

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL - THE LIFE OF CHRIST

PART ONE: THE PERIOD OF CHRIST'S LIFE PRIOR TO HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY

1. Introductory Portion of the Several Books

a. John's introduction (1:1-18)

- (1) Verse 14 tells us the Word is Christ. The passage affirms: 1-Christ existed before creation, 2-He was present with God, 3-He is Divine, 4-He is the Word, and 5-through Him all things were made (v.3).
- (2) John is showing to his readers that even though the Word is God, he is also a distinct personality.
- (3) Compare with Heb. 1:2 (Col. 1:15-17) and notice how creation came about. God Said! The Word made all things. (Notice the plural pronouns in Gen. 1:26, 3:22, 11:7.) How can we use this verse to show that Jesus is not a creature?
- (4) Life has flowed from the Word since the beginning. When God breathed life into man, the Word was there. The Word has the power of life and death, example: Lazarus. The Word is the spiritual light that guides mankind (Jn. 8:12).
- (5) The Light of the Word pierces the spiritual darkness of this world. Some will refuse to take advantage of the Light, but choose instead to remain in darkness. That is, some will despise and reject Christ.
- (6) John the Baptist was sent as a forerunner to prepare the way for the coming of the Light.
- (7) John's job was as a witness or messenger. He preached repentance and the Kingdom was at hand. His testimony was aimed at converting men to Christ, not himself. Compare John's mission to that of the Apostles.
- (8) Some followers tried to deify John. Even Christ said John was the light (5:35-38). How is this explained? Christ is a self-shining light, while John is a reflected light. Christ shines by His own light while John shines by Christ's light.
- (9) Christ is the universal light (Jn. 12:46). He was sent to light the way for every man, not just one particular group.
- (10) Compare to verse 11. This verse refers to His reception among the world in general. 1-He was in the world, 2-He created the world, and 3-the world did not recognize Him.
- (11) This verse concerns His reception among His own people. 1-He joined the Jewish race in fleshly form, and 2-they rejected Him as well.
- (12) Believers are given the power to become children of God. Notice that we are not made children by simply believing, but believing gives us the ability to become children. (Gal. 3:26; 4:6,7; 1 Jn. 3:1,2)
- (13) Race has nothing to do with salvation and our natural birth has nothing to do with spiritual regeneration. The new birth will be discussed more thoroughly when we study Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-8).
- (14) The Gnostics were already causing trouble in the church when John wrote this Gospel. If Christ truly came in the flesh, then Gnosticism is a false religion. Peter, James, and John were eyewitnesses of the Transfiguration, while the other Apostles were witnesses of Jesus' sinless and godlike life. The blessings of grace and truth come through Christ, not pomp and grandeur.
- (15) This is John the Baptist's testimony. Even though Christ was at least six months younger than John was, John gave him seniority. Why? His pre-existence.

- (16) Based on his own observations and those of the Baptist, the Apostle John concludes: we have all received of His fullness. "Grace for grace," means a perpetual reception not just a one-time gift. (Compare to Rom. 1:16,17.)
- (17) The Law of Moses was not a system of grace, nor could man become perfect (complete) through it.
- (18) The manifestation of the Word has allowed us to glimpse God the father. It is Christ's continuing duty to reveal God to generations that do not know Him (Jn. 14:9).

b. Luke's preface (1:1-4)

- (1) It seems from this introduction that others besides Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were writing gospels of their own.
- (2) The things believed were preached by eyewitnesses, these eyewitnesses would include but not be limited to the Apostles. Luke's inspiration would allow him to recollect perfectly what these eyewitnesses had told him. In turn, their inspiration would allow them to remember what they had seen and heard perfectly.
- (3) Luke has made himself accurately informed on the given subject. Luke will take his narrative back to the "very first," that is, to the pre-existent Christ. While Luke's gospel seems to be chronological, it is probably not exactly chronological event by event. However, the periods of Christ's life seem to be in order by topic.
- (4) Why was the book written? 1-To edify and strengthen Theophilus. Compare to 1 Jn. 5:13. 2-To provide assurance of the things already received. 3-To provide a permanent written record of the life of Christ.

c. The genealogies (Mt. 1:1-17; Lk. 3:23-38)

