

## Lesson 3

# The Birth and Childhood of Jesus

## Luke 2

### The Birth of Jesus (2:1-7)

During his reign as emperor of Rome, Caesar Augustus (31 BC–14 AD) passed a decree for taxation. Cyrenius was governor of Syria at the time and, in the administration of the decree, required the Israelites to return to their ancestral home for taxation.

Joseph, who lived in Galilee, was required to journey to Bethlehem to pay his taxes. In the ninth month of her pregnancy, Mary was required to make the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem (approximately 100 miles). When they arrived in Bethlehem, they found no room in the inn. Mary “brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger” (2:7). What humble circumstances these were for the God of glory to enter the world!

In this manner, the Lord Jesus was born into the world. His birth was the fulfillment of prophecy: (1) He was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14); (2) He was born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2); (3) He was born the descendant of Abraham (Gen. 12:3) and David (2 Sam.

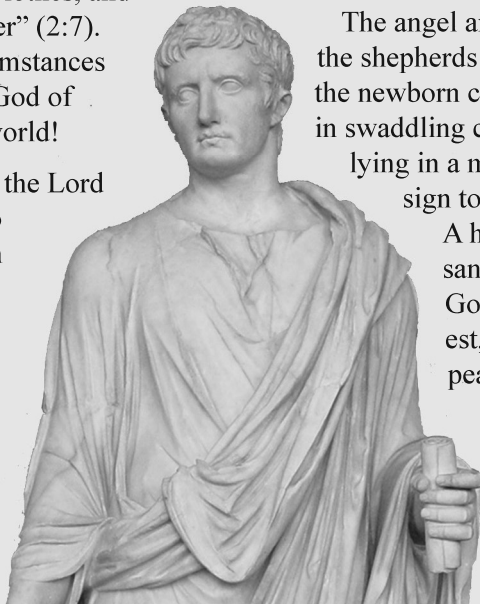
7:11-14). Truly, the Lord’s Messiah had come.

### The Visit of the Shepherds (2:8-20)

When Jesus was born, an angel appeared to shepherds who were tending their flocks in a field near Bethlehem. The angel announced, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (2:10-11). The good news, which is the meaning of the word “gospel,” is that the Savior was born. He is the “Christ,” the long-expected Messiah promised by the prophets. This Messiah is also Lord.

The angel announced that the shepherds would find the newborn child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger as a sign to the shepherds.

A host of angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (2:14). The shepherds left their flocks and journeyed to Bethlehem



Augustus Caesar

to see the newborn child, the Christ. Upon arriving at the manger, they told Mary and Joseph of the visit of the angels.

### Circumcision and Presentation of Jesus (2:22-40)

In obedience to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph had the baby circumcised on the eighth day (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3). On that day, they also named Him Jesus in obedience to Gabriel’s instructions (1:31). Jesus was born “under the law” (Gal. 4:4); hence, He had to obey all of the ordinances in the law of Moses in order to be without sin (Heb. 4:15).

The law required that the firstborn male child be presented in the temple forty days after his birth (Exod. 13:2; Lev. 12:1-8). A sacrifice was offered; usually the sacrifice was a one-year old lamb and a pigeon or turtledove, but in cases of poverty, two turtle doves or pigeons could be offered.

While Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were in the temple, a man named Simeon saw Jesus. The Lord had revealed to Simeon that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah or Christ (2:26). The Holy Spirit led him to the Temple that day; when he saw Jesus, he took Him in his arms and said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (2:29-30). He had lived to see the prophesied Messiah. Under the Spirit’s inspiration, Simeon prophesied that Jesus would be the salvation, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles (2:32). He also foretold that (1) Jesus was set for the rising and falling of many in Israel (2:34); (2) Jesus would be the source of great sorrow for Mary—a reference to her sorrow at His death (2:35).



