

JESUS THE CHRIST

*A Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to
Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern*

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Commentary (Indented Italics), Underlining and Bolding by
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PREFACE

The scope of the subject presented in this work is expressed on the title page. It will be readily seen that the author has departed from the course usually followed by writers on the Life of Jesus Christ, which course, as a rule, begins with the birth of Mary's Babe and ends with the ascension of the slain and risen Lord from Olivet. The treatment embodied in these pages, in addition to the narrative of the Lord's life in the flesh comprises the Antemortal existence and activities of the world's Redeemer, the revelations and personal manifestations of the glorified and exalted Son of God during the apostolic period of old and in modern times, the assured nearness of the Lord's second advent, and predicted events beyond—all so far as the Holy Scriptures make plain.

It is particularly congruous and appropriate that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the only Church that affirms authority based on specific revelation and commission to use the Lord's Holy Name as a distinctive designation—should set forth her doctrines concerning the Messiah and His mission.

The author of this volume entered upon his welcome service under request and appointment from the presiding authorities of the Church; and the completed work has been read to and is approved by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. It presents, however, the writer's personal belief and profoundest conviction as to the truth of what he has written. The book is published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A characteristic feature of the work is the guidance afforded by modern scriptures and the explication of the Holy Writ of olden times in the light of present day revelation, which, as a powerful and well directed beam, illumines many dark passages of ancient construction.

The spirit of the sacredness inherent in the subject has been a constant companion of the writer throughout his pleasing labor, and he reverently invokes the same as a minister to the readers of the volume.

JAMES E. TALMAGE.
Salt Lake City, Utah,
September, 1915.

PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

The second edition of this work appeared in December, 1915, and the third in March, 1916. The third edition presented several minor alterations in wording and contained additional notes and references. Succeeding issues, including the fifth which was printed on India paper, and the present edition are practically uniform with the third.

JAMES E. TALMAGE.
Salt Lake City, Utah,
October, 1922.

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THE MERIDIAN OF TIME

Unto Moses, with whom the Lord spake "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend,"[144] the course of the human race, both as then past and future, was made known; and the coming of the Redeemer was recognized by him as the event of greatest import in all the happenings to which the earth and its inhabitants would be witness. The curse of God had aforetime fallen upon the wicked, and upon the earth because of them, "For they would not hearken unto his voice, nor believe on his Only Begotten Son, even him whom he declared should come in the meridian of time, who was prepared from before the foundation of the world." [145] In this scripture appears the earliest mention of the expressive and profoundly significant designation of the period in which the Christ should appear – the meridian of time. If the expression be regarded as figurative, be it remembered the figure is the Lord's.

The term "meridian", as commonly used, conveys the thought of a principal division of time or space[146] thus we speak of the hours before the daily noon as ante-meridian (a.m.) and those after noon as post-meridian (p.m.). So the years and the centuries of human history are divided by the great event of the birth of Jesus Christ. The years preceding that epoch-making occurrence are now designated as time *Before Christ (B.C.)*; while subsequent years are each specified as a certain Year of our Lord, or, as in the Latin tongue, Anno Domini (A.D.). Thus the world's chronology has been adjusted and systematized with reference to the time of the Savior's birth; and this method of reckoning is in use among all Christian nations. It is instructive to note that a similar system was adopted by the isolated branch of the house of Israel that had been brought from the land of Palestine to the western continent; for from the appearance of the promised sign among the people betokening the birth of Him who had been so abundantly predicted by their prophets, the Nephite reckoning of the years, starting with the departure of Lehi and his colony from Jerusalem, was superseded by the annals of the new era.[147]

The occasion of the Savior's advent was preappointed; and the time thereof was specifically revealed through authorized prophets on each of the hemispheres. The long history of the Israelitish nation had unfolded a succession of events that found a relative culmination in the earthly mission of the Messiah. That we may the better comprehend the true significance of the Lord's life and ministry while in the flesh, some consideration should be given to the political, social, and religious condition of the people amongst whom He appeared and with whom He lived and died. Such consideration involves at least a brief review of the antecedent history of the Hebrew

nation. The posterity of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob had early come to be known by the title in which they took undying pride and found inspiring promise, Israelites, or the children of Israel.[148] Collectively they were so designated throughout the dark days of their bondage in Egypt;[149] so during the four decades of the exodus and the return to the land of promise,[150] and on through the period of their prosperity as a mighty people under the administration of the judges, and as a united monarchy during the successive reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon.[151]

Immediately following the death of Solomon, about 975 B.C. according to the most generally accepted chronology, the nation was disrupted by revolt. The tribe of Judah, part of the tribe of Benjamin, and small remnants of a few other tribes remained true to the royal succession, and accepted Rehoboam, son of Solomon, as their king; while the rest, usually spoken of as the Ten Tribes, broke their allegiance to the house of David, and made Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, their king. The Ten Tribes retained the title Kingdom of Israel though also known as Ephraim.[152] Rehoboam and his adherents were distinctively called the Kingdom of Judah. For about two hundred and fifty years the two kingdoms maintained their separate autonomy; then, about 722 or 721 B.C., the independent status of the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the captive people were transported to Assyria by Shalmanezar and others. Subsequently they disappeared so completely as to be called the Lost Tribes. The Kingdom of Judah was recognized as a nation for about one hundred and thirty years longer; then, about 588 B.C., it was brought into subjection by Nebuchadnezzar, through whom the Babylonian captivity was inaugurated. For three score years and ten Judah was kept in exile and virtual bondage, in consequence of their transgression as had been predicted through Jeremiah.[153] Then the Lord softened the hearts of their captors, and their restoration was begun under the decree of Cyrus the Persian, who had subdued the Babylonian kingdom. The Hebrew people were permitted to return to Judea, and to enter upon the work of rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem.[154]

A great company of the exiled Hebrews availed themselves of this opportunity to return to the lands of their fathers, though many elected to remain in the country of their captivity, preferring Babylon to Israel. The "whole congregation" of the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile were but "forty and two thousand three hundred and three score, beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven." The relatively small size of the migrating nation is further shown by the register of their beasts of burden.[155] While those who did return strove valiantly to reestablish themselves as the house of David, and to regain some measure of their former prestige and glory, the Jews were never again a truly independent people. In turn they were preyed upon by Greece, Egypt, and Syria; but about 164-163 B.C., the people threw off, in part at least, the alien yoke, as a result of the patriotic revolt led by the Maccabees, the most prominent of whom was Judas Maccabeus. The temple service, which had been practically abolished through the proscription of victorious foes, was reestablished.[156] In the year 163 B.C., the sacred

structure was rededicated, and the joyful occasion was thereafter celebrated in annual festival as the Feast of Dedication.[157] During the reign of the Maccabees, however, the temple fell into an almost ruinous condition, more as a result of the inability of the reduced and impoverished people to maintain it than through any further decline of religious zeal. In the hope of insuring a greater measure of national protection, the Jews entered into an unequal alliance with the Romans and eventually became tributary to them, in which condition the Jewish nation continued throughout the period of our Lord's ministry. In the meridian of time Rome was virtually mistress of the world. When Christ was born Augustus Cæsar[158] was emperor of Rome, and the Idumean, Herod,[159] surnamed the Great, was the vassal king of Judea.

Some semblance of national autonomy was maintained by the Jews under Roman dominion, and their religious ceremonials were not seriously interfered with. The established orders in the priesthood were recognized, and the official acts of the national council, or Sanhedrin,[160] were held to be binding by Roman law; though the judicial powers of this body did not extend to the infliction of capital punishment without the sanction of the imperial executive. It was the established policy of Rome to allow to her tributary and vassal peoples freedom in worship so long as the mythological deities, dear to the Romans, were not maligned nor their altars desecrated.[161]

Needless to say, the Jews took not kindly to alien domination, though for many generations they had been trained in that experience, their reduced status having ranged from nominal vassalage to servile bondage. They were already largely a dispersed people. All the Jews in Palestine at the time of Christ's birth constituted but a small remnant of the great Davidic nation. The Ten Tribes, distinctively the aforesaid kingdom of Israel, had then long been lost to history, and the people of Judah had been widely scattered among the nations.

In their relations with other peoples the Jews generally endeavored to maintain a haughty exclusiveness, which brought upon them Gentile ridicule. Under Mosaic law Israel had been required to keep apart from other nations; they attached supreme importance to their Abrahamic lineage as children of the covenant, "an holy people unto the Lord," whom He had chosen "to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth".[162] Judah had experienced the woeful effects of dalliance with pagan nations, and, at the time we are now considering, a Jew who permitted himself unnecessary association with a Gentile became an unclean being requiring ceremonial cleansing to free him from defilement. Only in strict isolation did the leaders find hope of insuring the perpetuity of the nation.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Jews hated all other peoples and were reciprocally despised and contemned by all others. They manifested especial dislike for the Samaritans, perhaps because this people persisted in their efforts to establish some

claim of racial relationship. These Samaritans were a mixed people, and were looked upon by the Jews as a mongrel lot, unworthy of decent respect. When the Ten Tribes were led into captivity by the king of Assyria, foreigners were sent to populate Samaria.[163] These intermarried with such Israelites as had escaped the captivity; and some modification of the religion of Israel, embodying at least the profession of Jehovah worship, survived in Samaria. The Samaritan rituals were regarded by the Jews as unorthodox, and the people as reprobate. At the time of Christ the enmity between Jew and Samaritan was so intense that travelers between Judea and Galilee would make long detours rather than pass through the province of Samaria which lay between. The Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans.[164]

The proud feeling of self-sufficiency, the obsession for exclusiveness and separation – so distinctively a Jewish trait at that time – was inculcated at the maternal knee and emphasized in synagogue and school. The Talmud,[165] which in codified form post-dates the time of Christ's ministry, enjoined all Jews against reading the books of alien nations, declaring that none who so offended could consistently hope for Jehovah's favor.[166] Josephus gives his endorsement to similar injunction, and records that wisdom among the Jews meant only familiarity with the law and ability to discourse thereon.[167] A thorough acquaintanceship with the law was demanded as strongly as other studies were discountenanced. Thus the lines between learned and unlearned came to be rigidly drawn; and, as an inevitable consequence those who were accounted learned, or so considered themselves, looked down upon their unscholarly fellows as a class distinct and inferior.[168]

At the time of Christ's ministry, the Jews could not read books that were not endorsed or accepted as belonging to Jewish tradition and culture.

Long before the birth of Christ, the Jews had ceased to be a united people even in matters of the law, though the law was their chief reliance as a means of maintaining national solidarity. As early as four score years after the return from the Babylonian exile, and we know not with accuracy how much earlier, there had come to be recognized, as men having authority, certain scholars afterward known as scribes, and honored as rabbis[169] or teachers. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah these specialists in the law constituted a titled class, to whom deference and honor were paid. Ezra is designated "the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel".[170] The scribes of those days did valuable service under Ezra, and later under Nehemiah, in compiling the sacred writings then extant; and in Jewish usage those appointed as guardians and expounders of the law came to be known as members of the Great Synagog, or Great Assembly, concerning which we have little information through canonical channels. According to Talmudic record, the organization consisted of one hundred and twenty eminent scholars. The scope of their labors, according to the admonition traditionally perpetuated by themselves, is thus expressed: Be careful in judgment; set up many scholars, and make a

hedge about the law. They followed this behest by much study and careful consideration of all traditional details in administration; by multiplying scribes and rabbis unto themselves; and, as some of them interpreted the requirement of setting up many scholars, by writing many books and tractates; moreover, they made a fence or hedge about the law by adding numerous rules, which prescribed with great exactness the officially established proprieties for every occasion.

"Four score" is 80 years – "numerous rules" much like today's government regulations which creates "proprieties for every occasion".

Scribes and rabbis were exalted to the highest rank in the estimation of the people, higher than that of the Levitical or priestly orders; and rabbinical sayings were given precedence over the utterances of the prophets, since the latter were regarded as but messengers or spokesmen, whereas the living scholars were of themselves sources of wisdom and authority. Such secular powers as Roman suzerainty permitted the Jews to retain were vested in the hierarchy, whose members were able thus to gather unto themselves practically all official and professional honors. As a natural result of this condition, there was practically no distinction between Jewish civil and ecclesiastical law, either as to the code or its administration. Rabbinism comprised as an essential element the doctrine of the equal authority of oral rabbinical tradition with the written word of the law. The aggrandizement implied in the application of the title "Rabbi" and the self-pride manifest in welcoming such adulation were especially forbidden by the Lord, who proclaimed Himself the one Master; and, as touching the interpretation of the title held by some as "father", Jesus proclaimed but one Father and He in heaven: **"But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ."**[171]

The scribes, whether so named or designated by the more distinguishing appellation, rabbis, were repeatedly denounced by Jesus, because of the dead literalism of their teachings, and the absence of the spirit of righteousness and virile morality there from; and in such denunciations the Pharisees are often coupled with the scribes. The judgment of the Christ upon them is sufficiently expressed by His withering imprecation: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"[172]

The origin of the Pharisees is not fixed by undisputed authority as to either time or circumstance; though it is probable that the sect or party had a beginning in connection with the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. New ideas and added conceptions of the meaning of the law were promulgated by Jews who had imbibed of the spirit of Babylon; and the resulting innovations were accepted by some and rejected by others. The name "Pharisee" does not occur in the Old Testament, nor in the Apocrypha, though it is probable that the Assideans mentioned in the books of the Maccabees[173] were the original Pharisees. By derivation the name expresses the

thought of separatism; the Pharisee, in the estimation of his class, was distinctively set apart from the common people, to whom he considered himself as truly superior as the Jews regarded themselves in contrast with other nations. Pharisees and scribes were one in all essentials of profession, and rabbinism was specifically their doctrine.

