fine line between Jewish nationalism and keeping the peace with their Roman overlords. The Pharisees were a group of laymen dedicated to the keeping of the Law (Torah). They had a saying: if all Israel would keep Torah perfectly for just one day, the Messiah would come. Some Pharisees opposed Jesus; others befriended Him—warning Him of trouble, speaking for Him at His trial, providing a place for His burial. The Zealots were the revolutionary underground. Jesus' disciple Simon "the Zealot" probably belonged to one of the 1st-century groups who actively opposed Roman rule.

## THE BIBLICAL LITERATURE

The biblical books relating the time of the Messiah are the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Although they tell us almost everything we know about the life and teachings of Jesus, they are not true biographies. Rather, they are theological documents telling who Jesus is and why He is important. They say little about Jesus' family background and youth, and nothing about His physical appearance. They concentrate almost totally on Jesus' ministry, but even here they do not give enough information to reconstruct the history of those years with absolute certainty. Rather, they focus on Jesus' person and His teachings, and give considerable

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attention to His death and resurrection and the surrounding events.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. The name “Synoptic” means that they view the life of Jesus from a common perspective. After introducing Jesus in different ways depending on their purpose, they relate the ministry of John the Baptist, the baptism and temptation of Jesus, His ministry in Galilee, His journey to Judea and ministry there, His final week in Jerusalem, His death, and His resurrection.

The Gospel of John differs from the Synoptics in a number of ways. It tells us more about Jesus’ early ministry in Judea. John also records long thematic discourses by Jesus instead of the usual shorter sayings of the Synoptics. More than the Synoptics, John includes theological reflection on the meaning of Jesus’ life and death. The four Gospels together give us a more complete picture of Jesus than any one of them would by itself.

### TRANSITION

#### The Prehistory of Jesus

The prologue of John’s Gospel locates the beginning of the story of Jesus in timeless eternity, before the dawn of creation (see Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–20). John at once identifies “the Word” as God *the Son* and distinguishes Him from God *the Father*. Although there was a time when Jesus of Nazareth did not exist, there never was a time when the Word did not exist.

Yet John announces a time when “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). The Word became incarnate in this Jesus. This event, the Incarnation, marks the time when the Revealer of God became a specific human being. After the Incarnation, John’s Gospel never again refers to Jesus as “the Word.” Since the Incarnation, God may be known in the person and work of Jesus.

• John 1:1–18

### INTRODUCTIONS TO JESUS CHRIST

Each of the four Gospels uniquely introduces the story of Jesus Christ as marking a new beginning in God’s dealings with His people. The Gospel of Mark uses a brief superscription (Mark 1:1) and prophetic announcement (1:2, 3) to make it clear that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, a truth previously declared by the prophets. Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy (Matt. 1:1–17), showing his Jewish readers that Jesus is truly the Messiah by tracing His ancestors back to David. That Jesus’ ancestry goes back also to Abraham evidences Jesus’ fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel.

Two Gospel writers, John and Luke, alert their readers concerning their purpose for writing a Gospel. Luke provides a brief preface (Luke 1:1–4) in which he sets out his intention. In a prologue, John begins with a clear statement about Jesus’ preexistence and divinity. He wanted his readers to know and believe that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:30, 31).

### John

#### The Eternal Word

**1**:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend<sup>a</sup> it.

#### John’s Witness: The True Light

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. <sup>8</sup>He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. <sup>9</sup>That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup>He came to His own,<sup>a</sup> and His own<sup>b</sup> did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup>But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

#### The Word Becomes Flesh

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt

1:5<sup>a</sup>Or overcome 1:9<sup>a</sup>Or That was the true Light which, coming into the world, gives light to every man. 1:11<sup>a</sup>That is, His own things or domain <sup>b</sup>That is, His own people

### TIME CAPSULE



36 to 31 BC

36–33	Relations between Octavian and Antony break down
36	Cleopatra visits Herod to impose rent
31	Octavian defeats Antony at the battle of Actium
31	Herod the Great changes allegiance from Antony to Octavian
31	Octavian dominates the Roman Empire
31	Tomb of Jason west of Jerusalem is damaged by earthquake

## THE WORD BECOMES FLESH (JOHN 1:14)

John's Gospel describes Jesus' preexistence by identifying Him as the divine "Word" (John 1:1), or, as expressed in the Greek language, the *Logos*. Many Greek philosophers spoke of the *Logos* as universal Reason. People familiar with Greek thought could have understood John to be proclaiming Jesus as the organizing principle or "Reason" behind the universe.

Some Jewish people adapted the Greek idea of *Logos* to fit the traditional Jewish idea of the Word. But more thought of the Word in traditionally Jewish categories. They identified God's creative Word with divine Wisdom, which they also identified with God's Law (the Torah). They brought various ideas together: that God created all things through the Law or Wisdom (John 1:3), that the Word was life and light (1:4), and that Wisdom had been with God from the beginning (1:2).

In the prologue of his Gospel, John declares something that neither the Greek philosophers nor the Jewish teachers conceived: the Word became flesh and dwelt among His people. To the Greeks *Logos* was invisible reason, not part of the material world. To the Jewish teachers Wisdom was a divine attribute of Yahweh. But to John the Word was the divine Christ who became a human being. The Word's glory was "full of grace and truth," revealing to us the full character of God (John 1:14, 17, 18).

among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup>John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"

<sup>16</sup>And<sup>a</sup> of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. <sup>17</sup>For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son,<sup>a</sup> who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

<sup>1:16</sup><sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *For*. <sup>1:18</sup><sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *only begotten God*.

### TRANSITION

#### Introduction and Dedication

The author of the third Gospel introduces his historical work, identifying his sources and purpose. Luke's Gospel is dedicated to a distinguished patron, Theophilus, whose name in Greek means "lover of God." Theophilus

already had been instructed in Christian teachings, but Luke wished to provide him with "certainty" (Luke 1:4). Luke is alone among the Gospel writers in beginning his account with a preface that explains in some detail his procedure and desire to write an "orderly account" (1:3).

