

The Harmony of the Gospels

Part 3b – Jesus & John the Baptist (Birth to manhood)

(Mathew 1:18- 2:23 ; Luke 1:5- 2:52)

Previously, we did the study focussing on the events chronologically. Please follow the chart below and refer previous notes to be on the same page.

The Gospels of both Matthew and Luke detail the birth of Jesus. Luke's unique take on the nativity of Christ comes into sharper focus when compared with Matthew. Luke's Gospel is not only good news but it is a historically accurate record of the events surrounding the birth, life and death of the Messiah. Matthew's account gets Jesus into Bethlehem by way of Joseph's dreams. Luke's account, on the other hand, gets the holy family to Bethlehem through political and historical events. "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus ..." (Luke 2:1a).

Gospels of Mark & John do not have the details of the birth of Jesus. The gospels are theological reflections on the meaning of Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah who is revealed to be the universal saviour of all people.

Previously in Part 3a we saw:

1. An angel appears to Zechariah (birth of John the Baptist foretold)
2. An angel appears to Mary (birth of Jesus foretold)
3. Mary visits Elizabeth
4. Birth of John the Baptist
5. The angel's advice to Joseph

		When & where	Mathew	Mark	Luke	John
Part 1 – Introduction						
Part 2 – The Pre-existent state of Christ and His incarnation						
1.	The dedication to Luke’s gospel				1:1-4	
2.	Christ’s pre incarnate existence					1:1-18
3.	The genealogies of Jesus		1:1-17		3:23b – 38	
Part 3 a – Jesus & John the Baptist (Birth to manhood)						
1.	An Angel appears to Zechariah (at the temple)	Jerusalem (15 months before Jesus’ birth)			1:5-25	
2.	An angel appears to Mary	Nazareth (9 months before birth of Jesus)			1:26-38	
3.	Mary visits Elizabeth	Judea			1:39-56	
4.	Birth of John the Baptist	Judea (6 months before the birth of Jesus)			1:57-80	
5.	The angel’s advice to Joseph	Nazareth	1:18-25a			
Part 3 b– Jesus & John the Baptist (Birth to manhood)						
6.	Birth of Jesus	Bethlehem			2:1-20	
7.	Circumcision & naming of Jesus	8 days old	1:25b		2:21	
8.	Jesus presented in the temple	Jerusalem (40 days after birth)			2:22-39a	
9.	Visit of the Magi	Jerusalem, Bethlehem	2:1-12			
10.	The flight to Egypt	Egypt	2:13-18			
11.	Return to Nazareth	Nazareth	2:19-23		2:39b	
12.	John & Jesus’ childhood				1:80a ; 2:40	
13.	Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem	12 years old			2:41-51	
14.	Later childhood				2:52	

In Part 3b we will look into the following events:

6. Birth of Jesus (Joseph & Mary to whom he was engaged, travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem) Luke 2:1-20
(Now Joseph & pregnant Mary are together)

- A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. A census was to be taken. Rome took a census every fourteen years for both military and tax purposes, and each Jewish male had to return to the city of his fathers to record his name, occupation, property, and family.

Note that this is not his actual name but a combination of two titles. Caesar is a title like king or emperor and Augustus is an adjective to describe somebody. Augustus means august, revered, highly esteemed, highly regarded, honored. Augustus was given as an indication of how they honored him. And thus the title Caesar Augustus refers to Gaius Octavius, (born 63 B.C) who ruled Rome from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14.

The title 'Augustus' meant "worthy of reverence," which is an insinuation that he was worthy of worship. Coins issued by Augustus featured Caesar's image and inscriptions such as "Divine Caesar and Son of God." Christ is the true possessor of the titles claimed by Augustus. It is not Augustus who is Savior and Lord, but "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord" (Luke 2:11). It is not Augustus, but Jesus who is the Son of God (Luke 1:32).

Though Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar was ruling, God was in charge, for He used Caesar's edict to move Mary and Joseph eighty miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill His Word.

When Mary said "Be it unto me according to Thy word" (Luke 1:38), it meant that from then on, her life would be a part of the fulfillment of divine prophecy. God had promised that the Saviour would be a human, not an angel (Gen 3:15; Heb. 2:16), and a Jew, not a Gentile (Ge 12:1-3; Nu 24:17). He would be from the tribe of Judah (Ge 49:10), and the family of David (2Sa 7:1-17), born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14) in Bethlehem, 'the city of David' ***Micah 5:2 "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."***

Jeremiah 23:5-6 we know He is from the line of King David: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land ... This is the name by which he will be called: the Lord our righteous savior."

From Isaiah 7:14 we know that He was born from a virgin: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and you will call him Immanuel.”

From Isaiah 11:1 we know He is from the line of Jesse, the father of King David: “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him.”

