

The Nativity of Luke

Since many have set their hands to laying out an orderly narrative regarding the events that have been brought to fulfillment among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning, and who became servants of the word, passed it on to us, it seemed a good thing that I also, having exactly traced out everything from the beginning, should write it out in order for you, most exalted Theophilus, so that you might recognize the reliability of the accounts you have been taught.

John the Anointer

THE ANNUNCIATION (1:5-25)

Zachariah and Elizabeth, in the Temple

In the days of Herod, king of Judaea, there was a certain priest, *Zachariah* by name, from the *priestly order of Abijah*, and his wife came from the *daughters of Aaron*, and her name was *Elizabeth*. And both were upright before God, conducting themselves impeccably in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. And they had no child, because Elizabeth was *barren*, and both were well advanced in their days.

Now it happened that, when it was his order's turn in the presence of God, and as he was serving as priest, it fell to him by lot—as was the custom of the priesthood—to enter the *sanctuary of the Lord* and burn incense. And all the main body of the people was outside praying during the hour of the incense.

An angel appears

And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of the incense.

Zachariah is terrified, told “do not be afraid”

And seeing him Zachariah was alarmed, and fear descended upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zachariah, for your supplication has been heard,

Bearing and naming a son

“...and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall declare his name to be *John*; and for you there will be joy and delight, and many will rejoice at his birth.

Jesus the Anointed

THE ANNUNCIATION (1:26-56)

Mary and Joseph, in Nazareth

In the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy], the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee whose name was *Nazareth*, to a *virgin* betrothed to a man whose name was *Joseph*, and the virgin's name was *Mary*.

An angel appears

And going in to her he said, “Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you.”

Mary is distressed, told “do not be afraid”

And she was greatly distressed at his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Bearing and naming a son

“And see: You will conceive in your womb and will bear a son, and you shall declare his name to be *Jesus*.

He will be great, his destiny described

“For he will be great in the Lord’s eyes; and he must not drink wine or fermented drink, and he will be filled with a Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb, and he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God; and he will go forth in his presence, in the spirit and power of *Elijah*, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and to turn the wayward to the wisdom of the upright, *to prepare a people* made ready for the Lord.”

“How can this be? Because...”

And Zachariah said to the angel, “In what way shall I know this? For I am old and my wife is well advanced in her days.”

A sign will be given: silence

And in reply the angel said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stand before the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and announce these good tidings to you; see then: you shall be silent and unable to speak till the day these things take place, because you did not trust my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.”

Now the people were waiting for Zachariah, and they were amazed that he was taking so much time in the sanctuary. And when he came out he was unable to speak to them and they knew he had seen a vision in the sanctuary; and he was gesturing to them, and remained mute.

Zachariah departs, events proceed/intertwine

And it happened that when the *days* of his service were completed he *departed to his house*.

He will be great, his destiny described

“This man will be great and will be called 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 throughout the ages, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

“How can this be? Because...”

And Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, as I have intimacy with no man?”

A sign will be given: Elizabeth conceives

And in reply the angel told her, “A Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence the offspring will be called holy also, a Son of God. And look at your kinswoman Elizabeth: She also conceived a son, in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who had been called barren; because nothing, of all the things I have said, is impossible with God.”

And Mary said, “See: the slave of the Lord; may it happen to me as you have said.”

The angel departs, events proceed/intertwine

And the angel *departed* from her.

And during those *days* Mary went up in haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, And entered the *house of Zachariah* and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened that when Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting the baby leapt in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with a Holy Spirit, and with a great cry she called out and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed the fruit of your womb. And is this happening to me—that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For look: As the sound of your

greeting entered my ears, the baby in my womb leapt in joy. And how *blissful* she who has faith, for from the Lord will come fulfillment of what she has been told.”

Elizabeth rejoices

And after these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and kept herself concealed, saying: “Thus the Lord has done for me, in the days when he looked to remove the *censure* that is mine among men.”

Mary rejoices

And Mary said,

“My soul proclaims the Lord’s greatness,
And my spirit rejoices in God my savior,
because he looked upon
the *humiliation* of his slave.

For see:

Henceforth all generations will *bless me*;
because the Mighty One
has done great things to me.
And holy is his name,
and his mercy is for
generations and generations
to those who fear him.

He has worked power with his arm,
he has scattered those who are arrogant
in the thoughts of their hearts;
He has pulled dynasts down from
thrones and exalted the humble,
He has filled the hungry with good
things and sent the rich away empty.
He has given aid to Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,
just as he promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his seed,
throughout the age.”¹

And Mary stayed with her about three months, and returned to her house.

BIRTH & CHILDHOOD (1:57-80)

BIRTH & CHILDHOOD (2:1-52)

Now it happened that in those days an edict went out from Caesar Augustus that all the inhabited world should be enrolled in a census. This, the first enrollment, took place when Quirinius was governing Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city.

And so Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, to Judaea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, since he was from the *house and lineage of David*, to be enrolled with Mary, who was betrothed to him, and who was pregnant.

The birth and rejoicing

And while they were there it came about that the days of her bearing reached their term, and she gave birth to her son, her firstborn, and she wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the lodge.

And there were shepherds in the countryside there, dwelling out in the fields and keeping guard in the night over their flock. And an *angel* of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were *afraid*, greatly afraid.

