

# THE STORY

FINDING YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY.

## *Synopsis & Context – Session 22: The Birth of the King*

When we leave the Old Testament and begin reading the New Testament, what or rather how much of ‘yesterday’ is with us? That is, what has happened and how much time has elapsed in between our scenes? Roughly 400 years. This amount of time, although feels unimportant with its lack of description is no small matter. It would seem that the “Upper Story” has been quiet. But as it’s been pointed out, appearances may be deceiving. We need to remember “the story of Jesus does not begin with Jesus.” There is a great deal that brings us to the new moment – but which moment (or date) are we referring to specifically?

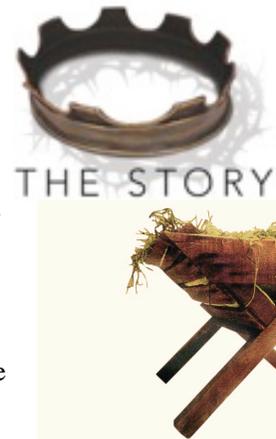
If asked, I imagine that you or your church friends could tell me a basic story of how Jesus came into the world. Where did we get this story, however? Even if we stick to one favorite strand, only one Gospel, which one would we use? What would we do with the others? I would venture to say most people’s rendition of this part of the Gospel would be based on a whole “composite” of the other scenes that are presented in the Bible. Does that mean the other accounts are “wrong?” I’d say no, but these differences only makes clear that the different emphasis and detail reflects more about the audience of the writer inasmuch if not more than the “God talk” being representative in the particular telling of this “good news.”

When you stop and think about it, the birth of Jesus was rather unspectacular by the world’s standards, but from a young age, his Word could dispel the darkness and brokenness he encountered by everyone. God’s promises made to Abraham and David had find fulfillment at long last. Is the birth of Jesus *the* event to which everything thus far in The Story has pointed?

As the Gospel According to Luke tells the story, Mary was the first to hear the news. In the midst of preparing for her own marriage, the angel Gabriel pronounced that she had been chosen to give birth to the Son of God. Nothing could have been further from her mind. Mary was engaged and a virgin. The power of the Most High would do this, the angel said. Mary rejoiced. She accepted her position as God’s servant and praised Him with purest trust in His plan. The editors of *The Story* (as well as the recent version of the Bible called “One”) would put Joseph as being the next to know. Whenever his divine message came, we pick up this part of the narrative from the Gospel According to Matthew. By this account, Joseph considered pursuing a legal dissolution of their relationship to save them both from the humiliation of an illegitimate pregnancy. But he received his own angelic visitor, who confirmed Mary’s innocence and gave his blessing on their marriage. Joseph marries Mary and soon after made the journey to Bethlehem to pay his taxes (or the ‘census’) as required by law (And mentioned only in Luke). The town was bustling, and the inn was full – so the Son of God was born in a grotto or a stall...a stable.

Still with Luke’s account, Angels deliver the birth announcement and shepherds became the welcoming committee for the King of Kings. They hurried to see for themselves, and found a surprisingly unassuming setting for a king: a baby in a feeding trough, accompanied by his mother, earthly father, and the local livestock. According to Matthew, God also sent signs in the stars and faraway wise men charted their course with gifts in hand. King Herod felt threatened by the birth of another monarch, so he ordered the massacre of all the baby boys in the surrounding areas. God sent angels again so His redemptive plan would stay its course. They warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt until it was safe to return.

Joseph, Mary, and Jesus returned to Israel only after Herod’s death and they made their home in Nazareth. Jesus grew up there as the precocious son of pious Jews. Are we to assume that Jesus and His family traveled to Jerusalem every year to celebrate Passover? Does it matter? Luke will pick up the story when Jesus is 12, who inadvertently stays behind from a Passover pilgrimage in the temple unbeknownst to his frantic parents (the ultimate prequel to “Home Alone” or just insight into adolescence?). Mary & Joseph find Jesus sitting with the teachers who were amazed at His words. Jesus grows up and Scripture tells us that He increased in wisdom and favor with God and with people.



**Chapter 22: *The Birth of the King* is ‘woven’ from selections from *Matthew, Luke, and John***

Matthew 1—2, Luke 1—2, John 1

*Plot Points for Chapter 22: The Birth of the King*

John explicitly teaches the preexistence of the Son of God, the Word who was with God and was God. Matthew emphasizes Jesus’ birth to a virgin mother and adoptive father who, in faith, committed themselves to God’s mysterious plan, including angelic visitors, important dreams, magi from far away, and a trip to Egypt. Luke demonstrates God’s sovereign hand guiding history to fulfill prophecy and highlights the humble shepherds who visited Jesus.

He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden. He spoke to Moses in the fire of a burning bush. He guided Israel in a cloud by day and fire by night. He sat enthroned over the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle and temple. But all of these were just the warm-up for the main act of the story. Now, the Lord would come himself, fully man and fully God.

The manner of his coming could not have been more amazing or unlikely. The Creator of the universe developed from a tiny embryo, to fetus, to newborn baby, passing through the birth canal and taking his first breath in the smelly air of an animal stable. His mother and his adopted father welcomed him with joy and trepidation.

The doctrine of the incarnation—the eternal God entering the limitations of time and space and being born as a human being—this doctrine lies at the heart of the Christian faith. While every other religion welcomes moral teachers and angelic messengers, we worship the God-man. In what can only be described as a mind-bending mystery, the child born in a manger and known to us as Jesus Christ is one person with two natures: fully human, fully divine. While the many things Jesus said revealed God in a way no other words could, it was the Word himself who was the fullest revelation. As Paul wrote, “The Son is the image of the invisible God. . . . He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:15–17).

*Cf. Barr, Adam Exploring the Story: A Reference Companion (Story, The). Zondervan.*

**God’s Story – *YOUR* story!**

- **Crossing into the New testament, we may very well want to take a deep sigh, for this part of *The Story* feels so familiar. And yet, which aspects of our exploration surprises you?**
- **Does each perspective of the nativity cycle as told by the different writers of the Gospel fit altogether nicely for you or is their ‘creative dissonance?’ *Why* or *why not*?**
- **Does the Prologue to the Gospel According to John help clarify the message of Christ or make it more difficult? *Why* / *how*?**
- **How does this Doctrine of the Incarnation change your life?**