- 1. The genealogy of Matthew (1 Chron. 1:34-2:15; Gen. 21:1-3; 25:21-26; 29:35; 38:29; Ruth 4:18-21) - In verses 1-6 we have fourteen Patriarchs listed, from Abraham to David. By counting David again there are fourteen Kings listed from David to Jecooniah. From Shealtiel to Jesus is fourteen generations. Do we recognize any Old Testament characters in this list? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Rahab, Ruth, The Kings, Joseph, Jesus.
- 2. The genealogy of Luke - Why is Luke's genealogy different than Matthew's? Two theories have been proposed:
 - (a) Matthew's genealogy shows Christ coming through the lineage of Joseph and Luke's shows Christ coming through Mary. That is, Matthew's genealogy was to demonstrate to the Jews that His paternal lineage was from Abraham through the Kings of Israel, thus making Him an heir to the throne of David. Luke's genealogy was to demonstrate Romans 1:3, that Christ was heir to David's throne in the flesh.
 - (b) The second theory says that both genealogies come through Joseph, but Luke's is more complete. That is, Matthew listed only the families, while Luke listed the individuals.
- 3. Both theories agree that the difference in purpose has much to do with the difference in the lists. Matthew was establishing Jesus' Jewish heritage, while Luke was establishing Jesus as the "new Adam" for the benefit of the Gentiles. (See also, McGarvey's Commentary on Matthew p. 23.)

2. Birth of John the Baptist Foretold to Zacharias (Lk. 1:5-25)

- (5) Herod the Great was appointed King of Judah by the Romans, he was a Jewish proselyte from the lineage of Edom (Idumaen). He was an evil man and the first of a line of ruling Herods of

Judah. He died in 4 BC, the approximate year of the Lord's birth. Zacharias was a Jewish priest of the eighth order (Abijah). His wife Elisabeth was also a Levite, a descendent of Aaron.

- (6) They were righteous in that they followed the Law of Moses by keeping the commandments and ordinances of the Law.
- (7) They were both too old to bear children, but besides age, Elisabeth was barren. We see then that the Baptist's birth was contrary to nature. Compare his situation to that of Isaac, Samson, and Samuel. The birth of each of these men was a foreshadowing of the birth of Christ.
- (8) The miracle which follows occurred while Zacharias was performing his priestly duties.
- (9) These duties included entering the Holy Place and burning incense.
- (10) The hour of incense corresponded to the hour of prayer, so the outer courts of the temple were filled with people.
- (11) The angel Gabriel appears to Zacharias (v.19).
- (12) The sudden appearance of the angel was disconcerting to Zacharias. He was afraid that he had performed his duties in an unworthy manner and that God was going to require his life.
- (13) It is doubtful that Zacharias was praying for a son at this time. However, it seems obvious that he had prayed for a son in the past. The fact that the angel mentions that Elisabeth will have a son points out the object of these past petitions. What is the significance of the name John? It means, "God is gracious" or "graciously bestowed of God."
- (14) The birth of John the Baptist was a reason for many to be joyful. This joy culminated in his ministry, as it was his ministry that brought joy to the people. Of course if he had never been born this joy would have never been available.
- (15) Compare Mt. 11:11- John lived up to the angel's prophecy. John was to be bound with the Nazarite vow (Num. 6:1-20; compare Samson, Jud. 13:2-5). This vow would account for his long hair and abstinence from wine and strong drink. His life and ministry were to be directed by the Holy Spirit from the day of his birth. (See v. 41 for a possible connection.)
- (16) The angel predicts the success of John's ministry. This ministry was to the Jews only. The number of his converts was many (Mt. 3:5,6; Mk. 1:5; Lk. 3:7). Notice that John's work was to turn the people back to God, hence his baptism of repentance and the fulfillment of Mal. 4:5.
- (17) John was to be the new "Elijah" prophesied as the forerunner of the Messiah (Mt. 17:9-13; 2 Ki. 1:8; Mt. 3:4; 1 Ki. 18:21-40). The continuity between the Old Covenant is maintained as this verse takes up where the Old Testament left off (Mal. 4:6). John's preaching would cause some to set aside their differences and prepare for the coming of the Messiah.
- (18) Zacharias wanted assurance that the angel's word was true. This scene reveals a flaw in Zacharias' character and his "sign" would also act as a punishment for doubting the angel. Why did Zacharias not believe the angel? Perhaps because of he and Elisabeth's advanced years. (Think of Abraham and Sarah.)
- (19) By identifying himself as "Gabriel," the angel should have quelled Zacharias' fears. Gabriel means "man of God" and previously appeared to Daniel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21). He was an archangel (Rev. 8:2) or prince of angels.
- (20) Zacharias will be struck dumb and remain that way until eight days after the birth of John. Remember that this punishment was also a sign that the angel spoke the truth.
- (21) It was unusual for the priest to stay long in the Holy Place. The people waiting outside were concerned over his extended stay. Slow service was considered displeasing to God, and the people feared the punishment that would accompany that displeasure (Lev. 16:13).
- (22) His countenance showed the people that he had seen a vision, but because of his dumbness he had to dismiss the congregation by signs. Numbers 6:23-26 shows that it was the duty of the incensing priest to bless the congregation.

