

# THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR

**BIBLE TEXT** : Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-23; Luke 2:1-40.

LESSON 312 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:10).

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Matthew 1:18-25**

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

<sup>20</sup> But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, 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.

<sup>21</sup> And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

<sup>22</sup> Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

<sup>23</sup> Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

<sup>24</sup> Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

<sup>25</sup> And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

### **Matthew 2:1-23**

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

<sup>2</sup> Saying, 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.

<sup>3</sup> When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

<sup>4</sup> And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

<sup>5</sup> And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

<sup>6</sup> And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **I Prophecy Fulfilled**

1. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, and was the Christ of God, as had been prophesied of Him, Matthew 1:18-25;

**Isaiah 7:14**

<sup>14</sup> **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 8:8**

<sup>8</sup> **And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach *even* to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.**

**Isaiah 9:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> **For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.**

<sup>7</sup> **Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**

**Isaiah 11:1**

<sup>1</sup> **And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:**

2. Christ was born at Bethlehem, the city of David, Matthew 2:1, 5, 6; Luke 2:1-7;

**John 7:42**

<sup>42</sup> **Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?**

**Micah 5:2**

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

3. Wise men came from afar to find the Christ, Matthew 2:1-7; Luke 2:1-7, 11;

**Numbers 24:17-19**

<sup>17</sup> **I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.**

<sup>18</sup> **And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.**

<sup>19</sup> **Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.**

4. Joseph and Mary fled with Jesus into Egypt to escape the hatred of Herod, Matthew 2:8-15;

**Hosea 11:1**

<sup>1</sup> **When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.**

5. Herod slew all the children under two years of age in an effort to destroy Christ, Matthew 2:16-18;

**Jeremiah 31:15-17**

<sup>15</sup> **Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, *and* bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they *were* not.**

<sup>16</sup> **Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping,**

of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

<sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

<sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

<sup>11</sup> And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup> And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

<sup>13</sup> And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth 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.

<sup>14</sup> When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

<sup>15</sup> And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

<sup>16</sup> Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

<sup>17</sup> Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

<sup>18</sup> In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

<sup>19</sup> But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to

and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

<sup>17</sup> **And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.**

6. Joseph and Mary returned from Egypt to dwell in Nazareth of Galilee, Matthew 2:19-23.

## II Birth of Our Saviour

1. Angels announced to shepherds the glad news of the birth of Christ, and declared His deity, Luke 2:8-14;

**Acts 2:36**

<sup>36</sup> **Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.**

2. The shepherds went to see Jesus, and glorified and praised God for what they had heard and seen, Luke 2:15-20.

3. Jesus was recognized and acknowledged to be the Christ of God, by the saints of God, Luke 2:21-40;

**Isaiah 52:10**

<sup>10</sup> **The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.**

**Psalms 98:2**

<sup>2</sup> **The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.**

**Psalms 98:3**

<sup>3</sup> **He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.**

### **NOTES:**

#### **Until Shiloh Come**

Man had hoped for a Redeemer from sin since the time of the first sin. The first promise of a Redeemer was given to Adam and Eve, who were the first transgressors against God, and so were the first in the need of redemption. The promise given them was part of the denunciation given the serpent. It stated: "I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). The gist of this promise was that through the seed of the woman Christ would come, and that He would destroy Satan and all his works. Though Satan was destined to bruise the seed of the woman — that is, Christ — nevertheless, that same Christ would be the eventual destroyer of all evil. Christ was indeed born into the world and crucified by wicked men; but He rose triumphant over death, hell, and the grave, and now reigns on High.

