

CHRISTMAS FOR GROWN-UPS

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CHRISTMAS 2016

Programme

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1. Introduction

- ▶ A Christmas Quiz
- ▶ Questions which arise
- ▶ Patterns
- ▶ Matthew: author, context, theology
- ▶ Luke: author, context, theology
- ▶ The OT in the NT

Quiz

- ▶ How did you get on?

Questions which arise

- ▶ Over to you

Patterns

Matthew

Genealogy to Adam
 Annunciation to Joseph
 The Magi and Star
 The Holy Innocents
 Egypt
 Bethlehem - Nazareth
 5 Major Citations

Luke

Genealogy to Adam
 Annunciation to Mary
 Shepherds
 John the Baptist

 Nazareth – Bethlehem
 Citations and echoes

Matthew 1-2

	Genealogy	1:1-17	
A	Joseph's dream; Jesus' birth	1:18-25	Isaiah 7:24
B	The Magi	2:1-12	Micah 5:1, 3; 2 Sam 5:2
C	Flight into Egypt	2:13-15	Hos 11:1
D	The holy innocents	2:16-18	Jer 31:15
E	Return (to Nazareth)	2:19-23	?Jdg 13:5-7; ?Is 11:1

Luke 1-2

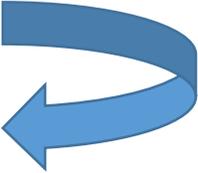
1. Annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist	2. Annunciation of the birth of Jesus the Messiah	Luke 1:1-25; Luke 1:26-38
3. The visitation (<i>Magnificat</i>)		Luke 1:39-56
4. The birth of John the Baptist (<i>Benedictus</i>)	5. The birth of Jesus the Messiah (<i>Gloria</i>)	Luke 1:57-80 Luke 2:1-20
6. The presentation (<i>Nunc dimittis</i>)		Luke 2:21-40
7. Jesus in the Temple		Luke 2:41-52

Matthew

- ▶ Traditionally: Matthew / Levi the tax collector
- ▶ But: unlikely for several reasons
- ▶ Mark
- ▶ Antioch on the Orontes
- ▶ Ambivalence to Judaism: antagonism / fulfilment

- ▶ After the destruction of Jerusalem and the re-organisation of Judaism i.e. post 70
- ▶ After the separation of church and synagogue, i.e. post 70
- ▶ Matthew's community: technically a "sect."
- ▶ Before Ignatius of Antioch, who cites this text, i.e. before the beginning of the 2nd century

1-4	Narrative:	Birth and Beginnings	
5-7	Sermon:	<i>Blessings, Entering the Kingdom</i>	
8-9	Narrative:		Authority and Invitation
10	Sermon:		<i>Mission Discourse</i>
11-12	Narrative:		Rejection by this Generation
13	Sermon:		<i>Parables of the Kingdom</i>
14-17	Narrative:		Acknowledgment by Disciples
18	Sermon:		<i>Community Discourse</i>
19-22	Narrative:		Authority and Invitation
23-25	Sermon:	<i>Woes, Coming of the Kingdom</i>	
26-28	Narrative:	Death and Rebirth	



Luke

- ▶ Luke: traditionally Luke the "beloved physician"
- ▶ Definitely post 70 because he uses Mark
- ▶ Destruction of Jerusalem
- ▶ Many scholars: 85 or 90

- ▶ The author uses Josephus, so later than 93 AD.
- ▶ The author has access to the Pauline corpus.
- ▶ Cf. Reaction to Jewish revolts in the Diaspora (115-117).
- ▶ Cf. Context of the Pastorals ("wolves", heresy, rejection of the OT, uneasy with the empire, yet no direct persecution).
- ▶ So: around 110 or 115 ad.

- ▶ Luke 1-4 Preparation
- ▶ Luke 5-9 Ministry in Galilee
- ▶ Luke 10-19 Road to Jerusalem
- ▶ Luke 20-24 Saving events in the Holy City

OT in the NT

- ▶ Always in "conversation" with OT narrative, patterns, theology etc. NB Genesis and the Isaiah.
- ▶ Impossible to read the NT without the OT
- ▶ Cf. The Jewish Annotated New Testament

OT in the NT: Matthew

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ▶ Genealogy: Abraham, David, Exile | ▶ Herod: Moses' birth |
| ▶ Birth: Joseph | ▶ Flight: Moses' "exile" |
| ▶ Magi: Balaam | ▶ Return: Moses' return |

OT in the NT: Luke

- ▶ Annunciations: See also: Ishmael Gen 16:7-12; Isaac 17:1-21; 18:1-12; Samson Jdg 13:3-21; John the Baptist Lk 1:11-20; Jesus Mt 1:20-21.
- ▶ OT couples: Elkanah and Hannah: 1Sam 1-3; 1:17; Abraham and Sarah: Gen 18:11
- ▶ Davidic descent (many places)
- ▶ Accomplishments of the child: 2Sam 7:9, 13-14, 16. Cf. also Ps 2:7 and 89:29; Is 11:1-2; 4:2-3; 2Sam 7:14

Conversation

2. MATTHEW 1-2

- Matthew’s context
- Matthew 1-2
- Stories behind the stories
- Citations
- The big picture
- And today?