In the New Testament the Pharisees are often mentioned as in opposition to the Sadducees; and such were the relations of the two parties that it becomes a simpler matter to contrast one with the other than to consider each separately. The Sadducees came into existence as a reactionary organization during the second century B.C., in connection with an insurgent movement against the Maccabean party. Their platform was that of opposition to the ever-increasing mass of traditional lore, with which the law was not merely being fenced or hedged about for safety, but under which it was being buried. The Sadducees stood for the sanctity of the law as written and preserved, while they rejected the whole mass of rabbinical precept both as orally transmitted and as collated and codified in the records of the scribes. The Pharisees formed the more popular party; the Sadducees figured as the aristocratic minority. At the time of Christ's birth the Pharisees existed as an organized body numbering over six thousand men, with Jewish women very generally on their side in sympathy and effort;[174] while the Sadducees were so small a faction and of such limited power that, when they were placed in official positions, they generally followed the policy of the Pharisees as a matter of incumbent expediency. The Pharisees were the Puritans of the time, unflinching in their demand for compliance with the traditional rules as well as the original Law of Moses. In this connection note **Paul**'s confession of faith and practice when arraigned before Agrippa – "That after the most straitest sect of our religion I **lived a Pharisee**." [175] The Sadducees prided themselves on strict compliance with the law, as they construed it, irrespective of all scribes or rabbis. The Sadducees stood for the temple and its prescribed ordinances, the Pharisees for the synagogue and its rabbinical teachings. It is difficult to decide which were the more technical if we judge each party by the standard of its own profession. By way of illustration: the Sadducees held to the literal and full exaction of the Mosaic penalty – an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth[176] – while the Pharisees contended on the authority of rabbinical dictum, that the wording was figurative, and that therefore the penalty could be met by a fine in money or goods.

Pharisees and Sadducees differed on many important if not fundamental matters of belief and practice, including the preexistence of spirits, the reality of a future state involving reward and punishment, the necessity for individual self-denial, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection from the dead; in each of which the Pharisees stood for the affirmative while the Sadducees denied.[177] Josephus avers – the doctrine of the Sadducees is that the soul and body perish together; the law is all that they are concerned to observe.[178] They were "a skeptical school of aristocratic traditionalists; adhering only to the Mosaic law." [179]

The Pharisees believed in the preexistence of spirits, the reality of a future state involving reward and punishment, the necessity for individual self-denial, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees did not believe in these doctrines.

Among the many other sects and parties established on the ground of religious or political differences, or both, are the Essenes, the Nazarites, the Herodians and the Galileans. The Essenes were characterized by professions of ultra-piety; they considered even the strictness of Pharisaic profession as weak and insufficient; they guarded membership in their order by severe exactions extending through a first and a second novitiate; they were forbidden even to touch food prepared by strangers; they practiced strict temperance and rigid self-denial, indulged in hard labor – preferably that of agriculture, and were forbidden to trade as merchants, to take part in war, or to own or employ slaves.[180] Nazarites are not named in the New Testament, though of specific record in the earlier scriptures;[181] and from sources other than scriptural we learn of their existence at and after the time of Christ. The Nazarite was one of either sex who was bound to abstinence and sacrifice by a voluntary vow for special service to God; the period of the vow might be limited or for life. While the Essenes cultivated an ascetic brotherhood, the Nazarites were devoted to solitary discipline.

The Herodians constituted a politico-religious party who favored the plans of the Herods under the professed belief that through that dynasty alone could the status of the Jewish people be maintained and a reestablishment of the nation be secured. We find mention of the Herodians laying aside their partisan antipathies and acting in concert with the Pharisees in the effort to convict the Lord Jesus and bring Him to death.[182] The Galileans or people of Galilee were distinguished from their fellow Israelites of Judea by greater simplicity and less ostentatious devotion in matters pertaining to the law. They were opposed to innovations, yet were generally more liberal or less bigoted than some of the professedly devout Judeans. They were prominent as able defenders in the wars of the people, and won for themselves a reputation for bravery and patriotism. They are mentioned in connection with certain tragical occurrences during our Lord's lifetime.[183]

The authority of the priesthood was outwardly acknowledged by the Jews at the time of Christ; and the appointed order of service for priest and Levite was duly observed. During the reign of David, the descendants of Aaron, who were the hereditary priests in Israel, had been divided into twenty-four courses,[184] and to each course the labors of the sanctuary were allotted in turn. Representatives of but four of these courses returned from the captivity, but from these the orders were reconstructed on the original plan. In the days of Herod the Great the temple ceremonies were conducted with great display and outward elaborateness, as an essential matter of consistency with the splendor of the structure, which surpassed in magnificence all earlier sanctuaries.[185] Priests and Levites, therefore, were in demand for continuous service, though the individuals were changed at short intervals according to the established

system. In the regard of the people the priests were inferior to the rabbis, and the scholarly attainments of a scribe transcended in honor that pertaining to ordination in the priesthood. The religion of the time was a matter of ceremony and formality, of ritual and performance; it had lost the very spirit of worship, and the true conception of the relationship between Israel and Israel's God was but a dream of the past.

Such in brief were the principal features of the world's condition, and particularly as concerns the Jewish people, when Jesus the Christ was born in the meridian of time.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. The Sanhedrin – This, the chief court or high council of the Jews, derives its name from the Greek *sunedrion*, signifying "a council." In English it is sometimes though inaccurately, written "Sanhedrim." The Talmud traces the origin of this body to the calling of the seventy elders whom Moses associated with himself, making seventy-one in all, to administer as judges in Israel (Numb. 11:16, 17). The Sanhedrin in the time of Christ, as also long before, comprised seventy-one members, including the high-priest who presided in the assembly. It appears to have been known in its earlier period as the Senate, and was occasionally so designated even after Christ's death (Josephus, *Antiquities* xii, 3:3; compare Acts 5:21); the name "Sanhedrin" came into general use during the reign of Herod the Great; but the term is not of Biblical usage; its equivalent in the New Testament is "council" (Matt. 5:22; 10:17; 26:59) though it must be remembered that the same term is applied to courts of lesser jurisdiction than that of the Sanhedrin, and to local tribunals. (Matt 5:22; 10:17; 26:59; Mark 13:9; see also Acts 25:12.)

The following, from the *Standard Bible Dictionary*, is instructive: "Those qualified to be members were in general of the priestly house and especially of the Sadducean nobility. But from the days of Queen Alexandra (69-68 B.C.) onward, there were with these chief priests also many Pharisees in it under the name of scribes and elders. These three classes are found combined in Matt. 27:41; Mark 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1. How such members were appointed is not entirely clear. The aristocratic character of the body and the history of its origin forbid the belief that it was by election. Its nucleus probably consisted of the members of certain ancient families, to which, however, from time to time others were added by the secular rulers. The presiding officer was the high priest, who at first exorcized in it more than the authority of a member, claiming a voice equal to that of the rest of the body. But after the reduction of the high priesthood from a hereditary office to one bestowed by the political ruler according to his pleasure, and the frequent changes in the office introduced by the new system, the high priest naturally lost his prestige. Instead of holding in his hands the 'government of the nation,' he came to be but one of many to share this power; those who had served as high priests being still in esteem among their nation, and having lost their office not for any reason that could be considered valid by the religious sense of the community,

exerted a large influence over the decisions of the assembly. In the New Testament they are regarded as the rulers (Matt. 26:59; 27:41; Acts 4:5, 8; Luke 23:13, 35; John 7:26), and Josephus' testimony supports this view. The functions of the Sanhedrin were religious and moral, and also political. In the latter capacity they further exercised administrative as well as judicial functions. As a religious tribunal, the Sanhedrin wielded a potent influence over the whole of the Jewish world (Acts 9:2); but as a court of justice, after the division of the country upon the death of Herod, its jurisdiction was limited to Judea. Here, however, its power was absolute even to the passing of sentence of death (Josephus, Ant. xiv, 9:3, 4; Matt. 26:3; Acts 4:5; 6:12; 22:30), although it had no authority to carry the sentence into execution except as approved and ordered by the representative of the Roman government. The law by which the Sanhedrin governed was naturally the Jewish, and in the execution of it this tribunal had a police of its own, and made arrests at its discretion (Matt 26:47)... While the general authority of the Sanhedrin extended over the whole of Judea, the towns in the country had local councils of their own (Matt. 5:22; 10:17; Mark 13:9; Josephus, B. J. ii, 14:1), for the administration of local affairs. These were constituted of elders (Luke 7:3), at least seven in number, (Josephus, Ant. iv, 8:14; B. J. ii, 20:5), and in some of the largest towns as many as twenty-three. What the relation of these to the central council in Jerusalem was does not appear clearly.... Some sort of mutual recognition existed among them; for whenever the judges of the local court could not agree it seems that they were in the habit of referring their cases to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. (Josephus, Ant. iv, 8:14; Mishna, Sanh. 11:2)."

2. Talmud – "The body of Jewish civil and religious law (and discussion directly or remotely relating thereto) not comprised in the Pentateuch, commonly including the *Mishna* and the *Gemara*, but sometimes limited to the latter; written in Aramaic. It exists in two great collections, the *Palestinian Talmud*, or *Talmud of the Land of Israel*, or *Talmud of the West*, or, more popularly, *Jerusalem Talmud*, embodying the discussions on the Mishna of the Palestinian doctors from the 2d to the middle of the 5th century; and the *Babylonian*, embodying those of the Jewish doctors in Babylonia, from about 190 to the 7th century." – *New Standard Dict.* The Mishna comprises the earlier portions of the Talmud; the Gemara is made up of later writings and is largely an exposition of the Mishna. An edition of the Babylonian Talmud alone (issued at Vienna in 1682) comprised twenty-four tomes. (Geikie.)

3. Rabbis – The title Rabbi is equivalent to our distinctive appellations Doctor, Master, or Teacher. By derivation it means Master or my Master, thus connoting dignity and rank associated with politeness of address. A definite explanation of the term is given by John (1:38), and the same meaning attaches by implication to its use as recorded by Matthew (23:8). It was applied as a title of respect to Jesus on several occasions (Matt. 23:7, 8; 26:25, 49; Mark 9:5; 11:21; 14:45; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8). The title was of comparatively recent usage in the time of Christ, as it appears to have first come into general use during the reign of Herod the Great, though the earlier teachers,

of the class without the name of Rabbis, were generally revered, and the title was carried back to them by later usage. Rab was an inferior title and Rabban a superior one to Rabbi. Rabboni was expressive of most profound respect, love and honor (see John 20:16). At the time of our Lord's ministry the Rabbis were held in high esteem, and rejoiced in the affluents of precedence and honor among men. They were almost exclusively of the powerful Pharisaic party.

The following is from Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. I, chap. 6: "If the most important figures in the society of Christ's day were the Pharisees, it was because they were the Rabbis or teachers of the Law. As such they received superstitious honor, which was, indeed, the great motive, with many, to court the title or join the party. The Rabbis were classed with Moses, the patriarchs, and the prophets, and claimed equal reverence. Jacob and Joseph were both said to have been Rabbis. The Targum of Jonathan substitutes Rabbis, or Scribes, for the word 'prophets' where it occurs. Josephus speaks of the prophets of Saul's day as Rabbis. In the Jerusalem Targum all the patriarchs are learned Rabbis.... They were to be dearer to Israel than father or mother – because parents avail only in this world [as was then taught] but the Rabbi forever. They were set above kings, for is it not written 'Through me kings reign'? Their entrance into a house brought a blessing; to live or to eat with them was the highest good fortune.... The Rabbis went even further than this in exalting their order. The Mishna declares that it is a greater crime to speak anything to their discredit, than to speak against the words of the Law.... Yet in form, the Law received boundless honor. Every saying of the Rabbis had to be based on some words of it, which were, however, explained in their own way. The spirit of the times, the wild fanaticism of the people, and their own bias, tended alike to make them set value only on ceremonies and worthless externalisms, to the utter neglect of the spirit of the sacred writings. Still it was held that the Law needed no confirmation, while the words of the Rabbis did. So far as the Roman authority under which they lived left them free, the Jews willingly put all power in the hands of the Rabbis. They or their nominees filled every office, from the highest in the priesthood to the lowest in the community. They were the casuists, the teachers, the priests, the judges, the magistrates, and the physicians of the nation.... The central and dominant characteristic of the teaching of the Rabbis was the certain advent of a great national Deliverer – the Messiah or Anointed of God or in the Greek translation of the title, the Christ. In no other nation than the Jews has such a conception ever taken such root or shown such vitality.... It was agreed among the Rabbis that His birthplace must be Bethlehem, and that He must rise from the tribe of Judah."

Individual rabbis gathered disciples about them, and, inevitably, rivalry became manifest. Rabbinical schools and academies were established, each depending for its popularity on the greatness of some rabbi. The most famous of these institutions in the time of Herod I. were the school of Hillel and that of his rival Shammai. Later, tradition invested these with the title "the fathers of old." It appears from the trifling matters over which the followers of these two disagreed, that only by opposition could either

maintain a distinguishing status. Hillel is reputed as the grandfather of Gamaliel, the rabbi and doctor of the law at whose feet Saul of Tarsus, afterward Paul the apostle, received his early instruction (Acts 22:3). So far as we have historic record of the views, principles or beliefs advocated by the rival schools of Hillel and Shammai, it appears that the former stood for a greater degree of liberality and tolerance, while the later emphasized a strict and possibly narrow interpretation of the law and its associated traditions. The dependence of the rabbinical schools on the authority of tradition is illustrated by an incident of record to the effect that even the prestige of the great Hillel did not insure him against uproar when once he spoke without citing precedent; only when he added that so had his masters Abtalion and Shemajah spoken did the tumult subside.

