

LESSON 2

THE PERIOD OF CHRIST'S LIFE PRIOR TO HIS MINISTRY, PART 2

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS (LK. 1:5–38)

The Book of Luke has the fullest account of the events immediately preceding the arrival of the Christ. Luke followed his introduction with two announcements. [See *Life of Christ*, 1, pp. 44–49.]

1. Why did Zacharias find Gabriel's words so hard to believe?
2. Which special group was John probably a member of since Gabriel said he would drink no alcohol?
3. What much-needed lesson did Zacharias learn from this event?
4. How did Mary's reaction compare with that of Zacharias when Gabriel visited her?
5. Why is the doctrine of the virgin birth vital to the Christian faith?
6. Why did God choose Mary to be the mother of His son?

THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO JOSEPH REGARDING THE COMING OF JESUS (MT. 1:18–25)

When Mary walked into Nazareth, returning from her three months with Elizabeth, it must have been obvious to everyone that she was pregnant. Joseph must have been devastated. He struggled with what action he should take. God delivered Joseph from his dilemma by sending an angel. [Commentary, pp. 63–65]

7. How might Joseph have reacted to Mary's pregnancy if the angel had not revealed God's plan to him?

8. What does Mt. 1:24, 25a suggest about Joseph and Mary's relationship after Jesus was born?

THE BIRTH OF JESUS (LK. 2:1–7)

As Mary reached her ninth month, their anticipation must have grown daily. A problem existed, however, that they were apparently unaware of: The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), and they lived in Nazareth. However, everyone in the Roman Empire was required to return to his ancestral city for a census. Joseph, who was a descendant of King David, had to make the trip to the town of David's birth, Bethlehem. [See *Life of Christ*, 1, pp. 65–67.]

9. Whom did God use to ensure the fulfillment of the prophecy that Christ would be born in Bethlehem?
10. In light of the fact that Jesus had such a lowly birth, what made the event so momentous?

THE BIRTH OF JESUS PROCLAIMED TO THE SHEPHERDS (LK. 2:8–20)

God did not let the moment of Christ's birth go by unpublicized. The divine announcement was not made, however, to the town leaders or even to the officials in the synagogue. It was made to a group of shepherds. [See *Life of Christ*, 1, pp. 67–68.]

11. Why are the shepherds sometimes called "the first evangelists"?
12. How did Luke know that Mary "treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19)?

THE CIRCUMCISION AND NAMING OF JESUS; THE TEMPLE SERVICE (LK. 2:21–39)

The Bible teaches that Christ was "born under the Law" (Gal. 4:4). He was a Jewish child born to a Jewish mother and subject to Jewish regulations. [See *Life of Christ*, 1, pp. 69–71.]

13. What did the Law require that Joseph and Mary do, having had a son?
14. What implications did Simeon's prophecies have?

**JESUS VISITED BY EASTERN MAGI
("WISE MEN") (MT. 2:1–12)**

Simeon had indicated that Jesus would not only be the Jews' Messiah, but also the Gentiles'. Proof of this came soon—in the persons of dignitaries from the East. [See *Life of Christ*, 1, pp. 71–73.]

15. What are magi?

16. Politically speaking, why was Herod so threatened by news of a newborn king?

17. What are Frankincense and Myrrh?

**THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT
AND THE SLAUGHTER OF BABY BOYS
IN BETHLEHEM (MT. 2:13–18)**

Herod was furious when the magi did not return to him with the desired information. In an insane effort to eradicate all possible rivals to his throne, he had all baby boys in the area of Bethlehem killed. Anticipating Herod's reaction, the Lord sent an angel to tell Joseph to take his family into Egypt. [See *Life of Christ*, 1, pp. 82–84.]

18. How many babies were likely to have been killed because of Herod's decree in a town of Bethlehem's size?

**JESUS LIVING AT NAZARETH;
A VISIT TO JERUSALEM
WHEN HE WAS TWELVE (LK. 2:40–52)**

At this point in the story of Jesus, it becomes obvious that the purpose of the writers of the Gospel Accounts was not to compose a biography of Christ. Only Luke recorded anything of the next twenty-eight or so years, and he shared only a few notes about Jesus' growth, plus the details of a single incident. [See *Life of Christ*, 1, pp. 84–89.]

19. What do the gospel writers tell us about Jesus' life prior to His ministry?

20. Why did Jesus wait thirty years to begin His ministry?