

Matthew 2: 1-12 *The Visit of the Magi* (continued)

- ⁶ And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.”
- ⁷ Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance.
- ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage.”
- ⁹ After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.
- ¹⁰ They were overjoyed at seeing the star,
- ¹¹ and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

Matthew 2: 13-15 *The Flight to Egypt*

- ¹³ When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.”
- ¹⁴ Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.
- ¹⁵ He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Matthew 2: 16-18 *The Massacre of the Infants.*

- ¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi.
- ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:
- ¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.”

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Faith Formation

ADVENT RETREAT
GOSPEL READINGS

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Matthew 1: 18-25 *The Birth of Jesus (continued)*

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

²³ “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us.”

²⁴ When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

²⁵ He had no relations with her until she bore a son,^{*} and he named him Jesus.

Luke 2: 15-20 *The Visit of the Shepherds*

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

¹⁶ So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger.

¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child.

¹⁸ All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds.

¹⁹ And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

Luke 2: 21 *The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus*

²¹ When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Matthew 2: 1-12 *The Visit of the Magi*

¹ When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod,^{*} behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem,

² saying, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star^{*} at its rising and have come to do him homage.”

³ When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

⁴ Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

⁵ They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:

Luke 2: 1-14 *The Birth of Jesus*

- ¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled.
- ² This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria.
- ³ So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town.
- ⁴ And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,
- ⁵ to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.
- ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to have her child,
- ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.
- ⁸ Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.
- ⁹ The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear.
- ¹⁰ The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
- ¹¹ For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.
- ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."
- ¹³ And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:
- ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Matthew 1: 18-25 *The Birth of Jesus.*

- ¹⁸ Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit.
- ¹⁹ Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.
- ²⁰ Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.
- ²¹ She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

The Gospels of Advent, Christmas and the Epiphany

Of the 27 books in the Bible's New Testament, only two wrote to the announcements, birth, visits and flight of Jesus: the Gospels (a word that means "good news") of Matthew and Luke.^a



Each approaches the subjects much differently, focusing on different audiences: Matthew the Jewish population and Luke the Gentiles.

Matthew starts his Gospel with "The Birth of Jesus" (1: 18-25), while Luke begins with the "Announcement of the Birth of John" (1: 5-25), and continues with the "Announcement of the Birth of Jesus" (1: 26-38), "Mary Visits Elizabeth" (1: 39-45), "The Canticle of Mary (1: 46-56), "Birth of John" (1:57-66), and "The Canticle of Zachariah" (1: 67-80).

Both Matthew and Luke have "The Birth of Jesus" chapters, which are also approached much differently. In Matthew we have "The Visit of the Magi" (2: 1-12). In Luke we have "The Visit of the Shepherds" (2: 15-20) and "The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus" (2: 21). Matthew never mentions the Shepherds and Luke never mentions the Magi (Wise Men).

We conclude the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany readings with Matthew's chapter 2 "The Flight to Egypt" (2: 13-15), "The Massacre of the Infants" (2: 16-18) and "The Return from Egypt" (2: 19-23) and Luke's "The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus" (2: 22-38).

While Matthew's and Luke's audiences and approaches are different, in their totality is a comprehensive, wondrous and blessed story of the Son of God, our Savior - Jesus Christ.

The *Prologue* of John (1: 1-5, 10-14) is included to set the stage for the coming of this very special liturgical season.

Footnote:

^a Mark's Gospel begins with "The Preparation for the Public Ministry of Jesus" and John begins his Gospel with a "Prologue" and "The Book of Signs".

The Gospel of Matthew ^b

The Gospel of Matthew, better than any other Gospel, picks up where the Jewish Bible leaves off. Malachi closes the Old Testament with a promise: God will send a Messiah to fix Israel's problems and bring peace and joy to the people. Matthew opens the New Testament by declaring that this promise from centuries past is now fulfilled: The Messiah has come at last.

The promised Messiah arrives as a newborn baby boy: Jesus. But most Jews don't recognize him. They're expecting a warrior king, like David - someone to restore the independence and glory of Israel. The salvation Jesus brings isn't political. It's spiritual. It's for everyone. And it's forever.

Matthew seems to target Jewish readers more than any other Gospel. He traces Jesus' family tree to Abraham and David, points out 57 prophecies that Jesus fulfills and compares Jesus to Israel like the Jews of the Exodus.

The Gospel of Luke ^c

It is believed that Luke, also the author of *The Acts of the Apostles*, was a non-Jewish doctor who traveled with Saint Paul. His letters were written to someone named Theophilus, which highlighted that Jesus came to save everyone not just the Jews.

Luke's entire Gospel revolves around a single word that neither Matthew or Mark use and John writes only once: Savior. It is first used in *The Canticle of Mary* (1: 47) "my spirit rejoices in God my savior" and in *The Birth of Jesus* (2: 11) "For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord."

Luke tells us of two visits to earth by the angel Gabriel: Zechariah (1: 19) and Mary (1: 26). Luke also tells us of an angel's appearance to the shepherds upon Jesus' birth (2: 11). As Zechariah and Mary prepared for the coming of the Messiah and Lord, we too must prepare. As the shepherds glorified and praised God (2: 20), let us be ready to receive Jesus.