Matthew’s context

- After Mark
- Probably in Antioch in Syria
- Most likely a mixed community
- Just broken away from the mother religion
- Very strong: Moses in Matthew (throughout)

	Genealogy	1:1-17	
A	Joseph’s dream; Jesus’ birth	1:18-25	Isaiah 7:24
B	The Magi	2:1-12	Micah 5:1, 3; 2 Sam 5:2
C	Flight into Egypt	2:13-15	Hos 11:1
D	The holy innocents	2:16-18	Jer 31:15
E	Return (to Nazareth)	2:19-23	?Jdg 13:5-7; ?Is 11:1

Stories behind the stories

- Genealogy: Abraham, David, Exile
- Birth: Joseph
- Magi: Balaam and Balak
- Herod: Moses (birth)
- Flight: Moses (murder)
- Return: Moses (Pharaoh’s death)

Genealogy

- Abraham, David, Exile
- The number 14
- The women in particular
- The final generations: Jacob, Joseph, Jesus

	Possession (David)		
Promise (Abraham)		Loss (Exile)	Longing (Messiah)
1700 BC	1000 BC	578 BC	6 BC

Joseph story

- Genesis 37-50
- He dreams several times
- He goes down to Egypt
- In Egypt, he is a refuge for his family

Balaam story

- Numbers 22-24
- A evil king (Balaam) tries to get a seer to bring disaster on Israel
- The seer fails and instead of cursing, he blesses
- He prophecies a glorious future, “a star shall come out of Jacob”

Camels and kings

- Psa. 72:10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

- 11 May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.
- Psa. 72:15 Long may he live! May gold of Sheba be given to him. May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all day long.
- Is. 60:5 Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. 6 A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

Moses

- Moses mentioned
- Moses alluded to
- Moses affirmed
- Moses radicalised
- Why?
- Exodus 1: The Birth of Moses
- Exodus 2: Moses flees his homeland
- Exodus 3 and 15: Moses is called out of Egypt
- Let’s look at the detail.

Jesus	Moses
Matt. 2:13 Now after they had left, 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 about to search for the child, to destroy him.”	Ex. 2:15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well.
Matt. 2:16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.	Ex. 1:22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.”
Matt. 2:19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said,	Ex. 2:23 After a long time the king of Egypt died. Ex. 4:19a The Lord said to Moses.
Matt. 2:20 “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” 21 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.	Ex. 4:19b “Go back to Egypt; for all those who were seeking your life are dead.” 20 So Moses took his wife and his sons, put them on a donkey and went back to the land of Egypt.

Citations

Is. 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

Hebrew Bible: young woman (*almah*)
 Greek OT: virgin (*parthenos*)

Mic. 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah,

from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

2Sam. 5:2 For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.”

Hos. 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Jer. 31:15 Thus says the LORD: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.

The last quotation doesn't really exist as such in the OT.

Is. 4:3
Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem,

Judg. 13:5 for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a *nazirite* to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.”

Judg. 13:7 but he said to me, ‘You shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a *nazirite* to God from birth to the day of his death.’”

Is. 11:1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (*nezer*) shall grow out of his roots

Gen. 49:26 The blessings of your father Joseph are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, on the brow of him who was set apart (*nazir*) from his brothers.

Judg 13:7 But he said to me, ‘You shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a *nazirite* to God from birth to the day of his death.’”

Who: 1:1-17	How: 1:18-25	Where? 2:1-12	Whence: 2:13-23
Abraham David Exile Tamar Rahab Ruth Bathsheba Mary	Joseph Ishmael Isacc Samson David (Is 7:14)	Moses Balaam Balak Rachel (Jer 31:15) (Kings Camels)	Joseph Moses Nazorean Is 4:3; Judges 16:5-7; Gen 49:26; Is 11:1 Remnant David
Origin	Birth	Exile	Exodus

- ▶ **And today?**
Matthew has created a special “tapestry”
- ▶ Jesus is firmly stitched into Bible and prophecy
- ▶ The story thread derives from many biblical stories
- ▶ There is some history
- ▶ There is lots of “theology”

Conversation

3. LUKE 1-2

- Luke’s context
- Luke 1-2; actually really Luke 1:5-4:15
- Luke’s context
- Overall shape
- Genre
- Historicity
- Problem: John the Baptist

