

# Class two

Wesley Huff  
Teach, Reach, Encourage, Equip

## The Dead Sea Scrolls

Over 970 scrolls assembled from more than 10 000 fragments make up the Collection we call the Dead Sea Scrolls. The majority of these manuscripts are highly fragmentary although when pieced together comprise:

33 copies of Deuteronomy

24 copies of Genesis

20 copies of Isaiah

970+ scrolls

Dating

These documents were penned between 3rd century BCE — 1st century CE

Languages used

Hebrew  
Aramaic  
Greek  
Nabataean

75% of the scrolls were written in Hebrew

Contents

The scrolls contain copies all of the Hebrew canon (Old Testament) except for Esther.

A sampling of other books found amongst the collection:

Book of Enoch  
Book of Jubilees  
Book of Tobit  
Wisdom of Sirach  
The War Scroll  
The Rule of Blessing  
Community Rules

Although most of the scrolls are papyrus, one is made of copper. Known as the "Copper Scroll," it lists 64 locations - 63 of which are said to be caches of silver and gold. None of these treasures have been found.

We are not entirely sure who wrote, copied, and stored all of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is thought that most of them are the product of the Jewish sect known as the Essenes. However, scholars also believe that a good number may be the work of the Sadducees or potentially other less well known Jewish groups living in the deserts around the Dead Sea.

The Great Isaiah scroll was 1 000 years older than any previously Hebrew copy of that book prior to its discovery. It is one of the only scrolls from the Dead Sea Scrolls that contains the near entirety of the book from start to finish.

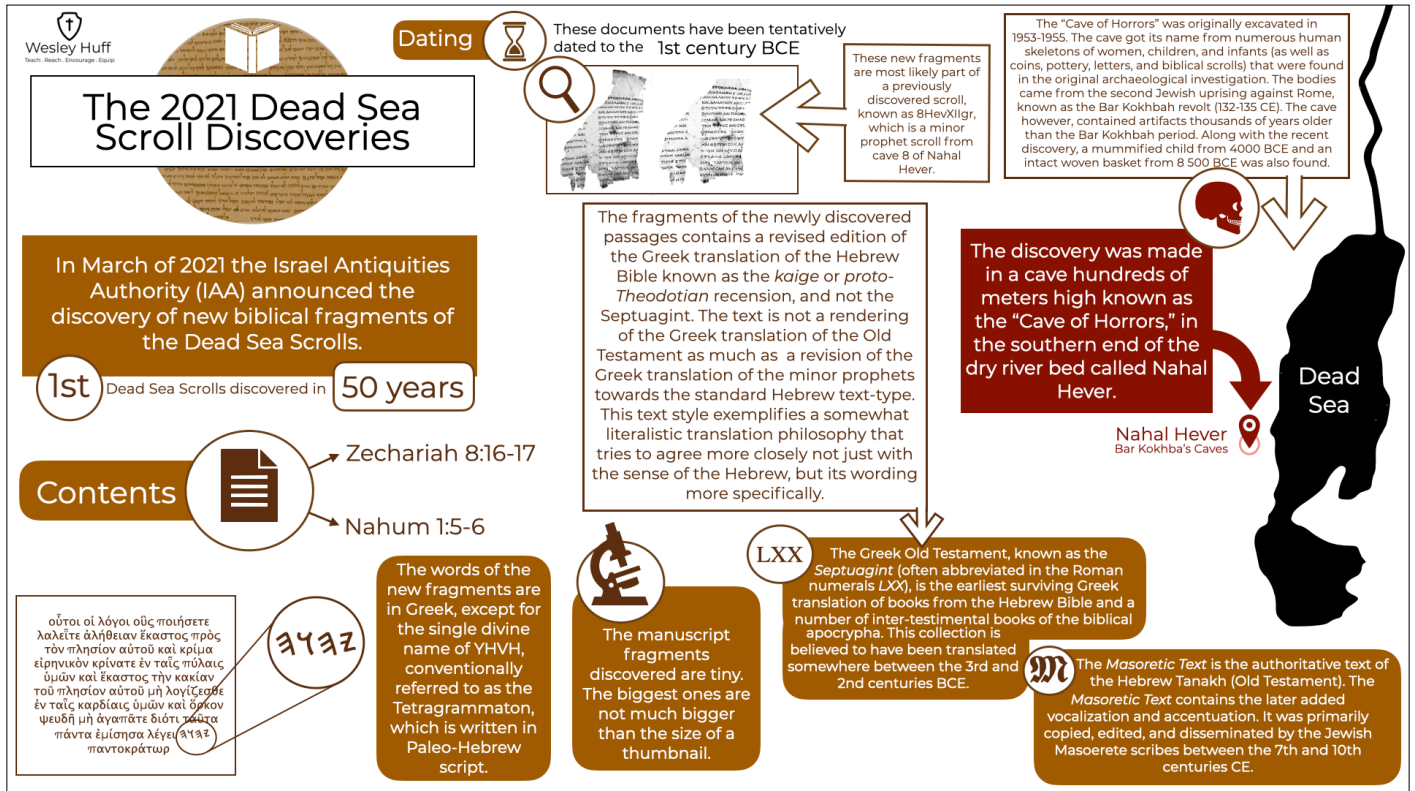
24 feet long

The smallest is no bigger than 3 inches

The longest is 29 feet long

Jericho  
Cave 11  
Cave 1  
Qumran  
Cave 4  
Murabba'at  
Bar Kokhba's Caves  
Ein Gedi  
Nahal Hever  
Bar Kokhba's Caves  
Masada  
Dead Sea







# The Gospel: A Review

- In the Greek and Roman world of the 1st century, when the Roman Empire ruled the larger Mediterranean world, the word *euangelion* had a clear set of associations that are well illustrated by a monumental inscription found in the Turkish town of Priene. It records an edict from Paulus Fabius Maximus, the Roman proconsul of Asia, issued in 9 B.C.E. The edict aligns the regional calendar with the Roman calendar, honoring Caesar Augustus by making his birthday the beginning day of the calendar year.

# The Gospel: A Review

- *"Providence has ordered all things and set them in order by giving us Caesar Augustus, whom she has filled with virtue that he might benefit all humanity, and has sent him as a savior for us and our descendants, that he might end war and bring order to all things ... The birthday of the god was the beginning of the good news for the world..."*
  - Priene Inscription, text and translation from Victor Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (1955). Oxford. 82.
- Notice that Augustus' birth is hailed as "good news" (Grk. *euangelion*), that is, the arrival of a new ruler and a new regime of "salvation" (Grk. *soteria*) that has brought peace, order, and "benefit" (Grk. *euergesia*, literally "doing of goodness") to the known world.
- This is precisely the same vocabulary used by the earliest disciples of Jesus to describe the importance of Jesus of Nazareth and the story of his life and message, his execution at the hands of the Jewish and Roman authorities, and his resurrection from the dead into a role of cosmic authority.



- How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings **good news**, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." (Isaiah 52:7)
- Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of **good news**; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9)
- Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. (Psalm 96:1-2)

## The Gospel: A Review

- *At its briefest, the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that he is the Son of God and became man for us, that he died and was raised, and that he has been established as Lord over all things. This much St. Paul takes in hand and spins out in his epistles. He bypasses all the miracles and incidents (in Christ's ministry) which are set forth in the four Gospels, yet he includes the whole gospel adequately and abundantly. This may be seen clearly and well in his greeting to the Romans, where he says what the gospel is, and then declares: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord," etc. There you have it. The gospel is a story about Christ, God's and David's son, who died and was raised, and is established as Lord. This is the gospel in a nutshell.*



# Formation of the Gospels: Review

- The Gospels are **theological biographies** of Jesus centered on the **good news of God's Kingdom**.
- They are not neutral histories, but persuasive accounts that challenge allegiance, thinking, and behavior.
- They proclaim that the crucified and risen Jesus is both Messiah (Son of David) and Lord (Son of God).
- Each Gospel offers a distinct perspective, together giving a unified and fuller portrait of Jesus.
- Their purpose is to faithfully tell Jesus' story and invite readers to acknowledge Him as Lord and follow Him.

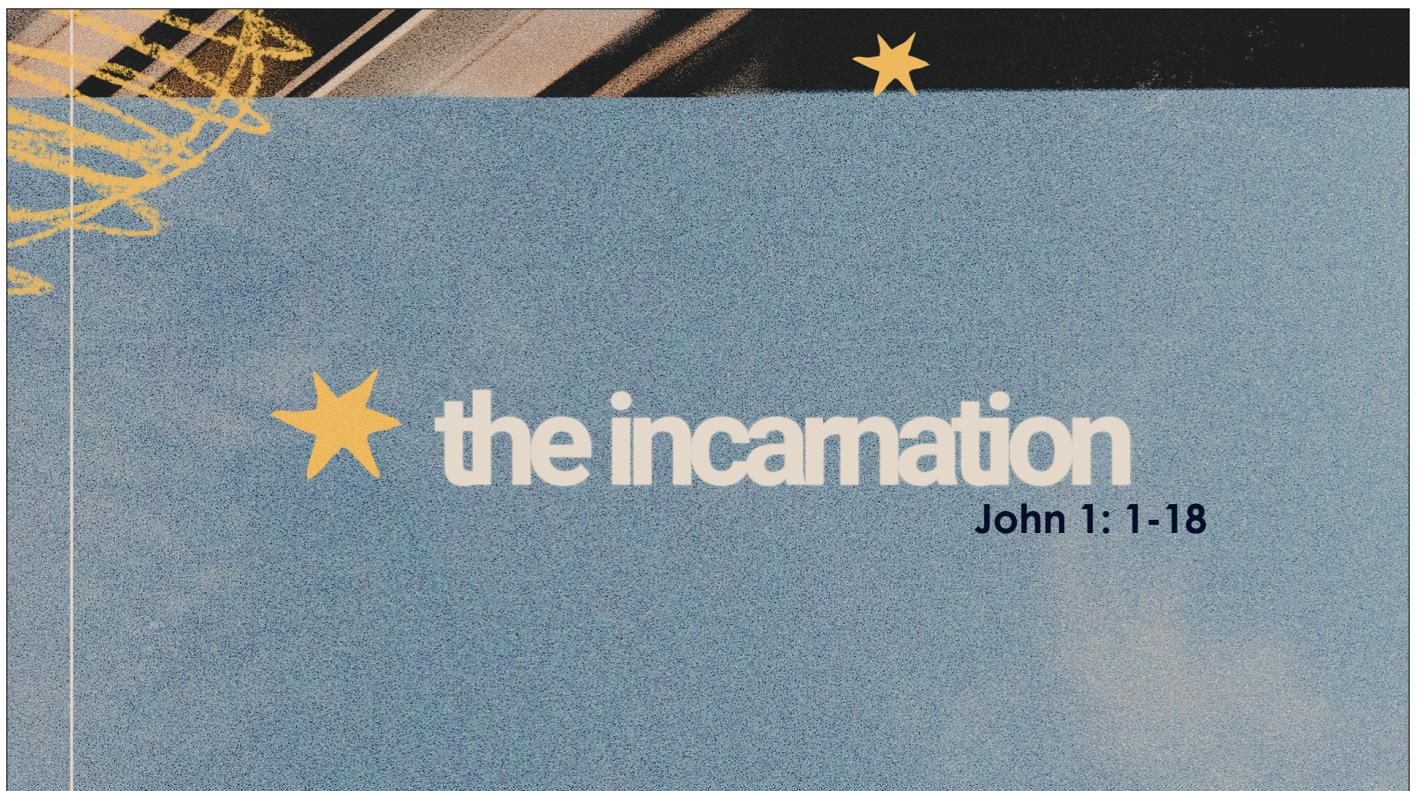
# Formation of the Gospels: Review

- Ancient Biographies:
  - Representations of the essence/meaning of a key figure's life story and message
  - Not archival, unbiased accounts but accounts aimed at persuading the reader to emulate the figure
  - "The four apostolic Gospels are theological, historical, and formational, narrative biographies that retell the story and proclaim the significance of Jesus as Israel's messiah and the Lord of all nations, the one who through the power of the Spirit is restoring God's reign over all creation."
- Pennington, Jonathan (2012). *Reading the Gospels Wisely*. Baker Academic. 35.



<b>Events and Teachings</b> ↘	4 B.C.–80s/90s A.D. — Jesus' early life, mission in Galilee, teaching and healing, mission to Jerusalem, execution, empty tomb, resurrection appearances, Pentecost
<b>Eye-Witness Testimony</b> ↘	4 B.C.–80s/90s A.D. — The earliest communities of Jesus' followers contained eyewitnesses, friends and family members of Jesus' disciples, people healed by Jesus, and those who encountered Jesus.
<b>Oral Traditions and Written Traditions</b> ↘	30 A.D.–mid 2nd century A.D. — Jesus' teaching and stories about him circulated in church communities for decades
<b>Collections of Traditions</b> ↘	40s A.D.–70s A.D. — Collections of traditions grouped together in oral and written form ("Q" or special material in Matthew, Luke, early Mark)
<b>Gospel Compositions</b>	60s–90s A.D. — Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, extra-canonical gospel traditions (Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Thomas, etc.)

*The Formation of the Gospels.* Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Rise of the Messiah (2024).





# Visual Commentary: John 1

## Study Notes

### Introduction

The Bible contains four accounts of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection that together are known as the Gospel. We are going to be looking at the first chapter of John's Gospel. John uses imagery from Genesis and Exodus to make a surprising claim about who Jesus is. And there's a lot to unpack. These study notes will take you deeper into the ideas explored in our video Visual Commentary: John 1.

