

# Synchronizing the Nativity Accounts of Matthew and Luke

Part Three  
From Bethlehem to Nazareth

- The birth of Jesus
- The angel's announcement to the shepherds
- The shepherds come to the manger



Previously, we learned that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem in obedience to a decree from Rome.

**Luke 2:4-5**

- 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.



This is how God ensured that his Son would be born in the city of David.

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- 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.



The process of paying their taxes undoubtedly took time. It is clear that Mary did not go into labor until after they had been in Bethlehem some days.

### **Luke 2:6-7**

- <sup>6</sup> And so it was, that, **while they were there**, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.
- <sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.



These humble beginnings speak to the chastisement of any Christian who think he deserves special treatment because he is a child of God.

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In a town so overrun that every inn was filled, God's angel appeared only to shepherds.



### **Luke 2:8-9**

- <sup>8</sup> And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
- <sup>9</sup> And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.



### Luke 2:10-12

- <sup>10</sup> And the angel said unto them,  
Fear not:  
for, behold, I bring you good tidings of  
great joy, which shall be to all people.
- <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day  
in the city of David  
a Saviour,  
which is Christ the Lord.
- <sup>12</sup> And this *shall be* a sign unto you;  
Ye shall find the babe wrapped in  
swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.





**Luke 2:13-14**

- <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
- <sup>14</sup> Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

No one ever said it better...






### **Luke 2:15-16**

- <sup>15</sup> And it came to pass,  
as the angels were gone away from  
them into heaven,  
the shepherds said one to another,  
let us now go even unto  
Bethlehem, and see this thing  
which is come to pass, which the  
Lord hath made known unto us.
- <sup>16</sup> And they came with haste,  
and found Mary, and Joseph,  
and the babe lying in a manger.



### Luke 2:17-19

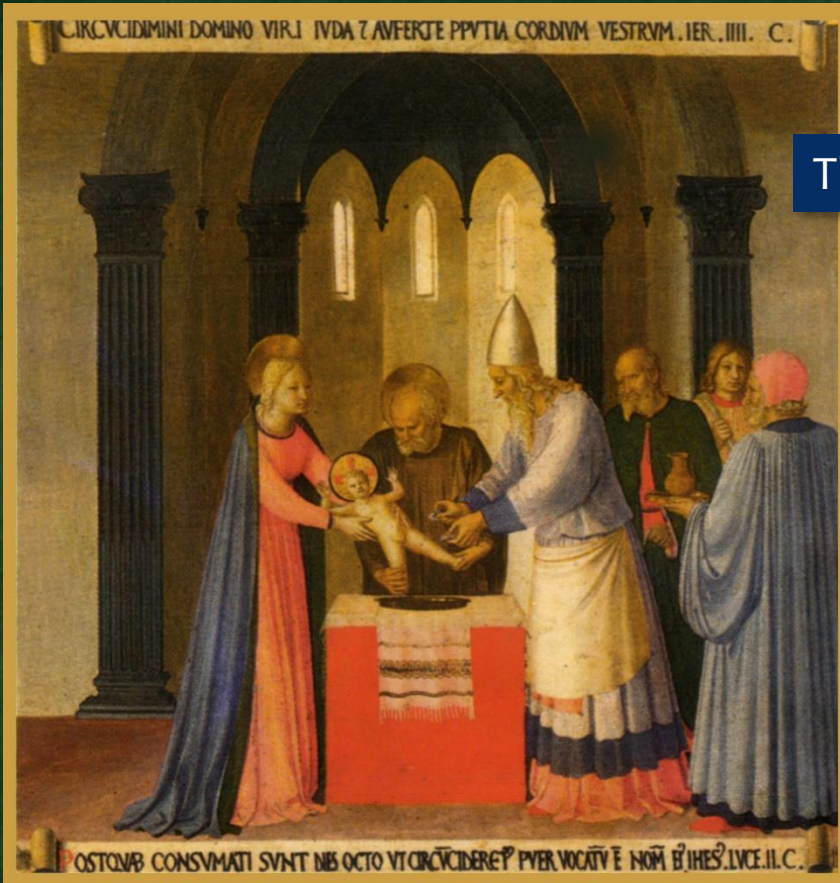
- <sup>17</sup> And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.
- <sup>18</sup> And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.
- <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.