• Luke 1:1–4

### Luke

#### Dedication to Theophilus

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

<sup>1:1</sup><sup>a</sup> Or *are most surely believed*

## EARLY LIVES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS

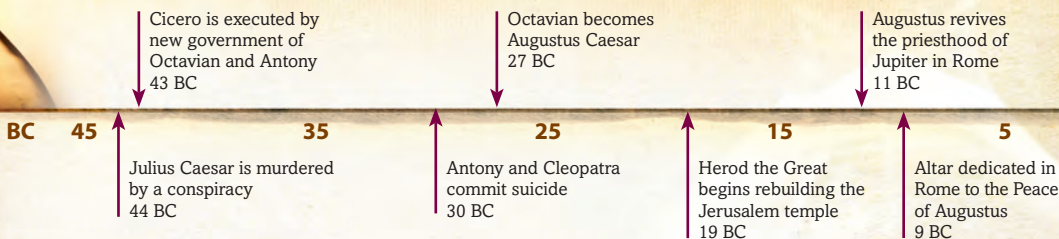
Elizabeth and Mary, the mothers of John and Jesus, were either blood relatives or close kinswomen (Luke 1:36). The angel Gabriel appeared to both families—to Elizabeth's husband and to Mary herself—and announced their future sons John and Jesus. Even before birth, these babies were named (Luke 1:13, 31) and set apart for unique missions (1:16, 17, 32, 33).

Practically nothing is known of John's boyhood, except that he "grew and became strong in spirit" (Luke 1:80). Only slightly more is known of Jesus' upbringing. Early in His life Jesus was taken to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, and there raised by His mother, Mary, and her husband, Joseph, a carpenter by trade. Hence the Child was known as "Jesus of Nazareth" (Mark 1:24).

*Even before birth, these babies were named and set apart for unique missions.*

Jesus was His mother's firstborn child; He had four brothers (James, Joses, Judas, and Simon) and an unspecified number of sisters (Mark 6:3). The only incident preserved from His first 30 years (after His infancy) was His trip to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary when He was 12 years old (Luke 2:41–50). Occurring in the year that, as a Jewish boy, He attained the age of religious responsibility, the trip was at a crucial juncture of His development.

## AUGUSTUS BRINGS PEACE TO THE ROMAN WORLD



### TRANSITION

#### The Birth of John the Baptist

Luke gives an extraordinary glimpse of ordinary, pious Jews at the time. We should not imagine that everyone was as spiritually bankrupt as the Jewish leaders who later opposed Jesus. The lives of the barren, old Elizabeth and the young, virgin Mary intersect at the point of God's unexpected favor to His humble servants. Elizabeth was from the tribe of Levi (Luke 1:5) and was also related to Mary (1:36). Because Elizabeth was barren and elderly, the birth of John the Baptist is presented by Luke as a special work of God.

Luke implies that John was born 6 months before Jesus (Luke 1:26) and that the two were relatives (1:36). No other Gospel mentions their kinship, and John's Gospel raises a question: If Jesus and John the Baptist were related, why did John not recognize Jesus at the time of His baptism (John 1:31)? Some think that the Baptist knew Jesus, but did not recognize Him as the Messiah. Geography allows for another possibility: Luke indicates that John was raised in the wilderness of Judea (Luke 1:80), whereas Jesus was raised in Nazareth of Galilee (2:39). During their early years they were separated by quite a distance by ancient standards, possibly distant enough to be unfamiliar with each other as adults.

• Luke 1:5–80

### Luke

#### John's Birth Announced to Zacharias

**1**:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elizabeth. **6**And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. **7**But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

**8**So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, **9**according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell

to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. **10**And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. **11**Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. **12**And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

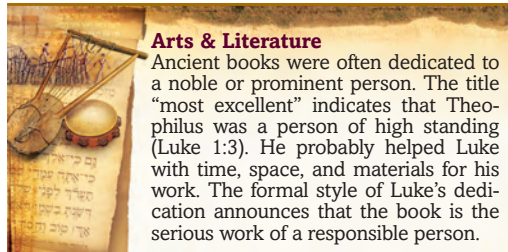
**13**But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. **14**And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. **15**For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. **16**And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. **17**He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,'<sup>a</sup> and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

**18**And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

**19**And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. **20**But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

**21**And the people waited for Zacharias, and

1:17<sup>a</sup>Malachi 4:5, 6



#### Arts & Literature

Ancient books were often dedicated to a noble or prominent person. The title "most excellent" indicates that Theophilus was a person of high standing (Luke 1:3). He probably helped Luke with time, space, and materials for his work. The formal style of Luke's dedication announces that the book is the serious work of a responsible person.

marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. <sup>22</sup>But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.

<sup>23</sup>So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. <sup>24</sup>Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, <sup>25</sup>“Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among people.”

### **Christ’s Birth Announced to Mary**

<sup>26</sup>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!”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>29</sup>But when she saw *him*,<sup>a</sup> she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. <sup>30</sup>Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor

1:28<sup>a</sup> NU-Text omits *blessed are you among women*.

1:29<sup>a</sup> NU-Text omits *when she saw him*.

with God. <sup>31</sup>And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. <sup>33</sup>And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

<sup>34</sup>Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?”

<sup>35</sup>And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup>Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. <sup>37</sup>For with God nothing will be impossible.”

<sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

### **Mary Visits Elizabeth**

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

### **The Song of Mary**

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said:

- “My soul magnifies the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup> And my spirit has rejoiced  
 in God my Savior.  
<sup>48</sup> For He has regarded the lowly  
 state of His maidservant;  
 For behold, henceforth all generations  
 will call me blessed.  
<sup>49</sup> For He who is mighty has done  
 great things for me,  
 And holy *is* His name.  
<sup>50</sup> And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him  
 From generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with His arm;  
 He has scattered *the* proud in the  
 imagination of their hearts.



- 52 He has put down the mighty  
from *their* thrones,  
And exalted *the* lowly.
- 53 He has filled *the* hungry with good things,  
And *the* rich He has sent away empty.
- 54 He has helped His servant Israel,  
In remembrance of *His* mercy,
- 55 As He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and to his seed forever.”
- 56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

### Birth of John the Baptist

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

### Circumcision of John the Baptist

- 59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias.
- 60 His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.”
- 61 But they said to her, “There is no one among

your relatives who is called by this name.” 62 So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called.

- 63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.” So they all marveled. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he spoke, praising God. 65 Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. 66 And all those who heard *them* kept *them* in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.

