

Life of Christ Part 1 Lesson 3

Lesson 3

Chronology of the Life of Christ

The Birth of John the Baptist

The Song of Mary

The Birth of Christ

Contents of Lesson 3

Chronology of the Life of Christ.....	1
The Birth of John the Baptist.....	1
The Song of Mary.....	6
The Birth of Christ	9

Chronology of the Life of Christ

6 B.C. The Magi from the East see the star and begin their journey to Jerusalem.

Autumn, 6 B.C. Zacharias and Elizabeth conceive John the Baptist.

Spring, 5 B.C. Mary conceives by the Holy Spirit, and visits Elizabeth.

Summer, 5 B.C. Mary leaves Elizabeth; Joseph has a dream.

Late Summer, 5 B.C. Elizabeth gives birth to John the Baptist.

Late Autumn, 5 B.C. Mary is near term; she and Joseph are uprooted by the census and must travel the 70+ miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

December, 5 B.C. Mary gives birth to Christ; the Magi arrive in Jerusalem.

Late January Early February, 4 B.C. The presentation of Christ in the temple.

February, 4 B.C. The Magi visit the Christ child in Bethlehem; Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt after the warning in the dream. It is about a three week journey 200 miles or so.

February, 4 B.C. The children of Bethlehem are killed, calculating from the time the Magi saw the star and began their journey.

March 14, 4 B.C. Herod dies the sin unto death.

Late March, 4 B.C. Jesus, Joseph, and Mary make the trip back to Nazareth, probably arriving in late April or early March.

April, 4 B.C. Joseph and Mary and Jesus return to Israel, settling in Nazareth.

***Note: the year zero does not exist!

Spring, 9 A.D. Christ's first Passover in Jerusalem.

Spring, 26 A.D. John begins his ministry of baptism and repentance.

Autumn, 26 A.D. Christ is baptized by John, and begins His ministry.

Late Autumn Early Winter, 2627 A.D. Christ's wilderness temptation.

December, 26 A.D. Christ's 30th birthday.

Late Winter Early Spring, 27 A.D. Christ's early Galilean ministry: Cana and Capernaum.

Spring, 27 A.D. Christ's first Passover during His ministry; first cleansing of the temple, Nicodemus.

Mid 27 A.D. to early 28 A.D. John's accession, Christ's training of the disciples, return to Galilee through Samaria, the Samaritan woman, the continuation of the Galilean ministry.

Galilean ministry:

Child at Capernaum healed, John 4:4654.

Rejection at Nazareth, Luke 4:1631.

Recall of the four disciples, Matt 4:1822; Mark 1:1620.

The demoniac healed at the Capernaum synagogue, Mark 1:2128; Luke 4:3137.

Peter's mother in law and others healed, Matt 8:1417; Mark 1:2934; Luke 4:3841.

Tour of Galilee with Simon and others, Matt 4:2324; Mark 1:3539; Luke 4:4244.

Final recall of the four disciples, Luke 5:111.

Cleansing of a leper and resultant publicity, Matt 8:24; Mark 1:4045; Luke 5:1216.

Paralytic healed and forgiven, Mat 9:18; Mark 2:112; Luke 5:1726.

Matthew's calling and banquet at his home, Matt 9:913; Mark 2:1317; Luke 5:2732.

Dispensational teaching, Mat 9:1417; Mark 2:1822; Luke 5:3339.

Spring, 28 A.D. Second Passover of Christ's ministry.

Spring, 29 A.D. Third Passover of Christ's ministry.

Spring, 30 A.D. Crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

Summer, 30 A.D. Ascension and Session of Christ.

The Birth of John the Baptist

This begins our study on the people who waited in the right way for their Messiah.

We know the situation in Israel at this time; we know the history; and we know that the Messiah is

going to come. It is a great thing to look at the lives of those who waited. In a sense we all wait for the coming of the Lord for the Lord's righteous activities in our own lives. It is a fine thing to look at those who waited in the right way, and to find out how we might wait.

