

Birth of Jesus

Matthew 1:18-25 & Luke 2:1-40

When Mary returned from visiting Elizabeth, Joseph learned that she was with child.

He knew that he was not the father, but he loved Mary and didn't want her to be exposed to any disgrace. He finally decided to dismiss her quietly and find a safe place for her to stay until the child was born. But then an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.

“Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because the child that she is carrying has come to her through the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

When Joseph awoke he did as the angel instructed and took Mary home as his wife. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, the northern part of Israel, yet Scripture said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is near Jerusalem.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone would go to their own home town to register.

So, Joseph and Mary went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem, the town of David, in Judea.

Soon after they arrived, the baby was born. She wrapped her child in strips of cloth and placed him in a manger, a feeding trough, because there was no room for them in the inn. The Messiah was born.

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

“Don’t be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all men of goodwill.” Then, they disappeared.

The shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So, they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

When the time of purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: a pair of doves or two young pigeons.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. It had been promised to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts that day. When the parents

brought in the child Jesus, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God.

Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Mary and Joseph were amazed at all Simeon said. Then he blessed them and said to Mary, “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

And Mary treasured up all that was said and pondered it in her heart.

As Joseph and Mary walked further, a prophetess named Anna approached them. She had lived with her husband seven years and was then widowed. Obeying God’s will, she moved to the temple and there she stayed day and night: meditating, fasting, praying for the coming of the Savior. She was now 84. When she looked up and saw the little family approaching, she knew.

She approached the Holy Family and began to praise God and to speak to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. And Mary treasured all that was said and pondered it in her heart.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.