4. Sadducean Denial of the Resurrection— As set forth in the text, the Sadducees formed an association numerically small as compared with the more popular and influential Pharisees. In the Gospels the Pharisees are of frequent mention, and very commonly in connection with the scribes, while the Sadducees are less frequently named. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Sadducees appear frequently as opponents of the Church. This condition was doubtless due to the prominence given the resurrection from the dead among the themes of the apostolic preaching, the Twelve continually bearing testimony to the actual resurrection of Christ. Sadducean doctrine denied the actuality and possibility of a bodily resurrection, the contention resting mainly on the ground that Moses, who was regarded as the supreme mortal lawgiver in Israel, and the chief mouthpiece of Jehovah, had written nothing concerning life after death. The following is taken from Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, article "Sadducees," as touching this matter: "The denial of man's resurrection after death followed in the conception of the Sadducees as a logical conclusion from their denial that Moses had revealed to the Israelites the Oral Law. For on a point so momentous as a second life beyond the grave, no religious party among the Jews would have deemed themselves bound to accept any doctrine as an article of faith, unless it had been proclaimed by Moses, their great legislator; and it is certain that in the written Law of the Pentateuch there is a total absence of any assertion by Moses of the resurrection of the dead. This fact is presented to Christians in a striking manner by the well-known words of the Pentateuch which are quoted by Christ in argument with the Sadducees on this subject (Exo. 3:6, 16; Mark 12:26, 27; Matt. 22:31, 32; Luke 20:37). It cannot be doubted that in such a case Christ would quote to His powerful adversaries the most cogent text in the Law; and yet the text actually quoted does not do more than suggest an inference on this great doctrine. It is true that passages in other parts of the Old Testament express a belief in the resurrection (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Job 19:26; and in some of the Psalms); and it may at first sight be a subject of surprise that the Sadducees were not convinced by the authority of those passages. But although the Sadducees regarded the books which contained these passages as sacred, it is more than doubtful whether any of the Jews regarded them as sacred in precisely the same sense as the written Law. To the Jews

Moses was and is a colossal form, preeminent in authority above all subsequent prophets."

5. The Temple of Herod – "Herod's purpose in the great undertaking [that of restoring the temple, and of enlarging it on a plan of unprecedented magnificence] was that of aggrandizing himself and the nation, rather than the rendering of homage to Jehovah. His proposition to rebuild or restore the temple on a scale of increased magnificence was regarded with suspicion and received with disfavor by the Jews, who feared that were the ancient edifice demolished, the arbitrary monarch might abandon his plan and the people would be left without a temple. To allay these fears the king proceeded to reconstruct and restore the old edifice, part by part, directing the work so that at no time was the temple service seriously interrupted. So little of the ancient structure was allowed to stand, however, that the temple of Herod must be regarded as a new creation. The work was begun about sixteen years before the birth of Christ; and while the Holy House itself was practically completed within a year and a half, this part of the labor having been performed by a body of one thousand priests specially trained for the purpose, the temple area was a scene of uninterrupted building operations down to the year 63 A.D. We read that in the time of Christ's ministry the temple had been forty-six years in building; and at that time it was unfinished.

"The Biblical record gives us little information regarding this, the last and the greatest of ancient temples; for what we know concerning it we are indebted, mainly to Josephus, with some corroborative testimony found in the Talmud. In all essentials the Holy House, or Temple proper, was similar to the two earlier houses of sanctuary, though externally far more elaborate and imposing than either; but in the matter of surrounding courts and associated buildings, the Temple of Herod preeminently excelled.... Yet its beauty and grandeur lay in architectural excellence rather than in the sanctity of its worship or in the manifestation of the Divine Presence within its walls. Its ritual and service were largely man-prescribed; for while the letter of the Mosaic Law was professedly observed, the law had been supplemented and in many features supplanted by rule and priestly prescription. The Jews professed to consider it holy, and by them it was proclaimed as the House of the Lord. Devoid though it was of the divine accompaniments of earlier shrines accepted of God, and defiled as it was by priestly arrogance and usurpation, as also by the selfish interest of traffic and trade, it was nevertheless recognized even by our Lord the Christ as His Father's House. (Matt. 21:12; compare Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45.).... For thirty or more years after the death of Christ, the Jews continued the work of adding to and embellishing the temple buildings. The elaborate design conceived and projected by Herod had been practically completed; the temple was well-nigh finished, and, as soon afterward appeared, was ready for destruction. Its fate had been definitely foretold by the Savior Himself." – From the author's *House of the Lord*, pp. 54-61.

It took almost 79 years to build the Temple of Herod, and soon after it was "well-nigh finished," it was ready for destruction.

6. State of the World at the Time of the Savior's Birth – At the beginning of the Christian era, the Jews, in common with most other nations, were subjects of the Roman Empire. They were allowed a considerable degree of liberty in maintaining their religious observances and national customs generally, but their status was far from that of a free and independent people. The period was one of comparative peace – a time marked by fewer wars and less dissension than the empire had known for many years. These conditions were favorable for the mission of the Christ, and for the founding of His Church on earth. The religious systems extant at the time of Christ's earthly ministry may be classified in a general way as Jewish and Pagan, with a minor system – the Samaritan – which was essentially a mixture of the other two. The children of Israel alone proclaimed the existence of the true and living God; they alone looked forward to the advent of the Messiah, whom mistakenly they awaited as a prospective conqueror coming to crush the enemies of their nation. All other nations, tongues, and peoples, bowed to pagan deities, and their worship comprised naught but the sensual rites of heathen idolatry. Paganism was a religion of form and ceremony, based on polytheism – a belief in the existence of a multitude of gods, which deities were subject to all the vices and passions of humanity, while distinguished by immunity from death. Morality and virtue were unknown as elements of heathen service; and the dominant idea in pagan worship was that of propitiating the gods, in the hope of averting their anger and purchasing their favor. – See the author's *The Great Apostasy*, 1:2-4, and notes following the chapter cited.

FOOTNOTES

[144] Exo. 33:11; see also Numb. 12:8; Deut. 34:10; compare P. of G.P., Moses 1:2, 11, 31.

[145] P. of G.P., Moses 5:57; for later mention of the "meridian of time," see 6:56-62; and 7:46; and compare Doc. and Cov. 20:26; 39:3.

[146] "Meridian: ... figuratively, the highest point or culminating-point of anything; the zenith; as the meridian of life." – "New Stand. Dict."

[147] B. of M., 3 Nephi 2:8; compare 4 Nephi 1:1, 21; Mormon 8:6; Moroni 10:1.

[148] Gen. 32:28; 35:10.

[149] Exo. 1:1, 7; 9:6, 7; 12:3, etc.

[150] Exo. 12:35, 40; 13:19; 15:1; Numb. 20:1, 19, 24, etc.

[151] See mention throughout the books of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and references therein.

[152] Isa. 11:13; 17:3; Ezek. 37:16-22; Hos. 4:17.

[153] Jer. 25:11, 12; see also 29:10.

[154] Ezra 1:1-4; the author, "House of the Lord," pp. 47-53; also "Articles of Faith" xvii:1-22.

[155] Ezra 2:64-67.

[156] "House of the Lord," pp. 51-53.

[157] Josephus, Ant. xii:6 and 7; 2 Maccabees 2:19; 10:1-8; also John 10:22.

[158] Luke 2:1.

[159] Matt. 2:1. Note 2, end of chapter 8.

[160] Note 1, end of chapter.

- [161] Deut. 7:6; see also 10:15; Exo. 19:5, 6; Psa. 135:4; Isa. 41:8; 45:4; compare 1 Peter 2:9.
- [162] Note 6, end of chapter.
- [163] 2 Kings 17:24.
- [164] John 4:9; Luke 9:51-53. Chap. 13 herein.
- [165] Note 2, end of chapter.
- [166] Bab. Talmud, Sanhedrin, 90.
- [167] Josephus, Ant. xx, 11:2.
- [168] Note the emphasis given to this distinction in John 7:45-49; see also 9:34.
- [169] Note 3, end of chapter.
- [170] Ezra 7:11; see also verses 6, 10, 12.
- [171] Matt. 23:8-10; see also John 1:38; 3:2.
- [172] Matt. 23:13, 14, 15, 23. etc., read the entire chapter; compare Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:46; see also as instances of special denunciation of the Pharisees Luke 11:37-44. Note also that the lawyers, who were professionally associated with the scribes, are included in the sweeping criticism: verses 45-54. See Chapter 31 herein.
- [173] 1 Maccabees 2:42; 7:13-17; 2 Maccabees 14:6.
- [174] Josephus, Antiquities, xvii, 2:4.
- [175] Acts 26:5; see also 23:6; Philip. 3:5.
- [176] Exo. 21:23-35; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21; contrast Matt 5:38-44.
- [177] Note 4, end of chapter.
- [178] Josephus, Antiquities xviii, 1:4.
- [179] "New Stand. Dict.," under "Sadducees."
- [180] Josephus, Antiquities xviii, 1:5.
- [181] Numb. 6:2-21; Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17; Amos. 2:11, 12. Note 1, end of chapter 7.
- [182] Matt. 22:15, 16; Mark 12:13.
- [183] Luke 13:1, 2; see also John 4:45; Mark 14:70; Acts 2:7.
- [184] 1 Chron. 24:1-18.
- [185] Note 5, end of chapter.

7

GABRIEL'S ANNUNCIATION OF JOHN AND OF JESUS

JOHN THE FORERUNNER

Associated with the prophecies of the birth of Christ are predictions concerning one who should precede Him, going before to prepare the way. It is not surprising that the annunciation of the immediate advent of the forerunner was speedily followed by that of the Messiah; nor that the proclamations were made by the same heavenly ambassador – Gabriel, sent from the presence of God.[186]

About fifteen months prior to the Savior's birth, Zacharias, a priest of the Aaronic order, was officiating in the functions of his office in the temple at Jerusalem. His wife, Elisabeth, was also of a priestly family, being numbered among the descendants of Aaron. The couple had never been blessed with children; and at the time of which we speak they were both well stricken in years and had sorrowfully given up hope of posterity. Zacharias belonged to the course of priests named after Abijah, and known in later time as the course of Abia. This was the eighth in the order of the twenty-four courses established by David the king, each course being appointed to serve in turn a week at the sanctuary.[187] It will be remembered that on the return of the people from Babylon only four of the courses were represented; but of these four each averaged over fourteen hundred men.[188]

During his week of service each priest was required to maintain scrupulously a state of ceremonial cleanliness of person; he had to abstain from wine, and from food except that specifically prescribed; he had to bathe frequently; he lived within the temple precincts and thus was cut off from family association; he was not allowed to come near the dead, nor to mourn in the formal manner if death should rob him of even his nearest and dearest of kin. We learn that the daily selection of the priest who should enter the Holy Place, and there burn incense on the golden altar, was determined by lot;[189] and furthermore we gather, from non-scriptural history, that because of the great number of priests the honor of so officiating seldom fell twice to the same person.

On this day the lot had fallen to Zacharias. It was a very solemn occasion in the life of the humble Judean priest – this one day in his life on which the special and particularly sacred service was required of him. Within the Holy Place he was separated by the veil of the temple only from the Oracle or Holy of Holies – the inner sanctuary into which none but the high priest might enter, and he only on the Day of Atonement, after long

ceremonial preparation.[190] The place and the time were conducive to the highest and most reverential feelings. As Zacharias ministered within the Holy Place, the people without bowed themselves in prayer, watching for the clouds of incense smoke to appear above the great partition which formed the barrier between the place of general assembly and the Holy Place, and awaiting the reappearance of the priest and his pronouncement of the benediction.

Before the astonished gaze of Zacharias, at this supreme moment of his priestly service, there appeared, standing on the right of the golden altar of incense, an angel of the Lord. Many generations had passed in Jewry since any visible presence other than mortal had been manifest within the temple, either in the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies; the people regarded personal visitations of heavenly beings as occurrences of the past; they had come almost to believe that there were no longer prophets in Israel. Nevertheless, there was always a feeling of anxiety, akin to that of troubled expectancy, whenever a priest approached the inner sanctuary, which was regarded as the particular abode of Jehovah should He ever again condescend to visit His people. In view of these conditions we read without surprise that this angelic presence troubled Zacharias and caused fear to fall upon him. The words of the heavenly visitant, however, were comforting though of startling import, embodying as they did the unqualified assurance that the man's prayers had been heard, and that his wife should bear him a son, who must be named John.[191] The promise went even further, specifying that the child to be born of Elisabeth would be a blessing to the people; many would rejoice at his birth; he would be great in the sight of the Lord, and must be guarded against wine and strong drink;[192] he would be filled with the Holy Ghost, would be the means of turning many souls to God, and would go before to make ready a people prepared to receive the Messiah.

Doubtless Zacharias recognized in the predicted future of the yet unborn child the great forerunner, of whom the prophets had told and the psalmist had sung; but that such a one should be offspring of himself and his aged wife seemed impossible despite the angel's promise. The man doubted, and asked whereby he should know that what his visitant had spoken was true: "And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."[193] When the highly blessed though sorely smitten priest at length came from within and appeared before the expectant congregation, already made anxious by his delayed return, he could but mutely dismiss the assembly and by signs indicate that he had seen a vision. The penalty for doubt was already operative; Zacharias was dumb.

In due time the child was born, there in the hill country of Judea[194] where Zacharias and Elisabeth had their home; and, on the eighth day following the birth the family

assembled in accordance with custom and Mosaic requirement, to name the babe in connection with the rite of circumcision.[195] All suggestions that he be called after his father were overruled by Zacharias, who wrote with decisive finality: "His name is John." Thereupon the dumb[196] priest's tongue was loosed, and being filled with the Holy Ghost he burst forth in prophecy, praise and song; his inspired utterances have been set to music and are sung in worship by many Christian congregations as the Benedictus:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."[197]

The last words Zacharias had uttered prior to the infliction of dumbness were words of doubt and unbelief, words in which he had called for a sign as proof of authority of one who came from the presence of the Almighty; the words with which he broke his long silence were words of praise unto God in whom he had all assurance, words that were as a sign to all who heard, and the fame whereof spread throughout the region.

The unusual circumstances attending the birth of John, notably the months of dumbness passed by the father and his sudden recovery of speech on the bestowal of the fore-appointed name, caused many to marvel and some to fear, as they asked: "What manner of child shall this be?" When, a man grown, John raised his voice in the wilderness, again in fulfillment of prophecy, the people questioned as to whether he was not the Messiah.[198] Of his life between infancy and the beginning of his public ministry, a period of approximately thirty years, we have of record but a single sentence: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."[199]

THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE VIRGIN

Six months after the visitation of Gabriel to Zacharias, and three months prior to the birth of John, the same heavenly messenger was sent to a young woman named Mary, who lived at Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was of the lineage of David; and though

unmarried was betrothed or espoused to a man named Joseph, who also was of royal descent through the Davidic line. The angel's salutation, while full of honor and blessing, caused Mary to wonder and to feel troubled. "**Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women**";[200] thus did Gabriel greet the virgin.