Read Luke Chapter 1

There is a stylistic change in the Greek of this passage and the one which follows. Luke changes from the strongly idiomatic classical Greek to one that is quite Hebraistic. Since Luke was a Greek by birth, and his language is very Greek, the speculation is this: that Luke records here the memories of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Introduction

Luke 1:5-7, "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, living without blame in all the commandments and righteous requirements of the Lord. And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in their days."

Luke goes out of his way in his usual way to put forth the background of these two people; their general lineage, and of more importance their spiritual status.

They were both of the priestly tribe of Levi. This was a tribe of prestige and prosperity and also the tribe of the Sadducees. This religious group came into being about 300 years before Christ. They are characterized by their aristocracy, their cultural surrender to the Greeks and others, and their opposition to everything Pharaonic.

The name "sadducee" comes from the Aramaic *Sadduqim*, which meant 'righteousness'. However, those who were in opposition to them called them *saddiqim*, which meant 'destruction'.

They came from the ranks of the priests and high priests of Israel, during the time of the Greek occupation. Their desire was to give in to the Hellenizing influences of the Greeks, and thus retain their favor.

The Sadducees had a lot to lose to the occupation forces of the Greeks, because they were mostly prosperous, aristocratic people. In order to maintain their lifestyles and possessions, they placated the Greeks, giving in to their cultural and even religious influences.

Due to the double tyranny of the Pharisees and king Herod, the Sadducees had made a great comeback not long before the birth of Christ. Let's face it: the Pharisees were no fun at all.

Zacharias and Elizabeth had resisted the temptation to become Sadducees, and neither did they become Pharisees by reaction. They found a true relationship with God through the ritual system.

They lived in all the righteous requirements and commandments of God. The commandments included much more than the ten commandments. The commandments definitely included the greatest commandment to love the Lord with all their heart and soul and might.

They did so without blame. Without blame does not mean that they were perfect. It does mean that when they sinned they took care of it with the proper sacrifice and the mental attitude that went along with it. Without blame does not mean that their execution of the ritual plan was perfect they were after all human. They did their best and maintained a good relationship with God.

Elizabeth was barren. Whenever a woman of God is barren it means that God has something special in mind for her. The Greek word for "barren" is *STEIRA*, and it definitely indicates that she was physically incapable of bearing children.

In Elizabeth's case, this condition was in addition to her being past menopause. She was quite old, but this was not the reason for her barren condition. The two are separate in the original language.

Complicating the situation was Zacharias' advanced age. He could not have gotten Elizabeth pregnant even if she were able.

This situation was identical to that of Abraham and Sarah, some two thousand years before. It is worthwhile to note! The covenants to Adam, Abraham, and David are about to be fulfilled, and

this birth will bring the messenger to prepare the way.

Luke 1:8-10, "Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering."

There was a great number of priests. Because of this, it is likely that each priest would get to render his service once in a lifetime. The priests were chosen by lot to do so, and with God there are no accidents.

As a righteous man, no doubt Zacharias had big expectations for this day, and in some ways he may have looked at the event as the culmination of a good life. It was Zacharias' turn to burn incense at the incense altar in the Holy Place.

The incense altar represented the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the righteousness produced by His perfect life.

The incense burned twenty four hours a day a tribute to the uninterrupted righteousness of Christ's life. Zacharias merely went in to put on new incense, so that the burning might be perpetuated.

The aroma that the incense gave off was designed to be a pleasing one representative of the pleasure that Christ would give to God.

The position of the altar in that holy place showed the source of that righteousness the Spirit and the Word. The golden lamp stand was a symbol of the ministry of the Spirit it illuminated the table of showbread. The table of showbread represented the Word of God. When illuminated by the Spirit it produces righteousness.

Thus the Holy place taught even the doctrine of kenosis.

The great multitude of people may indicate that there was a feast or that this was a holy day but we can only guess at that.

Zacharias encounters a surprise...

