

Birth of Jesus Christ PowerPoint Script

1 The Birth of Jesus Christ

2 The Nativity Quiz—all the answers are “The Bible does not say” and question 4 “All...”

3 Genealogy of Mary and Joseph

Both Matthew and Luke give the genealogy of Jesus and they are different. Matthew's account gives the royal lineage and records the names of those whose right it was to sit on David's throne. Luke's record contains the personal pedigree of Mary's husband. Mary's father, Jacob or Joachim and Joseph's father Heli were brothers making Mary and Joseph first cousins with the same ancestral lines. (The Mortal Messiah, Bruce R McConkie, 1:316)

4 Women in Jesus' Genealogy

It is unusual for a woman to be named in the genealogy, but Matthew and Luke mention five, including Mary; Tamar, a Gentile woman, who engaged in incest with her father-in-law in trying to force him to obey Levitical law; Rahab, a Gentile who ran an inn and it has been suggested by scriptionaries that she was a harlot who converted and helped the Israelites overcome Jericho; Ruth, a Gentile who married into the covenant, was widowed and remarried to Boaz; and Bathsheba, a Hebrew married to a Gentile, and who committed adultery with David.

All of these women exhibited courage, intelligence and initiative. A great message is that Jesus came to be a Savior to Jews and Gentiles, saints and sinners and that as Satan tried to thwart God's plan through his ancestral line, God is in charge and made all things work according to His Plan.

5 Mary's Parents Joachim and Anna

Tradition tells the story of Joachim and Hannah (Anna) who were childless. In Israel, being childless was a major tragedy. The Jewish rabbis said that seven people were excommunicated from God and the list began, "A Jew who has no wife, or a Jew who has a wife and who has no child." (Barclay - Luke pg 10) If a woman remained childless after ten years of marriage, it was considered grounds for divorce, since having a family was one of the important reasons for marriage.

They longed for a child but remained childless into their old age. When they were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim, "*You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands.*" Others who had children jostled Joachim, thrusting him back as unworthy. This caused the aged man great grief, and he and his wife left with heavy hearts. Then the two of them gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort their old age.

Joachim took his flocks and went to a high mountain, refusing to return home in shame. Meanwhile, Anna prayed in her garden. She promised to have their child raised in the Temple as a holy vessel of God as Hannah had prayed for Samuel. God sent an angel (which we can only suppose could have been Gabriel, or Noah) to each of them, who gave them tidings of the birth of "a daughter most blessed, by whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and through whom will come the salvation of the world." Anna conceived shortly thereafter, and gave birth to Mary.

6 Mary

Miriam or Mary would have been the firstborn female in her family. Her name means "height or "summit," but probably the best meaning is "excellence." Her name can also mean "bitterness."

Mary would experience both during her lifetime. As a baby she would have been brought to the temple eighty days (40 days for boys) after her birth along with a lamb and either two turtle doves or two pigeons as an atonement for her mother, that Anna would be purified and clean.

Israeli researchers have proven that some kinds of girl's service in the Temple corresponds with historic facts. The girls performed various services for the priests and were given a thorough religious education from the scriptures in return. Upon reaching the age of 12, they had to leave the Temple service, but those living nearby continued to do knitting and sewing work for the Temple (Pixner-Jerusalem-pg 19).

Joachim and Anna took Mary, at the age of three, to the temple to be dedicated to the service of the Lord, and presented her, according to tradition, to the priest Zechariah. The parents then, after offering up her sacrifice (according to the custom of the time), left Mary with other maidens in the apartments of the temple to be brought up. (There is some evidence that these young girls would spend some months each year with their families.)

The traditions tell us that Mary had a beautiful singing voice and that she composed songs in the temple, as did David. Girls dedicated to the Lord by their parents remained in the temple until the age of puberty when they would be ready for betrothal. Girls brought up in the temple were considered prime wives especially for priests and theological students.