From the time of the first promise of a Redeemer, God has renewed that promise many times. From the time of the first family upon earth, there have been those who have believed such promises; and they have been accepted by God because of their belief. (**Romans 4:3** <sup>3</sup> **For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**). Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Jacob and Isaac were among the first who believed God's promise of a Redeemer. These, and many more, all longed for the day of the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The records of secular and sacred history teach us that throughout the civilized world there was considerable knowledge and belief of Israel's coming Messiah and King. Quite likely much of this knowledge was acquired through Daniel. To him was given the revelation of the times of the Messiah. (**Daniel 9:20-27**

Joseph in Egypt,

<sup>20</sup> Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

<sup>21</sup> And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

<sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

<sup>23</sup> And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

### **Luke 2:1-40**

<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

<sup>2</sup> (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

<sup>3</sup> And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

<sup>4</sup> And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

<sup>5</sup> To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

<sup>6</sup> And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

<sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

<sup>9</sup> And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

<sup>10</sup> And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

<sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

<sup>20</sup> And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; <sup>21</sup> Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. <sup>22</sup> And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. <sup>23</sup> At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. <sup>24</sup> Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. <sup>25</sup> Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. <sup>26</sup> And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. <sup>27</sup> And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate) Daniel was chief of the governors of all the wise men in Babylon and was widely known and respected. His understanding of the prophecies concerning the Messiah and His people must have been discussed and known. And Daniel's revelation put an actual time for the coming of the Messiah.

Earlier than Daniel's was Balaam's prophecy concerning Christ. Although Balaam was a Gentile he spoke in some detail of the "Star out of Jacob," and the Sceptre that should rise out of Israel (Numbers 24:17). Although the promise of a Redeemer and Messiah was particularly given to Israel by God, there seemed to be many also outside the nation of Israel who, for various reasons and with varying degrees of enthusiasm, hoped for Christ. Through the centuries before Christ's birth, God had striven with Israel that He might use them to introduce the worship of God to heathen nations. But, more often than not, Israel was worshiping idols rather than the true and living God. Nevertheless, God did use individuals from among them to proclaim and publish the hope and promise of the Messiah. While most men's understanding of the true significance of Christ's coming was very much limited, His birth as a Babe in the city of Bethlehem was not without its proper effect.

The immortal soul of man has felt the need of redemption since sin first worked its havoc in the human heart. Colour of skin has no bearing on the need of salvation; and, while many of the Israelites became bitter enemies of Christ, there were also many hungry hearts who welcomed Him. What a lesson we see there for us to learn, for our own benefit, as we read of some who, by believing on the Christ, received great things from God. Jewish tradition states that it was the hope of every woman that she would be the mother of the Messiah. We read of two, outside of Israel, who were brought into the very lineage of Christ. These two were Ruth, a Moabitish woman, who accepted the worship of God as it was taught to her by her mother-in-law; and Rahab, who performed a valuable service for the two spies when they came to Jericho.

### **Glad Tidings**

Near the town of Bethlehem were certain shepherds in the

<sup>14</sup> Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

<sup>15</sup> And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

<sup>16</sup> And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

<sup>17</sup> And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

<sup>18</sup> And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

<sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.

<sup>20</sup> And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

<sup>21</sup> And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

<sup>22</sup> And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord;

<sup>23</sup> (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

<sup>24</sup> And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

<sup>25</sup> And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

<sup>26</sup> And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

<sup>27</sup> And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

<sup>28</sup> Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

<sup>29</sup> Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

<sup>30</sup> For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

<sup>31</sup> Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

<sup>32</sup> A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

<sup>33</sup> And Joseph and his mother marvelled

fields with their flocks. To these shepherds appeared the angel of the Lord, announcing the birth of Christ. He declared to them, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

The birth of Christ was not without marvellous signs and manifestations of heavenly pleasure. The proclamation of the angel of God to the shepherds was one of the signs. Though simple in their way of life, perhaps, yet they must have been wise in the things of God to have been granted such an announcement of Christ's birth. Going immediately to see, they found the child Jesus, as the angel of God had informed them. Then returning to their flocks, they glorified God for the great things, which they had heard and seen, and made known abroad the sayings which were told them concerning the Child.

Some forty days later, after the days of Mary's purification according to the Law of Moses, Jesus was brought to the Temple by His parents, that He might be presented to the Lord.

