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## **JESUS' BIRTH**

A selection from HALLEY'S BIBLE HANDBOOK, NEW REVISED EDITION, AN ABBREVIATED BIBLE COMMENTARY, LATEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES, HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE, AN EPITOME OF CHURCH HISTORY BY HENRY H. HALLEY, ZONDERVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE, C. LAST IN 1965

"LUKE- JESUS THE SON OF MAN

PAGE 485

The special emphasis of Luke is the Humanity of Jesus. Representing Jesus as the Son of God, Luke features His Kindness toward the Weak, the Suffering and the Outcast.

While each of the Gospels was intended for All Mankind, Matthew seems to have had in immediate view the Jews; Mark, the Romans; and Luke, the Greeks.

Jewish civilization had been built around their Scriptures. Therefore Matthew appeals to their Scriptures.

Roman civilization gloried in the idea of Government, Power. Therefore Mark calls particular attention to the Miracles of Jesus as exhibiting His Superhuman Power.

Greek civilization represented Culture, Philosophy, Wisdom, Reason, Beauty, Education. Therefore, to appeal to the Thoughtful, Cultured, Philosophic Greek Mind, Luke, in a complete, orderly, and classical story, which has been called the "Most Beautiful Book Ever Written", depicts the Glorious Beauty and Perfection of Jesus, the Ideal, Universal Man.

Then, to these three Gospels, John added his, to make it clear and unmistakable that Jesus was GOD in Human Form.

LUKE

PAGE 485

His name is mentioned only three times in the New Testament: Colossians 4:14, where he is called the "Beloved Physician", Philemon 24, where he is called Paul's "Fellow-Worker"; and in II Timothy 4:11, indicating that he was with Paul in the dark hours of approaching martyrdom. In all three passages mention is made also of Mark, indicating that Mark and Luke were companion workers.

In the latter part of the book of Acts, the varying use of the pronouns "they" and "we" indicate that Luke was with Paul from Troas to Philippi, in the early part of Paul's Second Missionary Journey, and that, about 6 years later he re-joined Paul at Philippi at the close of Paul's Third Missionary Journey, and was with him, through his Imprisonment in Caesarea and Rome, to the end.

DATE

PAGE 485-486

Quite commonly it is thought that Luke wrote his Gospel about the year A. D. 60, while Paul was in prison in Caesarea, and followed it with the Book of Acts during Paul's imprisonment in Rome the next two years; for the two books, addressed to the same person, are, in a sense, two volumes of one work.

Luke's two year sojourn in Caesarea, A. D. 58-60, afforded him abundant opportunity to get, firsthand, from original companions of Jesus, and first founders of the Church, accurate information concerning all details.

Caesarea was only a few miles from Jerusalem. Jesus' Mother may have been still alive, at John's home in Jerusalem. Luke may have spent many precious hours with her, listening to her reminiscences of her Wondrous Son. And James, Bishop of Jerusalem, Jesus' own Brother, could have supplied Luke with full details of the whole story of Jesus' Life.

CHAPTER 1:1-4

INTRODUCTION

PAGE 486-487

Many Narratives (1), were already in existence, about Jesus. Luke carefully and painstakingly examined all Authentic Records, and consulted all available Eyewitnesses and original Companions of Jesus that he might sift out the Exact Facts.

Theophilus (3), to whom this Gospel and the book of Acts are addressed, or dedicated, was a Roman Official of high rank, as indicated by the title Most Excellent. It is not known who he was. Possibly, he may have been one of Luke's converts, in Philippi or Antioch. It may be that he bore the expense of publication of Luke's two books, in having copies made for many Churches.

GENERAL EXPECTATION OF THE MESSIAH

PAGE 487

Josephus, Tacitus and Suetonius state that there was general expectancy over the East that the time for the Messiah to appear was at hand. It was based, partly at least, on Daniel's "70 Weeks' Prophecy" (Daniel 9:24-27). By the popular interpretation, the 70 weeks was understood to mean 70 sevens of years, that is, 490. The decree to rebuild Jerusalem, from which they were to be reckoned (Daniel 9:25), was issued 457 B. C. Hence the time was about up. The Son of God was about to appear.