Luke’s context

- After Mark and Matthew
- Probably in Rome
- Most likely a mixed community
- Gentile mission an established fact
- Possibly: tendency to reject the Jewish roots of Christianity

1. Annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist	2. Annunciation of the birth of Jesus the Messiah	Luke 1:1-25; Luke 1:26-38
3. The visitation (Magnificat)		Luke 1:39-56
4. The birth of John the Baptist (Benedictus)	5. The birth of Jesus the Messiah (Gloria)	Luke 1:57-80 Luke 2:1-20
6. The presentation (Nunc dimittis)		Luke 2:21-40
7. Jesus in the Temple		Luke 2:41-52

Overall shape

- The “career” of Jesus really starts in 4:16-30
- 1:5-4:15 makes up the first major unit
- Three episodes dealing with John and Jesus
- 1:5-25 corresponds to 1:26-38 (1:39-56 = transition)
- 1:57-80 corresponds to 2:1-52
- 3:1-20 corresponds to 3:21-4:15

- John = prophet (1:16-17; 1:76; 3:1-6)
- Jesus = Messiah (1:32-33; 1:69; 2:4, 11; 3:23-38)
- Jesus = Son of God (1:35, 2:49; 3:22)

Genre

- Biography, including the following elements
- Pre-public career of a great person
- Family background
- Miraculous conception
- Omens and other predictions of future greatness
- Childhood prodigies

- Suetonius Lives of the Twelve Caesars Augustus 94, as follows:
 - Portents (6 of 14 items)
 - Dreams (3 of 14 items)
 - Prophecies (2 of 14 items)
 - Childhood Prodigies (2 of 14 items)
 - Miraculous conception by Apollo (1 of 14 items)

- 1. Two angelophanies
 - a. 1:26-38 (birth and destiny)
 - b. 2:8-20 (birth of the saviour)
- 2. Four prophecies
 - a. 1:67-70 by Zechariah
 - b. 2:25-35 by Simeon

- c. 2:36-38 by Anna
- d. 3:16-17 by John the Baptist
- 3. Portent
 - a. 1:41-45 (portent and prophetic interpretation)
- 4. Event
 - a. 3:21-22 (= 1:41-45; portent and interpretation)
 - b. Descent of the Holy Spirit; bath qol
- 5. Prodigies
 - a. 2:41-51 (astounds the rabbis)
 - b. 4:1-13 (defeats the devil)
- 6. Family
 - a. Genealogy, via David to Adam

Suetonius, again:

Having reached this point, it will not be out of place to add an account of the omens which occurred before he was born, on the very day of his birth, and afterwards, from which it was possible to anticipate and perceived his future greatness and uninterrupted good fortune.

Augustus §94

A reader of Luke, familiar with the conventions of biographical writings, would have taken 1:5-4:15 as an anticipation / prophecy / foreshadowing of the future career of Jesus. In other words, the reader is provided with a detailed theological description of the hero before the real narrative starts in 4:16.

Historicity

- › The birth narratives share certain features:
- › The child Jesus, the parents Mary and Joseph
- › Annunciations, virginal conception
- › Nazareth and Bethlehem
- › King Herod (the Great)
- › Genealogies

Matthew	Luke
Genealogy to Abraham	Genealogy to Adam
Annunciation to Joseph	Annunciation to Mary
The Magi and Star	Shepherds
The Holy Innocents	John the Baptist
Egypt	
Bethlehem - Nazareth	Nazareth - Bethlehem
5 Major Citations	Citations and echoes

John the Baptist

- › JB was a 1st cent. Jewish prophet, proclaiming an eschatological message with some apocalyptic traits.
- › His message was imminent judgement and the way to avoid that was by repentance, illustrated by his baptism.
- › There is an implied critique of the adequacy of the Temple worship.
- › The differences between JB and Qumran are greater than the similarities.
- › He anticipated “the coming one”, but it is difficult to be more precise than that - an angel? the messiah? a heavenly figure? God himself?
- › He had a big influence in his day - as the need to execute him illustrates. Still, any idea of a revolt is due to Herod’s paranoia rather than to anything JB actually said.
- › The relationship between Jesus and John is hotly disputed - e.g. did Jesus follow his “mentor’s” example and baptise?
- › Mark: already proclaims “the coming one”
- › Matthew: discussion over baptism
- › Luke: actually in jail at the baptism

- John: locates JB in Jn 1; no baptism
- [Nazoreans]: Jesus refuses
- In the Acts: 1:5, 22; 10:37; aa:16; 13:24; 18:25; 19:3.
- In the Gospel: 7:18-30 (NB); 9:7-9; 20:1-8
- NB: never, ever a reference to what “happened” in Luke 1-2.
- Comparison: Annunciation
- Comparison: Birth
- Comparison: the mothers meet

Luke 1:17 “With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Luke 1:18 Zechariah said to the angel, “How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.”

