



Bi60

CHRISTMAS

The Celebration of the Birth of Christ

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The Savior has been born today!” – *Luke 2:10, 11*

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What Is Bi60?

Have you ever heard of reading the Bible in a year? How about reading the Bible in an hour? Welcome to Bi60 – the Bible in 60 minutes – a simple compilation of select passages to present the big picture of the Bible in a small amount of time.

The idea of Bi60 came to me one Wednesday night at church in the fall of 2020. A team of staff members and volunteers had pieced together a set of prayers that they read from the stage. Members of the congregation prayed with them as they read. The service lasted for about an hour and the whole experience was wonderful!

As I drove home that evening, I wondered about doing something similar to the prayer service but reading Scripture for an hour. How wonderful it would be to hear God’s Word in such a unique way! Thus, Bi60 was born! I soon created various themes and started the process of selecting passages of Scripture. Individuals, small groups, and, yes, even congregations can read these select Bible verses and hear God’s Word in an unfamiliar way.

My intention was not to manipulate Scripture but to piece together complementary passages in a way that our sectioned Bibles cannot accomplish. In the meantime, readers will experience God’s Word, His wisdom, instructions, and encouragements in a way they never have before.

The Translation

For Bi60, I used the *New Living Translation* for several reasons. First, the *NLT* is an unfamiliar translation to

most Christians, not that people are unaware of the *NLT* but that they do not read it regularly. Since the *NLT* is unfamiliar to most of us, it is a refreshing reading experience.

Second, I chose the *NLT* for its readability. While the other translations are excellent in their respective ways, they do require readers to possess a higher comprehension level, from 9th grade (*NIV*) to 12th grade (*KJV*). But the *NLT* requires a seventh-grade comprehension level, so it is very easy to understand and allows for smooth, story-like reading.

Third, I chose the *NLT* because it coincides with the *One Year Chronological Bible (NLT)* from Tyndale Publishing, the Bible for which I produced my *Study Guide* and *Daily Reflections* (visit BiAY.org for more details). The Bi60 selections are a mixture of the *New Living Translation* and the *One Year Chronological Bible*. Where the two versions are not identical, I chose the version that made the most sense to me or was the easiest to read. If I added words for clarification or transition purposes, I wrote them in brackets [].

How to Read Bi60

While every word in Bi60 is from the Bible (except for my bracketed clarifications and transitions), I took the references out and added them as footnotes for a smoother reading experience.

The Bi60 may take more or less than one hour, depending on each participant’s reading pace. Each Bi60 booklet has roughly 12,000 words which, when read at an average speed, will take about sixty minutes. This special Christmas edition has only 4500 words, which will take anywhere from 20-30 minutes to read. Perhaps I should call it Bi20-30!

The primary purpose of Bi60 is not the amount of time it takes to read the passages but to enjoy God’s Word in a new and refreshing way. I trust that He will bless your time in the Bi60.

Merry Christmas,
Aaron

Bi60 CHRISTMAS

The Celebration of the Birth of Christ

Introduction

Here begins the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.¹

Many people have written accounts about the events that took place among us. They used as their source material the reports circulating from the early disciples and other eyewitnesses of what God has done in fulfillment of His promises. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I have also decided to write an accurate account for you, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.²

The Ancestors of Jesus

God told Abraham, "I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others... All the families on earth will be blessed through you."³ This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and Abraham:

Abraham was the father of Isaac.
Isaac was the father of Jacob.
Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.
Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).
Perez was the father of Hezron.
Hezron was the father of Ram.
Ram was the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).
Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).
Obed was the father of Jesse.
Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).
Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.
Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.
Abijah was the father of Asa.
Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat.
Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.
Jehoram was the father of Uzziah.
Uzziah was the father of Jotham.
Jotham was the father of Ahaz.
Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.
Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.
Manasseh was the father of Amon.
Amon was the father of Josiah.
Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).

After the Babylonian exile:
Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.
Abiud was the father of Eliakim.
Eliakim was the father of Azor.
Azor was the father of Zadok.
Zadok was the father of Akim.
Akim was the father of Eliud.
Eliud was the father of Eleazar.
Eleazar was the father of Matthan.
Matthan was the father of Jacob.
Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.⁴

The Prophets of Old

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. [To Jeremiah, He said], "The time is coming when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. He will

¹ *Mark 1:1*

² *Luke 1:1-4*

³ *Genesis 12:2, 3*

⁴ *Matthew 1:1-17*

be a king who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. His name will be 'The Lord Is Our Righteousness.' In that day, Judah will be saved..."⁵

[To Isaiah, He said], "This time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. For a child is born to us, a Son is given to us. The government will rest on His shoulders, and He will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of His ancestor David for all eternity."⁶

[The Lord continued], "I will give you a sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call Him Emmanuel, which means 'God with us.'"⁷