In common with other daughters of Israel, specifically those of the tribe of Judah and of known descent from David, Mary had doubtless contemplated, with holy joy and ecstasy, the coming of the Messiah through the royal line; she knew that some Jewish maiden was yet to become the mother of the Christ. Was it possible that the angel's words to her had reference to this supreme expectation and hope of the nation? She had little time to turn these things in her mind, for the angel continued: "**Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.**"[201]

Even yet she comprehended but in part the import of this momentous visitation. Not in the spirit of doubt such as had prompted Zacharias to ask for a sign, but through an earnest desire for information and explanation, Mary, conscious of her unmarried status and sure of her virgin condition, asked: "**How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?**" The answer to her natural and simple inquiry was the announcement of a miracle such as the world had never known – not a miracle in the sense of a happening contrary to nature's law, nevertheless a miracle through the operation of higher law, such as the human mind ordinarily fails to comprehend or regard as possible. Mary was informed that she would conceive and in time bring forth a Son, of whom no mortal man would be the father: – "**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.**"[202]

Then the angel told her of the blessed condition of her cousin Elisabeth, who had been barren; and by way of sufficient and final explanation added: "**For with God nothing shall be impossible.**" With gentle submissiveness and humble acceptance, the pure young virgin replied: "**Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.**"

His message delivered, Gabriel departed, leaving the chosen Virgin of Nazareth to ponder over her wondrous experience. Mary's promised Son was to be "The Only Begotten" of the Father in the flesh; so it had been both positively and abundantly predicted. True, the event was unprecedented; true also it has never been paralleled; but that the virgin birth would be unique was as truly essential to the fulfillment of prophecy as that it should occur at all. That Child to be born of Mary was begotten of

Elohim, the Eternal Father, not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and, the offspring from that association of supreme sanctity, celestial Sireship, and pure though mortal maternity, was of right to be called the "Son of the Highest." In His nature would be combined the powers of Godhood with the capacity and possibilities of mortality; and this through the ordinary operation of the fundamental law of heredity, declared of God, demonstrated by science, and admitted by philosophy, that living beings shall propagate – after their kind. The Child Jesus was to inherit the physical, mental, and spiritual traits, tendencies, and powers that characterized His parents – one immortal and glorified – God, the other human – woman.

Jesus Christ was to be born of mortal woman, but was not directly the offspring of mortal man, except so far as His mother was the daughter of both man and woman. In our Lord alone has been fulfilled the word of God spoken in relation to the fall of Adam, that the *seed of the woman* should have power to overcome Satan by bruising the serpent's head.[203]

In respect to place, condition, and general environment, Gabriel's annunciation to Zacharias offers strong contrast to the delivery of his message to Mary. The prospective forerunner of the Lord was announced to his father within the magnificent temple, and in a place the most exclusively sacred save one other in the Holy House, under the light shed from the golden candlestick, and further illumined by the glow of living coals on the altar of gold; the Messiah was announced to His mother in a small town far from the capital and the temple, most probably within the walls of a simple Galilean cottage.

MARY'S VISIT TO HER COUSIN ELISABETH

It was natural that Mary, left now to herself with a secret in her soul, holier, greater, and more thrilling than any ever borne before or since, should seek companionship, and that of some one of her own sex, in whom she could confide, from whom she might hope to derive comfort and support, and to whom it would be not wrong to tell what at that time was probably known to no mortal save herself. Her heavenly visitant had indeed suggested all this in his mention of Elisabeth, Mary's cousin, herself a subject of unusual blessing, and a woman through whom another miracle of God had been wrought. Mary set out with haste from Nazareth for the hill country of Judea, on a journey of about a hundred miles if the traditional account be true that the little town of Juttah was the home of Zacharias. There was mutual joy in the meeting between Mary the youthful virgin, and Elisabeth, already well advanced in life. From what of Gabriel's words her husband had communicated, Elisabeth must have known that the approaching birth of her son would soon be followed by that of the Messiah, and that therefore the day for which Israel had waited and prayed through the long dark centuries was about to dawn. When Mary's salutation fell upon her ears, the Holy Ghost bore witness that the chosen mother of the Lord stood before her in the person of her cousin; and as she

experienced the physical thrill incident to the quickening spirit of her own blessed conception, she returned the greeting of her visitor with reverence: "**Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**"[204] Mary responded with that glorious hymn of praise, since adopted in the musical ritual of churches as the Magnificat:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."[205]

MARY AND JOSEPH

The visit lasted about three months, after which time Mary returned to Nazareth. The real embarrassment of her position she had now to meet. At the home of her cousin she had been understood; her condition had served to confirm the testimony of Zacharias and Elisabeth; but how would her word be received at her own home? And especially, how would she be regarded by her espoused husband?[206] Betrothal, or espousal, in that time was in some respects as binding as the marriage vow, and could only be set aside by a ceremonial separation akin to divorce; yet an espousal was but an engagement to marry, not a marriage. When Joseph greeted his promised bride after her three months' absence, he was greatly distressed over the indications of her prospective maternity. Now the Jewish law provided for the annulment of a betrothal in either of two ways – by public trial and judgment, or by private agreement attested by a written document signed in the presence of witnesses. Joseph was a just man, a strict observer of the law, yet no harsh extremist; moreover he loved Mary and would save her all unnecessary humiliation, whatever might be his own sorrow and suffering. For Mary's sake he dreaded the thought of publicity; and therefore determined to have the espousal annulled with such privacy the law allowed. He was troubled and thought much of his duty in the matter, when, "**behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.**"[207]

Great was Joseph's relief of mind; and great his joy in the realization that the long predicted coming of the Messiah was at hand; the words of the prophets would be fulfilled; a virgin, and she the one in the world most dear to him, had conceived, and in

due time would bring forth that blessed Son, Emmanuel, which name by interpretation means "God with us." [208] The angel's salutation was significant; "Joseph, thou son of David," was the form of address; and the use of that royal title must have meant to Joseph that, though he was of kingly lineage, marriage with Mary would cast no shadow upon his family status. Joseph waited not; to insure Mary all possible protection and establish his full legal right as her lawful guardian he hastened the solemnization of the marriage, and **"did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."** [209]

The national hope of a Messiah based on promise and prophecy had become confused in the Jewish mind, through the influence of rabbinism with its many vagaries, and its "private interpretation" [210] made to appear authoritative by the artificially sustained prestige of the expositors; yet certain conditions had been emphasized as essential, even by the rabbis, and by these essentials would be judged the claim of any Jew who might declare himself to be the long expected One. It was beyond question that the Messiah was to be born within the tribe of Judah and through the line of descent from David, and, being of David He must of necessity be of the lineage of Abraham, through whose posterity, according to the covenant, all nations of the earth were to be blessed. [211]

Two genealogical records, purporting to give the lineage of Jesus are found in the New Testament, one in the first chapter of Matthew, the other in the third chapter of Luke. These records present several apparent discrepancies, but such have been satisfactorily reconciled by the research of specialists in Jewish genealogy. No detailed analysis of the matter will be attempted here; but it should be borne in mind that the consensus of judgment on the part of investigators is that Matthew's account is that of the royal lineage, establishing the order of sequence among the legal successors to the throne of David, while the account given by Luke is a personal pedigree, demonstrating descent from David without adherence to the line of legal succession to the throne through primogeniture or nearness of kin. [212] Luke's record is regarded by many, however, as the pedigree of Mary, while Matthew's is accepted as that of Joseph. The all important fact to be remembered is that the Child promised by Gabriel to Mary, the virginal bride of Joseph, would be born in the royal line. A personal genealogy of Joseph was essentially that of Mary also, for they were cousins. Joseph is named as son of Jacob by Matthew, and as son of Heli by Luke; but Jacob and Heli were brothers, and it appears that one of the two was the father of Joseph and the other the father of Mary and therefore father-in-law to Joseph. That Mary was of Davidic descent is plainly set forth in many scriptures; for since Jesus was to be born of Mary, yet was not begotten by Joseph, who was the reputed, and, according to the law of the Jews, the legal, father, the blood of David's posterity was given to the body of Jesus through Mary alone. Our Lord, though repeatedly addressed as Son of David, never repudiated the title but accepted it as rightly applied to Himself. [213] Apostolic testimony stands in positive assertion of the royal heirship of Christ through earthly lineage, as witness the

affirmation of Paul, the scholarly Pharisee: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;" and again: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead." [214]

In all the persecutions waged by His implacable haters, in all the false accusations brought against Him, in the specific charges of sacrilege and blasphemy based on His acknowledgment of the Messiahship as His own, no mention is found of even an insinuation that He could not be the Christ through any ineligibility based on lineage. Genealogy was assiduously cared for by the Jews before, during, and after the time of Christ; indeed their national history was largely genealogical record; and any possibility of denying the Christ because of unattested descent would have been used to the fullest extent by insistent Pharisee, learned scribe, haughty rabbi, and aristocratic Sadducee.

At the time of the Savior's birth, Israel was ruled by alien monarchs. The rights of the royal Davidic family were unrecognized; and the ruler of the Jews was an appointee of Rome. Had Judah been a free and independent nation, ruled by her rightful sovereign, Joseph the carpenter would have been her crowned king; and his lawful successor to the throne would have been Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

Gabriel's annunciation to Mary was that of the Son of David, on whose coming the hope of Israel rested as on a sure foundation. The One, thus announced, was Emmanuel, even God who was to dwell in flesh with His people, [215] the Redeemer of the world, Jesus the Christ.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. John the Baptist Regarded as a Nazarite – The instruction of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, that the promised son, John, was to "drink neither wine nor strong drink," and the adult life of John as a dweller in the desert, together with his habit of wearing rough garb, have led commentators and Biblical specialists to assume that he was a "Nazarite for life." It is to be remembered, however, that nowhere in scripture extant is John the Baptist definitely called a Nazarite. A Nazarite, the name signifying *consecrated* or *separated*, was one, who by personal vow or by that made for him by his parents, was set apart to some special labor or course of life involving self denial. (See page 67). Smith's *Comp. Dict. of the Bible* says: "There is no notice in the Pentateuch of Nazarites for life; but the regulations for the vow of a Nazarite of days are given (Numb. 6:1-2). The Nazarite, during the term of his consecration, was bound to abstain from wine, grapes, and every production of the vine, and from every kind of intoxicating drink. He was forbidden to cut the hair of his head, or to approach any dead body, even that of his nearest relation." The sole instance of a Nazarite for life named in the scriptures is that of Samson, whose mother was required to put herself under Nazarite observances prior to his birth, and the child was to be a Nazarite to God from his birth (Judges 13:3-

7, 14). In the strictness of his life, John the Baptist is to be credited with all the personal discipline required of Nazarites whether he was under voluntary or parental vows or was not so bound.

2. Circumcision - while not exclusively a Hebrew or an Israelitish practice, was made a definite requirement through the revelations of God to Abraham, as the sign of the covenant between Jehovah and the patriarch. (Gen. 17:9-14.) This covenant was made to include the establishment of Abraham's posterity as a great nation, and provided that through his descendants should all nations of the earth be blessed (Gen. 22:18) – a promise which has been proved to mean that through that lineage should the Messiah be born. Circumcision was a binding condition; and its practice therefore became a national characteristic. Every male was to be circumcised eight days after birth (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3). This requirement as to age came to be so rigidly enforced, that even if the eighth day fell on a Sabbath the rite had to be performed on that day (John 7:22, 23). All male slaves had to be circumcised (Gen. 17:12, 13) and even strangers who sojourned with the Hebrews and desired to partake of the Passover with them had to submit to the requirement (Exo. 12:48). From the *Standard Bible Dictionary* we take the following: "The ceremony indicated the casting off of uncleanness as a preparation for entrance into the privileges of membership in Israel. In the New Testament, with its transfer of emphasis from the external and formal to the inner and spiritual side of things, it was first declared unnecessary for Gentile converts to the gospel to be circumcised (Acts 15:28), and afterward the rite was set aside even by Jewish Christians." It became customary to name a child at the time it was circumcised, as is instanced in the case of John, son of Zacharias (Luke 1:59).

3. Zacharias' Affliction – The sign for which Zacharias asked was thus given by the angel: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." (Luke 1:20.) From the account of the circumcision and naming of the boy, John, it is held by some that the afflicted father was also deaf, as the company "made signs" to him as to how he would have his son named (verse 62).

4. Jewish Betrothal – The vow of espousal, or betrothal, has always been regarded as sacred and binding in Jewish law. In a manner it was as binding as a marriage ceremony, though it carried none of the particular rights of marriage. The following succinct statements are taken from Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. I. p. 99: "Among the Jews of Mary's day it was even more of an actual engagement [than it later came to be]. The betrothal was formally made with rejoicings in the house of the bride under a tent or slight canopy raised for the purpose. It was called the 'making sacred' as the bride thenceforth was sacred to her husband in the strictest sense. To make it legal, the bridegroom gave his betrothed a piece of money, or the worth of it, before witnesses, with the words, 'Lo, thou art betrothed unto me,' or by a formal writing in which

similar words and the maiden's name were given, and this in the same way was handed to her before witnesses."

5. Genealogies of Joseph and Mary – "It is now almost certain that the genealogies in both Gospels are genealogies of Joseph, which if we may rely on early traditions of their consanguinity involve genealogies of Mary also. The Davidic descent of Mary is implied in Acts 2:30; 13:23; Rom. 1:3; Luke 1:32, etc. St. Matthew gives the legal descent of Joseph through the elder and regal line, as heir to the throne of David; St. Luke gives the natural descent. Thus, the real father of Salathiel was heir of the house of Nathan, but the childless Jeconiah (Jer. 22:30) was the last lineal representative of the elder kingly line. The omission of some obscure names and the symmetrical arrangement, into tesseradecads were common Jewish customs. It is not too much to say that after the labors of Mill (*On the Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels*, pp. 147-217) and Lord A. C. Hervey (*On the Genealogies of Our Lord*, 1853) scarcely a single difficulty remains in reconciling the apparent divergencies. And thus in this as in so many other instances, the very discrepancies which appear to be most irreconcilable, and most fatal to the historic accuracy of the four evangelists, turn out, on closer and more patient investigation, to be fresh proofs that they are not only entirely independent, but also entirely trustworthy." – Farrar, *Life of Christ*, p. 27, note.

