

A Study of the Christ Text

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Pre-existence of Christ				1:1-18
Genealogy of Jesus	1:1-17		3:23-38	
Gabriel announces John's birth			1:1-25	
Gabriel visits Mary			1:26-38	
Mary visits Elizabeth			1:39-56	
Birth of John the Baptist			1:57-80	

Overriding Principles

- Jesus needed to be from the tribe of Judah and of the family of David both in the flesh, and in line to reign as king (Gen. 49:10; II Sam. 7:12-19; Acts 2:29-35).
- It is commonly thought, therefore, that Luke has the genealogy of Mary with Eli (3:23) being her father.
- Additionally, the regal side of David's family is thus thought by many to be represented by Matthew in giving the genealogy of Joseph, Jesus' *legal* father.
- Jesus also had to have been God as well as man to fully satisfy the need for a fully suitable mediator—a virgin birth (cf. Job 9:30-35; I Tim. 2:5; I Jn. 2:1-2).
- God had also determined that a *forerunner* would precede Jesus to prepare the way for Him (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6; cf. Matt. 11:14; Mk. 9:11-13; Lk. 1:17).

Main Point

- Jesus was the only solution to the ultimate problem of mankind—sin.
- The time just before His arrival was an awakening from about 400 years of silence from when God ceased speaking to man at the completion of Old Covenant revelation (about the time of Malachi c. 425 BC).

Secondary Points

- In addition to salvation, Jesus also brought to men and women the clearest possible light of knowledge (Jn. 1:4, 17).
- Grace was both fully realized and fully understood only in Jesus, not through Moses (Jn. 1:17).
- The full concept of God includes the Father and the Son (Jn. 1:1).

- The greatness of Mary's faith as contrasted to Zacharias wavering (Lk. 1:18-20, 38).
- Possibly, John the Baptizer was to be a Nazirite for life, like Samuel and Samson (Lk. 1:15; cf. Num. 6:3).

Historical /Cultural Matters

- **Alleged Discrepancies between Matthew and Luke's Genealogies.**
A discussion of the genealogies would be incomplete without considering some of the apparent discrepancies between the records.
 - 1. Matthew's genealogy is inconsistent with Old Testament records, that show Matthew skipped generations.**
This is a common objection, which a cursory look at Matthew 1:17 would seem to justify. However, careful examination shows that Matthew broke the genealogy down into three historic divisions, each of which contained fourteen generations. Matthew used the significance of the number 7 to construct a *literary* genealogy that was accurate for his purpose to show Jesus as both the son of Abraham and the son of David. In this way Jesus is linked to the two major covenants of promise in the Old Testament (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18; II Sam. 7:12-16). Matthew's genealogy was deliberately abridged. This may have been to aid in memorization of the tables. Old Testament writers also abridged their genealogical records, so Matthew had scriptural precedent to do so (compare Ezra 7:3 with I Chronicles 6:7-10).
 - 2. Comparison shows that Matthew and Luke did not record the same names in their genealogies. Since they are not in harmony with each other, one or both of them must be erroneous.**
Matthew and Luke traced two family histories. Matthew recorded the ancestors of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. Luke recorded the ancestors of Mary, the biological mother of Jesus. The divergence of names is natural, given the fact that both authors presented two different family trees.
 - 3. Luke stated that Joseph was the son of Heli, while Matthew stated he was the son of Jacob.**
The Jerusalem Talmud shows that Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli. Joseph's father was Jacob. It was customary to refer to a son-in-law as a son in the first century. So Luke's statement was culturally correct.
- **The "Division of Abijah" (Lk. 1:5).**
 - 1.** The announcement of John's birth comes at a high moment in Zechariah's career. As one of about eighteen thousand priests, Zechariah serves in the temple twice a year (I Chron. 24:7-18), but only once in his life does he get to assist in the daily offering by

going into the holy place. This honor had fallen to him by *lot*. His job was to offer *incense*, a picture of intercession rising to God (Ps 141:2; Rev 5:8; 8:3-4). Everything about the announcement's timing points to a moment of high piety. Zechariah goes in while the people are praying. A later prayer from the Targum of Canticles 4:6 may well express their thoughts: "May the merciful God enter the Holy Place and accept with favor the offering of his people."

2. With the Babylonian destruction of Solomon's Temple in 586 BCE the priestly service ceased, and the cycle count with it. After the Babylonian captivity the Temple was rebuilt, "and this temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius . . . Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their orders for the service of God in Jerusalem." (Ezra 6:15, 18) This was March 12, 515 BCE. Josephus noted there were "four courses of the priests." (*Against Apion* 2:8; cf. Ezra 2:36-39) The Talmud also notes at that time many Levites were missing, and "Four mishmaroth (divisions) returned from the [Babylonian] exile, and they were Jedaiah, Harim, Pashhur and Immer. The prophets amongst them arose and divided them and increased them to twenty-four. [Lots were prepared] and mixed and placed in an urn. First came Jedaiah . . . and Jehoiarib should be subordinate [to him.]" The original divisions were reestablished from the four priestly families, and the cycle count began anew.

Words and Grammar

- **Word**, ? ? ? ? ? ? ? Jn. 1:1, 14)? ? In addition to simply meaning a "word," this Greek term, as here, can refer to the thought or "mind" behind a word. Words are the representations of thoughts (cf. I Cor. 2:10-12); Jesus is the fleshly representation of God's mind (Jn. 1:18; 14:7-9).
- **Comprehend/Overpower**, ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? Jn. 1:5)? ? A word that means "to grasp" and here could mean either that Jesus was not *understood*, or that He was not *held back*. Context seems to favor that the problem centered on a lack of understanding.
- **Explained**, ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? (Jn. 1:18): The Greek word behind our word *exegesis* (to extract from a text its true meaning). Jesus brings out the true meaning of God (Jn. 14:7-9).
- **Whom**, ? ? ? ? Matt. 1:16): The feminine form of the word, showing that Jesus was born to Mary, not Joseph. Complementing this is Luke 3:23b where Jesus is only *supposedly* the son of Joseph.
- **Came/Realized**, ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? (Jn. 1:17):? Commonly meaning *came*, but in this context meaning the One from Whom grace and truth were given their full realization—their fulfillment.

- **Gabriel**, ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? (Lk. 1:19): Meaning, God is powerful. (Dan. 8:16; 9:21).

Relationship to the Church

- The worship of God is to follow the order He reveals (Lk. 1:5, 8; cf. II Chron. 29:25; Heb. 8:5; I Cor. 14:33, 40).
- Jesus was made head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:19-23; I Cor. 15:20-28; Acts 2:29-36).
- The church has a perfect human object lesson to draw from—this is huge (Jn. 13:34-35; 14:7-9)!
- Through Jesus we can enter into God's mind as never before (I Cor. 2:10-16).

Who is Jesus?

- God with us.
- Light.
- The realization of truth and grace.
- The Maker of all things.
- He who gives us the right to become a child of God.
- The ruler over all things.
- The fulfillment of God's mercy.
- The fulfillment of God's Promise.