

The Great Story

Week 22 – The Messiah is Born

Bible Study

I. Introduction

- a. Since the closing of the Old Testament, Israel had endured 400 years without a prophet.
- b. From 167 to 160 BC the Maccabean Revolt took place between Judea and the Seleucid Empire (One of the 4 fragments of the empire conquered by Alexander)
 - i. This story is included in 1st and 2nd Maccabees (found in the Apocrypha but not considered canonical by Protestants)
- c. Julius Caesar died on March 15th, 44 BC (Ides of March)

II. Gaius Octavius (great nephew of Caesar) defeated Antony in battle in 31 BC and became the first emperor of Rome.

- a. He was given the title Augustus (Great or Venerable) by the Senate.
- b. Initiated the *Pax Romana*, The Peace of Rome (a relative peace within the empire for 2 centuries)
- c. Augustus died in 14 AD at the age of 75.

III. The Gospels

- a. The Synoptic Gospels
 - i. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar in their descriptions of events. The extent of details vary in certain accounts, but these three Gospels are most closely related.
- b. The Gospel of John
 - i. John's Gospel is the only Gospel that alludes to a 3 year ministry of Christ (mentions 3 different Passovers).
- c. The Gospels should be read in light of each other so details of events are properly integrated.

IV. The Writers

- a. Matthew
 - i. Tax Collector called by Jesus
 - ii. Gospel Audience – Jews
 - iii. Main Focus – Demonstrate Jesus as the Messiah and King
- b. Mark
 - i. Cousin of Barnabas, Temporary companion of Paul, and associate of Peter
 - ii. Gospel Audience – Gentile believers in Rome
 - iii. Main Focus – Jesus as a suffering servant
- c. Luke
 - i. Companion of Paul, Doctor

- ii. Gospel Audience – Gentiles
- iii. Main Focus – Jesus as savior of mankind
- d. John
 - i. Disciple of Jesus (The Disciple who Jesus loved)
 - ii. Gospel Audience – Gentile Christians
 - iii. Main Focus – Jesus is the Christ, Son of the Living God

V. Who is Jesus?

- a. John 1:1-6
 - i. Jesus was present with God in the beginning
 - ii. Jesus is God (2nd member of the Trinity)
- b. Jesus was fully man but also completely God in His human incarnation.
- c. Jesus is the Christ (this is a Greek Word, the equivalent in Hebrew is, “Messiah”)

VI. John the Baptist

- a. Zechariah and Elizabeth were both in the line of Aaron.
 - i. They had no children and were old
 - ii. No children in that day was looked upon as being cursed by God.
- b. Zechariah was a priest in the division of Abijah.
 - i. Nothing special, there were 24 divisions of priests
 - ii. Each division provided services at the Temple for one week at a time, 2 weeks a year.
 - iii. Zechariah was chosen by lot to burn incense before the altar to signify the
 - 1. About 18k priests served at the temple. Being chosen to do this was a great honor and something that usually only happen once in the life of a priest.
 - 2. God was in control of the lots
- c. An Angel appeared to Zechariah and told him that he and Elizabeth would have a son.
 - i. Zechariah questioned the angel asking for a sign that these things were true
 - ii. The angel punished him by telling him that he would be unable to speak until everything that he was told had taken place.
- d. John was filled with the Holy Spirit from the time he was in the womb.
 - i. He was not to drink alcohol – Nazirite Vow? (Num 6:2-5, Judges 13:4-5, 1 Sam 1:11)
- e. John was to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord.
 - i. Malachi 4:5-6
 - ii. The people were expecting someone to come in the Spirit of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord.

VII. Mary and Gabriel

- a. Mary was a virgin that was engaged to be married to Joseph

- i. Being engaged was almost like being married in that time.
- b. 6 months after Elizabeth became pregnant, Gabriel visited Mary and told her that she would conceive a son by the Holy Spirit while she was still a virgin.
- c. Mary questioned how she would become pregnant while being a virgin whereas Zechariah doubted Gabriel and asked for a sign to verify the truth of what he had been told.
- d. When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant, he was going to divorce her quietly as to not publically disgrace her.
 - i. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him what happened to Mary and not to divorce her.

VIII. The Birth of Jesus

- a. Jesus was probably born in 6/5 BC
 - i. Though the Roman calendar is based on the birth of Jesus, the starting date is wrong.
- b. Luke 2:1-21
 - i. Jesus was born in Bethlehem because his adopted father (Joseph) was of the tribe of Judea.
 - 1. Matthew traces the lineage of Jesus through Joseph to show that Jesus had legal right to the throne of David.
 - 2. Luke traces the lineage of Jesus through Mary to show he had the blood of David.
 - 3. Micah 5:2
 - a. This is a Messianic prophecy about where the Messiah would come from.
 - ii. The shepherds came to worship Jesus and then went to tell everyone what they saw.
- c. After 40 days, Jesus had to be presented at the temple for purification according to the Law of Moses.
 - i. Mary and Joseph sacrificed either 2 turtledoves or two pigeons for this ceremony. This is evidence that they were poor and could not afford a more expensive Lamb.
- d. Simeon recognized Jesus as the Messiah and prophesied over Him.
 - i. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would see the Lord's Christ before he died.

IX. The Wise Men and Egypt

- a. Matthew 2 describes the visit of the Wise Men
 - i. The event likely occurred 2 years after the birth of Jesus.
- b. The Wise Men came from the East
 - i. The Wise Men were likely from Persia, perhaps descendants of the Jews who stayed there after the exile.
- c. The Wise Men first went to Herod to inquire about the birth of the King.
 - i. Herod wanted the Wise Men to report the whereabouts of Jesus so he could kill him.

- d. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were no longer in the inn at this time, they had likely moved into actual living quarters.
- e. While the Wise Men gave Jesus 3 gifts (gold, frankincense, and myrrh), there is no indication that there were just 3 people.
- f. The Wise Men were warned about Herod's intent to kill Jesus in a dream and did not return to him.
- g. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take his family and flee to Egypt.
 - i. This fulfilled the Scripture in Hosea 11:1 where the Exodus is seen as a pictorial representation of where the Messiah would come from.
- h. Herod killed all the children 2 and under in Bethlehem. Bethlehem had between 300-1000 people during this time.
- i. The family of Jesus returned from Egypt after the death of Herod (likely only a few months). They moved back to Nazareth.
 - i. Matthew 2:23 - ... "He shall be called a Nazarene"

X. Jesus Presented at the Temple

- a. Luke 2:41-52 describes Jesus as a young boy at the temple.
- b. When Jesus was 12, he went with his family to Jerusalem for the Passover. All Jewish men were required to attend. At the age of 13, Jesus would have been considered a man.
- c. While his family left, Jesus remained behind in the Temple, learning and questioning the teachers there.
 - i. The teachers were amazed at his understanding and answers.
- d. After three days, his parents found him in the Temple and asked him why he stayed. He said, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"
 - i. This was likely a day's journey before they discovered him missing, a day's journey back to Jerusalem, and part of another day looking for him.
 - ii. Jesus was not being rebellious here, he did submit to his parents and go with them.

XI. Summary of the Story

- a. Jesus is the Christ, son of the Living God.
- b. He came to earth in bodily form and was born of a virgin.
- c. Jesus fulfilled messianic prophecies even in his early years.

XII. Sources

- a. *The MacArthur Study Bible*. Edited by MacArthur, John, Jr. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997