

Bite Size Bible Study

Advent according to Matthew #190

By Pastor Lee

Of the synoptic gospels there are only two that tell the story of Jesus' birth – Matthew and Luke. At times it is helpful to see what each has said about the birth without reference to the other, because each had a different purpose in writing each account.

Matthew's purpose was to prove to the Jewish community that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. By stressing that He was the Messiah it also meant that He was the King of the Jews. We find this in the sections of his writing.

Matthew begins with a genealogy to prove that Jesus was in the line of descent through King David then back to Abraham. Abraham was the father of the Jews, the one God made a covenant with. David was considered to be the greatest King Israel had ever had.

There are more than 40 Old Testament references to a coming Messiah in the Old Testament. Most of them are cloaked in poetic language – never using the word messiah. Many are found in the Psalms. From these references the Jewish people envisioned a warrior King coming to free Israel from oppression.

Next Matthew relates Jesus' miraculous conception and birth. He was to be conceived through the Holy Spirit in a young woman, something that had never occurred before. By this He was to be the Son of God, and yet He was also the Son of Man(kind).

Here is how the birth of Yeshua the Messiah took place. When his mother Miryam was engaged to Yosef, before they were married, she was found to be pregnant from the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). Her husband-to-be, Yosef, was a man who did what was right; so he made plans to break the engagement quietly, rather than put her to public shame. But while he was thinking about this, an angel of Adonai appeared to him in a dream and said, "Yosef, son of David, do not be afraid to take Miryam home with you as your wife; for what has been conceived in her is from the Ruach HaKodesh. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Yeshua, [which means 'Adonai saves,'] because he will save his people from their sins."

All this happened in order to fulfill what Adonai had said through the prophet,

"The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him 'Immanu El.'" [Isa 7:14]

Matthew 1:18-23 CJB

Immanu El means, "God is with us."

The virgin (HaAlmah) means a young unmarried virgin.

Next we find the visit of the Magi. These were Eastern wise men, possibly priests or astrologers. There is no indication of how many of them there were and they were there as representatives of their king to honor the newborn King of kings. They presented gifts as one king would to another king. They may have been from Babylon or Persia. The Magi probably were aware of many of the Jewish writings, since there were still many Jews left in the area from the earlier exile.

They were going to Bethlehem, the prophesied city in which the Messiah was to be born.

But you, Beit-Lechem near Efrat, so small among the clans of Y'hudah, out of you will come forth to me the future ruler of Isra'el, whose origins are far in the past, back in ancient times.

Therefore he will give up [Isra'el] only until she who is in labor gives birth. Then the rest of his kinsmen will return to the people of Isra'el. He will stand and feed his flock in the strength of ADONAI, in the majesty of the name of ADONAI his God; and they will stay put, as he grows great to the very ends of the earth; and this will be peace. Micah 5:2-5a CJB

This probably occurred somewhere within two years of the birth, because when Herod found that when the magi did not return to him and tell him where the child was, he had all the children in Bethlehem, under two years of age, slaughtered.

Joseph was warned to leave for Egypt before this occurred, and stayed there until the death of Herod; which occurred in 4 BCE according to non-biblical records. Upon their return they opted to live in Nazareth rather than Bethlehem because Herod's son Archelaus was more of a threat than his father.

These are the points that Matthew felt were important to record for the Jews. His report gives us a view from the Jewish perspective.

Next we will see what Luke felt was important for the Gentile reader.