Luke 1:15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:35 The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Luke 1:34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

Luke 1:32 “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

- John: prophet, to prepare, go before
- Jesus: Saviour, House of David, mercy, Abraham, holiness, righteousness, salvation, forgiveness, light, dawn, peace.

Luke 1:39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

And today?

- Luke has rooted the birth of John and Jesus in OT annunciations of birth
- Luke risked comparisons with the birth of the gods and emperors
- Natural v. miraculous conception
- John and Jesus are related — theologically
- John and Jesus are contrasted — theologically

Conversation

4. Christmas Vigil Readings

- All three readings
- Genealogy
- Birth
- Reflection and Prayer

All three readings

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ▸ Isaiah 62:1-5 | Joy |
| ▸ Psalm 88 (89):4-5,16-17,27,29 | David, Jesus |
| ▸ Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 | David |
| ▸ Matthew 1:1-25 | Abraham, David, Jesus |

Isaiah 62

About Zion I will not be silent,
 about Jerusalem I will not grow weary,
 until her integrity shines out like the dawn
 and her salvation flames like a torch.
 The nations then will see your integrity,
 all the kings your glory,
 and you will be called by a new name,
 one which the mouth of the Lord will confer.
 You are to be a crown of splendour in the hand of the Lord,
 a princely diadem in the hand of your God;
 no longer are you to be named 'Forsaken',
 nor your land 'Abandoned',
 but you shall be called 'My Delight'
 and your land 'The Wedded';
 for the Lord takes delight in you
 and your land will have its wedding.
 Like a young man marrying a virgin,
 so will the one who built you wed you,
 and as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride,
 so will your God rejoice in you.

Psalm 88 (89)

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.

'I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
 I have sworn to David my servant:
 I will establish your dynasty for ever
 and set up your throne through all ages.'

Happy the people who acclaim such a king,
 who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face,
 who find their joy every day in your name,
 who make your justice the source of their bliss.

'He will say to me: "You are my father,
 my God, the rock who saves me."
 I will keep my love for him always;
 with him my covenant shall endure.'

Acts 13

When Paul reached Antioch in Pisidia, he stood up in the synagogue, held up a hand for silence and began to speak:

‘Men of Israel, and fearers of God, listen! The God of our nation Israel chose our ancestors, and made our people great when they were living as foreigners in Egypt; then by divine power he led them out.

‘Then he made David their king, of whom he approved in these words, “I have selected David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will carry out my whole purpose.” To keep his promise, God has raised up for Israel one of David’s descendants, Jesus, as Saviour, whose coming was heralded by John when he proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the whole people of Israel. Before John ended his career he said, “I am not the one you imagine me to be; that one is coming after me and I am not fit to undo his sandal.”’

Matthew

- The Genealogy (1:1-17)
- The Birth (1:18-25)

Matthew 1

A genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, Tamar being their mother, Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon was the father of Boaz, Rahab being his mother, Boaz was the father of Obed, Ruth being his mother, Obed was the father of Jesse; and Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife, Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Azariah, Azariah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah; and Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers. Then the deportation to Babylon took place.

After the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob; and Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ.

The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian deportation to Christ.

Genealogy

- Pattern: Abraham, David, Exile
- Numbers: 14 + 14 + 14
- Notice the important women
- NB at the end: Matthan the father of Jacob; and Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ.
- Tamar: see Genesis 38
- Rahab: see Joshua 2-6
- Ruth: see the Book of Ruth
- Wife of Uriah (Bethsheba): see 2 Samuel 11-12
- Abraham

Matt 3:7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our

ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

▸ David

All the crowds were amazed and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" (Matthew 12:23). Cf. Matt 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30–31; 21:9, 15; 22:42

He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? (Matthew 12:3)

He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" (Matthew 22:43–45)

▸ Exile

"A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more." (Matthew 2:18)

Birth

- Background
- Kind of writing

Matthew 2

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph; being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us.' When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home and, though he had not had intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.

Birth

(i) Joseph: the name Joseph reminds the aware bible reader of another Joseph in the book of Genesis. That Joseph was a dreamer, threatened by his brothers, who went down to Egypt. Because of his position, Egypt became a place of refuge for his family. The character of our Joseph and the narrative surrounding him all come from Genesis 37-50.

(ii) Divorce was allowed by inference in Deut 24:1-4, although no legislation formally permits it. The rabbis discussed "warmly" the conditions under which a man might divorce his wife.

(iii) Son of David: the relationship with David immediately calls to mind the guarantee and promise to the house of David made by the prophet Nathan in 2 Sam 7 and the prayer version of it in Psalm 89. David was the anointed shepherd-king of Israel-language significant in Mt. In the centuries before Jesus' birth, people's hopes focused on a restoration of the kingdom of David, as a mark of God's continued faithfulness to his people.