- (23) Zacharias had to finish his priestly duties before he could go home. His duties at the temple lasted from one to two weeks and he would be confined to the temple during that time. His home was located somewhere in the hill country surrounding Jerusalem (see v. 39).
- (24) It is hard to determine exactly why Elisabeth hid herself. Perhaps it was because the child was to be a Nazarite (compare to Samson's mother) or perhaps the modesty of the day dictated it. It could be that her advanced years made her more careful, not wanting to lose the child. Her seclusion was interrupted by Mary's visit.
- (25) To be barren was a reproach to a Jewish woman (Gen. 30:23). Each woman hoped that she would be the mother of the Messiah.

3. **Birth of Jesus Foretold to Mary (Lk. 1:26-38)**

- (26) This verse indicates that John was six months older than Jesus was. Palestine was divided into three territories: Judea - south, Samaria - central, and Galilee - north (refer to map).
- (27) This engagement period could last up to a year and commenced with a betrothal ceremony. It had all the binding obligations of our marriage ceremony. The "seed of David" may refer to Christ's lineage through Joseph and/or Mary. The fact that Mary was a virgin fulfills the prophecy of Isa. 7:14.
- (28) The angel Gabriel entered Mary's house and saluted (greeted) her. The salutation included the statement of her being highly favored. (How? We shall see directly.)
- (29) The words of the angel confused Mary.
- (30) The fact that Mary had obtained favor in God's eyes indicates that she had not always had this favor. This in turn eliminates the false doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception."
- (31) Verse 35 answers the "how" posed by this statement. Jesus - "the help of Jehovah" or Savior.
- (32) The word for "shall be" in Greek indicates acceptance. Christ will be accepted as the Son of the Most High. How did Christ possess David's throne? David ruled God's people from an earthly throne, Christ rules God's people from a heavenly throne which would include David's earthly throne.
- (33) This is a reference to the spiritual house of Jacob, the true Israel. Only eternity will end this kingdom on earth. (Gal. 3:7-9) comments on spiritual Israel and demonstrates that both Jew and Gentile are included.
- (34) This is not a question of unbelief, like the question of Zacharias', but simply not understanding "how" this thing could happen. Still, why should Zacharias be punished and Mary be left alone?
- (35) Jesus was miraculously conceived, this why He was the "Son of God." The agency of the Holy Spirit is employed as He was at creation (Gen. 1:2).
- (36) Elisabeth was Mary's relative, not necessarily her cousin. Mary becomes informed of Elisabeth's condition. Why had Mary not already received this information?
- (37) Mary must believe that nothing is impossible with God.
- (38) Mary submits to the prophecy, she is willing to become the bondservant of the Lord, that these things might come to pass.

4. **Mary Visits Elisabeth (Lk. 1:39-56)**

- (39) It was not long before Mary went to see Elisabeth. The city of Judah referred to here was probably Hebron.
- (40) As was the custom, Mary went into the host and saluted her with a formal greeting, such as: "may God be with you" or "may peace be yours."
- (41) The sound of Mary's voice caused 1) John to leap in the womb and 2) Elisabeth to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to such an extent as to utter the following prophecy.