7 Ancient Prayer Circle

Later, when the brethren are met together on the Mount of Olives, [after Christ's resurrection] "Peter said to Mary, 'Blessed one, please ask the Lord to tell us about the things that are in heaven. 'Having taken position in a [prayer] circle, Mary begins to speak:

8 Mary's Vision

When I was in the Temple of God [a number of early sources report that Mary served in the Temple, like Samuel, as a child] . . . there appeared to me one day a manifestation like an angel of unfamiliar aspect. . . . And suddenly the veil of the Temple was rent and there was a great earthquake and I fell on my face unable to bear the sight of him. But he stretched forth his hand and raised me up, and I looked up to heaven and a dewy cloud came and moistened me from head to foot; and he wiped me off with his stole (robe, shawl) and said to me, "Greetings, thou favored one, chosen vessel!" and he grasped my right hand. And there was bread in abundance and he set it out on the altar of the Temple [shewbread], and he ate first and then gave to me. And he put forth his hand from his garment and there was wine in abundance, and he drank first and then gave to me, and I beheld and saw a full cup and bread. And he said to me, "In three years' time I shall send to you my Logos [Word] and you will bear a son, and through him all the creation will be saved. . . . Peace to thee, my beloved, forever and ever." And suddenly he was gone from me, and the Temple was as it was before. Mary would have been around 9-11 yrs old.

9 Elder McConkie

"Can we speak too highly of her whom the Lord has blessed above all women? There was only one Christ, and there is only one Mary. Each was noble and great in the pre-mortal existence and each was foreordained to the ministry he or she performed. We cannot but think that the Father would choose the greatest female spirit to be the mother of His Son, even as He chose the male spirit like unto Him to be the Savior." (The Mortal Messiah, Bruce R McConkie, 1:327)

10 Joseph

Most men were betrothed between 18-20 years of age. What kind of young man would God choose to be the earthly role model for His Son? Joseph worked the trade of *Tekton*, meaning not just a joiner or carpenter, but a master builder, somebody who worked on the various materials needed for the construction work, including timber and iron, but most frequently stone. (*With Jesus in Jerusalem*, pg 33-34, Bargil Pixner, Corazin Publishing 1996)

Carpenters were regarded as particularly learned. If a difficult problem were under discussion, the Rabbis would ask: "Is there a carpenter among us, or the son of a carpenter, who can solve the problem for us?" The high esteem in which carpenters were held in Israel counters the common sentimental idyllic notion that Jesus and Joseph were only naive and amiable, simple manual workers. (*Jesus' Jewishness*, pg 162, Charlesworth, Crossroad Publishing, New York, 1996)

Joseph was called a "just" man in scriptures, meaning that he would be known as a *Tzaddik*, a righteous man, with high moral character, and a faithful observer of the Mosaic law. He was described in the Greek translation as being "beyond reproach." His reputation was impeccable.

Within two short chapters we find Joseph receiving four separate "visions" (JST changed "dreams") in which he was given instructions regarding the birth and protection of Jesus and Mary. Obviously he was a man in tune with the Spirit and prepared to deal with moral dilemmas. The main moral dilemma of his life was what the right thing would be to do concerning Mary's eventual pregnancy. Because of his high character he worried most about giving offense to God by possibly marrying an adulteress.

11 Betrothal of Mary and Joseph

Espousal or betrothal was a legally binding marriage but without marital intimacy. There is a formal marriage contract called the "ketubah." The penalty for fornication was death. Another ceremony would have to be completed before they would start living together. During the betrothal time the young man would be preparing a home for his wife. The marriage of Mary and Joseph was most probably arranged when they were children. It would have been expected that they would marry a close relative and not long after Mary reached puberty she was betrothed to Joseph. A betrothal was usually entered into when a girl was between the age of 12 and 13 which gave the young man rights over the young woman. The contract could be broken only by a formal "bill of divorcement."

12 Annunciation

Angel Gabriel appeared to her and greeted her, "Hail, thou that art highly favored!" In the Greek instead of "Hail," it is "Rejoice! In the East a man never gives even a man that salutation unless he is perfectly equal in status with him, but *never* a woman. That's why Mary "cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." The angel was addressing her with great respect and equality.

13 "How can this be...?"

The angel then said "Fear not" – as angels always do – and then told her that she would bring forth a Son. "How can this be seeing I know not a man." The JST drops the phrase "seeing I know not a man," implying perhaps that Mary's question was not about how should could conceive a child but about her already getting engaged to be married and knowing the Messiah was prophesied to be born of a virgin.