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# Prologue to John

## 1:1-18: The Poetic Prologue

The prologue of John's Gospel, found in 1:1-18, is a tightly composed poetic essay. It's arranged in two parallel panels, which are indicated by keywords and repeated themes (adapted from Mary Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 18-19).

<b>Introduction</b> <sup>1</sup> In the beginning <b>was the Word</b> and <b>the Word</b> was <u>with God</u> and <b>the Word</b> was <u>God</u> . <sup>2</sup> <b>He</b> was in the beginning <u>with God</u> . <sup>3</sup> All things through <b>him</b> [= <b>the word</b> ] <b>came to be</b> and without him nothing has <b>come to be</b> which has <b>come to be</b> .			
<b>A</b>	<sup>4</sup> In him was <u>life</u> and the <u>life</u> was the <u>light</u> <sup>1</sup> of humanity <sup>5</sup> and <u>the light</u> <sup>2</sup> shines in the <b>darkness</b> and the <b>darkness</b> did not overcome it <sup>6</sup> There was a human sent from God. His name was <b>John</b> . <sup>7</sup> He <u>came</u> as a <b>witness</b>	<sup>14</sup> and <b>the Word</b> <b>came to be</b> flesh and it <b>tabernacled</b> <u>with us</u> , and <u>we saw</u> his <b>glory</b> , the <b>glory</b> as of the one and only from <b>the Father</b> , full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> <b>John bore witness</b> about him and he cried out, saying: "This is the one of whom I said,	<b>A'</b>
<b>B</b>	so that he could <b>bear witness</b> about <u>the light</u> <sup>3</sup> so that <u>all might believe</u> through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not <u>the light</u> <sup>4</sup> but so that he could <b>bear witness</b> about <u>the light</u> <sup>5</sup>	'The one who comes / <u>after</u> / me,' <b>has been</b> / <u>in front of</u> / me, because he <u>was</u> / <u>prior to</u> / me."	<b>B'</b>
<b>C</b>	<sup>9</sup> <u>The light</u> <sup>6</sup> , the true one, which gives <u>light</u> <sup>7</sup> to all humanity, was <u>coming into the world</u> . <sup>10</sup> In <u>the world</u> he was, and <u>the world</u> through him <b>came to be</b> , and <u>the world</u> did not know him. <sup>11</sup> Unto <b>his own</b> he came and <b>his own</b> did not <b>receive him</b> . <sup>12</sup> But to those who did <b>receive him</b> he gave authority to <b>become children of God</b> to <u>those who</u> <u>believe in his name</u> , <sup>13</sup> those <u>not from blood</u> and <u>not from the desire of the flesh</u> and <u>not from the</u> <u>desire of a man</u> , <u>but from</u> <b>God they were born</b> .	<sup>16</sup> For from his <u>fullness</u> we all have <b>received</b> , even <u>grace in place of grace</u> <sup>17</sup> For the Torah was given <u>through Moses</u> , <u>grace and truth</u> came through Jesus Messiah.	<b>C'</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> <sup>18</sup> No one has <u>seen God</u> , ever. <u>The one and only God</u> , who is in the bosom of <b>the Father</b> that one has <u>revealed...</u>			



This literary design is an imitation of the literary pattern of Genesis 1:1-2:4, with an introduction and conclusion that wrap around a structure of two panels that are themselves matching triads.

Genesis Imagery	Exodus Imagery
1A - Creation by the Word Light and Life 1:3-5	2A - Incarnation of the Word Tabernacle and Glory 1:14
1B - The Witness of John 1:6-8	2B - The Witness of John 1:15
1C - The Word Was Rejected and Received by "Them" 1:9-13	2C - The Word Was Received by "Us" 1:16-17

Each inner panel tells the story of creation and incarnation of the divine word in a way that sets the core themes for the narrative to follow:

- In 1A-1B-1C, the word is the agent of creation, through whom the entire cosmos came into being. The word is the source of life and light, to borrow imagery from Genesis 1:3-6. And that light, to which John bore witness, is rejected by some and accepted by others (1:3-13).
- In 2A-2B-2C, the word is the divine temple glory that becomes incarnate as a human to fulfill the meaning of the temple and Torah (1:14-17).

However, in contrast to Genesis 1, which culminates in the seventh day in Genesis 2:1-3, the conclusion in John 1:18 provides literary closure to the prologue. But it does not provide conceptual closure (1:18 ends in an incomplete sentence). The "seventh-day completeness" of Genesis 2:1-3 must wait for its parallel in the death and resurrection of Jesus in John 19-21 when Jesus will announce "it is finished" (τετέλεσται, Jn. 19:30 // Gen. 2:1 "they were finished," συντελεσθησαν LXX).

*The six strophes of John's prologue, like the six days of creation in Genesis 1, requires one final act to bring it to completion. This act begins in verse 19 as the Gospel narrative of God's final work that began with the incarnation will culminate in the life and death of Jesus. Until the story of this final work has been told,*

*there can be no "seventh day." But utilizing the structure of Genesis, but breaking from its pattern, the very design of the prologue asserts that there is still something more to come.*

Mary Coloe, God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel, 23.

## John 1:1-2 and 1:3-5

a b b' a'	<p><sup>1</sup> In the beginning was <b>the Word</b> and <b>the Word</b> was with God and <b>the Word</b> was God.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> <b>He</b> was in the beginning with God,</p>
a a'	<p><sup>3</sup> All things through <b>him</b> [= <b>the word</b>] came to be and without him nothing has come to be which has come to be,</p> <p><sup>4</sup> In him was <b>life</b>, and the <b>life</b> was the light<sup>1</sup> of humanity.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> And <b>the light</b><sup>2</sup> shines in the <b>darkness</b>, and the <b>darkness</b> did not overcome it.</p>

## The Word of God

The first line is an obvious repetition of Genesis 1:1.

<b>John 1:1</b> In the beginning was the Word. <i>Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος</i>	<b>Genesis 1:1</b> In the beginning, God created the skies and the land. <i>Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.</i>
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By beginning the story this way, John not only makes a claim about the divine identity of Jesus but claims that the following narrative is of cosmic significance. The events recounted in the Gospel of John are set to a “cosmic key” so that Jesus’ teachings, life, death, and resurrection are all portrayed as a continuation of God’s creative ordering of the darkness in Genesis 1.

### Why Is Jesus Called the “Word” of God?

Why does John introduce the pre-incarnate Jesus as the Word of God? There are at least three important streams of influence that have come together (and there are many more).

#### 1. The Divine Word in Genesis

God’s words have a prominent role in the creation narrative of Genesis 1:1-2:3. Each of the seven days is introduced by a new act of divine speech, and on the third and sixth days, there are three additional moments when God speaks, creating a total of ten words that generate the cosmos.

In the beginning, Elohim created the skies and the land.	<i>Elohim</i>
Now, the land was wild and waste and darkness was over the face of the deep abyss, and the spirit/wind of Elohim was over the face of the waters.	<i>Spirit/wind/breath of Elohim</i>
And Elohim said...	<i>The word of Elohim</i>

In Genesis 1:1-2, God’s own person is closely identified with the following two ways of describing God’s presence and activity: the spirit and the word.



## 2. The Divine Word in the Prophets and Writings

The images of the divine person from Genesis 1 are explored in greater depth in the rest of the TaNaK. The keywords and images of Genesis 1:1-3 are hyperlinked in multiple places in Proverbs and Psalms, and John seems to have crafted his language about the pre-incarnate Jesus in light of these passages.

<p><u>In the beginning</u> was the Word, and the Word was with God ... he was with God <u>in the beginning</u>.</p> <p>John 1:1-2</p>	<p><u>In the beginning, Elohim</u> created the skies and the land ... the <b>spirit/breath</b> of Elohim was hovering over the waters, and Elohim <b>said</b> ...</p> <p>Genesis 1:1-3</p> <p>Yahweh possessed me [wisdom] <u>at the beginning</u> of his way, before his works from old. From ancient times I was established, <u>from the beginning</u> ...</p> <p>Proverbs 8:22-23</p> <p>There <u>I was beside him</u>, as a master workman.</p> <p>Proverbs 8:30</p>
<p><u>All things came to exist through him</u>, and apart from him not one thing came into existence which has come into existence.</p> <p>John 1:3</p>	<p>And God <b>said</b> ...</p> <p>Genesis 1:3, etc. (a total of 10x in Genesis 1)</p> <p><u>By means of wisdom</u> Yahweh founded the land, by means of understanding he established the skies.</p> <p>Proverbs 3:19</p> <p><u>By means of the word of Yahweh the skies were made</u>, and by <b>the spirit/breath of his mouth</b> all their host.</p> <p>Psalms 33:6</p>
<p>In him was life, and the life was <b>the light</b> of humanity. And the <b>light</b> was shining in darkness, and the darkness could not comprehend it.</p> <p>John 1:4-5</p>	<p>And God said, "Let there be <b>light</b>," and there was <b>light</b>. God saw that the <b>light</b> was good, and God separated the <b>light</b> from the darkness.</p> <p>Genesis 1:3-4</p>

John 1:1-13 places Jesus in the role of creator of life and light as the divine word from Genesis 1:1 and the divine wisdom of Proverbs 8.

### 3. The Divine Word in Jewish and Greek Philosophy

We know from Jewish literature that was written at the same time as John's Gospel that there was a serious conversation about the nature of Yahweh's identity in light of texts like these in the Hebrew Bible. Early messianic Judaism was not the only movement that came to the conclusion that Yahweh's identity was complex and unified and that Yahweh's attributes, like his word and spirit, could be considered distinct divine agents who were part of the divine identity.

- The early Aramaic Targum translations to Genesis 1:1:

<p><sup>1</sup>From the beginning, by wisdom, the son of Yahweh completed the heavens and the earth.</p> <p>or</p> <p><sup>1</sup>From the beginning, by wisdom, the word of Yahweh created and completed the heavens and the earth.</p> <p><sup>2</sup>And the earth was waste and unformed, desolate of man and beast, empty of plant cultivation and of trees, and darkness was spread over the face of the abyss; and a spirit of mercy from before the Lord was blowing over the surface of the waters.</p> <p><sup>3</sup><b>And the word of the Lord said: "Let there be light," and there was light according to the decree of his word.</b></p> <p><i>The Aramaic Bible: Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis, trans. Martin McNamara, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), Ge 1:1–3.</i></p>	<p>מלקדמין בחכמה ברא דיי<sup>1</sup> הוות תהיא שכלל ית שמיא וית ארעא: <sup>2</sup>וארעא ובהיא וצדי מן בר נש ומן בעיר וריקנא מן כל פלחן צמחין ומן תהומא ורוח דרחמין מן אילנן וחשוכא פריס על אפי קדם יי הוה מנשבא על אפי מיא: ואמר (ממרא) דיי יהוי נהור והות<sup>3</sup> נהור כגזירת ממריה:</p>
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The Aramaic translators are capitalizing on a Hebrew/Aramaic wordplay here, as the Hebrew word for “create” (ברא/*bara'*) is exactly the same letters for the Aramaic word “the sons” (ברא/*bar'a*). But the wordplay itself is not sufficient to explain this interpretation. It depends on a network of similar hyperlinks within the Hebrew Bible that sees a common figure lying behind the multiple images of the divine word, spirit, and wisdom.

Philo of Alexandria was a 1st century Jewish philosopher who attempted a massive intellectual synthesis between Jewish biblical thought and Greek philosophy in the tradition of Plato.

In Greek philosophy, the word *logos* referred to an impersonal principle of order, the pattern of reason which is woven into the fabric of the cosmos (remember *kosmos* in Greek means “ordered realm”).

For Philo, he saw the *logos* of John 1 as a personal creature, the chief of all of God's creation, and through this creature, God both created and now oversees the cosmos. Philo personalized the Greek *logos* idea and then combined it with the biblical portrayal of Yahweh's divine attributes that are both unified and distinct from God.

*For Heraclitus the Logos is “the omnipresent wisdom by which all things are steered”; it is the divine word received by the prophet, which becomes almost equivalent to God (see J. Adam, *The Religious Teachers of Ancient Greeks*, 216–34). For the Stoics, the Logos is the common law of nature, immanent in the universe and maintaining its unity, the divine fire, the soul of the universe. Philo of Alexandria exploited the concept in a striking fashion. He saw the Logos as the agent of creation, distinguishing between the Logos as a thought in the mind of God, his eternal wisdom, and its expression in making formless matter a universe. The Logos is the medium of divine government of the world; it is “the captain and pilot of the universe.” The Logos is the means by which man may know God, for God is unknowable by the mass of mankind; they can know him only in and through the Logos: “The Logos is the God of us imperfect men, but the primal God is the God of the wise and perfect.”*

George R. Beasley-Murray, John, vol. 36,  
Word Biblical Commentary, p.6.

*John’s prologue is a feat of christological midrash on Gen 1:1, intentionally merged with scriptural witness to God’s creative speech-acts, primitive confessions of the pre-existent Son of God, Jewish Hellenistic wisdom traditions, messianic discourse, and fashioned in such a way as to deliberately resource and resonate with tropes in Greco-Roman philosophy. In effect, John takes the Logos, a malleable yet popular concept in Greco-Roman philosophy for cosmic rationality, and he baptizes it in Jewish wisdom traditions and re-codes it with christological meaning.*

Michael Bird, “Reflections on the Prologue of John,”  
from December 19, 2020 Patheos Blog.

