

# The Harmony of the Gospels

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

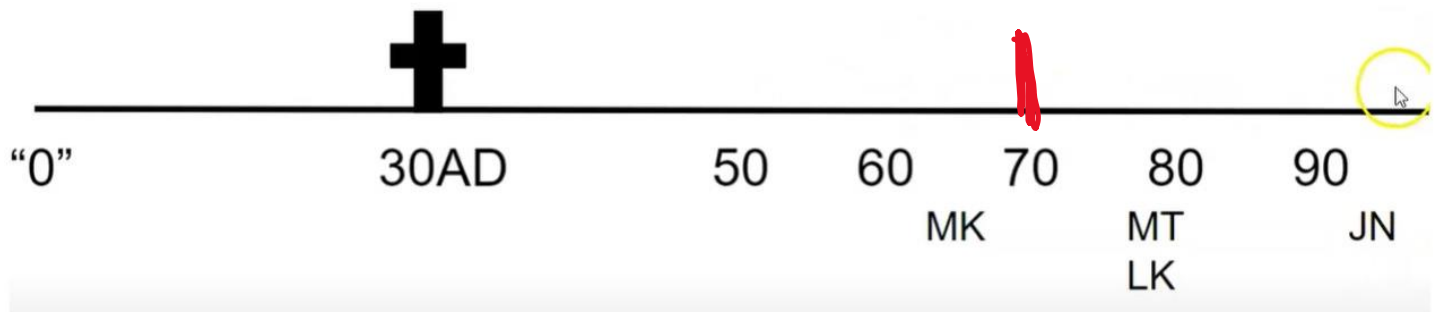
(Mathew 1:18- 2:23 ; Luke 1:5- 2:52)

### The chronology/ timeline of the gospels:

History divided into 2 era – B.C (Before Christ) and A.D (Anno Domini) After death

Mathew has recorded the birth of Jesus as before 4 BC (at the time of Herod).

Luke has recorded the birth of Jesus as after AD 6 (born during the governorship of Quirinius- as census was taken around that time)



30 AD – death & resurrection of Christ

AD 70 – The destruction of Jerusalem by Romans

Gospel of Mark written between AD 60 – AD 70

Gospel of Mathew & Luke written between AD 70 – AD 80

Gospel of John written around /after AD 90

Today we are doing the narrative of Jesus & John the Baptist from their birth to manhood.

The clearest places where the virgin birth is taught are the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, for these are the only two places in Scripture where the birth of Christ is narrated. Mark does not include an infancy narrative at all. Instead, Mark jumps right to the public ministry of Jesus.

**Luke – writer of Gospel of Luke** was a physician, a non Jewish author (only gentile author in New testament), not a direct eyewitness, disciple of Paul , travelled with Paul. He also wrote the book of Acts.

Scholars have noted that Luke had an outstanding command of the Greek language. His vocabulary is extensive and rich, and his style at times approaches that of classical Greek. He

was familiar with sailing and had a special love for recording geographical details. All this would indicate that Luke was a well-educated, observant, and careful writer.

His writings are based on careful investigation. ***Luke 1:2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us.*** Eyewitness (autoptes) a medical term: autopsy, a detailed examination. 'Ministers of the word' (huperetes) a medical intern/student who is learnt/ taught by Christ. It simply means Paul interviewed those who autopsied the lifestyle of Christ and gotten information from them – my firsthand testimony.

		When & where	Mathew	Mark	Luke	John
<b>Part 1 – Introduction</b>						
<b>Part 2 – The Pre-existent state of Christ and His incarnation</b>						
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	
<b>Part 3a – Jesus &amp; John the Baptist (Birth to manhood)</b>						
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			

### Chronological study :

1. **An Angel appears to Zechariah** (at the temple, Jerusalem).

#### **Luke 1:5-25 (The conception & birth of John the Baptist foretold)**

- At the time when Herod was King of Judea
- Jewish priest named Zechariah/ Zacharias' (name means “Yahweh has remembered”)
- Member of the priestly order of Abijah : There were 24 divisions of priesthood and the priestly division of Abijah was eighth on the list according to 1 Chr 24:6-19

The priestly divisions are the groups into which Jewish priests were divided for the purposes of their service in the Temple in Jerusalem.