“ And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). ”

Jewish tradition used the language of "overshadowing" for God's presence with his people. An example of this is found in Exodus 40:34 where it says: "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." Gabriel's reference in Luke 1:35, "...the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee..." suggests that same cloud of glory representing the presence and power of God. (IVP 190)

Matthew says the baby was “of the Holy Ghost.” Contrary to what many Christians believe, the Latter-day Saint position is that Mary was with child by the *power* of the Holy Ghost.

14 **Pres. Joseph F. Smith said,**

How are we begotten? I answer: just as Jesus Christ was begotten by his Father. The Christian denominations believe that Christ was begotten, not of God but of the Spirit that overshadowed his mother. This is nonsense. Why will not the World receive the truth? Why will they not believe the Father when he says that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son? Why will they try to explain this truth away and make a mystery of it. (The Nativity, Alonzo Gaskill, p.21)

From his mother he received a mortal body; from his Divine Father he received the power both to surrender his life and to take it up again.

15 **Mary's Call to be the Mother of the Savior of the World**

"So we find Mary, about 14-15 years of age and inexperienced in meeting the trials of life, under contract to marry, but with the child of God the Father by the power of the Holy Ghost. We find her in a city of Galilee - rough, rugged and untempered -- where a self-righteous people were quick to condemn, ever ready to punish; where the tongue of gossip would cut her tender feelings to the bone; where she would become a hiss and a byword among her friends and relatives, for she had (as they viewed it) committed the sin next only in wickedness to murder. Those among whom she dwelt would no more believe her strange tale than angel had come to her -- angels no longer came to mortals, everyone knew that! -- or that the Almighty himself was the Father of that which was in her womb; they would no more believe these claims than they would believe the testimony of the fruit of her womb when he testified in their own city that he was the Messiah of whom Isaiah had spoken." (The Mortal Messiah, Bruce R McConkie, 1:322)

16 **Behold the handmaid of the Lord**

Mary's heavy burden was lightened by the knowledge she had. "Mary, thou hast sound favor in the sight of God." Her submission was total. "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord., be it unto me according to thy word." God would be with her. What was then open to the young virgin? 'Go to thy cousin Elisabeth. She also is with child in a miraculous way - she will understand. She will counsel and help you, and the Lord will give you power to overcome.'" (The Mortal Messiah, Bruce R McConkie, 1:322)

17 **Journey to Elizabeth**

We may wonder why Mary would not have confided in her parents. Traditions suggest that they, being advanced in age, had died either while Mary served in the temple or soon after she returned to Nazareth. Mary would have needed motherly counsel and so Mary left Nazareth and traveled to

one of the villages near Jerusalem to stay with Elizabeth, a relative, and there she witnessed the miracle of Elizabeth being with child in her old age.

Elizabeth, upon seeing Mary, was, the scriptures tell us, “filled with the Holy Ghost” and bore witness of Mary’s state as “the mother of my Lord.” Elizabeth’s child, (John the Baptist), leapt within her womb.

18 Magnificat

Mary's song of praise (Luke 1:46-56), defined elsewhere as the "Magnificat," shows her response to the message that God had given her and that Elizabeth's testimony had confirmed. The song shows the extent of her spirituality and her knowledge of scripture. All in all, Mary alludes to 14 different Old Testament references (1 Samuel 2:1-10, Psalm 34:2, Psalm 35:9, 1 Samuel 1:11, Psalm 111:9, Psalm 107:9, Psalm 98:3, Genesis 17:7, and Micah 7:20).

Mary's song is divided into two sections. The first (46-50), she says what God did for her. In the rest (51-56), she speaks of what God will do for Israel in fulfilling the promises He made to Abraham.

Read the words on the PowerPoint slide

19 Mary was found to be with child

By the time Mary returned from Judea to Nazareth her pregnancy was at least 4-5 months advanced (Luke 1:56). If not already obvious, her condition would be discovered not long thereafter. This is implied in Matthew 1:18: “She was *found* to be with child.” It sounds as though Mary did not reveal the past events to any but Elizabeth and Zechariah until her condition was known. Her silence was the result (we may suppose) of equal parts modesty and faith; modesty in speaking of such an intimate matter, and faith that God would reveal His purpose when He chose, and to whom He chose.