## The Word Was With God, The Word Was God

John uses a classically Israelite mode of expressing a transcendent idea: he states the idea twice in different words that on a literal level appear logically impossible. But once we meditate on the contradiction, a deeper possibility opens up, one which defies our normal concepts of reality.

- Statement 1: The Word was *with* God.
  - This literally means “toward” (Grk. *pros* / *προς*) God. The word is as closely united to God as possible, yet it has a distinct identity in relationship to God. To be with another is to have some part of one’s identity that makes one distinct, different.
- Statement 2: The Word was God.
  - The word is not other than God, but it is interior to God’s own being and identity, and so the word is God in a way that challenges our very concepts of what it means to be a person.

## Creation by Means of the Divine Word

By retelling the story of pre-creation and creation through the lens of the divine *logos*, John portrays Jesus as the uniquely divine agent of creation who stands as the one and only mediator between Heaven and Earth, between the divine and humans.

*The opening words of the prologue intend a simple yet fundamental claim: God has an eternal Word, a Word that is interior to God and intrinsically God, and that which is true of God is also true of his Word. John sets forth neither bi-theism nor modalism, neither the epiphany of an angel nor the emanation of a lesser heavenly power.... The relationship of the Word with God is never expressed as creation, emanation, or adoption, but in terms of begotten-ness (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18), the genus of sonship, which makes explicable*

*the oneness and sent-ness (8:29; 10:36; 17:20-23) as well as oneness and subordination (13:16-20; 14:28). The Word is neither a separate deity, nor a personified divine attribute, nor a mighty angel, but a personal agent within the one God, the divine Son.*

Michael Bird, “Reflections on the Prologue of John,” from December 19, 2020 Patheos Blog.

Notice how in 1:1-3 Jesus is the word, life, and light. All three are metaphorical ways of referring to the self-same personal being at the center of creation.

### John 1:6-8 and 1:9-10

<sup>6</sup> There was a human sent from God;  
his name was **John**.  
<sup>7</sup> He came as a **witness**  
so that he could **bear witness about** the light<sup>3</sup>  
so that all might believe through him.  
<sup>8</sup> He was not the light<sup>4</sup>  
but so that he could **bear witness about** the light.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The light<sup>6</sup>, the true one,  
which gives light<sup>7</sup> to all humanity,  
was coming into the world.  
<sup>10</sup> In the world he was,  
and the world through him **came to be**  
and the world did not know him.  
<sup>11</sup> Unto **his own** he came,  
and **his own** did not **receive him**.  
<sup>12</sup> But to those who did **receive him**  
he gave authority to **become children of God**  
to those who believe in his name,  
<sup>13</sup> those not from blood  
and not from the desire of the flesh  
and not from the desire of a man,  
but from God they were born.

In 1:6-8, John the baptizer is introduced as the first witness to Jesus' true identity in the Gospel of John. This begins an important theme throughout the story of different characters, and even Jesus himself, acting as *witnesses* to God's revelation in and through Jesus.

Notice that even though John's introduction differs from the introductions found in Matthew (a genealogy), Mark (a quotation from Isaiah 40), and Luke (a long, dramatic story of Zechariah and Mary), all four accounts begin with a focus on John the baptizer.



The third paragraph in 1:9-13 progresses in a stair-step manner:

<p><sup>9</sup> <b>The light</b>, the true one, which gives <b>light</b> to all humanity, was <u>coming</u> into <u>the world</u>.</p>
<p><sup>10</sup> In <u>the world</u> he was, and <u>the world</u> through him <b>came to be</b> and <u>the world</u> <b>did not know him</b>.</p>
<p><sup>11</sup> Unto <b>his own</b> he came and <b>his own did not receive him</b>.</p>
<p><sup>12</sup> But to those who did <b>receive him</b> he gave authority to <b>come to be children of God</b> to <u>those who believe</u> in his name,</p>
<p><sup>13</sup> <u>those not from</u> blood and <u>not from</u> the desire of the flesh and <u>not from</u> the desire of a man, <u>but from</u> <b>God they were born</b>.</p>

The progression moves from the entrance of the light into the world (the incarnation) and the paradox that will become the focus of the story: Jesus came into a world that exists in and through him, yet he was not received or recognized for who he really was. This is a major motif in the story, as people constantly wrestle with Jesus' identity. Even more paradoxical is when Jesus comes to "his own," that is, to Israel, and is rejected. This is all set up as a contrast to "those who do receive him" and find themselves being "born from above," as Jesus will put it to one of Israel's teachers (John 3).

The final line in 1:13 defines the new identity of the "born from God" believers. They are not an ethnic group or tribal family ("from blood"), and their birth isn't the result of human desire for sex or a patriarch's desire to build a household as his own possession. This family's identity is not determined by human interests at all. Rather, they are "born from God."

- Note: The language of "desire" could be recalling Genesis 3:6-7.

## The Incarnation From the Perspective of Exodus

John 1:14-18 claims that God's glorious temple presence (Exod. 33:18-23) and divine attributes (Exod. 34:6) are revealed in the humanity of Jesus.

<p>And the Word became flesh and <b>dwelt</b> (Grk. ἐσκήνωσεν) among us, and we saw <b>his glory</b> (Grk. δόξα), glory as of the one and only from the Father ...</p> <p>John 1:14a</p> <p><b>Full of grace and truth</b> (Grk. πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας)... For from his <b>fullness</b> we have all received, and <b>grace upon grace</b>. For the Torah was given through Moses; <b>grace and truth</b> were realized through Jesus Christ.</p> <p>John 1:14b, 16-17</p> <p>And we saw <b>his glory</b> (Grk. δόξα), glory as of the one and only from the Father... <b>No one has seen God at any time</b>; the one and only God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained...</p> <p>John 1:14b, 18</p>	<p>Have them make a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell (Heb. shakan) among them. According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle (Heb. mishkan // Grk. τῆς σκηνῆς) and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.</p> <p>Exodus 25:8-9</p>
	<p>I will make a covenant of peace with them. It will be an eternal covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them and will set my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place (Heb. mishkan // Grk. κατασκήνωσις) will be with them and I will be their God and they will be my people.</p> <p>Ezekiel 37:26-27</p>
	<p>Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and <b>full of covenant love and truth</b>.</p> <p>Exodus 34:6-7</p>
	<p>"But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory (Heb. kavod // Grk. δόξα) passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by."</p> <p>Exodus 33:20-22</p>

### "The One and Only Son"

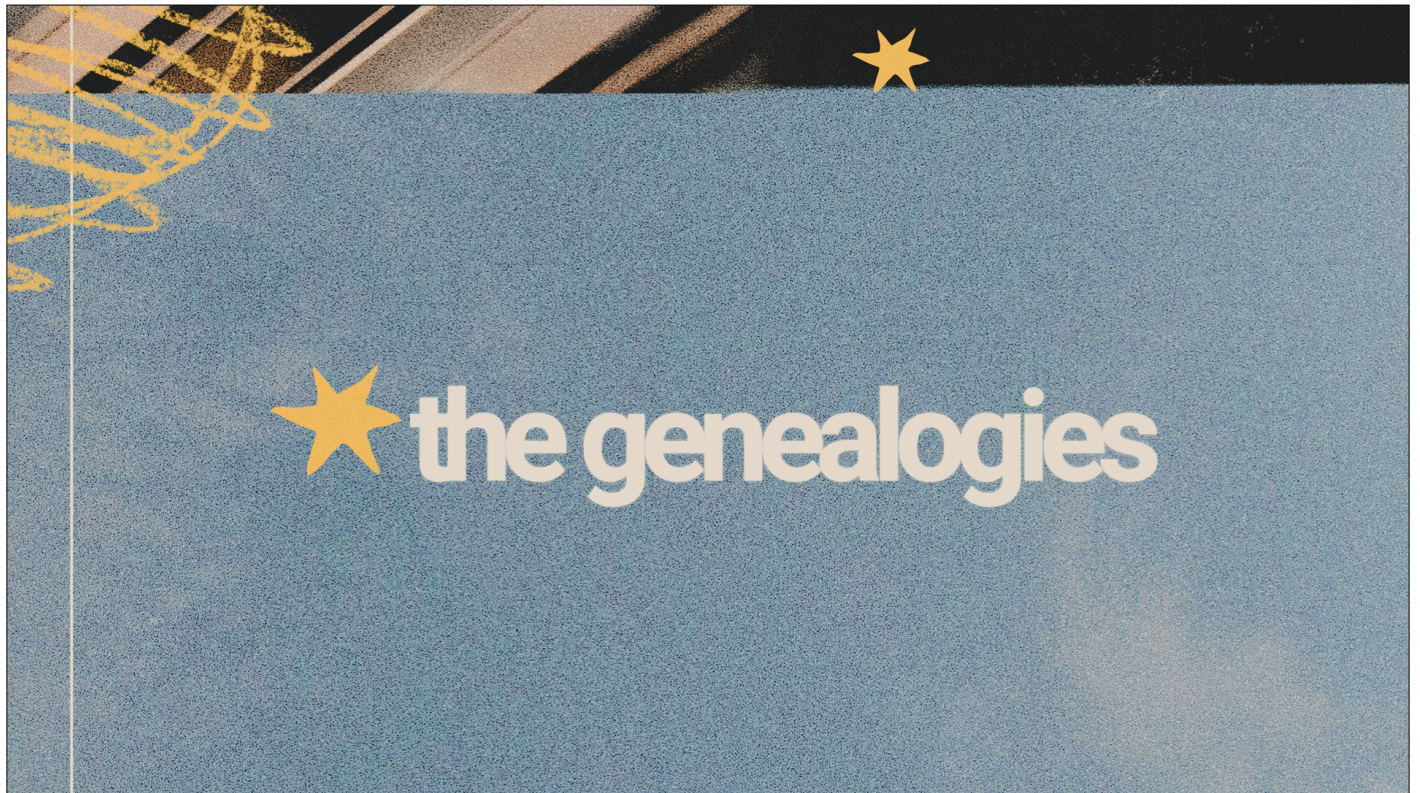
"The one and only God" = monogenēs. Μονογενής, literally means "the only one of its kind," unique in its γένος, in the LXX frequently translates יחיד (yahîd), used of an only or beloved child (as in Judg 11:34, of Jephthah's only daughter). It is therefore parallel to ἀγαπητός, "beloved," an alternative rendering of יחיד in the LXX. Significantly, in Gen 22:2, 12, 16, ἀγαπητός in the LXX renders יחיד with reference to Isaac, Abraham's "only" son; Heb 11:17, alluding to the same passage, uses μονογενής of Isaac.

George R. Beasley-Murray, John, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary, p.14.

### "Has Made Him Known"

The use of the verb "explain/make known" (Greek: exēgeomai) without an object as the very last word of the prologue has created considerable syntactic difficulty. The verb comes at the end of the sentence and thus at the end of the prologue. It leads the reader directly into the prose narrative of the life of Jesus through the kai that opens v. 19. The object of the verb ("him," referring back to "God") must be supplied by the reader from the context.

Francis J. Moloney, Belief in the Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel, John 1-4, p. 50.



# THE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

- Both Matthew and Luke contain genealogies but there are key differences:
  - Matthew's genealogy occurs at the beginning of the Gospel, works earliest to latest (Abraham to David, then the Babylonian exile, to Joseph and Mary) with a focus on the line of Joseph
  - Luke's genealogy occurs after he describes the birth of Jesus, his childhood, and the ministry of John the Baptist. Luke works backward from Joseph all the way back to Adam and then God.
- **Genealogies do more than list names**
  - In the Bible, genealogies trace family lines **and communicate theological meaning** about identity, belonging, and God's promises.

## PART THREE: THE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

- Matthew's genealogy points to deeper story themes
  - It sets up Jesus' identity and mission from the very first sentence.
- Matthew begins with: "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham..."
- **This establishes key theological claims:**
  - Jesus is **connected to Abraham**, God's chosen one for blessing all nations.
  - Jesus is **descended from David**, the royal line of Israel.

- "The genealogy ensures continuity between Israel's story and the story that Matthew is about to narrate ... This genealogy prepares the reader to interpret Jesus as the heir of the promises to Abraham, the consummation of Israel's epic story that began in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis ... The strong emphasis given to Israel's exile imparts a particular shape to the history: the story of Israel is a story that juxtaposes God's covenant faithfulness—signified by the promise to Abraham and the promise to David of an everlasting kingdom—with Israel's unfaithfulness, as signified ... by the checkered history of the kings that led up to the deportation to Babylon ... The Messiah, in Matthew's narrative, is the one who saves his people from the consequences of their sins by closing the chapter of powerlessness and deprivation that began with the exile to Babylon ... Jesus is the one who will bring about the end of Israel's exile."

- Hays, Richard B. (2017). *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Baylor University Press. 110–111.



# MATTHEW

- Matthew structures Jesus' teaching to reflect the teaching of Moses, showing how Jesus came to fill full the Torah.
- Matthew identifies Jesus as the Son of David, emphasizing how Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's messianic hopes.
- Matthew portrays Jesus as the Son of Abraham, emphasizing how Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise of blessing to all nations through Abraham and his descendants.
- Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of God and Son of Humanity, focusing on the claim of Jesus' divine and human identity.

