

- Last week we looked the book of Malachi. We don't know exactly who wrote the book or when, but we know it was sometime after the exile because people were living in the rebuilt Jerusalem then. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malachi> We talked about how the book opens with a statement of how God loves Israel ([Malachi 1:1-5](#)) and then continues a pattern of accusations against Israel. The accusations include how the people and priests allow inferior animals to be sacrificed ([Malachi 1:6 – Malachi 2:9](#)), how the men of Israel were wrecking their families with divorce ([Malachi 2:10 – 3:7](#)) and how they are robbing God by not offering as commanded ([Malachi 3:8-15](#)). The book of Malachi closes with a reminder that all will be recorded (written and remembered) and the “Day of the Lord” will come again. ([Malachi 3:16 – 4:6](#)).
- We are starting a new period in the class. We are moving into the New Testament. As we do, our focus will be less on individual books and more on a chronological study of the events as they happened. There is only one Gospel – the good news of Christ, but we have four accounts of the Gospel, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We are going to be studying the book of John separately since he did not write chronologically like the other three Gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark and Luke. They are known as the Synoptic Gospels (the terms Gospels is widely used as a “shorthand” for Gospel accounts) because they contain largely the same accounts in the same order and same language. Today we are going to look at the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, including the ancestry that led up to his birth. We are also going to look at the only event we really know about from Jesus's childhood.
- Luke's Gospel account was addressed to a person named Theophilus as an eyewitness account describing consecutive events in detail. ([Luke 1: 1-4](#))
- Luke would later write an account of the development of the early Church called the Acts of the Apostles to the same person. ([Acts 1:1](#))
- We get two genealogical accounts of Jesus. Both Luke ([Luke 3:23-38](#)) and Matthew ([Matthew 1:1-17](#)). Both Gospel accounts are identical from Abraham to David. There they differ. Matthew was written to the Jews, and emphasizes the development of the Royal line of descendants to prove Jesus's legitimate claim to be a King, for that reason it starts backward and works forward to Joseph, Jesus's father. Luke was not written to the Jews and therefore focused more on lineage, therefore it also starts forward from Mary (Jesus's mother) and works backward. <https://carm.org/why-are-there-different-genealogies-jesus-matthew-1-and-luke-3>
- Before Luke ever gets into Christ's genealogy or birth, he covers the fact that the angel Gabriel appeared before a priest called Zacharias to the right of the altar he was using, and told Zacharias that his prayers were being answered, so even though he and his wife Elizabeth are old, they are going to have a baby who will be a predecessor of Christ and that he will have the power of Elijah. ([Luke 1:5-25](#))
- Some think that John the Baptist actually was the prophet Elijah. After all, Malachi did say that Elijah would come before the Day of the Lord. ([Malachi 4:5](#)). But John the Baptist

denied that he was actually Elijah reincarnated ([John 1:19-21](#)), and Malachi's prophecy was more likely fulfilled when Jesus was transformed at the Mount of Transfiguration and Elijah actually appeared there. ([Matthew 17:1-9](#)).

- Luke and Matthew both record an angel visiting Jesus parents to tell them that even though they have not ever had sexual intercourse, they would still have a son they would name Jesus who would change the world and be called names like Immanuel ("God with us") and Son of the Most High. Matthew and Luke tell different stories. Matthew talks about an angel visiting Jesus father Joseph and tells him not to divorce Mary because God made her pregnant and she really was still a virgin. ([Matthew 1:18-25](#)) Luke tells of the angel Gabriel visiting Jesus' mother Mary and telling her that she would have a child of God even though she had never had sexual intercourse, because "nothing is impossible with God." ([Luke 1:26-38](#))
- The Catholic Church elevates and venerates Mary as a result. They say they do not "worship" her per say. But they do often picture her in their artwork, refer to her as "blessed" and even address prayers to her (which really is an act of worship). But we do not read of a single example or instruction of this kind of veneration. In fact, the only mention of Mary outside of the Gospel accounts is a brief mention of the fact that she was present among 120 people who were gathered together to worship. ([Acts 1:14](#)).
- Mary goes to visit her relative Elizabeth (the traditional view is that they were first cousins, but we don't know that for sure). Elizabeth's baby leaps for joy inside her and she is filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary acknowledges that her baby is special and will fulfill prophecy. She ends up staying with Elizabeth for three months. ([Luke 1:39-56](#))
- At the birth of Elizabeth's son, his father apparently cannot speak, and even though those in attendance want to name him Zacharias after his father, Zacharias writes on a tablet that the son's name should be John (because that is what he angel has told him). Zacharias is able to speak again then, and he tells everyone that this child will be special and prepare the way for the Lord. When he is old enough, John then goes to live in the desert. ([Luke 1:57-80](#))
- Luke is the only Gospel account which actually records the events of Jesus' birth. Joseph and Mary had gone to a town called Bethlehem because the Roman emperor Ceaser Augustus had everyone register for a census in the town their family was from, and Joseph's family was from Bethlehem so his whole family to be had to go there (apparently, it didn't matter if your fiancée was 9 months pregnant). While they are there, Mary had to give birth and there was not an available hotel room for them, so they had to stay in the barn out back which was where Jesus was born. Finally, angels appear to shepherds in the fields nearby to tell them about Christ's birth. The shepherds go visit and describe for Mary what happened to them. ([Luke 2:1-20](#))
- Eight days after Jesus birth, Jewish law said babies had to be circumcised and offerings had to be made – all of which was to happen in the temple. Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple and there are two very devout people named Simeon and Anna serving there who both recognize what Christ represents. ([Luke 2:21-38](#))