The writer of the article "Genealogy of Jesus Christ" in Smith's *Bible Dict*, says: "The New Testament gives us the genealogy of but one person, our Savior (Matt. 1; Luke 3).... The following propositions will explain the true construction of these genealogies (so Lord A. C. Hervey): 1. They are both the genealogies of Joseph, i.e. of Jesus Christ, as the reputed and legal son of Joseph and Mary. 2. The genealogy of Matthew is, as Grotius asserted, Joseph's genealogy as legal successor to the throne of David. That of Luke is Joseph's private genealogy, exhibiting his real birth, as David's son, and thus showing why he was heir to Solomon's crown. The simple principle that one evangelist exhibits that genealogy which contained the successive heirs to David's and Solomon's throne, while the other exhibits the paternal stem of him who was the heir, explains all the anomalies of the two pedigrees, their agreements as well as their discrepancies, and the circumstance of there being two at all. 3. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was probably the daughter of Jacob, and first cousin to Joseph her husband."

Mary's father and Joseph's father were probably brothers.

A valuable contribution to the literature of this subject appears in the *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute, or Philosophical Society of Great Britain*, 1912, vol. 44, pp. 9-36, as an article, "The Genealogies of our Lord," by Mrs. A. S. Lewis, and discussion thereof by many scholars of acknowledged ability. The author, Mrs. Lewis, is an authority on Syriac manuscripts, and is one of the two women who, in 1892, discovered in the library of St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai, the Syriac palimpsest MS. of the four Gospels. The gifted author holds that Matthew's account

attests the royal pedigree of Joseph, and that Luke's genealogical table proves the equally royal descent of Mary. Mrs. Lewis says: "The Sinai Palimpsest also tells us that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, to be enrolled there, because they were both of the house and lineage of David."

Canon Girdlestone, in discussing the article, says in pertinent emphasis of Mary's status as a princess of royal blood through descent from David: "When the angel was foretelling to Mary the birth of the Holy Child, he said, 'The Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David.' Now if Joseph, her betrothed, had alone been descended from David, Mary would have answered, 'I am not yet married to Joseph,' whereas she did answer simply, 'I am an unmarried woman,' which plainly implies – if I were married, since I am descended from David, I could infuse my royal blood into a son, but how can I have a royal son while I am a virgin?"

After brief mention of the Jewish law relating to adoption, wherein it is provided (according to Hammurabi's Code, section 188), that if a man teach his adopted son a handicraft, the son is thereby confirmed in all the rights of heirship, Canon Girdlestone adds: "If the crown of David had been assigned to his successor in the days of Herod it would have been placed on the head of Joseph. And who would have been the legal successor to Joseph? Jesus of Nazareth would have been then the King of the Jews, and the title on the cross spoke the truth. God had raised Him up to the house of David."

6. The Inner Sanctuary of the Temple – The Holy of Holies in the Temple of Herod retained the form and dimensions of the Oracle in the Temple of Solomon; it was therefore a cube, twenty cubits in each principal measurement. Between this and the Holy Place hung a double veil, of finest material, elaborately embroidered. The outer of the two veils was open at the north end, the inner at the south; so that the high priest who entered at the appointed time once a year could pass between the veils without exposing the Holy of Holies. The sacred chamber was empty save for a large stone upon which the high priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the Day of Atonement; this stone occupied the place of the Ark and its Mercy Seat. Outside the veil, in the Holy Place, stood the altar of incense, the seven-branched candlestick, and the table of shewbread. – *The House of the Lord*, p. 59.

FOOTNOTES

[186] Luke 1:19, 26; see also Dan. 8:16; 9:21-23.

[187] Luke 1:5; compare 1 Chron. 24:10.

[188] Ezra 2:36-39.

[189] Luke 1:8, 9; read the entire chapter.

[190] Lev. chap. 16; Heb. 9:1-7; see also "House of the Lord," p. 59, and compare pp. 24 and 39. Note 6, end of chapter.

[191] For other instances of children promised in spite of barrenness due to age or other causes, see Isaac (Gen. 17:16, 17 and 21:1-3); Samson, (Judges, chap. 13); Samuel (1 Sam. chap. 1); son of the Shunammite (2 Kings 4:14-17).

- [192] Note 1, end of chapter.
- [193] Luke 1:19, 20.
- [194] Luke 1:57; compare verse 39.
- [195] Note 2, end of chapter.
- [196] Note 3, end of chapter.
- [197] Luke 1:68-79.
- [198] Luke 1:65, 66; see also 3:15.
- [199] Luke 1:80.
- [200] Luke 1:28.
- [201] Luke 1:30-33.
- [202] Luke 1:35; see also preceding verses, 31-33.
- [203] See Chapter 5 herein; Gen. 3:15.
- [204] Luke 1:42; read verses 39-56.
- [205] Luke 1:46-55.
- [206] Note 4, end of chapter.
- [207] Matt. 1:20, 21; read 18-25.
- [208] Matt. 1:22-23; compare Isa. 7:14; see also 9:6.
- [209] Matt. 1:24, 25.
- [210] 2 Peter 1:20.
- [211] Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; compare Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8.
- [212] Note 5, end of chapter.
- [213] For instances see Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 21:9; 20:30, 31, with which compare Luke 18:38, 39.
- [214] Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; see also Acts 2:30; 13:23; compare Psa. 132:11; see also Luke 1:32.
- [215] Matt. 1:23.

8

THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Equally definite with the prophecies declaring that the Messiah would be born in the lineage of David are the predictions that fix the place of His birth at Bethlehem, a small town in Judea. There seems to have been no difference of opinion among priests, scribes, or rabbis on the matter, either before or since the great event. Bethlehem, though small and of little importance in trade or commerce, was doubly endeared to the Jewish heart as the birthplace of David and as that of the prospective Messiah. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth of Galilee, far removed from Bethlehem of Judea; and, at the time of which we speak, the maternity of the Virgin was fast approaching.

At that time a decree went out from Rome ordering a taxing of the people in all kingdoms and provinces tributary to the empire; the call was of general scope, it provided "**that all the world should be taxed.**"[216] The taxing herein referred to may properly be understood as an enrolment,[217] or a registration, whereby a census of Roman subjects would be secured, upon which as a basis the taxation of the different peoples would be determined. This particular census was the second of three such general registrations recorded by historians as occurring at intervals of about twenty years. Had the census been taken by the usual Roman method, each person would have been enrolled at the town of his residence; but the Jewish custom, for which the Roman law had respect, necessitated registration at the cities or towns claimed by the respective families as their ancestral homes. As to whether the requirement was strictly mandatory that every family should thus register at the city of its ancestors, we need not be specially concerned; certain it is that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be inscribed under the imperial decree.[218]

The little town was crowded at the time, most likely by the multitude that had come in obedience to the same summons; and, in consequence, Joseph and Mary failed to find the most desirable accommodations and had to be content with the conditions of an improvised camp, as travelers unnumbered had done before, and as uncounted others have done since, in that region and elsewhere. We cannot reasonably regard this circumstance as evidence of extreme destitution; doubtless it entailed inconvenience, but it gives us no assurance of great distress or suffering.[219] It was while she was in this situation that Mary the Virgin gave birth to her firstborn, the Son of the Highest, the Only Begotten of the Eternal Father, Jesus the Christ.

But few details of attendant circumstances are furnished us. We are not told how soon the birth occurred after the arrival of Mary and her husband at Bethlehem. It may have been the purpose of the evangelist who made the record to touch upon matters of purely human interest as lightly as was consistent with the narration of fact, in order that the central truth might neither be hidden nor overshadowed by unimportant incident. We read in Holy Writ this only of the actual birth: "**And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; became there was no room for them at the inn.**"[220]

In vivid contrast with the simplicity and brevity of the scriptural account and of its paucity of incidental details, is the mass of circumstance supplied by the imagination of men, much of which is wholly unsupported by authoritative record and in many respects is plainly inconsistent and untrue. It is the part of prudence and wisdom to segregate and keep distinctly separate the authenticated statements of fact, in so momentous a matter, from the fanciful commentaries of historians, theologians, and writers of fiction, as also from the emotional rhapsodies of poets and artistic extravaganzas wrought by chisel or brush.

From the period of its beginning, Bethlehem had been the home of people engaged mostly in pastoral and agricultural pursuits. It is quite in line with what is known of the town and its environs to find at the season of Messiah's birth, which was in the springtime of the year, that flocks were in the field both night and day under the watchful care of their keepers. Unto certain of these humble shepherds came the first proclamation that the Savior had been born. Thus runs the simple record: "**And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.**"[221]

Christ was born in the springtime, at a time when shepherds were watching their flock at night. The angels sang for joy and to the glory of God.

Tidings of such import had never before been delivered by angel or received by man—good tidings of great joy, given to but few and those among the humblest of earth, but destined to spread to all people. There is sublime grandeur in the scene, as there is divine authorship in the message, and the climax is such as the mind of man could never have conceived—the sudden appearance of a multitude of the heavenly host,

singing audibly to human ears the briefest, most consistent and most truly complete of all the songs of peace ever attuned by mortal or spirit choir. What a consummation to be wished – Peace on earth! But how can such come except through the maintenance of good will toward men? And through what means could glory to God in the highest be more effectively rendered?

The trustful and unsophisticated keepers of sheep had not asked for sign or confirmation; their faith was in unison with the heavenly communication; nevertheless the angel had given them what he called a sign, to guide them in their search. They waited not, but went in haste, for in their hearts they believed, yea, more than believed, they knew, and this was the tenor of their resolve: "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." [222] They found the Babe in the manger, with the mother and Joseph near by; and, having seen, they went out and testified to the truth concerning the Child. They returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

There is meaning as deep as the pathos that all must feel in the seemingly parenthetical remark by Luke. "**But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.**" [223] It is apparent that the great truth as to the personality and mission of her divine Son had not yet unfolded itself in its fulness to her mind. The whole course of events, from the salutation of Gabriel to the reverent testimony of the shepherds concerning the announcing angel and the heavenly hosts, was largely a mystery to that stainless mother and wife.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW STRICTLY OBSERVED

The Child was born a Jew; the mother was a Jewess, and the reputed and legal father, Joseph, was a Jew. The true paternity of the Child was known to but few, perhaps at that time to none save Mary, Joseph, and possibly Elisabeth and Zacharias; as He grew He was regarded by the people as Joseph's son. [224] The requirements of the law were carried out with exactitude in all matters pertaining to the Child. When eight days old He was circumcised, as was required of every male born in Israel; [225] and at the same time He received as an earthly bestowal the name that had been prescribed at the annunciation. He was called JESUS, which, being interpreted is Savior; the name was rightfully His for He came to save the people from their sins. [226]

Part of the law given through Moses to the Israelites in the wilderness and continued in force down through the centuries, related to the procedure prescribed for women after childbirth. [227] In compliance therewith, Mary remained in retirement forty days following the birth of her Son; then she and her husband brought the Boy for presentation before the Lord as prescribed for the male firstborn of every family. It is manifestly impossible that all such presentations could have taken place in the temple, for many Jews lived at great distances from Jerusalem; it was the rule, however, that

parents should present their children in the temple when possible. Jesus was born within five or six miles from Jerusalem; He was accordingly taken to the temple for the ceremonial of redemption from the requirement applying to the firstborn of all Israelites except Levites. It will be remembered that the children of Israel had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt with the accompaniment of signs and wonders. Because of Pharaoh's repeated refusals to let the people go, plagues had been brought upon the Egyptians, one of which was the death of the firstborn throughout the land, excepting only the people of Israel. In remembrance of this manifestation of power, the Israelites were required to dedicate their firstborn sons to the service of the sanctuary.[228] Subsequently the Lord directed that all males belonging to the tribe of Levi should be devoted to this special labor instead of the firstborn in every tribe; nevertheless the eldest son was still claimed as particularly the Lord's own, and had to be formally exempted from the earlier requirement of service by the paying of a ransom.[229]

In connection with the ceremony of purification, every mother was required to furnish a yearling lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or dove for a sin offering; but in the case of any woman who was unable to provide a lamb, a pair of doves or pigeons might be offered. We learn of the humble circumstances of Joseph and Mary from the fact that they brought the less costly offering, two doves or pigeons, instead of one bird and a lamb.

Among the righteous and devout Israelites were some who, in spite of traditionalism, rabbinism, and priestly corruption, still lived in righteous expectation of inspired confidence, awaiting patiently the consolation of Israel.[230] One of these was **Simeon**, then living in Jerusalem. Through the power of the Holy Ghost he had gained the promise that he should not see death until he had looked upon the Lord's Christ in the flesh. Prompted by the Spirit he repaired to the temple on the day of the presentation of Jesus, and recognized in the Babe the promised Messiah. In the moment of realization that the hope of his life had found glorious consummation, Simeon raised the Child reverently in his arms, and, with the simple but undying eloquence that comes of God uttered this splendid supplication, in which thanksgiving, resignation and praise are so richly blended:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."[231]

Then under the spirit of prophecy, Simeon told of the greatness of the Child's mission, and of the anguish that the mother would be called to endure because of Him, which would be even like unto that of a sword piercing her soul. The Spirit's witness to the divinity of Jesus was not to be confined to a man. There was at that time in the temple a godly woman of great age, Anna, a prophetess who devoted herself exclusively to temple service; and she, being inspired of God, recognized her Redeemer, and testified

of Him to all about her. Both Joseph and Mary marveled at the things that were spoken of the Child; seemingly they were not yet able to comprehend the majesty of Him who had come to them through so miraculous a conception and so marvelous a birth.