### Zacharias' Prophecy

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

- 68 “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,  
For He has visited and redeemed His people,  
69 And has raised up a horn  
of salvation for us  
In the house of His servant David,  
70 As He spoke by the mouth of  
His holy prophets,  
Who *have been* since the world began,  
71 That we should be saved from our enemies  
And from the hand of all who hate us,  
72 To perform the mercy *promised*  
to our fathers  
And to remember His holy covenant,  
73 The oath which He swore to  
our father Abraham:  
74 To grant us that we,  
Being delivered from the  
hand of our enemies,  
Might serve Him without fear,  
75 In holiness and righteousness before  
Him all the days of our life.
- 76 “And you, child, will be called the  
prophet of the Highest;  
For you will go before the face of  
the Lord to prepare His ways,  
77 To give knowledge of salvation  
to His people  
By the remission of their sins,  
78 Through the tender mercy of our God,  
With which the Dayspring from  
on high has visited<sup>a</sup> us;  
79 To give light to those who sit in  
darkness and the shadow of death,  
To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

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



### Herod's Kingdom at Jesus' Birth

Born in Idumea, Herod the Great was a Jew by religion, but was also immersed in Greek culture and politically loyal to Rome. The Roman emperor Augustus Caesar appointed Herod over a kingdom including the regions of Idumea, Judea, Perea, Samaria, Gaulanitis, Iturea, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Auranitis.

1:78<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *shall visit*.

**TRANSITION**

**The Genealogy of Jesus**

The first Gospel begins, like 1 Chronicles, with a genealogy. This account of the ancestors of Jesus Christ sets His story within the sacred history of the people of Israel. As Abraham’s descendant, Jesus is identified as a Jew. As David’s descendant, He is located more narrowly in Israel’s royal family. Matthew’s account follows Chronicles, but omits some generations, apparently grouping the descendants into sets of fourteen (Matt. 1:17). The mention of four non-Jewish women—Tamar (1:3), Rahab, Ruth (1:5), Uriah’s wife (1:6)—anticipates the Gospel’s conclusion, which calls for the evangelization of all nations.

Numerous attempts have been made to account for the disagreements between Matthew’s and Luke’s genealogies (see “The Genealogy of Jesus” at Luke 3:23). Some have proposed that Matthew provides Joseph’s genealogy and Luke, Mary’s. But Luke describes Mary as related to Elizabeth from the tribe of Levi (Luke 1:5, 36) while placing Jesus in the tribe of Judah (3:33), making it improbable that Luke’s genealogy is actually Mary’s. Probably the discrepancies between the genealogies arise from the different sources used by the two evangelists.

• Matthew 1:1–17

**Matthew**

**From Abraham to Christ**

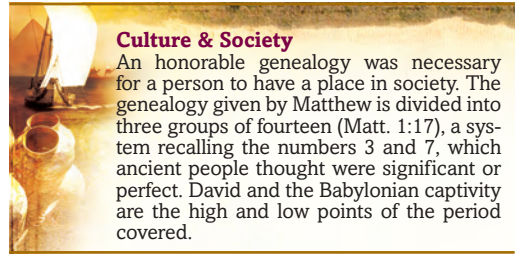
**1** :1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

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

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

<sup>12</sup>And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot

1:6<sup>a</sup> Words in italic type have been added for clarity. They are not found in the original Greek. 1:7<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *Asaph*. 1:10<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *Amos*.



**Culture & Society**

An honorable genealogy was necessary for a person to have a place in society. The genealogy given by Matthew is divided into three groups of fourteen (Matt. 1:17), a system recalling the numbers 3 and 7, which ancient people thought were significant or perfect. David and the Babylonian captivity are the high and low points of the period covered.

Zerubbabel. <sup>13</sup>Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. <sup>14</sup>Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. <sup>15</sup>Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. <sup>16</sup>And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

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

**TRANSITION**

**The Birth of Jesus**

No one knows precisely when Jesus was born. Even His year of birth is only an educated guess based on the information available. The intention of the medieval creators of our calendar was to set the date of Jesus’ birth at AD 1. They simply miscalculated. The Jewish historian Josephus places the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, and both Matthew (Matt. 2:1) and Luke (Luke 1:5) presume that Herod was king at the time of Jesus’ birth. But it is not clear how much before Herod’s death Jesus was born.

We know that Herod became king of the Jews in 37 BC. Outside of Matthew (Matt. 2:16), no historical record mentions Herod’s slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem. Josephus does write that Herod ordered the murders of members of his own family to protect his throne. So it is not surprising that a few peasant children in Bethlehem went unnoticed among Herod’s many atrocities, leaving us no help with dating. Since Herod’s calculations led him to target children under two years old, Jesus’ birth likely occurred one or two years before Herod’s death—in either 6 or 5 BC.

A date of about 5 BC could fit with Luke’s note that Augustus, who reigned from 27 BC to AD 14, was the Roman emperor when Jesus was born (Luke 2:1). Luke’s mention of Quirinius (2:2), however, creates a problem. After Herod died, Rome divided his territory among his surviving sons. Archelaus ruled in Judea (see Matt. 2:22) until he was deposed by the Romans in AD 6. Only then was Quirinius



appointed governor, after serving for more than a decade as commander of the Roman troops in the area. Perhaps Luke simply identified him by his later office.

Some have tried to specify Jesus' birth date by appeal to astronomical phenomena that might explain the star of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:2, 7, 9, 10). Halley's comet appeared in 12 or 11 BC and another comet in 5 BC. But in antiquity comets were thought to forecast evil, not blessed, events. In 7 BC a rare (once every 794 years) conjunction of the planets Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn occurred in the constellation Pisces. Whether Matthew's star was any of these is pure speculation. For ancient people the star confirmed again that Jesus was the Messiah who fulfilled Balaam's star prophecy (Num. 24:17).

- Matthew 1:18–25
- Luke 2:1–20

### Matthew 1:18–25

#### The Virgin Birth

**1**:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. <sup>20</sup>But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

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


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

### Luke 2:1–20

#### Christ Born of Mary

**2**:1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This census

1:23<sup>a</sup> Isaiah 7:14 1:25<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *a Son*.

TIME CAPSULE		30 to 27 BC
30		Herod the Great meets Octavian in Alexandria, Egypt
30		Octavian confirms Herod the Great as king of Judea
30		Herod executes Hyrcanus II
29		Herod the Great executes his wife Mariamne
27–AD 14		Augustus Caesar is founder and emperor
27–25		Herod builds city of Sebaste in Samaria
27		Roman Senate gives the title “Augustus” to Gaius Octavian

### BETRAYAL AND BETROTHAL (MATT. 1:18)

The betrothal of Mary and Joseph (Matt. 1:18) involved much more than engagement does today. Even though a young Jewish man was considered an adult around age 13, he would work for a few years to save up for his marriage, around the age of 18 or 20. After the making of a legal contract between the two families, the young man and the woman (who was normally between the ages of 12 and 16) were “betrothed.”