During Zechariah's priestly division's rotation of duties in the temple, he was "chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense" (Luke 1:9). Each priestly division served in the temple only twice a year and the duties were assigned by lot. Every direct descendant of Aaron was automatically a priest. That meant that for all ordinary purposes there were far too many priests.

There were so many priests at this time that the privilege of burning incense in the Holy Place came only once in a lifetime, if at all. It was quite possible that many a priest would never have the privilege of burning incense all his life; but if the lot did fall on any priest, that day was the greatest day in all his life, the day he longed for and dreamed of. On this day the lot fell on Zacharias, and one could imagine him to be thrilled to the core. (Luke 1)

- And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth - So both Zacharias and Elizabeth were from priestly lines. Elizabeth means "God is my oath." (or "My God is an oath") A priest might marry only a woman of absolutely pure Jewish lineage. It was especially meritorious to marry a woman who was also a descendant of Aaron, as was Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias. "To be a priest and married to a priest's daughter was a double distinction".
- Zacharias and Elizabeth were notable for excellence of character: "They were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. (Luke 1:6) . Godly examples – **walked blamelessly**.
- **The contrast**: But no children, as Elizabeth was unable to conceive, as they both were old. Barren (steiros from stereos = firm, solid, immovable; Root ster- = firm hence English "sterile"). Advanced in years (probaino from pro = before + baino = step) means literally to go forward, to advance – gone past normal limits)

### **Elizabeth (God is my oath) + Zechariah (God remembers)**

But considering they were barren in their old age, looked like Yahweh had forgotten them.

Barrenness was a disgrace, and many suffered very bitterly on that account; as did Hannah, and Rachel, and others. The Jewish Rabbis said that seven people were excommunicated from God and the list began, "A Jew who has no wife, or a Jew

who has a wife and who has no child." Childlessness was a valid ground for divorce.

- Zechariah's response to angelic encounter: ***Luke 1:10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. 11 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him (shaken & overwhelmed with fear/ gripped with fear)***

Temple (naos) describes the holy place in which the golden altar of incense stood. There was a morning and an evening sacrifice occurring at 9AM and 3PM. And the fact that there was such a multitude "makes it more likely that this incident took place in the afternoon".

Luke mentions angels twenty-three times in his Gospel.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition/prayers has been heard - And this is the first mention of the breaking of God's 400 years of silence since God had last spoken through His prophet Malachi. This is interesting for literally the last words in Malachi God predicted the coming of the forerunner John the Baptist (***Malachi 4:5-6, Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.***), the very one God's messenger was now announcing to Zacharias! God went silent for a period of 400 years and now He speaks by describing the fulfillment of His promise and then the one who hears (Zacharias) goes silent (for about 9 months).

Angelic visitations to announce births are rather common in the Old Testament (Genesis 16:10-11; 17:15-19; 18:10-15; 25:23; Judges 13:3-21) mostly to women.

- "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition/prayers has been heard – As he is burning incense on behalf of people, God answers His prayers (intercession)
- With the intervening accounts of Gabriel's appearance to Mary and her visit to Elizabeth, don't miss the unusual fact Elizabeth named the child – not Zechariah (Luke 1:60) Here is more evidence of Luke's emphasis on the role of women in the unfolding story".

- ***Luke 1: 13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been 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 before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will 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 and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”*** (in Malachi 4:5-6)

***John : of Hebrew origin (3110); Joannes (i.e. Jochanan) Jehovah is a gracious giver***

**Joy** (5479)(chara)(and rejoice) is a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing. Joy is a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing.

**Gladness** (20)(agalliasis related verb - agalliao from agan = much + hallomai = jump; gush, leap, spring up = literally to jump much, leap for joy) means gladness or extreme joy, often accompanied by words and/or bodily movements, such as jumping, smiling, etc.

**Will rejoice** (5463)(chairo) means to enjoy a state of gladness, to be delighted.

**To be filled with the Spirit** was to under the influencing control and power of the Spirit. He would have the power of God in his life like the prophet Elijah (Lk 1:17). This is Luke's first mention of the Holy Spirit, and he refers to the Holy Spirit about 16x, more than Matthew (~13x), Mark (~7x), and John (~13x). It is worth noting that this was a "**Spirit filled family**" for both of John's parents were filled with the Spirit - Luke 1:41(Elizabeth), Luke 1:67 (Zechariah)

John The Baptist with the spirit & power of Elijah: (Fore runner, voice calling in the desert, way maker- one who prepared the way for the coming Messiah )

- Bold, strong messages to shake people out of their apathy, unbelief, and sin.
  - like a megaphone
  - Elijah confronted King Ahab, King Ahaziah
  - John the Baptist – King Herod Antipas

- Appearance – rugged (*Elijah wore a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist. 2 Kings 1:7-8 ; John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist"*) (Matthew 3:4) (not attractive)
- Food- Supernaturally provided – *You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there."* (1 Kings 17:2-3) *"And his food was locusts and wild honey."* (Matthew 3:4b) (not appealing)
- They Both Had Their Lives Sought by Wicked Queens. Elijah – Jezebel & John – Herodias *"So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, 'May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.'" (1 Kings 19:2)*

Herodias' contempt for John went so far that she connived to get Herod to pronounce the death sentence on him. She wanted John silenced because she didn't like what he said, even though she knew he was right. Asked for his head on the platter.

- Both were familiar with deserts and solitude. See 1 Kings 17:3,19:4; Luke 1:80.
- **They Both Suffered from Depression and Doubt.** Both these men were anointed prophets, but they were still human. Elijah's emotions were exhausted after the supernatural exploits of killing the prophets of Baal. *"He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'" (1 Kings 19:4)*

After months in prison, John's soul was in anguish. He was attacked with doubt about who Jesus was. *"When John, who was in prison heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" (Matthew 11:2-3)*

The powerful preaching of Elijah and John turned people to repent. *"Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* (Matthew 11:11)

- Zechariah – dumb, unable to speak until child is born. People waiting in the outer courts to receive the Aaronic blessing.
- Elizabeth – now pregnant, goes into seclusion for 5 months. (Maybe she recognized the weightiness of the promise within her as enemy would want to destroy it through words etc..). The word for ‘seclude’ in Greek means to conceal on all sides or entirely, to hide.

## 2. An angel appears to Mary (In Nazareth – when Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant)

### Luke 1:26-38 (The conception & birth of Jesus foretold)

- In Nazareth
- To a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.
- Angel’s greetings : ***Luke 1:28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.***
- You shall name Him Jesus (Jehovah is salvation) of Hebrew origin (3091); Jesus (i.e. Jehoshua), the name of our Lord. This is the long-awaited Messiah that people were looking for through out the ages. There might have been many children born with the name Jesus (common name in those days) – but this is the only deliverer who would save them from sins.
- Mary’s response:

***Luke 1:34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man. 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.***

***<sup>36</sup> And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.***

***<sup>37</sup> For with God nothing shall be impossible.***



**38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.**

### **Two different responses to the promise of the Lord: Zechariah & Mary**

- Same Angel Gabriel appeared to both of them
- Similar impossible situation: Elizabeth – barren & past the age of childbearing; Mary- an engaged virgin to conceive & give birth to a child without man’s involvement.
- Both situations were a matter of disgrace: The culture in which Elizabeth lived viewed a barren woman with shame & disgrace. Mary who lived in an honour and shame culture also would have gone through state of embarrassment, ridicule, mocking by the community when they came to know that she is pregnant out of wedlock.
- Both have received the highest promise from the Lord through the angel.
- Zechariah’s response is one of doubt. He hears and acknowledges what Gabriel is proclaiming to him but he is looking for a proof “How can I be sure if this will happen?”

On the other hand, Mary’s response was of humility & total surrender. When the angel finished his announcement, Mary simply replied, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (Lk 1:34). She sought understanding more than doubt. Once Gabriel explained to her how it is possible (1:35), Mary’s response of acceptance (1:38) tells us where her heart is when she says, “Behold, the handmaid (servant/slave) of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

- Zechariah was made dumb until the miracle came through, but Mary began to praise and rejoice in the Lord.

### **3. Mary visits Elizabeth (travels from Nazareth to Judea) Luke 1: 39-45**

***In those days (few days later) Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”***

Elizabeth is now 6 months pregnant. Mary hurries to make a 90 mile journey to Judea stays with her cousin Elizabeth about three months and then goes back to her own home.

Beautiful exchange happens between the carriers/ recipients of a mighty promise from the Lord.

When you are a recipient / carrier of a weighty promise from God, be careful who you interact and share with, as words that proceed from the mouth are significant.