[To Isaiah, He also said], "I am the Lord! That is My Name! Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I prophesy again. I will tell you the future before it happens. Look at My servant, whom I strengthen. He is My Chosen One, who pleases Me. I have put My Spirit upon Him. He will bring justice to the nations... I, the Lord, have called Him to demonstrate righteousness. I will give Him to My people, Israel, as a symbol of My covenant with them. And He will be a light to guide the nations. He will open the eyes of the blind. He will free the captives from prison and release those who sit in the dark..."⁸

Now in these final days, God has spoken to us through His Son... The Son radiates God's glory and expresses the very character of God..."⁹

The Birth of John Foretold

It all begins with a Jewish priest [named] Zechariah, who lived when Herod was king of Judea... Zechariah [and his wife] Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple... As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense in the Lord's presence. While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside praying.

While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was overwhelmed. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice with you at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord... He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth, and he will persuade many Israelites to turn to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah, the prophet of old. He will precede the coming of the Lord, preparing the people for His arrival. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will change disobedient minds to accept godly wisdom."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."

Then the angel said, "I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was He who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you won't be able to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly come true at the proper time."

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. When he finally did come out, he

⁵ *Jeremiah 23: 5, 6*

⁶ *Isaiah 9:1, 2, 6, 7*

⁷ *Isaiah 7:14*

⁸ *Isaiah 42:1, 6-9*

⁹ *Hebrews 1:1-3*

couldn't speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the Temple sanctuary.

When Zechariah's week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. "How kind the Lord is!" she exclaimed. "He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."¹⁰

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored [one]. The Lord is with you."

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will reign over Israel forever. His Kingdom will never end."

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and He will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age. People used to say she was barren, but she is already in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever He wants. May everything you have said come true." Then, the angel left.¹¹

Mary Visits Elizabeth

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. What an honor this is, that the mother of my Lord should visit me! When I heard your greeting, my baby jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what He said."¹²

Mary responded, "Oh, how I praise the Lord. How I rejoice in God my Savior! For He took notice of His lowly servant, and now generation after generation will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy and He has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation, to all who fear Him. His mighty arm does tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has helped His servant Israel and not forgotten His promise to be merciful. He promised our ancestors – Abraham and his children – to be merciful to them forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then went back home [to Nazareth].¹³

John Is Born

When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. The word spread quickly to her neighbors and relatives that the Lord had been very kind to her, and everyone rejoiced with her.

When the baby was eight days old, all the relatives and friends came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said, "No! His name is John."

¹⁰ *Luke 1:5-25*

¹¹ *Luke 1:26-38*

¹² *Luke 1:39-45*

¹³ *Luke 1:46-56*

“What?” they exclaimed. “There is no one in your family by that name.” So they asked the baby’s father, communicating to him by making gestures. He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s surprise, he wrote, “His name is John.” Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God.

Wonder fell upon the whole neighborhood and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, “What will this child turn out to be? For the hand of the Lord is surely upon him in a special way.”¹⁴

Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy:

“Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited His people and redeemed them. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of His servant David, just as He promised through His holy prophets long ago. Now we will be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us. He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering His sacred covenant with them — the covenant He gave to our ancestor Abraham. We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness forever.

“And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. Because of God’s tender mercy, the light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.”

John grew up and became strong in spirit. Then he lived out in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.¹⁵

Jesus Is Born

Now, this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, being a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace her publicly.

As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit, and she will have a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

All of this happened to fulfill the Lord’s message through His prophet [Isaiah]: “Look, the virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and He will be called Emmanuel, meaning ‘God with us.’”

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He brought Mary home to be his wife, but she remained a virgin until her son was born, and Joseph named Him Jesus.¹⁶

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire... All returned to their ancestral towns to register for the census. Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was expecting a child.

While they were there [in Bethlehem], the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped Him in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Luke 1:57-66*

¹⁵ *Luke 1:67-80*

¹⁶ *Matthew 1:18-25*

¹⁷ *Luke 2:1-7*

Shepherds Visit Jesus

That night there were shepherds in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior — yes, the Messiah, the Lord — has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David. You will recognize Him by this sign — you will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped in strips of cloth."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others, the armies of heaven, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph, and there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing Him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.¹⁸

A Celebration at the Temple

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, He was named Jesus, the name given Him by the angel even before He was conceived. Then it was time for the purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child, so His parents took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD." So they

offered a sacrifice according to what was required in the law of the Lord...¹⁹

Now there was a man named Simeon who lived in Jerusalem. He was a righteous man and very devout. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he eagerly expected the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple.

When Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, "Lord, now I can die in peace! As You have promised, I have seen the Savior You have given to all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and He is the glory of Your people Israel!"