(iv) Jesus is the Greek for Joshua, the name of Moses' successor, who actually led the people into the promised land. The name comes Hebrew/Aramaic and means "YHWH is salvation" or "YHWH saves/has saved." Messiah or Christ is not found in the Hebrew Bible pointing to an expected end-time agent of God's salvation. That language and expectation developed in the last two centuries before the birth of Jesus.

(v) The promise in Isaiah 7:14 is read as a messianic prophecy. In its original context, this text promised a successor to King Ahaz, born in the normal way. The Hebrew says 'alma,

which could be a young woman and/or a virgin. The early Greek version of the OT (the Septuagint) used the word “virgin”, taken up here by Matthew because it fits with his account of Jesus’ conception.

(i) Communication in a dream: the clear prototypes are Jacob (and his famous ladder) and Joseph (with the coat of many colours).

Otherwise, the Bible is hesitant, not to say suspicious, of divination by dreams.

(ii) Annunciation-type story: these stories show the following pattern.

- (1) appearance of an angel;
- (2) fear and/or prostration;
- (3) message;
- (4) objection;
- (5) sign.

OT: Ishmael Gen 16:7-12, Isaac 17:1-21; 18:1-12; Samson Jdg 13:3-21.

NT: John the Baptist Lk 1:11-20; Jesus Lk 1:26-38. Our version in Matt is missing one element, the sign: the angel comes in a dream and there is a message. Implied are (a) fear—“Do not be afraid” and (2) an objection—Joseph wants a divorce and the angel somehow knows this.

Who is Jesus?

- Over to you...

Reflection

- The feast invites us to experience real joy, remembering that “the Lord takes delight in you.”
- We all have “shadows” in our past, sometimes cast by ourselves—and yet everything is part of God’s plan.
- What’s in a name? Lots, actually. You could reflect on your own—why that name and what is its meaning? Likewise, the name of Jesus.

Prayer

God of Abraham and Sarah, of David and his descendants, unwearied is your love for us and steadfast is your covenant; wonderful beyond words is your gift of the Saviour, born of the Virgin Mary.

Count us among the people in whom you delight, and by this night’s marriage of earth and heaven draw all generations into the embrace of your love.

Conversation

5. CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT READINGS

- All three readings
- Luke
- Background
- Luke 2
- Reflection and prayer

All three readings

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Isaiah 9:1-7 ▸ Psalm 88 (89):4-5,16-17,27,29 ▸ Titus 2:11-14 ▸ Luke 2:1-15 | <p>A child is born
The presence of the Lord
The appearing of the glory
Birth of Jesus</p> |
|---|---|

Isaiah 9

The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase; they rejoice in your presence as men rejoice at harvest time, as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils. For the yoke that was weighing on him, the barb across his shoulders, the rod of his oppressor, these you break as on the day of Midian. For all the footgear of battle, every cloak rolled in blood, is burnt, and consumed by fire.

For there is a child born for us, a son given to us and dominion is laid on his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace. Wide is his dominion in a peace that has no end, for the throne of David and for his royal power, which he establishes and makes secure in justice and integrity. From this time onwards and for ever, the jealous love of the Lord of Hosts will do this.

Psalm 88 (89)

Today a saviour has been born to us: he is Christ the Lord.

O sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.
O sing to the Lord, bless his name.

Proclaim his help day by day,
tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all the peoples.

Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad,
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,
let the land and all it bears rejoice,
all the trees of the wood shout for joy
at the presence of the Lord for he comes,
he comes to rule the earth.

With justice he will rule the world,
he will judge the peoples with his truth.
Today a saviour has been born to us: he is Christ the Lord.

Titus 2

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

Luke 2

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.

Background

- Two large panels (see previous slide)
- John: prophet, to prepare, go before
- Jesus: Saviour, House of David, mercy, Abraham, holiness, righteousness, salvation, forgiveness, light, dawn, peace
- Why? See the Mandaean even today.

- Historically:
- No empire-wide census in the time of Augustus
- Augustus: saviour and the *pax romana*
- Quirinius was governor of Syria—only later
- He did conduct a local census in 6 AD.
- Purpose: to indicate a birth of universal significance

So you must consecrate the fiftieth year, and you must proclaim a release in the land for all its inhabitants. That year will be your jubilee; each one of you must return to his property and each one of you must return to his clan. (Leviticus 25:10)

If your father happens to miss me, you should say, 'David urgently requested me to let him go to his city Bethlehem, for there is an annual sacrifice there for his entire family.' (1 Samuel 20:6)

Then you must give over to the Lord the first offspring of every womb. Every firstling of a beast that you have—the males will be the Lord's. (Exodus 13:12)

An ox recognises its owner, a donkey recognises where its owner puts its food; but Israel does not recognise me, my people do not understand." (Isaiah 1:3)

"I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt

to this day, but I have been moving about in a lodge [*katalyma*] and a tent" (2 Sam. 7:6 LXX)

David, anointed king, in history and in early Judaism

The Lord writes in the census book of the nations, "This one was born there." (Psalms 87:6)

When the time came for Rebekah to give birth, there were twins in her womb. (Genesis 25:24).

