

The Life & Teachings of Yeshua

*Learning about the real Jesus, his message, his culture
and the people he taught and loved.*

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Two Very Different Birth Traditions

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Bible Study

Guideline:

- (1) Luke wrote first.
- (2) Mark reworked Luke's material and unfavorably influenced Matthew.
- (3) Matthew followed Mark's version closely.
- (4) Accounts found in Matthew that are not found in Mark, frequently preserve the earlier sources of the life of Jesus that lie behind Luke's Gospel.

Analysis of Luke

Number is for verse.

- (1) Roman emperor orders worldwide census be taken.
- (3) People had to return to the places of their births.
- (4) Joseph returns to Bethlehem.
- (5) Joseph engaged to Mary.
- (5) Mary is pregnant with first child.
- (9) An angel appears to shepherds.
- (11) Anointed used instead of Christ.

- (13) Many heavenly beings appear and chant praises.

In the previous article you were introduced to the Bible Study Guideline at the left side of this page. We are going to apply this guideline as we examine the different Gospel traditions about the birth of Yeshua. The earliest tradition found in the New Testament comes from the Gospel of Luke. Please examine Luke's account from a reporter's perspective. We want to identify the participants and events recorded in Luke, Mark and Matthew and then compare them.

Let me warn you that you will probably have to deal with programming you received when you were a child. As I told a Bible study group recently, do your best to forget the song that begins, "We three kings of the Orient are." When I was a child I acted in many plays and played the roles of a shepherd, wise man, and an inn keeper. It is a real challenge to separate those memories from the actual Bible accounts, but we shall begin this study with Luke 2 --

¹Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ²This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own town. ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the town of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹for today in the town of David there has been born for you a Deliverer, who is the Anointed of the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

(15) Shepherds go to Bethlehem.

(17) Shepherds tell about the angel's message.

(20) Shepherd return to their flocks.

(21) 8 days later Yeshua is named and circumcised in Bethlehem.

(22) 30 days later they go to Temple in Jerusalem.

(39) Return to home at Nazareth.

(41) Travel to Jerusalem every year to participate in the Pasach (Passover).

Analysis of Mark
No reference to birth of Yeshua.

Analysis of Matthew
(1:18) Mary engaged to Joseph, becomes pregnant before they have sexual intercourse. Father is the Holy Spirit.
(19) Joseph considers ending relationship.
(19) Joseph is now called her husband.
(20) In a dream an angel speaks to Joseph. Mary called his wife. Explains Holy Spirit is father.
(21) Angel names Yeshua and explains his mission.
(22) Matthew's uses prophecies to support events.
(23) Mary's pregnancy and the angel's message were prophesied over 700 years

¹⁵When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as he lay in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

²¹And when eight days had passed, before his circumcision, his name was then called Yeshua, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²²And when the days for their purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. . . .

²⁷And he (Simeon) came in the Spirit into the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Yeshua, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law. . . .
³³And his father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about him. . . .

³⁹When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him. ⁴¹Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Pasach. ⁴²And when he became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast.

Following our Bible Study Guideline, our next step is to examine Mark's account of the birth of Yeshua. This is easy because he didn't write one. Why? Did he not feel that it was important? Did he disagree with it? Had he heard it? Obviously, we will never know the answers to those questions, but we do know that nothing is recorded about it in Mark's Gospel, therefore, let's move on to Matthew. Based on the Bible Study Guideline above, we feel that Matthew had Luke and Mark, as well as some other sources before him when he wrote his account, which is found in Matthew 1:18-2:23.

^{1:18}Now the birth of Yeshua the Anointed One was as follows. After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Then Joseph her husband, being just and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Yeshua, for he will save his people from their sins."

²²So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the

earlier by Isaiah.

(25) Joseph named him Yeshua and not Immanuel as in the prophecy.

(2:1) Yeshua born in Bethlehem. Magi arrive and start looking for the new king. Someone told Herod about them. (4) Chief priests and scribes are asked where the Messiah would be born.

(6) The prophecy is from Micah 5:2-4.

(11) Magi leave expensive gifts.

(12) God warns Magi about Herod.

(13) Joseph has another dream and an angel has a message for him.

