

SALTED
WITH
FIRE



BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

ELVEAN

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Volume One: The Alpha Text

ELVEAN BAILEY

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INTRODUCTION

ETERNAL LIFE

Life is called eternal because it extends from the past eternity to the eternity which is to come. Eternal life is imparted by God through the Holy Spirit to every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence everyone who believes on His Son inherits eternal life which is eternally in Christ Jesus.

Saints of God will reign with the Anointed One. Anyone who intends to spend eternity with a person should learn as much as possible about that individual. The Bible is a book about Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation we find Jesus in every book.

The more we learn about Him, the more we can become like Him.

Jesus is the source of life. We live because He lives. He says that whoever eats His body and drinks His blood has eternal life and He will raise him up at the last day. (See John 6:54.)

Later on He prayed, “And this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). (Study also 1 John 5:12-13.)

The day is coming when time is going to fold itself into the bosom of eternity and man will either live in heaven with God or perish in the lake of fire with Satan.

The Book of Revelation concludes the record. There Saint John the Divine describes Him as Him which is and which was and which is to come. (See Revelation 1:8.) He also penned the witness Jesus gave concerning Himself.

“. . . . I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Revelation 21:6).

The Salted with Fire collection is a chronicle of His life and it reveals Him as the giver of life. To inherit eternal life you must become a new creature. That is accomplished through the new birth experience. Christ told Nicodemus you must be born again and gave him the Gospel in a Nutshell: “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” (John 3:16).

The lost are spiritually dead and it takes a greater miracle to raise a lost soul from his spiritually dead state than it took to raise His friend Lazarus from the grave where he lay dead for four days.

Saint John wrote in his first epistle, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (5:11). Jesus, the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13) and the everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6) is the Father of eternity. Eternal life is imparted by a Person and that Person is Jesus Christ, the eternal I AM.

—The Author



PROLOGUE

A GREAT COMING FORTH

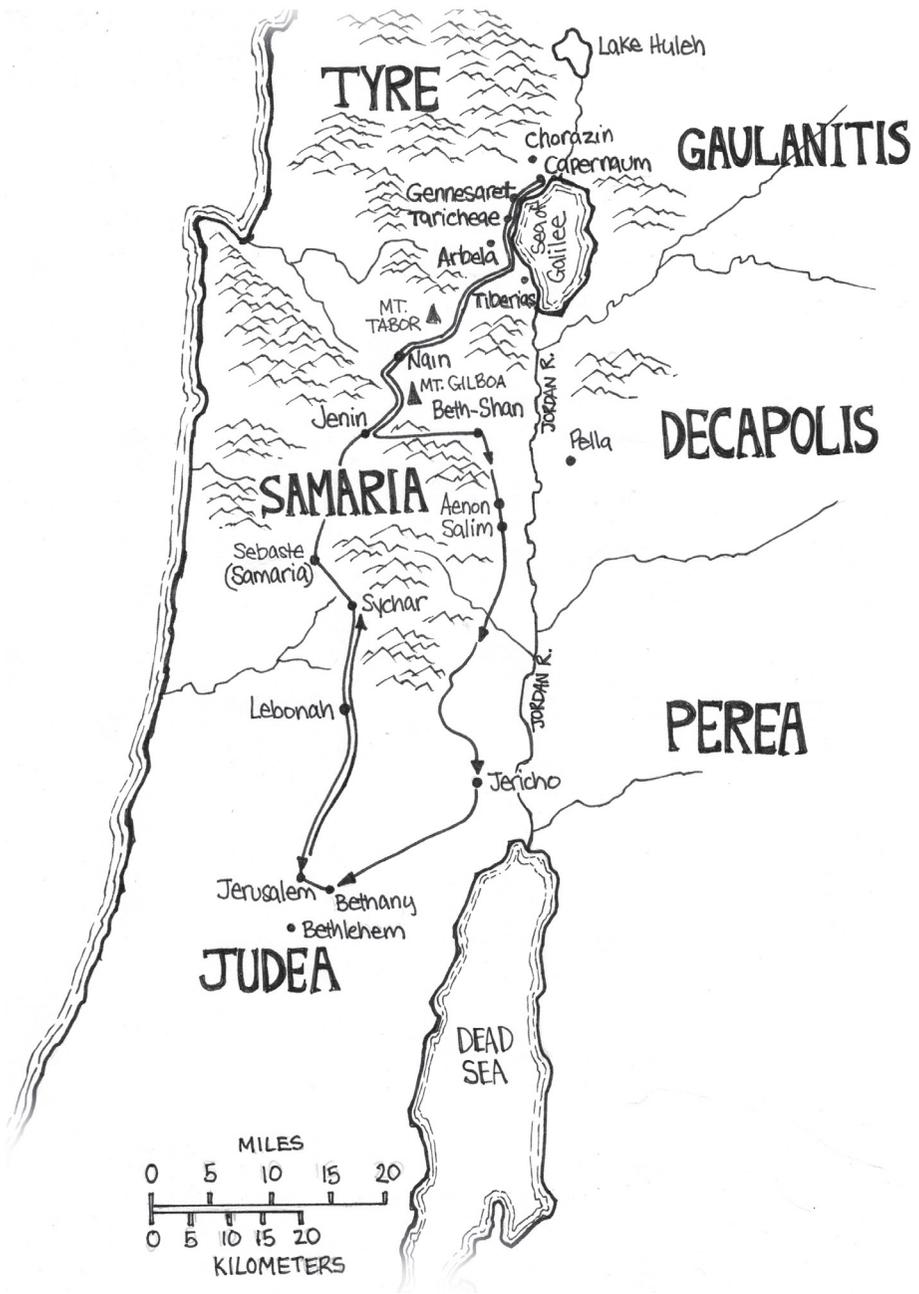
Jesus was slowly winding His way to the Holy City. Following the feeding of the five thousand He gave a discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum. There, the Jews murmured at Him for claiming to be the bread of life which came down from heaven. He continued His labors in Galilee refusing to walk in Jewish lands because they sought to kill Him. When the time of the Feast of Tabernacles began to draw near, His brothers started pestering Him about attending. They wanted Him to go and perform some miracles to impress His disciples in Judea.

