

Two Boys, One Gospel

Helpful Resources

New Testament 101 (p.35), Four Voices, One Song (p.37), Historical and Political Context (p.39), Maps of Palestine and Jerusalem (p.47), Family of David (p.49), Five Questions of Christmas (p.77)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

We opened with “the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (*Mk. 1:1*), which is the focus of the New Testament (*Lk. 1:1-4*). The Gospel is the “good news” of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, a restored relationship with God, and eternal life with Him. God provided this salvation through His Son, Jesus, whose name means “the one who saves” (*Matt. 1:21*). Jesus is the Messiah (*Matt. 1:16*), which means the “Promised or Anointed One,” the Chosen Seed who would reverse the curse of the serpent (*Gen. 3:15; 1 Jn. 3:8*). This incredible story began with two incredible births, that of Jesus and John the Baptist.

- Birth of John

1. **Purpose:** Before the Messiah would arrive, it was prophesied that Elijah would appear as a forerunner or messenger to “clear the way before Him” (*Mal. 3:1; 4:5, 6*). John would testify about the Christ “in the spirit of Elijah” (*Jn. 1:6-8, 15; Lk. 1:17, 41-45*).
2. **Parents:** John would identify “the Lamb of God who would take away our sins” (*Jn. 1:29, 36*). In the Old Testament, only priests selected lambs for sin sacrifices. Was John a priest? No, but his parents were descendants of Aaron, the first High Priest (*Lk. 1:5*).
3. **Pregnancy:** The first time an old couple had a miracle baby, it was Abraham and Sarah beginning the nation of Israel (*Gen. 18:11-15*). The other old couple with a miracle baby was Zacharias and Elizabeth (*Lk. 1:6, 7, 18*). His birth announced the arrival of Christ.

- Birth of Jesus

1. **Genealogy** (*Matt. 1:1-16; Lk. 3:23-38*): Joseph and Mary’s ancestors are recorded. The families prove that Jesus is human (line of Adam), Jewish (Abraham), and a King (David).
2. **Parents:** Jesus had young parents (New Testament) compared to John’s old parents (Old Testament). They were also poor, but they followed the Law (*Lk. 2:21-24, 39; Gal. 4:4*).
3. **Member of the Trinity:** Jesus, the Word, was and is God, in the flesh (*Jn. 1:1, 14, 18*).
4. **Always Existed:** Since Jesus is God, He’s eternal. His existence didn’t begin in the manger. He was first in heaven, then He came to earth (*Jn. 1:1, 2, 15*).
5. **Creator:** All members of the trinity participated in creation (*Jn. 1:3, 10; Gen. 1:1, 2*).
6. **Virgin Birth:** Conceived by the Spirit and born of woman, He was fully God and fully man (*Matt. 1:18, 20; Lk. 1:34, 35*). As such, Jesus is the only eligible mediator between God and man, to restore their relationship (*1 Tim. 2:5*).

7. **Light of Men:** Because of sin, the world is a spiritually dark place. As sinners, we are born into spiritual darkness. Jesus is the Light, the way out of spiritual darkness (*Jn. 1:4*). It's no surprise that Jesus was born at night and spotlighted by a star (*Isa. 9:2; 42:6, 7*).
 8. **New Life:** "The wages of sin is death" (*Rom. 3:23*), but those who put their faith in Jesus are reborn spiritually and become children of God (*Jn. 1:4, 12, 13*).
 9. **Grace and Truth:** Moses gave us God's Law, by which all men are judged and condemned. The only escape from is the grace of God through Jesus (*Jn. 1:16, 17*).
 10. **Rejected:** Though God sent Jesus to redeem His people, they reviled Him (*Jn 1:10, 11*).
- Prophetic Passages
 1. **John's Birth** (*Lk. 1:13-17, 19, 20*): He will be the forerunner "in the spirit of Elijah."
 2. **Jesus' Birth** (*Lk. 1:30-33; Matt. 1:23*): He will be the Son of God, born of a virgin in the line of David. His name shall be called Emmanuel, meaning "God with us."
 3. **Zacharias' Prayer** (*Lk. 1:67-79; Mal. 4:2-6*): John will be a prophet of the Most High, preparing the way before Him by bringing God's people to repentance.
 4. **Simeon's Praise** (*Lk. 2:25-35*): Jesus is "God's salvation, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel." Simeon predicted the tragic end of Jesus' life.
 - Personal Application
 1. **The Promises of God:** These events were prophesied hundreds of years before they happened, yet they were fulfilled. We can trust God to keep His promises.
 2. **The Providence of God:** Behind the scenes of these events is a sovereign God who orchestrates all things for His purposes. He has a plan and sees it through to the end.
 3. **Angels Everywhere:** Multiple times in the story, angels appeared to carry out God's plan, a subtle reminder that there is more to this world than what we can see.
 4. **Life Changes:** God interrupted the lives of Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, and Zacharias with difficult but wonderful changes. We can either push against God's will (like Zacharias), or accept and embrace it (like Mary, Joseph, and Elizabeth). Which one are you?
 5. **Releasing Kids:** Mary, Elizabeth, and Zacharias praised God for His goodness in the birth of their boys. But they knew the boys were in God's hands and that He had great things in store for them. Children are a gift of God that must be returned to Him to do His will.
 6. **Testify of the Truth:** John's assignment was to tell others about the Savior. His assignment is our assignment. Are we using our opportunities to tell others about Jesus?

The Bottom Line

God is faithful, and He keeps His promises. God promised a Messiah, a Savior, and He sent Him.

Questions to Consider

1. What names or pictures of Christ can you find in the prophecy of Zacharias (*Lk. 1:67-79*)?
2. Read "The Five Questions of Christmas" (after Review). What is man's biggest question?
3. Is it easy or difficult to trust God's promises? Are you faithful to keep your promises?
4. What is providence? How should the truth of providence be an encouragement to us?
5. How did your reading go this week? What difficulties did you encounter? Why is that?
6. What did you learn this week? How did God encourage you with His Word?