

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 2

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

The inspired account of the birth of Jesus Christ never fails to thrill every reader. Jesus Christ did not come unannounced. In the little town of Bethlehem, on that cool and clear starry night, the angel of the Lord came to the shepherds and said, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord" (Luke 2:8-10). Hallelujah! We have a Saviour and anyone who comes to Him in repentance and faith will have all his sins cleansed and enjoy life everlasting! This study of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ will be meaningful only if its theological purpose is emphasized.

This lesson looks at the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the announcement of His birth, His infancy and His childhood.

UNDERSTANDING

GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

The first book of the New Testament opens with the words: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ." A similar phrase appears in the first book of the Old Testament (Genesis 5:1): "This is the book of the generations of Adam". This parallelism should not go unnoticed. In Genesis, God created the first man Adam in His own image. But Adam sinned against God, and man came under God's wrath and condemnation. In Matthew, Jesus Christ came as the perfect God-man to redeem man from the wrath and condemnation of God, and restore the divine plan and purpose God intended—that man might live to worship and glorify Him (John 4:23; Romans 15:6).¹

Matthew traced the genealogy of Jesus Christ to David and Abraham. Matthew's purpose is clear—he wanted to convince the Jews that Jesus Christ is their King because of His royal lineage. Secondly, Matthew sought to link Jesus Christ the "son of Abraham" to the spiritual promise that God had made to Abraham that his seed will be a blessing to all families of the earth (Genesis 12:3; 17:5-6).² This is a fulfilment of prophecy and God's promises.

¹ John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall **worship** the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to **worship** him. Romans 15:6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth **glorify** God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

² Genesis 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 17:5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a

Matthew grouped the fourteen generations into 3 divisions. The first division begins with Abraham, the father of the nation Israel, and ends with David, the king of the nation Israel at its most glorious era. The second division traces the lineage from David to the Babylonian Captivity. It covers the reign of Solomon during which the moral and spiritual life of the nation Israel declined and ends with the Babylonians who invaded Jerusalem and took the Jews captive to Babylon. The third division begins from the end of the Babylonian Captivity to the birth of Jesus Christ, whose coming fulfils God's plan and purpose not only for Israel but the other nations of the earth.

Luke traced the genealogy of Jesus Christ to Adam and God. Luke presented Jesus Christ as fully man and fully God. He was the perfect man, the son of Adam, who was created in the image of God. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. Luke recorded the message from the angel, praising God with a multitude of the heavenly host, saying (Luke 2:14): "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill toward men." This is in fulfilment of God's covenant promise to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth will be blessed! Jesus Christ is come to be the Saviour of the world. His gracious invitation is open to whosoever is willing to accept Him in true faith and in so

father of many nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

doing be saved from eternal damnation in Hell (John 3:16).³

Announcement of Jesus' Birth

Six months after Elisabeth was with child (later known as John the Baptist), God sent His angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, to a virgin by the name of Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph. Gabriel, the angel, informed Mary that she was highly favoured of the Lord, and that she would conceive and give birth to a son, and that she should call Him, Jesus — which means He shall save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Luke recorded in greater detail the announcement made by Gabriel (Luke 1:32-33) — "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." This kingdom is primarily to be understood as the Lord Jesus Christ's reign in the hearts and minds of the people who receive Him (Luke 17:21).⁴ Then the kingdom will be manifested in an actual earthly and political kingdom in the Millennium at the end of the age (Revelation 20:4).⁵ And at the

³ John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

⁴ Luke 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

⁵ Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their

end of the one thousand year reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, the kingdom of God will be the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:1).⁶

Mary's initial reaction was surprise for although she was betrothed to Joseph, they had not yet been married. Jewish marriage in those days was in three phases. The first phase is the *engagement*. This involved two children whose parents made the arrangement when they were very young. When the children came to marriageable age, the girl could refuse marriage, and the engagement would be annulled. But if she agreed, the *betrothal* would take place. The period of betrothal usually lasted for about a year. During this period, the woman lived with her parents. The couple was considered as husband and wife although they had not entered into a marital relationship. After one year the *marriage* was completed, and the bride would stay with her husband. We can understand why Mary expressed bewilderment and surprise since she had not been married to Joseph. The conception in her womb was a *miraculous* act of God the Holy Spirit. Mary humbly accepted the divine favour upon her.