“Surely you should go,” they insisted. “If you want people to know who you are, then go and show yourself to the world.”

“No,” He replied. “You go. I’m not yet ready.”

When the time came that He should be offered up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem. He directed messengers to go into a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for a visit. But they refused to receive Him. So He went to another village.

As He slowly wound His way around towns and villages He blessed hurting souls all along the way. On one Sabbath He had an opportunity to show compassion toward a woman who had suffered with an infirmity for a very long time. He was teaching in one of the synagogues when He spotted this woman who appeared to have curvature of the spine. Curled up in a ball, she had not stood straight in eighteen years.



He called out to her, “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.” Then He laid hands on her and she lifted herself up and glorified God.

On another Sabbath day He went to the home of one of the chief Pharisees for dinner. While there He saw a man who was sick to the point where his vital organs were failing. He healed him and gave him permission to leave.

By now great multitudes were following Him. He passed through Samaria and Galilee and as He entered a certain village, He met ten men in various stages of leprosy. He healed them all, but only one of them came back to thank Him.

As He neared the Holy City there appeared to have been a period where He wanted solitude. So to get away from the crowds and perhaps even His disciples, He may have taken an alternate route. At any rate He managed to walk in a way so as not to attract public attention.

He did not elect at this time to enter Jerusalem in a spectacular fashion. He may have entered through the sheep gate. Upon His arrival, He presented Himself to the people at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Gospel Evangelist Saint John recorded an incident that occurred after the feast. Jesus went out into the Mount of Olives and returned early the next morning to teach in the temple. Suddenly the scribes and Pharisees interrupted the class by dragging in a promiscuous woman off the streets and sitting her down in their midst. Everyone waited to see what would happen next. The woman stood shivering as she waited to be stoned.

Jesus stooped down and began writing a sermon in the sand. When they continued to question Him, He lifted Himself up and said, “The one of you who has never sinned may throw the first stone.” Then He stooped and resumed writing. All the woman could hear were rocks dropping. One by one from the eldest to the youngest, the men began to walk away.

Jesus stood and asked the woman, “Where are your accusers? Did not even one hit you with a rock?”

“Not a single one, Lord.”

“Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

Two months after the Feast of Tabernacles, He attended the Feast of Dedication. It was winter when He walked into an area of the temple known as Solomon's Porch. There He saw some theologians standing around discussing various facets of the law. When He walked over to them, they began to question Him about His Son-ship. But in taking issue with His responses, some of them picked up stones to slay Him. He escaped and went to Bethabara and there He abode. The people converged upon Him and what they heard Him say and saw Him do caused them to say, "John did no miracle but everything He spoke of this man was true." And many of them believed on Him then and there.

