

Lesson 2

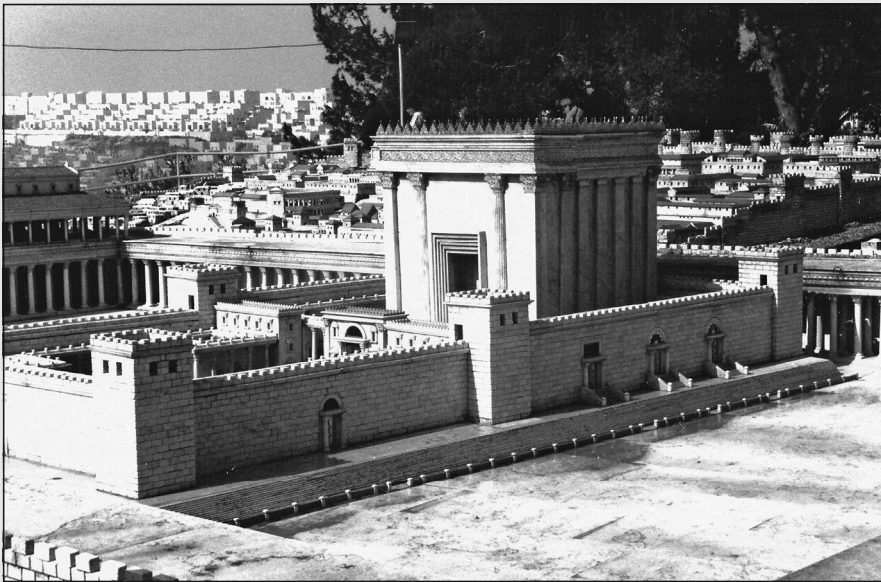
Announcements of the Births of John and Jesus

Luke 1

Announcement of the Birth of John (1:5-25)

The events of the gospel of Jesus Christ began during the reign of Herod the Great (37-4 BC). A priest named Zacharias married Elizabeth. They were unable to have children because Elizabeth was barren. They lived in the hill country of Judea. They were righteous before God.

thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John” (1:13). The angel went on to relate that John would not touch wine or strong drink and that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost (1:15). He then quoted Malachi 4:6 to identify the child to be born with the prophesied harbinger of the Lord who would



Zacharias was ministering in the Temple when Gabriel appeared to him. This photo is of a model of the city of Jerusalem in the time of Christ.

When Zacharias took his turn serving in the Temple, he entered into the Holy Place of the Temple to burn incense. An angel named Gabriel appeared to him and said, “Fear not, Zacharias: for

“make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (1:17).

Zacharias was awed and amazed. He asked, “Whereby shall I know this?” The angel replied that

he would be unable to speak until the birth of the child as a sign from God, because of his unbelief (1:20).

When the angel departed, Zacharias departed from the Temple, unable to speak. The people perceived that he had seen a vision. Later, he returned to his house in the hills of Judea. Soon thereafter, his wife conceived and hid herself for five months.

Announcement of the Birth of Jesus (1:26-38)

(Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus is told from the perspective of Mary; Matthew’s account is told from the perspective of Joseph. By studying both accounts, one gets the complete account of the birth of Jesus [be sure to read Matt. 1-2].)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, Gabriel appeared to Mary in Nazareth. Mary was betrothed to Joseph of the house of David. When Gabriel appeared, he said, “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS” (1:30-31). The angel announced that Jesus would reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom forever (1:32-33).

Mary protested that this could not be so inasmuch as she had never “known” (i.e., had a sexual relationship with) a man. Gabriel explained that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit (1:35). As a sign that what he revealed was true, Gabriel told Mary of the conception of Elizabeth, her cousin (1:36). After this, Mary expressed her submission to the will of the Lord.

Mary Visits Elizabeth (1:39-56)

Very soon after Gabriel departed, Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth in the hills of Judea. As the

angel had revealed, Elizabeth was with child and in her sixth month of pregnancy. When Mary entered the house, the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaped with joy and the Holy Spirit caused Elizabeth to prophesy (1:41). She called Mary, her younger cousin, the "mother of my Lord" (1:43), a designation which can only be understood when one recognizes that Jesus is the Lord God. Elizabeth recognized that what was happening to the two of them was the beginning of the fulfillment of the Messianic promises (1:45).

After Elizabeth finished speaking, Mary rejoiced before the Lord (1:46-56). She said, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (1:47). She also recognized that the events which were transpiring were the fulfillment of God's Messianic promises (1:54-55).