The angel Gabriel also informed her that her cousin, Elisabeth, was already with child for six months in her old age. Mary, on hearing the news, went straightaway to see Elisabeth, whose husband was Zacharias, a member of the priestly order. When Mary greeted

Elisabeth, Elisabeth's baby leaped for joy and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. She spoke in a loud voice, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:42). Mary responded in a spontaneous outburst of praise and adoration to God, "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46, 47). Mary recognized her sinful state and acknowledged that God is her Saviour. There is no teaching in the Word of God to worship Mary. The exaltation, veneration and worship of Mary as the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, Co-Mediatrix of the grace of God, and the Immaculate Virgin Mary, has no shred of Scriptural evidence or support. However, that should not stop bible-believing Christians from honouring and respecting Mary, who cared for the Lord Jesus Christ as any mother would for her children.

The conception of the child Jesus by the virgin Mary is a miracle. A miracle is something that is contrary to the laws of nature as we understand it. Some may object that there is such a thing as a miracle. But happenings, which from man's perspective, are miraculous are "natural" from the perspective of God—"for with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Why should man find it absurd that the Almighty God can perform miracles? The sooner man humbles himself and acknowledges his own weakness and frailty, the better it is for him, for he who seeks God early will find Him and receive salvation in Jesus Christ.

Joseph must have been shocked at Mary's news that she was with child. If he chose to make

foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

⁶ Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

the matter public, Mary would have to die by stoning (Leviticus 20:10).⁷ Being a just and righteous man, Joseph did not choose this course of action. He decided to put her away privately by giving her a bill of divorcement in the presence of witnesses. It was when he came to this decision that the angel of the Lord, presumably Gabriel, appeared to him in a dream. The angel told him not to put Mary away and not to be afraid (probably of public opinion and criticism), but to marry her when the time of marriage came. The angel explained that Mary was with child because of the work of God the Holy Spirit, and when she gave birth to a son, they should call Him "Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." This happened in fulfilment of the prophecy by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14) "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Joseph obediently took Mary to be his wife. Joseph did not have any marital relationship with Mary until she gave birth to Jesus.

Birth of Jesus the Messiah

Caesar Augustus, then emperor of Rome (27 B.C. - A.D. 14), passed a decree that all the people would be taxed. Joseph being a descendant of David had to go to Bethlehem to pay his taxes. Together with Mary, he left Nazareth which is in the province of Galilee for Bethlehem in Judaea in the south. They travelled the

long and winding road until they reached the little town of Bethlehem. There the time arrived for Mary's child to be born. They came to an inn but there was no room for them. In those days an inn served as a stopping place for travellers. Normally it consisted of a walled-in area with a well. A larger inn might have small rooms surrounding the court. Joseph and Mary had to be satisfied with a stable (probably a cave stable). It was in the stable that the babe Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes (bandages tightly wrapped round a newborn babe) and placed in a manger which was a feed trough used for cattle, sheep, donkeys or horses. Once again this is in fulfilment of the prophecy by the prophet Micah (8th century B.C.) that a ruler would come forth out of Israel, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."⁸

It is interesting to note that the first people who saw the babe Jesus, besides Joseph and Mary, were shepherds who were keeping watch over their sheep on that starry night (Luke 2:8). The angel of the Lord appeared before them and "the glory of the Lord" — the heavenly brightness that manifests the presence of God — shone all round about them. It was natural for them to be afraid. The angel quickly allayed their fear, and proclaimed the good news that in the town of David, a Saviour was born and suddenly there appeared a multitude of angels praising God

⁷ Leviticus 20:10 And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

⁸ Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

saying (Luke 2:14): “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

When the angels had gone, the shepherds quickly made their way to Bethlehem in search of the Saviour. They found Mary, Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. These shepherds heard the good news; they searched, they saw and they spread the news to others concerning the child Jesus. The very first humans who were given the honour of proclaiming the good news were simple, humble and lowly shepherds!

Infancy and Childhood Days of Jesus

Very little is mentioned about the infancy and childhood of Jesus Christ. When Jesus was eight days old, His parents in keeping with the law of Moses brought him in to be circumcised (Genesis 17:11-12; Leviticus 12:3).⁹ As commanded, they named Him “Jesus”. The circumcision was a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants. It identified Jesus with Israel. However the emphasis is not on the circumcision but on the naming of Jesus.

After giving birth, Mary was ceremonially unclean according to Mosaic laws (Leviticus 12:1-4).¹⁰

⁹ Genesis 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. Leviticus 12:3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

¹⁰ Leviticus 12:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived

She was disqualified from entering the temple. Her purification would be completed after forty days. Mary had to make a sacrificial offering. If she could not afford a lamb, she might offer two pigeons or two turtledoves which cost much less (Leviticus 12:8).¹¹ Accordingly, Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to present the child to the Lord and to make the required offerings.