- (42) "Blessed art thou among women" could be legitimately translated "blessed of God beyond all other women." Elisabeth knew by inspiration that Mary was pregnant.
- (43) Elisabeth inquires as to why she is so honored? She is referring to the honor of being visited by the mother of the Messiah.
- (44) Elisabeth recounts what happened in verse 41. It seems that Mary's salutation caused the baby to "leap for joy" in Elisabeth's womb.
- (45) Elisabeth may be comparing Mary to Zacharias. That is, Mary is blessed because she believed from the beginning.
- (46-56) Most of the recorded words we have spoken by the mother of Jesus occur in these verses. This is Mary's song. (Compare to Hannah's song, 1 Sam. 2:1-10). This poem is a celebration of the Lord's glorious fulfillment of the promise to Israel of a Messiah. Mary rejoiced that she had been elevated from nothing to the mother of the Messiah. Notice verse 48. All generations from that time forward would know that she was the mother of the Lord. In verse 49, Mary's poem begins to look back over the great things that God had done for Israel.

The poem can be divided into three main sections:

1. (vv. 46-48) - Even though Mary was blessed, it is God who deserves the credit.
2. (vv. 49,50) - Here Mary glorifies God for His power, holiness, and mercy.
3. (vv. 51-53) - The changes which the Messiah will make are spoken of as if He had already completed His work.

Mary concludes (vv. 54-56) with an expression of gratitude for God's own faithfulness.

5. Birth and Early Life of John (Lk. 1:57-80)

- (57) John was born soon after Mary's departure. The predictions of the angel begin to unfold.
- (58) With the rejoicing of the kinfolk and neighbors, the fulfillment of v. 14 begins. Everyone realized that Elisabeth having a child was a great blessing possible only through "great mercy of the Lord."
- (59) Mosaic Law concerning circumcision can be found in Gen. 17:12, Lev. 12:3, and Jn. 7:22,23. Tradition called for at least ten witnesses. Circumcision served as a mark of Jewish nationality and as a sign of their faith in God.
- (60,61) Zacharias had communicated to Elisabeth that the baby was to be named John or else she was inspired concerning the name. Custom dictated that the son would be named for the father, the naming of both John and Jesus broke with this tradition.
- (62) This verse implies that Zacharias was probably deaf as well as dumb. The witnesses assumed that Zacharias would override Elisabeth in this matter of the name. Some commentators feel that the Greek is saying that the witnesses were asking for a sign from Zacharias, not signing to him.
- (63) Tablet - a clay tablet coated with wax, into which letters were traced with a stylus. Zacharias' simple statement infers that John had already been named. Why would they marvel at this? First, John was not a family name and second, that the parents would agree to such a name.
- (64) When Zacharias affirmed that his son's name was indeed John, his tongue was loosened. Notice that the first use of his recovered speech was to praise God.
- (65) The active presence of God has always inspired awe in man. The circumstances of John's birth were told throughout all of Judea.
- (66) It could be seen that the Lord was with John. Because the Lord was with John, it was known that he was destined for something - just what, everybody wondered?
- (67) In verses 67-79 we have prophecy uttered by Zacharias. Part 1 - (67-75) Blessing God for the true spiritual salvation in fulfillment of his promises. There had been no recorded prophets

since Malachi. What is a prophet? A forth-teller, one who communicates God's will (Gen. 20:7; Jn. 4:19) God's mouthpiece to the people (2 Pet. 1:21). Sometimes even evil men were inspired as prophets (Num. 23:5; 24:11).

- (68) This verse refers to Jesus Christ. Note: Prophets sometimes spoke of things that were going to happen as if they had already occurred.
- (69) The word "horn" represents strength and honor, power and glory. Zacharias gives precedence in his prophecy to Jesus, even though the occasion is the birth of his own son, John.
- (70) The words of the prophets were the words of God. God first promised the Messiah in Gen. 3:15. Since that time, Christ had been the main subject of prophecy (Rev. 19:10).
- (71) Our true enemies are the ones that can harm us spiritually. The messiah was sent to deliver us from these spiritual enemies.
- (72,73) Christ will bring pardon, peace, and eternal life, thus fulfilling the promise, the covenant, and the oath.
- (74) Christ will indeed conquer our enemies, but even though He is mighty, we need not fear Him.
- (75) "Holiness" involves the duties we owe to God, such as: reverence, devotion, and worship. "Righteousness" has more to do with that which is right between men.
- (76) Part 2 - (76-79) Presenting John as the prophet and herald of the Messiah. Review the aspects of what it means to be a "forerunner."
- (77) John's objective was to awaken the people to see their need for spiritual salvation by starting them on their way through repentance.
- (78) Christ is the dayspring, that is, the dawn of a new era.
- (79) Everyone has the opportunity for this light to shine on them.
- (80) John begins to grow - physically, mentally, and spiritually. "The deserts" means unenclosed, untilled, uninhabited places. They could be mountains, woods, pastures, or desert; anyplace remote would fit the definition. John remained in the deserts until his time of public ministry (at about 30 years of age).

6. Birth of Jesus Foretold to Joseph (Mt. 1:18-25)

- (18) It was probably upon her return from visiting Elisabeth that Mary's pregnancy was discovered (became evident).
- (19) Of course, Joseph supposes that Mary had committed adultery. This left him with two courses of action according to the Law of Moses. Deut. 22:23,24 was the most drastic alternative. The less violent alternative is found in Deut. 24:1 in which Mary would not be punished.
- (20) Obviously, this problem filled Joseph's mind. An angel speaks to Joseph in a dream, addressing him as a son of David. The angel affirms that Mary has not been untrue to Joseph, but is pregnant supernaturally. Why would Joseph "fear" to take Mary as his wife? Because it would have soiled his family name to marry an adulterous woman.
- (21) The angel prophesies a son, to be named Jesus. Also we see that Christ's work is also prophesied: namely, to save us from our sins!
- (22) Why was Mary chosen? So that prophecy such as Isa. 7:14 might be fulfilled. The four main points of this prophecy are: 1- a virgin bears a child, 2- a male child, 3- the child shall be divinely named and 4- the significance of the name would be given.
- (23) For Jesus to be the "Son of God" would demand a miraculous birth. His name Emmanuel means "God with us."
- (24) When Joseph awoke he obeyed the angel. It seems then that Joseph married Mary immediately, some months before the birth of Jesus. By marrying, Joseph saved Jesus from an illegitimate birth.

- (25) They abstained from intercourse until after Jesus was born. The Jews had already had two heroes named Jesus (Joshua and Hosea). One was captain of Israel, while the other was a high priest. Notice that Christ fulfills both of these offices.

7. Birth of Jesus (Lk. 2:1-7)

- (1) Caesar Augustus is the first of four Roman emperors to be mentioned in the NT. The title Caesar is also given to Tiberius (Lk. 3:1), Claudius (Acts 17:7), and Nero (Acts 25:8; 26:32). Augustus either called for a census of the Roman Empire or perhaps an enrollment for tax purposes.
- (2) Quirinius took another census about ten years later (Acts 5:37). Syria included Palestine under Roman rule.
- (3) The census called for each man to proceed to the city of his ancestors.
- (4) Even though Bethlehem was south of Nazareth it was at a higher (up) elevation. Bethlehem translates "house of bread" and thus it was a fitting birthplace for the "bread of life." It is located about six miles south of Jerusalem and 80 miles from Nazareth. Bethlehem was also the birthplace of David (1 Sam. 16:1).
- (5) Mary was either required by law to accompany Joseph or directed to by the Holy Spirit. She was near her term.
- (6) While waiting to be registered, Mary's time came.
- (7) Did Mary have other children? See Mt. 13:55, Mk. 6:3, Lk. 8:20, and Jn. 7:5. "Swaddling clothes" were bands of cloth used to wrap infants. It is reasonable to assume that the manger or crib was probably located in an outbuilding of the inn.

8. The Shepherds (Lk. 2:8-20)

- (8) Shepherding was one of the chief occupations among the Jews. Can you name some famous OT shepherds? Who is the most famous NT shepherd? (Jn. 10:11; Heb. 13:20.) The custom was to divide the night into four watches. The shepherds would take turns throughout the night.
- (9) Suddenly and unexpectedly an angel appears. The bright shining often accompanied the presence of angels (Ex. 24:16; Num. 14:10; Mt. 17:5). The shepherds were fearful.
- (10) The angel tells them that there is no need to be afraid because he is a messenger of good tidings.
- (11) That Christ was born in Bethlehem is a fulfillment of prophecy (Mic. 5:2). The Savior is the Christ (anointed), the ruler or Lord.
- (12) The sign was that the baby would be lying in a manger, not that he would be wrapped in swaddling clothes.
- (13) Now a host of angels appear and begin praising God.
- (14) Peace will come to all men who choose to be pleasing to God.
- (15) Even though the angels did not command them to go to Bethlehem the shepherds wanted to see this thing which had occurred.
- (16) Exactly how far away the shepherds were is hard to say, however they were close enough to arrive the same night. How they found Mary and Joseph is unclear.
- (17) This was proof enough for the shepherds who then began broadcasting the things that they had witnessed.
- (18) Those who heard the shepherd's story did not fully understand it.
- (19) Mary compared what the shepherds said to what the angel had told her. She filed these things away in her mind for future reference.
- (20) As the shepherds returned to their flocks, they rejoiced and praised God because these things had been made known to them.