- There were some persons “magi” “from the east” who apparently saw a star they interpreted as special enough to indicate that a person has been born “King of the Jews” and they went to worship Him. We don’t know much about these people and their identity has been hotly debated through the years but they must have interpreted a lot through this special star and were confident enough in the specific meaning to follow it. They went to ask Herod, who was the King of the Jews that had been appointed by Ceaser Augustus. Herod secretly sees this as a threat and then tells them to go find the child and come back and tell him where the child is located. These magi, go, find Jesus, present gifts to him of “gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” We know that gold is, frankincense (also known as olibanum) is a very rare oil used for health reasons, and myrrh is a salve or ointment also known for its healing properties. God warns them in a dream not to go back and tell Herod, so they don’t. (Matthew 2:1-12)
- Herod realizes that the magi have not returned so he orders all males under two years old in Bethlehem and round about to be killed. This actually happens just like the prophet Jeremiah had predicted (Jeremiah 31:15), but an angel warns Joseph in a dream to take Jesus to Egypt (fulfilling yet another prophesy made in Hosea 11:1). When King Herod finally dies and his son Archaleus takes over, God tells Joseph in a dream that it is safe to go back to Galilee, where they are from. (Matthew 2:13-23) Jesus continues to grow and become strong there. (Luke 2:39-40)
- When Jesus was 12 his family made their annual visit (with a lot of their friends and relatives) to Jerusalem for Passover. When they were returning Joseph and Mary realized Jesus was not with them. They went back to Jerusalem and looked for him for three days! They finally found him in the temple, asking questions and answering questions – which were amazing very scholarly people there. After Joseph and Mary expressed their consternation, Jesus just told them “don’t you know I have to be in my Father’s house” which they didn’t really understand. Meanwhile Jesus just kept maturing. (Matthew 2:41-52).

Questions:

1. What does the term “Synoptic Gospels” mean?
2. What are the “Synoptic Gospels.”
3. How many Gospels are there? How many Gospel accounts?
4. Who was Luke written to and why?
5. What else did Luke write to the same person?
6. What are the major differences between Luke’s genealogy of Jesus and the one Matthew records?
7. What angels predicts a son will be born to a priest? What is the name of the angel, the son, and the priest?
8. Of what prophet does the angel say that this son will have the power?
9. Was Zechariah and Elizabeth son actually this prophet?
10. What do the angels tell Joseph and Mary specifically?

20171001 Sunday AM

Preparing the Way and the Royal Birth

Matthew 1-2:23, Luke 1-3:38

p 4 of 4

11. What is the only Biblical mention of Mary the mother of Jesus outside the Gospel accounts?
12. What happens when Mary goes to visit Elizabeth? How long does she stay?
13. What are the events that take place when Elizabeth has her son?
14. Where was Jesus born and why?
15. Why do the shepherds nearby go and visit Jesus?
16. What happens eight days after Jesus birth? Who are Simeon and Anna?
17. Who are the "magi" and how do they know to worship Jesus?
18. Who was Herod and what his relationship with the magi?
19. What gifts do the Magi present Jesus?
20. What did Herod do when the magi didn't return?
21. Why did Joseph take Mary and Jesus to Egypt?
22. What prophecies were fulfilled by the answers to questions 20 and 21?
23. Why did Joseph finally bring his family back? Where did they settle?
24. What happened when Jesus was 12?

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