The scroll of the birth-beginning  
(βιβλος γενεσεως) of Iesous Messiah

**Genesis 5:1:** "This is the scroll of the birthings (ספר תולדת) / βιβλος γενεσεως) of **Adam** "

son of **Dauid**

**2 Samuel 7:** **David** , father of the messianic **seed for Israel**

son of **Abra'am**

**Genesis 12:1-3, 22:18:** **Abraham** , father of the seed for the **blessing of the nations**

*The Opening Genealogical Line. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Rise of the Messiah (2024).*

## PART THREE: THE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

- “Son of David” emphasizes:

- Jesus belongs to Israel's royal dynasty.
- Matthew traces the line through **Solomon**, highlighting royal succession.
  - The use of “son of David” in Matthew 1:1 is the first of 10 times that Matthew uses the phrase.
- Biblical authors employ numbers as vehicles of meaning. Matthew highlights numerical wordplays in this genealogy, inviting readers to contemplate deeper layers of meaning.
- The genealogy is divided into **three sets of 14 generations**.
  - The Hebrew letters of “David” add up to 14 — highlighting Jesus’ **connection to David's kingship**.

## PART THREE: THE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

- Matthew leaves out certain generations to create symbolic numbers in genealogies
- This is a common Hebrew literary practice, going all the way back to the genealogies in Genesis (the 10 generations of Genesis 5, or the 70 descendants of Genesis 46).
- Ancient genealogies were ways of making theological claims, and Matthew's readers would have understood exactly what he was doing and why.
- Matthew didn't make numerical adjustments only. He also adjusted a few letters in some names for the same purpose.
  - For example, he changed the names of Asa and Amon to Asaph (the poet featured in the book of Psalms) and Amos (the famous prophet). Matthew is winking at us here, knowing that his readers would spot these out of place names.
  - The point, of course, is that Jesus doesn't just fulfill Israel's royal hopes, but also the hope of the Psalms (Asaph) and the Prophets (Amos). Jesus is from a line of kingly succession that also culminates the rich tradition of worship and prophecy of Israel.
  - This way, readers are thinking about all of Israel and her history as they meet Jesus for the first time. The irony is that some modern translations haven't gotten the pun, and so have changed the names back to their “original” referents.

## PART THREE: THE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

- **Why Abraham matters:**

- Abraham is where God's rescue plan for the world **begins** (Genesis 12:1–3).
- Matthew wants readers to see **Jesus as the fulfillment** of God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations.
- "I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the city gates of their enemies. And all the nations of the earth will be blessed<sup>14</sup> by your offspring because you have obeyed my command." (Gen 22:17-18)

"Jesus' identification in *Matthew 1* as the 'Son of David' is capable of many meanings, but the presence of these gentile women highlights the inclusiveness of the Messiah's role, to be a blessing to the nations as well as to save his own people from their sins ... Is the Davidic Messiah's role to be that of a new Joshua, who will again lead an obedient Israel to drive out the Canaanites? ... Or do the Canaanite women in Jesus' ancestry require a more positive relationship to gentiles? All this is at stake in Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman in *Matthew 15:21–28*. She may as well have stepped out of the genealogy, in order to press her own claims on the line of David as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba each did in their own way."

Bauckham, Richard (2002). "The Gentile Forerunners of the Messiah." *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels*. Erdmans. 44.



# GENEALOGIES

- Matthew's inclusion of five women in the genealogy links Jesus' story to a pattern of God using surprising people and means to fulfill his promises.
- The fact that Matthew has given us a patriarchal (i.e., male) lineage of the royal line of David through Abraham and Judah highlights the presence of four women in the genealogy. And, additionally, the four women named are not the ones we would expect, like the matriarchs of Israel in Genesis: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah. The inclusion of these specific four women is part of a deliberate strategy because these four women are deeply connected within the narrative strategy of the Hebrew Bible.
  - **Matthew 1:3:** Tamar from *Genesis 38*
  - **Matthew 1:5:** Rahab from *Joshua 2*
  - **Matthew 1:5:** Ruth from *Ruth 1–4*
  - **Matthew 1:6:** Wife of Uriah (= Bathsheba) from *2 Samuel 11–12* and *1 Kings 1–2*

# GENEALOGIES

- **Tamar:** Incest, immorality, feigned prostitution, a Gentile
- **Rahab:** Harlotry, lying, deception, a Canaanite
- **Ruth:** A woman from Moab—a nation born out of incest
- **Bathsheba:** Adultery

	Tamar Genesis 38	Rahab Joshua 2, 6	Ruth Ruth 1-4	Bathsheba 2 Sam 11-12 & 1 Kgs 1-2	The Canaanite Woman Matthew 15:21-28
<b>A non-Israelite, on the “kick them out” lists in Deut. 7:1; 20:1</b>	<b>Gen. 38:6, 11</b> Judah’s wife is Canaanite; Tamar’s father lives nearby	<b>Josh. 2:1</b> Rahab is a Canaanite prostitute who lives in Jericho	<b>Ruth 1:4</b> Mahlon and Kilion “took for themselves Moabite wives”	<b>2 Sam. 11:3</b> “Isn’t this Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, wife of Uriah the Hittite?”	<b>Matt. 15:21-22</b> “Jesus went into the region of Tyre and Sidon, and behold, a Canaanite woman from those regions came out ...”
<b>Recently widowed</b>	<b>Gen. 38:8-10</b> Tamar becomes twice widowed		<b>Ruth 1:5</b> Ruth becomes a widow	<b>2 Sam. 11</b> Bathsheba becomes widowed because David murders her husband	
<b>Unusual “liaison” with the promised lineage</b>	<b>Gen. 38:12-19</b> Tamar disguises as a prostitute to maintain the family “seed”	<b>Josh. 2:1b-7</b> They “go into” Rahab the prostitute’s house at night	<b>Ruth 3:2-14</b> Ruth secretly meets Boaz at night in the threshing floor	<b>2 Sam. 11:1-4</b> David’s affair takes place at night, while he stays home during a war	
<b>Bold assertion toward the line of David/Joshua</b>	<b>Gen. 38:25-26</b> Tamar proves Judah’s guilt with cord and seal	<b>Josh. 2:12</b> “Now, swear to me by Yahweh, since I have done <i>khesed</i> to you, that you do <i>khesed</i> to my father’s house”	<b>Ruth 3:9</b> “I am Ruth your servant. So spread your covering over your servant, for you are a kinsman-redeemer.”	<b>1 Kgs. 1:15-21</b> Bathsheba requests that Solomon be made king instead of Adonijah	<b>Matt. 15:25-27</b> Jesus’ silence prompts her to say “Lord! Help me!” She counters Jesus’ parable with a tweaked

Women Hyperlinks. Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Rise of the Messiah (2024).

	Tamar Genesis 38	Rahab Joshua 2, 6	Ruth Ruth 1-4	Bathsheba 2 Sam 11-12 & 1 Kgs 1-2	The Canaanite Woman Matthew 15:21-28
					parable in return
<b>Red cord = Symbol of deliverance</b>	<b>Gen. 38:18, 25</b> "cord" belongs to Judah  <b>Gen. 38:28</b> "red" tied to firstborn	<b>Josh. 2:18-19</b> a "red cord" is tied to the window "as a sign of <b>faith</b> " (אמת)			<b>Matt. 15:28</b> "Great is your <b>faith</b> , O woman! Let it be as you desire."
<b>Confession of faith in God of Israel OR Request for mercy/favor</b>		<b>Josh. 2:10-11</b> "Yahweh your God, he is God in heaven above and earth below"	<b>Ruth 1:16</b> "Your people will be my people, and your God, my God"		<b>Matt. 15:22b</b> She cried out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
<b>Sets precedent for Gentile inclusion</b>		<b>Josh. 9</b> The Gibeonites			<b>Matt. 15:29-38</b> The feeding of the 4,000 Gentiles follows

*Women Hyperlinks.* Created by Tim Mackie for BibleProject Classroom: Rise of the Messiah (2024).

"Jesus' identification in Matthew 1 as the 'Son of David,' is capable of many meanings, but the presence of these gentile women highlights the inclusiveness of the Messiah's role, to be a blessing to the nations as well as to save his own people from their sins ... Is the Davidic Messiah's role to be that of a new Joshua, who will again lead an obedient Israel to drive out the Canaanites? ... Or do the Canaanite women in Jesus' ancestry require a more positive relationship to gentiles? All this is at stake in Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28. She may as well have stepped out of the genealogy, in order to press her own claims on the line of David as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba each did in their own way."

Bauckham, Richard (2002). "The Gentile Forerunners of the Messiah." [\*Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels\*](#). Eerdmans. 44.

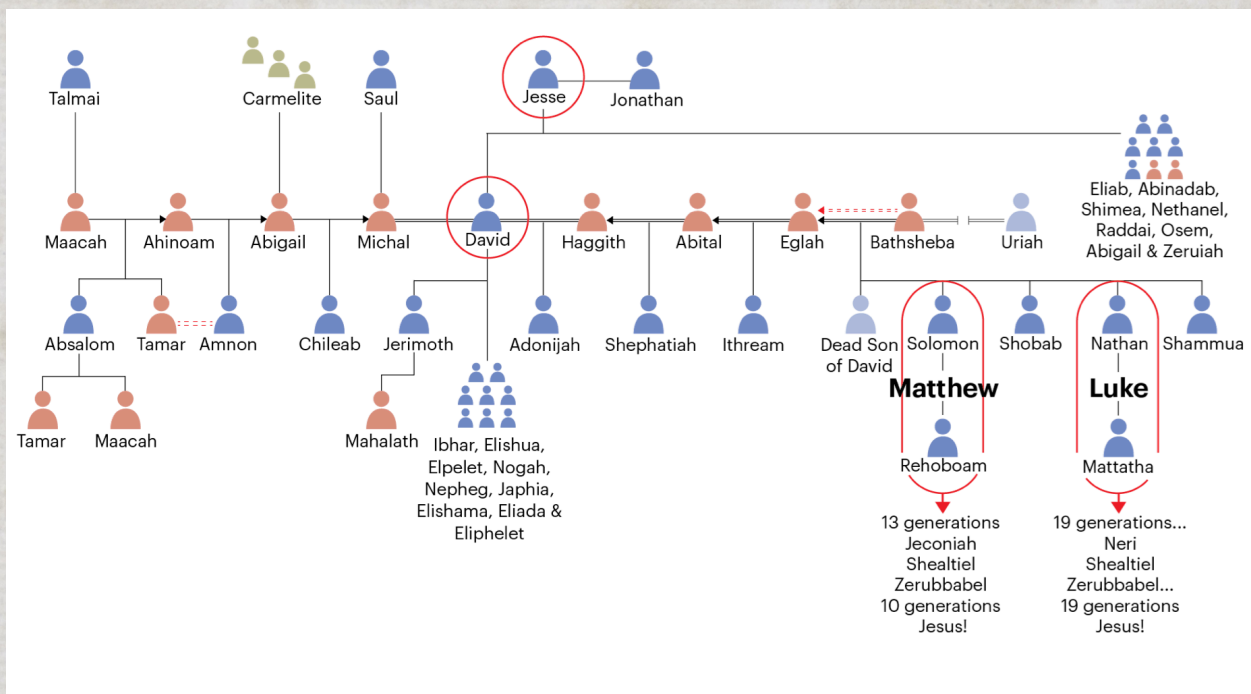


# LUKE

- Luke's genealogy is different from Matthew's genealogy as it embodies a different set of theological claims about Jesus' identity.
- Matthew and Luke contain essentially the same names from Abraham to David but very few names in common after that
- Matthew follows the royal family in Jerusalem that came from Solomon, but Luke instead follows the lesser known Nathan, the ninth son of David. The family line joins back up to Matthew in the person of Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:13 // Luke 1:27), but it separates again until Jesus' adoptive father Joseph.

Luke's genealogy embodies a claim about Jesus' identity. It gives Jesus the place of ultimate significance in world history. It includes and highlights his descent from David by the non-royal line as the prophesied messianic son. However, he is more than just a new David. David has his own special place as the fifth "seventh," as does Abraham as the third seventh, but Jesus' position at the end of the eleventh seven, in the seventy-seventh generation surpasses that of every predecessor from Adam onwards. He is greater than Enoch and greater than Abraham and David. He is the consummation of human history.

Richard Bauckham, "The Lukan Genealogy of Jesus" in *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 365.



# LUKE

- The number seven was an important factor in the design of Luke's genealogy. There are 77 (7 x 11) generations between Adam and Jesus in Luke 3:23–38, which is a number of ultimate fulfillment. Remember Lamech's 77 in Genesis 4:24 and Jesus' ironic allusion to it in Matthew 18:22.
- Enoch is in the seventh position (as he is in Gen. 5:21), the only ancestor of Jesus to share his name is in the 49th position, and Jesus himself is in the 77th position.
- There are 49 (= 7 x 7) generations between Adam and "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς, Joshua, Luke 3:29), the only ancestor to share Jesus of Nazareth's name. The number 49 echoes the ten Jubilee cycles from Daniel 9 (7 x 70).
- Luke has designed the genealogy so that multiple sevens conclude with a key patriarch.