As He ventured further over into the coasts of Judea, great multitudes followed and He healed them. In Perea he taught on marriage and divorce, blessed little children, counseled a rich young ruler, and lectured His disciples on their place in the future kingdom.

Then He began to inch His way down the Jericho Road. From the old city to the new, a number of sightless men sat by the wayside begging. On the way into the city He healed a certain blind man. "Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you," He said. Immediately his sight was restored and he followed Him glorifying God.

While He was in Jericho, the people witnessed the conversion of Zacchaeus who was chief among the publicans. Jesus stayed at the home of this wealthy tax collector who was the most hated man in town for he overcharged people, paid the Romans their due, and kept a good portion for himself. Wanting to see Jesus, but being so short in stature, he had to climb a tree. A Sycamore fig tree is not easy to climb. It has slick bark and it's a long way to the first limb. So it took Zacchaeus a while to climb up. As Jesus approached, He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today I must abide at your house." Zacchaeus came down faster than he went up and received Jesus joyfully.

After supper there was a time of restitution. That little man stood up and said, "Lord, I am going to give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have falsified anyone's tax returns I'm going to restore to him four-fold."

As Jesus was attempting to leave the city, the pleas of blind Bartimaeus caused Him to stand still. He healed him but before He could make a complete exit, two more blind men cried out to Him. He touched their eyes and immediately they received their sight. They followed Him, as did Bartimaeus. He was contemplating making the seventeen-mile trip to Jerusalem to face circumstances that awaited Him there when He learned that some special friends had dispatched an urgent message for Him to come to Bethany.

Mary and Martha had a brother named Lazarus who was critically ill. They thought about their friend and asked their guests, “Where is Jesus? Will someone please go and look for Him and tell Him that he whom He loves is sick.”

Their brother’s ailment appeared to be terminal. However, Jesus, being divine, knew exactly what was going to happen. He told the messenger, “Lazarus’ illness will bring glory to God,” and remained where He was for two days. Finally, He said to His disciples, “Let’s go to Judea.”

“But Master,” they protested. “Some theologians just recently attempted to stone you.”

His love for His friends momentarily blocked His concern for His own safety. “Aren’t there twelve hours in a day?” He countered. “My time is not up. We will travel during the day. No one will attack us from behind because we will be able to see everything that goes on around us.”

And they started out for Bethany. Lazarus had died but ETERNAL JESUS knew He had the power to resurrect him. “Our friend is sleeping so I am going to awaken him.” Thinking He meant that Lazarus was simply resting, the disciples said, “Lord, if he’s asleep then he’s going to be all right.”

But Jesus was not speaking of the napping kind of sleep. So He spoke to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. But it is good that I was not there so that you might believe.”

By now the two sisters were becoming hysterical. Their only brother had been in the grave four days when someone told Martha he had seen Jesus. She ran out of the house leaving Mary absorbed in her thoughts. Upon reaching the edge of town, gasping for breath,

she blabbered, “What is taking you so long? If you had come when I first sent for you my brother would still be alive. Nevertheless, I know that whatever you ask of God, He will give it to you.”

Jesus responded with great compassion, “Martha, I give you my word. Lazarus will rise again.”

“Master, I know that my brother will rise again when the world ends.”

Jesus answered, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes on me will live again even if he dies. And what’s more, whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Can you believe this, Martha?”

“Yes, my Lord. I know that you are the Christ, the Son of God who should come into the world.” She returned to her home where she took her sister aside and whispered, “Our Master is on the way and wishes to see you.”

As soon as she heard that, Mary jumped up and ran out of the house. Their puzzled guests said, “Let’s go. She must be going to the cemetery to cry over Lazarus.” But to their astonishment, she kept running past the cemetery. Upon reaching Jesus, she fell sobbing at His feet. Deeply troubled, He groaned in the Spirit.

The grave was a cave with a stone positioned at the entrance. With the death dew resting on his forehead, Lazarus lay there with his tongue glued to the roof of his mouth.