CHAPTER 1:26-38

ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY

PAGE 488

This is commonly called the Annunciation. The Messiah was to be born in David's family. It had been a thousand years since David, and there had come to be thousands of families of Davidic descent. God, in looking them over, to choose the one through whom His Son should come into the world, passed up the ruling families around Jerusalem, as His eye rested on a humble woman, in a lowly home, in an obscure village of the distant hills of Galilee. What a woman she must have been, to be thus chosen of God to impart and mold the human nature of His Son! And how her heart must have thrilled at the angelic message that she was to be the mother of the Divine King of the Ages!

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

PAGE 488

Luke is thought to have gotten his story of Jesus' birth directly from Mary herself. Matthew probably got

his from Joseph. Both state plainly, explicitly, unmistakably and unequivocally that Jesus was born of a Virgin. From the beginning, in unbroken sequence, it has been held as a tenet of the Church, till the rise of modern criticism. If we believe in the Deity of Jesus and His Resurrection from the dead, what is gained by discrediting the Virgin Birth? The Resurrection is the greatest of miracles. If we do not believe that, why concern ourselves with Christ at all? If we do believe it, then why carp at the other parts of the miraculous story? His supernatural exit from the world pre-supposes a supernatural entrance into the world. To call Jesus an illegitimate child is nothing less than blasphemy.

CHAPTER 1:39-56

MARY'S VISIT TO ELISABETH

PAGE 488-489

Mary and Elisabeth were kin (1:36), "cousins" (AV), "kinswoman" (RV). Elisabeth's home city is not named, except that it was in the hill country of Judah (39). As she was of the tribe of Levi (1:5), it may have been Hebron, which was a Levitical city (Joshua 21:11). Mary's Song of Thanksgiving (46-55), called the "Magnificat", is similar to Hannah's Song at the birth of Samuel (I Samuel 2:1-10). In her meditations she, probably, had uttered these thoughts over and over till they took the beautiful poetic form in which they here appear as her personal liturgy. Mary was with Elisabeth for three months (56), time for John's birth (36). Then she returned to Nazareth.

CHAPTER 2:1-38

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

PAGE 489-491

What is here told in chapters 1 and 2 is omitted in the other Gospels, except the statement in Matthew 1:25-2:1 that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and returned to Galilee (Matthew 2:22-23).

BETHLEHEM

PAGE 489

The birthplace of Jesus was a center of historic associations. The city of David. Rachel's burying place. The home of Ruth. 15 miles to the south was Hebron, the home of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 10 miles northwest was Gibeon, where Joshua made the sun stand still. 12 miles west was Socoh, where David had slain Goliath. 6 miles north was Jerusalem, where Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the magnificent capital of David and Solomon, the scene of the ministry of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the center of God's age-long effort to reveal Himself to mankind.

The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, oldest church building in Christendom, was built originally by Helena, mother of Constantine the first Christian Emperor of the Roman Empire, A. D. 330. There is a cave-like room underneath the church that is said to be the actual manger room in which Jesus was born. There is a tradition that this same room was a part of the ancestral home of David and Boaz and Ruth. In this room Jerome the Latin scholar spent 30 years, making his Translation of the Bible into Latin.

CHAPTER 2:1-5

THE ENROLMENT OF QUIRINIUS

PAGE 490

This was a census of the Roman Empire. Roman historical records place the Enrolment of Quirinius in A. D. 7, which was 10 or 12 years after Jesus was born. This historical discrepancy was for a long time troublesome to Biblical students. But in recent years ancient papyri have been found from which it is learned that Quirinius was TWICE governor of Syria. Luke expressly says it was "the first" enrolment. It has been found also that people were required to go to their ancestral homes for the census. Thus, the

spade of the archeologist goes on, confirming, one by one, even to minutest detail, the historical accuracy of Bible statements.