Joseph and Mary were amazed at what was being said about Jesus. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, "This child will be rejected by many in Israel, and it will be their undoing. But He will be the greatest joy to many others. The deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed, and a sword will pierce your very soul."²⁰

Anna, a prophetess, was also there in the Temple... She was very old. She was a widow, for her husband died when they had been married only seven years. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about Jesus to everyone who had been waiting for the promised King to come and deliver Jerusalem.

When Jesus' parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned [to Bethlehem].²¹

¹⁹ *Luke 1:21-24*

²⁰ *Luke 1:25-35*

²¹ *Luke 2:36-39*

¹⁸ *Luke 2:8-20*

Wise Men Visit Jesus

Now Jesus was born during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the newest born king of the Jews? We have seen His star and we have come to worship Him.”

Herod was deeply disturbed by their question, as was all of Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law. “Where did the prophets say the Messiah would be born?” he asked them.

“In Bethlehem,” they said, “for this is what the prophet [Micah] wrote, “O Bethlehem of Judah, you are not just a lowly village in Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.”²²

Then Herod sent a private message to the wise men, asking them to come to see him. At this meeting, he learned the exact time when they first saw the star. Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. When you find Him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship Him too!”

After the meeting, the wise men went their way. Once again, the star appeared to them, guiding them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was staying. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house where the child and His mother, Mary, were, and they fell before Him and worshiped Him. Then, they opened their treasure chests and gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But when it was time to leave, they went home another way, because God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.²³

Journey to Egypt

After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up and flee to Egypt with the child and His mother,” the angel said.

“Stay there until I tell you to return because Herod is going to try to kill the child.”

That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and his mother, and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken to the prophet [Hosea], “I called my Son out of Egypt.”²⁴

Herod was furious when he learned that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under because the wise men had told him that the star first appeared to them about two years earlier. Herod’s brutal action fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah, “A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah, weeping and mourning unrestrained. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead.”²⁵

When Herod died, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and told him, “Get up and take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel because those who were trying to kill the child are dead. So Joseph returned immediately to Israel with Jesus and his mother. But when he learned that the new ruler was Herod’s son Archelaus, he was afraid.

Then, in another dream, Joseph was warned to go to Galilee. So they went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets concerning the Messiah, “He will be called a Nazarene.”²⁶

Mary stored all these things in her heart, and Jesus grew both in stature and wisdom, and He was loved by God and by all who knew Him.²⁷ He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on Him.²⁸

²⁴ *Hosea 11:1*

²⁵ *Jeremiah 31:15*

²⁶ *Matthew 2:13-23*

²⁷ *Luke 2:51, 52*

²⁸ *Luke 2:40*

²² *Micah 5:2*

²³ *Matthew 2:1-12*

The Word Made Flesh

In the beginning, [Jesus] the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that He didn't make. Life itself was in Him, and this life gives light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

God sent John the Baptist to tell everyone about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light. He was only a witness to tell [others] about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, [also came] into the world.

But although the world was made through Him, the world didn't recognize Him when He came. Even in His land and among His people, He was not accepted. But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth... This rebirth comes from God.

So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.

John pointed Him out to the people. He shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming who is far greater than I am, for He existed long before I did.'"

We have all benefitted from the rich blessings He brought to us, one gracious blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses, but God's love came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but His only Son, who is Himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has told us about Him.²⁹

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through Him God created

everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see... Everything was created through Him and for Him. He existed before anything else, and He holds all creation together...

He is the beginning, supreme over all... So He is first in everything. For God in all His fulness was pleased to live in Christ, and through Him, God reconciled everything to Himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth through Christ's blood on the cross.

This includes you who were once far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now He has reconciled you to Himself through Christ... As a result, He has brought you into His presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault.³⁰

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever! Some sat in darkness and deepest gloom, imprisoned in iron chains of misery. "Lord, help!" they cried in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. He led them from the darkness and deepest gloom. He snapped their chains.

Come, let us worship and bow down! Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for He is our God. We are the people He watches over, the flock under His care. Come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come to Him with thanksgiving. Let us sing psalms of praise to Him, for the Lord is great, a great King above all gods.³¹

Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others He has redeemed you... Praise the Lord for His great love and for the wonderful things He has done!³²

³⁰ *Colossians 1:15-22*

³¹ *Psalms 95:1-3, 6, 7*

³² *Psalms 107:1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 14*

²⁹ *John 1:1-18*

SELECTED PASSAGES

Genesis 12:2, 3

Psalms 95:1-3, 6, 7

Psalms 107:1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 14

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:1, 2, 6, 7

Isaiah 42:1, 6-9

Jeremiah 23: 5, 6

Jeremiah 31:15

Hosea 11:1

Micah 5:2

Matthew 1:1-25

Matthew 2:1-23

Mark 1:1

Luke 1:1-80

Luke 2:1-40, 51, 52

John 1:1-18

Colossians 1:15-22

Hebrews 1:1-3