9. The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus (Lk. 2:21)

- (21) Lev. 12:1-8 shows that under the Law the firstborn male child was to be dedicated to the Lord. As the angel had commanded the child was named Jesus.

10. The Presentation and Purification in the Temple (Lk. 2:22-39)

- (22) Lev. 12:1-5 shows that the purification process took 40 days. When this time was past, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. All firstborn male children were regarded as belonging to the Lord (Ex. 12:29,30). This child had to be redeemed with money (Ex. 13:11-15; Num. 18:15,16), about five shekels.
- (23) The tribe of Levi took the place of the original household priest (Num. 3:12), thus the firstborn could be redeemed as we noticed in verse 22.
- (24) The law also called for a sacrifice to be made. A year old lamb was called for, however the poor were allowed to substitute two young pigeons or turtledoves (Lev. 12:6-8). Mary's offering shows she was poor.
- (25) The name Simeon means "hearing." He was a cautious man, careful concerning the Law. He was expecting the Messiah to come. "The consolation of Israel" was a Jewish expression referring to the Messiah. Simeon was filled with the Holy Spirit.
- (26) Compare this verse to Mt. 16:28. The Holy Spirit had guaranteed Simeon that the Messiah would come before he died.
- (27) The Spirit had directed Simeon to the Temple, so that he would be there at the same time as Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.
- (28) Simeon recognized Jesus as the Messiah on first sight. He immediately blessed God for fulfilling his vision.
- (29) Simeon realizes that he is free to depart this life because the vision has been fulfilled.
- (30) How does Simeon see salvation? The embodiment of salvation is seen through the baby that Simeon holds in his arms.
- (31) The Jewish ideas concerning the Messiah had been spread throughout the world.
- (32) This salvation (light) will be for all people, Gentile as well as Jew.
- (33) Luke accepts Joseph as Christ's legal earthly guardian. Joseph and Mary were amazed because they did not realize the extent of the power that their Son would one day wield. They were also surprised that a stranger would know things concerning Jesus.
- (34) Why was Jesus a "falling?" (Isa. 8:14; Mt. 21:42,44; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 1:23) indicates He would be a stumbling block. Why was He a "rising?" (Rom. 6:4-9; Eph. 2:6) show that many would be raised up to glory and life through Him.
- (35) Here we have prophecy concerning Mary's pain at the crucifixion. Christ's death will manifest the evil in the hearts of His persecutors.
- (36) This Anna (or Hannah) was well known as a prophetess of advanced years. Some believe her to have been over 100 years old.
- (37) Some commentators feel that she was 84 years old and the things mentioned here happened within that time frame. The Jews held widows who chose not to remarry in high esteem. She was obviously very devout as seen by the time that she spent worshipping in the Temple.
- (38) She thanked God and spoke to those present of the Messiah.
- (39) Luke omits to tell that Jesus returned to Galilee via Bethlehem and Egypt. Eventually they do return as we will see in Mt. 2:22,23.

11. Visit of the Wise Men (Mt. 2:1-12)

- (1) History shows that Herod died in 4 BC, therefore Christ was born in or before that year. Herod was a puppet king of the Roman government, a half Jew. The wise men were actually priests or philosophers, Magi, from somewhere east of the Euphrates River.
- (2) The "star" was a supernatural source of light, because it behaved as no star could. These men were directed by God, as demonstrated by their knowledge of who would be found under the star.
- (3) Why was Herod "troubled?" His reign was threatened. Christ is the peace of the righteous and the trouble of the wicked.
- (4) Herod realized that the reference here was to the Messiah. The chief priests and the scribes could tell from the OT where the Christ would be born.
- (5) The priests quote Micah 5:2-4.
- (6) Compare this verse to Micah 5:2. Though not a direct translation, the gist of the message is there.
- (7) Herod now consults the Magi as to when the star appeared. This would pinpoint when Christ was born and give him an idea of his age. Notice that Herod held this meeting privately. Why?
- (8) To get an idea of Herod's true nature remove the word "worship" from this quote and insert the word "murder."
- (9) The star returned to guide the Magi, and they followed it the rest of the way to where Jesus was living.
- (10) Finding the star caused them to rejoice and confirmed that they were being guided supernaturally.
- (11) They worshipped Christ and presented Him with gifts. Joseph and Mary could use these gifts as money on their impending flight to Egypt.
- (12) The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod.