(14) Joseph immediately takes his family to Egypt.

(15) Prophecy is Hosea 1:1.

(16) Based on the 2 year old comment the approximate date of Yeshua's birth is October 7 BCE.

(18) Prophecy is Jeremiah 31:15 (14)

(19) Joseph stays in Egypt until Herod's death in April of 4 BCE.

(22) Joseph has another dream and is warned about going to Judea. This is the reason he moves to Galilee.

Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." ²⁴Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn son. And he called his name Yeshua.

^{2:1}Now after Yeshua was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ²"Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

⁴Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: ⁶and you, Bethlehem, Land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child; and when you have found him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship him." ⁹After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹After coming into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

¹³Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." ¹⁴So Joseph got up and took the child and his mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. ¹⁵He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

¹⁶Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.

¹⁷Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more."

(23) Notice the use of the word “prophets.” There are no known prophecies in the Hebrew Bible to support this claim.

Analysis of John

No reference to birth of Yeshua.

¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, ²⁰“Get up, take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the child's life are dead.” ²¹So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, ²³and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Comparison of Luke & Matthew

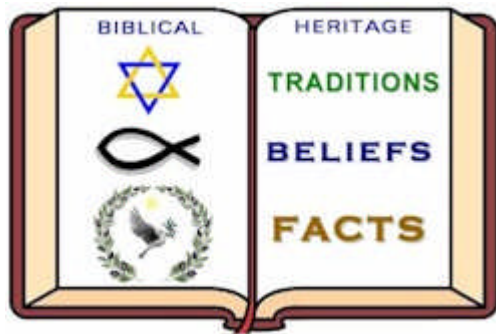
Event	Luke	Matthew
Reason for being in Bethlehem.	Decree from Caesar Augustus	None given – appears to be home.
Joseph & Mary engaged.	Agree	Agree
Reason for Mary’s pregnancy.	None given.	No sexual intercourse. He wants to put her away. Holy Spirit is father of the child.
Inn Keeper & Staying Stable with animals.	No room at inn. Nothing said about inn keeper or stable.	Nothing said about inn, inn keeper or stable.
Yeshua in a manger.	Yes	Yes
Angel appears to shepherds & they go to Mary & Joseph.	Yes	No
Circumcision of Yeshua on 8 th day.	Yes	No
Joseph & Mary visits Temple 30 days later.	Yes	No
Returned to home in Nazareth.	Yes	No
Joseph has dreams in which an angel leaves him messages.	No	Yes
Joseph told in dream to name child “Yeshua.”	No	Yes
Magi arrive looking for baby.	No	Yes
Herod searches for baby.	No	Yes
Magi present expensive gifts.	No	Yes
Herod orders babies killed.	No	Yes
Joseph & family go to Egypt.	No	Yes
Settle in new home – Nazareth	No	Yes
Prophecies used to support events in the story.	No	Yes
Three kings riding on camels visit the manger.	No	No
Angels present at the birth.	No	No
Date of birth given in story.	No	No

Clearly Luke and Matthew present two very different traditions about the birth of Yeshua. Since they could not be reconciled in the Bible itself, later traditions incorporated both and then added a few new details. Did you have to deal with the songs “Away in a Manger” and “We Three Kings” as you read the stories?

Some people will be challenged by the suggestion that there are two differing accounts in the New Testament. The suggestion that they are “different” means that either one or both may be wrong. This creates a significant challenge to their beliefs about the biblical text itself. **BHC**

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Matters of faith are playing an increasingly greater role of importance in the political and social environments today. Our mission is to provide solid factual information about the book and the heritages from which those matters of faith originated. *Even though millions read their Bible regularly, many know nothing about its history or the heritages that shaped it and were shaped by it in return.*

For Christians the single most important historical figure is Yeshua, yet most of their beliefs are based on words attributed to Saul of Tarsus, a man who never met Yeshua during his life time; or on the thoughts of men who lived centuries later. The reason that BHC launched its new series *The Life & Teachings of Yeshua* is to help readers learn more about the one upon who the beliefs of over two billion people are based. Shouldn't modern Christianity reflect Yeshua's life and teachings?

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