For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, your all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior (Wisdom 18:14–15)

I was nursed with care in swaddling cloths. (Wisdom 7:4)

Luke 2

In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to men who enjoy his favour.’

Background

For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us. He shoulders responsibility and is called: Extraordinary Strategist, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

How delightful it is to see approaching over the mountains the feet of a messenger who announces peace, a messenger who brings good news, who announces deliverance, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7)

As for you, watchtower for the flock, fortress of Daughter Zion— your former

dominion will be restored, the sovereignty that belongs to Daughter Jerusalem. (Micah 4:8)

David was going back and forth from Saul in order to care for his father’s sheep in Bethlehem. (1 Samuel 17:15)

As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, seemingly insignificant among the clans of Judah— from you a king will emerge who will rule over Israel on my behalf, one whose origins are in the distant past. (Micah 5:2)

Reflection

- Bring to mind a time when the birth of a child made a huge impact on you. Use the experience to meditate upon the incarnation.
- There is great joy in the Gospel tonight. Have you even felt such spontaneous, exultant happiness? A prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Prayer

Good and gracious God, on this holy night you gave us your Son, the Lord of the universe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, the Saviour of all, lying in a manger. On this holy night draw us into the mystery of your love. Join our voices with the heavenly host, that we may sing your glory on high.

Give us a place among the shepherds, that we may find the one for whom we have waited, Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in the splendour of eternal light, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Conversation

6. CHRISTMAS DAWN READINGS

Sequence

- All three readings
- Luke: David, treasured, pondered, seen and heard, shepherds
- Reflections and prayer

All three readings

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Isaiah 61:11-12 ▸ Psalm 97 (96) ▸ Titus 3:4-7 ▸ Luke 2:15-20 | <p>Your saviour comes
New light will shine
The kindness and love of God
Let us go to Bethlehem</p> |
|---|--|

Isaiah 61

This the Lord proclaims
to the ends of the earth:
Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Look,
your saviour comes,
the prize of his victory with him,
his trophies before him.’
They shall be called ‘The Holy People’,
‘the Lord’s Redeemed.’
And you shall be called ‘The-sought-after’,
‘City-not-forsaken.’

Psalm 97 (96)

This day new light will shine upon the earth: the Lord is born for us.

<p>The Lord is king, let earth rejoice, let all the coastlands be glad. The skies proclaim his justice; all peoples see his glory.</p>	<p>Light shines forth for the just and joy for the upright of heart. Rejoice, you just, in the Lord; give glory to his holy name.</p>
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Titus 3

When the kindness and love of God our saviour for mankind were revealed, it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our saviour. He did this so that we should be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life.

Luke 2

When the angels had gone from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told.

- This reading is simply the continuation of the reading for Midnight Mass. Some of the information given there applies here too, of course.
- It illustrates a response to the events of salvation and already some are worshipping the baby.

- There are considerable OT echoes: Gen 25:24; Wis 7:4.

David

(i) David as shepherd: When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.” But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.” Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah. (1 Sam 16:6–13)

(ii) Davidic shepherd to come: I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. (Ezek 34:23) My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. (Ezek 37:24)

(iii) Bethlehem: Often mentioned in connection with David (1 Sam 17:12, 15; 20:6, 28; 2 Sam 23:14–16; 1 Chr 11:16–18; Luke 2:4; John 7:42). A significant echo can also be found in the book of Ruth (Ruth 1:1–2, 19, 22; 2:4; 4:11). The key text, however, is the one cited by Luke

Treasured

The only two other occurrences of the word “treasured” illustrate the range of meaning rather well:

(i) Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.” (Matt 9:17)

(ii) for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. (Mark 6:20)

Pondered

In the New Testament, the other word “pondered” is limited to Luke-Acts (Luke 2:19; 14:31; Acts 4:15; 17:18; 18:27; 20:14).

The meaning ranges from the literal (to take with) to the metaphorical (to consider, to discuss). Heart also has a certain prominence in Luke-Acts (16-11-22-7+20).

Seen and heard

And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. (Luke 7:22)

Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptised, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.’ (Acts 22:14–16)

Shepherds

- Shepherds represent two apparently contradictory things:

- David the shepherd-king
- Shepherds as unclean, permanently ritually impure
- Both are true at the same time.