**Bethlehem square features the entrance to the Church of the Nativity, a building erected in AD 600 to commemorate that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The featured place in the building is a grotto where Mary is thought to have given birth. Photo courtesy of HolylandPhotos.org.**

A prophetess named Anna was also present in the Temple. Her husband had died after she had been married only seven years; she was now 84 years old. She served the Lord night and day. She gave thanks to the Lord for Jesus and spoke of Him to all of the Israelites who were awaiting the advent of the Messiah (2:38).

Luke does not record the visit of the wise men and the subsequent flight into Egypt (Matt. 2). He simply reports that Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth. There “the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him” (2:40).

### **Jesus’ Observance of the Passover at Twelve Years Old (2:41-52)**

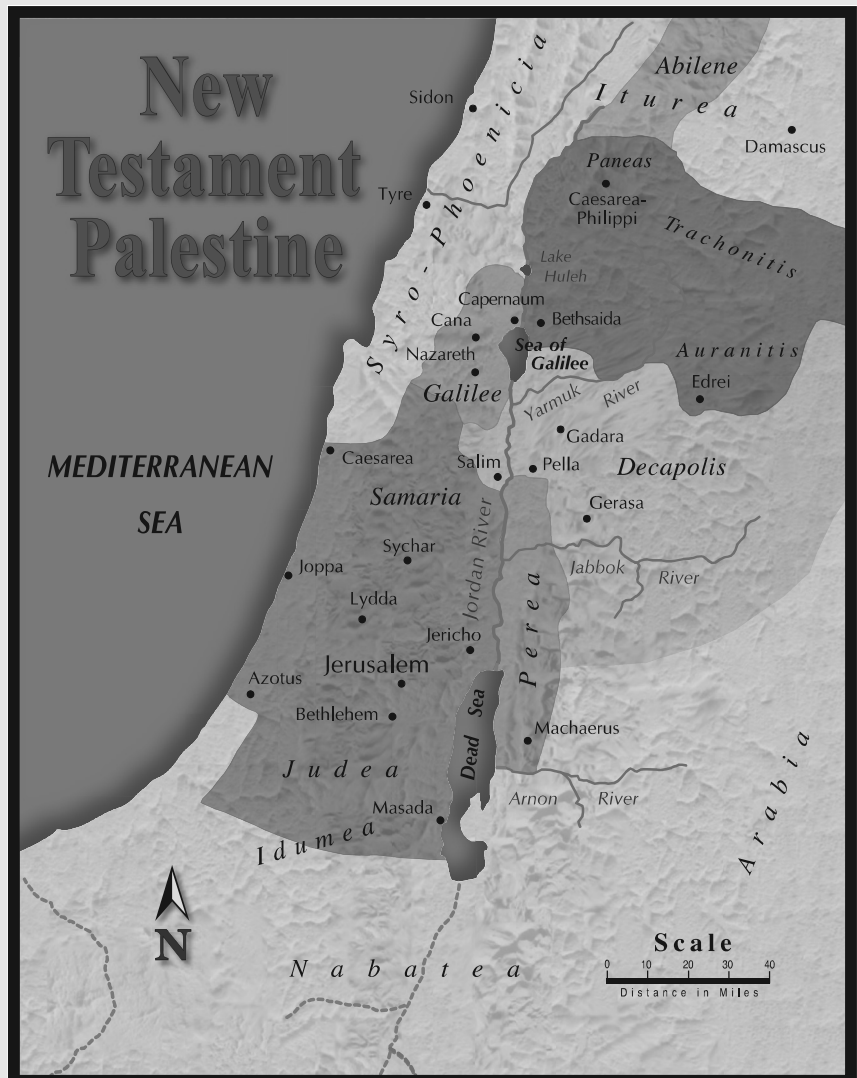
The years of Jesus’ childhood are hidden in obscurity. No one knows what happened during those years. Some of the apocryphal gospels tell stories of events which are supposed to have occurred during those years; however, these stories manifest the characteristics of myths instead of history. We know

nothing of Jesus’ childhood except this one incident recorded by Luke.

