

The Early Years

The actual date of Jesus birth is not known with any certainty. The year of His birth may be known with some level of accuracy. Based on the several prophecies found in Daniel and other historical accounts, we know that Jesus was born about 4 or 5 BC (as our calendars are today).

There are really only two accounts of the birth of Jesus in the gospels. Matthew gives some details about the conversations between Mary and Gabriel but picks up after Jesus is born. Luke gives more detail about the night of His birth. Sometimes, we become confused because we try to make the accounts happen on the same night. This clearly isn't the way things happened.

In Matthew's account, we have the visit from the magi and the flight of Joseph, Mary and Jesus to Egypt. When we consider Luke's account, the magi visit and the escape to Egypt are not mentioned. These two accounts are not contradictory. We will spend some time this morning looking at several events in the life of young Jesus. The purpose of this time looking at the early years of Jesus is primarily to show that Jesus lived under the laws of God even from a young age. We will also see that when we take a little time with the Bible, we find that many of the "contradictions" many point out in the Bible really have a logical explanation. After all, **God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. (1 Corinthians 14:33 NASB)**

As we move forward with our message, we will begin, as nearly as we can, with the chronology of events in the life of Jesus as a young child. We mentioned earlier, that Luke's account covers the time more nearly associated with His birth. So, we will start with Luke the 2nd chapter. Once the shepherds returned to their flock, Luke tells us that Jesus conformed to the Mosaic Law as revealed in Leviticus the 12th chapter.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: 'When a woman gives birth and delivers a male *child*, then she shall be unclean for seven days; as *she is* in the days of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. Then on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And she shall stay *at home in her condition of blood purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. And she shall stay at home in her condition of blood purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed.* (Leviticus 12:1-4 NASB)

Now we have reviewed the law, let's see what Luke tells us about the circumcision and presentation of Jesus by Mary and Joseph as we read from Luke the 2nd chapter beginning in verse 21.

And when eight days were completed so that it was time for His circumcision, He was also named Jesus, the *name* given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

And when the days for their purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord: "EVERY *FIRSTBORN* MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD"), and to offer a sacrifice according to what has been stated in the Law of the Lord: "A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG DOVES." (Luke 2:21-24 NASB)

A pair of turtledoves or a pair of young doves. This tells us that Mary and Joseph were not financially able to offer other sacrifices. Again, in the 12th chapter of Leviticus, we find the prescribed offerings.

But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young doves, the one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.” (Leviticus 12:8 NASB)

During this visit, we meet Simeon and Anna. Both of these recognize Jesus as the Messiah of God, the answer to their prayers, and the fulfillment of the promises of God.

Luke then jumps a span of time to the returning to Nazareth. This jump in time allows for the fulfillment of the prophecy found in Hosea the first verse of the 11th chapter.

When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. (Hosea 11:1 NASB)

While this verse does not clearly specify that the son referenced is Jesus, Matthew ties this verse to the Christ child when he writes: **Now when they (the magi) had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to kill Him.”**

So, Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod; *this happened* so that what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: “OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.” (Matthew 2:13-15 NASB)

For the historians, Herod the King was known as “Herod the Great,” and was made King by the Romans in the year 43 BC. The best chronologists have supposed that Herod died somewhere between two and four years after the birth of Christ, but the particular time cannot now be determined; nor can it be ascertained at what age Jesus was taken into Egypt. It seems probable that He was between one and two years old—based upon the account of Herod’s order to kill all the children two years and under.

We do know that Joseph was obedient to the voice of the angel. When the angel told him to take his family to Egypt, he did and likewise, as recorded in Matthew, when it was time to return to Israel, Joseph listened to the angelic instructions.

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, “Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.” So, Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. (Matthew 2:19-21 NASB)

At this point, Matthew’s gospel realigns with Luke’s gospel. Jesus is taken by Joseph and Mary to the town and region where He would mature and begin His ministry.

And when *His parents* had completed everything in accordance with the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. Now the Child continued to grow and to become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the favor of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:22-40 NASB)

Well, preacher, we have heard and learned several interesting facts about the time of the birth of Jesus. What are we to do with this information? How does this help us to know how we fit into this?

There are several reasons why these facts may be helpful to us. First, we call ourselves disciples of Christ or Christians. If we are to follow Christ, we need to be as nearly like this Christ whom we claim to follow. We need to know Jesus on such a level that we are familiar with every fact

about His life on earth. We need to understand how Jesus reacted to those around Him. If we don't know Jesus on that level, then we cannot have any assurance that we are doing or will do what Jesus would do in similar circumstance.

Second, when we look at the life of Jesus, we find that He lived a life of obedience to God and all of the commandments. In fact, Jesus tells us that His mission is to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

“Do not presume that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter shall pass from the Law, until all is accomplished! Therefore, whoever nullifies one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-19 NASB)

Third, Jesus came as an infant, grew through childhood, and matured into adulthood in similar fashion as each of us. This is all according to God's intent and plan. Just as Jesus grew up, we too grow into children of God.

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons *and daughters*. Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba! Father!” Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7 NASB)

We are also told that the maturing process of Jesus served to allow Him to become our priest.

In the days of His humanity, He offered up both prayers and pleas with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His devout behavior. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him, being designated by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7-10 NASB)

Fourth, and finally, when we examine the details of the life of Jesus, we are reminded that Jesus is God in the flesh or God incarnate. We remember the prophecy that a virgin would give birth to a son and name Him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14)? Immanuel means God with us.

We may view Jesus in human terms but we must remember that He is much more than another baby born long ago. He is God.

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over every ruler and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision performed without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:9-12 NASB)

Have you been baptized into Jesus? Have you received the circumcision not performed by hand?