Reflection

- This was no ordinary child. It is the birth of the Son of God. In order to take in the implications of that we can do well to recall Meister Eckhart's reflection and ask ourselves how the birth of Jesus takes place in us:
- What good is it to me if the eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly but does not take place within myself? And what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace and if I am not also full of grace?
- The shepherds were both frightened and thrilled. Good news can sometimes be terrifying. Pregnancy and the birth of a child can give rise to both feelings. Hopefully the joy and wonder at new life outweigh the fear and apprehension. What has been your experience?

Prayer

Today, O God of light, your loving kindness dawns, your tender compassion shines upon us, for in our Saviour, born of human flesh, you reveal your gracious gift of our birth to life eternal.

Fill us with the wonder of this holy day: let us treasure in our hearts what we have been told, that our lives may proclaim your great and gentle mercy.

7. CHRISTMAS DAY READINGS

- All three readings
- The Prologue
- Editorial traces and layout
- Echoes
- Reflections and prayer

All three readings

- Isaiah 52:7-10 The salvation of our God
- Psalm 98 (97) 1-6 Sing a new song
- Hebrews 1:1-6 He has spoken to us
- John 1:1-18 The Word was made flesh

Isaiah 52

How beautiful on the mountains, are the feet of one who brings good news, who heralds peace, brings happiness, proclaims salvation, and tells Zion, 'Your God is king!'

Listen! Your watchmen raise their voices, they shout for joy together, for they see the Lord face to face, as he returns to Zion. Break into shouts of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord is consoling his people, redeeming Jerusalem. The Lord bares his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Psalm 98 (97)

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Sing a new song to the Lord
for he has worked wonders.
His right hand and his holy arm
have brought salvation.

The Lord has made known his salvation;
has shown his justice to the nations.
He has remembered his truth and love
for the house of Israel.

Shout to the Lord, all the earth,
ring out your joy.
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp
with the sound of music.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
acclaim the King, the Lord.

Hebrews

At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything and through whom he made everything there is.

He is the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature, sustaining the universe by his powerful command; and now that he has destroyed the defilement of sin, he has gone to take his place in heaven at the right hand of divine Majesty. So he is now as far above the angels as the title which he has inherited is higher than their own name.

God has never said to any angel: You are my Son, today I have become your father; or: I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Again, when he brings the First-born into the world, he says: Let all the angels of God worship him.

The Prologue

In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower.

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.

The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world. He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to all who believe in the name of him who was born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man but of God himself.

The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. John appears as his witness. He proclaims: ‘This is the one of whom I said: He who comes after me ranks before me because he existed before me.’

Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received – yes, grace in return for grace, since, though the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

- One of the very greatest texts of early Christianity
- Great influence at the early church councils
- Serves as an introduction to the Gospel
- Seems to come from an earlier text adjusted for use

- Can we trace the text behind the text?
- Sources
- Narrative insertions in the poetry
- Whatever disturbs the rhythm
- Adjustments to the original which are not part of Johannine theology
- Adjustments which fit exactly the Evangelist’s theology

- The prose “upsets” the poetry
- There is a concentration of non-Johannine vocabulary in 14e, 16-18.
- The evangelist’s addition of 15 severs 14 from 16, where the “we” confession is continued, indicating that the evangelist was editing a pre-existing text.
- The Law/Grace antithesis is not Johannine but Pauline, indicating that this editorial material was added in a Hellenistic community where the Pauline antithesis was known and affirmed.

The Prologue Hymn Source	Wisdom Parallels
1. In the beginning was <i>Wisdom</i>	Prov 8:22-23; Wis 6:22; Sir 24:9
And <i>Wisdom</i> was with <i>God</i>	Prov 8:23, 30; Wis 9:4 9
And <i>God</i> (divine) was <i>Wisdom</i>	

2 The same (<i>She</i>) was in the beginning with God	
3. All things through her <i>became</i>	Prov 3:19; 8:30; Wis 7:21-27, 8:1; 9:12; IQS 10:11
4. What <i>became</i> in her was <i>life</i>	Prov 3:18; 8:35
And the <i>life</i> was the <i>light</i> men	Wis 7:26; Prov 6:23; TestLevi 14:4; (Sir 17:11)
5. And the <i>light</i> in the <i>darkness</i> shines	
And the darkness did not extinguish it	Wis 7:29-30

The Prologue Hymn Source	Wisdom Parallels
10. In the <i>world</i> she was	Wis 8:1; Sir 24:6
and the <i>world</i> through her became	
And the <i>world</i> did not know her	Prov 1:29; Bar 3:23, 28, 31
11. Unto her <i>own</i> she came	
And her own did not <i>receive</i> her	Sir 24:8-12; 1 Enoch 42:1-2
12. But as many as <i>received</i> her	Prov 3:18; 8:35
She gave them authority children of God to become	Wis 7:14, 27; Sir 6:20-22; 15:7
14. And wisdom tabernacled among us	Sir 24:10; Wis 9:10; Bar 3:37; (cf. Prov 8:31)
and we beheld her glory	(Cf. Sir 24:23); Bar 4:1