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months (1:56) and must have returned to Nazareth shortly before the birth of John. By the time she returned, she was obviously pregnant. Joseph wondered what he should do (see Matthew's account for Joseph's point of view—Matt. 1:18-25). The angel of the Lord reassured Joseph of Mary's moral purity and explained that her pregnancy was caused by the Lord, not by an act of immorality.

The Birth of John (1:57-66)

Finally, the time for Elizabeth to give birth arrived. Her kinsmen rejoiced with her in the birth of her firstborn child in her old age. On the eighth day after his birth, the child was circumcised and named. The relatives suggested that the child should be named "Zacharias" after his father. Elizabeth insisted that he be named "John." The relatives asked Zacharias what the child should be called. He called for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name

is John." Immediately his mouth was opened; he was able to speak. These events were soon noised abroad, causing the populace to wonder what God was bringing to pass.

Zacharias' Prophecy (1:67-79)

Even as the Holy Spirit had come upon Elizabeth when Mary

of salvation to His people—a salvation which consisted of the remission of sins (1:77).

The Early Life of John (1:80)

The early life of John is hidden in obscurity. This only is revealed about it, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in



John the Baptist grew up in the wilderness of Judea. The wilderness of Judea is not a place of thick underbrush, as one might imagine, but barren hills with little vegetation.

came to her home, so also the Holy Spirit came upon Zacharias at the circumcision of John. He prophesied of God's work, telling of God's work through the Messiah (1:68-75) and through John (1:76-79).

Zacharias indicated that the Lord was working to redeem his people (1:68) by raising up a horn of salvation (1:69), in fulfillment of the words of the holy prophets (1:70). By raising up this horn of salvation, the Lord was remembering his holy covenant with Abraham (1:72-73).

His own child John was sent before the Messiah by God to prepare the people for His coming (1:76). He would bring knowledge

the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (1:80). Because his parents were old when he was born, we should likely conclude that they died while he was yet young (there is no later mention of his parents). He was raised in the desert of Israel (in the wilderness region near the Jordan). This kind of early life provided his training for the stern, Elijah-like character necessary to call Israel to repentance, to prepare a people for the Lord.

Questions

1. What efforts did Luke make to be sure his testimony was accurate (v. 3)? _____

2. What was to be the work of John (vv. 16-17)? _____

3. How did his work relate to the fulfillment of the Messianic covenant? _____

4. Is the birth narrative of Luke given from Mary or Joseph's point of view? _____
5. What is the kingdom over which Jesus would reign (vv. 32-33)? Prove your answer with Scripture. _____

6. How long shall His reign last (v. 33)? _____
7. What was the significance to Mary of Elizabeth's pregnancy (vv. 36-37)? _____

8. What consequences would Mary face as an unmarried pregnant girl in Israel? _____

9. What was her attitude toward the Lord's will (v. 38)? How might her attitude have influenced Jesus (22:42)?

10. What did Elizabeth recognize about Mary when the two met (vv. 41-44)? _____

11. What did Mary recognize to be occurring in the birth of Jesus (vv. 54-55)? _____

12. Who is the "horn of salvation" of verse 69? _____
13. What verses indicate that Zacharias recognized in the births of Jesus and John the fulfillment of the Messianic covenant? _____
14. What would be the work of John (v. 76)? _____

Fill in the Blanks

1. Herod the Great (_____ BC) was ruler of _____ when the angel _____ appeared to _____
2. Zacharias was a _____, ministering in the _____ when the angel appeared to him.
3. While Zacharias was burning _____, the angel announced that his wife _____ would have a son whom he would name _____.
4. The child to be born would not drink _____ or _____ and would be filled with the _____.
5. Because Zacharias doubted the angel's word, he was not able to _____ until after John's _____.

True or False

- ___ 1. Mary went to visit Elizabeth in Elizabeth’s seventh month of pregnancy.
- ___ 2. Mary was not expecting a child when Gabriel spoke to her.
- ___ 3. The angel revealed the names of both John and Jesus.
- ___ 4. Elizabeth called Mary’s baby “her lord.”
- ___ 5. John grew up in the wilderness of Judea.

Short Answer

- 1. How does the doctrine of the virgin birth relate to the God-man nature of Jesus? _____

- 2. If Jesus was not born of a virgin, what was Mary’s moral character? _____

Thought Questions

- 1. List as many miraculous births from the Old Testament as you can remember. _____

- 2. In what sense did John manifest the “spirit and power of Elijah” (1:17)? _____

- 3. What relationship was Jesus to John? _____
What was the difference in their ages? _____
- 4. Write down the designations of Jesus in Luke 1. _____

- 5. What did the law require to be done to a woman who committed fornication (cf. Deut. 22:23-24)? Did Mary act like a guilty person? _____