That Mary became pregnant after their betrothal, but before their wedding, prompted Joseph “to put her away” (Matt. 1:19). A betrothed couple could not sleep together before the wedding. In fact, Galilean parents normally kept the man and woman from spending time together privately until the wedding (normally a year after betrothal). Thus, Joseph would not have known Mary very well, and should not be blamed for mistrusting her and deciding to end the betrothal.

The commitment of a betrothal was so legally binding that a divorce was required to break it off (1:19). Joseph had little choice. If a man's betrothed wife became pregnant, people would assume that she had regarded him as an inadequate man and this would publicly humiliate him. Worse yet, should he not divorce her most people would assume that he was the one who had gotten her pregnant, and he would bear great shame in a culture that was obsessed with shame and honor.

Jewish law required a man to divorce a wife who had been unfaithful. Joseph could have divorced Mary publicly in a court. The court would not only establish his innocence, but also profit him financially: he would get to keep all of Mary's dowry (the money her father gave her for her marriage). By planning to divorce her privately (writing out a certificate of divorce for her in front of two witnesses), Joseph elected to forfeit profit rather than shame her any further.

### AUGUSTUS, THE FIRST ROMAN EMPEROR (LUKE 2:1)

Luke refers to “Caesar Augustus” as the Roman emperor who ruled the Mediterranean world during the birth and youth of Jesus (Luke 2:1). The Roman Senate gave the title “Augustus” to this ruler in 27 BC. He was born Gaius Octavius in 63 BC, the great-nephew of the famous Julius Caesar.

In his will Julius Caesar made Octavius his adopted son. The untimely death of the dictator in 44 BC by assassination was the beginning of Octavius’s path to the emperorship. He changed his name to Gaius Julius Caesar Octavian.

Octavian, as he was now called, sided with Mark Antony against the assassins of his adopted father. He initiated a coalition of three dictators—himself, Antony, and Marcus Lepidus—known as “the Triumvirate.” The three not only gained victory over Caesar’s murderers by 42 BC, but also carried out the bloodiest purge in Rome’s history. From 36 to 33 BC there was a break in relations between Octavian and Antony, culminating in Octavian’s dominion over the empire by 31 BC.

After 27 BC, Octavian became known as “Augustus,” the name bestowed on him by the Senate. He was the first Roman emperor, reigning solely as ruler of the Roman realm for more than 40 years (27 BC–AD 14). In essence, Augustus was the second founder of Rome, reorganizing it as an empire, and presiding over the Silver Age of Latin literature, dominated by names like Virgil, Livy, and Ovid.

Augustus did not change foreign policy in Palestine much from that of his predecessors. He continued the employment of client kingdoms in the remote parts of the Roman Empire and in 30 BC confirmed Herod the Great as ruler of Judea.

first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup>So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife,<sup>a</sup> who was with child. <sup>6</sup>So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup>And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

#### Glory in the Highest

<sup>8</sup>Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>And behold,<sup>a</sup> an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. <sup>10</sup>Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup>For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

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

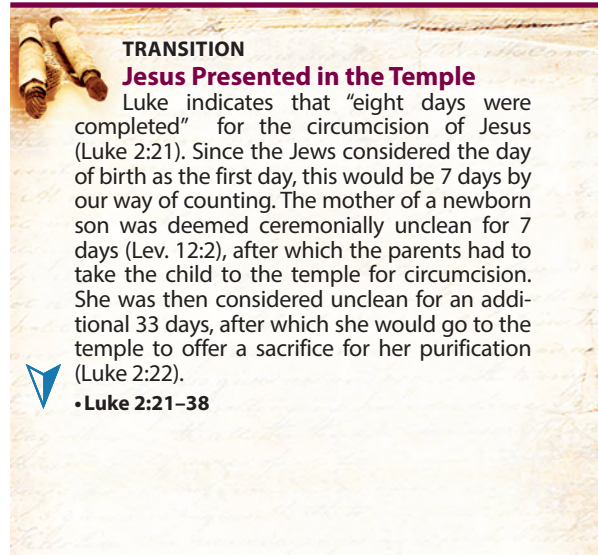
<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill  
toward men!”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>2:5</sup> <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits *wife*.    <sup>2:9</sup> <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits *behold*.

<sup>2:14</sup> <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *toward men of goodwill*.

<sup>15</sup>So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup>Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely<sup>a</sup> known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. <sup>18</sup>And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup>But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. <sup>20</sup>Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

<sup>2:17</sup> <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits *widely*.



#### TRANSITION

### Jesus Presented in the Temple

Luke indicates that “eight days were completed” for the circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2:21). Since the Jews considered the day of birth as the first day, this would be 7 days by our way of counting. The mother of a newborn son was deemed ceremonially unclean for 7 days (Lev. 12:2), after which the parents had to take the child to the temple for circumcision. She was then considered unclean for an additional 33 days, after which she would go to the temple to offer a sacrifice for her purification (Luke 2:22).

• Luke 2:21–38

**Luke****Circumcision of Jesus**

**2**:21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child,<sup>a</sup> His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

**Jesus Presented to God**

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

**Simeon Sees God's Salvation**

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

**29** "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;  
**30** For my eyes have seen Your salvation  
**31** Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,  
**32** A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

**2:21**<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *for His circumcision*. **2:23**<sup>a</sup> Exodus 13:2, 12, 15 **2:24**<sup>a</sup> Leviticus 12:8

**TIME CAPSULE****25 to 22 BC**

25	Antioch in Pisidia passes into Roman hands
25	Rome annexes kingdom of Amyntas to form province of Galatia
24	Herod relieves drought and plague in Judea
23	Cyrus becomes a senatorial province of Rome
23	Herod builds a square (the Praetorium?) in front of the palace
22	Herod the Great begins construction of Caesarea, a new seaport
22	The ruler of the Ethiopians signs a treaty with Rome

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

**Anna Bears Witness to the Redeemer**

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

**TRANSITION****Jesus Escapes to Egypt**

The visit of the wise men occurred some months after the birth of Jesus. Joseph and Mary were no longer in the stable, but living in a house (see Matt. 2:11) in Bethlehem, a village about 5 miles south of Jerusalem. The family fled from there to Egypt to escape the plot of Herod, who apparently feared the new King would replace him.

Herod died in 4 BC, and Matt. 2:16, 19 suggests that Jesus may have been one to two years old at that time (see "The Birth of Jesus" at Matt. 1:18). Herod's death meant that Joseph could take his young Child and wife Mary back to Israel (Matt. 2:19–21).



