

The Birth of Jesus - A Chronology

by Bill Crews

Both **Mark** and **John** skip over the birth and youth of Jesus as well as the birth of John the baptizer. **Mark** begins his account with the ministry of John the baptizer, followed immediately by the ministry of Jesus. After a prologue (1:1-18) in which he emphasizes the eternality and deity of the one who became Jesus, John does the same.

Matthew begins his account with the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham through David (Matt. 1:1-17). Then he gives a brief account of the birth of Jesus with the focus on Joseph. Mary is already with child, and an angel appears to Joseph to explain and to tell him what he is to do. The marriage proceeds, and the child is born (Matt. 1:18-25). The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judaea is followed by the visit of the wise men from the east. **Matthew** also tells of Joseph with Mary and Jesus fleeing to Egypt and staying there until the death of Herod the Great, of Herod's order to kill all the "male children" two years old or younger in and around Bethlehem, of the return of Joseph, Mary and Jesus to Judaea, and of their going to Nazareth of Galilee.

Luke gives the background of the birth and then tells of the birth of John (who would become the baptizer). While he has nothing to say about the appearance of the angel to Joseph, the visit of the wise men, Herod's attempt to slay "the young child" Jesus, or the flight to and sojourn in Egypt, he, with the focus on Mary, has more to say about the background of the birth of Jesus, the actual birth of Jesus, and the events that closely followed the birth of Jesus.

Here are the events in chronological order:

1. **John's prologue.** Read John 1:1-18. Jesus is the Word that became flesh and dwelled among men. That Word was in the beginning with God and was God. All things that were made ("Jehovah's Witnesses" falsely teach that He was the first thing that was made or created) were made through Him. He came to make God known to man and to reveal the grace and the truth.
2. **An angel appears to Zacharias.** Read Luke 1:5-25. In the temple at Jerusalem the angel Gabriel appears to the priest Zacharias to inform him that his wife Elisabeth will conceive and bear a son whom they are to name "John." That child will become the man who in the spirit and power of Elijah will prepare the Jewish people for the Lord. She conceives and hides herself for five months.
3. **An angel appears to Mary.** Read Luke 1:26-38. At Nazareth of Galilee the angel Gabriel appears to a virgin named "Mary" who was betrothed to a man named "Joseph" to inform her that she has been chosen by God to conceive a son by the power of the Holy Spirit. She is told of the great role to be played by that child and that she is to name him "Jesus." She is also told that her kinswoman Elisabeth is now in her sixth month with child.
4. **An angel appears to Joseph.** Read Matthew 1:18-24. At Nazareth of Galilee an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph who has learned that Mary his betrothed is with child and is considering putting her away privately. Joseph is told of Mary's miraculous conception, instructed to proceed with the marriage, and told why the child is to be named "Jesus." Joseph marries Mary. [This event may have occurred after the next event listed.](#)
5. **Mary visits Elisabeth.** Read Luke 1:39-56. Mary leaves Nazareth and goes to the hill country of Judaea to the town where Elisabeth lives. She stays there three months and then returns to Nazareth. ([The marriage of Joseph and Mary may belong here.](#))
6. **The birth of John.** Read Luke 1:57-65. We are told of the birth of Elisabeth's son and of his being named "John."

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