Jesus said, “Take the stone away.” An awful odor emanated from the grave. While the people held their hands over their noses, Jesus prayed, “Father I thank thee that thou has heard me. And I know that thou always hear me, but because of these people who are watching, I am praying again so they will believe that thou has sent me.” Then he cried out in a bellowing tone, “Lazarus, come forth.”

Life returned to Lazarus’ mortal body and he came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes and a napkin wound about his face. Jesus said to them, “Loose him and let him go.”

Jesus had called Lazarus by name and he heard Him. He was dead yet could hear the voice of God. Jesus was glad that He was not there at the outset because Lazarus could not have died in His holy presence. If He had been there, many might never have come

to know Him as the giver and sustainer of life. Many of the people who witnessed this miracle believed on Him.

This miracle was so profound, it rocked Jerusalem. With all the mighty works, sermons, and discourses He had given, the Jews had every reason to accept Him as the Son of God. But nothing He had said or done could persuade them that He was who He said He was. Raising Lazarus affirmed His deity for only God can give life.

Jesus performed many miracles during the three-and-a-half years He ministered on this earth. He healed the sick, raised the dead, and fed the hungry. He gave sight to the blind, caused the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the dumb to talk. Our Lord blessed and healed thousands. And He healed them one at a time.

But that was not the purpose for which He came. God designed a method by which the poor and the lost could live forever. The effects of His miracles should have been to strengthen their faith. He called His miracles *signs*. Saint John said He did many signs he did not record. But the ones he did record were done so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through His name. (See John 20:30-31.)

Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to go to Jerusalem to face that hour of which the prophets had spoken. He was the promised One who came and accomplished His mission of reconciling us to God and who became our light and our salvation. That day, His disciples learned a valuable lesson. Operating in the spiritual realm, Christ took authority over natural forces and declared, "If you believe on me, I will give you eternal life and you will never perish."



A decorative flourish consisting of a central white bird-like shape with wings spread, set against a light gray background that tapers into a horizontal oval shape.

CHAPTER 1

ON THIS WISE

Each of the Four Gospel Evangelists wrote an account of the Gospel of Jesus the Christ and Son of God. Saint Matthew presented Him as the Branch of David. Saint Mark, as Jehovah's servant, the Branch. Saint Luke, as the man whose name is Branch. And Saint John, as the Branch of Jehovah.

In the first four verses of his Gospel, Saint Luke, a Greek-speaking physician, relates that he received eyewitness accounts of the earthly history of our Lord Jesus and could affirm their authenticity through divine revelation. Thus, his biography was, in fact, a first-hand rendering of the account. Some of the eyewitnesses may have been Mary, the mother of Jesus, His brethren, and some of the original disciples. In addition, there were hundreds and perhaps thousands of people still living who had listened to Him teach and had witnessed His miracles.

Early believers (some of whom went on to become deacons in the first century church) wrote narratives on the life of Christ. Only after spending time with these eyewitnesses did Doctor Saint Luke write his Greek friend saying, "I am writing to you, most excellent Theophilus, that you might know the certainty of these things wherein you have received instruction." (See Luke 1:1-4.)



THE HEAVENLY ANNOUNCEMENT

It was in the sixth month that God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary who was engaged to a man named Joseph. (Please read Luke 1:26-38.)

The angel said to her, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”

Looking at him Mary must have thought, *What in the world are you talking about?*

Gabriel reassured her, “You need not be afraid. God has been gracious to you. He has chosen you to be the mother of His Son and you will call Him JESUS. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and His kingdom will never end.”

Mary thought, *I can't do that.* She asked, “How can this be, seeing that I have never known a man?”

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,” he answered.

For her comfort, he told Mary about her kinswoman Elisabeth's pregnancy. “That too, is a miracle because she is past the age of childbearing,” he said.

After her curiosity had subsided, Mary became filled with joy. By the virgin birth, our Father God would be able to bring His holy Son into the human race. Mary exclaimed, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.”

With that, the Holy Spirit breathed God's Word upon her and Mary became pregnant.



THE VISITATION

Six months before Gabriel appeared to Mary in Nazareth, he appeared to Zacharias in Judea. (Please read Luke 1:5-25.) Zacharias and Elisabeth were a righteous couple who resided in the hill country near Jerusalem. Zacharias, an elderly priest, was burning incense in the temple when the angel appeared at the altar. It was during the evening sacrifice, while the multitude of the people praying outside the Holy of Holies waiting to be blessed, that the angel startled him. Said the angel to the priest, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shall call his name John."