• **Matthew 2:1–21**

**Matthew****Wise Men from the East**

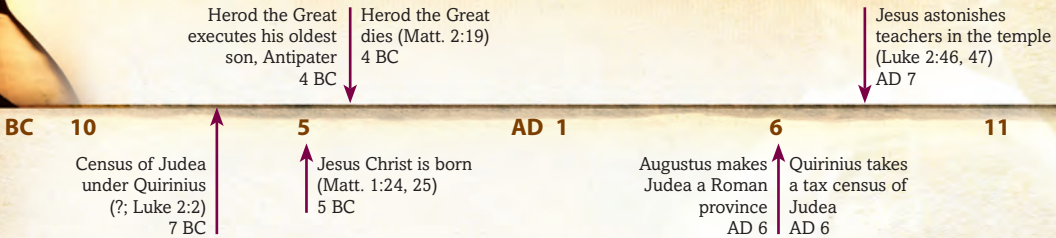
**2**:1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, **2** saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

**3** When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

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

**2:33**<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *And His father and mother*. **2:37**<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *a widow until she was eighty-four*. **2:38**<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *to God*.

**THE YOUNG JESUS**



6 ‘But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’<sup>a</sup>

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

9When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12Then, being divinely warned in a dream

2:6<sup>a</sup> Micah 5:2

that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

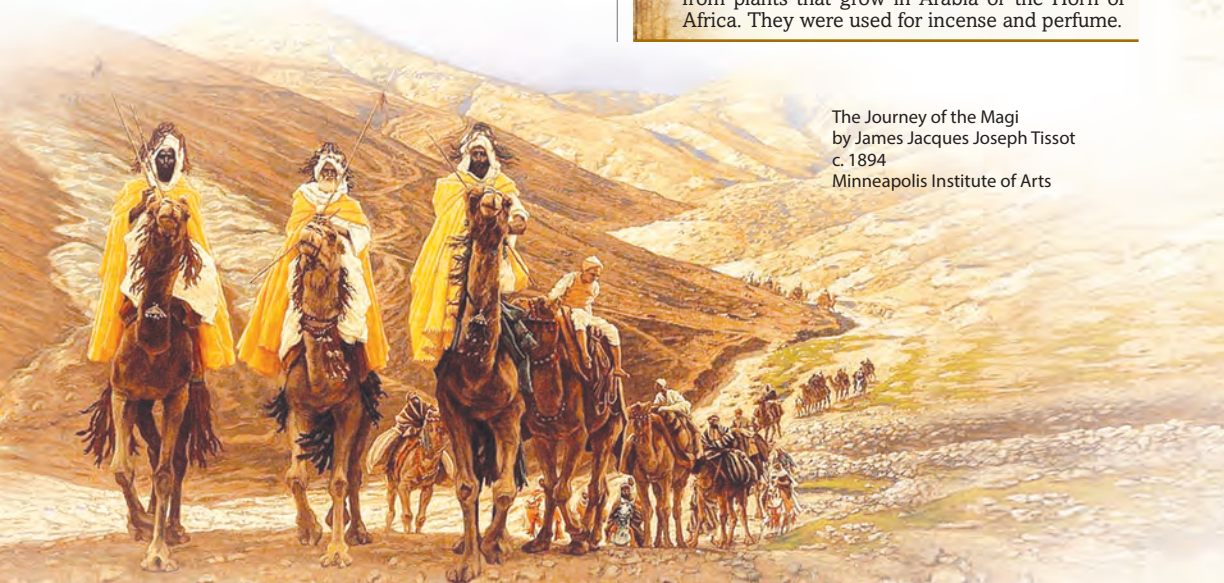
**The Flight into Egypt**

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

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

2:15<sup>a</sup> Hosea 11:1

**Trade & Economics**  
The gifts given to Jesus by the foreign rulers were luxury items (Matt. 2:11), like the symbolic gifts exchanged by rulers today, and like the wealth brought by Gentiles to Israel’s king (Ps. 72:10; Is. 60:6). Frankincense and myrrh are resins or gums taken from plants that grow in Arabia or the Horn of Africa. They were used for incense and perfume.



The Journey of the Magi  
by James Jacques Joseph Tissot  
c. 1894  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts

## JUDEA GROANS UNDER ARCHELAUS (MATT. 2:22)

Archelaus was the eldest son of Herod the Great (37–4 BC), the Roman-appointed king of Judea. He was the principal heir of his father's kingdom and was given the territory of Judea and Samaria, which he ruled himself from 4 BC to AD 6. Most of our information concerning Archelaus comes from the Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37–100), who states that the monarch was raised in Rome.

Although Archelaus was not as harsh a ruler as his father, his reign was marked by great unrest. He rigorously oppressed the Jews, culminating in 3,000 Jewish deaths in the temple precincts during a Passover celebration. He also continually interfered in the election of the Jewish high priest.

Jewish unrest climaxed in a large-scale rebellion which had to be quelled by the Romans. Because of instability in the region, the Roman emperor Augustus (27 BC–AD 14) decided to depose Archelaus and exiled him to Gaul in AD 6. Roman governors or procurators were appointed by the emperor to rule the Palestinian provinces.

Joseph's fear of returning to Judea with the young Jesus (Matt. 2:22) is understandable in light of the conditions during the short time Archelaus was in office. Tension and unrest in Judea probably made Galilee seem a much safer region in which to raise a child.

### Massacre of the Innocents

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

<sup>18</sup>“A voice was heard in Ramah,  
Lamentation, weeping, and  
great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
Refusing to be comforted,  
Because they are no more.”<sup>a</sup>

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

2:18<sup>a</sup> Jeremiah 31:15

### TRANSITION

## Jesus' Childhood in Nazareth of Galilee

Matthew's Gospel does not specify Joseph's hometown, but indicates that he decided not to return to Bethlehem of Judea to avoid living in the territory of Archelaus. The choice to settle instead in Nazareth of Galilee fulfilled a messianic prophecy (Matt. 2:23), for which no corresponding verse is found in the Old Testament.

Luke's Gospel, however, presumes that Joseph and Mary were residents of Nazareth (Luke 1:26; 2:4, 39). Jesus' birth in Bethlehem occurred because of a census that required His parents to return to their ancestral home (2:1–4). Not mentioning the family's flight to Egypt, Luke reports

only that from Bethlehem they traveled to Jerusalem (2:21–38) before returning home to Nazareth where Jesus was raised.