- And all went to be registered, returned each to his own town.
- And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He took Mary with Him to whom He was engaged. Joseph obediently brought his pregnant wife Mary (who is about 13) some 85-90 miles (1 week’s journey) from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which was about 2,564 feet above sea level, so travelers from Nazareth would have to ascend in altitude, hence Luke's accurate description of ‘went up’.

Bethlehem (house of bread) - In fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy in Micah. How fitting that the House of Bread would be the site of the birth of the Bread of Life (John 6:35). Who would grow up, die and be raised from the dead that He might be able to nourish the entire world with "spiritual bread."

- ***Luke 2:6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born.***
We often think that Mary was close to delivery when they made this journey, but this may not have been the case at all. Joseph may have been anxious to get her out of Nazareth to avoid the pressure of scandal (subject of much gossip in Nazareth). Luke tells us that it was while they were in Bethlehem, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.
‘When the time came/ completed’- *pimplemi*- to fill, to make full, to complete
- ***Luke 2:7 She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.***

The mention of a manger has led many to conclude Jesus was actually born in a stable. But that is not what the text says. Luke only says Mary laid Him in a manger which was a feeding trough, something that could be found inside of or outside of a stable.

Luke showed the King of kings born into poor and humble circumstances—born as a human, born to serve.

The rank of the child was usually indicated by the splendor and costliness of these bands. Children of wealthy parents would wrap the child with white linen and gold bands. They would also use expensive purple cloth, fastened with a broach. The infant was wrapped firm and tight. It looked like a little mummy. Arms, hands, and feet could not be seen.

- **Angels inform Shepherds who were guarding their flock nearby.**

Normally the birth of a prince would be announced to kings and other dignitaries, but this "princely" announcement was given to lowly shepherds, not to priests, rulers, kings, Pharisees nor Scribes, not to the great men of Israel but common shepherds, who as a class were actually considered as "outcasts" by the Jewish hierarchy! Shepherds were near the bottom of the social ladder. They were uneducated and unskilled, increasingly viewed in the post-New Testament era as dishonest, unreliable, unsavory characters, so much so that they were not allowed to testify in court. They were chosen to be first witnesses that His Son had come into the world.

Why the first announcement of the birth of Jesus was made to shepherds? Why weren't the angels sent to kings, nobles or to fishermen and tax collectors? These shepherds were not ordinary shepherds. The shepherds to whom the angels appeared were the ones who were in charge of the temple flock. They had the oversight of the lambs that would soon be sacrificed to provide atonement for sin. Their eyes had been trained to notice any defect or blemish a lamb might have because only perfect lambs could be used as sacrificial lambs. Any flaw rendered a lamb unacceptable as an offering to God. And now the Lord was calling upon these shepherds to go and inspect the Ultimate Lamb. The spotless Lamb was ready to become the sacrificial Lamb.

Luke 2:12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (focus is on baby wrapped in cloths, not Joseph / Mary)

When the wise men came, they were guided by a star. The humble shepherds were directed to a stable. There might be many babies born & swaddled but one baby in the manger.

Sign (*semeion* a sign is something that serves as a pointer to aid perception or insight.

Are we willing to be His signposts, a star – directing others to Christ?

The angel was joined by a host of angels & sang – *Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.*

Luke 2:19 But Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

Treasured (suntereo from sun/syn = with + tereo = guard, keep) means to keep closely together, keep close, preserve. Here Mary reflects deeply and carefully the words of the shepherds, keeping them in her mind, safely storing them up (so to speak).

Pondering (sumballo from sún = together, with + bállō = to cast) literally means to throw together, placing together or bringing together for comparing and weighing facts. Then the idea is “to converse, to carry on a discussion,” or “to consider carefully and draw conclusions” about a certain matter. Here it speaks of Mary pondering these things in her heart, giving them careful thought, thinking seriously about them.

7. Circumcision & naming of Jesus

Luke 2:21 Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given to him by the angel even before he was conceived.

There were three legal ceremonies which Jesus underwent. (First was done locally, the latter two in the Temple)

1. There was the ceremony of circumcision – 8th day. It was a token of the covenant that God made with Abraham. On this same day, the child was named, according to Jewish custom.
2. There was the ceremony of purification. This was a ceremony Mary had to go through. After the birth of a boy child a woman was considered unclean for forty days (eighty for a girl child). She could work around the home and engage in normal activities, but she could not take part in religious ceremonies. She was religiously, that is, ceremonially, unclean. After a woman's forty or eighty days were up, she was to make an offering in the temple (Leviticus 12:1-8).
3. There was the ceremony of dedication to the Lord (Luke 2:23; Exodus 13:2,12,15; Leviticus 27:6; Numbers 18:15-16). A male child was presented (dedicated) in the temple when the family was close to Jerusalem.

