



## Son of David

THE MATTHEAN INFANCY NARRATIVE.  
MATTHEW'S THEMES AND FORMULA  
QUOTATIONS.

*Guido Reni, St Joseph with the Infant Jesus (Wikimedia Commons)*

Joy to the World [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10000/10000-h/10000-h.htm](#)  
What Shall We Give [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10000/10000-h/10000-h.htm](#)

### “Once in Royal David’s City” (hymn no. 205)

1. Once in royal David’s city  
Stood a lowly cattle shed,  
Where a mother laid her baby  
In a manger for his bed:  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little child.

2. He came down to earth from heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And his shelter was a stable,  
And his cradle was a stall;  
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Savior holy.

3. And our eyes at last shall see him,  
Through his own redeeming love;  
For that child so dear and gentle  
Is our Lord in heav’n above,  
And he leads his children on  
To the place where he is gone.

# Infancy Narratives

ACCOUNTS OF JESUS' DIVINE CONCEPTION AND MIRACULOUS BIRTH, THE MATTHEAN AND LUCAN INFANCY NARRATIVES ARE VERY DIFFERENT YET SHARE IMPORTANT FEATURES

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## Infancy Narratives, Characteristics

Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2

- Not just the Nativity but, in Luke, also the only “childhood” stories preserved in canonical writings
  - Later, non-canonical infancy stories in apocryphal gospels added numerous fanciful details and stories to Jesus’ early life
- **Style and composition differ from the rest of these gospels**
  - reworked earlier material?
  - self-contained, can stand alone
  - **Aware of later material in the gospels but the gospels do not betray awareness of them . . .**
    - later additions?
    - “gospel overtures”
- With the **Passion and Resurrection Narratives** at the end of the gospels, the **Infancy Narratives** form a frame for the body of each gospel
  - They teach who Jesus is before the body of each gospel relates what he did (the issues of **Christology**)

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## Infancy Narratives, Initial Exegetical Questions

More detailed discussions of Matthew and Luke will precede our study of each evangelist

- **Historical**
  - Event: Mary became pregnant during her engagement but before her marriage; after her marriage she gave birth to a son under unusual circumstances
  - Sources: How did Matthew and Luke learn of the event?
    - Matthew, presumably the apostle, may have heard the story from Jesus himself or his family members
    - Luke did not know Jesus during his mortal ministry; he must have heard stories from other disciples and, very possibly, from family members he interviewed
- **Literary**
  - Both evangelists wrote narrative accounts of the conception and birth of Jesus known as **infancy narratives**
  - Placed them at the beginning to answer the first part of the Christological question: **who Jesus was**
  - Matthew referred to prophecies from the Jewish scriptures to show that the events of Jesus' birth fulfilled prophecy (**formula quotations**, more below); portrayed the events largely from the perspective of Joseph to show that Jesus was the Son of David
  - Luke included poetic passages or songs to personalize the characters of his infancy narrative (**canticles**, more below); much from Mary's point of view
- **Theological**
  - Demonstrated that Jesus conception was divine and that his birth was miraculous
  - Jesus was the Son of God, the promised Messiah