WISE MEN SEARCH FOR THE KING

Some time after the presentation of Jesus in the temple, though how long we are not told, possibly but a few days, possibly weeks or even months, Herod, king of Judea, was greatly troubled, as were the people of Jerusalem in general, over the report that a Child of Prophecy – one destined to become King of the Jews – had been born. Herod was professedly an adherent of the religion of Judah, though by birth an Idumean, by descent an Edomite or one of the posterity of Esau, all of whom the Jews hated; and of all Edomites not one was more bitterly detested than was Herod the king. He was tyrannical and merciless, sparing neither foe nor friend who came under suspicion of being a possible hindrance to his ambitious designs. He had his wife and several of his sons, as well as others of his blood kindred, cruelly murdered; and he put to death nearly all of the great national council, the Sanhedrin. His reign was one of revolting cruelty and unbridled oppression. Only when in danger of inciting a national revolt or in fear of incurring the displeasure of his imperial master, the Roman emperor, did he stay his hand in any undertaking.[232]

Rumors of the birth of Jesus reached Herod's ears in this way. There came to Jerusalem certain men from afar, wise men they were called, and they asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." [233] Herod summoned "all the chief priests and scribes of the people," and demanded of them where, according to the prophets, Christ should be born. They answered him: "In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." [234]

Herod sent secretly for the wise men, and inquired of them as to the source of their information, and particularly as to the time at which the star, to which they attached such significance, had appeared. Then he directed them to Bethlehem, saying: "Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." As the men set out from Jerusalem on the last stage of their journey of inquiry and search, they rejoiced exceedingly, for the new star they had seen in the east was again visible. They found the house wherein Mary was living with her husband and the Babe, and as they recognized the royal Child they "fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." [235] Having thus gloriously accomplished the purpose of their pilgrimage, these devout and learned travelers prepared to return home, and would have stopped at Jerusalem to report to

the king as he had requested, but "being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."[236]

Much has been written, beyond all possible warrant of scriptural authority, concerning the visit of the magi, or wise men, who thus sought and found the infant Christ. As a matter of fact, we are left without information as to their country, nation, or tribal relationship; we are not even told how many they were, though unauthenticated tradition has designated them as "the three wise men," and has even given them names; whereas they are left unnamed in the scriptures, the only true record of them extant, and may have numbered but two or many. Attempts have been made to identify the star whose appearance in their eastern sky had assured the magi that the King was born; but astronomy furnishes no satisfactory confirmation. The recorded appearance of the star has been associated by both ancient and modern interpreters with the prophecy of Balaam, who, though not an Israelite had blessed Israel, and under divine inspiration had predicted: "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." [237] Moreover, as already shown, the appearance of a new star was a predicted sign recognized and acknowledged among the people of the western world as witness of Messiah's birth. [238]

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Herod's perfidy in directing the magi to return and report to him where the royal Infant was to be found, falsely professing that he wished to worship Him also, while in his heart he purposed taking the Child's life, was thwarted by the divine warning given to the wise men as already noted. Following their departure, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, saying: "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." [239] In obedience to this command, Joseph took Mary and her Child, and set out by night on the journey to Egypt; and there the family remained until divinely directed to return. When it was apparent to the king that the wise men had ignored his instructions, he was exceedingly angry; and, estimating the earliest time at which the birth could have occurred according to the magis' statement of the star's appearing, he ruthlessly ordered the slaughter of "all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." [240] In this massacre of the innocents, the evangelist found a fulfillment of Jeremiah's fateful voicing of the word of the Lord, spoken six centuries earlier and expressed in the forceful past tense as though then already accomplished: "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." [241]

BIRTH OF JESUS MADE KNOWN TO THE NEPHITES

As heretofore shown, the prophets of the western hemisphere had foretold in great plainness the earthly advent of the Lord, and had specifically set forth the time, place, and circumstances of His birth.[242] As the time drew near the people were divided by conflicting opinions concerning the reliability of these prophecies; and intolerant unbelievers cruelly persecuted those, who, like Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, and other righteous ones in Palestine, had maintained in faith and trust their unwavering expectation of the coming of the Lord. Samuel, a righteous Lamanite, who, because of his faithfulness and sacrificing devotion had been blessed with the spirit and power of prophecy, fearlessly proclaimed the birth of Christ as near: "And behold, he said unto them, Behold I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name." [243] The prophet told of many signs and wonders, which were to mark the great event. As the five years ran their course, the believers grew more steadfast, the unbelievers more violent, until the last day of the specified period dawned; and this was the "day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death, except the sign should come to pass which had been given by Samuel the prophet." [244]

Nephi, a prophet of the time, cried unto the Lord in anguish of soul because of the persecution of which his people were the victims; "and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, Lift up your head and be of good cheer, for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to shew unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men, from the foundation of the world, and do the will, both of the Father, and of the Son; of the Father, because of me, and of the Son, because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given." [245]

The words of the prophet were fulfilled that night; for though the sun set in its usual course there was no darkness; and on the morrow the sun rose on a land already illumined; a day and a night and another day had been as one day; and this was but one of the signs. A new star appeared in the firmament of the west, even as was seen by the magi in the east; and there were many other marvelous manifestations as the prophets had predicted. All these things occurred on what is now known as the American continent, six hundred years after Lehi and his little company had left Jerusalem to come hither.

THE TIME OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The time of Messiah's birth is a subject upon which specialists in theology and history, and those who are designated in literature "the learned," fail to agree. Numerous lines of investigation have been followed, only to reach divergent conclusions, both as to the year and as to the month and day within the year at which the "Christian era" in reality began. The establishment of the birth of Christ as an event marking a time from which chronological data should be calculated, was first effected about 532 A.D. by Dionysius Exiguus; and as a basis for the reckoning of time this method has come to be known as the Dionysian system, and takes for its fundamental datum A.U.C. 753, that is to say 753 years after the founding of Rome, as the year of our Lord's birth. So far as there exists any consensus of opinion among later scholars who have investigated the subject, it is to the effect that the Dionysian calculation is wrong, in that it places the birth of Christ between three and four years too late; and that therefore our Lord was born in the third or fourth year before the beginning of what is designated by the scholars of Oxford and Cambridge, "the Common Account called Anno Domini." [246]

Without attempting to analyze the mass of calculation data relating to this subject, we accept the Dionysian basis as correct with respect to the year, which is to say that we believe Christ to have been born in the year known to us as B.C. 1, and, as shall be shown, in an early month of that year. In support of this belief we cite the inspired record known as the "Revelation on Church Government, given through Joseph the Prophet, in April, 1830," which opens with these words: "**The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the flesh.**" [247]

Another evidence of the correctness of our commonly accepted chronology is furnished by the Book of Mormon record. Therein we read that "in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah," the word of the Lord came to Lehi at Jerusalem, directing him to take his family and depart into the wilderness. [248] In the early stages of their journey toward the sea, Lehi prophesied, as had been shown him of the Lord, concerning the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews. Furthermore, he predicted the eventual return of the people of Judah from their exile in Babylon, and the birth of the Messiah, which latter event he definitely declared would take place six hundred years from the time he and his people had left Jerusalem. [249] This specification of time was repeated by later prophecy; [250] and the signs of the actual fulfillment are recorded as having been realized "six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem." [251] These scriptures fix the time of the beginning of Zedekiah's reign as six hundred years before the birth of Christ. According to the commonly accepted reckoning, Zedekiah was made king in the year 597 B.C. [252] This shows a discrepancy of about three years between the commonly accepted date of Zedekiah's inauguration as king and that given in the Book of Mormon statement; and, as already seen, there is a difference of between three and four years between the

Dionysian reckoning and the nearest approach to an agreement among scholars concerning the beginning of the current era. Book of Mormon chronology therefore sustains in general the correctness of the common or Dionysian system.

As to the season of the year in which Christ was born, there is among the learned as great a diversity of opinion as that relating to the year itself. It is claimed by many Biblical scholars that December 25th, the day celebrated in Christendom as Christmas, cannot be the correct date. We believe April 6th to be the birthday of Jesus Christ as indicated in a revelation of the present dispensation already cited,[253] in which that day is made without qualification the completion of the one thousand eight hundred and thirtieth year since the coming of the Lord in the flesh. This acceptance is admittedly based on faith in modern revelation, and in no wise is set forth as the result of chronological research or analysis. We believe that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, April 6, B.C. 1.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. The "Taxing" – Regarding the presence of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem, far from their Galilean home, and the imperial decree by compliance with which they were led there, the following notes are worthy of consideration. Farrar (*Life of Christ*, p. 24, note), says: "It appears to be uncertain whether the journey of Mary with her husband was obligatory or voluntary.... Women were liable to a capitation tax, if this enrolment also involved taxation. But, apart from any legal necessity, it may easily be imagined that at such a moment Mary would desire not to be left alone. The cruel suspicion of which she had been the subject, and which had almost led to the breaking off of her betrothal (Matt. 1:19) would make her cling all the more to the protection of her husband." The following excerpt is from Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. 1, chap. 9; p. 108: "The Jewish nation had paid tribute to Rome through their rulers, since the days of Pompey; and the methodical Augustus, who now reigned, and had to restore order and soundness to the finances of the empire, after the confusion and exhaustion of the civil wars, took good care that this obligation should neither be forgotten nor evaded. He was accustomed to require a census to be taken periodically in every province of his vast dominions, that he might know the number of soldiers he could levy in each, and the amount of taxes due to the treasury.... In an empire embracing the then known world, such a census could hardly have been made simultaneously, or in any short or fixed time; more probably it was the work of years, in successive provinces or kingdoms. Sooner or later, however, even the dominions of vassal kings like Herod had to furnish the statistics demanded by their master. He had received his kingdom on the footing of a subject, and grew more entirely dependent on Augustus as years passed, asking his sanction at every turn for steps he proposed to take. He would, thus, be only too ready to meet his wish, by obtaining the statistics he sought, as may be judged from the fact that in one of the last years of his life, just before Christ's birth, he made the

whole Jewish nation take a solemn oath of allegiance to the emperor as well as to himself.

"It is quite probable that the mode of taking the required statistics was left very much to Herod, at once to show respect to him before his people, and from the known opposition of the Jews to anything like a general numeration, even apart from the taxation to which it was designed to lead. At the time to which the narrative refers, a simple registration seems to have been made, on the old Hebrew plan of enrolling by families in their ancestral districts, of course for future use; and thus it passed over quietly.... The proclamation having been made through the land, Joseph had no choice but to go to Bethlehem, the city of David, the place in which his family descent, from the house and lineage of David, required him to be inscribed."

2. Jesus Born Amidst Poor Surroundings—Undoubtedly the accommodations for physical comfort amidst which Jesus was born were few and poor. But the environment, considered in the light of the customs of the country and time, was far from the state of abject deprivation which modern and western ways would make it appear. "Camping out" was no unusual exigency among travelers in Palestine at the time of our Lord's birth; nor is it considered such to-day. It is, however, beyond question that Jesus was born into a comparatively poor family, amidst humble surroundings associated with the inconveniences incident to travel. Cunningham Geikie, *Life and Words of Christ*, chap. 9, pp. 112, 113, says: "It was to Bethlehem that Joseph and Mary were coming, the town of Ruth and Boaz, and the early home of their own great forefather David. As they approached it from Jerusalem they would pass, at the last mile, a spot sacred to Jewish memory, where the light of Jacob's life went out, when his first love, Rachel, died, and was buried, as her tomb still shows, 'in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.' ... Traveling in the East has always been very different from Western ideas. As in all thinly-settled countries, private hospitality, in early times, supplied the want of inns, but it was the peculiarity of the East that this friendly custom continued through a long series of ages. On the great roads through barren or uninhabited parts, the need of shelter led, very early, to the erection of rude and simple buildings, of varying size, known as khans, which offered the wayfarer the protection of walls and a roof, and water, but little more. The smaller structures consisted of sometimes only a single empty room, on the floor of which the traveler might spread his carpet for sleep; the larger ones, always built in a hollow square, enclosing a court for the beasts, with water in it for them and their masters. From immemorial antiquity it has been a favorite mode of benevolence to raise such places of shelter, as we see so far back as the times of David, when Chimham built a great khan near Bethlehem, on the caravan road to Egypt."

Canon Farrar (*Life of Christ*, chap. 1) accepts the traditional belief that the shelter within which Jesus was born was that of one of the numerous limestone caves which abound in the region, and which are still used by travelers as resting places. He says: "In

Palestine it not infrequently happens that the entire khan, or at any rate the portion of it in which the animals are housed, is one of those innumerable caves which abound in the limestone rocks of its central hills. Such seems to have been in the case at the little town of Bethlehem-Ephratah, in the land of Judah. Justin Martyr, the Apologist, who, from his birth at Shechem, was familiar with Palestine, and who lived less than a century after the time of our Lord, places the scene of the nativity in a cave. This is, indeed, the ancient and constant tradition both of the Eastern and the Western Churches, and it is one of the few to which, though unrecorded in the Gospel history, we may attach a reasonable probability."

3. Herod the Great—The history of Herod I, otherwise known as Herod the Great, must be sought in special works, in which the subject is treated at length. Some of the principal facts should be considered in our present study, and for the assistance of the student a few extracts from works regarded as reliable are presented herewith.

Condensed from part of article in the *Standard Bible Dictionary*, edited by Jacobus, Nourse, and Zenos; published by Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1909:—Herod I, the son of Antipater, was early given office by his father, who had been made procurator of Judea. The first office which Herod held was that of governor of Galilee. He was then a young man of about twenty-five, energetic and athletic. Immediately he set about the eradication of the robber bands that infested his district, and soon was able to execute the robber chief Hezekiah and several of his followers. For this he was summoned to Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin, tried and condemned, but with the connivance of Hyrcanus II [the high priest and ethnarch] he escaped by night.—He went to Rome where he was appointed King of Judea by Antony and Octavius.—For the next two years he was engaged in fighting the forces of Antigonus, whom he finally defeated, and in 37 B.C. gained possession of Jerusalem.—As king, Herod confronted serious difficulties. The Jews objected to him because of his birth and reputation. The Asmonean family regarded him as a usurper, notwithstanding the fact that he had married Mariamne. The Pharisees were shocked at his Hellenistic sympathies, as well as at his severe methods of government. On the other hand the Romans held him responsible for the order of his kingdom, and the protection of the eastern frontier of the Republic. Herod met these various difficulties with characteristic energy and even cruelty, and generally with cold sagacity. Although he taxed the people severely, in times of famine he remitted their dues and even sold his plate to get means to buy them food. While he never became actually friendly with the Pharisees, they profited by his hostility to the party of the Asmoneans, which led at the beginning of his reign to the execution of a number of Sadducees who were members of the Sanhedrin.

