

318.1 Jesus' Birth (NT Lesson 2; January 20)

1. Scheduling
2. Housekeeping and announcements
 - a. Funding
 - b. YouTube
 - c. Making the podcast your own (I usually go through the reading, make notes on what I want to focus on, then draw those points out for the lesson)
3. Come, Follow Me (Discuss the whys behind the new organization)
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Approaches to scripture
 - c. Follow up
 - d. Reading Review
 - e. Nugget
 - f. Devotional
 - g. Lesson
 - i. Questions and comments
 - ii. Spiritual gifts
 - iii. Learning about Jesus
 - iv. Seeing God's hand in our lives
 - v. Participation
 - vi. Challenge
 - vii. Preview
 - viii. Resource recommendations
4. Conclusion

Scheduling Notes:

Jan 6	Introduction
Jan 13	Matthew 1; Luke 1
Jan 20	Luke 2; Matthew 2
Jan 27	John 1
Feb 3	Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3
Feb 10	Matthew 4; Luke 4-5
Feb 17	John 2-4
Feb 24	Matthew 5; Luke 6

Housekeeping and announcements

Funding

\$1000 a month to keep the podcast going (if it drops below \$1000 a month for two months I'll stop the podcast; that's where it needs to be for me to fit it into my schedule)

YouTube

Making the podcast your own

Come, Follow Me

Prayer

Prayer: There are beautiful prayers and songs in this week's reading. I think the most important prayer we can take from this reading is Mary's, "Behold the servant of the Lord. Be it unto me according to God's will"

(As a side note, Mary holds a place of tremendous respect in the Catholic Church, and Catholics regularly pray the "Hail Mary" which is taken from Luke 1: "Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."

Approaches to scripture

Quick review of approaches to scripture

Personal: The most important. How does this passage apply to your life and help you be a better human?

Doctrinal: What does this passage teach you about God and the Gospel?

Literary: How does this passage communicate its message and fit into the rest of the book?

Historical: How does this passage relate to what we can know about the past?

Follow up: How are you taking responsibility for your own learning? What are you doing individually? As a family? In your ward?

Reading Review:

What is Matthew and who is Jesus? Matthew is truly the Gospel of the Church. Jesus is the new Moses who gives the new, true interpretation of the Law. Jesus is alive primarily in the Church community, "God among us"

Matthew 1 Theme: God's plan big and small (across centuries, then to a particular family in a particular place) The unexpected origin of Jesus/God can use complex backgrounds (the women are the most interesting aspect of this list of names) Genealogy of Jesus (both Matthew and Luke's are of Joseph); Joseph and Mary are betrothed (engagement but more official), Mary was pregnant "from the Holy Spirit". Joseph was about to divorce her, but was given more information in a dream.

Matthew 2 Theme: Jesus was a really big deal, the true King, and a new Moses

Lessons from Joseph: He makes good choices, is caring and respectful, “considers things”, and is open to revelation, even challenging revelation. Then he acts on it. God engages with Joseph according to his spiritual gifts (dreams). The wise men are “magi” from the East. They first go to the king to learn of the king. King Herod is threatened and consults other experts (political leader consults religious leaders). The star guides the magi (note that Jesus’ family is in a “house” and he seems to be a toddler) Joseph is again warned in a dream. They escape to Egypt and Herod orders all baby boys killed (an echo of Pharaoh killing the Hebrew babies in Exodus). Note that in Matthew, Mary is not *from* Nazareth; the family moves to Nazareth because of the political situation in Judea.

What is Luke and who is Luke’s Jesus? Luke is the most polished gospel, written in superb Greek. Luke is a two volume work, Luke-Acts. Luke tells the story of Jesus, and Acts tells the story of the growth of the infant Church (“the Way”; Acts 9:2). Luke tells the story of the gospel going from Jerusalem to Rome. Luke is particularly concerned with the marginalized, women, the poor. Luke’s Jesus is above all an inspiring example, the Righteous One.

Luke 1 Luke loves parallels. In these chapters we have parallels between John and Jesus. Elisabeth is called Mary’s “cousin” in the KJV of Luke 1:36 but the Greek word is better translated “relative”) Luke follows the conventions of classical history writing. “Theophilus” could have been a Roman official or less likely the personification of the Christian community (ancient works were often dedicated to those who funded the project, the name means “lover of God”). John comes from a priestly family. More parallels--Gabriel announces both the birth of John and the birth of Jesus. Note the female voices we have in this chapter, with how much Elisabeth and Mary speak (low bar, but still noteworthy). Mary is troubled and questions how she will conceive. Mary submits to the angel’s promise. John (in utero) and Elisabeth and the Spirit all testify of Jesus. “He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty”. This is a theme of reversal that is common, and central to apocalyptic writings (God will set all things right, the low will be exalted and the high will be humbled). John grows in the spirit and lives in the wilderness.

