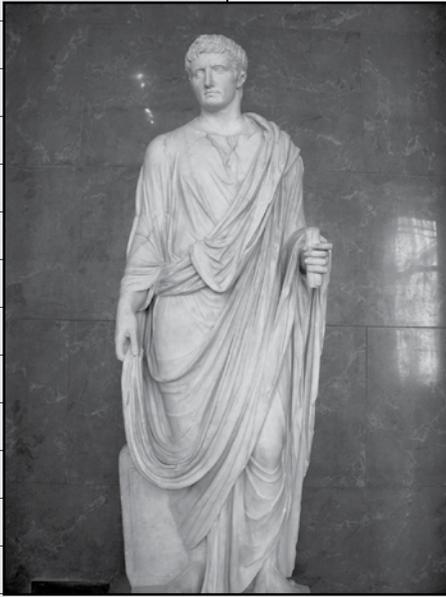


Notes

LESSON 2

The Birth of John Announced

(Luke 1:5-25)



Augustus Caesar ruled the Roman Empire from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14. He was ruling when John and Jesus were born.

The marvelous birth of Jesus begins to unfold in the days of Herod the Great, the son of Antipater, founder of the Herodian line. This Herod ruled from 37 to 4 B.C. The emperor in Rome at the time was Octavian, Caesar Augustus. This is important as it places the events surrounding Christ in the days of the fourth world empire, Rome, as prophesied in Daniel 2.

There was a priest, Zacharias, described as “of the division of Abijah.” When the number of priests became so numerous that they could not all administer at the altar at one time, David divided them into 24 courses, or divisions. Each of these courses would officiate for one week (1 Chron. 23:16; 24:1-31). Abijah was the eighth in order. Zacharias’ wife, Elizabeth, was a descendant of Aaron; and both Zacharias and Elizabeth are described as exemplary in their conduct and “advanced in years.” Elizabeth was barren.

As Zacharias was offering incense at the altar of incense, located just outside of the double veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, the angel Gabriel appeared to him. The troubled and fearful reaction of Zacharias would have been quite natural. Gabriel informed Zacharias that the prayer of both him and Elizabeth had been heard. A son would be born to them. He would be an unusual child. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. He would be a Nazarite (Num. 6:1-8). He would “turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God” as he came in “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Mal. 4:5), acting as a forerunner of Him who was to come (Mal. 3:1). Because of the incredible nature of the things he was being told, Zacharias requested a sign, proof that it was going to come to pass. The sign he was given was to be struck dumb, unable to speak, until the things promised occurred. After the completion of his course, Zacharias returned to his home in the hill country of Judea, and Elizabeth conceived.

The Birth of Jesus Announced (Luke 1:26-38)

In the sixth month after Elizabeth’s conception the angel Gabriel was sent by God with a divine message. He was sent to Nazareth of Galilee, where he appeared to a young virgin named Mary who was espoused to a man named

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The Announcement to Joseph of the Impending Birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18:25)

After her visit with Elizabeth, Mary returned home, and the fact that she was with Child was evident. The only explanation was that the Child was conceived through the Holy Spirit, for that is what the angel Gabriel told her. What was the situation in which Mary found herself? Deuteronomy 22:23-24 indicates that Mary would have been viewed as being guilty of adultery and could have been put to death. However, Joseph was a righteous man with the passage indicating that he was a man of tender heart with true feelings for Mary. He determined to put her away secretly. Deuteronomy 24:1 would be applicable here.

While he was contemplating his course of action, Joseph was visited by an angel of the Lord in a dream. He received assurance that corroborated what Mary had apparently told him. The Child she was carrying was of the Holy Spirit. He would be called Jesus, that is, Savior – derived from the verb signifying to save.

Much attention has been paid to the Hebrew word translated “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14. Many contend that “virgin” is an incorrect translation and that it should be rendered “young woman.” The word itself is *almah*.

The word occurs in the following instances and in each obviously designates an unmarried woman and a true virgin – Psalm 68:15, Exodus 2:8, Proverbs 30:19. Genesis 24:43, Song of Solomon 1:3, 6:8, and Isaiah 7:14 (Guy N. Woods, *The Living Messages of the Books of the Old Testament*, 261).

Being thus assured, Joseph took Mary to wife and did not consummate the marriage until after the birth of the Lord.

The Birth of the Savior (Matt. 2:1; Luke 1:1-7)

It came to pass in the days surrounding the birth of Jesus that a decree came forth from the emperor of Rome, Octavian, Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the world under Roman rule. The purpose of such an enrollment would be to assist in the work of taxation and also to determine how many were subject to military service. Octavian ruled in Rome from 31 B.C. to A.D. 15. At this time, Quirinius was governor of Syria. Roman custom was for each person to be enrolled in their place of residence. However, the Jews went to be enrolled in their ancestral homes.

Joseph and Mary, both of the lineage of David, made their way to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be enrolled. While in the city of Bethlehem, in the most humble circumstances imaginable, Jesus was born. The Lord was born in a stable for there was no room for Him in an inn, undoubtedly due to the large number of people in the city for the census. His first bed was a manger. Was there significance to Bethlehem as His birthplace? It had been prophesied in Micah 5:2.

The Shepherds and Angels (Luke 2:8-20)

In the hill country around Bethlehem shepherds were watching over their sheep by night. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them and there was great brightness as the glory of the Lord shone around them. Why shepherds? I believe it was to demonstrate that the work of the Lord was for all men, from the least to the greatest; there is no class distinction in the love of God and the availability of salvation. It was announced to them, “Today in the