The image depicts a nativity scene at night. In the upper left, a bright, multi-pointed star shines prominently against a dark, starry sky. Below the star, the silhouettes of the manger scene are visible: Mary kneeling, Joseph standing, and the infant Jesus in the manger. To the right, two shepherds with their staffs stand with their flocks, including a donkey and a sheep. The background features rolling hills under a twilight sky with a warm, orange-red glow. The entire scene is framed by a dark border.

**Luke 2:20**

<sup>20</sup> And the shepherds returned,  
glorifying and praising God for all the things  
that they had heard and seen,  
as it was told unto them.

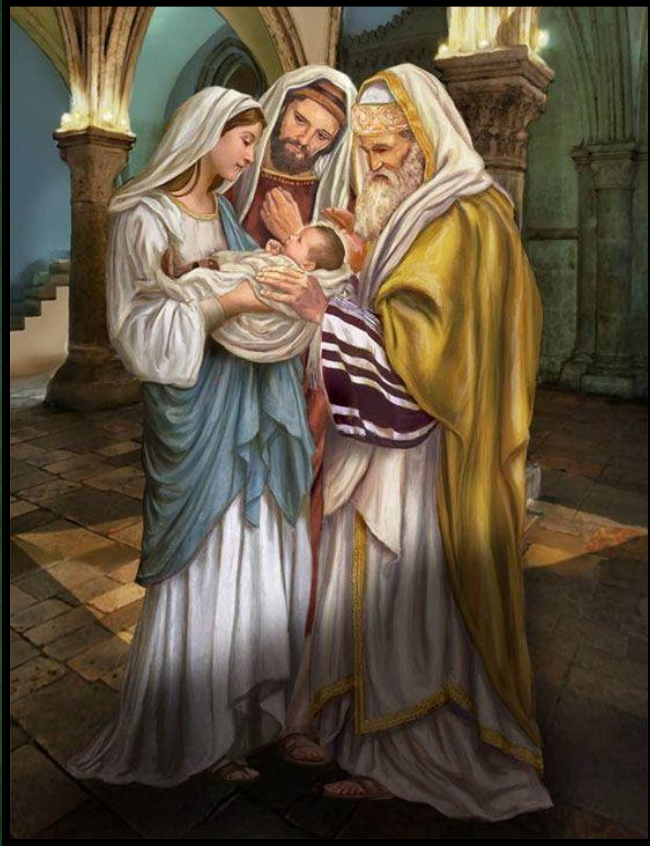
- The birth of Jesus
- The angel's announcement to the shepherds
- The shepherds come to the manger
  
- The circumcision
- The presentation at the Temple
- The prophecies of Simeon and Anna



The circumcision was performed in Bethlehem.

### Luke 2:21

<sup>21</sup> And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.



Forty days after his birth, Jesus was brought to the temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated.





### **Luke 2:22-24**

- <sup>22</sup> And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, **they brought him to Jerusalem**, to present *him* to the Lord;
- <sup>23</sup> (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)
- <sup>24</sup> And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.



Everything was done according to the laws of God for childbirth as recorded in Leviticus 12:

### Leviticus 12:1-4

- <sup>1</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
- <sup>2</sup> Speak unto the children of Israel, saying,  
If a woman have conceived seed,  
and born a man child:  
then she shall be unclean seven days;  
according to the days of the separation for her  
infirmity shall she be unclean.
- <sup>3</sup> And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall  
be circumcised.
- <sup>4</sup> And she shall then continue in the blood of her  
purifying three and thirty days;  
she shall touch no hallowed thing,  
nor come into the sanctuary,  
until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.

$$\begin{array}{r} 7 \text{ days} \\ + 33 \\ \hline 40 \text{ days} \end{array}$$

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Mary made offerings as prescribed by the law.