1st seven: <b>Enoch</b>	6th seven: Joseph
2nd seven: Shelah	7th seven: <b>Jesus</b>
3rd seven: <b>Abraham</b>	8th seven: Shealtiel
4th seven: Admin	9th seven: Mattathias
5th seven: <b>David</b>	10th seven: Joseph
11th seven = 77th generation = <b>Jesus of Nazareth</b>	



It seems that Luke wants the descent from David to evoke not the high status of royal descent, but the low status of David's humble origins. This is confirmed by the genealogy Luke gives to Jesus, which traces Jesus' descent through Joseph from David and back to Adam. This is a sophisticated theological text, embodying, as biblical genealogies do, much more than just biological information. According to this genealogy, Jesus was descended from David not through Solomon and the kings of Judah as in Matthew's genealogy, but through David's little-known ninth son Nathan. While making contact with the official line of heirs to the Davidic throne in Zerubbabel and his father Shealtiel, the genealogy otherwise consists of entirely unknown names between Nathan and Joseph. This embodies an interpretation of the prophecies of the Davidic messiah, according to which the Messiah is to come not from the line of David's royal successors but from David's own family origins in Bethlehem (see Isaiah 11:1–5 and Micah 5:1–2). ... The new king is not to be born in the royal palace in Jerusalem, but in insignificant Bethlehem, where David's own story began ... among the ordinary people. Bethlehem is the city of David, but not of any of David's sons through Solomon.

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 73–74



## POSSIBLE ISSUE

- Some critics find another supposed contradiction in the genealogies associated with the narratives of Jesus' birth. Matthew 1:16 says that Joseph's father was Jacob; Luke 3:23 says that Joseph's father was Heli.
- There are several theories, but the best answer to this seeming discrepancy is that Luke is recording Mary's genealogy and Matthew is recording Joseph's. There was no Koine Greek word with the exclusive meaning of "son-in-law," and so Joseph is called the "son of Heli" due to his marriage to Heli's daughter, Mary. Joseph was a "son" by marriage.





## PART FOUR: THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS

- Scholars place the date of Jesus' birth as no later than March or April 4 BC
  - Jesus was born during the time of Herod the Great who is believed to have died sometime between March 12 - April 11 based on Josephus' calculations
- We can also consider the date based on the Census of Quirinius.
  - According to Luke 2:1-5, Augustus issued a worldwide census when Quirinius was governor of Syria
  - This has caused some confusion because Quirinius was the governor around 6-7AD, about 10 years after Jesus was born
  - The Greek word for "first" in Luke 2:2 is a form of the word protos and can be translated "before." Thus Luke 2:2 could actually be translated, "This was the census taken before Quirinius was governor of Syria."



- We can also consider the star of the wise men
- According to Matthew 2:1-12, wise men (or astrologers) were alerted by something significant was about to occur
  - There was an alignment of Jupiter and Saturn with Mars (happens every 805 years) that occurred in February of 6BC.
  - Then in March or April of 5BC, the wise men observed the star mentioned in Matthew 2:2, traveled to Israel and then see the star again in Jerusalem
    - It is postulated that this may have been a comet which would have been visible to the naked eye for a long period of time
    - Records indicate that a tailed comet was visible for 70 days, first visible in the East in March/April of 5BC and again over Jerusalem in April/May. Some scholars use this evidence to suggest Spring 5BC.

- Other suggest that the star was a supernova which is when a star explodes and gives off an unusually bright light
  - We have no record of such an event occurring
- It is also important to note that the wise men likely did not visit on the night of Jesus' birth
  - Mary and Joseph seemed to have moved into a house
  - It is possible that Jesus was 1-2 years old when they visited
- In the end, determining the specific day of Jesus' birth might not be possible

# CHRISTMAS IS NOT A PAGAN HOLIDAY

Celebrating the incarnation of Jesus at Christmas is a longstanding Christian tradition spanning over a millennia. Although there has clearly been growth, lore, and traditions added to our modern practice of the holiday the accusation of substantial pagan roots falls apart under historical inspection. All the traditional "pagan" associations and connections with Christmas, when truly put under the microscope, turn out to be themselves more fiction than fact.

→ A good portion of this material owes its credit to the work of Michael Jones of Inspiring Philosophy. To find out more visit [inspiringphilosophy.org](http://inspiringphilosophy.org)

DEC. 25th

**claim**



The date of Christmas is borrowed from pagan festivals like Sol Invictus and / or Saturnalia

Winter Solstice

Sol Invictus

**reality**

*Sol Invictus* was not placed on 12/25 until 354 AD when the Philocalian Calendar records this but doesn't specify any festival with regards to sun worship. Prior to this, the Julio-Claudian fasti inscriptions say Sun festivals were on August 8th, 9th, 28th, and December 11th, and maybe October 19th. The Philocalian Calendar says Emperor Aurelian honored the sun with chariot races every 4 years Oct 19-22.

Saturnalia

*Saturnalia* was never on 12/25. Macrobius says *Saturnalia* began 14 days before January, which comes out to December 17th, using Roman Calendrical dates. He says it lasted for 3 days, but according to the Fasti inscriptions, it lasted to the 24th during the days of the Republic.

The *Winter Solstice* had no festive significance to ancient Romans. There were no celebrations planned for the date and they disagreed on when it was. The Julian Calendar does say 12/25, but Pliny the Elder says 12/26, and Columella says 12/23.

"Father Christmas"

Father Christmas, surprisingly, pre-dates Santa Claus. But he is not a pagan deity. Instead, he was a medieval personification of Christmas. Richard Smart of Plymtree is the first to write about him, referring to him as Sir Christmas, and his task is to announce the birth of Christ

Oxford Book of Carols, no. 21, 41-3

SANTA



Wesley Huff  
Teach. Reach. Encourage. Equip

"Santa"

Santa Claus can only be traced back to Dutch immigrants in New York in the early 1800s. He came from the Dutch *Sinterklaas*, also known as St. Nicolas. His feast day was on 12/6 and was moved to 12/25 around this time to help make Christmas a family holiday. Newspapers promoted it and encouraged to give gifts on Christmas instead of New Years' like it traditionally was before this. *Sinterklaas* was rebranded from a catholic priest to look like a traditional dutchman from that time period, which included a big red suit. After this Santa was exported around the world and different countries added new spins. Stockings were also promoted around this time period and trace back to Clement C. Moor's "A Visit from St. Nicholas." In 1927, in Finland, a radio broadcaster, Markus Rautio, morphed the old pagan deity, Joulupukki, into a Santa figure. Santa changed the Joulupukki figure, not the other way around.

A dictionary of English Folklore, section: Santa.

CHRISTMAS TREES

**claim**

Christmas trees find their origin in druid and pagan practices of bringing pine trees into one's house to ward off nature spirits.



**reality**

Christmas trees only go back to the 16th century in Europe. The first mention of Christmas trees is in an Alsace ordinance in the 16th century. Almost no early pagans thought pine trees were sacred, let alone associated with 12/25. Germanic tribes believed the oak was sacred. Maximus of Tyre said, "The Celts indeed worship Zeus, but they honour Him in the form of a lofty oak."

Oxford Book of Carols, no. 21, 41-3

MISTLETOE



Mistletoe does not go back to paganism. The first we hear of using mistletoe as Christmas decorations are in Robert Herrick, "Hesperides poetry collection," (892, 980), and then William Coles mentions it is a decoration in "The Art of Simpling" (1600s). The tradition of kissing under it did not begin until the end of the 18th century in Britain.

A dictionary of English Folklore, section: Mistletoe.

## SO WHERE DOES DEC. 25 COME FROM IF IT'S NOT PAGAN?

The date of Christmas was never an appropriation or supplanting of pagan festivals. All of the evidence points to the fact that early Christians genuinely believed that Jesus' birth took place on Dec. 25th and celebrated it as such.



AD 170 - 235

Hippolytus of Rome

Hippolytus of Rome, wrote a commentary on the book of Daniel in the early third century. In it he states that Jesus was born "eight days before the Calends of January," which would have been December 24th or 25th.

Hippolytus of Rome, Commentary on Daniel 4.23.3.



AD 160 - 240

Tertullian

& The Death / Birth Concept

There was an idea within early Christianity that if you were really holy you would die on the day you were conceived or born. This was calculated mainly because the Old Testament would record the life of individuals

like Moses and present round numbers (without adding months or days). The most holy man who ever lived was Jesus, therefore many within the early church thought he *must* have died on his birthday. The ancient Christian writer Tertullian, in *Adversus Judaeos*, stated that Christ suffered "in the month of March, at the time of the Passover, on the eighth day before the Calends of April." That day would have been March 25th. If that was also the day of the Incarnation, it explains why the early Church set the date for Christmas nine months later on December 25th.

Tertullian, *Adversus Judaeos*, Ch. VIII.

Augustine



Wesley Huff  
Teach. Reach. Encourage. Equip



AD 354 - 430

Augustine in the fourth century attests to the ongoing tradition of Jesus' birth being on Dec. 25th. He wrote, "For he [Jesus] is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also he suffered; so the womb of the Virgin, in which he was conceived, where no one of mortals was begotten, corresponds to the new grave in which he was buried, wherein was never man laid, neither before him nor since."

Augustine of Hippo, *On the Trinity*, from McGowan, "December 25th."



c. AD 160 - 240

Sextus Julius Africanus

The origin of December 25th as the date for Christmas finds its beginnings in the late second and early third century with the historian Sextus Julius Africanus. Africanus wrote a volume titled *Chronographiai*, an early Christian treatise that attempted to chronologically cover world history from creation up until his own day. Based on calculations from his reading of Luke and Matthew's Gospels, Africanus concluded that Jesus was conceived on March 25th. For the birth then, he counted nine months ahead which landed him on the date of December 25th.

Sextus Julius Africanus, *Chronographiai* Volume 1.



# AGREEMENT BETWEEN MATTHEW AND LUKE

- Jesus was born of a virgin (Matthew 1:18, 23, 25; Luke 1:27).
- Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee (Matthew 2:23; Luke 1:26; 2:4).
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4–7).
- After Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth (Matthew 2:23; Luke 2:39).

# UNIQUE DETAILS

- The magi visit Jesus (Matthew 2:1–12).
- Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt to escape Herod's cruelty (Matthew 2:13–18).
- A group of shepherds visit Jesus in the manger (Luke 2:8–20).
- Joseph and Mary make a trip to the temple in Jerusalem in fulfillment of the Law (Luke 2:22–39).



# LUKE'S BIRTH NARRATIVE

- Luke repeatedly emphasizes that God's redemptive work comes through people of **humble status**, especially women and the poor.
- Mary is a young, unmarried woman from Nazareth, an insignificant village (Luke 1:26–27).
- Elizabeth and Zechariah are righteous but marginalized by age and barrenness (Luke 1:6–7).
- Shepherds, not elites, are the first witnesses of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:8–20).

## LUKE 1-2

Character	Promise	OT Portrait	Fulfillment	Poem of Celebration
<b>The Temple: Zechariah</b>	Elderly couple will bear a promised son (Luke 1:13-20).	Abraham and Sarai	Pregnancy (1:24) and birth (1:57)	Zechariah's Song (1:68-79)
<b>The Poor: Mary</b>	A woman of low status will bear the promised deliverer (Luke 1:31-33).	Hannah	Birth of Jesus (2:6-7)	Mary's Song (1:47-55)
<b>The Prophets: Simeon and Anna</b>	God promised that they would see the Messiah born in their day (Luke 2:25-26, 36-37).	Isaiah and Hannah	They see Jesus in the temple (2:26-27)	Simeon's Song (2:29-32) and Anna's praise (2:38)



Luke sees the Old Testament not merely as a collection of predictions about a future Messiah, but rather as a book of self-involving promises made by God to the people of Israel. Through his covenant promise, God has bound himself to this particular people and can therefore be trusted to fulfill his word. Luke's claim is that this is precisely what has happened in the life of Jesus and in the continuing history of the people that follow him as their Lord.

*Richard B. Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, 192–93*

# The Gospel of Luke

## Study Notes

### Introduction

The Gospel of Luke tells the fascinating story of Jesus' life, ministry, and announcement of God's Upside-Down Kingdom. Luke emphasizes how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures, setting the stage for the Jesus movement that would spread throughout the ancient world. Use these study notes to dig deeper into the ideas introduced in the first five videos in our Luke-Acts series: The Birth of Jesus, The Baptism of Jesus, The Prodigal Son, The Crucifixion of Jesus, and the Resurrection of Jesus.

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# The Literary Design of Luke's Gospel

## Reading the Gospel According to Luke

Prologue - Luke 1:1-4

Introduction - Luke 1:5-2:51: John and Jesus Introduced

Part 1 - Luke 3:1-9:50: Jesus Announces God's Kingdom in Galilee

- Chapter 3: Jesus is introduced as the Son of God and Son of Adam
- Chapter 4: Jesus inaugurates his Kingdom mission
- Chapters 5-6: Jesus confronts Israel's leaders and teaches about the Kingdom
- Chapters 7-9: Jesus' healings and parables of the Kingdom

Part 2 - Luke 9:51-19:27: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

- Chapter 9:51-13:21: The journey part 1: Following Jesus 101
- Chapter 13:22-17:10: The journey part 2: God's generous and dangerous offer of the Kingdom
- Chapter 17:11-19:27: The journey part 3: Jesus' coming Kingdom

Part 3 - Luke 19:28-24:53: Jesus' Confrontation, Execution, and Resurrection in Jerusalem

- Chapter 19:28-21: Jesus confronts Jerusalem's leaders during Passover week
- Chapter 22-23: Jesus' last Passover, arrest, and execution
- Chapter 24: The empty tomb and resurrection appearances

## The Unity of Luke-Acts

Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2 show that both books were written by the same author and were meant to be read as a single continuous work.