At Mary's greeting, the child in Elizabeth's womb leaped (*Greek : skirtao – leap like a calf*). Leaping is often associated with joy and is an expression of it. This is the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit and is not dependant on our circumstances. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

And then she cried out (*anaphoneo*) with a loud voice (*krauge*) - "and she exclaimed with a great cry." This was not just a casual "hello" but a Spirit enabled loud cry! She Elizabeth recognized that Mary's faith played an active role in receiving the promise.

***Luke 1:45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."***

#### 4. **Birth of John the Baptist:** (In Judea, 6 months before the birth of Jesus)

Luke 1: 57- 66

- When the time was come, Elizabeth delivered the baby
- Everyone rejoiced when they heard that the Lord was merciful to her
- Circumcised on 8<sup>th</sup> day ; naming ceremony. It was Elizabeth who named him John (the name given by the angel).
- Whole neighbourhood was in awe
- Instantly Zechariah could speak again . He gestured for a writing tablet and to everyone's surprise he wrote 'His name is John'. Instantly his tongue was released.

Zechariah's prophecy – His mouth was released after the miracle. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophecy.

Luke 1:67-79

#### 5. **The angel's advice to Joseph** (In Nazareth – Mathew 1: 18:25)

- Now John the Baptist is born, Mary is pregnant. Joseph who is going to be married to Mary soon, finds out that his betrothed woman is pregnant. Imagine the scenario .

The law demanded in such cases that the woman would be stoned to death – If a man marries a girl who is claimed to be a virgin, and then finds that she is not, “they shall bring the girl to the entrance of her father’s house and there her townsmen shall stone her to death” (Deut. 22:20)

Divorce has to be done publicly.

- Joseph a righteous man – decided not to disgrace her publicly, so decided to divorce her privately.
- Angel appeared to Joseph in a dream – Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, conceived by the Holy Spirit, she will have a son,.... Name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from sin.
- Joseph obeys the command without questioning. He took Mary as his wife.
- ***Mathew 1: 25 But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born.*** No sexual relations with Mary until the son was born. Later on, they had children (Jesus’ brothers & sisters) James, Joses (a form of Joseph), Simon, Jude, and sisters are mentioned in Mark and Matthew.
- Jesus’ was supernatural from conception to birth including pregnancy, as no mixing of blood could take place (Adam’s blood line). DNA was not shared.

***Mathew 1: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).***

The virgin birth shows us that our redeemer is fully, truly a man—yet without sin. Jesus was born supernaturally, but not in a way that makes his humanity different from ours (Heb 2:10–11). He experienced physical & emotional experiences just like us. He is Immanuel—God with us (Matt 1:23). This is covenantal language, reflecting the high covenant promise of God walking among us as our God (cf. Lev 26:12).

He was conceived uniquely of a woman by the agency of the Holy Spirit,

Jesus is guarded from original sin and stands uniquely parallel to Adam. Were Jesus to have been born with a sinful nature, he would not be the sinless Savior. The virgin birth is the means by which the holy Son of God was incarnate, born without sin.

**Question: Since Mary carried sin in her flesh, why didn’t she pass along to Jesus ? Did Jesus inherit sin through Mary?**

There are two reasons we know Jesus didn't inherit sin from Mary.

- First, the word of God says the sin nature of humanity transfers from one generation to another through the reproductive process. Spiritually speaking, our sin nature is passed through the man (i.e., the "seed"). David confirms that sin passes to us in the moment of conception: *Ps 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*

But since Christ was formed in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit, and not by the seed of men, He did not possess a sin nature.

- Secondly, neither Joseph nor Mary contributed any "flesh" to Jesus' conception, according to Luke. Luke says the Holy Spirit conceived the child inside Mary so that Mary was just a medium only. Conception naturally involves material from both a man and woman, but since Mary was a virgin, the normal process was not used to conceive Jesus. He was formed like the original Adam: by God directly. Mary simply carried the child, but her body did not conceive the child.

Paul confirms this conclusion when calling Jesus our new Adam:

***1Cor. 15:45 So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.***

***1Cor. 15:46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.***

***1Cor. 15:47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.***

Paul says that Christ was a new Adam, and the His body was not made of the earth like the first Adam (v.47), which tells us that Jesus' body was created (i.e., conceived) in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit without any connection to Mary's body. Therefore, Jesus received none of mankind's sinful nature, neither from Joseph nor from Mary, and therefore Jesus didn't inherit the sin of Adam.

- Joseph named the child 'Jesus' just as spoken by the angel.