The first intimation Joseph heard anything extraordinary in his betrothed wife could have come directly from Mary herself. Or perhaps he began to see the physical evidence of her pregnancy. One account, by James, Jesus’ half brother, records, “And Mary was in her sixth month and behold Joseph came....and entering into her house, he discovered she was big with child. And he.....wept bitterly.” (The Nativity, Alonzo Gaskill, p.21)

20 Joseph's Anxiety

By Jewish law, to break a betrothal required a bill of divorcement. What options were available to Joseph? The Law of Moses outlined three possible courses of action to a wronged husband in Joseph’s position. All three are summarized in Deuteronomy 22:

A betrothed wife found by her husband not to be a virgin (assuming no mitigating factors) was subject to death by stoning (vv. 13-21): “She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father’s house” (v. 21). Perhaps this severe punishment was no longer possible in a first-century Israel ruled by Rome. At the very least, however, such a woman would be divorced and ostracized from all proper society.

But perhaps – and it is not difficult to imagine “righteous” Joseph casting about for a better way out – perhaps Mary had been forced against her will (vv. 25-27). Perhaps it had happened during her

trip to Judah, and she had been too ashamed to tell anyone until now. In which case, she was not an adulteress after all.

Or, a third possibility: perhaps this had happened before their betrothal (vv. 28-29). In that case, the matter could be remedied by Joseph releasing Mary so that she might marry the father of her child.

Pursuing the first alternative was clearly out of the question. Joseph, being "a just man," but was "unwilling to expose her to public disgrace" (Matthew 1:19). And so he considered, as the best course of action, a private bill of divorce, (Deuteronomy 22:26 or 22:29). Such an action would need only two witnesses, and would bring the least possible reproach upon Mary. This solution would allow her either to bear her illegitimate child in private away from Nazareth, or to marry the father, if possible.

21 Joseph's Vision

Joseph's anxiety led to a dream, or, in the JST, a vision. An angel appeared to him. Most scholars believe it is the Angel Gabriel again, and tells him that the baby is of God and that Mary had been faithful to him. He was to be the husband to Mary and the father of the prophesied Savior of all mankind!

22 The Marriage of Joseph and Mary

There is no record of the performance of their marriage. Scholars are divided. Either they were married right away, and all would assume Joseph was either the father or that he was forgiving of her adultery and marrying her anyway, or they did not formally marry until after Jesus was born. In any case, the scriptures say that Joseph "knew her not" meaning they did not have intimate relations until after Jesus was born. We know that Joseph and Mary later had at least six more children.

23 All the world should be taxed - Bethlehem

When Rome called for the taxes to be paid and a census to be taken - it was required that all men and women should pay their taxes in their ancestral land, under the direction of Jewish tax collectors. Joseph's ancestral land was Bethlehem, of the house of David.

Mary's ancestral home was also Bethlehem and she was a landowner in Nazareth. The Bible says she returned to "her own house." A woman's name is never written in the East unless she is an independent property owner and sole representative of her line. They had to be present when their name was called for the census. The tax collection began in Jerusalem and surrounding villages (Bethlehem) and went throughout the land to its outer borders. The first called would be in the area around Jerusalem and the last called would be in the outer areas like Nazareth. Joseph and Mary, and by extension, Jesus, represented the first and the last to be called.

The way this was done was in a formal gathering of all to be enrolled. "In the name of Caesar Augustus, the Emperor and King of all the world, I call upon you all that are within the hearing of my voice to come forward and pay your legal and lawful taxes as is required." They would begin with the royal families. First on the list would be all belonging to the House of King David. They list the land and descendants. When Joseph's name was called he would come forward and declare he is living and pay his taxes.

The agent would then instruct the scribe to write that "Joseph, the son of David, a carpenter, hath appeared before us, that he is a living soul, and that his name is worthy to be written in the book

of life." If your name was not written in the book of life it was because you had committed some crime and you were blotted out. Because Mary owned land, she too would have to be declared and pay taxes. Jesus also would have to be declared to the census and written in the Book of Life. Tradition says that tax collector for the little family was the father of Matthew, the tax collector who became an Apostle and wrote of Christ's birth.