Luke 1:1-4 shows that the Gospel of Luke was compiled from sources and eyewitness reports of events to help followers of Jesus understand his significance and story with more certainty.

## The Old Testament in Luke-Acts

Luke sees the Old Testament not merely as a collection of predictions about a future Messiah, but rather as a book of self-involving promises made by God to the people of Israel. Through his covenant promise, God has bound himself to this particular people and can therefore be trusted to fulfill his word. Luke's claim is that this is precisely what has happened in the life of Jesus and in the continuing history of the people that follow him as their Lord.

Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 192-93

## Patterns in Luke's Engagement with the Old Testament

1. Scripture quotations are almost always found in the mouths of characters in the story and not in overt authorial commentary. This narrative device imparts a dramatic nature to Luke's intertextual citations. Readers are required to interpret the echoes of the Hebrew Bible in light of the narrative's unfolding plot.
2. Most of the references to the Hebrew Bible consist of narrative parallels that are suggested through the literary devices of allusion and echo. The effect of this narrative technique is to lure us into the work of close and careful reading, seeking to discern and interpret the intertextual clues woven into the fabric of the story.

Illustration: “Luke is like a dramatic theatrical performance, where the primary action of the Gospel is played out on center stage, in front of the spotlights. On a scrim at the back of the stage, however, there is displayed a kaleidoscopic series of flickering sepia-toned images from Israel’s Scriptures. The image can flash by almost unnoticed; however, if the viewer pays careful attention, there are many moments where the words or gestures of the characters onstage mirror something on the shifting backdrop, or, possibly, the other way around. In these moments, the reader is expected to have a flash of interpretive insight, as the ‘live action’ recapitulates a scene from an older story, allowing the two narrative moments to interpret each other. It is not Luke’s style to develop sustained sequences in which the patterns run parallel; rather, almost as soon as we recognize an echo of the Old Testament, the moment has passed and a new image appears on the backdrop ... The story keeps moving, and leaves us with a powerful but indistinct sense of analogy between God’s saving acts for Israel in the past and the new liberating events coming to fulfillment in the story of Jesus.”

Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*

## Main Themes in Luke

The first theme appears in Luke chapters 1-2. Jesus’ birth story is part of a larger pattern of God fulfilling his promises to individuals who represent the story of Israel.

Character	Promise	OT Portrait	Fulfillment	Poem of Celebration
<b>The Temple: Zechariah</b>	Elderly couple will bear a promised son (Luke 1:13-20).	Abraham and Sarai	Pregnancy (1:24) and birth (1:57)	Zechariah’s Song (1:68-79)
<b>The Poor: Mary</b>	A woman of low status will bear the promised deliverer (Luke 1:31-33).	Hannah	Birth of Jesus (2:6-7)	Mary’s Song (1:47-55)
<b>The Prophets: Simeon and Anna</b>	God promised that they would see the Messiah born in their day (Luke 2:25-26, 36-37).	Isaiah and Hannah	They see Jesus in the temple (2:26-27)	Simeon’s Song (2:29-32) and Anna’s praise (2:38)

These representative characters show how God is at work fulfilling his ancient covenant promises to Israel, and they set up the rest of Luke’s account as one large fulfillment narrative.

Luke has designed the introductory section to focus on the interweaving of John and Jesus’ story as the continuation of Israel’s story.



Design Sequence	Episode Narrative Perspective		
Frame	1:5 "In the days of King Herod of Judah ..."		
A	1:5-7	Introduction to John's parents Zechariah and Elizabeth	Narrator
B	1:8-20	Annunciation of John's birth to Zechariah + poem	Zechariah
C	1:21-23	People's response to Zechariah's vision	People around Zechariah
D	1:24-25	Elizabeth becomes pregnant with John	Elizabeth
E	1:26-38	Annunciation of Jesus' birth to Mary + poem	Mary
F	1:39-45	Mary meets Elizabeth, Elizabeth declared Mary to be the blessed one	Mary and Elizabeth
E	1:46-56	Celebration of Mary's pregnancy + poem	Mary
D	1:57-58	Elizabeth gives birth to John	Elizabeth
C	1:59-66	People's response to Zechariah's naming of John	People around Zechariah
B	1:67-79	Zechariah celebrates the birth of John + poem	Zechariah
A	1:80	Conclusion to John's youth	Narrator
Frame	2:1 "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus ..."		

The second main theme centers around Mary, Jesus' mother. Luke's depiction of Mary is crucially important for introducing the themes he will develop throughout the two volumes. Mary's portrait is a combination of two narrative traditions from the Hebrew Scriptures: (1) the deliverer of God's people (male or female), and (2) the miraculous mother of a male deliverer.

### 1. The Male or Female Deliverer

Female deliverers include the midwives Shiprah and Puah (Exod. 2:15-21), Deborah (Judg. 4-5), Jael (Judg. 4:17-22; 5:24-27), and Esther.

Male deliverers include Joseph, Moses, the judges, Samuel, and David.

## Mary and Other Deliverer Figures

Luke 1:28 - Angel to Mary <i>"Rejoice, O graced one! The Lord is with you."</i>	Judges 6:12 - Angel to Gideon <i>"The Lord is with you, O valiant one!"</i>
Luke 1:29-30 - Angel to Mary <i>Mary was disturbed at this word, and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. And the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary!"</i>	Judges 6:22-23 - Angel to Gideon <i>When Gideon saw that it was the angel of Yahweh, he said, "Oh no! I've seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" But Yahweh said to him, "Peace! Don't be afraid!"</i>
Luke 1:35 - Angel to Mary <i>"The Holy Spirit will come upon you."</i>	Holy Spirit empowerment commonly describes the male judges.  Othniel: Judges 3:9-10 - Gideon: Judges 6:34  Jephthah: Judges 11:29 - Samson: Judges 13:25  Deborah is described in a parallel role, and is the only judge who is also called "a prophet" (Judg. 5:4).
Luke 1:42 - Elizabeth to Mary <i>"You are blessed (ευλογουμένη) among women."</i>	Judges 5:24 - Deborah of Jael <i>"Most blessed (Sept. ευλογηθει) among women."</i>

## 2. Miraculous Mothers of Male Deliverers

Mothers of male deliverers include Sarah (Gen. 17-18, 21), Rebekah (Gen. 25:21), Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:31-30:24), Samson's mother (Judg. 13), and Hannah (1 Sam. 1-2).

### Mary and Other Mothers of Male Deliverers

Luke 1:31 - Angel to Mary: <i>"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call his name ..."</i>	Genesis 16:11 - Angel to Hagar: <i>"You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son, and you will call his name, Ishmael."</i>  Judges 13:5 - Angel to Samson's mother: <i>"You will become pregnant and give birth to a son."</i>  Isaiah 7:14 - Isaiah to Ahaz: <i>"The young woman will conceive and will give birth to a son, and she will call his name, Immanuel."</i>
Luke 1:32-33 - Angel to Mary: <i>"He will be great and called Son of the Most High ... and he will reign over the house of Jacob."</i>	Genesis 17:16-17 - Angel to Abraham about Sarah: <i>"I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."</i>
Luke 1:37 - Angel to Mary: <i>"For no matter is impossible (αδυνάτος) before God."</i>	Genesis 18:14 - God to Abraham about Sarah: <i>"Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too wonderful for Yahweh [Heb.]? For no matter is impossible (αδυνάτος) for God [Sept.]."</i>
Luke 1:44 - Elizabeth to Mary: <i>"Behold, when the voice of your greeting came into my ears, the child in my womb leapt (σκιρτάω) for joy."</i>	Genesis 25:22 - Rebekah <i>"But the children leapt (σκιρτάω Sept.) within her ..."</i>

Mary's pregnancy both belongs to the series of famous mothers of deliverers in the Hebrew Scriptures, in that it is enabled by a miraculous act of God, but it also transcends the series, in that her pregnancy is virginal. In Elizabeth and her son the storyline of Israel's Scriptures culminates, while in Mary and her son the new creation begins. It is not surprising, therefore, that, while Mary does stand in the succession of biblical mothers who conceive through God's power, she is more especially and more emphatically portrayed by Luke as in the succession of human agents of divine deliverance from their enemies ... Mary's motherhood is celebrated as part of her active role in a great act of God for the salvation of his people. Mary's motherhood is of national and even world-changing significance.

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 58

In Luke 1:46-55, Mary's song (the Magnificat) is crucially important for introducing the core theological themes of Luke's Gospel. It has a symmetrical, mirrored design.

God brings a great reversal for Mary.
<sup>46</sup> My soul glorifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. <sup>48</sup> For he has had regard for <b>the lowliness</b> (ταπεινωσις) of <b>his servant</b> (δουλος); for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. <sup>49</sup> For the <b>Mighty One</b> (δυνατος) has done great things for me; and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup> And his <b>covenant love</b> (ελεος), is upon <b>generation after generation</b> toward those who fear him.
Hinge: Mary's story is a paradigm for God's work in history.
<sup>51</sup> He has enacted power with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their heart.
Future redemption will mirror Mary's story.
<sup>52</sup> He has brought down <b>mighty ones</b> (δυναστα) from their thrones, and has exalted those who are <b>lowly</b> (ταπεινος). <sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things and sent away the rich empty-handed. <sup>54</sup> He has given help to Israel <b>his servant</b> (δουλος) in remembrance of his <b>covenant love</b> (ελεος). <sup>55</sup> As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed <b>unto the age</b> .

Mary, in her "low status" (v. 48) is clearly paradigmatic of those whom God exalts. But she does not only represent them. In her own exaltation by God, from low status to being the mother of the Messiah, she becomes the means of the exaltation of the lowly in her generation through the coming of the Messiah. This is why the acts of divine "reversal" and salvation can be described in the past tense, as one single act of salvation for God's people. Mary's becoming the mother of the Messiah is the beginning of the exaltation of the lowly and the humiliation of the exalted in Israel that her son will accomplish.

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 70

Mary's song is also a creative collage of intertextual echoes from salvation songs all over the Hebrew Bible.

Mary's Song	Old Testament Intertexts
<p>Luke 1:46-47 My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.</p>	<p>1 Samuel 2:1 My heart rejoices in Yahweh, my horn is raised up by Yahweh ... for I will rejoice in your salvation.</p> <p>Habakkuk 3:18 I will rejoice in Yahweh, I will be glad in the God of my salvation.</p> <p>Psalms 35:9 And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD; It shall exult in his salvation.</p>
<p>Luke 1:48 For he has looked upon the lowliness of his servant; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me fortunate (μακαρίζω).</p>	<p>1 Samuel 2:11 O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me, and not forget your maidservant.</p> <p>Genesis 30:13 Leah said, "Fortunate (μακαριος) am I! For women will call me fortunate (μακαριζω)." So she named him fortunate [= Heb. Asher].</p> <p>Psalms 72:17 [Sept.] May his [messianic seed] name be blessed (ευλογημενος) forever ... may all the families of the earth be blessed (ευλογεω) in him, all the nations will count him fortunate (μακαριζω).</p>
<p>Luke 1:49 For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is his name.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 10:20-21 You shall fear the LORD your God ... he is your praise and he is your God, who has done these great things and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen.</p> <p>Psalms 111:9 He has sent redemption to his people, he has commanded his covenant forever, holy and awesome is his name.</p>
<p>Luke 1:50 And his mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear him.</p>	<p>Psalms 103:17 For Yahweh's covenant love [Sept. "mercy" = ελεος / Hebrew: חסד] is from age to age over those who fear him, and his righteousness for the children of children.</p>
<p>Luke 1:51 He has done great deeds with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their heart.</p>	<p>Exodus 6:1 With my mighty hand I will send Israel out, and with my exalted arm he will bring them out of Pharaoh's land.</p> <p>Isaiah 51:9 Wake up, wake up, put on strength O arm of Yahweh, as in the days of past generations long ago.</p> <p>Psalms 118:15 [Sept.] The right arm of the Lord has done great deeds, the right arm of the Lord has exalted me.</p> <p>Psalms 89:11 [Sept.] You brought down the proud as one that is slain, and with the arm of your power, you scattered your enemies.</p>



<p>Luke 1:52-53  <i>He has brought down rulers from their thrones,  and has <b>exalted those who were humble</b>.  He has filled the hungry with good things;  and sent away the rich empty-handed.</i></p>	<p>1 Samuel 2:7-8  <i>The Lord sends poverty and wealth; <b>he humbles  and he exalts</b>. He raises the poor from the dust and  lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them  with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.</i></p>
<p>Luke 1:54-55  <i>He has given help to <b>his servant Israel</b>,  in remembrance of his mercy,  just as he spoke to our fathers,  to Abraham and his descendants forever.</i></p>	<p>Isaiah 41:8-9  <i>But you, <b>Israel, my servant</b>,  Jacob, whom I have chosen,  you <b>descendants of Abraham</b> my friend,  I took you from the ends of the earth,  from its farthest corners I called you.  I said, "You are my servant";  I have chosen you and have not rejected you.</i></p> <p>Psalms 98:3  <i>He has <b>remembered his covenant love</b> and his  faithfulness to the house of Israel;  All the ends of the earth have seen  the salvation of our God.</i></p> <p>Micah 7:20  <i>You will be faithful to Jacob,  and show love to <b>Abraham</b>,  as you pledged on oath to <b>our  ancestors</b> in days long ago.</i></p>

This usage of traditional scriptural language in a new context is not a sign of a lack of originality. Rather it is testimony to the art of the poet who can take language already laden with meaning for people familiar with the heritage of their Scriptures and use it to describe new situations.