Obviously, the details of Jesus' childhood were buried in obscurity. Such things did not matter when He was thought to be only the son of simple peasants. After His death and resurrection, these differing accounts of His childhood did agree on two central points: He was born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of popular messianic expectations, but He was better known as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Matt. 26:71; Mark 1:24; 16:6; Luke 18:37). The so-called “Infancy Gospels” among the New Testament apocrypha offer wild speculation about events surrounding the youth of their wonder-child hero.

• Matthew 2:22, 23  
• Luke 2:39, 40

### Matthew 2:22, 23

**2**:22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. <sup>23</sup>And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

### Luke 2:39, 40

#### The Family Returns to Nazareth

**2**:39 So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>And the Child grew and became strong in spirit,<sup>a</sup> filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

2:40<sup>a</sup> NU-Text omits *in spirit*.

TIME CAPSULE	20 to 12 BC
20–AD 50	Historian Philo is part of wealthy Jewish family of Alexandria
20	The Parthians return captured standards and prisoners to Augustus
20	Herod the Great meets Augustus in Syria
20	Herod receives the region of Gaulanitis from Augustus
20–19	Herod begins rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem
20	Herod cuts taxes
19	Death of Virgil, Roman poet and friend of Augustus
19	The <i>Aeneid</i> manuscript is still incomplete at the poet Virgil's death
18	Herod the Great visits Augustus in Rome
17	Augustus appoints the children of M. V. Agrippa as his heirs
15	M. V. Agrippa presents sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem
15	Veterans of two legions colonize Berytus (Beirut)
15	Quirinius becomes praetor of Rome
15	Herod invites M. V. Agrippa to visit Judea
12	Augustus becomes "high priest" of Rome, the "Pontifex Maximus"
12	Quirinius elected consul of Rome

**TRANSITION**  
**Jesus Visits the Temple**

The date of Jesus' visit to the temple depends on the year of His birth (see "The Birth of Jesus" at Matt. 1:18). If He were born in 5 BC, this temple event could have occurred about AD 7. However, the date also depends on how exact we understand the age 12 (Luke 2:42).

The circumstances described in this event do not present Jesus as a child-prodigy. A Jewish boy was considered a man, accountable to the Law's demands, following his bar mitzvah at age 13. (Bar mitzvah, meaning "son of the commandment," is a religious rite of passage comparable to catechism and confirmation in some Christian traditions.) It was customary for Jewish parents to take their son to the temple one or two years before he turned 13. Thus Jesus' visit to the temple at this age, as well as His questions of and by the teachers of the Law, are consistent with normal Jewish practice. He took His relationship with God seriously. What was exceptional was His level of understanding (Luke 2:47).

• Luke 2:41–52

**Luke**

**The Boy Jesus Amazes the Scholars**

**2**:41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. **42**And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. **43**When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother<sup>a</sup> did not know *it*; **44**but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. **45**So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. **46**Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. **47**And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. **48**So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." **49**And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" **50**But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

**Jesus Advances in Wisdom and Favor**

**51**Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His

2:43<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *And His parents*.



**The Journeys of Jesus' Birth**

The decree of Caesar Augustus required Mary and Joseph to leave the Galilean city of Nazareth and register for the census in the Judean city of Bethlehem. After Jesus was born and circumcised, His parents took Him to the temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:1–40). Joseph fled from Bethlehem, taking his family to Egypt to escape from Herod the Great. Returning from Egypt after Herod's death, Jesus' family settled in Nazareth (Matt. 2:13–23).

## BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' ministry. The silence of John's early years was broken by his thundering call to repentance sometime around AD 26 or 27, shortly before Jesus began His ministry. Matthew's Gospel pictures John preaching in the wilderness of Judea (Matt. 3:1), calling people to repentance and baptism (3:3–10), announcing Jesus as the Coming One (3:11, 12), and baptizing Him (3:13–17).

According to the Synoptic Gospels, the main phase of Jesus' ministry began in Galilee after John's

imprisonment by Herod Antipas. Possibly John's arrest was a signal for Jesus to proclaim His message in Galilee: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:14, 15). In the Gospel of John, however, there is indication that Jesus ministered for a short time in Judea, while John the Baptist was still preaching (John 3:22–4:3). Some of John's disciples even became concerned because Jesus "baptized more disciples than John" (John 3:36; 4:1). John reassured his followers: Jesus' ministry was given to Him by God; John himself was only a forerunner (3:27, 28).

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.

### TRANSITION

#### John the Baptist

The description of John the Baptist in Matthew and Mark (Matt. 3:4; Mark 1:6) resembles that of Elijah in 2 Kin. 1:8. There were popular expectations of an Elijah-like figure who would prepare for the coming of the Messiah, and both Gospels explicitly report that Jesus identified John as the fulfillment (Matt. 11:14; 17:10–13; Mark 9:11–13). But according to the Fourth Gospel, John himself denied this identification (John 1:21, 25). Possibly the Baptist did not realize the true significance of his role. He could only describe himself as a herald preparing the way for the Lord's coming (John 1:23).

Luke dates the beginning of John's ministry as the 15th year of the Roman emperor Tiberius (Luke 3:1). Tiberius had a 2-year coregency with Augustus, his adoptive father, before Augustus died. Depending on whether Luke refers to the beginning of the coregency or of Tiberius's independent rule, the 15th year would be AD 26 or 28. Pontius Pilate was the Roman procurator (or governor) of Judea from AD 26 to 36. Caiaphas was the Jewish high priest from AD 18 to 36.

• Matthew 3:1–12

• Mark 1:1–8

• Luke 3:1–18

• John 1:19–28

Matthew 3:1–12

#### John the Baptist Prepares the Way

**3**:1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup>and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" <sup>3</sup>For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

"The voice of one crying  
in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the LORD;  
Make His paths straight.'"<sup>a</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him <sup>6</sup>and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

<sup>7</sup>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, <sup>9</sup>and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. <sup>10</sup>And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>11</sup>I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."<sup>a</sup> <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

3:3 <sup>a</sup>Isaiah 40:3 3:11 <sup>a</sup>M-Text omits *and fire*.

### Culture & Society

John the Baptist's rough appearance probably reminded his hearers of Elijah (2 Kin. 1:7, 8). The camel hair of John's garb was more rustic than linen or wool. His visible isolation and independence correspond to his spiritual and ethical independence. Thus he was preaching his message in the wilderness, not in the town (Matt. 3:1, 4; 11:7–9).