**(Leviticus 12:2-4**

**<sup>2</sup> Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. <sup>3</sup> And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. <sup>4</sup> And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled).** Here in the Temple was a man named Simeon, just and devout, who waited for the consolation of Israel. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. The Spirit of the Lord had moved him to go into the Temple when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus there. Seeing Jesus, Simeon took the Child up in his arms and prophesied of Him, saying, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:30). This was a remarkable thing, and Joseph and Mary marvelled at the things which Simeon spoke of Jesus. No sooner had he finished than Anna, a prophetess, came in, and likewise gave thanks unto the Lord; and "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

#### **Wise Men from Afar**

Some time after the birth of Jesus, a group of wise men came from the East, inquiring of the rulers at Jerusalem, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews"? Their inquiry caused great consternation throughout Jerusalem, and troubled King Herod greatly. Herod ruled the land by fear and force, and was not ignorant of the implications in the coming of a Messiah. Herod, as many others, looked for Christ to establish a political and earthly kingdom, which would destroy the established civil powers. Herod was fearful and jealous of anyone who showed any promise of being able to overthrow his reign, so he hastily called the chief priest and scribes and inquired of them where Christ was to be born. When he was told that Bethlehem was the prophesied place he sent the wise men to find the Christ Child. Herod's motives soon became apparent. Failing in his first attempt to find Christ, he ordered his soldiers to slay every child in the land under two years of age, thereby hoping to destroy any threat that Christ would upset Herod's reign.

Although Herod's interest in Christ was born of envy and he was filled with unreasonable hatred toward Him, it does prove that Herod believed Christ would be a man of great influence and power. How remarkable was the unbelief of the priests and scribes! They knew the prophecies of Christ, were able to tell Herod where He would be born, saw the men who came a great distance to see Him, and yet were not concerned enough about

at those things which were spoken of him.

<sup>34</sup> And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

<sup>35</sup> (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

<sup>36</sup> And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

<sup>37</sup> And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

<sup>38</sup> And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup> And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

<sup>40</sup> And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

the matter to go and see for themselves. The same unbelief is in men's hearts today. Many have the Gospel at their finger tips and yet will do nothing to obtain it; while oftentimes a hardened sinner, far from the Kingdom of God, catches a glimpse of the glory of God and turns to God with all his heart and finds Christ for himself.

### **God's Witnesses**

We learn from this series of events that God performed some marvellous things to bring to everyone's attention the fact that a Saviour had been born. This knowledge was noised abroad by three different classes of people.

The shepherds spread among their acquaintances and friends the good tidings the angelic hosts had brought concerning the birth of Christ, which meant that the common, working people had heard the good news. The brethren who looked for redemption in Israel were told about Christ by two of their own number: Simeon, the just and devout, and Anna, the prophetess. Lastly, there were the wise men who came from afar to seek the Christ. These wise men spoke about Christ to the highest and mightiest men of the land. Herod, the scribes, the priests, and all their companions heard about this great event from these men who came so far to see Him. How wonderful is God's faithfulness to the human heart that men might know there is a Saviour who can deliver fallen man from sin!

Paul the Apostle, in later years, when giving his testimony before the Roman rulers said this: "The king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

God has fulfilled His promise to the world. Isaiah prophesied many, many hundreds of years ago, and hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, of Him who would come. His message was: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:1, 2).

May the reader of this lesson be sure that he desires the Saviour of the world to be King in his own heart. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). There was no room for Him in the inn when He was born. Let us make room for Him in our hearts, and thus glorify God for His great salvation.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Relate the first promise of a Redeemer.
2. Name several prophecies which were fulfilled by the birth of Christ.
3. Name three ways by which the news of Christ's birth was known.
4. Why did the wise men come from the East to visit Christ?
5. How do we know there was a general knowledge and hope of a Messiah?
6. Why did Herod have all the children under two years of age killed?
7. Of what significance is the birth of Christ to us today?