Spurgeon: Our Saviour put Himself under the law for our sakes, and in every jot and tittle He observed it. So we are delivered from its dominion; for if Christ has fulfilled the

law on our account, it has no more claim upon us. ***“Ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Romans 6:14).*** Everything was done that was required by the Jewish law, you see. ***“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Galatians 4:4)***

8. **Jesus presented in the temple. (Parents took Jesus to Jerusalem present him to the Lord) (Luke 2:22-39a) AFTER 40 DAYS**

- ***“If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord.” 24 So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord.***
- Ordinarily parents were supposed to bring a lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering. But in the case of the poor, they were permitted to bring “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons” (Lev. 12:6–8). The fact that Mary brought no lamb, but only two young pigeons is a reflection of the poverty into which Jesus was born.
- The main purpose in presenting the baby at the Temple is the redemption of the firstborn as commanded in the Mosaic Law. Ex 34:19 says “The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the first offspring from cattle and sheep.” Do you know why? The reason is for the purchase of every firstborn child of Israel, as God spared the firstborn of Israel in Egypt’s deadliest plague. (Exodus 13:2, 12, 13, 15).
- ***Luke 2: 25 At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon - He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him 26 and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. 27 That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, 28 Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,..... He prophesied over Mary “He has been sent as a sign from God”***
- Anna, a prophetess was also in the temple. Anna is certainly notable as a prophetess because there had not been any truly inspired spokesperson for God for 400 years, since the prophet Malachi! **And don't miss how Luke includes the women involved in the story of Jesus' life.**

She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years.

Luke 2: 37 Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshipping God with fasting and prayer.

38 She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

Note that each of these experiences reaches the depth of humiliation. Christ stooped to the lowest point of human experience in every condition in order to become the Perfect Savior who sympathizes. He can now identify with and feel for any person's circumstances. He knows you just as you are!

9. Visit of the Magi: (Jerusalem/ Bethlehem)

Mathew 2:1-12

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 saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6 "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

2: 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

- Bethlehem in Galilee seven miles northwest of Nazareth. This Bethlehem (house of bread, the name means) of Judah was the scene of Ruth's life with Boaz (Ruth 1:1; Mathew 1:5) and the home of David, descendant of Ruth and ancestor of Jesus (Mathew 1:5). David was born here and anointed king by Samuel (1 Sam. 17:12). The town came to be called the city of David (Luke 2:11). Jesus, who was born in this House of Bread called himself the Bread of Life (John 6:35), the true Manna from heaven.

AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL - Micah 5:2

- Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea - Note the expression of time after. The question is how long after Jesus was born? If we compare Matthew 2:1 with Matthew 2:7 and Matthew 2:16 this suggests that that the wise men evidently arrived around two years after the birth of Jesus. Why else would Herod kill all the male infants two years or younger?

- Herod the great (Herod the paranoid): He killed three of his sons on suspicion of treason and murdered his favorite wife, her mother, and several other family members. He suffered from paranoia.

He tried to trick the wise men into serving as spies to help him murder Jesus. When that didn't work, he killed all the male children in Bethlehem under two years old in a murderous effort to exterminate God's anointed one (Matthew 2:16).

Mathew 2:3 Was troubled (disturbed)(tarasso) literally means to shake back and forth, be agitated (like water boiling) and stir up (like the pool)

- Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem - Thinking that the King of the Jews would be born in the royal palace, they went to Herod
- Notice first, that they are magi or wise men, not kings. Magi (wise men- magos) is derived from the Persian word magus meaning "great" (thus "great, powerful men") and in the plural ("magi") as in Mathew 2:1, 7, 16, magi referred to the high priestly caste Persians (also Medes and Babylonians) who are affectionately called the "wise men." Expert in astrology, interpretation of dreams.
- The magi had in some way been made aware of this divine birth and had come seeking the KING OF THE JEWS. Apparently, the magi were ignorant of the

prophecy in Micah 5:2 as was Herod. They would have assumed that the Messiah would be born in the capital of Israel, Jerusalem."

- Star – as an announcement. A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel. —Numbers 24:17

On the night Jesus was born, the bright light of a single star announced His birth. It was an announcement that many had hoped and prayed for, yet many missed.

Daniel 12:3 “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

- ***Mathew2: 10 They bowed down and worshipped Him.*** Proskuneo represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect.

The first recorded worshippers were poor Jewish shepherds and now we see rich Gentile wise men, giving us a foreshadowing of Jesus' life purpose to be the Savior of the world, both Jews and Gentiles!