### Leviticus 12:6-8

- <sup>6</sup> And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest:
- <sup>7</sup> Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This *is* the law for her that hath born a male or a female.
- <sup>8</sup> And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

She brought two birds for the sacrifice. As for the lamb, she offered the Lamb of God.

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Here we read of the prophecies of Simeon and Anna:

**Luke 2:25-26**

- <sup>25</sup> And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.
- <sup>26</sup> And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.



### Luke 2:27-33

- 27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple:  
and when the parents brought in the child Jesus,  
to do for him after the custom of the law,
- 28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed  
God, and said,
- 29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in  
peace, according to thy word:
- 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
- 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all  
people;
- 32 A light to lighten the Gentiles,  
and the glory of thy people Israel.
- 33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those  
things which were spoken of him.



For the first time, Mary is forewarned of the suffering she will endure as the mother of the Christ.

**Luke 2:34-35**

- <sup>34</sup> And Simeon blessed them,  
and said unto Mary his mother,  
Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising  
again of many in Israel;  
and for a sign which shall be spoken  
against;
- <sup>35</sup> (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own  
soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts  
may be revealed.



God sent in Anna to speak of the *reason* he must suffer – the redemption of Israel.



### Luke 2:36-38

- <sup>36</sup> And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;
- <sup>37</sup> And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.
- <sup>38</sup> And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.



It is worth remembering that it was the angel of God who announced Christ's birth to the shepherds. Luke makes no mention of "his star in the east" or the wise men in his account. At this point, King Herod had made no threats.



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These events, found only in Matthew's gospel, must have taken place after Jesus was dedicated in the temple –

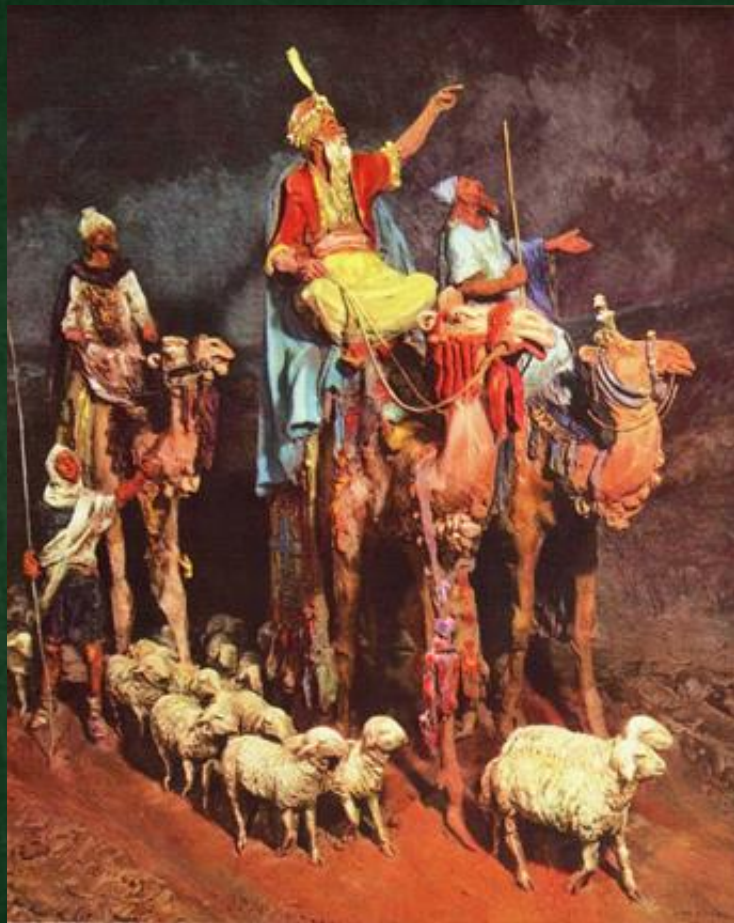


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These events, found only in Matthew's gospel, must have taken place after Jesus was dedicated in the temple –

– and this means Joseph must have taken his family *back to Bethlehem* after the presentation in Jerusalem.

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- The wise men depart



## **Matthew 2:1-2**

- <sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- <sup>2</sup> Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.