- 1 In the beginning was Wisdom
and Wisdom was with God
and God (divine) was Wisdom
- 2 The same (She) was in the beginning with God
- 3a All things through her became
- 4 What became in her was life
And the life was the light of men
- 5 And the light in the darkness shines
And the darkness did not extinguish it
- 10 In the world she was
and the world through her became
And the world did not know her.
- 11 Unto her own she came,
And her own did not receive her
- 12a But as many as received her,
- 12b She gave them authority children of God to become
- 14a/b And Wisdom tabernacled among us

1 In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, **and without him not one thing came into being**. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6 **There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.** 7 **He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.** 8 **He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.** 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

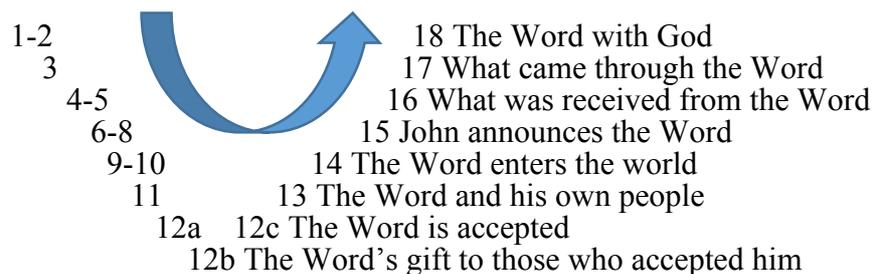
11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, **who believed in his name**, he gave power to become children of God, 13 **who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.** 14 **And the Word became flesh** and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, **the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.** 15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he

was before me.”) 16 *From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.* 17 *The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* 18 **No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.**

- Negatively:
 - Opposition to Torah / Wisdom ideology
 - Opposition a defective wisdom Christology
 - Loss: feminine imagery of God
- Positively:
 - Creation and new creation
 - Logos/Word – transcendence and wisdom
 - Prophecy – Jesus was a prophet
 - Gospel (“the word”)
 - Jesus – presence and revelation
 - Dialogue with the culture (Judaism / Stoicism)

Layout

Strophe 1: The pre-existence of the Word
 Strophe 2: From creation through the history of Israel
Interpolation: John the Baptist’s announcement
 Strophe 3: The Incarnation
 Strophe 4: The response of the community



In this scheme, the heart is becoming “children of God”. This would have been especially important in discussion with the synagogue. The community claimed to be the true children of God. A descent/ascent model coheres with the Gospel.

Echoes

PRE-EXISTENT LOGOS

John 17:5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

LIFE

John 5:24 Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.

LIGHT

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

LIGHT V. DARKNESS

John 3:19 And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,

John 12:46 I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.

JOHN AS WITNESS

John 1:19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

THE OPPOSITION OF THE WORLD

John 14:17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

John 14:19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

John 15:18 “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you.

CHILDREN OF GOD

John 11:52 and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God.

BORN OF GOD

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

BEHOLDING HIS GLORY

John 17:5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I

had in your presence before the world existed.

THE ONLY SON

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

MOSES

John 5:45 Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

John 6:32 Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

John 9:28 Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”

SEEING GOD

John 5:37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form,

John 6:46 Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father.

Reflections

- ▶ The search for “origins”
 - ▶ The power of the word
 - ▶ The quest for wisdom
 - ▶ Dialogue with the times we live in
 - ▶ God as personal in Christ
 - ▶ Christocentric eco-theology
1. “In the beginning” takes me back to my own new creation in Christ—back to significant moments—perhaps even to a single moment which stands out as the beginning of my own belonging in Christ. Praise.
 2. Life—what makes me alive, taking hold of my imagination and energy? How is my life in Christ? Prayer of gratitude.
 3. Light—a fabulous imagery. It may be that some particular land or seascape stands out in my memory as having an especially beautiful light. Prayer of enlightenment.
 4. The dark side of refusal and rejection—in my life I probably have said both yes and no to grace. Where am I now in my life? Prayer of pilgrimage.
 5. Wisdom was God’s presence—a feminine presence, because (to use Biblical language) just as a man is “incomplete” without the love and companionship of a woman, the human person needs to be complemented by God’s wisdom.

6. The power of language in my experience as an entry point to appreciating the Word made flesh. What word am I hearing especially today?

Prayer

We praise you, gracious God, for the glad tidings of peace, the good news of salvation: your Word became flesh and we have seen his glory. Let the radiance of that glory enlighten the lives of those who celebrate his birth.

Reveal to all the world the light no darkness can extinguish, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in the splendour of eternal light, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Conversation