#### THE AMAZING PROVIDENCE OF GOD

PAGE 490

The Messiah was to be of the family of David, and to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2-5). But the chosen parents lived at Nazareth, 100 miles from Bethlehem. A decree of Rome requires them to go to Bethlehem, just as the child is to be born. Thus God makes the decree of a pagan empire to be the instrument of fulfilling His prophecies.

#### CHAPTER 2:6-7

#### BORN IN A MANGER

PAGE 490

The word translated "inn" may mean a public lodging place, or the guest room adjoining a private home. Here it is thought to have been the latter, probably the home of their Davidic kin, same "house" where the Wise- Men later came (Matthew 2:11). The hundred mile journey from Nazareth, by foot or on a donkey, for a woman about to give birth to a child, must have been long and hard. Crowded out of the guest room, temporarily, by others who had arrived earlier, they had to lodge in the stable. The sacred moment arrived, and the Son of God had an animal feed-trough for His cradle. After the shepherds came and told their story, no doubt the best the home afforded was open to Joseph and Mary.

#### CHAPTER 2:8-20

#### THE SHEPHERDS

PAGE 490

The traditional "Shepherds' Field", where the angelic choirs sang the birth-day hallelujahs of earth's new King, is about three-quarters of a mile east of Bethlehem.

#### JESUS' BIRTHDAY

PAGE 490-491

It is now celebrated on December 25th. There is nothing in the Bible to indicate it. This date first appears as Jesus' birthday in the 4th century, in the West. The Eastern church date is January 6th.

#### GABRIEL

PAGE 491

Gabriel was the name of the Angelic prince sent from heaven to direct arrangements for the Son of God's arrival (Luke 1:19, 26). We presume he was the angel who appeared to the shepherds (2:9, 13). And also, the one sent to Joseph (Matthew 1:24); and directed the flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13, 19). He had given to Daniel the Seventy Weeks' Prophecy (Daniel 9:21). How interested was he in human redemption! And how we will love to make his acquaintance when we get to Heaven.

#### CHAPTER 2:21-38

#### JESUS' CIRCUMCISION AND PRESENTATION

PAGE 491

That they offered two pigeons instead of a lamb and a pigeon is an indication that they were poor (Leviticus 12:8).

#### CHAPTER 2:39

#### RETURN TO NAZARETH

PAGE 491

Luke here proceeds directly from the Presentation in the Temple to the Return to Nazareth, omitting events recorded in Matthew 2:1-21, Visit of Wise-Men, Flight to Egypt, Slaughter of Children, and Return

from Egypt.

Mark and John say nothing about the Birth and Childhood of Jesus. Matthew and Luke record different incidents. To harmonize these into exact chronological sequence is not easy. Here are approximate probable dates:

5 B. C. 1:5-25		Announcement to Zacharias	Luke
	6 months later	Announcement to Mary	Luke 1:26-38
		Mary's Visit to Elisabeth	
Luke 1:39-56			
	3 months later	Mary's Return to Nazareth	Luke 1:56
		Announcement to Joseph	
Matthew 1:18-24			
		Birth of John the Baptist	
Luke 1:57-80			
4 B. C. Matthew 1:25		Birth of Jesus	
	Luke 2:1-7		
		Announcement to Shepherds	Luke
2:8-20			
	8 days later	Jesus' Circumcision	Luke
2:21			
	32 days later	Jesus' Presentation	Luke
2:22-38			
3 B. C. Matthew 2:1-12		Visit of Wise-Men	
		Flight to Egypt	
Matthew 2:13-15			
		Slaughter of Children	
Matthew 2:16-18			
2 B. C. Luke 2:39		Return to Nazareth	
	Matthew 2:19-23	"	



17	Sun.	9:30am	Worship Led By Michelle Moseley
20	Wed.	Sunset	Hanukkah Ends
21	Thurs.		Winter Solstice (Shortest Day Of The Year)
24	Sun.	9:30am	Christmas Eve Worship Led By Nelson Johnston
		7:00pm	Christmas Eve Service At First Presbyterian Church
In Roanoke Rapids			
25	Mon.		Christmas Day
31	Sun.		No Service- Please Visit A Local Church Or Tune In To A Service On
Television			
New Year's Eve			