M. Horgan, "The Hodayot (1QH) and New Testament Poetry," 190

### 3. Mary's Faith and Zechariah's Doubt

Mary's humble faith and elevation is in contrast to the priest Zechariah's doubt and lowering of status (in becoming mute). Once he regains his ability to speak, he utters a song woven entirely out of lines from Israel's prophetic hopes.

<p>Luke 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for <b>he has visited us</b> and <b>accomplished</b> <b>redemption</b> for his people,</p>	<p>Exodus 4:31 So the people believed; and when they heard that <b>the LORD has visited the sons of Israel</b> and that he had seen their affliction ...</p> <p>Exodus 6:6 Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. <b>I will also redeem</b> you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments."</p>
<p>Luke 1:69 And has <b>raised up a horn of salvation</b> for us in the house of <b>David</b> his servant—</p>	<p>Psalms 132:13, 17-18 For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation. There I will cause <b>the horn of David</b> to spring forth; I have prepared a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon himself his crown shall shine.</p> <p>2 Samuel 22:3 My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and <b>the</b> <b>horn of my salvation</b>, my stronghold and my refuge ...</p> <p>Psalms 148:13-14 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven. <b>And he has lifted up a horn for his people.</b></p>
<p>Luke 1:70-71 As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old— Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of <b>all who hate us</b>;</p>	<p>Psalms 18:17 He saved me from my strong enemy, and from <b>those</b> <b>who hated me</b>, for they were too mighty for me.</p>
<p>Luke 1:72-73 to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, <b>the oath which he swore</b> to Abraham our Father ...</p>	<p>Micah 7:20 You will give truth to Jacob and covenant love to Abraham, the <b>oath you swore</b> to our forefathers from the days of old.</p>
<p>Luke 1:74-75 to grant us that we, <b>being rescued from the hand of our</b> <b>enemies</b>, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.</p>	<p>Micah 4:10 From Babylon <b>you will be rescued</b>; There the LORD will redeem you <b>from the hand of your enemies</b>.</p>
<p><b>And you, child,</b> will be called the prophet of the Most High. For <b>you will go on before the Lord to prepare his ways</b>;</p>	<p>Malachi 3:1 Behold, I am going to send <b>my messenger</b>, and <b>he</b> <b>will prepare the way before me</b>. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple ...</p>
<p>To give to his people the knowledge of salvation, by <b>the</b> <b>forgiveness of their sins</b>, because of the mercy of our God</p>	<p>Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, who <b>forgives iniquity</b> and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of his possession? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in <b>covenant love</b>.</p>

With which <i>the sunrise</i> from on high will visit us.	Malachi 4:2 But for you who fear my name, <i>the sun of righteousness</i> will rise with healing in its wings ...
To <i>shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,</i> to guide our feet into the way of peace.	Isaiah 9:2 The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; <i>those who live in a dark land,</i> <i>the light will shine</i> on them.

#### 4. The Role of the Spirit in the Events of Jesus’ Life

Luke emphasizes the role of the Spirit in the events leading up to Jesus’ birth and in empowering Jesus himself for his Kingdom mission.

The Spirit is the divine agent in the birth stories of John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1:15, 34, 41, 67, 80; Luke 2:25-27).

Jesus is empowered by the Spirit at his baptism (Luke 3:16, 22), during his temptation in the desert, and at the start of his ministry (Luke 4:1, 14, 18 = Isa. 61:1).

### Part 1: Luke 3:1-9:50

Jesus’ mission in Galilee is to announce the Kingdom of God and bring it to the poor, hurting, and outcast.

#### Luke 3:23-38: Luke’s Genealogy

Luke’s genealogy is different from Matthew’s genealogy as it embodies a different set of theological claims about Jesus’ identity.

#### The Enoch Dimension and the Number Seven

The number seven was an important factor in the design of Luke’s genealogy. There are 77 (7 x 11) generations between Adam and Jesus in Luke 3:23-38, which is a number of ultimate fulfillment. Remember Lamech’s 77 in Genesis 4:24 and Jesus’ ironic allusion to it in Matthew 18:22.

Enoch is in the seventh position (as he is in Gen. 5:21), the only ancestor of Jesus to share his name is in the 49th position, and Jesus himself is in the 77th position.

There are 49 (= 7 x 7) generations between Adam and “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς, Luke 3:29), the only ancestor to share Jesus of Nazareth’s name. The number 49 echoes the ten Jubilee cycles from Daniel 9 (7 x 70).

Luke has designed the genealogy so that multiple sevens conclude with a key patriarch.

1st seven: Enoch	6th seven: Joseph
2nd seven: Shelah	7th seven: Jesus
3rd seven: Abraham	8th seven: Shealtiel
4th seven: Admin	9th seven: Mattathias
5th seven: David	10th seven: Joseph
11th seven = 77th generation = Jesus of Nazareth	

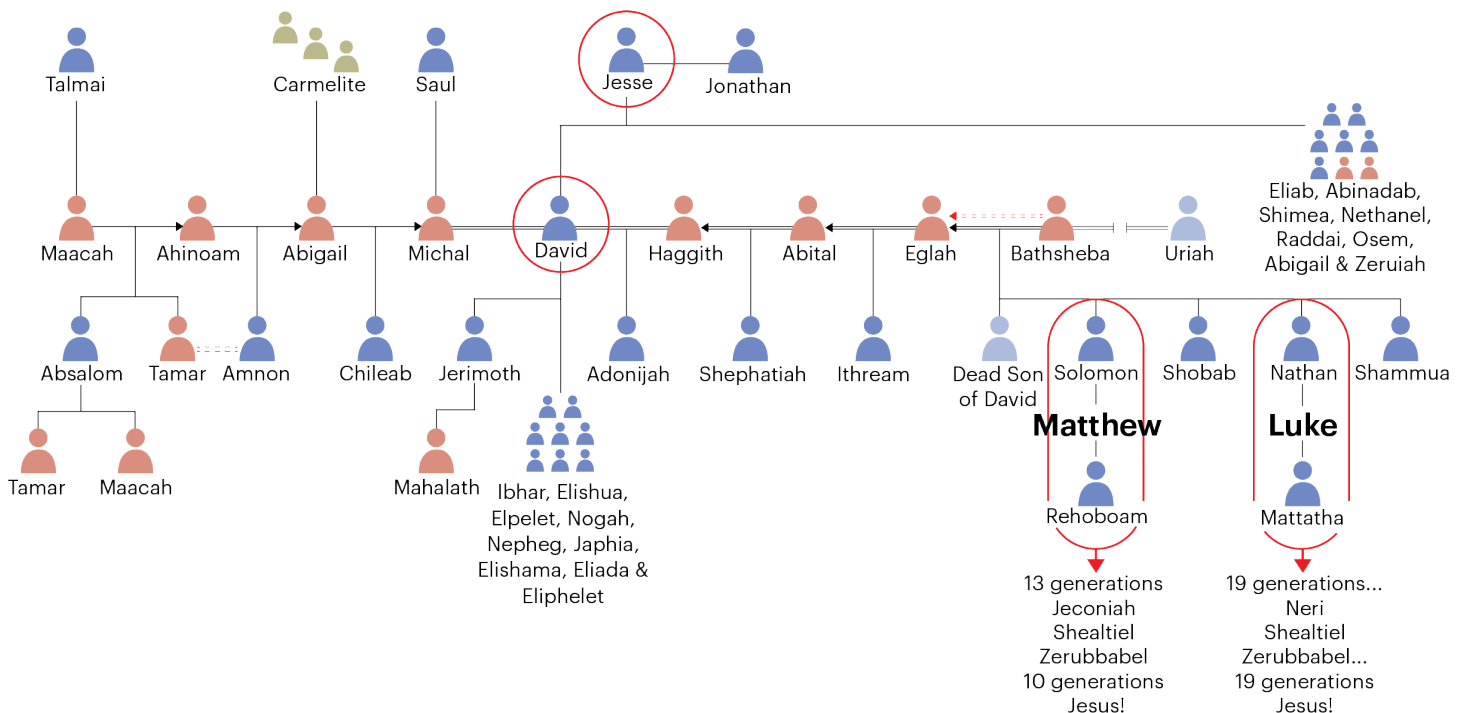
Luke's genealogy embodies a claim about Jesus' identity. It gives Jesus the place of ultimate significance in world history. It includes and highlights his descent from David by the non-royal line as the prophesied messianic son. However, he is more than just a new David. David has his own special place as the fifth "seventh," as does Abraham as the third seventh, but Jesus' position at the end of the eleventh seven, in the seventy-seventh generation surpasses that of every predecessor from Adam onwards. He is greater than Enoch and greater than Abraham and David. He is the consummation of human history.

Richard Bauckham, "The Lukan Genealogy of Jesus" in *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 365

## The David Dimension

Luke's genealogy is the same as Matthew's genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17) between Abraham up to David, but they part ways after David. Matthew follows the royal family in Jerusalem that came from Solomon, but Luke instead follows the lesser known Nathan, the ninth son of David.

The family line joins back up to Matthew in the person of Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:13 // Luke 1:27), but it separates again until Jesus' adoptive father Joseph.



It seems that Luke wants the descent from David to evoke not the high status of royal descent, but the low status of David's humble origins. This is confirmed by the genealogy Luke gives to Jesus, which traces Jesus' descent through Joseph from David and back to Adam. This is a sophisticated theological text, embodying, as biblical genealogies do, much more than just biological information. According to this genealogy, Jesus was descended from David not through Solomon and the kings of Judah as in Matthew's genealogy, but through David's little-known ninth son Nathan. While making contact with the official line of heirs to the Davidic throne in Zerubbabel and his father Shealtiel, the genealogy otherwise consists of entirely unknown names between Nathan and Joseph. This embodies an interpretation of the prophecies of the Davidic messiah, according to which the Messiah is to come not from the line of David's royal successors but from David's own family origins in Bethlehem (see Isaiah 11:1-5 and Micah 5:1-2). ... The new king is not to be born in the royal palace in Jerusalem, but in insignificant Bethlehem, where David's own story began ... among the ordinary people. Bethlehem is the city of David, but not of any of David's sons through Solomon.

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 73-74

## Luke 4:14-21: Jesus' Speech at Nazareth

Jesus' inaugural speech at Nazareth in Luke 4:14-21 is based on Isaiah 61 (and Isa. 58:6). The main theme of his speech is good news of freedom for the poor and oppressed.

*The Spirit of the LORD is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim  
liberty to captives  
and recovery of sight for the blind;  
to proclaim the year of favor for Yahweh,  
and the day of vengeance of our God.*

Isaiah 61:1-2

*The Spirit of the LORD is on me, because he has  
anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He  
has sent me to proclaim release for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the  
oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

Luke 4:18-19

*Will you call this a fast,  
even a day of favor for Yahweh?  
Is this not the fast which I choose,  
to loosen the bonds of wickedness,  
to undo the bands of the yoke,  
and to let the oppressed go free  
and break every yoke?*

Isaiah 58:5b-6

The word "freedom" comes from the Greek *aphesis*, meaning "release," and the Hebrew *deror*, meaning "jubilee liberation" (see Isa. 61:1 and Lev. 25:10).

This is the common word for "forgiveness" in Luke (1:77 or 3:3), but the word's meaning is broader and more accurately means release from burden or bondage. The word in Isaiah 61 is rooted in the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25) and is about release from the social consequences of a society's collective sin: freedom from debt, slavery, poverty, and oppression.

The phrase "the poor" comes from the Greek word "*ptokhos*" and Hebrew word "*aniy*." These words refer to more than economic status. It refers to a person's wider social location in terms of family heritage, land ownership, vocation, gender, ethnicity, education, and religious purity. In Jewish literature, it refers to anyone of low status or anyone who lives outside the socially accepted boundary lines.



Jesus' mission is directed to the poor ... in the holistic sense of those who are for any number of reasons relegated to positions outside the boundaries of God's people. Jesus refuses to recognize those socially determined boundaries, asserting instead that these "outsiders" now can belong to God's family.

Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 211

## Luke 5-9: Jesus' Ministry

The Nazareth announcement sets the agenda for Jesus' healing and teaching ministry in Luke 5-9 where he reaches out to:

- Working-class fishermen (5:1-11)
- A leper (5:12-16)
- A paralyzed man (5:17-27, note the use of *aphesis* with multiple nuances in this story)
- A tax collector (5:27-39, note that while Levi is not economically poor, he is still an outsider)
- A man with a deformed hand (6:6-11)
- Crowds of people in his "Sermon on the Plain" (6:17-49, see discussion below)
- The Roman centurion's servant (7:1-10)
- The grieving widow and mother in Nain (7:11-16)
- The blind, leprous, lame, deaf, and poor who are healed by him (7:22)
- A repentant prostitute (7:36-49, note the repetition of *aphesis* at the conclusion)
- People tormented by demons (11:14-23)
- The hunchbacked woman (13:10-17, note the explicit use of slavery/freedom vocabulary in Jesus' view of her illness)

### The Sermon on the Plain

Jesus' sermon on the plain in Luke 6:17-49 focuses entirely on reversing traditional human economic and value systems (Luke 6:20-26). Jesus' Kingdom rejects violence (Luke 6:27-30) and social hierarchies that promote homogeneity and closed status circles (Luke 6:31-35).