24 **Up to Bethlehem**

Mary and Joseph traveled 85 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The scriptures say they went "up" from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Bethlehem is built on a mountain ridge much higher than Nazareth. Bethlehem means "House of Bread." An appropriate name for the birth of the one who would be called, "The Bread of Life."

25 **"No Room in the Inn"**

Bethlehem was the ancestral home for both Joseph and Mary. With the call to go to your ancestral home, Bethlehem would have filled up with Joseph and Mary's relatives. In the Middle East family memories are long. Even if Joseph and Mary's family had lived several generations in the Galilee area, all Joseph would need to say is who his father and grandfather were and most homes in the village would have been open to them. Joseph was a "royal" from the family of King David. Being from King David's direct line they would have been welcomed anywhere.

A woman about to give birth is given special attention. Regardless of the circumstances, Mary would have had assistance in childbirth. To turn away a descendant of David, especially about to deliver would have been an unspeakable shame to the entire village.

Mary had family - Elizabeth and Zachariah - in a nearby village. If they couldn't find shelter there they could have to them. Also, Joseph and Mary had time to make adequate arrangements. The scriptures say, "*While they were there, the days were accomplish that she should be delivered.*" Yet all the movies and stories depict them arriving at night in Bethlehem and racing from inn to inn before Mary gives birth.

26 **Caravanserai**

What was an "inn?" Some scholars believe Mary and Joseph would have stayed in a caravanserai, a large open inner court with arches and alcoves for a bit of privacy; an ancient motel. It was filled with people and animals.

27 **No Room in the "Kataluma"**

The word translated as "inn" is an English translation. It reads differently in the original Greek. Scholars who have lived in the Middle East believe Mary and Joseph stayed in a home, possibly of a relative. Simple village homes had 2 rooms. One was for guests, which was usually an attached room at the end of the house or on the roof. The main room was the family area where they cooked, ate and slept.

Each home had a door at ground level where you entered, then went up a short flight of stairs to the main family room. At night, the animals were brought into the lower level. They would be protected from theft and would provide added warmth in the colder months. The family room had a slight slope in the direction of the animal stall that aids in sweeping and washing. Dirt and water naturally move downhill into the space for the animals and can be swept out the door. If the

family cow is hungry during the night she can stand up and eat from the stone mangers provided. In the morning the animal area is cleaned out and fresh straw put down.

What about the scripture that says Mary laid her baby in the manger because there was no room for him in the "kataluma." The Greek word used does not mean a commercial inn (that's the English translation) but means a "place to stay," and can refer to a house or guest room. Jesus then would have been placed in a manger in the family living space because in that home the guest room was already full. We have also heard that Jesus was born in a cave, but many simple homes at that time began in caves and expanded, so this too is also possible.

28 **Star**

Ancient scientists were actually astronomers. They did not have the technology we have and so they depended on the orientation of the stars to get their bearings. Eastern people believed that when a star shoots across the sky, it is a sign that some great soul has returned to its home. They believe that God has the counterpart of every star in a human being. As God, He is called the Shepherd of the Stars. He knows them by name for he has made them with His own hands.

Matthew emphasizes the Star – reminding the Jews that a star announced the birth of Abraham and Moses. Only the Wise Men saw the star in the scriptures. The star may also be dualistic, for a star was a common ancient symbol for an angel. It may be literally a star or the visitation from some heavenly messenger that guided the Wise Men.

29 **Birth of Jesus**

The family room would have been cleared of men for the birth of the child, and the village midwife and other women would have assisted at the birth.

Jesus was born in the very property where, according to legend, David had been crowned king of the shepherds. When an infant *firstborn* boy was born outside of the home in a more public situation it was customary that those nearby would bring money, silks, and spices and lay them before the boy

30 **Shepherds - Outcasts**

There was near Bethlehem, on the road to Jerusalem, a tower known as *Migdal Eder*, or *the watch-tower of the flock*. Here was the station where shepherds watched the flocks destined for sacrifice in the Temple. It was a settled conviction among the Jews that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, and equally that He was to be revealed from Migdal Eder.