## Infancy Narratives, Differences

- **Beware of the tendency to overly harmonize the accounts of Matthew and Luke**
  - Our Christmas stories tend to combine the two: for instance, putting both Magi (Matt) and shepherds (Luke) at the stable (Luke) and not in a house (Matt)
- Matthew's is largely from Joseph's perspective, Luke's from Mary's
  - This does not mean, however, that Joseph and Mary were necessarily the sources—rather that the evangelists focused on them and what they represented
  - Luke adds the stories about John the Baptist as literary foils to compare and contrast with the story of Jesus
- **Matthew does not mention Nazareth until the end of his account, presenting the possibility that Joseph was from Bethlehem and Mary was from Nazareth**
  - Was it an arranged marriage and Joseph went to Nazareth to retrieve his new bride?
    - The problem of the "census" is treated below on "Misconceptions Quicklist (Luke)" below
  - Joseph and Mary had a "house" in Bethlehem and intended to return to there from Egypt (Matt 2:11, 22)
- While Matthew and Luke differ, and even conflict, on some details, **the important facts are all confirmed by the Book of Mormon**
  - Mary was a virgin from Nazareth, where she divinely conceived Jesus (1 Nephi 11:13–20)
  - Jesus was the son of God and his mother was named "Mary" (Mosiah 3:8)
  - Jesus was born near Jerusalem (Alma 7:10; Bethlehem is 9 km south of Jerusalem, hence "at," or in the region, of Jerusalem)
  - Mary was a precious and chosen vessel, who conceived by the **power** of the Holy Ghost (Alma 7:10; not of the Holy Ghost as in Matt 1:18, 21)

# The Matthean Infancy Narrative

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*STRESSING THE ROLE OF JOSEPH AND DEMONSTRATING THE FULFILMENT OF HEBREW PROPHECY, THE MATTHEAN INFANCY NARRATIVE SHOWS HOW JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH AND PROMISED SON OF DAVID*

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## Structure of Matthew's Infancy Narrative

*Formula quotations* cite Jewish scriptures (usually from the LXX or Greek translation); they give authority to Matthew's account and demonstrate that Jesus is fulfilling prophecy

- **Genealogy (1:1-17)**
- Conception and birth (1:18-25)
  - **first formula quotation**, 1:23 = Isaiah 7:14 LXX
- Visit of the Wise Men (Epiphany; 2:1-12)
  - **second formula quotation**, 2:6 = Micah 5:2, 2 Samuel 5:2
- Escape into Egypt (2:13-15)
  - **third formula quotation**, 2:15b = Hosea 11:1
- Massacre of the Innocents (2:16-18)
  - **fourth formula quotation**, 2:18 = Jeremiah 31:15
- "Return" to Nazareth (2:19-23)
  - **fifth formula quotation**, 2:23b = ?



Right: Geertgen tot Sint Jans *The Tree of Jesse* (Wikimedia Commons)

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## Matthew's Genealogy

- “An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (NRSV)
  - Israelite kings and priests were anointed (“messiahs” with a lowercase “m”)
- **Descending genealogy**, list divided into **three sets of 14 generations**
  - “. . . So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.” (Matt 1:1-17)”
    - Abraham to David—patriarchs
    - David to exile—kings
    - Exile to Christ—unknown “commoners”
  - Unequal divisions: 750, 400, and 600 years
  - **14 is the Hebrew numerical equivalent of David's name**
    - Matthew was probably selective in choosing who to list—and that is okay!
- **Presence of four women:** Tamar (Gen. 38), Rahab (Josh. 2), Ruth (Ruth 2-4), Bathsheba (2 Sam 11-12)
  - irregular unions and conceptions—precedents for Mary?
  - actors, not acted upon
  - **“sinners” too have a part in Christ**
  - **Gentiles have a part in Christ**
  - **Women important for God's plan**

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## Joseph and Jesus, Our Children and Us



Simon Dewey, “I the Arms of Joseph”

“The story of how Joseph the Carpenter accepted, protected, raised, and no doubt loved a precious child who was not his own is one that stirs the heart. In many traditions, his goodness and faithful discharge of his special mission has earned him the title Saint Joseph, and he is honored together with Mary and the Baby Jesus as part of a Holy Family. After the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke, Joseph is never heard of again. Passing references to Jesus’ supposed father (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 6:42) together with his absence otherwise later in the gospels seem to suggest that he was no longer alive when the adult Jesus began his public ministry. We are left instead with the impression of a very good man, the loving husband of a special woman and the father of a precious child.

“Those who have adopted or fostered the children of others may identify particularly with Joseph. But those of us who have biological children of our own or even those who have not yet been blessed with any children can still learn a dear lesson from the example of Joseph. In a real sense, none of our children are our own. Priceless spirit children of heavenly parents, all children on this earth are only here on loan from a loving God who trusts all of us—parents, grandparents, family, friends, and even strangers—to protect, care for, teach, and love them.