Biblical scholars agree that the wise men of the east (the magi) most likely came from Persia.



Their route to Jerusalem would probably correspond to the route taken by the Jews when they were released by Cyrus to rebuild the temple.





One can only speculate how these men knew to look for “his star in the east,” but there is a possible connection to this prophecy given to Balaam:

### **Numbers 24:17**

<sup>17</sup> I shall see him, but not now:  
I shall behold him, but not nigh:  
**there shall come a Star out of Jacob,** and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

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Where is he that is born King of the Jews? **for we have seen his star in the east,** and are come to worship him.



The wise men did not ask, “Where is he that WILL BE born?” They asked, “Where is he that IS born?”

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### Matthew 2:3-6

- 3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
- 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
- 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
- 6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.



## Matthew 2:7-8

- 7 Then Herod,  
when he had privily called the wise men,  
enquired of them diligently  
what time the star appeared.
- 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem,  
and said,

Go and search diligently for the young  
child; and when ye have found *him*,  
bring me word again,  
that I may come and worship him also.

This could be why Herod wanted to know WHEN the star first appeared, so he could estimate how old the child was now.

(Notice that in this passage, Jesus is not called a baby. He is spoken of as “the young child”.)

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### **Matthew 2:9-10**

- <sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
- <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.



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If the star first appeared on the night Christ was born, then Jesus would be a young child by the time the wise men arrived in Bethlehem.

By this time, Joseph had found a suitable home for his family.



### Matthew 2:11

<sup>11</sup> **And when they were come into the house,** they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.







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It is worth noting that they did NOT fall down and worship Mary.





Tradition gives us *three* wise men, simply because three gifts were presented.

**Gold** honored of Christ's eternal kingship.

**Frankincense** honored his eternal priesthood.

**Myrrh** honored his everlasting sacrifice.

Again, God used DREAMS to communicate his instructions.



**Matthew 2:12**

<sup>12</sup> And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

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### **Matthew 2:12**

<sup>12</sup> And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

### **Job 33:15-16**

<sup>15</sup> In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;

<sup>16</sup> Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction...

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- The massacre of the innocents

God spoke to Joseph in a dream to the saving of his family.





### **Matthew 2:13**

<sup>13</sup> And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying,

Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word:

for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.



### **Matthew 2:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

<sup>15</sup> And was there until the death of Herod:

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Out of Egypt have I called my son.





### **Hosea 11:1**

<sup>1</sup> When Israel *was* a child,  
then I loved him,  
and called my son out of Egypt.

### **Matthew 2:14-15**

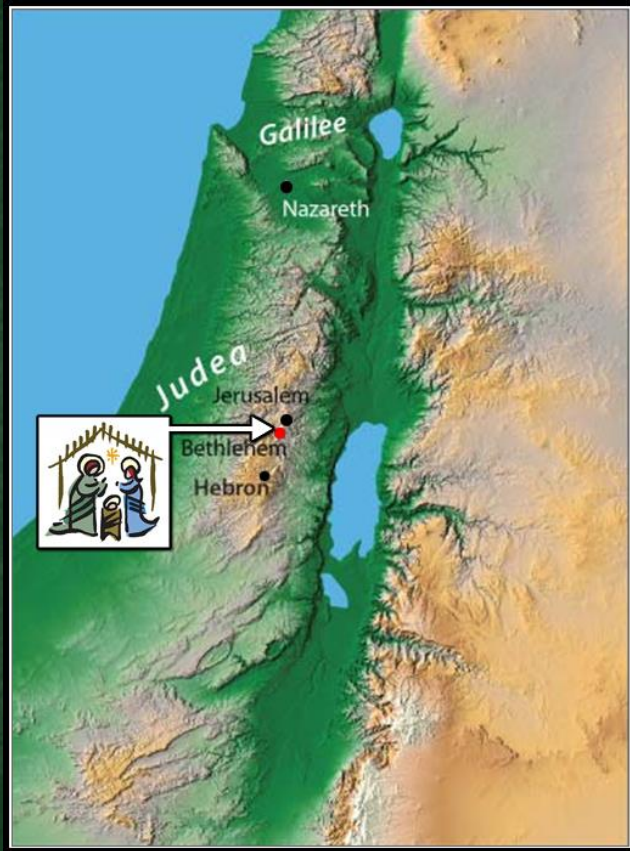
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From Bethlehem to the border of Egypt is about 200 miles.