While Mary was carrying the child on her way into the Temple area, she was met by Simeon, a just and devout man (the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Anointed). Simeon took the child Jesus in his arms and blessed God for he had seen the salvation of the people—“a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Another person who had not lost hope of seeing the Messiah of Israel was Anna, a prophetess who had lived for seven years with her husband, and then lived as a widow for eighty-four years. Like Simeon, Anna was of unusual commitment and had been blessed with special spiritual insight. She had been serving God, fasting, praying and coming to the temple with her heart burning with the Messianic hope.

seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. 3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. 4 And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.

¹¹ Leviticus 12:8 And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

She was not disappointed. She was present when Simeon spoke of the infant Jesus. She instantly gave thanks to God and spoke of Jesus Christ to all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem.

After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem. King Herod the Great, who ruled Israel which was then under the control of Rome (37 B.C - 4 B.C.), was troubled when he heard that wise men from the east had come in search of the King of the Jews. He requested that the wise men inform him of the whereabouts of the child so that he might also go and worship Him. The wise men followed a shining star which directed their paths to the young child Jesus. When they saw Jesus they fell down and worshipped Him. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gift of gold is fitting for a king; frankincense is incense offered only to God; and myrrh is an anointing oil, a perfume that gives a sweet odour making his "life more pleasant, pain less dreadful, and his burial less repulsive." The wise men did not return to King Herod for they had been warned by God in a dream.

King Herod was furious that his plans had been thwarted by the wise men. He ordered the slaughter of all babies in Bethlehem from the age of two and under. It was then about 6 B.C.¹²

¹² The dating shows that Jesus was not born yet. How could Herod attempt to kill the babe Jesus? There is some discrepancy in the dating of our present standard calendar. "In A.D. 525 Pope John I asked Dionysius, a Scythian monk, to prepare a standard calendar for the Western Church. Dionysius modified the Alexandrian system of dating, which used as its base the reign of Diocletian, for he did

There were great lamentation and weeping in the city. But by the providence of God, Joseph and Mary were forewarned by the angel of the Lord in a dream. They were told to flee to Egypt. When King Herod died in 4 B.C., the angel of the Lord again appeared to Joseph and instructed him to return to the land of Israel. When Joseph and Mary returned, they did not stay in Bethlehem, Judaea because Archelaus was in control there. They made their way to Nazareth. Jesus was then about three years old.

For the next ten years nothing was written about the young child Jesus except that he "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke 2:40). Jesus grew up physically.

Every year, Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem during the feast of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve, Joseph and Mary as usual brought Him to Jerusalem. When a Jewish boy attained the ripe age of

not want the years of history to be reckoned from the life of a persecutor of the church, but from the incarnation of Christ. The commencement of the Christian era was January 1, 754 A.U.C. (*anno urbis conditae* = from the foundation of the city [of Rome] and Christ's birth was thought to have been on December 25th immediately preceding. So 754 A.U.C. became A.D. 1 in the calendar of Dionysius. The years before this date are denoted by B.C. (before Christ) and after by A.D. (*anno Domini* = in the year of the Lord) with no zero between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1. However, later research indicated that the latest year for Herod's death was 750 A.U.C. and Christ's birth, according to Matthew, occurred before Herod's death. Hence, today it is generally recognized that the birth of Christ did not occur in A.D. 1 but sometime before that. . . Herod's death occurred around 4.B.C. Christ could have been born later than 4.B.C. So the year of Christ's birth would in 5/4 B.C" (Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, pp.11-27).

twelve, he becomes a *bar mitzvah* (*bar* means “son”, and *mitzvah* means “law”) — “a son of the law”, that is, he has attained maturity and responsibility in the keeping of God’s commandments. After the feast of the Passover, Joseph and Mary made their way home. They probably joined the northward bound caravan. The custom was that the men travelled in the front caravan, and the women and children in another caravan behind. That Jesus was not found missing until after a day’s journey was probably due to the fact that Joseph had thought that the lad was with Mary and vice versa. When they discovered that Jesus was missing, they returned to Jerusalem. After three days, they found Him in the temple listening and asking questions of the religious experts in the Mosaic Law. These experts were astonished and amazed at Jesus’ understanding and answers! When Mary asked Jesus, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing” (Luke 2:48) —she showed some measure of anguish and reproach. Jesus’ answer, however, demonstrated that He was conscious of His unique relation with His Heavenly Father and His business (He was not being rude). Nevertheless, He was submissive to His parents and returned with them to Nazareth. And Jesus increased in wisdom, stature and in favour with God and man. When we next hear of Him, He was already thirty years old — in between were eighteen silent years.

