

3rd Lesson from the Synoptic Gospels

THE INFANCY NARRATIVES OF JESUS (MATT 1-2/ LUKE 1-2)

What is genealogy? Genealogy is an account of the descent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor or from older forms. The Bible contains multiple genealogical records. They are part of Scripture. Genealogies are for the purpose of communicating detailed information about history and family relations. First, the genealogies help substantiate the Bible's historical accuracy. They speak about the physical existence of the characters in the Bible. By knowing family histories, we understand how real, authentic and historical the Bible is. The genealogies also confirm prophecy. The book of Genesis lists the male head of each family from Adam to Noah (Gen 5:1-32), from Noah through the descendants of his three sons, Japheth, Ham and Shem, and from Shem to Abraham (Gen 11:20-26). The genealogy in Genesis 25:12-18 lists Abraham's son Ishmael with Hagar, Sarah's slave. The names listed in this passage are based on village names in areas surrounding Canaan. The Messiah was prophesied to come from the line of David (Isaiah 11:1). Book of Numbers in chapter 1 lists the people who prepared for the departure to the Promised Land from Sinai. By recording His lineage in Scripture, God confirms that Jesus was descended from David (see Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38). The genealogy is yet another attestation of Jesus Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Genealogy of Jesus: The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew and in Luke show him as the descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and eventually David—men to whom these prophecies were made. God promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his offspring, which was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:7–9,16). By reading these genealogies, we also see that Jesus was a direct descendent of King David. Jesus' genealogy is also a fulfillment of many Old Testament promises. Jesus Christ has fulfilled these and will eventually fulfill every messianic prophecy in Scripture. He is the promised Messiah—the descendant of Abraham and David, our Savior—who gave His life to redeem us from our sins.

Why two genealogies? Jesus' genealogy is given in two places in Scripture: Matthew 1 and Luke 3:23-38. Matthew traces the genealogy from Jesus to Abraham. Luke traces the genealogy from Jesus to Adam. However, there is good reason to believe that Matthew and Luke are in fact tracing entirely different genealogies. Mathew gives importance to Joseph's lineage while Luke gives Mary's. Either way, Jesus is the promised Messiah to sit on David's throne and reign forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

Strange personalities in genealogy: Usually men but women are mentioned. The Bible's genealogies also teach how God has used a wide diversity of individuals throughout history. In the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, four women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bethsebah (wife of Uriah) from the OT and Blessed Virgin Mary from the NT) were mentioned, emphasizing the importance of women. In addition, Bible Genealogies show that God can use imperfect people for His purposes. Men and women, Jews and Gentiles, people of faith and people of

questionable character are all used by God to carry out His salvation plan in His son Jesus Christ.

The Genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 records several people with well-known sins:

Jacob, stealing brother's birthright (1:2) Tamar, a sinful woman (1:3), Rahab, a prostitute, Ruth a Moabite woman (1:5), David, an adulterer and murderer (1:6), Solomon, disobeyed God by taking foreign wives and storing up earthly riches (1:6-7). Everyone else mentioned was a sinner as well, because every man or woman (with the exception of Christ) is a sinner. The fact that God is able to bring the Messiah through a line of sinful people should be of great encouragement. God used people like Rahab, David, Jacob, and Solomon to accomplish His purposes—we can be assured that He will fulfill His purposes with us even though we are imperfect.

Why Genealogy of Jesus is important? In our modern culture, many families have little sense of heritage. We may have some family traditions, but most of us don't even know the names of our great, great grandparents or where and how they lived and what they did. In contrast, genealogies were a deeply integral part of Jewish society at the time of Jesus. Land was inherited based on family lines, and those who could not prove their ancestry in Israel were considered outsiders.