Luke 1:11,12 "And an angel of the Lord was seen by him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. And when he saw this, Zacharias was troubled and fear fell upon him."

There is little doubt left in Zacharias' mind that this is an angel of the Lord. He did not think it was a practical joke; he did not wonder if this happened to all the priests. He had an immediate reaction.

Zacharias knew that this did not happen every day. Furthermore, this angelic being had an imposing appearance, because fear is a universal reaction to the visible manifestation of angels. They are awesome indeed!

The angel stood at the right hand of the altar. This is the place reserved for Jesus Christ Luke records it because it is significant this angel stood as a direct representative of Christ Himself.

Zacharias knows that this is a grave moment something great, and perhaps terrible is about to happen. But he does not suspect in the least what it is all about.

The angel speaks ...

Luke 1:13-17, "But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you son, and you will give him the name John. And he will be joy and gladness to you, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great before the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb (birth). And he will turn around many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And he himself will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to prepare a people who have been built for the Lord."

The angel has good news for Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth they are going to have a son. The story also reveals that Zacharias had been praying for a son he had petitioned God. Not only will they have a child, but that child will also be joy

and gladness to them. Such is not always the case, so this must have been welcome news.

Even greater news is that even at his birth many will rejoice, and that he will be great before the Lord. He will be different in that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

The first part of the verse makes it clear that he will be great in his relationship with the Lord. **ENO.PION** is a preposition which denotes face to face relationship. John will have that kind of relationship.

Second, there is the matter of John's abstinence from alcoholic beverages. This also probably indicated that he would refrain from social life.

Finally, John is filled with the Spirit from birth. The preposition **EK** indicates separation, and in this case, separation from the womb. This preposition may indicate source the origin of something from someplace, but even so, the separation is now effective. It is no longer there at the place of its origin. **EK** does not indicate the existence of one thing inside another.

There is no precedence for interpreting this preposition to mean 'from inside', as is often done.

The adverb **ETI** is the key here. This together with **EK** translates "ever since." The Liddell-Scott lexicon makes this very clear on p.703. **ETI** does have some flexibility it can be taken in the ascensive meaning, which shows surprise on the part of the writer. It strengthens the phrase in which it takes part.

It was surprising that an infant would be filled with the Spirit from birth. Often this is interpreted as being in the womb because of verse 41 in this same chapter. Verse 41 in no way indicates that the fetus was filled with the Spirit in the womb. In fact, it is quite clear that it is Elizabeth who is filled, as we shall see.

With the ministry of the Spirit upon him, John will turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to prepare a people built for the Lord.

It had been quite some time since a prophet had ministered in the nation of Israel. There had been many false prophets, but not a single true one. The gift had gone out from the people. Now the fullness of time had come, and with it a prophet to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. The people must be humble; they must be obedient; they must be built inside their own souls.

Humility precedes obedience.

Knowledge precedes obedience.

Zacharias' failure and his discipline

Luke 1:18-23, "And Zacharias said to the angel, 'How shall I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.' And the angel answered and said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time.' And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. And it came about, when the days of his priestly service were ended, that he went back home."

Zacharias in the Holy Place in front of the archangel Gabriel, the very messenger of God wants proof!

All this time he has prayed for an heir. All this time he has done the right thing. But when push comes to shove, Zacharias fails to believe. He and his wife are too old, he thinks, for God to work a miracle.

The angel Gabriel is mentioned in three other passages in the Bible.

When he appears to Mary, to announce her role in the Messiah's birth.

And twice in Daniel, 8:16 and 9:21, to interpret the Word of God.

Not only does this angelic being have an awesome presence, but he is also one of the highest ranking of all angels, if not the highest.

The angel refers to his duty, his rank, and his mission. His regular duty station is in the presence of God. He is an angelic attendant in God's throne room, and he is often sent as God's personal messenger.

Now, all elect angels were and are trustworthy, but Gabriel is likely the most trusted of all. The wise king always uses his best men as his messengers; the wise general his best as couriers. So it is with Gabriel. His mission was as a messenger, sent personally by God to communicate the good news of the birth of the one who would follow.