From Smith's *Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible*: The latter part "of the reign of Herod was undisturbed by external troubles, but his domestic life was embittered by an almost uninterrupted series of injuries and cruel acts of vengeance. The terrible acts of bloodshed which Herod perpetrated in his own family were accompanied by others

among his subjects equally terrible, from the number who fell victims to them. According to the well-known story, he ordered the nobles whom he had called to him in his last moments to be executed immediately after his decease, that so at least his death might be attended by universal mourning. It was at the time of his fatal illness that he must have caused the slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem" (Matt. 2:16-18).

The mortal end of the tyrant and multi-murderer is thus treated by Farrar in his *Life of Christ*, pp. 54, 55: — "It must have been very shortly after the murder of the innocents that Herod died. Only five days before his death he had made a frantic attempt at suicide, and had ordered the execution of his eldest son Antipater. His death-bed, which once more reminds us of Henry VIII., was accompanied by circumstances of peculiar horror; and it has been asserted that he died of a loathsome disease, which is hardly mentioned in history, except in the case of men who have been rendered infamous by an atrocity of persecuting zeal. On his bed of intolerable anguish, in that splendid and luxurious palace which he had built for himself, under the palms of Jericho, swollen with disease and scorched by thirst, ulcerated externally and glowing inwardly with a 'soft slow fire,' surrounded by plotting sons and plundering slaves, detesting all and detested by all, longing for death as a release from his tortures yet dreading it as the beginning of worse terrors, stung by remorse yet still unslaked with murder, a horror to all around him yet in his guilty conscience a worse terror to himself, devoured by the premature corruption of an anticipated grave, eaten of worms as though visibly smitten by the finger of God's wrath after seventy years of successful villainy, the wretched old man, whom men had called the Great, lay in savage frenzy awaiting his last hour. As he knew that none would shed one tear for him, he determined that they should shed many for themselves, and issued an order that, under pain of death, the principal families of the kingdom and the chiefs of the tribes should come to Jericho. They came, and then, shutting them in the hippodrome, he secretly commanded his sister Salome that at the moment of his death they should all be massacred. And so, choking as it were with blood, devising massacres in its very delirium, the soul of Herod passed forth into the night."

...Very descriptive words for the torture of a wicked man – Herod's last days on earth

For mention of the Temple of Herod see Note 5, following Chapter 6.

4. Gifts from the Wise Men to the Child Jesus — The scriptural account of the visit of the wise men to Jesus and His mother states that they "fell down and worshipped him," and furthermore that "when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." The offering of gifts to a superior in rank, either as to worldly status or recognized spiritual endowment, was a custom of early days and still prevails in many oriental lands. It is worthy of note that we have no record of these men from the east offering gifts to Herod in his palace; they did, however, impart of their treasure to the lowly Infant, in whom they recognized the King

they had come to seek. The tendency to ascribe occult significance to even trifling details mentioned in scripture, and particularly as regards the life of Christ, has led to many fanciful suggestions concerning the gold and frankincense and myrrh specified in this incident. Some have supposed a half-hidden symbolism therein – gold a tribute to His royal estate, frankincense an offering in recognition of His priesthood, and myrrh for His burial. The sacred record offers no basis for such conjecture. Myrrh and frankincense are aromatic resins derived from plants indigenous to eastern lands, and they have been used from very early times in medicine and in the preparation of perfumes and incense mixtures. They were presumably among the natural productions of the lands from which the magi came, though probably even there they were costly and highly esteemed. Such, together with gold, which is of value among all nations, were most appropriate as gifts for a king. Any mystical significance one may choose to attach to the presents must be remembered as his own supposition or fancy, and not as based on scriptural warrant.

Frankincense is good as an antidepressant, anticancer, anti-infection, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, immune stimulant and sedative. Frankincense is a holy oil in the Middle East. As an ingredient in the holy incense, it was used anciently during sacrificial ceremonies to help improve communication with the creator.

Myrrh is good for anti-infection, an anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antitumor, astringent and tonic. Myrrh was used as incense in religious rituals, in embalming, and as a cure for cancer, leprosy, and syphilis. Myrrh, mixed with coriander and honey, was used to treat herpes. There are many other uses in the Modern Essentials book.

5. Testimonies from Shepherds and Magi— The following instructive note on the testimonies relating to Messiah's birth, is taken from the *Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association Manual* for 1897-8: "It will be observed that the testimonies concerning the birth of the Messiah are from two extremes, the lowly shepherds in the Judean field, and the learned magi from the far east. We cannot think this is the result of mere chance, but that in it may be discerned the purpose and wisdom of God. All Israel was looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, and in the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, the hope of Israel – though unknown to Israel – is fulfilled. Messiah, of whom the prophet spake, is born. But there must be those who can testify of that truth, and hence to the shepherds who watched their flocks by night an angel was sent to say: **'Fear not, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord.'** And for a sign of the truth of the message, they were to find the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger in Bethlehem. And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger; and when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. God had raised up to Himself witnesses among the people to testify that Messiah was born, that the hope of Israel was fulfilled. But there were classes of people among the Jews

whom these lowly shepherd witnesses could not reach, and had they been able to reach them, the story of the angel's visit, and the concourse of angels singing the magnificent song of 'Peace on earth, good will to men,' would doubtless have been accounted an idle tale of superstitious folk, deceived by their own over-wrought imaginations or idle dreams. Hence God raised up another class of witnesses – the 'wise men from the east' – witnesses that could enter the royal palace of proud King Herod and boldly ask: **'Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him'**; a testimony that startled Herod and troubled all Jerusalem. So that indeed God raised up witnesses for Himself to meet all classes and conditions of men – the testimony of angels for the poor and the lowly; the testimony of wise men for the haughty king and proud priests of Judea. So that of the things concerning the birth of Messiah, no less than of the things of His death and resurrection from the dead, His disciples could say, 'these things were not done in a corner.'"

6. The Year of Christ's Birth – In treating this topic Dr. Charles F. Deems (*The Light of the Nations*, p. 28), after giving careful consideration of the estimates, calculations, and assumptions of men who have employed many means in their investigation and reach only discordant results says: "It is annoying to see learned men use the same apparatus of calculation and reach the most diverse results. It is bewildering to attempt a reconciliation of these varying calculations." In an appended note the same author states: "For example: the birth of our Lord is placed in B.C. 1 by Pearson and Hug; B.C. 2 by Scalinger; B.C. 3 by Baronius and Paulus; B.C. 4 by Bengel, Wieseler, and Greswell; B.C. 5 by Usher and Petavius; B.C. 6 by Strong, Luvin, and Clark; B.C. 7 by Ideler and Sanclemente."

FOOTNOTES

[216] Luke 2:1; see also verses 2-4. Note 1, end of chapter.

[217] Note marginal reading, Oxford and Bagster Bibles.

[218] Note 1, end of chapter.

[219] Note 2, end of chapter.

[220] Luke 2:6, 7.

[221] Luke 2:8-14.

[222] Luke 2:15.

[223] Luke 2:19.

[224] Luke 4:22; Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3.

[225] Gen. 17:12, 13; Lev. 12:3; compare John 7:22.

[226] Luke 2:21; compare 1:31; Matt. 1:21, 25.

[227] Lev. chap. 12.

[228] Exo. 12:29; 13:2, 12; 22:29, 30.

[229] Numb. 8:15-18; 18:15, 16.

[230] Luke 2:25; see also verse 38; Mark 15:43; compare Psa. 40:1.

[231] Luke 2:29-32. These verses are known in Christian hymnology as the *Nunc Dimittis*; the name has reference to the first two words of the Latin version.

[232] Note 3, end of chapter.

[233] Matt. 2:2; read 1-10.

- [234] Matt. 2:5, 6; compare Micah 5:2; John 7:42.
- [235] Note 4, end of chapter.
- [236] Note 5, end of chapter.
- [237] Numb. 24:17.
- [238] B. of M., Helaman 14:5; 3 Nephi 1:21. See Chapter 5, 8 and 39 herein.
- [239] Matt. 2:13.
- [240] Matt. 2:16.
- [241] Matt. 2:17, 18; compare Jer. 31:15.
- [242] See Chapter 5 herein.
- [243] B. of M., Helaman 14:2; read 1-9.
- [244] B. of M., 3 Nephi 1:9; read verses 4-21.
- [245] B. of M., 3 Nephi 1:12-21.
- [246] Marginal reading, Oxford and Bagster Bibles, Matt. 2:1.
- [247] Doc. and Cov. 20:1; compare 21:3. Note 6, end of chapter.
- [248] B. of M., 1 Nephi 1:4; 2:2-4.
- [249] B. of M., 1 Nephi 10:4.
- [250] B. of M., 1 Nephi 19:8; 2 Nephi 25:19.
- [251] B. of M., 3 Nephi 1:1.
- [252] "Standard Bible Dictionary," edited by Jacobus, Nourse, and Zenos, pub. by Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York and London, 1909, p. 915, article "Zedekiah."
- [253] Doc. and Cov. 20:1; compare 21:2

9

THE BOY OF NAZARETH

Joseph, Mary, and her Son remained in Egypt until after the death of Herod the Great, which event was made known by another angelic visitation. Their stay in the foreign land was probably brief, for Herod did not long survive the babes he had slain in Bethlehem. In the return of the family from Egypt the evangelist finds a fulfillment of Hosea's prophetic vision of what should be: "**Out of Egypt have I called my son.**"[254]

It appears to have been Joseph's intention to make a home for the family in Judea, possibly at Bethlehem – the city of his ancestors and a place now even more endeared to him as the birthplace of Mary's Child – but, learning on the way that Herod's son Archelaus ruled in the place of his wicked father, Joseph modified his purpose; and, "**being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.**"[255]

...And, what if parents who lost their babies in Bethlehem, got wind of a story about a family, with a baby, who left just before Herod's decree? There may have been bitterness and envy for the Child, Jesus, who survived.

While Archelaus, who appears to have been a natural heir to his infamous father's wickedness and cruelty, ruled in Judea,[256] for a short time as king, then with the less exalted title of ethnarch, which had been decreed to him by the emperor, his brother Antipas governed as tetrarch in Galilee. Herod Antipas was well nigh as vicious and reprobate as others of his unprincipled family, but he was less aggressive in vindictiveness, and in that period of his reign was comparatively tolerant. [257]

Concerning the home life of Joseph and his family in Nazareth, the scriptural record makes but brief mention. The silence with which the early period of the life of Jesus is treated by the inspired historians is impressive; while the fanciful accounts written in later years by unauthorized hands are full of fictitious detail, much of which is positively revolting in its puerile inconsistency. None but Joseph, Mary, and the other members of the immediate family or close associates of the household could have furnished the facts of daily life in the humble home at Nazareth; and from these qualified informants Matthew and Luke probably derived the knowledge of which they wrote. The record made by those who knew is marked by impressive brevity. In this absence of detail we may see evidence of the genuineness of the scriptural account. Inventive writers would have supplied, as, later, such did supply, what we seek in vain

within the chapters of the Gospels. With hallowed silence do the inspired scribes honor the boyhood of their Lord; he who seeks to invent circumstances and to invest the life of Christ with fictitious additions, dishonors Him. Read thoughtfully the attested truth concerning the childhood of the Christ: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."[258]

In such simplicity is the normal, natural development of the Boy Jesus made clear. He came among men to experience all the natural conditions of mortality; He was born as truly a dependent, helpless babe as is any other child; His infancy was in all common features as the infancy of others; His boyhood was actual boyhood, His development was as necessary and as real as that of all children. Over His mind had fallen the veil of forgetfulness common to all who are born to earth, by which the remembrance of primeval existence is shut off. The Child grew, and with growth there came to Him expansion of mind, development of faculties, and progression in power and understanding. His advancement was from one grace to another, not from gracelessness to grace; from good to greater good, not from evil to good; from favor with God to greater favor, not from estrangement because of sin to reconciliation through repentance and propitiation.[259]

Our knowledge of Jewish life in that age justifies the inference that the Boy was well taught in the law and the scriptures, for such was the rule. He garnered knowledge by study, and gained wisdom by prayer, thought, and effort. Beyond question He was trained to labor, for idleness was abhorred then as it is now; and every Jewish boy, whether carpenter's son, peasant's child, or rabbi's heir, was required to learn and follow a practical and productive vocation. Jesus was all that a boy should be, for His development was unretarded by the dragging weight of sin; He loved and obeyed the truth and therefore was free.[260]

*This is what we all seek for, the freedom that comes from living a sin-free life. We are all dragged down by our human frailties – knowing and living **by truth** will set us free.*

Joseph and Mary, devout and faithful in all observances of the law, went up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. This religious festival, it should be remembered, was one of the most solemn and sacred among the many ceremonial commemorations of the Jews; it had been established at the time of the peoples' exodus from Egypt, in remembrance of the outstretched arm of power by which God had delivered Israel after the angel of destruction had slain the firstborn in every Egyptian home and had mercifully passed over the houses of the children of Jacob.[261] It was of such importance that its annual recurrence was made the beginning of the new year. The law required all males to present themselves before the Lord at the feast. The rule was that women should likewise attend if not lawfully detained; and Mary appears to have followed both the spirit of the law and the letter of the rule, for she habitually accompanied her husband to the annual gathering at Jerusalem.

When Jesus had attained the age of twelve years He was taken by His mother and Joseph to the feast as the law required; whether the Boy had ever before been present on such an occasion we are not told: At twelve years of age a Jewish boy was recognized as a member of his home community; he was required then to enter with definite purpose upon his chosen vocation; he attained an advanced status as an individual in that thereafter he could not be arbitrarily disposed of as a bond-servant by his parents; he was appointed to higher studies in school and home; and, when accepted by the priests, he became a "son of the law." It was the common and very natural desire of parents to have their sons attend the feast of the Passover and be present at the temple ceremonies as recognized members of the congregation when of the prescribed age. Thus came the Boy Jesus to the temple.