Mary and Joseph were required to observe the Passover in Jerusalem each year in obedience to the law of Moses (Dent. 16:1-8). When Jesus was twelve years old, the family journeyed to Jerusalem with many other Israelites to observe the feast. After the feast, they began to return to Nazareth;

Mary and Joseph assumed that Jesus was with the company of people returning to Nazareth. They traveled the entire day before they missed Him. Upon missing Him, they returned to Jerusalem and searched for three days before finding Jesus in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the Jewish learned men discussing the law. They were astonished at His understanding and answers.

His mother said, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing” (2:48). Jesus replied, “How is it that ye sought me? Wist (know) ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (2:49). Jesus had an understanding of His work at an early period of His life.



**And He said to them,  
“Why did you seek Me?  
Did you not know that  
I must be about My  
Father’s business?”  
(Luke 2:49 NKJV)**

Jesus returned to Nazareth with His parents and was subject to them (what an example for other young

people to follow—Eph. 6:1). In Nazareth, Jesus grew up; He increased in “wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man” (2:52). He was reared as a carpenter’s son who learned that trade (Mark 6:3). He had brothers named James, Joses, Judas, and Simon (Mark 6:3).

The Gospel of Luke relates the birth and childhood of Jesus from Mary’s point of view (1:26-56; 2:19, 51); Matthew relates the birth of Jesus from Joseph’s

point of view (Matt. 1:18-25). Luke possibly met Mary and had opportunity to hear her tell of the birth and childhood of the Lord. The Holy Spirit guided the beloved physician in the selection of what was recorded and in the words with which he wrote.

This is the last reference to Joseph in the gospel of Luke (2:41-52). We can only conjecture what happened to him. Most commentators speculate that Joseph is no longer mentioned in the Gospels because he died during the early life of Jesus.

### Questions

1. List the chain of events which resulted in Jesus’ being born in Bethlehem. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled by His birth in Bethlehem? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What good news did the angels announce to the shepherds (vv. 10-11)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Based on Leviticus 12:2-6 and Luke 2:23-24, what do we know about Mary and Joseph? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. For what was Simeon waiting when he was awaiting the “consolation of Israel” (v. 25)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What had God promised Simeon (v. 26)? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What did Simeon say when he saw Jesus (vv. 29-30)? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What did Simeon say about the Messiah’s work (v. 32)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. In what sense was Jesus set for the rising and falling of many in Israel (v. 34)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. How would Jesus be a source of sorrow to Mary (v. 35)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What is said about Anna’s personal life and her work (vv. 36-37)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What did Anna say about Jesus (v. 38)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. What did Jesus say He was doing in the Temple (v. 49)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. How is Jesus' youth so exemplary to younger people (v. 51)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15. In what ways did Jesus grow (v. 52)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Who Said It?

The answers to these questions are not confined to Luke 2.

1. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." \_\_\_\_\_

2. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." \_\_\_\_\_

3. "How is it that ye sought me? Wist (know) ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" \_\_\_\_\_

4. "Blessed by the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David." \_\_\_\_\_

5. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." \_\_\_\_\_

### The Brothers of Jesus

Name Jesus' fleshly brothers: \_\_\_\_\_

### Underline the Correct Answer

1. The ruler of Rome when Jesus was born was (Tiberius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, Julius Caesar, Nero Caesar).

2. The city of David is (Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jericho, Jerusalem).

3. Jesus was presented in the Temple when he was (8, 40, 30) days old.

4. At twelve years old, Jesus visited Jerusalem to observe the feast of (Pentecost, Passover, Tabernacles, Jubilee).

### Thought Questions

1. If your twelve-year-old boy was lost, where would you look for him? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How would you feel as a parent if your child was lost for three days? \_\_\_\_\_

3. In what subject would your child astonish his elders by the level of his learning and knowledge? \_\_\_\_\_