Because of this difference, modern readers usually skip right over the genealogies in Scripture. It is not a fascinating reading, but we should not disregard them because God had reasons for inspiring every part of the Bible—even the genealogy of Jesus. It is accurately tracing Jesus' ancestry back 4,000 years. His genealogy is recorded all the way back to the first man, Adam. This is a very significant detail; it is a crucial fulfillment of prophecy. Adam's sin brought judgment and death into the world, but a Savior was promised—the Seed of the woman who would strike the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Jesus Christ is the “Last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45), the promised Seed of the woman, which Paul summarized: Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. (Romans 5:18). Jesus is the Savior who was promised throughout history.

JESUS' BIRTH IN MATTHEW 1:18-25:

The bible has a few people whose birth had some special intervention from God. Issac, Samuel (OT), John the Baptist and Jesus in the NT. Science cannot explain God's intervention and that is why we call it as a miracle.

Prophecy - Fulfillment: About the Virginal birth of Jesus, Prophet Isaiah has long time back prophesied in 7th BC. We read in Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman (virgin), pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel. Why God chose a virgin? The understanding of the virginal birth of Jesus is essential. Jesus was born as the Son of God. If so, He had to be born of God and not of Human being. Hence God chose the Virgin for her Son who was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' human birth, everything is supernatural.

JESUS' BIRTH IN LUKE 2

Swaddling clothes (2:7): When he was born, he was wrapped in swaddling clothes. Swaddling clothes has a deep a theology. Solomon, the real son of David, says about his birth in the book of Wisdom 7:4 -5 "In swaddling clothes and with constant care I was nurtured for no king has any different origin or birth" Just as Solomon, the future king of Israel, was wrapped in swelling clothes, Jesus, the descendant of David, was wrapped in swaddling clothes to show that he was born as the King of the Jews in humility. In other words, the swaddling clothes means the humble birth of Jesus, the future king of the universe.

Manger (2:7): Christ was born in a manger. This is the true symbol of Christmas. The word manger is mentioned 3 times in Luke 2. What a lowly and dirty place for the king of the universe. It is a place where the animals feed. Jesus, being born in the manger, becomes food for the world. "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this living bread, will live for ever" (Jn 6:31) Manger is the symbol of spiritual food for our eternal life.

No room for them in the Inn (2:7): The entire theology of Jesus' incarnation is constructed in the verse. The inn is the resting place for travelers. It is a temporary place for short time duration. Jesus is not a traveler but an Emmanuel who is with us in eternity. "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:20)

Shepherds in the fields (2:8): They were uneducated, insignificant, outcaste, humble and poor and powerless in the Jewish society. It is a clear sign of our Lord's solidarity with the poor people. The humble people receive the glorious glimpse of our Lord's birth. It is amazing that the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the despised class of shepherds and not the aristocrats. The scripture scholars interpret that there were two groups of people whose testimony in 1st century Palestine would not be accepted. They are namely shepherds and women. But interestingly, the first ones to be told of Jesus' birth were shepherds, the first ones to be told of his resurrection were the women. This teaches us something about how God works.

The Magi (Matt 2:1-8): The Bible tells us that they came to Jerusalem from the East. More likely they were not Jews. Tradition says that they were from Persia (modern day Iran). This means the wise men traveled 800 to 900 miles to see the Christ child. They were involved in astrology and astronomy. In antiquity, astrologers, interpreters of dreams, and soothsayers from the East were called Magi. They skillfully interpreted dreams and saying things about future by watching movements of stars. The second century Church Father, Tertullian suggested that these men were kings because the Old Testament had predicted that kings would come to worship him. He also concluded that there were three kings based on the number of gifts mentioned, gold, frankincense and myrrh. In the sixth century, someone decided that their names were Melchior, Baltazar and Gaspar. Popular myth calls them astrologers.