The feast proper lasted seven days, and in the time of Christ was annually attended by great concourses of Jews; Josephus speaks of such a Passover gathering as "an innumerable multitude." [262] The people came from distant provinces in large companies and caravans, as a matter of convenience and as a means of common protection against the marauding bands which are known to have infested the country. As members of such a company Joseph and his family traveled.

When, following the conclusion of the Passover, the Galilean company had gone a day's journey toward home, Joseph and Mary discovered to their surprise and deep concern that Jesus was not with their company. After a fruitless search among their friends and acquaintances, they turned back toward Jerusalem seeking the Boy. Their inquiries brought little comfort or assistance until three days had passed; then "**they, found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.**" [263] It was no unusual thing for a twelve year old boy to be questioned by priests, scribes, or rabbis, nor to be permitted to ask questions of these professional expounders of the law, for such procedure was part of the educational training of Jewish youths; nor was there anything surprising in such a meeting of students and teachers within the temple courts, for the rabbis of that time were accustomed to give instruction there; and people, young and old, gathered about them, sitting at their feet to learn; but there was much that was extraordinary in this interview as the demeanor of the learned doctors showed, for never before had such a student been found, inasmuch as "all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." The incident furnishes evidence of a well spent boyhood and proof of unusual attainments. [264]

The amazement of Mary and her husband on finding the Boy in such distinguished company, and so plainly the object of deference and respect, and the joy of seeing again the beloved One who to them had been lost, did not entirely banish the memory of the anguish His absence had caused them. In words of gentle yet unmistakable reproof the mother said: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have

sought thee sorrowing." The Boy's reply astonished them, in that it revealed, to an extent they had not before realized, His rapidly maturing powers of judgment and understanding. Said He: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Let us not say that there was unkind rebuke or unfilial reproof in the answer of this most dutiful of sons to His mother. His reply was to Mary a reminder of what she seems to have forgotten for the moment – the facts in the matter of her Son's paternity. She had used the words "thy father and I;" and her Son's response had brought anew to her mind the truth that Joseph was not the Boy's father. She appears to have been astonished that One so young should so thoroughly understand His position with respect to herself. He had made plain to her the inadvertent inaccuracy of her words; His Father had not been seeking Him; for was He not even at that moment in His Father's house, and particularly engaged in His Father's business, the very work to which His Father had appointed Him?

He had in no wise intimated a doubt as to Mary's maternal relationship to Himself; though He had indisputably shown that He recognized as His Father, not Joseph of Nazareth, but the God of Heaven. Both Mary and Joseph failed to comprehend the full import of His words. Though He understood the superior claim of duty based on His divine Sonship, and had shown to Mary that her authority as earthly mother was subordinate to that of His immortal and divine Father, nevertheless He obeyed her. Interested as were the doctors in this remarkable Boy, much as He had given them to ponder over through His searching questions and wise answers, they could not detain Him, for the very law they professed to uphold enjoined strict obedience to parental authority. **"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart."**

What marvelous and sacred secrets were treasured in that mother's heart; and what new surprizes and grave problems were added day after day in the manifestations of unfolding wisdom displayed by her more than mortal Son! Though she could never have wholly forgotten, at times she seemingly lost sight of her Son's exalted personality. That such conditions should exist was perhaps divinely appointed. There could scarcely have been a full measure of truly human experience in the relationship between Jesus and His mother, or between Him and Joseph, had the fact of His divinity been always dominant or even prominently apparent. Mary appears never to have fully understood her Son; at every new evidence of His uniqueness she marveled and pondered anew. He was hers, and yet in a very real sense not wholly hers. There was about their relation to each other a mystery, awful yet sublime, a holy secret which that chosen and blessed mother hesitated even to tell over to herself. Fear must have contended with joy within her soul because of Him. The memory of Gabriel's glorious promises, the testimony of the rejoicing shepherds, and the adoration of the magi must have struggled with that of

Simeon's portentous prophecy, directed to herself in person: "**Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.**"[265]

In other words, Mary will feel as if a sword pierced her soul when her Son was lifted up on the cross, crucified, and then pierced with a sword.

As to the events of the eighteen years following the return of Jesus from Jerusalem to Nazareth, the scriptures are silent save for one rich sentence of greatest import: "**And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.**"[266] Plainly this Son of the Highest was not endowed with a fulness of knowledge, nor with the complete investiture of wisdom, from the cradle.[267] Slowly the assurance of His appointed mission as the Messiah, of whose coming He read in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, developed within His soul; and in devoted preparation for the ministry that should find culmination on the cross He passed the years of youth and early manhood. From the chronicles of later years we learn that He was reputed without question to be the son of Joseph and Mary, and was regarded as the brother of other and younger children of the family. He was spoken of both as a carpenter and a carpenter's son; and, until the beginning of His public ministry He appears to have been of little prominence even in the small home community.[268]

He lived the simple life, at peace with His fellows, in communion with His Father, thus increasing in favor with God and men. As shown by His public utterances after He had become a man, these years of seclusion were spent in active effort, both physical and mental. Jesus was a close observer of nature and men. He was able to draw illustrations with which to point His teachings from the varied occupations, trades and professions; the ways of the lawyer and the physician, the manners of the scribe, the Pharisee and the rabbi, the habits of the poor, the customs of the rich, the life of the shepherd, the farmer, the vinedresser and the fisherman – were all known to Him. He considered the lilies of the field, and the grass in meadow and upland, the birds which sowed not nor gathered into barns but lived on the bounty of their Maker, the foxes in their holes, the petted house dog and the vagrant cur, the hen sheltering her brood beneath protecting wings – all these had contributed to the wisdom in which He grew, as had also the moods of the weather, the recurrence of the seasons, and all the phenomena of natural change and order.

Nazareth was the abode of Jesus until He was about thirty years of age; and, in accordance with the custom of designating individuals by the names of their home towns as additions to their personal names,[269] our Lord came to be generally known as Jesus of Nazareth.[270] He is also referred to as a Nazarene, or a native of Nazareth, and this fact is cited by Matthew as a fulfillment of earlier prediction, though our current compilation of scriptures constituting the Old Testament contains no record of such prophecy. It is practically certain that this prediction was contained in some one of the many scriptures extant in earlier days but since lost.[271] That Nazareth was an

obscure village, of little honor or renown, is evidenced by the almost contemptuous question of Nathanael, who, on being informed that the Messiah had been found in Jesus of Nazareth, asked: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"[272] The incredulous query has passed into a proverb current even today as expressive of any unpopular or unpromising source of good. Nathanael lived in Cana, but a few miles from Nazareth, and his surprise at the tidings brought by Philip concerning the Messiah incidentally affords evidence of the seclusion in which Jesus had lived.

So passed the boyhood, youth, and early manhood of the Savior of mankind.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. Archelaus Reigned in Herod's Stead – "At his death Herod [the Great] left a will according to which his kingdom was to be divided among his three sons. Archelaus was to have Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, with the title of king (Matt 2:22). Herod Antipas was to receive Galilee and Perea, with the title of tetrarch; Philip was to come into possession of the trans-Jordan territory with the title of tetrarch (Luke 3:1). This will was ratified by Augustus with the exception of the title given to Archelaus. Archelaus, after the ratification of Herod's will by Augustus, succeeded to the rule of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, having the title of ethnarch, with the understanding that, if he ruled well, he was to become king. He was, however, highly unpopular with the people, and his reign was marked by disturbances and acts of oppression. The situation became finally so intolerable that the Jews appealed to Augustus, and Archelaus was removed and sent into exile. This accounts for the statement in Matt. 2:22, and possibly also suggested the point of the parable (Luke 19:12, etc.)." – *Standard Bible Dictionary*, Funk and Wagnalls Co., article "Herod." Early in his reign he wreaked summary vengeance on the people who ventured to protest against a continuation of his father's violence, by slaughtering three thousand or more; and the awful deed of carnage was perpetrated in part within the precincts of the temple. (Josephus, *Antiquities* xvii, 9:1-3.)

2. Herod Antipas – Son of Herod I (the Great) by a Samaritan woman, and full brother to Archelaus. By the will of his father he became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:19; 9:7; Acts 13:1; compare Luke 3:1). He repudiated his wife, a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petrea, and entered into an unlawful union with Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Herod Philip I (not the tetrarch Philip). John the Baptist was imprisoned and finally put to death, through the anger of Herodias over his denunciation of her union with Herod Antipas. Herodias urged Antipas to go to Rome and petition Caesar for the title of king (compare Mark 6:14, etc.). Antipas is the Herod most frequently mentioned in the New Testament (Mark 6:17; 8:15; Luke 3:1; 9:7; 13:31; Acts 4:27; 13:1). He was the Herod to whom Pilate sent Jesus for examination, taking advantage of Christ being known as a Galilean, and of the coincident fact of Herod's

presence in Jerusalem at the time in attendance at the Passover (Luke 23:6, etc.). For further details see Smith's, Cassell's, or the Standard Bible Dictionary.

3. Testimony of John the Apostle Concerning Christ's Development in Knowledge and Grace—In a modern revelation, Jesus the Christ has confirmed the record of John the apostle, which record appears but in part in our compilation of ancient scriptures. John thus attests the actuality of natural development in the growth of Jesus from childhood to maturity: "**And I, John, saw that he received not of the fullness at the first, but received grace for grace; and he received not of the fullness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fullness; and thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fullness at the first.**" (Doc. and Cov. 93:12-14). Notwithstanding this graded course of growth and development after His birth in the flesh, Jesus Christ had been associated with the Father from the beginning, as is set forth in the revelation cited. We read therein: "**And he [John] bore record, saying, I saw his glory that he was in the beginning before the world was; therefore in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation, the light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men. The worlds were made by him: men were made by him: all things were made by him, and through him, and of him. And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us**" (verses 7-11).

4. Missing Scripture—Matthew's commentary on the abode of Joseph, Mary and Jesus at Nazareth, "and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene" (2:23), with the fact that no such saying of the prophets is found in any of the books contained in the Bible, suggests the certainty of lost scripture. Those who oppose the doctrine of continual revelation between God and His Church, on the ground that the Bible is complete as a collection of sacred scriptures, and that alleged revelation not found therein must therefore be spurious, may profitably take note of the many books not included in the Bible, yet mentioned therein, generally in such a way as to leave no doubt that they were once regarded as authentic. Among these extra-Biblical scriptures, the following may be named; some of them are in existence to-day, and are classed with the Apocrypha; but the greater number are unknown. We read of the Book of the Covenant (Exo. 24:7); Book of the Wars of the Lord (Numb. 21:14); Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13); Book of the Statutes (1 Sam. 10:25); Book of Enoch (Jude 14); Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41); Book of Nathan the Prophet, and that of Gad the Seer (1 Chron. 29:29); Book of Ahijah the Shilonite, and visions of Iddo the Seer (2 Chron. 9:29); Book of Shemaiah (2 Chron. 12:15); Story of the Prophet Iddo (2 Chron. 13:22); Book of Jehu (2 Chron. 20:34); the Acts of Uzziah, by Isaiah, the son of Amoz (2 Chron. 26:22); Sayings of the Seers (2 Chron. 33:19); a missing epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor.

5:9); a missing epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 3:3); missing epistle to the Colossians, written from Laodicea (Col. 4:16); a missing epistle of Jude (Jude 3).

5. Nazareth— A town or "city" in Galilee, of which Biblical mention is found in the New Testament only. Josephus says nothing concerning the place. The name of the existing village, or the Nazareth of to-day, is *En-Nazirah*. This occupies an upland site on the southerly ridge of Lebanon, and "commands a splendid view of the Plain of Esdraelon and Mount Carmel, and is very picturesque in general" (Zenos). The author of the article "Nazareth" in Smith's *Bible Dict.* identifies the modern En-Nazirah, with the Nazareth of old on the following grounds: "It is on the lower declivities of a hill or mountain (Luke 4:29); it is within the limits of the province of Galilee (Mark 1:9); it is near Cana (John 2:1, 2, 11); a precipice exists in the neighborhood (Luke 4:29); and a series of testimonials reaching back to Eusebius represent the place as having occupied the same position." The same writer adds: "Its population is 3000 or 4000; a few are Mohammedans, the rest Latin and Greek Christians. Most of the houses are well built of stone, and appear neat and comfortable. The streets or lanes are narrow and crooked, and after rain are so full of mud and mire as to be almost impassable." At the time of Christ's life the town was not only regarded as unimportant by the Judeans who professed but little respect for Galilee or the Galileans, but as without honor by the Galileans themselves, as appears from the fact that the seemingly contemptuous question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" was uttered by Nathanael (John 1:46), who was a Galilean and a native of Cana, a neighboring town to Nazareth (John 21:2). Nazareth owes its celebrity to its association with events in the life of Jesus Christ (Matt. 2:23; 13:54; Mark 1:9; 6:1; Luke 1:26; 2:4; 4:23,34; John 1:45,46; 19:19; Acts 2:22).

FOOTNOTES

[254] Matt. 2:15; compare Hos. 11:1.

[255] Matt. 2:19-23. Note 5, end of chapter.

[256] Note 1, end of chapter.

[257] Note 2, end of chapter.

[258] Luke 2:40.

[259] Note 3, end of chapter.

[260] Compare His teachings after He had reached manhood, e.g. John 8:32.

[261] Deut. 16:1-6; compare Exo. 12:2.

[262] Josephus; Wars of the Jews, ii, 1:3.

[263] Luke 2:46; read 41-52.

[264] Compare Matt. 7:28, 29; 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:22.

[265] Luke 2:35.

[266] Luke 2:52.

[267] Note 3, end of chapter.

[268] Matt. 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3; Luke 4:22; compare Matt. 12:46, 47; Gal. 1:19.

[269] For illustrative examples see Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43); Mary Magdalene, so known from her native town of Magdala (Matt. 27:56); Judas Iscariot, possibly named after his home in Kerioth (Matt. 10:4); see Chapter 16 herein.

[270] Matt. 21:11; John 18:5; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 3:6; see also Luke 4:16.

[271] Note 4, end of chapter.

[272] John 1:45, 46.