“. . . as I look at my own precious children, I feel, like Joseph, that I have been entrusted with a great treasure. Recognizing that Joseph was a strong, responsible, and loving man who sought and received revelation to care for his family, I am inspired to emulate those qualities. In those moments, the gift I hope to give my Lord that year is to be more like Joseph the Carpenter.” (*Good Tidings of Great Joy*, 34)

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## Matthean Themes and Images



James Tissot, *The Betrothal of the Holy Virgin and St. Joseph* (Wikimedia Commons)

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- **Jesus the true king**
  - Joseph's legal heir, emphasis on Joseph's role
    - *Kingship was always traced in the male line*
  - Son of David
- **Jesus as Immanuel**
  - "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, '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.**'" (Matt 1:22-23 = Isaiah 7:14 LXX)
- **Jesus the new Moses**
  - Massacre of the Innocents = Pharaoh's massacre of Israelite boys
- **Joseph in Egypt and Joseph the Carpenter**
  - role of revelatory dreams
  - escape to Egypt

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## Lessons from the Magi or "Wise Men"



Jouvenet, *Adoration of the Magi*

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"Early Christian speculation soon began to suggest various places of origin and, later, even names for the Magi, but from the earliest periods they were assumed to have been Gentiles. Hence, while much of Matthew 1 focuses on Jesus' Davidic heritage and hence his position as a Jew and a member of the House of Israel, the Magi in Matthew 2 can be seen as reflecting Jesus' role in being a blessing to all peoples . . . In this case, the Wise Men anticipated the Gentiles who would later come into the New Testament Church. Thus, just as the women in the genealogy of Jesus indicated that outsiders had a part in the coming forth of Jesus, so the Magi illustrate how God will accept all people who will hearken to Christ. . .

"Regardless of their actual identity and background, in Matthew's narrative the Magi appear as outsiders who are brought by the direct intervention of God. In their case, God's revelation occurred in the form of an astronomical phenomenon: while the Jews had the Law and the Prophets to bring them to Christ, the Wise Men were brought by the sight of the star "in the east."

" . . . In a scene known in art as the Adoration of the Magi, upon their arrival the Wise Men fall before the child and worship him, honoring him even more explicitly than Luke had recorded that the shepherds had done. They then present him three treasures—gold, frankincense, and myrrh—which were symbolic as well as valuable. Gold, of course, was fit for a king. Frankincense was used in worship, and it alludes to Jesus' future priestly role as both the sacrificer and sacrifice. Myrrh, often used to anoint bodies for burial, foreshadows his future sacrificial death. Warned by the angel of the Lord in a dream not to return to Herod, the Magi then return home by another route, disappearing from history but not from our Christmas imagination." (*Good Tidings of Great Joy*, 99-108)

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## Misconceptions Quicklist

(Matthew)



Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet, *Adoration of the Magi*

- Supposition: Matthew's genealogy is that of Joseph, Luke's of Mary
  - Matthews is probably legal descent and is more interested in illustrating theological and historical points
- Supposition: There were *three* wise men, that they were perhaps *kings*, and they came to the *manger*
  - Number unknown, they arrived anytime within the first two years, and they found the family in a house
- Supposition: Herod killed thousands
  - Incident did not make Josephus's record of Herodian atrocities, there would only a few dozen males under two in a town of Bethlehem's size
- Supposition: Because Joseph brought Mary from Nazereth in Luke, he was from Nazereth, not Bethlehem
  - No ancient examples of going to ancestral homelands to be taxed; one was taxed where he lived and owned property
  - After Egypt he intended to go back to Bethlehem (perhaps his home town) but found that Archelaus was worse than Herod
  - "made his home in a town called Nazareth" (NRSV; probably Mary's home town)