Because of Zacharias' unbelief, he is disciplined to be silent. As Gabriel was a messenger to him, so also he could have been a messenger to the great crowd of people who were outside. He could have had the honor of the first announcement of the coming Messiah. Instead, he is silenced. Silenced until the day of the birth of his son. We will contrast this with the response of Mary.

Zacharias comes out of the Holy Place; and there arrayed before him is a great crowd, all of whom were wondering why it took so long for him to do his duties.

Now comes the charades routine. Zacharias makes signs he tries to make them understand the message, but they just cannot understand him. They come to the conclusion that he has seen some kind of vision and they most likely wrote it off as another kook.

Zacharias goes home when his duties are over. We know from a later passage that he uses the time to become childlike in his humility, and to turn his heart to a righteous attitude. He builds himself up in the Lord, until he develops a proper response. When he finally opens his mouth good things come forth.

Elizabeth conceives

Luke 1:24,25, "And after these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant; and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, 'So this is what the Lord has done to me in the

days when he looked to remove my disgrace among men.'"

Elizabeth makes an expression of disgust here not of praise. She is living in seclusion, not excited to be a part of God's plan for the Messiah, but ashamed to even go out. It is going to take a visit from Mary to get her out of her funk.

Elizabeth Gives Birth to the Forerunner

Luke 1:57-66

Remember, Mary had gone back home, leaving Elizabeth to fend for herself. Elizabeth had fully recovered from her funk over conceiving at such an advanced age. She gave birth to a son, and many of her neighbors and relatives heard about it, and so they rejoiced over the birth of this child, fulfilling the prophecy of Gabriel.

It is funny to note that people make signs to him when he is not deaf, only unable to talk. Zacharias names the boy John, and immediately his tongue is freed, and immediately he speaks praise to God. He had had nine months in which to contemplate his earlier failure. He recovered and now says the most wonderful things. The local population is astonished at these events, and they wonder what the child will grow up to be. A prophet? The Messiah himself? There was a lot of serious thinking going on the subject.

Zacharias' Prophecy

Luke 1:67-69. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on

before the Lord to prepare His way; to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.;"

Zacharias concentrates on the cross first.

Zacharias realized the need for salvation, and that it had to come before any national independence or prosperity.

Then he talks of national freedom from oppression. He calls to mind the covenant of God, the Abrahamic covenant. He brings up the fact that peace gives one the opportunity to concentrate on God all the more.

John is the one who will prepare the way for the savior, to make smooth the path for him. He is to get people to the point where they can handle the ministry of our Lord.

Christ's ministry will be hard to swallow, because it is about a personal redemption that requires humility. The people of Israel wanted national redemption without the sacrifice of individual pride. John will preach the message of salvation and forgiveness of sins.

Zacharias concentrates on the mercy of God, because Christ is the visible manifestation of mercy to all mankind. The Sunrise from on high is a term that is used to denote the resurrected status of Jesus Christ.

anatole means sunrise in the sense of the rising again of the sun in the east. ana is a preposition which means both up and again.

When you add the term from on high, it is obvious that this is God.

So, Zacharias looks forward to the manifest mercy of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, especially concentrating on the resurrection.

The sunrise shines upon those who are in darkness and the shadow of death.

Darkness refers to the cosmic system of Satan his design to prevent us from believing in Christ, and to destroy our relationship with God.

The shadow of death refers to physical death.

The light guides us into the way of peace (prosperity).

John the Baptist's Childhood

Luke 1:80, "And the child continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel."

The Song of Mary

Introduction

Luke's narrative now turns to the story of Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Mary is clearly portrayed as the biological mother of Jesus Christ. There was nothing special about her makeup that she was the mother of our Lord nothing that made her unique from all other women. She was a woman who loved God, and she too waited for the Messiah. In fact she waited faithfully, unlike so many of her contemporaries, both women and men.