The prophecy was two-fold: (a) Elisabeth would bear a son; (b) He would prepare the way for the Messiah.

Elisabeth conceived and hid for five months. In the sixth month, Mary hastened up the mountain tract, which ran north to south along the middle of Judea, to the house of Zacharias where she saluted her cousin. (Please read Luke 1:39-45.) At hearing the salutation, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. At the same time John became Spirit-filled causing him to leap inside her womb. And she spoke with a loud voice, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

She assured Mary that the mighty and the sick had been passed over and that they, two lowly women, had been chosen to be mothers of two great men of God. With profound piety and solemn joy these holy women contemplated the power and grace of God who would fulfill His ancient promises to Israel through their offspring and bring salvation to the world. This inspired Mary to sing a joyful song.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced
in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his
handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall
call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great
things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear
him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength
with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of
their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and
exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good
things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen
his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to
our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.

Luke 1: 46-55

Mary stayed with Elisabeth for about three months and returned to her own house elated over becoming the mother of a blessed child. And Elisabeth said, "I am honored that the mother of my Lord came to visit me."

Saint Matthew also recorded the Christ-Child's arrival on the scene. He calls his Gospel the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. He presents Him as Emmanuel which means "God in the midst of the Jews." The Jews were looking for their Messiah of whom the Old Testament prophets wrote. Jesus is that promised Messiah. Saint Matthew, whose Gospel was written primarily to the Jews, traces His ancestry all the way back to Father Abraham. The line of Abraham places Him in the nation. The line of David places Him on the throne. (Read Matthew 1:1-17.)

Forty-two Generations in the Royal Succession
of Davidic Kings (with omissions)
From Abraham to Christ

*Fourteen Generations
from Abraham to David*

*Fourteen Generations
from David to Babylon*

*Fourteen Generations
from Babylon to Christ*

Abraham	Solomon	Salathiel
Isaac	Roboam	Zorobabel
Jacob	Abia	Abiud
Judas	Asa	Eliakim
Phares	Josaphat	Azor
Esrom	Joram	Sadoc
Aram	Ozias	Achim
Aminadab	Joatham	Eliud
Naasson	Achaz	Eleazar
Salmon	Ezekias	Matthan
Booz	Manasses	Jacob
Obed	Amon	Joseph
Jesse	Josias	Christ
David	Jechonias	

** Salathiel did not beget Zorobabel. Pedaiah is omitted.
He is the father of Zorobabel and the brother of Salathiel.*

See Genesis 38 for other sons of Judah. See 1 Chronicles 2:13-17 for other sons of Jesse. See 1 Chronicles 3:1-9 for all the sons of David. See 2 Kings 8:24-12:21 for omitted kings of Judah between Joram and Ozias. They were Ahaziah, Queen Mother Athaliah (Study 2 Kings 11 and 12.), Joash, and Amaziah.

Other omitted kings are: Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin's uncle; Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin's father; and Zedekiah I, also Jehoiachin's uncle and the last king of Judah. (See 1 Chronicles 3:15-17.) The next king to sit on the throne of David will be the baby King Herod sought to kill.

Saint Matthew recorded, "Josias begat Jehonias and his brethren about the time they were carried away to Babylon." He went on to say, "And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Sabathiel."

Jechonias, however, had no reigning son because of a judgment from Jehovah who changed his name to Coniah, dropping the Je. (Study Jeremiah 22:30.) His son, Assir was the father of Salathiel.

Kings who reigned in the Inter-Biblical Period are not recorded in the Scriptures.

Matthew does not call Jesus the son of Joseph. In Scripture He is called: Son of God; Son of David; and Son of man. God sent Him into the world to save us from our sins. He is God who came in the flesh.

The marriage of Joseph and Mary took place after the conception but before the birth of Jesus. Matthew wrote, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:18).

As the angel had not yet appeared to Joseph, he was troubled over learning his fiancée was expecting a child. Knowing the baby was not his, but being a just man not willing to make her a public example he offered to end the betrothal. (Please read Matthew 1:19-25.)

In Jewish law, however, an engagement was legally binding and legal steps were required to obtain a dissolution. Not wanting

to embarrass her or have her penalized, Joseph decided to present the divorce papers in the presence of only two or three witnesses rather than before a magistrate.

As he brooded in the still of the night deliberating over the best way to carry out his plan, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream. “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21).