Footnotes:

^b "The Complete Guide To The Bible" by Stephen M. Miller
Barbour Books {c} 2007. Pages 300 - 306.

^c "The Complete Guide To The Bible" by Stephen M. Miller
Barbour Books {c} 2007. Pages 333 - 335.

Luke 1: 57-66 *The Birth of John*

⁵⁷ When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son.

⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹ When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father,

⁶⁰ but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John."

⁶¹ But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name."

⁶² So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called.

⁶³ He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed.

⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God.

⁶⁵ Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea.

⁶⁶ All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

Luke 1: 67-80 *The Canticle of Zachariah*

⁶⁷ Then Zechariah his father, filled with the holy Spirit, prophesied, saying:

⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn for our salvation within the house of David his servant,

⁷⁰ even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old:

⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,

⁷² to show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant

⁷³ and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that,

⁷⁴ rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord^a to prepare his ways,

⁷⁷ to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us

⁷⁹ to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

⁸⁰ The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Luke 1: 46-56 *The Canticle of Mary*^{e f}

⁴⁶ And Mary said: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
⁴⁷ my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
⁴⁸ For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on
will all ages call me blessed.
⁴⁹ The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.
⁵¹ He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and
heart.
⁵² He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly.
⁵³ The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away
empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his
descendants forever.”
⁵⁶ Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her
home.



Footnote:

^e Canticle *the name signifies "most excellent, best song". (www.NewAdvent.org)*
a hymn, psalm or other song of praise taken from biblical or holy
texts other than the Psalms (www.Wikipedia.com)

^f Magnificat ... is the Blessed Virgin Mary’s hymn of praise to the Lord.
It is also known as the Canticle of Mary in the Liturgy of the Hours,
a special collection of scripture readings, psalms, and hymns that
constitute what is known as the prayer of the church. Priests and
other religious are required to pray sections from the Liturgy of the
Hours each day. (www.ourcatholicprayers.com)
(Latin: [My soul] magnifies [the Lord]), also known as the *Song of
Mary* and the *Canticle of Mary*. It is one of the eight most ancient
Christian hymns and perhaps the earliest Marian hymn. The text of
the canticle is taken directly from the Gospel of Luke (1:46-55)
where it is spoken by Mary upon the occasion of her Visitation to her
cousin Elizabeth. (www.Wikipedia.com)

John 1: 1-5, 10-14 *Prologue*

¹ In the beginning⁺ was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the
Word was God.
² He was in the beginning with God.
³ All things came to be through him and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be
⁴ through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race;
⁵ the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the
world did not know him.
¹¹ He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him.
¹² But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of
God, to those who believe in his name,
¹³ who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a
man’s decision but of God.
¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we
saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.

Luke 1: 5-25 *Announcement of the Birth of John*

⁵ In the days of Herod, King of Judea,⁺ there was a priest named Zechariah
of the priestly division of Abijah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron,
and her name was Elizabeth.
⁶ Both were righteous in the eyes of God, observing all the commandments
and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly.
⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren and both were
advanced in years.
⁸ Once when he was serving as priest in his division’s turn before God,
⁹ according to the practice of the priestly service, he was chosen by lot to
enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense.
¹⁰ Then, when the whole assembly of the people was praying outside at the
hour of the incense offering,
¹¹ the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of
incense.
¹² Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him.

Footnote:

^d United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
(<http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>)

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

¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John.

¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,

¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of [the] Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb,

¹⁶ and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

¹⁷ He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah* to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord.”

¹⁸ Then Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.”

¹⁹ And the angel said to him in reply, “I am Gabriel, who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news.

²⁰ But now you will be speechless and unable to talk* until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.”

²¹ Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and were amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary.

²² But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was gesturing to them but remained mute.

²³ Then, when his days of ministry were completed, he went home.

²⁴ After this time his wife Elizabeth conceived, and she went into seclusion for five months, saying,

²⁵ So has the Lord done for me at a time when he has seen fit to take away my disgrace before others.”

Luke 1: 26-38 *Announcement of the Birth of Jesus*

²⁶ In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,

²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary.

²⁸ And coming to her, he said, “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.



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

³⁰ Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

³¹ Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.

³² He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,* and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,

³³ and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?”

³⁵ And the angel said to her in reply, “The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

³⁶ And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;

³⁷ for nothing will be impossible for God.”

³⁸ Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1: 39-45 *Mary Visits Elizabeth*

³⁹ During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah,

⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit,

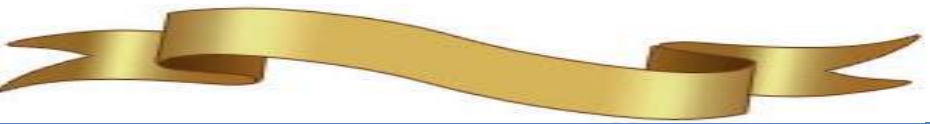
⁴² cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

⁴³ And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

⁴⁴ For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

⁴⁵ Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

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Jesus

- Returned from Egypt ... after the death of Herod
- Suffered in the desert ...
- Passed through the waters of the Jordan River ... Baptism ... Israelites crossing the Jordan
- Presented laws on a mountain

Old Testament

- Divine Promise, the Promised Land
- Sermon on the Mount
- 10 Commandments