Mary was born into sin, like every other female child before and after her. She does not have special access to God just because she conceived and gave birth to Christ. She is no different as far as we are concerned than any other mature believer.

The Arrival of an Angel.

Luke 1:26-28, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, 'Hail, woman who has been graced out. The Lord is with you.'"

Again, here is the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God, one of the highest ranking of all the angels. He is sent to announce to Mary the imminent arrival of the Messiah. Of the genealogies of these two, we already know much. Repetition is not necessary.

As the angel "beams in", he issues a greeting to her. The greeting means literally, "woman who

has been graced out". God is the only subject ever used by **CHARITOO**.

A Conversation with an Angel, Luke 1:29-38

Notice that Mary is not fazed at all by Gabriel's angelic appearance. She is unique in this regard. Daniel trembles, Zacharias fears, the shepherds are terribly frightened, and Mary is troubled by the greeting of this angel! She begins to DIALOGUE in her own mind. She is thinking it through, having a dialogue with herself "What did this angel mean by his greeting?" She was troubled by it.

The angel alleviates her troubled mind and tells her the exact meaning of the greeting.

"You have found grace from the side of God." Let me quote from Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich:

"...denotes a person, and indicates that something proceeds from this person." Mary has found it because she looked for it. She is a wonderful believer from the age of Israel. In her great humility she cannot think that she has found grace, for she has already prospered in knowing God.

"You will conceive in your womb and bear a child."

This certainly would have come as a surprise, since Mary was a virgin. She certainly understood the consequences of what the angel was saying. She would be subject to disgrace, and maybe the risk of capital punishment. There are great and terrible implications to this.

"And you will name Him Jesus." His name means salvation.

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and kingdom will have no end."

There could be no mistaking it now. She was to be the mother of the Messiah. He is the Son of God he will sit on David's throne his kingdom will last forever his kingdom will know no boundaries. These are all very clear. She is to bear the Messiah.

Mary's response is simple "How will this come about, since I am a virgin?" Mary's response is not

arrogant, unlike that of Zacharias. She is just curious. She did know the basics of reproduction. In fact, it is my impression that the Hebrew society was much more open about such things than our own. She was more than willing to believe.

Gabriel tells her as best he can the specifics on how she will conceive. "The Holy Spirit will appear over you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you; and therefore the holy one who is born will be called the Son of God."

This is the essence of the virgin birth. It is really quite clinical in nature. God the Holy Spirit performs the operation by his omnipotence, and adds the unpolluted chromosomes to Mary's ovum.

The Two Mothers are United

Luke 1:39-45, "Now at this time Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the fetus leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, 'Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the fetus leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.'"

We are not sure why Mary got up and went 'with haste' to visit Elizabeth at least the text does not come right out and tell us. However, we do know that Elizabeth is in a funk over the timing of her pregnancy. She does not want to be a circus sideshow act she wanted children while she was still young.

We also know that Mary and Elizabeth were cousins, so it was likely that Mary knew both of Elizabeth's pregnancy and her mental state. Finally, we know that as soon as she know about

her own immaculate conception, she left to be with Elizabeth.

Therefore, it is likely that the combination of the above conditions led Mary to visit Elizabeth. Just as soon as Mary enters the house and speaks her greeting, just as soon as that greeting enters the ears of Elizabeth, the fetus leaps in her womb. This leaping was reflex motility in response to the excitement of Elizabeth on hearing the voice of her cousin.

Immediately Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. This is for the purpose of prophecy what she says next is inspired by God the Holy Spirit. Luke always does us the courtesy of telling us when one is under the filling of the Spirit. Elizabeth literally "sounds off with a great cry". and she says, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

This first part of what she says confirms that when she wants to talk about a human being she uses one expression. Mary is blessed because she is chosen to bear and nourish and raise the Son of God. The fruit of her womb (not yet ripe nor picked) will also be blessed, because of His life and death.

The word for blessing here is EULOGEO, which means to speak well of someone. EULOGEO is blessing with reference to reputation.