**JOHN'S BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE (MARK 1:4)**

Some people who claimed to be especially holy lived in the wilderness. Also, Jewish people anticipated a new exodus through the wilderness (Is. 40:3), so many who claimed to be prophets or messiahs gathered followings in wilderness areas. Only there were they usually safe from interference by the established Jewish and Roman authorities. Thus John the Baptist began his ministry “in the wilderness” (Mark 1:4).

Like other ancient peoples, Jewish people had many symbolic rituals involving water. They washed themselves before festivals and after contact with anything they considered impure. A washing ritual was also performed when a person was initiated into a wilderness sect like the Essenes (who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls). But John's baptism was different from these ritual washings; it was a once-for-all baptism, like the kind Gentiles experienced when they converted to Judaism.

In John's day, Jewish people had special ways to practice baptism. Normally a person would strip naked, step down into the baptismal pool, and dunk himself or herself completely under water. But John's baptisms were different. The persons baptized did not perform the rite on themselves, and so presumably did not strip naked. Jewish people generally detested nakedness, and *public* nude baptisms would have been scandalous.

John had a message for those who came for baptism: water alone could not change them; they needed genuine repentance. This was also true for baptisms of Gentiles into Judaism and baptisms of Jews becoming Essenes; both required a pure heart as well as water. Yet while Jewish people often spoke of “repentance” as a regular act each time one sinned, John preached a special repentance, a turning from sin to God. John thus expected from his own people the kind of repentance they expected of Gentiles who converted to Judaism (Matt. 3:8, 9).

**Mark 1:1–8**

**Preparation for Jesus' Ministry**

**1** :1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the Prophets:<sup>a</sup>

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.”<sup>b</sup>

**3** “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>4</sup>John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. <sup>5</sup>Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

<sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. <sup>8</sup>I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

**Luke 3:1–18**

**Ministry of the Baptist**

**3** :1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region


1:2 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *Isaiah the prophet*. <sup>b</sup>Malachi 3:1  
1:3 <sup>a</sup>Isaiah 40:3

of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests,<sup>a</sup> the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, <sup>4</sup>as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.

**5** Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth;  
**6** And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”<sup>a</sup>

3:2 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text and M-Text read *in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas*. 3:6 <sup>a</sup>Isaiah 40:3–5

TIME CAPSULE		12 to 10 BC
12		Death of Augustus's friend and son-in-law (M. V. Agrippa)
12		An altar is dedicated to Roma and Augustus in Lyon, France
11		Augustus revives the priesthood of Jupiter in Rome
10		Dedication of Caesarea, Herod's seaport
10		Herod Antipas gives a display of gladiators at Caesarea
10		Birth of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1)



### John Preaches to the People

7Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as *our* father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 9And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10So the people asked him, saying, “What shall we do then?”

11He answered and said to them, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.”

12Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”

13And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.”

14Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?”

So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.”

15Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ *or* not, 16John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”

18And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.

### John 1:19–28

#### A Voice in the Wilderness

**1**:19 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

20He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

21And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

And he answered, “No.”

22Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”

23He said: “I am

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the LORD,’”<sup>a</sup>

as the prophet Isaiah said.”

24Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. 25And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

26John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. 27It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”

28These things were done in Bethabara<sup>a</sup> beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

1:23<sup>a</sup> Isaiah 40:3 1:28<sup>a</sup> NU-Text and M-Text read *Bethany*.

#### TRANSITION

#### The Baptism of Jesus

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus’ baptism marks His inauguration as the servant Messiah and the dawning of the new age of the Spirit. The Spirit is the agent of a new beginning. The open heaven, the descending dove, and the confirming heavenly voice highlight the ultimate revelatory significance of the baptism. Jesus was anointed by the Spirit of God as the Messiah and the Servant of the Lord described centuries earlier by the prophet Isaiah (Is. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1).

Mark’s account of Jesus’ baptism was open to several possible false interpretations. Readers of his Gospel might conclude (1) that Jesus was a repentant sinner (see Mark 1:4, 9), or (2) that He was inferior to John who baptized Him (1:9), or (3) that He became the Son of God at His baptism (1:10, 11).

The other evangelists denied such speculations early in their Gospels. The birth narratives in Matthew and Luke emphasize that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20), and even as a baby was the Christ (Luke 2:11). He was neither sinful nor inferior prior to His baptism. John’s prologue makes it clear that Jesus did not become the Son of God through baptism, but had been such from eternity (John 1:1–18).

Each evangelist further reformulates the baptism story to preclude any confusion Mark’s account might allow. Matthew introduces a dialogue between John and Jesus in which Jesus explained His true motive for receiving baptism (“to fulfill all righteousness,” Matt. 3:15) and John acknowledged his inferiority to Jesus (3:14). Luke reports the imprisonment of John (Luke 3:19, 20) before describing Jesus’ baptism. In his baptism narrative Luke nowhere refers to John and describes the Spirit as coming upon Jesus in response to His own prayer (3:21).

The Fourth Gospel stresses John's inferiority to Jesus (John 1:6–8, 19–37) and never mentions Jesus' baptism by John nor John's preaching of repentance. John served only as a witness to Jesus: (1) that Jesus received the abiding Spirit; (2) that He is the One who baptizes with the Spirit; and (3) that He is the Son of God (John 1:32–34).

- Matthew 3:13–17
- Mark 1:9–11
- Luke 3:21, 22
- John 1:29–34

**Matthew 3:13–17**

**John Baptizes Jesus**

**3**:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>And John *tried to prevent Him*, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

<sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

<sup>16</sup>When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He<sup>a</sup> saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. <sup>17</sup>And suddenly a voice

3:16<sup>a</sup> Or *he*



*came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

**Mark 1:9–11**

**1**:9 It came to pass in those days *that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee*, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And immediately, coming up from<sup>a</sup> the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. <sup>11</sup>Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

**Luke 3:21, 22**

**3**:21 When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. <sup>22</sup>And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

**John 1:29–34**

**The Lamb of God**

**1**:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' <sup>31</sup>I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

<sup>32</sup>And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. <sup>33</sup>I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup>And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

1:10<sup>a</sup> NU-Text reads *out of*.

**TRANSITION**

**The Genealogy of Jesus**

The genealogy in Luke's Gospel moves in reverse of the order found in Matthew's genealogy (see "The Genealogy of Jesus" at Matt. 1:1). Luke continues beyond Abraham, all the way back to Adam, thus setting the story of Jesus within the history of God's dealings with all humanity.