- ***Mathew 2:11.*** Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh - Their treasures implies they gave their best! The gifts were expensive gifts and were fit for a king.
- In Bethlehem, Jesus' family is living in a home and not a stable (Matthew 2:11)

10. The flight to Egypt:

Luke 2:13-18 Matthew 2:13 Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

- And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod . Return (anakampto from aná = back again + kámpto = bend) means literally to bend back or turn back and so to return. To bend back one's course. To bend one's steps back.
- Luke 2:14 Joseph's unquestioning obedience. The same night he left with Mary & child and stayed in Egypt until Herod's death. ***Fulfilment of prophecy : When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. Hosea 11:1***
- Luke 2:16 Herod was furious. Enraged (thumuoo) is used only here but we get a vivid picture of the meaning from the root word thumos which in turn is from

thúo which means to move impetuously, particularly as the air or wind, a violent motion or passion of the mind; move violently, rush along.

- Luke 2:18 is the fulfillment of prophecy in ***Jeremiah 31:15 Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."***

Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, died in Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19) and thus the grieving mothers of Bethlehem's slaughtered children are all personified in her name. Rachel was the mother of Benjamin, whose descendants were still associated with the town. Jacob put up a pillar to mark Rachel's grave which is near Bethlehem. Jeremiah's prophecy was given about 600 years before Christ was born.

Some of the captives were taken to Ramah in Benjamin, near Jerusalem; She represented the mothers of Israel weeping as they saw their sons going into captivity. It was as though Rachel said, "I gave my life to bear a son, and now his descendants are no more."

11. The return to Nazareth: (Egypt to Nazareth)

Mathew 2: 19-23 19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." 21 And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. 23 And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

They would have spent one to two years in Egypt, based on Josephus' account of Herod dying in Jericho in 4 B.C.

- Angel's direction
- Archelaus was King Herod the great's oldest son. Archelaus, Antipas, Philip the tetrarch were all his sons. King Agrippa 1 & 2 mentioned in Acts are his grandson & great grandson). Like his father, Archelaus rules with tyranny and cruelty.
- And came and lived in a city called Nazareth. That they came and lived here makes sense as Nazareth is where Gabriel was sent to announce to Mary she would be the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-30, Luke 2:4). Nazareth was a no name town,

thought to be home of nobody, but when Joseph moved his family there after returning from Egypt, Nazareth became the home of the greatest.

- **Nazareth – Why did Jesus have to Grow Up Here?**

Nazareth had such a low reputation; it was not even mentioned in the Old Testament. While the region of Galilee in Jesus' day generally had a negative reputation and was looked down on by Judeans (Jerusalem and Bethlehem were in Judea), Nazareth was even more looked down upon.

Neither the word “Nazareth” nor the word “Nazarene” actually occur in the Old Testament. The place has no significance whatsoever. It occurs in no story and not a single prophet literally says “the Messiah will be called ‘a Nazarene.’” It is off the map as far as the Old Testament is concerned.

We understand Nathaniel’s shock ***In John 1:46 "Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"***

Messiah was actually expected to come from somewhere else, namely Bethlehem, the hometown of David. Jesus’ ancestors were from Bethlehem

Nazareth was a no name town, thought to be home of nobody, but when Joseph moved his family there after returning from Egypt, Nazareth became the home of the greatest. Because Jesus was present in the city.

Mathew 2:23 And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

We learn at least three things from this statement. First of all, we learn that although Joseph’s decision to move to Nazareth appears to be entirely his own, in reality what was happening was the outworking of the plan of God: Jesus’ association with Nazareth is no accident of history.

Second, God’s decision to bring this about was communicated beforehand through the words of the prophets (we are not told which ones).

Finally, Matthew clarifies how Nazareth plays a role in God’s plan: it was to be the place after which the Messiah would “be called.” In other words, the significance of Nazareth consists in how it would become part of Jesus’ public identity. What

matters is the person and not the physical space. And we see this worked out in the Gospels and Acts: Jesus is indeed called “the Nazarene” by just about everyone: friends and enemies alike; demons address him as such .

(Mark 1:24“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”; Luke 4:34 What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”)

The sign on the cross mentions his Nazarene roots ***(John 19:19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”)***

Even after his resurrection, the glorified Jesus identified himself as such when he confronted Paul on the road to Damascus ***(Acts 22:88 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’)***

12. John the Baptist & Jesus’ childhood:

(John the Baptist) Luke 1:80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

(Jesus) Luke 2:40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

(Jesus) Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Jesus continues to live in Nazareth until he journeys to Capernaum to begin his public ministry.

13. Jesus visit to Jerusalem: (12 years old) Read Luke 2:41-51

Luke introduces Jesus as a young scholar engaging in theological discussion with the teachers in the temple. Jesus’ age is very significant in this narrative. The twelve-year old boy impresses skillful teachers with his knowledge; this is a symbolic story of a young prophet and future leader. Luke is interested in introducing Jesus as superior to Augustus. Jesus became strong and filled with heavenly wisdom.