Furthermore, Elizabeth says, "and why does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Elizabeth employs a rhetorical question here. She does not expect an answer she knows it. Elizabeth knows that the child she will bear will prepare the way for Christ. She answers her own question in the next verse.

Elizabeth now gives an explanation of her previous words, "for behold, as the sound of your greeting came into my ears, the fetus in my womb leaped for joy."

Elizabeth explains to Mary her rhetorical question, and her statement about blessing. She is telling Mary that at the moment she heard her greeting (and at the moment she was filled with the Spirit) the child leaped in her womb. It all came together at that moment Elizabeth understood everything

Mary the greeting her own pregnancy God's plan for the ages.

Finally, Elizabeth summarizes the entire experience the lifetime of that moment, "and blessed is she who believed that the things that were spoken will be fulfilled in her by the Lord."

Elizabeth is telling us that she finally understands it all, and she is complementing Mary on her immediate belief in the word of God. The word for blessing here is different from the one above. This is mental attitude contentedness. Elizabeth is saying in a roundabout way that she missed the boat that she did not immediately respond as she should have, and so she missed the blessing.

The important thing is that Elizabeth now understands everything with clarity. This verse also answers the previous question why Mary came to visit Elizabeth. It was so that Elizabeth could recognize her own error, and turn around.

Mary's Song, Luke 1:46-56

This is the great prayer of worship from Mary. It is a prayer that is based on the utter confidence of one who has known and relied on the capabilities of God.

Let's look at what Mary knows about God from learning in the ritual plan of God. She knows the architecture of her own soul that she has emotion, mentality, and a human spirit. She knows that God is the source of her salvation. She calls Him her savior. She understands the omnipresence and omniscience of God when she says that "He considered" her humble state.

EPIBLEPO is the verb here, and it means to look down upon something, and to understand it. God looked down upon Mary and He fully understood her humble state. God also knew exactly what to do about it. That is the expression of his omniscience.

Mary understands the omnipotence of God she calls Him the Mighty One, and she knows exactly what God has accomplished.

She understands the perfection, or holiness of God. When she says, "Holy is His name", she says, perfect is his essence.

She understands the implications of the birth of the Messiah. She praises God for the strategic victory of the angelic conflict, and here is her reasoning. If God can accomplish the virgin conception and birth of the Messiah, He can accomplish anything else. What is the problem to go from one impossibility to the next.

Mary was a patriot, and she understood the implications of the Messiah on her nation. She related the Messiah to the kingdom of God, and indeed she already understood some of the kingdom concepts even before Christ ever explained them.

She understood the difference between being rich and poor. This metaphor has nothing to do with food or hunger in the literal sense. It has everything to do with a desire for a relationship with God. It is all about true humility.

Those who are humble and hungry for a relationship with God will receive the intrinsically good. Those who are rich in their own minds will go away empty handed.

Mary understood the mercy of God, and its implications. She knew the history of her nation and its heroes.

The Birth of Christ

Joseph Has a Dream.

Matt 1:18-25, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before their union, she was found holding in her womb from the Holy Spirit. Now Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to publicly expose her, desired to divorce her in secret. But when he had considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him during a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take along Mary as your wife; for that which was conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you will call His name Jesus, for He Himself will save His people from their sins.' Now this whole thing came about that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Behold, the virgin

will hold in her womb, and will bear a Son, and they will call His name Immanuel', which having been translated is, 'God with us'. And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and he did not know her until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus."

Matthew is a Jew, and he writes his gospel to Jews. He is very careful in how he says things, for he does not want his readers to stumble over his words. His hypersensitive Jewish readership would have stumbled often and missed the message with a Gentile author writing in the style and words of the unclean.

Matthew is the one who emphasizes the kingdom offer more so than the other Gospel writers. He desires for the Jews to know their error in rejecting the Messiah and His kingdom.

I have provided a very literal translation, because it is important to understand the exact words of Matthew, and of the angel.