And the angel said to them, “*Do not fear*; for see: I bring to you *good tidings* of a great joy, which will be for all the people, because today, in David’s city, a savior was born to you who is the Anointed Lord. And this is a *sign* for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a throng of the heavenly army, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest places and
on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

And it happened that, as the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this story that has unfolded, which the Lord has made known to us.” And hasten-

The birth and rejoicing

Now for Elizabeth her time of bearing reached its term, and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had so lavishly bestowed his mercy on her, and they rejoiced with her.

[The angelic message to the shepherds is a third copy of those to Zechariah and Mary:

1. *An angel (“messenger”) of the Lord appears to insignificant people*
2. *The one(s) appeared to are afraid*
3. *The angel reassures: “Do not fear”*
4. *The angel gives a Message*
5. *The angel gives a Sign]*

ing they went and found both Joseph and Mary, and the baby lying in the manger as well; and seeing them they revealed what they had been told concerning this little child. And everyone who heard was amazed at the things reported to them by the angels. But Mary kept all these things in her heart, pondering them. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

The circumcision and naming

And when eight days had been completed it was time to circumcise him, and his name was *declared to be Jesus*, the name pronounced by the angel before his conception in the womb.

And when the days of their purification were completed, in keeping with the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present to the Lord—as has been written in the Law of the Lord: that “*Every male that opens the womb shall be declared holy to the Lord*”— and to offer a sacrifice—in keeping with what is stated in the Law of the Lord: “*A pair of turtledoves or two nestling pigeons.*”

Simeon’s prophecy by the “Holy Spirit”

And look: There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Symeon, and this was a man upright and pious, eagerly awaiting the consolation of Israel, and a Holy Spirit was upon him; and it had been made known to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he should see the Anointed of the Lord. And he came in the Spirit into the Temple; and as the parents brought in the little child Jesus, so that they could do for him what was customary according to the Law, he took him in his arms and blessed God and said,

The circumcision and naming

And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the little child, and they were calling him by the name of his father Zachariah. And speaking out his mother said, “No, he shall instead *be called John.*”

And they said to her: “There is no one from your family who is called by this name.” And they gestured to his father concerning what he might wish him to be called. And, requesting a tablet, he wrote, “John is his name.” And all of them were amazed.

Zechariah’s prophecy by the “Holy Spirit”

And on the instant his mouth and tongue were set free, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came upon all who dwelled around them, and all these stories were talked about throughout the whole hill country of Judaea, and all those hearing them took them to their heart, saying, “What then will this little child be? For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.”

And his father Zachariah was filled with a Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

Zechariah's *Benedictus* hymn

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
because he has visited his people and
bought their liberation,
and raised a horn of salvation for us
in the house of David his servant—
As he said through the mouth
of his holy prophets of old—
Salvation out of the hands of our enemies
and out of the hand of all who hate us,
to work mercy with our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to Abraham our father,
to grant that we,
having been delivered
without fear from our enemies' hands,
might worship him,
in holiness and justice
before his presence for all our days.
And now you, little child,
will be called a prophet
of the Most High;
for you go forth before
the presence of the Lord
to prepare his ways,
to give to his people
a knowledge of salvation
in the forgiveness of their sins,
through our God's inmost mercy,
whereby a dawning from on high
will visit us,
to shine upon those sitting in darkness
and death's shadow,
so to guide our feet
into the path of peace.”

The child grew and became strong

And the little child grew and became mighty
in spirit, and he was in the desert places till the
days when he was openly proclaimed to Israel.

Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* hymn

“Now you release your slave in peace,
Master, in keeping with your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have made ready
before the face of all peoples,
a light for a revelation to the gentiles
and a glory for your people Israel.”

And his father and mother were marveling
at the things being said about him.

And Symeon blessed them and said to his
mother Mary, “Look: This one is appointed for
the fall and the rise of many in Israel, and as a
sign that will be spoken against— and your
own soul a sword will also pierce—so that the
considerations of many hearts may be re-
vealed.”

And there was Anna, a prophetess, daughter
of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher—she was ad-
vanced in days, a great many—who had lived
with her husband for seven years after her
maidenhood, and for eighty-four years had
been a widow: who did not leave the Temple,
serving night and day with fasts and supplica-
tions. And, approaching at the same hour, she
openly praised God and spoke about him to
those awaiting the liberation of Jerusalem.

And when they finished everything required
by the Law of the Lord, they returned to
Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

The child grew and became strong

And the little child grew and became strong,
being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God
was upon him.

And each year, at the feast of the Passover,
his parents journeyed to Jerusalem. And when
he had reached twelve years of age they went
up for the feast as they were accustomed to do;
And having finished their days there, and as

they were on their way back, the boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and his parents were unaware he had done so. Rather, assuming him to be in the traveling party, they went on their way for a day, then sought him among their relatives and acquaintances, and, not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for him. And it happened that, after three days, they found him in the Temple, sitting amid the teachers, both listening to them and posing them questions; and those listening to him were astonished at his intelligence and at his responses.

And seeing him they were struck with wonder, and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us thus? Look! Your father and I are in horrible distress seeking you."

And he said to them, "Why did you seek me? Did you not know that it is necessary for me to be in the home of my Father?"

And they did not understand what he had said to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. And his mother treasured all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus progressed in wisdom and age and favor before God and men.