Luke introduces the genealogy with the comment that Jesus "began His ministry" (Luke 3:23). By referring to the beginning of Jesus' ministry before relating the temptation, Luke makes Jesus' victory over Satan's temp-

tations the first event of His ministry. Matthew and Mark begin Jesus' ministry after the temptation (see "Early Ministry in Galilee" at Matt. 4:12).

According to the Synoptics, Jesus did not begin His ministry until John completed his. Matthew's and Mark's Gospels place Jesus' ministry in Galilee after the arrest of John the Baptist (Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14). In Luke's presentation, John's arrest is recorded before Jesus' baptism, as well as before His ministry (Luke 3:19, 20, 23). Only in the Fourth Gospel do Jesus and John seem to minister simultaneously before John fades from the scene.

Luke puts Jesus' age at "about thirty years" at the time He began to minister (Luke 3:23). If Jesus were born in 5 BC, He would have been 30 during part of AD 26 and AD 27. It is possible chronologically that Jesus and John could have ministered at the same time around AD 26 (see "John the Baptist" at Matt. 3:1). However, we should not attempt precise dates since the Gospels offer different conceptions as to what marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

• Luke 3:23–38

## Luke

### From Jesus to Adam

**3:23** Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) *the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, <sup>24</sup>the son of Matthat,<sup>a</sup> the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, <sup>25</sup>the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, <sup>26</sup>the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, <sup>27</sup>the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, <sup>28</sup>the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodan, the son of Er, <sup>29</sup>the*

**3:24**<sup>a</sup>This and several other names in the genealogy are spelled somewhat differently in the NU-Text. Since the New King James Version uses the Old Testament spelling for persons mentioned in the New Testament, these variations, which come from the Greek, have not been footnoted.

*son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, <sup>30</sup>the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, <sup>31</sup>the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, <sup>32</sup>the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, <sup>33</sup>the son of Aminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, <sup>34</sup>the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, <sup>35</sup>the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, <sup>36</sup>the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, <sup>37</sup>the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, <sup>38</sup>the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

#### TIME CAPSULE



7 to 4 BC

7	Herod the Great executes his sons Alexander and Aristobulus
7	Census of Judea under Quirinius (?; Luke 2:2)
5	Birth of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:24, 25)
4	Wise men from the East visit Jesus (Matt. 2:1–12)
4	Herod the Great executes his oldest son, Antipater

#### TRANSITION

### The Temptation of Jesus

In all three Synoptics Jesus' temptation is not that of any ordinary individual, but of the Messiah, the Spirit-anointed Servant and Son of God (Ps. 2:7; Is. 42:1), as the heavenly voice affirmed at His baptism (Matt. 3:17). The Spirit led Jesus to face the question of what kind of Messiah He would be.

During the Intertestamental Period many Jews had come to believe that somehow Satan had wrested from God control of this earth. Thus, when Jesus emerged victorious from His test by Satan, He could announce the good news of the nearness of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15; Matt. 4:17), the messianic age (Luke 4:14–22), or the age of the Spirit (John 4:23, 24; 7:37–39).

The order of the three temptations is different in Matthew and Luke. Matthew's order moves toward a more logical climax: "turn stones to bread" (Matt. 4:3); "throw Yourself from the temple" (4:6); "give You all things" (4:9). Luke's order, making the temple the last temptation, moves Jesus once again toward His destiny in Jerusalem: "turn stone to bread"

#### TIME CAPSULE



9 to 8 BC

9–7	Sentius Saturninus, governor of Syria, conducts census
9	Aretas IV becomes ruler of Nabatea (southwest of Judea)
9	Dedication in Rome of the altar to the Peace of Augustus
8	Augustus conducts census
8	Death of the Roman poet Horace

**LUKE & THE CAREER OF QUIRINIUS**

Luke’s Gospel lists a census that was conducted at the time of Jesus’ birth, “while Quirinius was governing Syria” (Luke 2:1, 2). Further, Luke indicates that John the Baptist began preaching in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (3:1) and that Jesus was about 30 years old when He began to minister (3:23). Scholars are uncertain how to coordinate Luke’s chronological information with the varied career of P. Sulpicius Quirinius.

Year	Event
31 BC	Augustus Caesar becomes emperor of Rome (31 BC–AD 14)
15 BC	Quirinius becomes praetor of Rome
14 BC	Quirinius, as governor of Crete and Cyrene, defeats desert tribe
12 BC	Quirinius elected consul of Rome
5 BC	Quirinius, as governor of Pamphylia and Galatia, subdues tribes in south Galatia
5 BC	Jesus is born 1 or 2 years before Herod’s death (Matt. 2:1, 16), and about 30 years before Tiberius’s 15th year
4 BC	Herod the Great dies in March; Archelaus is made ruler of Judea at Passover in April
AD 2	Quirinius becomes chief advisor to Augustus’s grandson Gaius
AD 6	Archelaus is deposed, and Judea becomes a Roman province, subject to taxes by census
AD 6	Quirinius, as governor of Syria, conducts census in Syria and surrounding territories
AD 14	Tiberius Caesar becomes emperor of Rome (AD 14–37)
AD 21	Public funeral for Quirinius
AD 26	15th year of Tiberius, counting from his coregency with Augustus

The census taken by Quirinius in AD 6 is too late for Jesus’ birth. Some think that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice, taking a census both times. Others think it would be highly unusual for Quirinius to conduct a census before his appointment in AD 6. While some historians regard Luke’s information as flawed, others accept his statements as proof that Quirinius’s career was unusual.

(Luke 4:3); “give You all things” (4:6, 7); “throw Yourself from the temple” (4:9). See “Jesus’ Final Journey” at Matt. 8:18.

- Matthew 4:1–11
- Mark 1:12, 13
- Luke 4:1–13



**Matthew 4:1–11**  
**Satan Tempts Jesus**

**4**:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2**And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. **3**Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

**4**But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”<sup>a</sup>

**5**Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, **6**and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’  
and,

‘In *their* hands they shall bear you up,  
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”<sup>a</sup>

**7**Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’”<sup>a</sup>

**8**Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9**And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

**10**Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you,<sup>a</sup> Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>4:4<sup>a</sup>Deuteronomy 8:3

<sup>a</sup>4:6<sup>a</sup>Psalm 91:11, 12 <sup>a</sup>4:7<sup>a</sup>Deuteronomy 6:16 <sup>a</sup>4:10<sup>a</sup>M-Text reads *Get behind Me.* <sup>b</sup>Deuteronomy 6:13