Meanwhile in Bethlehem, Herod ordered the massacre of the innocents:



### **Matthew 2:16**

<sup>16</sup> Then Herod,  
when he saw that he was mocked of  
the wise men,  
was exceeding wroth,  
and sent forth, and slew all the  
children that were in Bethlehem,  
and in all the coasts thereof,  
from two years old and under,  
**according to the time which he had  
diligently enquired of the wise men.**



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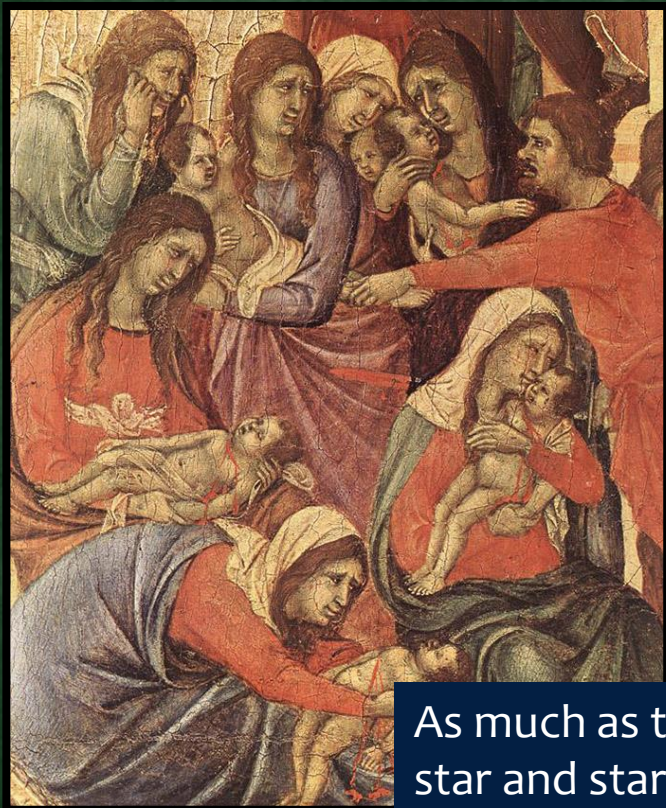
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Herod “enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.”



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diligently enquired of the wise men.

As much as two years had passed since the wise men first saw the star and started their journey.



### **Matthew 2:17-18**

- 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,
- 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.



### Jeremiah 31:15

<sup>15</sup> Thus saith the LORD;

A voice was heard in Ramah,  
lamentation,  
*and* bitter weeping;

Rahel weeping for her children  
refused to be comforted for her  
children,  
because they were not.

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- The angel of God sends the family to Egypt
- The massacre of the innocents
- Joseph takes his family to Nazareth
- Here, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke converge.





After the death of Herod, God used another dream to send the family back to Israel.

### **Matthew 2:19-21**

- <sup>19</sup> But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,
- <sup>20</sup> Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.
- <sup>21</sup> And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.



Yet another dream directed Joseph to settle in Nazareth.

**Matthew 2:22-23**

- <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:
- <sup>23</sup> And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.



Archelaus came to power after the death of his father Herod the Great in 4 BC, and ruled over 1/2 the territorial dominion of his father.

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“To be called a *Nazarene*, was to be called a *despicable man*, a man from whom no good was to be expected, and to whom no respect was to be paid.”

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### **John 1:45-46**

<sup>45</sup> Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him,  
We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

<sup>46</sup> And Nathanael said unto him,  
**Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?**

Philip saith unto him,  
Come and see.