The Kingdom should transform how Jesus' followers relate to wealth. Luke contains more of Jesus' teachings on money than any of the other Gospels, and he focuses on how our relationship to our resources is the most reliable indicator of our true allegiance and devotion (Luke 12:13-31, Luke 16:1-10, Luke 16:19-31, Luke 18:18-30, Luke 19:1-10, Luke 19:11-27).

Status in the Kingdom requires humility and repentance (Luke 6:36-42, see also Luke 9:46-48, Luke 14:7-11, Luke 18:9-14). Following Jesus is useless if we treat it like a mental exercise. Instead, following Jesus must result in a total life transformation (Luke 6:43-49).

Chapter 7 contains three stories about Jesus including three outsiders in the healing power of the Kingdom: the centurion, a grieving widow, and a prostitute. His choices raise suspicion (John the Baptist in Luke 7:18-23) and controversy (the Pharisees in Luke 7:39).

### Reasons for the Israelite Leaders' Opposition to Jesus

Luke writes that the leaders of Israel oppose Jesus because he is radically overturning all their social and religious views. His radical actions include blaspheming against the one God of Israel (5:21-22), eating with tax collectors and sinners (5:30-35), violating Sabbath traditions to heal the poor (6:1-5 and 6:6-11), and welcoming prostitutes into his social circle (7:39).

## Part 2: Luke 9:51-19:28: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Luke places the crucial transition story between Jesus and his disciples—the transfiguration—at an early point in the story (Luke 9:18-50) to set up Luke 9:51 when Jesus “sets his face to go to Jerusalem” to die. This moment in Luke 9:51 echoes Isaiah 50:7.

Luke continually frames the narratives in chapters 9-19 with notes about the journey to Jerusalem and its progress (Luke 9:57; 10:1, 38; 11:53; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1, 11, 28).

Part 2 consists mostly of Jesus' teaching and parables, but it is also a travel narrative. It is broken into three subsections marked by Luke 9:51, Luke 13:22, and Luke 17:11, which use similar vocabulary to show the stages of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.

### Themes in the Journey Narrative

#### 1. Learning on the Go With Jesus

The travel section consists mostly of Jesus' teaching and parables, so Luke portrays discipleship to Jesus as learning on the go.

Jesus teaches the disciples about:

- Prayer (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8).
- Upside-down Kingdom values such as loving your neighbor and your enemy using the parable of the good Samaritan, and humility before God using the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)
- Wealth and possessions in Luke 12:13-21 (a person's life isn't their stuff), Luke 16:1-15 (parable of the shrewd manager), Luke 16:19-31 (parable of the rich man and Lazarus), and Luke 18:18-30 (rich young ruler)
- Trusting in God's care despite persecution (Luke 12:1-11)

#### 2. Jesus Continues His Mission to the Poor

Jesus demonstrates his love and commitment to the poor and outsiders through the following:

- His teachings about seeking to save the lost in Luke 19:10, and in the lost and found parables in chapter 15
- His relationship with tax collectors like Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10
- Healing the blind in Luke 18:35-43
- Healing the sick in Luke 13:10-17
- His relationships with Samaritans in Luke 17:11-19
- His treatment of children in Luke 18:15-17

#### 3. Jesus' Dinner Parties

Beginning in Luke 6:27-29, Jesus continues to have meals with sinners on the road, like with Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. He also keeps telling parables set at dinner banquets (Luke 14:1-24 contains two banquet parables) or that culminate in banquets (three times in Luke 15). It's all a celebration of God's Kingdom and new people.

In contrast, Jesus has multiple meals with Israel's leaders that become the place where the two kingdoms clash in Luke 7:36-50, Luke 11:37-54, and Luke 14:1-24.

## Part 3: Luke 19:28-24:49: Jesus's Final Week in Jerusalem

### A Clash of Two Kingdoms

Jesus adopts Moses and Jeremiah's accusations of covenant rebellion and ignorance of Yahweh's purposes, and it grieves him.

Luke 19:41-44: Jesus Approaches Jerusalem	Prophetic Echo Chamber
<p>Luke 19:41 When he approached Jerusalem, <b>he saw the city and wept over it.</b></p>	<p>Jeremiah 9:1 <i>Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!</i></p> <p>Jeremiah 13:16b-17 <i>You hope for light, but he will turn it to utter darkness and change it to deep gloom. If you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord's flock will be taken captive.</i></p>
<p>Luke 19:42 <i>If only you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.</i></p>	<p>Deuteronomy 32:28-29 <i>For they are a nation lacking in counsel, and there is no understanding in them. Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would know their future!</i></p>
<p>Luke 19:43-44a <i>For the days will come upon you when <b>your enemies</b> will throw up siegeworks against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will dash you to the ground and your children within you.</i></p>	<p>Isaiah 29:3-4a <i>I will camp against you encircling you, and I will set siegeworks against you, and I will raise up battle towers against you. Then you will be brought low ...</i></p>
<p>Luke 19:44b <i>And they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because <b>you did not know the time of your visitation.</b></i></p>	<p>Jeremiah 6:15 <i>Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; they did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I visit them.</i></p>

Jesus announces the destruction of Jerusalem.

<p>Mark 13:14-15 <i>But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be</i></p> <p><i>(let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.</i></p> <p><i>The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house.</i></p>	<p>Matthew 24:15-17 <i>Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation <b>which was spoken of</b> <b>through Daniel the prophet,</b> <b>standing in the holy place</b></i></p> <p><i>(let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.</i></p> <p><i>Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.</i></p>	<p>Luke 21:20-21 <i>But when you see <b>Jerusalem</b> <b>surrounded by armies,</b> <b>then recognize that her</b> <b>desolation is near.</b></i></p> <p><i>Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city ...</i></p>
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Jesus portrays his coming death and resurrection as a new Passover/exodus.

<p>Mark 14:22-24</p> <p><i>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying,</i></p> <p><i>“Take it; this is my body.”</i></p> <p><i>Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.</i></p> <p><i>“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.</i></p>	<p>Matthew 26:26-28</p> <p><i>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying,</i></p> <p><i>“Take and eat; this is my body.”</i></p> <p><i>Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying,</i></p> <p><i>“Drink from it, all of you.</i></p> <p><i>This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”</i></p>	<p>Luke 22:16-20</p> <p><i>“For I tell you, that I will surely not eat the Passover until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”</i></p> <p><i>And taking the cup, giving thanks, he said,</i></p> <p><i>“Take this and divide it among yourselves, for I tell you, that I will surely not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.”</i></p> <p><i>And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,</i></p> <p><i>“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”</i></p> <p><i>In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying,</i></p> <p><i>“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.</i></p>	<p>1 Corinthians 11:23-26</p> <p><i>For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,</i></p> <p><i>“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”</i></p> <p><i>In the same way he also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me.”</i></p>
<p><b>“My blood of the covenant”</b></p> <p>Exodus 24:8</p> <p>See the <b>blood of the covenant</b> that Yahweh has made with you according to all these words.</p> <p>Zechariah 9:11</p> <p>As for you, because of <b>the blood of my covenant</b> with you, I will set your prisoners free from the pit which there is no water in it.</p>		<p>“The new covenant ... ” → Jeremiah 31:31 “... in my blood” → Exodus 24:8 + Zechariah 9:11</p> <p>Note how in Luke 22:16-19, there is mention of an additional cup before the bread. This maps onto traditional Passover liturgies, where there are multiple cups of wine that punctuate the meal.</p>	



Luke includes multiple unique elements in the passion narrative that highlight Jesus' innocence before the corrupt judicial systems of Israel and Rome.

Jesus said to the chief priests and soldiers from the temple and the elders who came to him, "Have you come out to me as to a rebel [Grk. *lestes* = revolutionary], with swords and clubs? I've been with you all every day in the temple and you didn't stretch out your hand against me."

Luke 22:52-53

But Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowds, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

Luke 23:4

Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against him. No, nor has Herod, for he sent him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by him. Therefore I will punish him and release him."

Luke 23:13-16

But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!" (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify him!" And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death; therefore I will punish him and release him." But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that he be crucified. And their voices prevailed. And Pilate pronounced the sentence that their demand be granted. And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Luke 23:18-25

One of the criminals who were hanged was hurling abuse at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve. But this one has done nothing wrong!"

Luke 23:39-41

Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, they returned home, beating their breasts.

Luke 23:47-48

Luke has adapted the portrait of Jesus' innocence to mirror David's innocence as he fled from Saul.

Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul, his father and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?"

1 Samuel 19:4-5

Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?"

1 Samuel 20:1

But Jonathan answered Saul, his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"

1 Samuel 20:32

Luke shows how Jesus' death and resurrection are the surprising fulfillment of God's story with Israel and the nations.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus highlight the contrast between their expectations of Jesus' messianic call and Jesus' own vision of his vocation.

1 Maccabees 4 tells the story of Israel's redemption by the hands of the Maccabees at the famous battle of Emmaus. 1 Maccabees, also called the First Book of Maccabees, is a historical text by an anonymous Jewish author after the restoration of an independent Jewish kingdom around the late 2nd century B.C.

*Now [the Syrian general] Gorgias took five thousand infantry and one thousand cavalry ... to attack the camp of the Jewish people, and strike them suddenly. But Judas heard of it, and he and his warriors moved out to attack the forces in Emmaus. At daybreak Judas appeared in the plain with three thousand men ... As they saw the camp of the Gentiles, strong and fortified, with cavalry all around it, Judas said to those who were with him, "Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge. Remember how our ancestors were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them. So now, let us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will favor us and remember his covenant with our ancestors and crush this heathen army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel."*

*When the Syrians looked up and saw them coming against them, they went out from their camp to battle. Then the men with Judas blew their trumpets and engaged in battle. The Gentiles were crushed, and fled into the plain.*

1 Maccabees 4

The disciples' journey to recognize Jesus as the crucified Messiah is portrayed as an ironic reversal of the human redefinition of good and evil in Genesis 2-3.

*But their eyes were prevented from being able to see him.*

Luke 24:16

*And the woman saw that the tree was good for eating, and that it was delightful for the eyes to see and attractive to stare at ...*

Genesis 3:6

*Then their eyes were opened up, and they recognized him, and he became invisible from them.*

Luke 24:31

*And the eyes of the two of them were opened up, and they recognized that they were naked.*

Genesis 3:7a

*And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us, as he spoke to us on the road, and as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"*

Luke 24:32

*Jesus said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that it was necessary for everything written in the Torah of Moses and in the Prophets and Psalms about me to be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures ... that the Messiah would suffer and be raised from the dead on the third day ...*

Luke 24:44-46

The brilliant dramatic irony of Luke's Emmaus road story nudges the reader inexorably toward a subtle but overwhelming conclusion: the two disciples are wrong to have been discouraged, but right to have hoped for Jesus to be the one who would redeem Israel. In their puzzled disappointment, they truly name Jesus' identity without realizing what they are saying, for the Redeemer of Israel is none other than Israel's God. And Jesus, in truth, is the embodied, unrecognized, but scripturally attested presence of the One for whom they unwittingly hoped.

Richard Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*, 74

# MATTHEW'S BIRTH NARRATIVE

- Matthew highlights Joseph's righteousness, establishing an important pattern of characters who answer the call to do right by God.
- The Spirit miraculously brings about Jesus' conception within Mary's womb, echoing the biblical pattern of the Spirit of God bringing new life in unexpected places.
- Jesus' name means "Yahweh will rescue," and his name connects to the hoped-for messiah who will restore Israel's kingdom and to Greek and Roman ideas about the good news of a king who is savior of the world.

## Joseph in Matthew

- **Explicit characterization of Joseph**

- "Joseph was a righteous one" = He was Torah-observant, doing right by God and neighbor in all his ways.

- **Implicit characterization of Joseph**

- "He didn't want to make a public spectacle" of Mary = Joseph knew the social consequences for Mary if he were to make public the news of her teenage pregnancy.
- "He had planned to divorce her quietly" = In 1st century Jewish culture, most marriages were arranged by the parents, and engagements were legally binding. They were viewed with the utmost seriousness and were virtually equivalent to being married.

# Joseph in Matthew

- **Links to Genesis**

- Joseph is given direction about marrying Mary while he is sleeping. // God provides a wife for Adam while he is sleeping ( Gen. 2:18-25 ).
- Mary is pregnant by the power of God's Spirit, a miraculous pregnancy. // God enabled the miraculous pregnancies of Sarah/ Isaac, Rachel/Joseph ( Gen. 21 , 30 ).
- When Joseph finds out Mary is pregnant, he suspects sexual promiscuity, though he wants to compassionately end the engagement. // Judah finds out that Tamar is pregnant and suspects sexual promiscuity, and he wants to mercilessly end her life ( Gen. 38:24-26 ).

# The Holy Spirit in Matthew

- The role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' conception is highlighted two times (Matt. 1:18, 20), and forms an important inclusio frame around all of Matthew chapters 1–4, where the Spirit again plays a key role in the story of Jesus' baptism by John (3:11, 16; 4:1). In the Hebrew Bible, the Spirit is associated with the creation of life.
- **Genesis 1:2** "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters."
- **Genesis 2:4b-7:** "At the time that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground. Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being."



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How does Mary becoming pregnant by the power of the Spirit connect to creation in Genesis 1 and 2 or to the birth of Isaac?

How does the Spirit's role in Genesis 1 shape our understanding of what God is doing in Jesus?

How does the Spirit's work in Mary challenge common expectations of how God acts in the world?