Luke 2 This is THE Christmas story that we think of (Supplemented with a few details from Matthew, especially the visit of the wise men). In Matthew it seems Joseph and Mary lived in Bethlehem and then moved to Nazareth; in Luke Joseph and Mary were from Nazareth and had reason to travel to Bethlehem (a difficult journey of over 90 miles). So many memorable details in this chapter “No room in the inn” (“guest room”, the same word as the “upper room” where Jesus holds the Last Supper). Jesus is born and placed where animals feed or rest (look up bands of cloth in the commentary). Luke also appreciates irony, and there is irony in the “heavenly army” preaching a message of peace. Matthew focuses on kings, and Luke focuses on shepherds. Note that Mary “treasures up” everything that is happening. John and Jesus are both named when they are eight days old and circumcised, as is Jewish custom. Two faithful worshippers at the temple bless and prophesy about Jesus: Simeon and Anna. The child Jesus “grows and becomes strong and wise”. We then have the only story from Jesus’ childhood in the New Testament. Jesus’ family goes to Jerusalem for Passover (the Last Supper is likely a

Passover meal) and Mary and Joseph realize Jesus is not among the family group returning to Nazareth, and they search for him in Jerusalem, and at last find him in the temple. Jesus' answer uses an idiom that means something like "be about the things of my Father" and likely means "be in my Father's house", which demonstrates that in Luke, even at this young age Jesus understands his relationship to God. Mary once again "treasures all these things in her heart".

Nugget: Intertextuality. How does one passage of scripture refer and relate to others? Matthew links to the Jewish Scriptures, and finds in Jesus' life their fulfillment, and Luke creates parallels between stories and books.

Devotional: Learning from Jesus' parents. Both Joseph and Mary do their best to make right choices based on their understanding, their faith, and social norms of the time. Both also receive revelation that God has a different plan for them, and they both do their part. Are we ready to be used by God? Can we let go of our assumptions and expectations and follow a new and unexpected path?

Lesson

Questions and comments? What part of the reading most struck you? Who did you most identify with?

What spiritual gifts did each person have in this reading?

Zechariah: The gift to see angels (as do most in this reading!)

Elizabeth: Gift of prophecy

Mary: Gift of faith

Joseph: Gift of dreams

What are your spiritual gifts?

What do we learn about Jesus in these chapters? Born in humble beginnings, (grew "from grace to grace" (D&C 93), progressed as all humans do, part of a family, also aware of his nature and calling, knew where he needed to be, had boundaries,

Seeing God's hand in our lives (point forward to the challenge)

"Treasuring in our hearts"

Submitting to God, submitting to what is ("use my pain, use my experience")

Challenge

Reflect on God's hand in your life (especially the unexpected twists and turns, how much good has come from my divorces)

Preview

Next week covers John 1, "the word made flesh" and John's testimony of Jesus. Next Sunday School lesson will focus on the beginning of Jesus' ministry, including the baptism.

Conclusion

(I didn't include this extra information in the podcast because of time)

Resources and additional information:

From Dr. Tom Wayment's New Testament (Which I HIGHLY recommend, looks excellent, I think the first two printings are already out of print; I have it on Kindle). I can't say how THRILLED I am that this EXISTS, is sold at Deseret Book and is doing well!