However, shepherds were outcasts from polite society in Israel at that time. Theirs was a generally despised profession and they were not even allowed to bear witness in court even if they were eyewitnesses to a crime. Polite society at the time would have said that if this baby was truly the Messiah, the parents would have rejected the shepherd's visit; yet how fitting that the good news about the Lamb of God should be given first to shepherds. Shepherds were not easily fooled. They were practical men who had little to do with fantasy. If *they* said they saw angels and went and found the Messiah, then you could believe them. (Wiersbe 176)

31 **The First Witnesses**

The first announcement of the Messiah's birth was given by an angel to some anonymous shepherds. Why shepherds? Why didn't they go to the priests or the learned scribes instead?

Why a field and not Temple Mount? Historians tell us that these shepherd priests were guarding lambs that were destined for sacrifice at the Temple. They were very vigilant in their callings, because the male lambs born of a first time mother ewe were for the Passover sacrifice and had to be without any blemish. The Shepherds had to be very vigilant and would stay up all night.

32 Angels

At first only one angel was visible to them, and he was accompanied by a manifestation of the resplendent Glory of God. In Jewish writings we find this quote: “Four things were missing from Herod’s Temple; namely, the Ark of the Covenant, the Urim and Thummim, the oil of anointing, and the Glory of the Lord.”

The “Glory of the Lord” was referred to as “*Shekinah*” glory – or the glory of the Holy Spirit. That glory had departed Israel in the days of Ezekiel. Because the people refused to repent, it, along with the prophets, had disappeared from Jewish history. Many righteous people for hundreds of years had mourned its loss. Now it had returned to announce the birth of Israel’s True King. “There was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.” The single angel is now joined by a multitude singing. They are called a “host,” or army of angels. It is a paradox that God has an army announce the coming of peace through the Prince of Peace.

33 "Ye shall find Him wrapped in Swaddling Bands"

The JST changed the words, "this shall be a sign" to "this is the way you shall find him." They were given details to help them find him. They would find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. The swaddling bands would be the royal design of the Royal house of David. Swaddling bands were frequently embroidered with symbols indicating family history and genealogy. According to ancient and modern custom, to be acceptable the embroidery must be exactly the same on both sides. This was a type showing that the outward life and the inner life were the same--they were never to have a wrong side to their character (BB 35). The shepherds were not told to follow the star - probably because there was none they could see.

34 The Manger

While Renaissance paintings depict the manger as a wooden trough, it was more likely the traditional stone basin. The mangers in Israel are almost without exception made of hollowed out limestone. Wood was expensive and not to be used for such common purposes. It was in this setting that baby Yeshua was born and placed in a manger.... The angelic hosts told the shepherds, “This is the way you shall find him. . .the child will be lying in a manger (Luke 2:12).”

Christ was placed like feed in a manger. We who through our sins behave less like children of God and more like animals can partake of the Bread of Life in the hope of sustaining and renewing our spiritual lives.

35 A Name and a Blessing

At eight days Jesus was circumcised and given a name and a blessing. Why eight days? Eight is associated with a new beginning, a rebirth and baptism. Circumcision served as a reminder to all Israel of the covenant God made with Abraham. Parents were reminded to teach their children to obey God's laws in preparation for the day they would enter into personal covenants with God themselves - at the age of accountability.

36 **Joseph, the earthly father**

Joseph, as the father figure, would have given the baby his name, which was revealed to both Joseph and Mary by the angel. He would be called "Yeshua," or "Jehovah is salvation."

37 The scriptures also say "they shall call his name Immanuel which being interpreted means God with us." Matthew was quoting Isaiah 7:14. This does not literally mean they used this for his name but as an exclamation made by Mary and Joseph as the primary witnesses, "He is God! God is with us!"

38 **Dedication of Jesus at the temple**

Forty days after a male child is born, the parents must go to the temple to dedicate the child and purify the mother. We sometimes have the idea that Mary and Joseph must have been very poor, because when they came to the Temple, they brought only a pair of turtledoves. The Levitical law stated that parents were to bring a lamb to be sacrificed for the redemption of a child, and two doves or pigeons were brought for the mother's purification and atonement. Leviticus 12:8 reads that if the parents were too poor, they could omit the lamb and substitute two young pigeons.