Star (Matt 2:9-10): Star is nothing new. The Jewish rabbis spoke about the appearance of the star in the sky at the births of Abraham, Isaac and Moses. Likewise, in the Book of Numbers, the

prophet Balaam speaks of "a star that shall come out of Jacob." So in the Bible, Stars were believed to be signs from God, announcing important events. Thus the magi, guided by the star, recognized the signs of the birth of Christ. The births and deaths of great figures, accompanied by astral phenomena, was widely accepted in antiquity. The Magi after having worshipped the child Jesus offered him Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh as gifts (Mt 2:11). The gifts speak about the future of child Jesus. Gold was a gift for kings so by offering Gold, they recognized Jesus as their king (Royalty). Frankincense was offered to God by priest in the temple worship and thus they recognized Jesus as their Eternal Priest, who offered himself on the cross, being God himself (Divinity). Myrrh was used as anointing oil to prepare bodies for burial and thus they recognized Jesus as human being who was born as a human being and He will die as a human beings (Humanity). Isaiah had already prophesied the visit of the three kings in 60:3 "Nations shall walk by your light, kings by the radiance of your dawning". So the visit of the Magi is the fulfillment of the OT prophesy.

On Jesus' Fleeing to Egypt, There is a parallel in the OT on fleeing to Egypt

Old Testament	New Testament
<p>Pharaoh feared the Hebrews in Egypt and commanded the midwives of Jewish mothers to kill all newborn boys; however, the little boys were spared because the midwives feared God and protected them. As a result, God blessed the midwives for their faithfulness (Exodus 1:15-22). After Moses was born, his mother hid him to ensure his safety. When she no longer could keep him hidden, she placed Moses in a basket along the Nile to be noticed by Pharaoh's daughter who had gone to the river to bathe. The Egyptian princess took pity on the baby in the basket, and Moses' life was spared from death (Exodus 1:15-22). For the survival, the sons of Jacob went to Egypt. Joseph took care of their brothers, interceding for them before Pharaoh.</p>	<p>Jesus' life was also threatened at birth. King Herod, who ruled over the land where Jesus was born, was paranoid and power hungry. In fact, the fear of losing his throne consumed him to such a horrifying degree that he murdered his own family. After Herod heard the prophecy stating a king more powerful than he would be born in his land during his lifetime, he instructed his soldiers to murder all the little boys born within his kingdom to ensure no one could take his crown (Matthew 2:3-18). So Joseph had to flee to Egypt to save the baby Jesus and Mary.</p>

Massacre of the infants: Shortly after the time of Christ's birth, King Herod the Great made an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the infant Jesus by ordering the slaughter of all male children age two and younger. The ecclesiastical name given to this killing of babies in Bethlehem and its surrounding regions is the Massacre of the Innocents. The event is recorded in Matthew 2:16-18: "Herod . . . gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who

were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.’”

The Massacre of the Innocents was the result of King Herod’s extreme paranoia and cruelty. Herod would do anything to protect his own interests, including murdering all the little boys in Bethlehem. In his fear and morbid suspicion, Herod could not allow a rival king to live. Not knowing how old Jesus was, but certain the wise men had said they’d first seen the star less than two years before their visit, Herod took no chances and had all male children under two in Bethlehem killed.

Matthew 2:17–18 cites the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15. In its original context, Jeremiah’s prophecy relates to Israel’s period of captivity in Babylon and the murder of children during the invasion of Judea. The mothers of Israel, portrayed as Rachel, are weeping for their sons who were led into exile. Rachel was considered a matriarchal figure to the nation of Israel, and her tomb is near Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19). Matthew links the prophecy by Jeremiah to the Massacre of the Innocents, and the parallel is striking.

After the death of Herod, the Holy Family came to Nazareth. Jesus was called Nazarene. There is a parallel in the OT. After the death of the all first borns in the land of Egypt of Pharaoh to the prisoners, during the night, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “leave my people at once, you and the Israelites with you. Go and worship the Lord as you said. Take everything with you and you will be doing a favor” The Egyptians likewise urged the people to hasten their departure from their land fear of their death as well. They left Egypt to Mount Sinai.

Jesus was circumcised: Circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin off a male. The word circumcise literally means “to cut around.” As a religious rite, circumcision was required of all of Abraham’s descendants as a sign of the covenant God made with him (Gen 17:9–14; Acts 7:8). The Mosaic Law repeated the requirement (Lev12:2–3), and Jews throughout the centuries have continued to practice circumcision (Joshua 5:2–3; Luke 1:59; Acts 16:3; Philippians 3:5).

