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**Mary
and the
Birth of Jesus.**

(Luke 2:1-52)

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Mary and the Birth of Jesus.

Topics.

- Jewish betrothal and marriage.
- Mary gives birth to Jesus her firstborn.
- An angel of the Lord appears to shepherds.
- Mary's child is circumcised and named Jesus.
- Simeon blesses Jesus and his mother Mary.
- A light to the Gentiles.
- Anna a prophetess speaks of Jesus.
- Jesus at twelve teaches in the temple.

MARY AND JOSEPH GO TO BETHLEHEM

- **Luke 2:1-5:** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, (espoused in KJV) who was with child.

The words, "In those days," refers to the miraculous events of the previous chapter in which the angel Gabriel told Zechariah his wife Elizabeth will have a child and that he was to name him John and told Mary the Holy Spirit will come upon her and that her child will be called the Son of God. Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist, Zechariah after being mute was miraculously able to speak again and all of Judea was talking about John's birth. Everyone has to go to his or her own city, so Joseph leaves Nazareth a small insignificant town in lower Galilee in Palestine and the place where Gabriel appeared to Mary and goes to Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David.

1

MARY AND JOSEPHS JOURNEY

Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem (Bethlehem means a house of dust) where Jesus was born, while there Herod ordered the killing of babies that were less than two years old. Mary and Joseph were warned by an angel to flee into Egypt after some time in Egypt they returned to Nazareth to live. Jesus eventually left the city of Nazareth for a wider ministry. In Scripture Jesus is sometimes referred to as the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. His enemies used the name Nazarene as a title of scorn, but used by His friends it had a friendly meaning.

NOTICE: Luke refers to Mary as Joseph's betrothed (espoused in KJV) (meaning she is promised in marriage) rather than his wife, this no-doubt is because they have not consummated the relationship. In the Old Testament it seems that women are recognized as a wife of a man once they sexually know that man for the intention of having children unlike prostitutes or concubines although if a man did have concubines he still had to treat them as he would a wife, he was to perform a husband's duty and provide for them (this is probably why only Kings had concubines, who else could afford them?).

The following verse is a good example of this principal:

- Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife and he went in unto Hagar (Gen. 16:3).

Sarai was Abram's real wife and Hagar was Sarai's maid, but because Abram's laid with Hagar with the intention of having children she is then referred to as his wife. Though Mary is pregnant with a child she is called Joseph betrothed wife because she has not known Joseph and therefore is not technically his wife in the same way a woman who is pregnant by her husband is considered to be. This is the beauty of using the word betrothed it allows for Mary to be called the wife of Joseph, without actually having known him sexually.

JEWISH BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE

Jewish betrothal and marriage involve a double ceremony performed together in modern times, but separated in ancient times by a year. First is the betrothal (erusin), which includes the reading of the marriage contract (ketubba) and the giving of the ring with a declaration, "Behold you are consecrated to me by this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel," accompanied by certain benedictions. This is followed by the marriage proper (nissu'in), consisting of the reciting of the seven marriage benedictions. The ceremony is performed under a huppa (a canopy) that symbolizes the bridal bower. There was a Jewish marriage betrothal contract written (called the ketubba) to protect the bride and guarantee her certain future rights before her marriage and to make divorce a costly matter for the husband because Jewish religious law permitted a man to divorce his wife at any time for any reason. The conditions stipulated in the document also guarantee the woman's right to property when her husband died. A Jewish wife carefully preserved the ketubba, not as evidence of marriage but for its future value. (From the Britannica Encyclopaedia).

2

MARY GIVES BIRTH TO JESUS HER FIRSTBORN

- **Luke 2:6-7:** And while they (Joseph and Mary) were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

A manger was a crib or stall used for food and an inn was a lodging-place that was used for breaking up a journey. Notice Jesus was the firstborn of Mary which implies he was not the last born of Mary (as some believe). The following verses clearly show that after the birth of Jesus Mary gave birth to other sons and daughters.

In the book of Matthew, we see the Jews saying:

- Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? (Matthew 13:55-56).

So, we know Jesus had four half-brothers and at least three sisters (if there had been only two, the word 'both' would have been used instead of 'all') who are accepted as half brothers and sisters of Christ. Because of this it follows that Joseph and Mary were a loving intimate couple and very normal mother and father and husband and wife, and that all those mentioned were alive when Jesus was.

Added to this we are told while Jesus was speaking to the people:

- His mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him (Matt. 12:46).

Though there are Scriptural reasons Joseph is not mentioned after Jesus was in the Temple at twelve years of age since the focus of Scripture is upon the true Father of Christ the immortal, invisible, eternal God Almighty and not his foster father, it would not be wrong to suppose that

Joseph was already dead when Jesus was crucified especially since Joseph is never mentioned during Jesus' ministry or when he was being crucified and Jesus asked John to look after Mary as if she were his own mother (John 19:26-27). At that time, none of Jesus' family believed in him and his message. Yet afterwards some did believe, and the letters written by two of them, James and Jude (or Judas) are part of the New Testament.

AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARS TO SHEPHERDS

- **Luke 2:8-14:** And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

The LORD'S religious leaders (the Chief Priests, Pharisees and Scribes) were so full of pride, selfish ambition and hypocrisy that God had to send His angels to humble shepherds in a field. Priests serving in the temple may have expected an angel to appear, but shepherds out in an open field would certainly have not, this maybe one of the reasons they were fearful when God's glory shone all about them and a multitude of angels appeared praising God.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

When the angels were praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest they were not implying that the baby that had been born was God (as some believe), rather they are praising God because the promised Messiah, Saviour and Son of God had been born.

3

Ponder for a moment: as far back as Genesis Scripture speaks of:

- A woman's seed that will destroy all that is of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).
- Moses speaks of a prophet and delivered to come like him.
- All the blood sacrifices for sin all point forward to a coming Saviour.
- The Psalms carry echoes of the Messiah the Christ and Saviour to come.
- The prophets speak of a coming Saviour.
- The Scriptures are full of a glory concerning the promised Messiah.
- All the faithful of old looked by faith toward the coming promised Christ.

And here in Mary's child Jesus is the fulfilment of all these Old Testament shadows, echoes, prophecies and Scriptures that have foreseen and spoken of this glorious day when the promised Messiah the Christ and Saviour would come into the world. Imagine the spectacular awe, beauty and wonder as these humble shepherds gazed upon the multitude of the heavenly angels praising God and by their eternal glory dispelling the darkness of the night.

This birth of Mary's child changed the world forever (especially the religious world), this is the most dramatic and exciting time in human history the only other time in mankind's history that will surpass the glory of the birth of Christ is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in eternal royal and majestic glory.

THE SHEPHERDS GO TO BETHLEHEM TO FIND JESUS

- **Luke 2:15-20:** When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds he told them that the Saviour Christ the Lord has been born, to confirm to the shepherds that what he said was true he told them that they would find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger in Bethlehem the city of David (v11-12).

Obviously, a manger was not the normal place for a baby to be born, so to see a new born baby in a manger especially after the angel had said they would be clear sign that the child was the Christ and promised Saviour. The Shepherds find the baby exactly as the angel had said, they tell Mary and Joseph everything they had experienced, seen and heard and Mary treasured up what they said and pondered them in her heart.

MARY'S CHILD IS CIRCUMCISED AND NAMED JESUS

- **Luke 2:21-24:** And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²²And when the time came for their (Mary and Joseph) purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Circumcision was a sign of the everlasting covenant between God and Abraham (Gen 17:9-16) whoever was not circumcised broke God's covenant and was to be cut off from God's people (Gen 17:12), the ceremony also included naming the baby boy being circumcised. Female babies were named in the synagogue on the Sabbath following their birth when the father was called to recite the benedictions over the reading of Torah. Under the Mosaic Law purification was required for the birth of a child, the mother was to offer up her first-born child to the LORD and offer a sacrifice of a Lamb or if poor two turtledoves.

(Leviticus 12:8) (Exodus 13:2) (Exodus 13:12).

SIMEON BLESSES JESUS AND HIS MOTHER MARY

- **Luke 2:25-35:** Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."³³And his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵and a sword will pierce through your (Mary's) own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

The LORD revealed to this faithful elderly man that he would see the Christ before he died. Imagine for a moment his excitement when he saw Mary and Joseph walk into the Temple with their new-born child, Simeon now fully content to go to his grave takes the baby in his arms and in absolute joy lifts him up toward heaven glorifying and praising God that he has seen His Salvation.

NOTICE: the Lord Jesus Christ is God's salvation, salvation is not in doctrine or intellectual knowledge, but in a person whose name is Jesus, Scripture in relationship to salvation is written to convict the reader of sin, bring them to repentance and turn them to the saving grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God and Saviour of all who will come to him.

A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES

Simeon's words, "A light to the Gentiles and for glory to the people of Israel," once again is a beautiful example of the wonderful and majestic language of the Bible, the words, "A light to the Gentiles," takes the mind of the reader to a banquet table of prophetic Scripture written of Christ in the Old Testament one of which is recorded in the following words of Isaiah (there are others):

- Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. ⁵Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶"I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations (Isaiah 42:1-6) (also Isaiah 49:6-7).

The phrase, "The fall and rising of many," (v34) refers to the fall of the religious leaders of Jesus generation the Chief Priests, Pharisees, Scribes and the entire Levitical priesthood and to the rise of the Gentiles. The phrase, "For a sign that is opposed," (v34) refers to the following words of Isaiah:

- Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation 'Whoever believes will not be in haste. He will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Isaiah 28:16) (Isaiah 8:14)

In the following verse the apostle Paul says the same thing as Isaiah:

- The Household of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone.

Peter writes:

- For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." and then adds, "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense (i.e., a sign that is opposed) (Ephesians 2:20) (1 Peter 2:6, 8).

