

“Sovereign Event: The Birth of God’s Son!”

Read Luke 1:5-25... Zechariah is in the Holy of Holies when Gabriel tells him that his wife Elizabeth is going to give birth to a son, and he is to name him John [which means, *God is gracious*]; this son of theirs will fulfill the prophecy of **Malachi 4:5-6** (cf. **Matthew 11:10-14**).

Luke 1:26-38... Gabriel tells Mary she is going to have God’s Son, and also that her aunt Elizabeth (who had been barren) is now six months pregnant.

Luke 1:39-45... Mary goes to Elizabeth, the Holy Spirit confirms, both her and Elizabeth’s pregnancy, just as Gabriel had said, Mary (**v. 56**) stayed three months.

The Jewish priestly cycles at the Temple and the seven major Feasts and Festivals (Passover, First fruits, Harvest, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, Hanukkah), when applied to the NT Scriptures concerning the conception and birth of both, Jesus, and John His cousin, reveal some very amazing things.

According to the Jewish calendar, Mary's visit would have been late in the 9th month of Kislev (Nov/Dec); not surprisingly, the Jewish festival of Hanukkah [Festival of Lights] begins on the 25th day of Kislev, which just happens to be very close to December 25, Christmas, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus: the Light of the World (**John 8:12**), "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." (**1John 1:5**), "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."

Read Luke 1:57-66... John means, *God is gracious* — John would have the awesome privilege and responsibility to announce the beginning of the ministry of God’s Son, the Messiah.

John 1:29, "The next day [John] saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" **31-34**, "'I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.' John testified saying, 'I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

John was six months older than Jesus, and since John's birth was near or during Passover (Nisan= Mar/April), Jesus would have then been born in the month of Tishri (Sept/Oct) about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

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Although our celebration of Christmas doesn't line up with the actual birth of Jesus, it very likely lines up with the time of Christ’s conception in the womb of Mary.

Read Luke 2:1-7... Joseph took Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to register in the town of both their ancestors , according to the census being taken.

According to Matthew’s genealogy (**1:1-16**) its purpose (**v. 1**) is to give, “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David.” It follows the bloodline (**v. 6**), **through David’s son Solomon**, to Joseph (Jesus’ legal father) (**v. 16**), “Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.”

Luke’s genealogy (**Luke 3:23-38**) is (**v. 23**), the record of Jesus, “When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed [*lit. as it was being thought*] , the son of Joseph, the son of Eli [Mary’s father].” Luke is following the line of Mary (Jesus’ blood mother), **through David’s son Nathan** (**v. 31**); and since there was no specific Greek word for “son-in-law,” Joseph was called the “son of Eli” by marriage to Mary (Eli’s daughter).

Tracing a genealogy through the mother’s side is unusual, but so was the virgin birth; but it is important that both Mary and Joseph were in the ancestry line of David, so that Jesus meets the requirement of being both a legal and bloodline descendant of David, and therefore eligible to be the Messiah. While Joseph and Mary were there, it came time for the baby to be born, and since they could find no place to stay, Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son, and placed Him in a manger; perhaps in the stable behind the inn, or maybe underneath the first floor of a house, where animals were kept.

Read Luke 2:8-20... An angel of the Lord appeared and announced to some shepherds the birth of God’s Son. They said (**v. 12**), the baby would be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

A large number of angels appeared praising God, the shepherds then went to Bethlehem to see all God had done, and there they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus who was lying in a manger, just as they were told.

Shepherds were at the bottom of the Jewish social order, because they couldn't participate in the religious rituals and ceremonies; and yet, out of all the people in and around Jerusalem, God chose a small band of shepherds to be the ones to witness the birth of His Son (**John 10:11**), “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” **1Peter 5:4** says He is “the Chief Shepherd,” to Whom all other shepherds in the church will give an account.

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After looking upon the baby Jesus, **Luke 2:18** says the shepherds went out into the streets, sharing the good news that the Savior had indeed been born.

Luke 2:19 says, “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart,” “all these things” meaning: the angel’s announcement about Mary’s Holy conception, Joseph’s response to this news, Elizabeth’s marvelous greeting, and the special names “Jesus” and “Immanuel,” to be given to her baby boy!

The shepherds (**v. 20**) “returned (to their flocks), glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

Jesus came to earth the first time, in the flesh of a helpless baby boy; the next time, He will come as the Warrior King, Sovereign Lord, and Righteous Judge over All (cf. **Revelation 19:11-16**).

At Jesus’ first coming there was no decent room available for Him to be born in; upon His return to the Father in heaven, He began preparing a place for all those who love Him, where we will live forever with Him in a new universe.

John 14:1-3, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also,” (**Revelation 21:1-5a**), “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’”

Only a few shepherds witnessed the first coming of Jesus; but when He returns to earth again, everyone in the world will see Him (**Revelation 1:7**), “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.”

The first time Jesus came, a single star marked His arrival (cf. **Matthew 2:1-2, 7-10**). Ultimately, the whole universe will be lit by His glory (**Revelation 22:5**), “And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. (cf. **Revelation 19:5-8; 21:22-25; 22:16**).

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The first time Jesus came, some wisemen (Magi) from the East (probably Persia) brought Him very special gifts to worship Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (cf. **Matthew 2:11b**). The next time Jesus comes, He will bring rewards for every believer (cf. **Revelation 22:12-13**).

The ultimate preparation for the next time Jesus comes, is to believe in and respond to what He said, did, fulfilled, and promised the first time He came. **Hebrews 1:1-4**, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they,” (**Philippians 2:8-11**), “Being found in appearance as a man, He [Jesus] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” (**Acts 2:21**), “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved,” (**Acts 4:12**), “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

More books and song lyrics have been written about, and more paintings have been done of, Jesus than any other person in history. The world’s calendar dating system (B.C., A.D.), two major holidays (Christmas, Easter), the first day of every week (Sunday), and the praise and worship of billions of followers, declares that this Jesus is indeed very, very, special.

Hebrews 9:26-28, “He [Jesus Christ, God’s Son] has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to* sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”

1John 5:11-13, “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

December 24th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

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Jesus is the reason for the season of Christmas. He is (**John 14:6**) the only way to God, the only embodiment of truth from God, and the only life with God; no one will be justified before the Father, and no one will go to heaven, apart from believing in Him, for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

This same Jesus was the baby who was born to a virgin in Bethlehem, in Judea; He was laid in a manger where shepherds came and witnessed Him. A year or so later, when Jesus was a toddler, some wisemen [Magi] came and worshipped Him as King. He is both Lord and Savior: crucified, resurrected, and coming again to gather all those who belong to Him, to be with Him forever!

This is the One to whom we give tribute at Christmastime, for He is the Reason for the Season and the only hope now and forever, and for that reason we gladly and joyously proclaim to all,

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Mike
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