Who Was Matthew? Matthew's name has been associated with the First Gospel since at least the second century and possibly even as early as the late first century. Because the surviving historical record is spotty, and no manuscripts of the First Gospel survive from the first century, scholars have not been able to establish firmly how far back the tradition goes that Matthew wrote the Gospel bearing his name. Matthew is mentioned by name five times in the New Testament (Matthew 9: 9; 10: 3; Mark 3: 18; Luke 6: 15; Acts 1: 13), mostly in the context of the lists of names of Jesus's earliest disciples. He was one of the twelve disciples, the first discernible group of followers of Jesus who received special recognition for their devotion and discipleship. The First Gospel does not claim to be written by Matthew, and nowhere does the author openly claim to be one of the early disciples of the Lord. Instead, readers have come to know this Gospel as the Gospel of Matthew through later traditions and remembrances. While Latter-day Saints tend to accept Matthew's authorship of the First Gospel, the evidence for making that claim is rarely discussed in detail. The author of the First Gospel relied heavily on the Gospel of Mark, and nearly 90 percent of the Gospel of Mark is repeated in the Gospel of Matthew, thus making Matthew in some respects a second edition of Mark. The author also incorporated other information not contained in Mark, and Matthew shares a little over sixty short sayings and stories with the Gospel of Luke that are not from Mark. In addition to those materials, the Gospel of Matthew contains a number of passages that are unique. Most of this unique information comes in the form of parables (the parables of the weeds among the wheat, the field, the pearl, the net, the unforgiving servant, the laborers in the vineyard, the two sons, and the ten maidens). Therefore, the author of the Gospel of Matthew was someone who was appreciative of Mark's Gospel, who shared material with the Gospel of Luke, and who recorded the overlooked parables from Jesus's life. The author also edited and corrected the order, grammar, syntax, matters relating to geography, and other details relating to the content of Jesus's teachings from Mark's Gospel. The earliest surviving references that mention the First Gospel call it the Gospel according to Matthew (Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 3.39.15), a tradition that goes back to Papias (died about 163 CE), who cited an otherwise unknown "elder" concerning the tradition. This information conforms well with the earliest surviving manuscripts of the Gospel that also call it either the Gospel according to Matthew or simply According to Matthew. Some manuscripts spell the name differently, preferring Matthaion instead of Maththaion, as Papias reported. This variation in spelling is also present in manuscripts for Matthew 9: 9. Three of the Gospels list Matthew as one of the twelve disciples (Matthew 10: 3; Mark 3: 18; Luke 6:

15), but only the Gospel of Matthew refers to him as a tax collector. This was probably an attempt to connect Matthew with the person who was collecting tax receipts, named Matthew in the Gospel of Matthew but named Levi in Mark and Luke (Matthew 9: 9; Mark 2: 14; Luke 5: 27). Thus, at least in one sense, the First Gospel had a different tradition concerning the conversion of a disciple named Matthew and how he became a follower of Jesus. Despite older claims, it is very unlikely that there was an individual named Levi Matthew or vice versa, given that such a name is otherwise unattested and first-century Jews did not have two Hebrew first names. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, many scholars started questioning the traditional claim that the disciple Matthew wrote the Gospel bearing his name. The question seems to arise out of a consistent concern that an eyewitness (Matthew) relied heavily upon the account of someone who was not an eyewitness (Mark). The second challenge has been that the material shared by Matthew and Luke has increasingly been thought to belong to a lost Gospel source, today known simply as Q. That hypothetical source is recovered through comparing the shared material between Matthew and Luke, which is strikingly similar, suggesting that they did have access to an earlier source. This piece of information raises the further possibility that the author did not rely on his or her own eyewitness account. Finally, the material unique to the First Gospel comes down to corrections of Mark's Gospel regarding grammar, locational references, and setting, as well as the addition of parables. The difficult question becomes, could this represent the work of an eyewitness to Jesus's ministry? Against those who think that Matthew could not have written the Gospel bearing his name are a number of other important considerations. All of the earliest Christian historians attributed the First Gospel to Matthew, and there is not an alternative tradition attributing the Gospel to another author. The earliest historians wrote that Matthew arranged the Gospel in a "Hebrew manner" (Epiphanius, Haer. 30.13.2– 3). The meaning of that claim is difficult to determine, although it could mean that it was arranged in a Hebrew manner of storytelling. But the reality is that early Christians believed that Matthew wrote the Gospel attributed to him.

(The Manuscripts)

Structure and Organization Any effort to provide a precise and agreed-on outline and structure of the Gospel of Matthew will be met with frustration. The reason for this is that there is no obvious organizing structure. Instead, there are several main features that are widely agreed upon that influence the structure in competing ways. Matthew incorporated five major discourses of Jesus, and each of them could function as an independent unit (Matthew 5– 7; 10; 13: 1– 53; 18; 23– 25). Earlier scholars had suggested that Matthew inherited these units and composed his Gospel around them, but this idea has fallen out of favor because of other indications that the Gospel is not simply a collection of interconnected discourses. Other obvious organizing features are that Matthew follows the sequence of the Gospel of Mark after Matthew 12 with some notable divergences. Additionally, Matthew likes to group things like parables (Matthew 13 and 25) or organize passages by themes. Matthew also likes keyword associations like angel and Lord (4 times in 1: 18– 2: 23), righteousness (5 times in Matthew 5– 7), and follow (9 times in chapter 8, and 6 times in chapter 19). Matthew likes doublets or repetitions (Matthew 4: 23/ 9: 35; 19: 30/ 20: 16; 10: 17– 22/ 24: 9– 13). Finally, Matthew likes to