It was the Jewish custom to become engaged, and then have the marriage and its consummation one year later. It was during this one year period that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. Remember that she had gone away and visited with Elizabeth immediately after the immaculate conception. Since she stayed with Elizabeth for several months, Mary's pregnant state would have been quite obvious when she returned.

The Greek is translated, "she was found holding in her womb from the Holy Spirit".

Joseph either did not know or did not believe the last part that about the Holy Spirit. If Mary did tell him this, it probably seemed too far fetched for him to buy. The literal translation is correct the word for child does not appear in Matthew's text.

He could have used BREPHOS or PAIDEIA or TEKNON, but he did not. Instead he uses a term which is quite clinical. The aorist participle ECHOUSA is quite clear it simply communicates that her state came about previously, and that she was holding something, not a baby, not a child, but something in her womb. ek plus the ablative of source of PNEUMATOS HAGIOU shows very

clearly that although she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit, no sexual relations were involved.

Joseph was a righteous man, and he did not want Mary to suffer public disgrace because of her pregnant state.

The aorist infinitive of DEIGMATIZO paints the picture of one pointing out another. Usually the context is one of disgrace. The public disgrace may have been deadly for Mary, because the Mosaic Law demanded capital punishment for adultery, Deut 22:23-27.

Joseph considered these things and came to a decision. This is all described by the verb ENTHUMEOMAI. ENTHUMEOMAI had the idea of smoldering incense, and it often portrayed the angry thoughts of an individual. Joseph does a slow burn over this, and manages no small amount of self control when he decides to put her away privately.

An angel of the Lord (unidentified) appears to Joseph during a dream. The word for dream here is ONAR. In another time and another place a very similar thing happened, and this becomes a marvelous play on words. ONAR is a very ancient Greek Word, and remained uncorrupted even to Matthew's day.

ONARION, a word with virtually the same spelling is the word for "little donkey". When Balaam went out to betray the nation of Israel, an angel of the Lord stood in his way with a drawn sword. Balaam's donkey, on which he was riding, saw the angel and stopped. Balaam did not see the angel. So the donkey talked to Balaam because of Divine inspiration. Balaam then saw the angel, and his effort to betray the nation was thwarted.

In same way, Joseph is out to betray the nation, and the entire world, when he desires to divorce Mary. His divorce of her would confirm to the world that she did have sexual relations with a man, and conceived from that liaison. So an angel is sent to stop Joseph in a dream.

The angel tells Joseph that he should not be afraid to take Mary along as a wife. The word PARALAMBANO is a terrific picture of

marriage. It means to take someone or something along with you. When the man takes his wife, he takes her along with her on a lifelong journey.

The angel also makes a clear communication on the contents of Mary's womb. The angel uses the neuter singular definite article as a relative pronoun to describe what is in her. It is translated "that which", or "the thing".

In the next sentence the angel says TEXETAI HUION, "she will give birth to a son". Notice that it is at the time of birth that the contents of her womb is identified as a son.

Look at the message of the angel "and you will call his name Jesus (savior), because He Himself will save His people from their sins". The angel did not emphasize the Messiah political savior aspect of Christ's life, but His role as the Savior from sin.

This was a part of Matthew's mission to show that Christ did succeed.

This whole thing took place so that Isaiah 7:14 might be fulfilled. "Behold, a virgin is pregnant, and brings forth a child." The Hebrew does not say that she is 'with child'. It says pregnant, and there is a difference.

They will call His name Emmanuel, which having been translated is 'God is with us.' The Greek preposition for with is META, which means 'with' in the sense of relationship. It denotes a close relationship between two persons. So Joseph rises from his sleep and does as the angel commanded. He took Mary along as his wife.

An important detail is included at the end of this passage. Joseph did not know Mary until after she gave birth. Knowing her is a polite way of saying that he refrained from having sexual relations with her. She was definitely a virgin when she gave birth, and Matthew confirms it.

Footnote: He does "know" her afterwards, and they produced several children together. Mary is not a perpetual virgin.