Bible Study 24

December 29, 2021

Last week we looked at Matthew’s Nativity Story. This week we examine the story told by Luke that is quite different. Where Matthew begins with a genealogy of Jesus, Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist.

Luke’s account is full of Angels and dreams. First to Zachariah the Father of the Baptist and then to Joseph who is engaged to Mary.

The Zachariah story is filled with Old Testament nuance with regard to the Tabernacle and the Day of Atonement. Zachariah is a priest and listens as the Angel Gabriel foretells of the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth who is barren. The story followers a common theme in the Old Testament of an elderly couple becoming the instrument of God’s salvation.

The birth of Jesus is foretold in Luke 1:26f. First Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her that God has chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah. The Angel links the birth to David. The Angel says: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you….”

Luke is the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.

Next the Gospel speaks of Mary journeying to see Elizabeth her cousin. Again Luke mentions that this time Elizabeth is filled with the holy Spirit. The words of the Great Canticle are placed in Mary’s mouth.

“My soul glorifies in the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior…”

Verse 57 continues with the Birth of John the Baptist and this time it is Zachariah who is filled with the Spirit. He prophecies and recites a song 1:67f.

“And the child grew and became strong in the Spirit…”

The Birth of Jesus is found in Luke 2:1f. Luke is very precise with his historic details as to how Christ was born. It was in the time of the Emperor Augustus, and when Quirinius was governor of Syria. This places Jesus’ birth around the year 3-- to – 4 BC.

Immediately Joseph goes from Nazareth to Bethlehem because he is of the house of Judah, in the line of David.

Luke is full of detail. “The child is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, because there was no room in the Inn.”

Shepherds play a great part in Luke’s story. The Angel appears to the shepherds and it shepherds who go to honor the Christ child. Again the City of Bethlehem is mentioned. It is the shepherds who spread the word and the news.

Jesus is presented in the Temple in 2: 21f where Anna and Simeon witness to the arrival of the Messiah the Christ child. The prophets speak of the future of the child.

In Luke’s Gospel there is no ‘Flight into Egypt,’ Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth.