

WELCOME to this second session of the study of the life of Christ. Today we begin looking at the life of Christ within a very broad chronological framework. This is somewhat shaped by modern biographical concerns, as we noted in the first study. But it is how our minds in western culture have been conditioned to think when considering the life of some individual. Some challenges immediately arise because of this approach. Namely, the canonical gospels were not written from this modern perspective. So they will not address many of the concerns that we would normally have about the heritage of Jesus of Nazareth. But we will address such concerns as they arise from our study of the scripture texts.



First a quick overview of today's study. The theme is built around "Beginnings." In regard to the canonical gospels, this means two fundamental aspects: his birth and the launching of public ministry. Thus as Luke makes clear (cf. Luke 3:23), Jesus was thirty years of age when He was baptized and began His ministry. Thus BEGINNINGS by design covers these first thirty years of Jesus earthly life.



What do we know about these years?¹ The answer is Not much! Only two of the four canonical gospels touch on this period of Jesus' earthly life. Matthew and Luke give separate accounts of the birth of Jesus and His early childhood years. But their accounts stop at age twelve and their story jumps ahead to the beginning of public ministry at thirty years of age. When viewed from a strictly chronological angle, even these two gospels only provide isolated details mostly about the first couple or so years of Jesus' life. But with the material presented we gain significant insights into the religious aspect of Jesus of Nazareth, which is at the heart of their objective.

These so-called '*Infancy Narratives*' in the canonical gospels stand in contrast to similar accounts in wide circulation during the beginning centuries of the Roman empire. The cultural tradition of that era was that every individual of importance and significant accomplishment had some kind of extraordinary birth and childhood. Particularly in regard to the Roman emperors, such spectacular birth accounts served to justify the claim to being a god and consequently helped validate the emperor worship cult that flourished at various times during the first three centuries of the empire. Later Christianity that functioned on the very fringe of the Christian movement came under heavy influence from this Roman cultural tradition. Consequently, as validation of their highly unorthodox beliefs a series of so-called *Infancy Gospels* was created supposedly giving accounts of both the birth and especially the childhood of Jesus largely through his teen years.²

The second focus in today's study will center on the official launching of public ministry. The canonical synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke share a generally common perspective in describing this period about Jesus' baptism and His temptation (Mark only references it while Matthew and Luke describe it). The Gospel of John, on the other hand, has a very different way of presenting this beginning of Jesus' ministry.

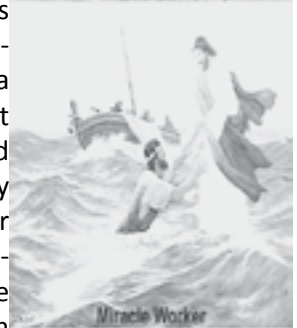
Modern studies of these first thirty years of Jesus' life tend to be more fascinated with the *Infancy Gospels* than with the *Infancy Narratives* inside Matthew and Luke. But Christians generally know well the "Christmas stories" of these two gospels, since they play such a huge role in the celebration of Christmas in western society. And yet, often times traditions have emerged over time that are more legendary in nature than factual about the meaning of these stories in Matthew and Luke. For example, no where does the scripture indicate how many wise men visited Jesus in Bethlehem. But modern legends identify three and even have names for them! Chances are pretty good, if your parents brought you up in church you played one of the wise men in a children's Christmas

¹Pretty regularly hyperlinks to my *Life and Ministry of Christ* materials at cranfordville.com will be given. Although this material is not yet in finalized form, it does contain substantially greater details than is possible to treat in this limited overview study. These are arranged both in outline form and in lecture manuscript form, since they were originally developed for *Religion 102 New Testament Introduction*, a course that I taught many years at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina.

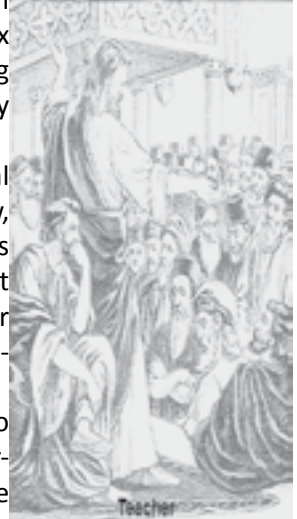
²To avoid confusion, keep clearly separate the labels *Infancy Narratives* and *Infancy Gospels*. The first label, *Infancy Narratives*, defines stories both in the canonical gospels and beyond about the birth and childhood of Jesus. But the second label, *Infancy Gospels*, defines a sub-category of the *New Testament Apocrypha*. Inside this collection of 'Christian' heretical writings from the second through the eighth centuries AD, one finds both Gospels and *Infancy Gospels*. The first will cover -- most of the time -- the entire life of Christ, while the second set of documents centers usually on 'filling in the missing gaps' in the birth and childhood years of Christ with legendary tales of super heroic actions modeled largely after the Greco-Roman 'god man' traditions.



Good Shepherd



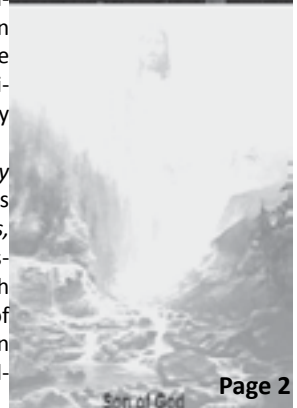
Miracle Worker



Teacher



Savior



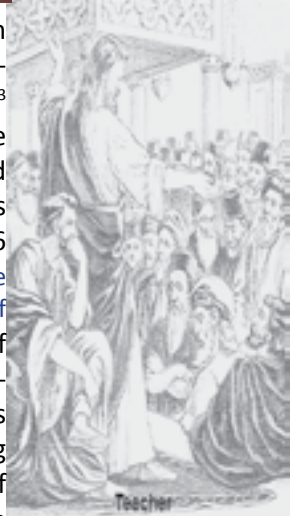
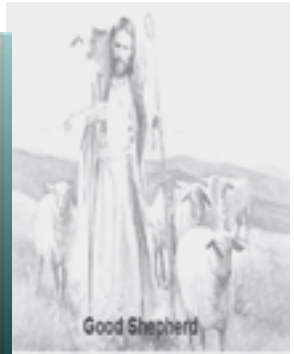
Son of God

pageant during your childhood.



THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Infancy Narratives: Definitions

- Jesus - 4 BC
- Born - approx. 3 BC
- Began public ministry: 27 AD
- Crucified: 33 AD
- Infancy Narratives:
- Cover only early childhood.
- Matthew & Luke give separate accounts
- Mark & John completely skip over this



When was Jesus born? That is, what year would you assign on our present day calendar to Jesus' birth? How should you go about establishing such a date? Our calendar is often called a 'Christian calendar.'³ But this does not in any way mean that this calendar existed at the time of Christ. In 1542, a major revision of the Julian Calendar was made and stands today as the modern Gregorian Calendar. The Julian Calendar was instituted in the late Roman Republic introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 BCE. The motivation for the Gregorian Calendar was to "bring the date for the celebration of Easter to the time of the year in which the First Council of Nicaea had agreed upon in 325." Adopted in the Roman Catholic countries of Europe, Protestants continued to use the same system down to the present day as well. But one of the many errors built into these revisions was a miscalculation of the date of Jesus' birth. With a general understanding of the beginning of public ministry at 27 AD when Jesus was 30 years of age, it becomes clear that He was not born in the year 0, even though the numbering of the years assumed the year of His birth.

With an approximate three plus years of public ministry, Jesus' death comes during Passover of year 30 on this calendar system. But one would note that in Eastern Orthodox Christian traditions alternative calendaring systems have always been used. Consequently, different dates typically are assigned to Jesus' birth, public ministry, and death. What the four canonical gospels give us in fair detail is the three plus years of public ministry from 27 to 30 AD. What we know very little about from these sources are the years from birth to the beginning of public ministry.

³For a helpful background study, see "Gregorian calendar," Wikipedia.org. The various labels are "Gregorian Calendar," "Western Calendar," and "Christian Calendar." All refer to the same calendar system of dating.

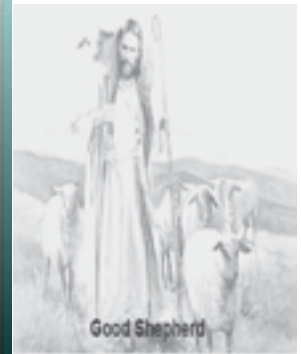


THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
SESSION TWO Theme: BEGINNINGS

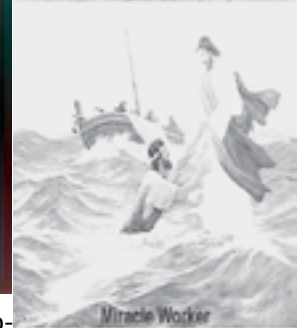
PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

Overview of Today's Study

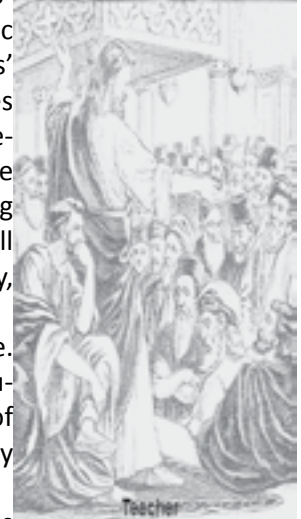
- **INFANCY NARRATIVES**
- **DEFINITIONS**
- **GOSPEL NARRATIVES**
- **INFANCY GOSPELS**
- **MINISTRY LAUNCHING**
- **BAPTISM**
- **TEMPTATION**



Good Shepherd



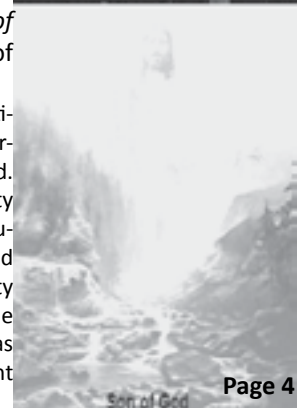
Miracle Worker



Teacher



Savior



Son of God

But what we do learn from these accounts is very important. Today, I want to focus on the Infancy Narratives and the Beginning of Public Ministry. The label *Infancy Narratives* defines specific stories about Jesus' birth and very early childhood. Inside Matthew and Luke, these stories cover parts of the first twelve years of Jesus' earthly life, but nothing beyond that. The gospel accounts jump from Jesus' 'Bar Mitzvahs' at age twelve to public ministry at age thirty. Nothing about these intervening years is provided. Add to that the fact that Mark and John skip over all these years from birth to beginning adulthood at age 30.⁴ Consequently, our knowledge of these early years is very limited.

The two gospels that provide information are Matthew and Luke. And their narratives are completely distinct from one another without duplication of events. The closest to duplication is with the genealogies of Jesus, but even here very different approaches are taken. Consequently by comparing the two sets of narratives we gain a more complete picture. In contrast to the two canonical gospels, the apocryphal Infancy Gospels present a very different picture of Jesus.

The rarity of information about the childhood of Jesus in the canonical gospels led to a hunger of early Christians for more detail about the early life of Jesus. This was supplied by a number of 2nd century and later texts, known as infancy gospels, none of which were accepted into the biblical canon, but the very number of their surviving manuscripts attests to their continued popularity.

Most of these were based on the earliest infancy gospels, namely the *Infancy Gospel of James* (also called the "Protoevangelium of James") and *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, and on their later combination into the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (also called the "Infancy Gospel of Matthew" or "Birth of

⁴Remember that in ancient Jewish tradition the periods of growing up were dramatically different from those in modern society. They were close to, but still somewhat different from both Roman, Greek, and Egyptian traditions in the ancient Mediterranean world. A Jewish girl went from infancy to childhood and immediately into adulthood at puberty in her early teen years. But a Jewish boy went from infancy to childhood into youth (at puberty) but not adulthood until his 30th birthday. Also, adulthood in the ancient world had nothing to do with acquiring legal rights and standings. Overwhelmingly it meant eligibility for marriage -- this for both girls and boys. Puberty marked a critical turning point for the girl since this meant physiologically she could now produce babies. But the young boy was not considered seriously responsible enough to start his own family until age 30 in ancient Jewish custom.



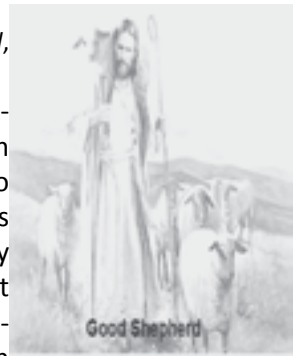
Mary and Infancy of the Saviour”).

The other significant early infancy gospels are the *Syriac Infancy Gospel*, *the History of Joseph the Carpenter* and *the Life of John the Baptist*.

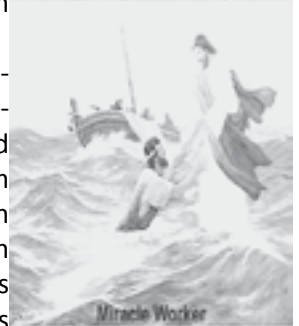
What information about Jesus that comes from these writings is legendary and fanciful imagination rather than historical accounts. We learn nothing about the beginnings of Jesus from these sources. But we do learn much about later non-Jewish Christian tendencies to re-make Jesus over into an image that suited their tastes which were shaped primarily by the surrounding Greco-Roman culture of the second and subsequent centuries. There in lies the value of studying these fragmented documents. They stand as a clear warning of the danger of letting our own world dictate how we should understand Jesus.

The second major aspect of BEGINNINGS is the launching of public ministry by Jesus. The canonical gospels provide two different perspectives of this segment. First, the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke present the beginning of public ministry in terms of Jesus’ baptism and temptation. With the completion of these two early events in Judea in southern Palestine, Jesus begins His formal ministry in Galilee in northern Palestine. Second, the Gospel of John comes at this very differently. His approach is more theological than historical narrative. The gospel begins with a formal Prologue in 1:1-18 where the religious conceptualization of Jesus as the divine Logos is placed before the reader. In John’s gospel, some preliminary activities of Jesus are presented in 1:19-34 centered around John the Baptist. But even the Synoptic Gospel writers are distinct from one another. All three emphasize the role of John the Baptist but in different ways. They all include a depiction of Jesus’ baptism, but with different emphases. All three include the temptation of Jesus but Mark only references it while Matthew and Luke go into greater detail.

While these approaches do not generally satisfy our curiosity about many of the details of Jesus’ childhood and youth, they do provide us with a rich perspective of who Jesus was religiously from the very outset of his earthly existence. And, after all, this is what the gospel writers are interested in, and concerned to present to their initial readers.



Good Shepherd



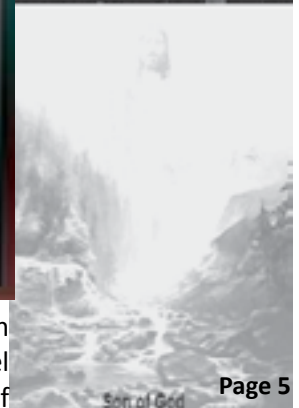
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THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Infancy Narratives: Matthew 1:1-2:23

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

1. Genealogy: Matthew 1:1-17
2. Birth: Matthew 1:18-25
3. Circumcision: Matthew 2:1-12
4. Flight to Egypt: Matthew 2:13-23
5. Jesus' Childhood: Matthew 2:23-23
6. Ministry with John: Matthew 3:1-17
7. Flight to Galilee: Matthew 23:1-17
8. Disappearance of Jesus in Bethany: Matthew 23:1-17
9. Return to Galilee: Matthew 23:1-17

A quick look at the pericopes containing the perspective of Matthew on the birth and childhood of Christ. In chapters one and two, this gospel writer introduces us to Jesus of Nazareth. He first covers the genealogy of



Jesus giving the pedigree of Jesus from a Jewish perspective starting with Abraham and continuing through Mary. After a summarizing statement in 1:17, Matthew inserts six narrative pericopes covering isolated events surrounding the birth and early childhood of Jesus (1:18-2:23). Then in 3:1 Matthew jumps forward to the ministry of John the Baptist in preparation for the beginning of public ministry by Jesus.

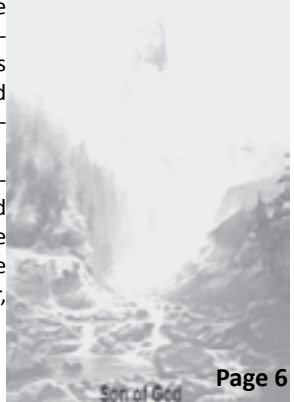
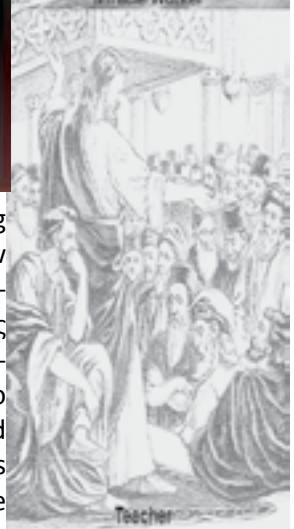
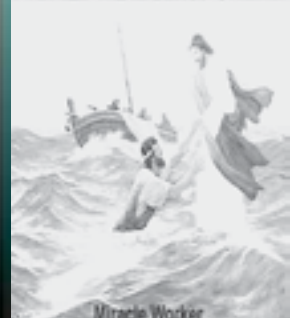
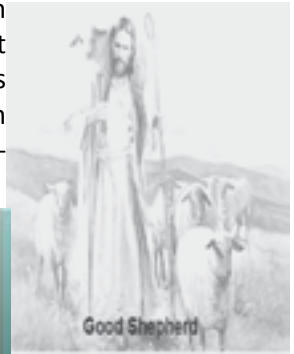
THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Infancy Narratives: Matthew 1:1-2:23

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

1. Genealogy: Abraham to David 1:2-6
2. Genealogy: David to Joseph 1:7-18
3. Genealogy: Summary Comment 1:17.

17 He is the genealogy from Abraham to David as Jewish genealogy and from David to the beginning of Jesus' ministry as Christian genealogy.

- Begins with Abraham through Mary
- Highlights the Jewish ancestry
- Emphasizes 14 'generations' (of years)



In writing to Jewish Christians in the late 60s to early 70s living in Syria most likely at Antioch and perhaps also in Damascus, Matthew stresses the Jewish lineage⁵ of Jesus at the outset as an important validation of the claim to being the promised Jewish Messiah: Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υιοῦ Δαυὶδ υιοῦ Ἀβραάμ (1:1). From all indication, Matthew was seeking to help the Jewish Christian community respond to growing synagogue pressure to abandon their Christian commitment and to return to Judaism as a part of the Jewish struggle against the Romans who were in the process of destroying Jerusalem and the temple at the time.

The arrangement stated by Matthew is to group the listing into three sections of fourteen names, although the actual listing doesn't quite follow this pattern.⁶ We really don't know the exact reasoning behind the 3 X 14 grouping structure, in spite of mountains of speculation by subsequent interpreters. What is clear is the theological intent of Matthew to assert the Jewish lineage of Jesus from Abraham through David, an essential qualification for the Jewish Messiah.

⁵"Genealogies are records of a person's or a group's descent from an ancestor or ancestors. Outside of Israel, genealogies appear only rarely in ancient Near Eastern literature and are attested primarily in Mesopotamian king lists and in 2d-millennium texts dealing with the political organization and history of the Amorites. However, the OT contains about 25 genealogies of varying complexity, a fact which suggests that genealogy played an important role in Israelite life and thought." [Robvert R. Wilson, "Genealogy, Genealogies," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.]

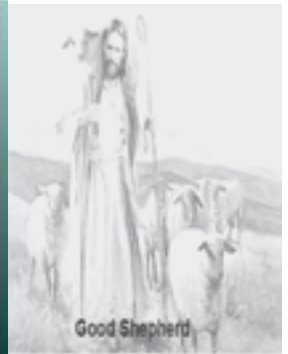
⁶"Since the first two groups contain fourteen names each (if we discount the repetition of David at the beginning of the second group), the problem centers in the third group. Because Jechoniah is repeated at the beginning of the third group (following the pattern established) and is therefore not to be counted again, we are left with only twelve names. Adding Jesus, we get thirteen, one short of the needed fourteen." [Donal Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, vol. 33A in the *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1998), 6.]



THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Infancy Narratives: Matthew 2:1-2:23

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

- 4) Anchor of fulfillment in Isaiah 7:14-25
- 5) No clue as to the sources used by Matthew for this
- 6) In 1:18-25, the fulfillment quote is central (v. 23)
- 7) 2:1-23 deal with childhood events
- 8) Egypt plays important symbolic role for the Messiah



The subsequent pericopes follow a defined pattern, that we can summarize as follows:

1) These pericopes grow out of the genealogy.

This is signaled in part with the opening words of verse 18, *Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ γένεσις οὕτως ἦν*, *Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way*. Selected events connected to the birth of Christ are presented as verification of the claims in the genealogy.

2) No clue as to the sources used by Matthew.

Because the presentation of Matthew does not overlap that of Luke, it is clear that both gospel writers are using different sources. The best guess is that Matthew utilized selectively traditions circulating in the early church about the birth and childhood of Jesus. Due to his specific objectives he utilized only those materials that fit his purpose to highlight the Jewish heritage of Jesus.

3) In 1:18-25, the fulfillment quote is central (v. 23).

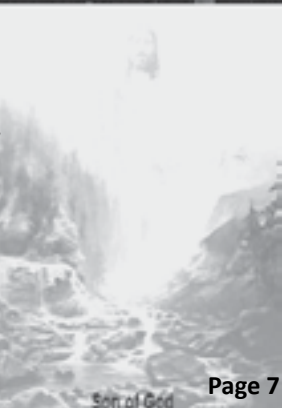
Taken from Isaiah 7:14 in the LXX translation, this OT prophecy is applied to Jesus by Matthew:

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”
 ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένοσ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν,
 καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ,

Thus from the outset we are introduced to a major writing strategy of Matthew: to anchor his story of Jesus in the Old Testament, especially texts that had been understood by Jews to anticipate the Jewish Messiah. Quite interestingly, for his readers without clear knowledge of Hebrew (over against Aramaic), Matthew adds the interpretative statement, *ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός.*, *“which translated means ‘God with us’.”*

4) 2:1-23 deal with the early childhood of Jesus, rather than His birth.

Matthew only references the birth of Jesus (1:25) rather than describe it. The circumstances connected to the birth are narrated by Luke alone. Matthew quickly moves on to a time period *“In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea”* (*Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως*). The four pericopes in 2:1-23 center around Herod the Great and his efforts to kill the





infant Jesus. This is triggered by the somewhat mysterious visit of μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν, *magi from the east*. (2:1-12). God's protection of Jesus is evidenced by His revelation to these men to not return back to Herod and also to Joseph to flee with his family to Egypt (2:13-15). Unfortunately, Herod orders the massacre of all infants two years and less in the region about Bethlehem in a futile effort to rid himself of this "King of the Jews" (ὁ τεχθεὶς βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; cf. 2:16-18). After Herod's death, Joseph is instructed to bring his family out of Egypt and back to Nazareth in Galilee rather than Bethlehem in Judea because Archelaus, Herod's son, was ruler in Judea.

5) Egypt plays an important symbolic role for the Messiah.

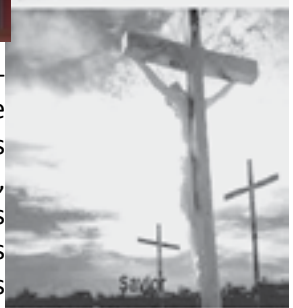
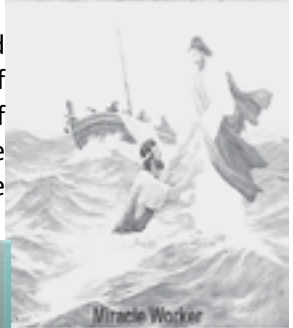
That Jesus spent several early formative years of his childhood in Egypt, he will often be compared to Moses and as the fulfillment of the Law of Moses. Much of Matthew's presentation of the teaching of Jesus will be centered in Jesus as a 'greater than Moses' teacher of divine revelation. Note particularly the Sermon on the Mount in chapters five through seven.




Luke, on the other hand, has a completely different series of episodes than those found in Matthew. He begins with a formal Prologue in 1:1-4. Then in episodes 2-6, Luke parallels John the Baptist and Jesus at the point of announcement and birth. But tucked in the middle is #4, Mary's visit with Elizabeth. Then Luke jumps to two separate appearances of Jesus in the Jerusalem temple. The first one in 2:22-40 is soon after His birth for purification after the birth of a child. But the second one comes at Jesus' twelfth year and marks His formal acceptance into Covenant Israel (2:41-52).

Luke's arrangement is much more pointed toward a non-Jewish readership in the intention to explain several critically important Jewish rituals which Jesus' parents participated in. From Luke we glean not only a sense of the role of John the Baptist for Jesus' ministry, but even more importantly we encounter the first two emphases of many in the gospel document that connect up Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. This will be an crucially important issue in Luke's religious perspective on Jesus.

One of the distinctives of Luke is the way he sets up the annunciation and birth narratives of both John and Jesus in parallel form to each other.



Then in the center of this comes the pericope on Mary, giving her special prominence. Luke makes a noticeable shift in language from 1:1-4 to 1:5-2:52 with a move from very eloquent literary Greek in 1:1-4 to heavy Semitic Greek in the second section.



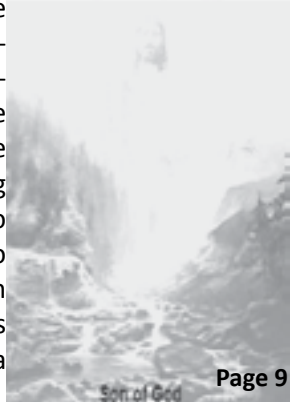
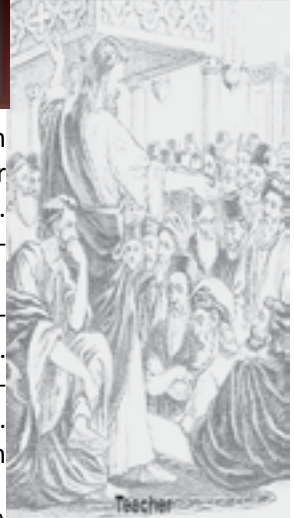
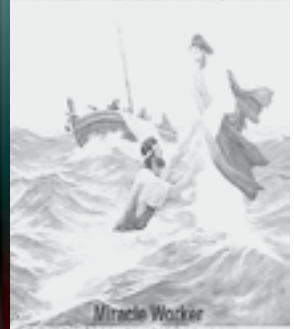
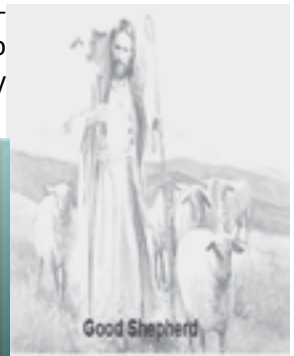
THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Infancy Narratives: Luke 1:1-2:52

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

1. Prologue 1:1-4
2. Announcement of John's birth 1:5-25
3. Announcement of Jesus' birth 1:26-38
4. Mary's visit to Elizabeth 1:39-56
5. John's birth 1:57-80
6. Jesus' birth 2:1-21

• Notice the informal parallelism:

- > 2. John / 3. Jesus
- > 4. Mary
- > 15. John / 6. Jesus



The announcement of John's impending birth (1:5-25) is made by an angel to Zechariah, a priest in the temple. He and Elizabeth were older and without children, thus his initial skepticism at the angel's word to him. When she became pregnant, Elizabeth responded with gratitude for finally being able to give birth to a child.

The announcement of Jesus' impending birth (1:26-38) is made directly to Mary, rather than to Joseph -- as in Matthew's account (1:18-23). Considerable Semitic influence surfaces with poetic expressions characterizing much of the conversations: 1:13-17; 30-33; 35; 42; 46-55; 68-79. Mary takes center stage clearly in 1:39-56 with her eloquent expression of praise in vv. 46-55.

The second pair of parallels surface next with John's birth (1:57-80) and Jesus' birth (2:1-21). Here the chapter division is awkward and should have come after Jesus' birth narrative.

John's birth narrative largely centers about Zechariah's eloquent praise of God for the birth of his son. It happened as John was being circumcised on the eighth day according to the Law of Moses. Jesus' birth narrative is given in greater detail and largely centers on the praise of God by the visiting shepherds. Their visit took place prior to the eighth day circumcise of Jesus (cf. v. 21).

The tone of Luke's presentation is centered on celebration and praise of God for remembering the needs of His covenant people Israel by sending these two individuals to them. Although writing to a largely non-Jewish Christian readership in the late 70s to early 80s, Luke underscores the joy of the people around Jesus and John over their births. With Palestine in ruins and the temple in Jerusalem totally destroyed by now, the coming of Jesus and John occasions poetic expressions of joy and gratefulness to God. The role of Mary in this celebration given by Luke here lifts her to prominence and special favor from God. It is this tone of celebration in Luke's accounts that makes his gospel a favorite choice around Christmas time. The several poetic expressions of praise -- although not sung as a



song by the initial participants -- have been set to some of the most beautiful music ever composed.



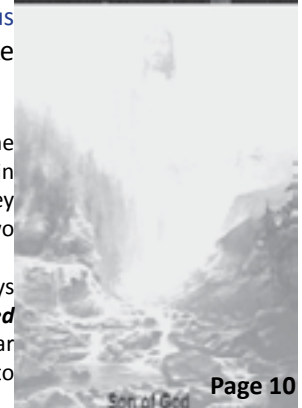
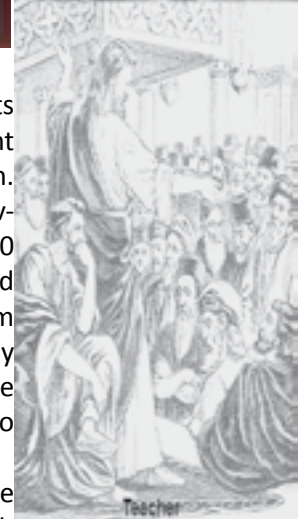
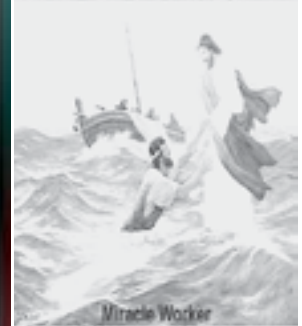
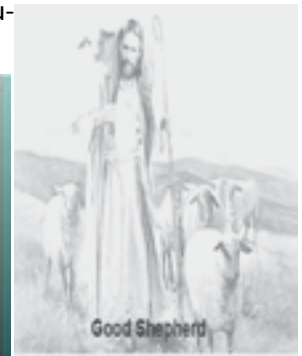
THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Infancy Narratives: Luke 1:1-2-52

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

Jesus' temple connections:

7. **Jesus' presentation in the temple 2:22-40**
 8. **Jesus' visit to the temple 2:41-52**

- **2:22-40: Purification Rite**
 - Happened after 8th day circumcision
 - Jewish purification ritual in temple
 - Simeon & Anna celebrate
- **2:41-52: Jesus induction at Passover**
 - At 12 years
 - His amazing insights
 - Jesus' childhood (vv. 51-52)



The last two episodes in Luke's Infancy Narratives center on two events that happened sometime after Jesus' birth. Again both of them highlight the strict adherence to the Jewish religious traditions by Mary and Joseph.

According to Lev. 12:6, the ritual purification of the mother after giving birth was to take place 40 days after birth if the child were a boy (80 if a girl). For the first born child, this included a dedication of the child to the Lord as the first-born son. Thus the family made the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem for this ceremony.⁷ Luke's account centers mainly on the celebration of Simeon and Anna in the outer court of the temple upon recognizing who the baby truly was as his parents brought him into the temple. Once more Jesus is closely linked to the Jerusalem temple.

The second episode in 2:41-52 places Jesus in the temple at age twelve. The significance of this was that Jewish boys after their twelfth birthday would be expected to accompany their parents to the Jewish festivals at the temple in Jerusalem. Through a temple ritual they were 'inducted' formally into covenant Israel with all the obligations of the Torah to be obeyed. The central emphasis of Luke is that this twelve year old boy was able to dazzle the Jewish scribes with his profound knowledge of the Hebrew Bible at this young age.

With a single statement in verse 52, Luke covers the years from 12 years old to 30 years of age by Jesus, that is, his youth: *Καὶ Ἰησοῦς προέκοπεν [ἐν τῇ] σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ χάριτι παρὰ θεῶ καὶ ἀνθρώποις.* **And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.** What Luke stresses is a normal youth by Jesus growing up in a very devout family.

⁷Indeed some chronological tension exists between Matthew and Luke over the sequence of events. The arrival of the magi came while Mary and Joseph were still in Bethlehem. They then fled to Egypt until after Herod died (73/74 BCE - 4 BCE). Then they returned to Nazareth, rather than Bethlehem. This clearly implies that within the first two months of Jesus' birth they were still in Bethlehem.

But Luke plainly says in 2:39 that after completing the purification rites some 40 days after Jesus' birth they *ἐπέστρεψαν* εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν εἰς πόλιν αὐατῶν Ναζαρέθ, **returned** to Galilee to their own city Nazareth. Either this rite actually took place more than a year after Jesus' birth, or else the use of two separate traditions by Matthew and Luke led to this chronological difference.

From either two to three years old (in Matthew) or twelve years old (in Luke) these gospel writers jump over the youth of Jesus and begin with his adult life at age 30. But the launching of public ministry by Jesus needed the foundation of a forerunner, who was John the Baptist. Matthew and Luke then devote space to the ministry of John, both utilizing elements of Mark's story at this point. The fourth gospel stresses John's ministry but in a very different manner than that by the Synoptic Gospels.



THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Launching Ministry

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

- **John's ministry**
 • **MT 3:1-12 // Mk. 1:1-8 // Lk. 3:1-20 // Jn. 1:19-34**
- **Jesus begins ministry**
- **BAPTISM**
 • **MT 3:13-17 // Mk. 1:9-11 // Lk. 3:21-22**
- **TEMPTATION**
 • **MT 4:1-11 // Mk. 1:12-13 // Lk. 4:1-13**

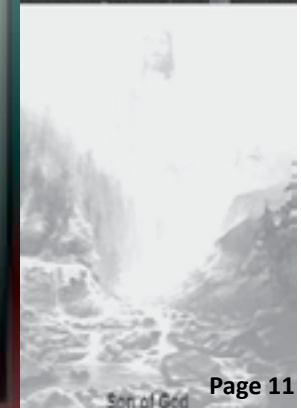
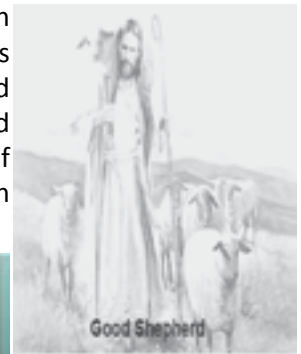
Once John is properly placed on center stage, the gospel writers move forward with the two central initial events that launched Jesus' public ministry. These took place in Judea in southern Palestine, but His ministry centered in Galilee in northern Palestine. First came His baptism in the Jordan river on the eastern border of Judea. The synoptic writers give a detailed picture of this event, while the fourth gospel only alludes to it indirectly. His baptism was followed by the temptation experience in the Judean wilderness. Mark merely references it, while Matthew and Luke go in to greater details. John never mentions it.

Each of the gospel writers utilize the ministry of John in distinct ways.

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Launching Ministry

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

- **John's ministry**
 • **MT 3:1-12// Mk. 1:1-8 // Lk. 3:1-20 // Jn. 1:19-34**
- **Ministry a fulfillment of Isaiah prophecy**
- **John's strange dress and diet**
- **John's message of repentance**
- **John's prediction of the coming Messiah**





Mark largely places John's ministry as boundary markers to Jesus' ministry.⁸ Matthew modifies Mark's narrative significantly with additional material as well as more interaction with Jesus through Jesus' ministry.⁹ And Luke utilizes his Mark source again in his own distinctive manner.¹⁰

⁸"At the beginning of Mark's story of Jesus, John appears prominently as a preacher and baptizer to whom many people—including Jesus of Nazareth—responded. As Jesus is baptized, God tells him that he is his son. After John is arrested, Jesus begins his own preaching mission in Galilee. However, the narrative of John's arrest and execution (6:14–29) is held until about one-third of the way through the gospel. A previous narrative concerns John's disciples' practice of fasting as the Pharisees did, in contrast to the practice of Jesus' disciples, who didn't fast (2:18–22). John the Baptist next appears in the middle of the gospel, at the point where Jesus asks his disciples who people say he is; some answer that he is John (8:28). Finally, when Jesus is in Jerusalem, and the Jewish leaders ask Jesus about his authority, he evades answering directly by asking them whether they believe John's baptism was from God or not (11:27–33)." [Paul Hollenback, "John the Baptist," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).]

⁹"Matthew has used John the Baptist traditions with distinctive aims and purposes, among which the following are prominent:

1. John is the prophet (Elijah) of Jesus (the Messiah). John knowingly prepares for Jesus' coming as Messiah, while Jesus knowingly regards John as Elijah, the greatest of humans before Jesus.

2. John and Jesus are equally men of God. All righteous people (Jesus' disciples, Christians) will believe their messages, while the unrighteous (John's disciples, Pharisees, Herod, Jewish leaders) disbelieve and even kill them.

3. Despite Jesus' high regard for John, even the least Christian is greater than John. What historical material beyond that found in Josephus and Mark is present in Matthew?

1. There is an additional reference to John's asceticism (11:18).

2. John harshly attacked the Pharisees and Sadducees (3:7–10), Herod (14:4), and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (21:32). These people did not believe in John, but outcasts such as tax collectors and harlots did (21:32).

3. John preached the same message as Jesus (3:2; 4:17).

4. John knew of Jesus and regarded him as the sinless Messiah before he baptized him (3:14–15). Jesus regarded John very highly (11:9–14), but he regarded his own followers even more highly (11:11).

5. Even John was in prison he had doubts about whether Jesus really was the Messiah (11:2–6). These doubts evidently rested on the unexpected character of Jesus' activity and message (11:5–6)."

[Paul Hollenback, "John the Baptist," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).]

¹⁰As in the case of Mark and Matthew, the author of Luke-Acts also has a distinctive portrayal of John the Baptizer. This is seen most readily and fully in the birth story of John and Jesus (Luke 1 and 2), and the account of John's appearance as a baptizer and Jesus' baptism (3:1–22). Luke's perspective is succinctly summed up by Jesus himself in 16:16: "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached." Thus, Luke fits John into his historical scheme: Israel (law and prophets including John), Jesus, and the Christian Church.

Most distinctive in Luke is the opening tale, which interweaves the stories of the birth of John and Jesus. The scheme can be set out as follows:

- The announcement of John's birth (1:5–25)
- The announcement of Jesus' birth (1:26–35)
- The two mothers meet (1:36–45)
- Mary praises God for Jesus (1:46–56)
- Zachariah praises God for John (1:57–80)

Thus we have the chiasmic pattern A, B, A + B, B, A. In this way Luke makes the basic two-sided point: John the Baptist and Jesus are closely allied in the scheme of salvation, but John is subordinate to Jesus.

John and Jesus are allied through Luke's stories of their births, which are united together because their mothers are relatives (1:36); both births are miraculous and thus merit special praise to God. Yet John is subordinated to Jesus in several ways: Elizabeth is barren and both she and her husband are very old, yet she conceives in the normal manner (1:24), while Mary conceives by the Holy Spirit when she is still unmarried (1:34–35); when Mary greets Elizabeth, the fetus (the future John) leaps in her womb for joy in the presence of the mother of her Lord, i.e., Jesus the Messiah (1:41, 44). Finally, and most importantly, John is clearly only a prophet (1:76) like Elijah (1:17), while Jesus is the Son of God and Messiah (1:32–35). [Paul Hollenback, "John the Baptist," in *The Anchor Yale*





John stands as the great transitional figure between the Old and New Covenants in Luke's presentation. In the fourth gospel, John plays a more limited role with focus on him only in chapters one and three.¹¹

John plays a very crucial role in setting up Jesus' ministry. Out of ancient middle eastern cultural traditions came the practice of having a herald go in advance of a king to the city in order to make sure full and worthy preparations were in place at the arrival of the king. Thus all three synoptic gospel writers anchor John's ministry in the prophetic words of both Malachi (3:1, ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου) and Isaiah (40:3, φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ). John is then the 'forerunner of Jesus' as he has been labeled.

His unusual dress and diet seem to reflect OT texts such as 2 Kings 1:8 and Zech. 13:4 to suggest the appearance of an OT prophet, and perhaps Elijah in particular. Clearly from the historical setting his dress, diet, and location of ministry 'in the wilderness' set him apart from urban Jerusalem as one coming out of the poor rural segment of Jewish life. This contributed to his cultural perspective from the heritage of Amos and many of the other eighth century Israelite prophets.

Thus John's message was OT prophetic preaching but with an updated twist: κηρῦσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. He preached a baptism that reflected genuine repentance. This was the condition of divine forgiveness. The OT prophets called for repentance. John's message demanded a public demonstration of commitment to repentance in immersion baptism. The connection of water and purification was fundamental in Judaism. The public demonstration of repentance in water baptism brought the connection even closer. One of the Matthean additions to Mark's narrative in Mt. 3:7-10 makes it clear that repentance had to be genuine and reflected in serious lifestyle changes.¹²

Bible Dictionary (New York: Doubleday, 1992).]

¹¹The picture of John the Baptizer in the gospel of John is very clearly focused, and as in Luke's case it may be summed up in one of the gospel's pungent statements: "He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light" (1:8). In accordance with this gospel's outlook, John the Baptist is not seen in strictly historical terms. Rather, the terminology is abstract and especially legal: John is essentially a witness sent by God (1:6) to tell the truth about Jesus (5:33, 35; 10:41). This basic theme is sustained by two sub-themes; John is not the light, rather Jesus is the light; since Jesus is the light he ranks before John and must increase in stature, while John must decrease.

Apart from brief references to John the Baptist in chaps. 5 and 10, all of the material about the Baptizer is found in chaps. 1 and 3. The opening of the gospel presents Jesus as the true light of the world and John as the true witness to that light. The basis for the truth of John's witness is that he was "sent from God" (1:6). But that he was really sent from God and that he speaks the truth is shown substantively by his exaltation of Jesus over himself (1:15), and by his denial before Jews sent from Jerusalem that he has any status as Messiah, as Elijah, or as the prophet (1:19-28). As a witness John is simply the voice announcing the coming of Jesus as Lord and Son of God (1:23, 34), who was revealed to him and Israel as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29, 36) during his baptizing mission (1:30, 33). Moreover, John baptizes only with water (1:26, 31) while Jesus "baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (1:33). Finally, John's disciples turn to Jesus because they too see him as the Messiah (1:35-41).

[Paul Hollenback, "John the Baptist," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).]

¹²**Matt. 3:7-10.** 7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Notice also **Luke 3:10-14.** 10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has



This message of repentance and baptism laid the foundation for John's emphasis on the coming Messiah. His focus was on the superiority of the Messiah in comparison to himself.



THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Launching Ministry

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

- **Jesus begins ministry**
- **BAPTISM**
- **ML 3:13-17 // Mk. 1:9-11 // Lk. 3:21-22**

• Jesus έβαπτισθη εις τον Ιορδανην υπο Ιωαννου.
• Heavenly validation of Jesus' baptism
• συ ει ο υιος μου ο αγαπητος, εν σοι ευδοκησα.

Jesus is linked to John through Jesus' baptism by John. Luke follows Mark's account rather closely, while Matthew makes significant variations from Mark's narrative. Matthew sets up the episode with John's reluctance to baptize Jesus (vv. 13-15). At this point all three gospel writers are very similar to one another. The major differences center on a prepositional phrase (ἐπ' αὐτόν, Mt. / Lk.; εις αὐτόν, Mk.) and the narration perspective of the Heavenly voice: οὗτός ἐστιν (Mt.) or συ εἶ (Mk. / Lk.). No real material differences are in the shift in the prepositional phrases. Matthew and Luke use terminology more appropriate to the image of a dove lighting on Jesus' head (ἐπ' αὐτόν, upon him), while Mark's εις αὐτόν is more appropriate to the concept of the Holy Spirit entering into Jesus with anointing for ministry. The narrative shift in the Heavenly voice moves from God speaking for the benefit of John and the crowds watching (οὗτός ἐστιν, this is) to Mark's and Luke's συ εἶ, you are, speaking directly to Jesus himself.

What God said is the primary point of all three narratives. The first part, εἶ ο υιος μου ο αγαπητος, you are my beloved Son, comes from Psalm 2:7 LXX.¹³ And the second part, εν σοι ευδοκησα, in whom I am well pleased, comes from Isa. 42:1. What perhaps is theological significant is that the psalms text stresses the messiah as a royal descendant of David, while the Isaiah text underscores the suffering servant image of the messiah. Clearly the point of the gospel writers is that God dramatically placed His 'seal of approval' on Jesus' baptism and subsequent ministry. Thus Jesus' baptism marks an official turning point in His life. It becomes both the launch pad for His public ministry, and it becomes the model for Christian

none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

¹³Matthew's οὗτός ἐστιν ο υιος μου ο αγαπητος, this is my beloved Son, may very well be taken from Isa. 42:1 also with a slight alteration of the LXX text: Here is my servant. (Ιακωβ ο παϊς μου).



baptism later own.



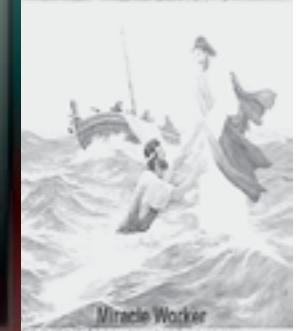
THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Launching Ministry

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

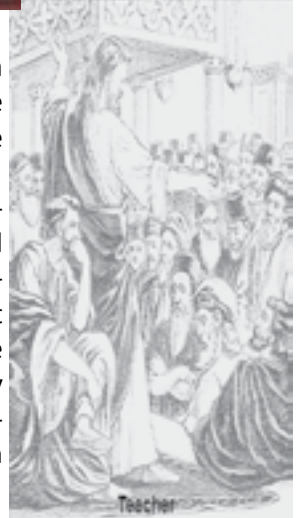
- **Jesus begins ministry**
- **TEMPTATION**
- **Mt. 4:1-11 // Mk. 1:12-13 // Lk. 4:1-13**
- **Mark in connection to Matthew & Luke**
- **The role of the Holy Spirit**
- **The role of Satan**
- **Three examples of temptation**
- **The role of the angels**



Good Shepherd



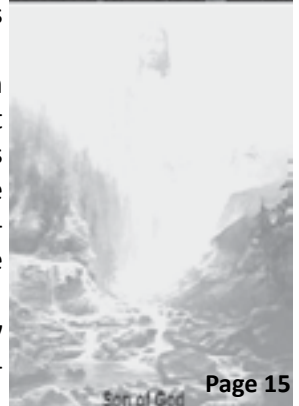
Miracle Worker



Teacher



Son of God



Son of God

But before public ministry could begin, Jesus needed to be tested in a manner similar to Moses and a few others in the Old Testament. Only the synoptic gospel writers include this episode in their stories of Jesus. The fourth gospel skips over it completely.

Considerable differences exist between these three accounts, however. Mark only references the experience in 1:12-13. Both Matthew and Luke work over the core Markan framework but with substantial expansions reflecting their different use of the common Q source. The chart at cranfordville.com highlights these differences. Careful analysis of these accounts in close comparison reveals some differences driven mostly by the theological intent of each of the gospel writers. These can be understood by completing the study steps located at the bottom of the chart in cranfordville.com on Jesus temptation.

But the common point from all three accounts is to underscore the OT background experience of the 40 day (e.g., Moses and Elijah). Jewish tradition understood the need of serious testing before one began serious service to God. There needed to be a 'provenness' to one's character and commitment prior to launching ministry. In a limited manner this same point lies behind a similar requirement on spiritual leaders in Titus one and First Timothy three.

Jesus' experience was guided and sustained by the presence and leadership of the Holy Spirit. This then stands as a model for believers going through times of testing to remind them that God never abandons His people in times of trial.

In traditional Old Testament fashion, Satan stands behind temptation and enticements to abandon God's will and mission for us. He sought to entice Jesus to compromise the idea of Messiah from the lofty ideals Christ understood to those of a sensationalist religious rebel. Each of the three specific temptations recorded by Matthew and Luke reflect pressure by Satan this direction. Satan knew well he could defeat Christ if he could reduce Him down to a Judas of Galilee (cf. Acts 5:37).

In Matthew and Mark, the help of angels (Mk. οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ; Mt. ἄγγελοι προσήλθον καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ) provide help to Je-



...sus either during his temptation (Mk) or at the end of it (Mt.). Perhaps one of the more insightful statements comes from Luke at the end of his narrative:

Καὶ συντελέσας πάντα πειρασμὸν ὁ διάβολος ἀπέστη ἀπ' αὐτοῦ **ἄχρι καιροῦ**.

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him **until an opportune time**.

Satan never gives up trying to defeat God's people no matter how unsuccessful he may be at times.



THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST
DAY TWO: BEGINNINGS
PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

¡Muchas Gracias por venir a este segundo período de sesiones del estudio!

Lorin L Cranford



Good Shepherd



Miracle Worker



Teacher



Savior



Son of God