Should the Christian males be circumcised? We are no longer under the Old Testament Law and so, circumcision is no longer required. This is brought out in a number of New Testament passages, among which are Acts 15; Galatians 2:1–3; 5:1–11; 6:11–16; 1 Corinthians 7:17–20; Colossians 2:8–12; and Philippians 3:1–3. We are delivered from our sins as the result of our faith in Christ.

Presentation of Baby Jesus in the Temple: According to the OT, Leviticus 12:2-8 When a Jewish male child is born, the family is obliged to fulfill three ceremonies according to the Jewish law. 1. The child has to be circumcised on the 8th day. 2. The child has to be presented to the temple. 3. Purification ceremony has to be done to the mother after the child’s birth and redemption ceremony for the baby.

Purification and redemption ceremonies: The Gospel describes Joseph, as the head of the Holy Family of Nazareth, presented Mary and the baby Jesus in the Temple of God. The blessed Mother was presented for her ‘purification’. Jesus was presented for his ‘redemption’.

Purification of Blessed Virgin: According to Leviticus 12:2-8, a woman who bore a child was unclean for forty days following the birth of a son or eighty days following the birth of a daughter. Although the Blessed Mother, conceived without original sin and ever virgin, was exempt from these precepts of the law, she chose to submit herself to the Law just like any other Jewish mother.

Redemption of Jesus, the first born: Exodus 13:2, 12-13 prescribes that every first-born male belongs to God and he must be set apart for the Lord’s service. According to the law, the Israelites when they bring the child, should offer a lamb if they are rich. If they are poor, a pair of doves or two pigeons must be offered. By offering the animals and birds as sacrifice in the temple, the parents redeemed their child. In the case of Jesus, he never needed to be redeemed as he belonged wholly to the Lord, but Joseph kept these laws as an act of obedience to God.

The encounter with Simeon and Anna: The old, pious and Spirit-filled Simeon and Anna had been waiting in the Temple for the revelation of God’s salvation. When Simeon took the Child in his arms, he recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah for a long time back, blessed the parents and prophesied that Jesus would be the glory of Israel and the light of revelation to the Gentiles. While Simeon blessed Mary, he warned her that her child would be “a sign of contradiction,” and that she would be “pierced with a sword.” Mary was given both **the blessedness** of being the mother of the Son of God and **a state of being sorrow** that a sword which would pierce her heart as her Son would die upon the cross. Thus Mary received both a crown of joy and a cross of sorrow. But her joy was not diminished because of her faith.

The boy Jesus in the temple: When Jesus was 12 years old, his parents went up to the feast of Passover, according to the custom. After the feast was over, Jesus stayed back (Lk 2:41-42). This celebration is called as **Bar mitzvah** (son of commandment). It is a very important and meaningful ceremony in Judaism. **Bat Mitzvah for girls:** Interestingly, a girl becomes an adult, according to Jewish tradition at the age of 12. According to this celebration, when a Jewish boy turns 13, he becomes an adult and he has all the rights and obligations of a Jewish adult, including the commandments of the Torah. He becomes fully responsible for his actions in a system of spiritual rewards and punishment. It is a momentous occasion in the life of every Jewish boy. On his 13th birth day, He will be taken in procession to Jerusalem temple or a synagogue with singing and dancing to read a section of Torah for the first time. As a responsible man, he is now permitted to attend the synagogue on his own. On this special day, he will be decorated and they will tie a leather belt in his upper arm with the most central Jewish prayer ***Shema*** Deut 6:5 -6 ***“Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”***.

Why do they tie in his hand? It is a biblical command according to Deut 6:8 "You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they should be for a reminder between your eyes".