ANNA A PROPHETESS SPEAKS OF JESUS

- **Luke 2:36-38:** And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not

depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Virgin means chaste and chaste carries the idea of a pure woman, one that is restrained, modest, celibate, unused, unspoilt, spotless, stainless and pure. Scripture teaches that single people should not be having a sexual relationship until they are married, therefore when the Bible uses the word virgin in relationship to an unmarried woman it carries the idea of a woman that is chaste and not just young. When the word virgin is used figuratively in the Bible it implies faithfulness. From God's viewpoint there seems to be two groups of people, the entire nation Israel being the wider view and from them the faithful and those who return to the LORD in repentance. The faithful or repentant are called the remnant or the virgin daughter of Israel thus virgin carries the idea of being separated, faithful or the only people of God, it implies a people with only one God in contrast to people with many gods. The use of the word virgin when applied to the people of God carries a picture of God's people being chaste with one God contrasted to Satan's people fornicating with many God's.

ANNA THE PROPHETESS

Anna means favoured; she was an elderly woman who had been married for seven years before her husband died. The phrase, "From the time she was a virgin," means she had been married to her husband from the time she was a young girl and that he was the only man she had been with. She was an eighty-four-year-old single woman who gave herself to the LORD by constantly offering praise and worship to him. Many older people may not be able to do a great deal of activity for the LORD, but like Anna they can delight and thrill the heart of God by spending their time in fellowship with Him. Anna in the Temple testified of God to men and women who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

6

MARY JOSEPH AND JESUS RETURN TO NAZARETH

- **Luke 2:39:** And when they (Mary and Joseph) had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

This verse shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that the Jews living prior to Jesus death and resurrection were still under the law. This truth should always be remembered when reading the New Testament since it explains why Paul and others who clearly understood they were saved by grace, still conformed to Jewish customs so as not to offend any and to keep the doors open to share the Gospel. Mary Joseph and Jesus return to their own town Nazareth in Galilee. Imagine their mental perplexity and bewilderment, both Mary and Joseph had Gabriel the angel of the LORD appear to them concerning the birth of Mary's child and Jesus at twelve year of age not only had no other interest in life except to serve God, but speaks of God to Mary and Joseph as being his true father. There is no-doubt Mary and Joseph understood that they had a child that was unique and truly different from the norm, but did not fully understand just how majestically different he was.

JESUS AT TWELVE TEACHES IN THE TEMPLE

- **Luke 2:40-50:** And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favour of God was upon him. ⁴¹Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching

for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." ⁴⁹And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

The fact Luke says, Jesus grew in wisdom shows that he was not born with all wisdom. Jews from every nation would have been in the temple at this time as it was the annual celebration of the Passover Feast. Jesus at twelve knew who his true Father was. Telling Mary and Joseph that he must be in his Father's house puzzled his parents, showing that neither Mary or Joseph fully understood who Jesus was or his ultimate future; no-one did not even the apostles until he appeared to them after his death and resurrection.

Mary said, I and thy father sought thee sorrowing and Jesus replied:

- Don't you know I must be about my Father's business?

Jesus did not acknowledge Joseph as his father but said my Father, if Jesus was meaning his supposed father Joseph business Mary and Joseph would have understood, but they did not. Joseph was a carpenter not a Levite priest so they knew it wasn't Joseph business Jesus was referring to. Mary and Joseph did not fully understand, how could they fully comprehend what Jesus was saying? Even the apostles did not fully understand who Jesus was until they saw him after the resurrection and they had seen Jesus perform multitudes of miracles practically every day

NOTE: how did Jesus know at twelve that he had this unique relationship with God if he was not the only unique begotten Son of God?

MARY, JOSEPH AND JESUS RETURN TO NAZARETH

- **Luke 2:51-52:** And he (Jesus) went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.

Jesus obeyed his parents until the time of his ministry and grew in wisdom, notice Jesus not only grew in favour with God, but he grew in favour with men setting the example for all who belong to the family of God.

Some believe Jesus is God, but consider the following:

- Scripture uses the term Mary the mother of Jesus and often refers to Mary as Jesus mother, but never once mentions Joseph as his father. If Jesus is God then those who say God has a mother are absolutely right.
- Jesus at twelve said, "He must be about his Fathers business," how can this statement make sense if Jesus is God?

For further information concerning Jesus being God, see the title:

- Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity) in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

SUMMERY

God was fully involved in the conception and birth of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- By Old Testament prophecies and the word of God.

- By the angel Gabriel naming Jesus, before he was conceived in the womb.
- By a miracle in the conception of Mary
- By a host of heavenly angels appearing to shepherds and God's glory dispelling the darkness of the night and all the angels praising God because of the birth of Mary's child Christ.
- By an angel of the LORD proclaiming that in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord has been born.
- By the Holy Spirit through a righteous man named Simon proclaiming the child Jesus will be a light to the Gentiles, glory to Israel and salvation for all people.
- By Anna a prophetess speaking of the child Jesus as the redemption of Jerusalem.
- By Jesus at twelve knowing who his true Father was.

The Scriptures leave no room to doubt that the immortal, invisible, eternal God Almighty is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in a unique manner, a way quite different from the Fatherhood God extended to believers.

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