12. Jesus Taken to Egypt to Escape Death (Mt. 2:13-18)

- (13) The reading seems to indicate that the Magi arrived and departed the same night that Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt. The angel intended for them to leave immediately. There were many Jews in Egypt at this time so refuge among their own people was possible. The trip was between one and two hundred miles. The reason for this flight is explained.
- (14) It is interesting to note that they had to seek refuge in the country of bondage.
- (15) The death of Herod was probably soon after their arrival in Egypt. As for the prophecy, see Hos. 11:1.
- (16) When the Magi did not return, Herod became enraged. He had all the male children 2 years older and under, in and about Bethlehem, put to death. Herod could not know if the star appeared before or after the birth of Jesus, therefore he built in a margin for error. To see the extent of Herod's cruelty see *The Fourfold Gospel* pp. 50,51.
- (17) Jer. 31:15 was originally spoken concerning the Babylonian captivity. This type of prophecy is where the words spoken mean the same thing in the current situation as they did when they were originally spoken, even though they had no reference to this current event. This is a verbal fulfillment.
- (18) Rama was a hill town 6 miles north of Jerusalem. Compare Rachel to the mothers Bethlehem. Thus we have the fulfillment words, not necessarily a prediction.

13. The Return to Nazareth (Mt. 2:19-23)

- (19) It was not long until Herod died. Joseph was informed of Herod's death by an angel in a dream.
- (20) Since the enemies were dead, it was safe to return home.
- (21) So they returned to Palestine.

- (22) The land had been divided among Herod's sons. Archelaus controlled Judea. It seems Joseph's original plan was to return to Bethlehem. He decided, with God's approval, to go to Galilee where Antipas ruled.
- (23) Prophecy shows that Jesus should be called a Nazarene. Nazareth comes from a word meaning "lowly" or "despised." (Isa. 11:1; Eze. 15:1-6; Mal. 4:1.) He was called a Nazarene, but was actually a Bethlehemite.

14. Visit to Jerusalem at Age Twelve (Lk. 2:40-52)

- (40) The humanity of Christ is demonstrated in this verse as His body grew and His mind expanded.
- (41) The Law required that males above the age of 12 attend the Passover feast (Ex. 13:7). It took place at the first full moon following the vernal equinox. The attendance at Jerusalem often exceeded two million.
- (42) This is the only incident that we have recorded from Jesus' childhood. Nazareth to Jerusalem was about 70 miles, uphill.
- (43) The feast lasted eight days (Ex. 12:15, Lev. 23:56). As Joseph and Mary were returning home, they lost track of the boy Christ.
- (44) They expected Him to be among those traveling their way. The first day's journey was usually a short one, so when the evening camp was made, Jesus turned up missing.
- (45) They immediately returned to Jerusalem to try and find Him.
- (46) Compare this loss of the Savior to that of Lk. 24:21. They found Him at the Temple listening and questioning the teachers there. Jesus was not usurping the authority of adults but simply sitting in on a class that probably met daily.
- (47) The teachers were amazed at the questions he asked them and the answers He gave to their questions.
- (48) Joseph and Mary were astonished that Jesus would presume to enter the class of these teachers. Mary was also upset that he had not accompanied the caravan. She expressed the concern that she and Joseph felt.
- (49) Here we have the first recorded words of Jesus. Mary should have known that He would be in the Temple. From this point on, Joseph is not referred to as Jesus' father. Jesus is saying that His being at the Temple was more important than the return to Nazareth.
- (50) Joseph and Mary did not understand what he was saying to them. It seems strange that they did not expect some "different" behavior from their special Son.
- (51) Jesus returns to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary. During the ensuing years Jesus was in subjection to His earthly parents and learned His father's trade (Mk. 6:3). This is the last mention of Joseph. Notice that Mary once again records the sayings of and concerning her Son in her heart.
- (52) During these years He was admired by His fellowmen for His holiness. However, note closely how they react to His teaching as He begins to "activate" His holiness by teaching it to others. How could He increase in favor with God?