Before Bar Mitzvah age, the boy was not obligated for any religious celebration but from Bar Mitzvah onwards, the boy is considered accountable for his spiritual duties and responsibilities. When Jesus was 12 years old, his parents went up to the feast of Passover, according to the custom. After the feast was over, Jesus stayed back (Lk 2:41-42).

Parallels between Moses and Jesus

Events	Moses	Jesus
Born under foreign rulers	Moses was born in Egypt many years after Joseph, who famously saved the region from famine, died. The current reigning pharaoh knew nothing of the Hebrew - Egyptian partnership and considered the Hebrews as his threat to the country. Out of fear of being overthrown, he made the Hebrews his slaves and forced them into hard labor and oppression (<u>Exodus 2:3-10</u>)	Jesus was born during two foreign rules: Herodians, a local power and and Romans a foreign power. The former ones were ruthless, power hungry and murderous.
Sign of Humility	Moses became the prince of Egypt although he was born of a Jewish mother who nursed him as his biological mother. (<u>Exo 2:11</u>). Moses did not want to be a royal but identified himself with his suffering people	Jesus as the Son of God was born in a manger, but often referred to as the “King of kings and Lord of lords”. They expected him as a political Messiah but he came as a suffering Messiah.
Lives Threatened at Birth:	Pharaoh feared the Hebrews in Egypt and commanded the midwives of Jewish mothers to kill all newborn boys; Moses miraculously escaped from the plot by God’s intervention. (<u>Exodus 1:15-22</u>).	Jesus’ life was also threatened at birth by King Herod but God intervened in the life of Jesus and saved him from the hands of Herod (<u>Matt 2:13-15</u>)

The comparison between the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus

Like the birth of Jesus was foretold by the prophets of the OT, John’s role as the messenger of Jesus was already foretold in the OT prophets Isaiah 40:2 “I am sending my messenger ahead of you” Malachi 4:5-6 “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction”.

In our catholic liturgical calendar, we celebrate birthdays only for three persons: Lord Jesus (Dec 25), Blessed Virgin Mary (Sept 8) and John the Baptist (June 24). Because of his unique role in the history of salvation, the church joyfully celebrates his birthday since the fourth century

The Announcement of John's Birth	The Announcement of Jesus' Birth
The angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah to tell of a miraculous birth: Luke 1:11	The angel Gabriel appears to Mary to tell of a miraculous birth: Luke 1:26-27
Gabriel tells Zechariah, <i>Zechariah, do not be afraid, for your prayer has been heard.</i> Luke 1:13	Gabriel tells Mary, <i>Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor.</i> Luke 1:30
Gabriel announces the name of the child, <i>...and you shall name him John</i> Luke 1:13	Gabriel announces the name of the child, <i>...and you must name him Jesus</i> Luke 1:31
Gabriel announces the mission of the child, <i>even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the Israelites to the Lord their God...preparing for the Lord a people fit for him.</i> Luke 1:15-17	Gabriel announces the mission of the child, <i>He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob forever and his reign will have no end.</i> Luke 1:32-33
Zechariah expresses disbelief and is rebuked, <i>Zechariah said to the angel, 'How can I know this? I am an old man...The angel replied...'Look, since you do not believe my words....you will be silenced.'</i> Luke 1:18-20	Mary expresses concern and is assured, <i>'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will com upon you, and the power of the Most High will over you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God.'</i> Luke 1:34-36
John is born: <i>The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son...</i> Luke 1:57	Jesus is born: <i>...the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth of a son, her first-born.</i> Luke 2:6
John is circumcised and named on the 8th day: <i>Now it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; ... 'he is to be called John.'</i> Luke 1:59-60	Jesus is circumcised on the 8th day: <i>When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.</i> Luke 2:21
Zechariah speaks the prophecy of the Benedictus in Luke 1:67-79	Mary speaks the prophecy of the Magnificat in Luke 1:47-55 speaks
John's birth story conclusion: <i>...the child grew up and his spirit grew strong.</i> Luke 1:80	Jesus' birth story conclusion: <i>And as the child grew to maturity, he was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was with him.</i> Luke 2:40