Matthew proceeded to quote from the Prophet Isaiah who had written, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

Joseph awakened trusting in God and desiring to be obedient to His will, he married Mary and took her to his home. But “knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son” (Matthew 1:25). He called His name Jesus as Gabriel had instructed and went to work making baby furniture. And Mary got busy making baby clothes.

Doctor Luke explains how our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came to be born in Bethlehem. For 400 years the Palestinian Jews had been waiting for the promised Messiah. The Roman Emperor Augustus ordered an enrollment of all the subjects of the empire. And although Palestine was under the jurisdiction of King Herod, all those who resided there were also included in the decree. The enrollment of the Jews, however, took place after the Jewish method which required the father of a household to register at the place of his family’s ancestral dwelling. Hence, Joseph would have to go to Bethlehem, the original city of his ancestors.

Rome conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C. and from that time to A.D. 70, the Holy City was under the Roman Empire. The citizens were taxed by Rome to finance its military. Caesar Augustus’ new personal tax required a census to be taken. And this was done during the time when Quirenius was governor of Syria. The emperor ordered all citizens to remain in their current homelands

until revenue officials could inform them of the amount due on their assessment.

NO ROOM

The time came for the Jewish citizens living in the twenty-seven provinces ruled by the Roman Senate and the emperor to return to their native lands to register. Joseph left Nazareth with Mary, his wife, for five days of bumpy travel to Bethlehem of Judea. Heavy with child, she would have to endure an eighty-mile ride on the back of a donkey. A village seated on a steep ridge, and surrounded by olive groves on the main route between Jerusalem and Egypt, Bethlehem had been sacred to the Jewish people for hundreds of years.

They passed through Samaria and continued southward. After enduring an extremely arduous journey, Mary was relieved when at last they reached the city limits. But they were soon to find that there would be no hotel accommodations. Somehow, however, Mary knew that Joseph would find a place.

While searching, she went into labor. They were offered a stable and it was there that she brought forth life. Our Lord was not born in a hospital under pristine conditions and there were no attending physicians, nurses, or midwives - just His parents and some farm animals.

We may never know exactly where the swaddling clothes came from. But here is a possible scenario. While Mary travailed in birth, Joseph looked around and found clean straw which he placed in a feeding trough. Then he spotted some gauze-like material used to wrap wounded lambs and proceeded to assist in the delivery. And there in a manger in the stable he carefully laid the Son of God.

ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

The angels and the shepherds welcomed the birth of the Christ with jubilation. The angel of the Lord said to the shepherds who were abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night,

“Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10-12).

After these pretty voices rang out the glad tidings, the angels returned to heaven and the shepherds hurriedly headed in the direction of the locale of the blessed event. The first Jews to visit Jesus, they knelt on the straw in humble adoration.

Eight days after His birth, Mary and Joseph had Him circumcised and He officially received the name, JESUS. The Greek form of the Hebrew *Jehoshua*, meaning “*Savior*,” when given to Mary’s child was designed to express the special office He would fill. *Christ*, from the Greek *Christos*, meaning “*anointed*,” corresponds to the Hebrew *Mashiah*. Jesus, therefore, was His personal name and Christ was His title.



PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

In keeping with the tradition of having the first male child born to a Hebrew mother redeemed, when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to God. Mary offered her gifts of purification and paid five shekels. Next she offered her token of thanksgiving and gave the traditional offering for the poor: a pair of turtle doves or maybe two young pigeons.

There was a just and devout senior in Jerusalem who had been looking for the promised Messiah. The Holy Spirit had told Simeon that he would not die till he saw the Lord's Christ. When Mary and Joseph arrived at the temple with the Child to do for Him after the custom of the law, Simeon took Him up in his arms and blessed God for preparing: "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32).

Then he blessed them and prophesied, "Some won't believe this is God's Son. In rejecting Him they will reject the Father." He proceeded with a warning, "You will suffer a great sorrow because of their unbelief."

Anna, an aged widowed prophetess of the tribe of Asa who spent much time praying in the temple, gave a song of praise to God and then left to spread the news over all Jerusalem. (Please read Luke 2:36-38.)



WHERE?