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**He shall be called a Nazarene.**

## Matthew Henry Commentary

“Now this was not particularly foretold by any one prophet, but, in general, it was *spoken by the prophets*, that he should be *despised and rejected of men* (Isaiah 53:2, 3), a *Worm, and no man* (Psalm 22: 6, 7), that he should be an *Alien to his brethren* (Psalm 69:7, 8). Let no name of reproach for religion's sake seem hard to us, when our Master was himself called a *Nazarene*.”

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- <sup>23</sup> And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, **He shall be called a Nazarene.**

The Bible reader who depends solely on the Gospel of Luke to learn the Nativity story will come away thinking that the new family resettled in Nazareth immediately following the presentation in Jerusalem.

### **Luke 2:38-39**

- <sup>38</sup> And she [Anna] coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.
- <sup>39</sup> And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.



But “all things according to the law of the Lord” includes things that Luke did NOT write about – the star over Bethlehem and the wise men from the east, the wrath of Herod and the massacre of the innocents, and the family’s escape to Egypt. These are things that only Matthew relates.

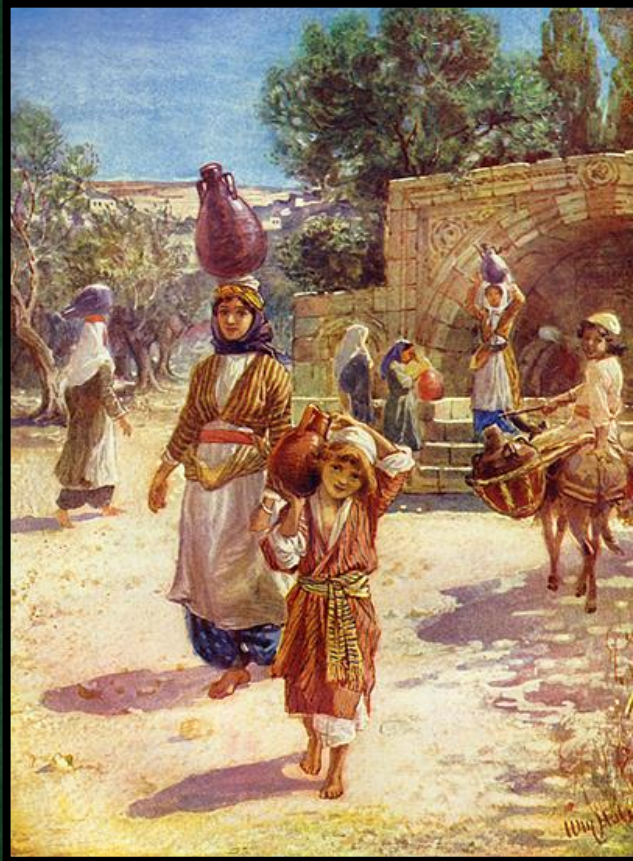
Verse 38 concludes Luke’s report on the dedication, and verse 39 begins a new paragraph.

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When properly ordered, the events recorded in Matthew and Luke fit together perfectly.

**Luke 2:39-40**

- <sup>39</sup> And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.
- <sup>40</sup> And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.



This concludes my series “Synchronizing the Nativity Accounts of Matthew and Luke.”

I pray it helped to expand your understanding and appreciation of the events surrounding the birth of our Savior, and I hope you will enjoy the beautiful song featured on the next slide.



## Miriam

Written and performed by  
Pierce Pettis

No banners were unfurled when God stepped into the world  
Held in the arms of a little girl named Miriam.

Who would ever believe – your fiancé, your family –  
The teenage pregnancy of Miriam?

But laws of nature were suspended, death sentences rescinded,  
Throughout all the world, all because of a little girl,  
named Miriam.

Medieval paintings glaring down. Stony figures judge and frown,  
Wearing a halo like a crown. Could that be Miriam?

In Gentile temples stained glass swirls, a cherubim with golden curls.  
How unlike your Hebrew world, Miriam.

I don't know if you ascended. I don't care what's been amended.  
There was one sure miracle – the faith of a little girl named Miriam.

Oh, you are blessed indeed. Blessed is the fruit of your tree.  
Yeshua, Kings of kings, and son of Miriam.

No banners were unfurled when God stepped into the world  
Held in the arms of a little girl named Miriam.



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