MEANING

What is the intended message in the genealogy, the miraculous conception, the sudden decree to tax the people, the lack of room in the inn, the birth of Jesus, the visit by the shepherds and the wise men, the flight to Egypt, Herod’s killing of the babies, and the growth and development of young Jesus?

Looking at just the historical knowledge is to miss the theological and spiritual intent of the divine author. The genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ conveys the faithfulness of God’s promises, plan and purpose. God keeps His promise and in the “fullness of time”, God the Son came in the flesh to be the Saviour of the world. And through the nation Israel, all the other nations of the world will be blessed. God’s eternal plan and purpose for the human race has started ticking, and with the first advent of His only begotten Son, we are in the last days—the eleventh hour. Two thousand years have passed since the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and that brings us two thousand years nearer to the end of human history and the establishment of God’s millennium kingdom as promised to King David. God’s timing is perfect. The minute details and trouble taken to make sure that everything is precisely where it should be reveals that God is serious about what He has declared He would do.

The angel of the Lord clearly declared that nothing is impossible with God. Why should men think otherwise? The sin of man is in exalting himself to be like God. Man must realize that there is an unfathomable and immeasurable gulf between him and God. Let us

humble ourselves, repent and serve God.

God reveals that He is sovereign and is in control of the affairs of men. The decree of Caesar Augustus was no coincidence for it compelled Joseph and Mary to return to the city of David, Bethlehem-Judah to pay tax. Consequently, Mary gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem in fulfilment of the Scriptures. King Herod told the wise men to inform him of the whereabouts of the King of the Jews so that he could worship Him. But God is not mocked. God knows the heart of man. Man may plot and plan, but God is the One who directs all things. Herod's evil act of infanticide was surely satanically inspired. But God is great. The devil's and man's evil intent and purposes were thwarted by God.

God honoured the lowly shepherds, who were keeping watch over the flock, by giving them the good news first (Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 3:34).¹³ Noticed how they rejoiced at the news. God grants the desires of those who faithfully love and hope in Him. He blessed Simeon and Anna with long life (because of their Messianic hope) so that they lived to see and hold Jesus in their arms.

Finally, Jesus set an example as a young boy. At the tender age of twelve, He was conscious of His relationship with God the Father and His Father's business. Yet He submitted to the authority of his earthly parents, Joseph and Mary.

¹³ Psalm 138:6 Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the **lowly**: but the proud he knoweth afar off. Proverbs 3:34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the **lowly**.

REFLECTION

We are never too tired or bored to read and hear again the account of the first Christmas. The story sought to draw us closer to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to adore and worship Him.

We take comfort in the fact that God is faithful and true to His Word. Every promise in His Word will be fulfilled to the letter. We can rest assured that His second coming will be as certain as His first; and our salvation in Him is sure. God never disappoint those who faithfully believe and hope in Him.

We learn the virtues and value of being humble and lowly. God sees and hears the humble and lowly. We ought to worship and serve Him fervently with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. AMEN

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 2

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38.

TUESDAY: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24.

**WEDNESDAY: Luke 1:39-56;
Luke 2:1-7.**

THURSDAY: Luke 2:8:20.

FRIDAY: Matthew 2:1-18.

4. Why is it necessary for Jesus to be born of the virgin Mary? How is it possible?

Discussion Questions

1. What is the theological significance in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus Christ?

5. On what basis did God choose Mary?

2. What is the theological significance in Luke's genealogy of Jesus Christ?

6. Did Mary understand what the angel Gabriel told her? How did she respond?

3. What is the value of a genealogy?

7. In her song of praise, what evidence shows that Mary acknowledged that she was a sinner?

8. What can we learn about Mary from her song of praise to God?

9. What spiritual comfort and encouragement do we derive from Jesus' birth?

10. Did the angel of the Lord command the shepherds to make the trip to the manger? What motivated them to go?

11. What impresses you most in the account about the shepherds?

12. Matthew alone reports the visit of the wise men. From the text, what can you tell about them? Is there anything that we can learn from them?

13. Can God prevent Herod from killing the babe Jesus? Why did God tell Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt? What truth do we learn about God's dealing with man from this?