Saint Matthew and Saint John wrote that Jesus is the Christ for the Jews, the Persians, the Gentiles, and for the whole world. When Joseph and Mary and the child returned to Bethlehem, they moved into a house. There they were visited by some wise men from the Orient who travelled to Jerusalem. Staring at their odd clothing people wondered if they were kings or priests or astronomers. They could have very well been scientists. Or they could have been royalty. They may also have been spiritual leaders who came from the East asking, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2).

The Magi, as they are called, were the first Gentiles to visit Jesus. They had heard about Micah’s prophecy of a world-king who would be born in the land of Judah. Probably over the course of a year this entourage travelled hundreds of miles across steamy deserts, around high mountains and through deep valleys bearing costly gifts. Somewhere along the line, God had enlightened them with regard to who Jesus was. This was evidenced in the type of gifts they presented. They did not come bearing a stuffed camel or a sand timer. They brought gifts befitting our Lord’s deity and kingship.

The citizens of Jerusalem were filled with uncertainty and someone went to King Herod the Great, son of Antipater, an Idumean, and reported that strangely-dressed foreigners had come to Jerusalem and were inquiring about a child-king. Herod became troubled and gathered all the chief priests and scribes together and demanded to know where the Christ should be born. Being experts in Jewish law, they answered, “In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel” (Matthew 2:5-6).



Herod had called the child “*Christ*.” This indicated that he knew that Jesus was more than humanity but he would not tolerate competition of any kind. His fear of a rival ruler caused him to ask, “What time did the star appear?” If that could be determined then he would be able to determine the age of the child.

He sent them to Bethlehem directing them to, “Go and search diligently for the young child, and when you have found him, bring me word that I may come and worship him also” (Matthew 2:8).

The star reappeared and led the wise men to Bethlehem where upon entering the house and seeing the Jewish child-king, they knelt and worshipped Him and presented their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Then, because God warned them in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

BE THOU THERE

When Joseph laid Jesus on Mary's bosom, He could have ordered the universe out of existence. Instead, they fled to Egypt. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him" (Matthew 2:13).

The angel, speaking with urgency, prompted Joseph to make no delay. He awoke and took the Child and His mother and began the long, tedious journey through the rocky mountains of the Sinai Desert wilderness to their city of refuge. This time Mary carried the Child and Joseph had a dual responsibility of protection.

WEEPING, MOURNING, AND LAMENTING

When the anxious king discovered that the worshipping foreigners were long gone, he became enraged. Now he doesn't know which male child will be the future king. So he contrives a cruel, heartless plan. He sends a battalion to Bethlehem with orders to slay all the children, two years and under, that were in Bethlehem and all the coasts around. The soldiers held a reign of terror over the little town.

Matthew quoted a prophecy of Jeremiah which he said was fulfilled. "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted because they were not." (See Matthew 2:18 and Jeremiah 31:15.)

But Herod's wicked scheme would not succeed because God's only begotten Son was on His way to Egypt. There were many Jews in Egypt, some of whom resided in Alexandria. Judea had once been subject to Egyptian rule and there was a temple there for a population of perhaps one million Jewish residents. The rulers of Egypt recognized the importance of Jews in their land and a temple was erected in a village for them. This was done one hundred-fifty years before His birth.

The Christ-Child arrived safely and lived with His parents under God's divine protection until Herod died.

The sages who had come to see Jesus were called wise because they were savvy enough to know that someone had created this world, and they wanted to come and worship that someone. They were both blessed and a blessing because the family was able to subsist off the gold, which sustained them throughout the length of their stay in Egypt.

Eventually, Herod became gravely ill and left to bathe in the hot sulphur springs of Zerka. On his deathbed he had a suspicion there would be rejoicing in the land over his demise. So he told his sister and brother-in-law to lock up all the principal Jews in the circus at Jericho and put them to death at his passing so instead of rejoicing there would be mourning and lamenting.

His internal organs became so infiltrated with infection that he breathed out his last breaths in pain and agony. Bloated and rotten inside, his body sent out such a stench that no one wanted to be in the same room with him. He died and his kingdom was divided among his three sons. When the news was released, the circus prisoners were set free and instead of mourning, there was jubilation. While his subjects were carrying out his pre-arranged plans for a magnificent funeral, God was dispatching a message to Joseph.

Jesus, King Emmanuel, could have come into the world in grand, royal splendor and dethroned Herod. Instead, He came as a babe in a lowly manger in Bethlehem of Judea and grew up in Nazareth of Galilee.