Because Mary and Joseph sacrificed only the birds there is an impression that Mary and Joseph were poor. When the shepherds came they would have given a gift of at least one lamb under the cultural conventions of the day. Zacharias was a wealthy man. In the late 1800's, the ruins of his palatial home were still standing. Tradition says that he had hundred of lambs grazing on the hillsides. Would he and Elizabeth have allowed Mary to come like a pauper to the Temple at Jerusalem without a lamb? Mary and Joseph were visited by shepherds who had witnessed angels, and according to tradition, whenever shepherds visited they each brought at least one lamb as a gift. (Mountford 48) There was a greater reason than poverty for Mary and Joseph not to bring a lamb.

Mary *did* bring a male lamb without blemish to the temple. Jesus was the lamb! Jesus himself was to eventually be the sacrifice. How could *He* be redeemed by the sacrifice of a mere lamb? Christ was perfect and had no need for redemption - *He* was the Redeemer of all mankind! Mary came to the temple to dedicate Jesus, the lamb without blemish, to God. Mary filled the role almost of a priest in bringing the Lamb of God as a sacrifice into the temple, flesh of her flesh, and blood of her blood. The legends say that as she stood at the entrance of the temple she wept as she looked upon this beautiful baby knowing he would one day be a human sacrifice.

39 **Simeon**

When Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple, they were blessed by a certain Simeon, a righteous and faithful man who "was waiting for the consolation of Israel." We read in Luke that Simeon "came by the Spirit into the Temple" and found the child Jesus who had been brought there by his parents. Although he was fairly old, nevertheless it was revealed to him that he would not die until his eyes beheld the Messiah. The fulfillment of that sacred promise was realized as he held the 41 day-old baby in his arms.

Simeon dedicated the baby Jesus before the hundreds of people that were gathered in that temple court. Simeon blessed the tiny child and gave a prophecy concerning him. He said, "Behold, this child is set for the *fall* and the rising again of many in Israel..." It is of interest that the word "fall" here is used in *only one* other place in the New Testament. It is found in Matthew 7:27 where it reads, "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that

house; and it fell: and great was the *fall* of it." Under the influence of the Holy Ghost, Simeon's prophecy pointed to another fulfillment of the Savior's parable--that because of their rejection of their Messiah, the house of Israel would suffer a great fall. This came to pass literally in 70 AD with the destruction of the Temple.

Simeon mentions that a sword will pierce through Mary's soul. The Greek word used for sword here means a large sword such as Goliath used (1 Samuel 17:51) and the verb tense means "constantly keep on piercing" (Wiersbe-Bible Exposition Commentary, Vol. I, pg 178).

40 Anna

Anna, an old prophetess, whose name means "grace," had spent her life in fasting and prayer at the Temple. Anna was the daughter of Phanuel whose name means "the face of God." She was from the tribe of Asher means "happy and blessed." The meanings of these three names taken together (Asher, Phanuel, and Anna) express beautifully Anna's feelings concerning the choice blessing that was hers: "Happy am I" for I have seen "the face of God" through His "Grace."

Anna, betrothed at the normal age of 12-14 years was only married for 7 years before her husband died. It had been 84 years since that day making her at least 101 years old. The scriptures say that Anna "departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers might and day." She never missed a service in the Temple. According to Jewish religious law, women were allowed in every area of the Temple precincts in which men were. Women were often found in the precincts of the Temple where they came to observe the priests at work or to participate in the various services. It is important to remember that men and women came to the Temple also whenever they felt a spiritual need to pour out their prayers and their hearts to God (Shmuel Safrai, *Jerusalem Perspective*, July-August 1989, "The Role of Women in the Temple").

41 Wise Men

Joseph and Mary did not move back to Nazareth but made a home in Bethlehem. Maybe they felt it was better not to return to face the gossip or, a greater reason, God prompted them to stay in Bethlehem. They were about to receive some very special visitors.

According to oral history - Wise Men were priests from Persia called Magi - they were princes from the great Magian order, who came to worship Christ, to take their oath of allegiance from Him. Why? The Persian and Hebrew religions were not alien to each other. In training the Hebrew people, God had them taken into captivity so they could be educated among the Persians. The Israelites were in captivity in Persia and later Babylonia. When Cyrus let them return to rebuilt the temple, most of the Jews did not return. It is from this group the Magi come.

42 How many Wise Men were there?

We don't know. The number of wise men has likely come into tradition because of the three gifts given. By giving these gifts to the family of Joseph, Miriam (Mary), and Yeshua, the Wise Men provided the income allowing the family to fulfill prophecy by escaping to Egypt. According to James, the half-brother of Jesus, the Magi told Herod, "We have seen a star of great size shining among these stars, and obscuring their light, so that the stars did not appear." So they knew that a king had been born in Israel. Yet there is no record that anyone else saw the star.

43 **The Gifts of the Wise men**

Gold Fit for a King. Its nature reminds us that Christ is celestial or godly in His nature. It represents His incorruptibility, purity, value, and wisdom. It reminds us that He who was sent to redeem us was of royal birth and filled with power.

Frankincense Fit for a Priest at the Temple. It is Temple incense that symbolizes Christ's sacrifice, constant communion with God and eventual resurrection.

Myrrh A healing balm or ointment, used in preparation for death, which reminds us of Christ's Atonement which came through His suffering and also His power to heal us.

The gifts are symbolic Kings (gold), Priests (frankincense), and Scientific men (Myrrh).

44 **Herod**

He built perhaps the richest monarchy in the history of the world. His engineering feats have dumfounded contemporary architects and engineers. Experts today can do little more than shake their heads in disbelief. It is not humanly possible to do what he did. The facts speak for themselves:

His monetary wealth not only surpassed Caesar's, but exceeded the total collective wealth of the entire Roman Empire. He retained 450,000 paid employees. He created a communication system that enabled messages to be passed to every corner of the kingdom in less than 90 minutes. Stones placed in the walls of the temple in Jerusalem could not be moved and placed today.

He should have a legacy as one of the great geniuses in the history of the world. There is no such legacy. Instead he is only remembered by believers as the baby killer of Bethlehem. The coldblooded massacre of children is in keeping with the character of Herod who slew three of his own sons because they were rivals to his throne. Augustus Caesar is said to have remarked: "it is better to be Herod's pig than his son." (because he was a Jew, at least in name, he couldn't eat pork.) As he was dying he commanded his soldier to kill all the top leaders in Jerusalem so at least someone would be mourning at his death. (The decree was never carried out.)

45 **Flight into Egypt**

Joseph was warned in a *vision* (JST) that their lives were in danger; they must go to Egypt. Where did they go? Most likely to Heliopolis, which was the ancestral home of Asenath who was married to Joseph of Egypt. Mary was also a descendant of the house of Ephraim, the son of Joseph.

46 **Heliopolis,**

Heliopolis, previously known as On (Joseph of Egypt's wife's adoptive father was the Priest of On) or Zi-On as it was earlier known. So it was written, "Out of Egypt I have called my Son." There, they lived for about two years most likely in the large population of Jews living there, as well as a Jewish temple, which allowed them to escape the murderous reign of Herod the Great – and then return to Nazareth after Herod's death. (Arnold Fructenbaum, "How Did the Wise Men Know?")

47 **Death of Zacharias**

The same edict that endangered the infant Jesus' life was also dangerous for the infant John the Baptist, only 6 months older. As Mary and Joseph took Jesus into Egypt, Elizabeth escaped into the wilderness with the infant John. Zacharias was not so lucky. Herod's soldiers found him at the altar of the temple and asked where he had hidden his son. (Many knew about John's miraculous birth - he would have been a prime target). The guards threatened him with his life and he responded: "I am a martyr of God. Take my blood! But my spirit the Lord will receive, for you shed innocent blood in the forecourt of the temple of the Lord. [He was slain between the altar and the porch of the temple], and the children of Israel did not know that he had been slain."
(Studies in Scripture, Jackson and Millett, p. 151)

48 **The Glorious Advent of our Savior**

And so the advent of our Savior was a glorious thing in this world: proclaimed by Wise Men, religious men, shepherds, priests and kings: and it was not simply, as most people picture it, that of a poor, unnoticed person coming into the world, but a spectacular event heralded by those who had *eyes to see and ears to hear*.

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