frame ideas, sometimes referred to as *inclusio*. For example, Matthew 1: 24 and 28: 20, the beginning and ending of the Gospel, refer to the idea of “Immanuel,” or the promise that “God is with us.” Therefore, a few organizing features can be drawn out from this discussion. The book of Matthew is not simply a collection of texts that were reproduced without shaping and adjusting by the author. Matthew had a strong hand in presenting the story. The Gospel of Matthew is intentionally formulated from units of tradition while accepting much of what Mark wrote as authoritative. Also, Matthew did not write a biography of the Hellenistic type, nor did he write a novel. In some features, the Gospel approaches a biography, particularly in the birth and death sequences: the genealogy makes it thoroughly Jewish. And the great speeches are not philosophical but salvation oriented; thus Jesus is more akin to Moses than to Socrates. Ultimately, the Gospel of Matthew continues to defy categorization in simple terms, but its message is forward-looking, hopeful, and ever centered on the Son of Man.

Wayment, Thomas A.. *The New Testament: A New Translation for Latter-day Saints* (Kindle Locations 181-188). Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book. Kindle Edition.

Who Was Luke? As with the other Gospels, the Third Gospel was written by an anonymous author whose identity has been passed down through early Christian writers who lived in the generations after the apostles. According to tradition, Paul’s traveling companion named Luke wrote a two-part work, Luke– Acts, to a patron named Theophilus near the time of Paul’s death. That traveling companion was a physician (Colossians 4: 14), and he seems to have come to believe in the gospel message and come into contact with several eyewitnesses to Jesus’s ministry. The evidence for the authorship of the Third Gospel is the following: (1) Stylistic similarities between the Gospel and book of Acts strongly suggest that the same person wrote both. (2) The author of Acts may signal his own personal involvement in some events from the lifetime of Paul through the use of the first-person plural *we* (16: 10– 17; 20: 5– 15; 21: 1– 18; 27: 1– 28: 16). (3) Both the Gospel and Acts are dedicated to the same person (Theophilus) with similar interests and intent. (4) The book of Acts refers to a former treatise, which is almost certainly the Gospel of Luke. Given these evidences, it is reasonable to conclude that a traveling companion of Paul was involved in the writing of the Gospel of Luke and that he wrote it with the intent to further the spread of the gospel message. The question of when Luke wrote is more straightforward, with a few key pieces of evidence guiding the discussion. Paul is still alive at the end of Acts, and Paul’s death is widely thought to have occurred under Nero’s reign (died 9 June 68 CE). Assuming that Paul was still alive when Luke wrote, then it may be possible to suggest that the Gospel of Luke was written before 68 CE. But Luke also drew heavily from Mark’s Gospel, and therefore if Mark’s Gospel was written sometime in the 60s CE, then Luke must have had access to it and then enough time to compose his own account. To offer a date more specifically would be to force the evidence in ways that are limiting for the discussion. From the foregoing discussion, a clearer picture of Luke emerges. A traveling companion of Paul accepted the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he agreed to travel with Paul in the region around Troas and Philippi. That companion was probably named Luke, the name of a physician who is mentioned in several of Paul’s letters. Luke traveled to Jerusalem and came into contact with a generation of living eyewitnesses and probably written

sources as well, and he availed himself of those sources when he wrote. Luke shows clear signs of seeing the gospel story through Paul's eyes, and he emphasized the place of women in the church, the plight of the poor, and the universal message of salvation that reached beyond Judea and Galilee. He told the gospel as a self-interested believer who promoted the vantage point of his missionary friend while maintaining Greek standards of writing history.

Structure and Organization One of the most obvious organizing features of the Third Gospel is the shift in the narrative that takes place at Luke 9: 51, when Jesus begins to unequivocally move toward Jerusalem and the completion of his mission. This two-part narrative structure develops into a purpose-driven effort that seeks to promote mission and calling over major life moments or discourses. In this telling of the story, Jesus encounters a series of rejections (Luke 4: 14– 30; 6: 1– 11), he performs miracles, and then he is transfigured before three of his disciples (Luke 9: 28– 36). These experiences prepare Jesus to look toward Jerusalem and to prepare his disciples for his departure. One might think of Luke's retelling as episodic, dramatic, and almost cinematic. Luke drew on sources in telling the story this way, and he quoted from Mark and another lost source dubbed simply "Q" by scholars (from German *Quelle*, or source). The latter source was a collection of sayings of Jesus that circulated orally, although some scholars think it was a written document. One clue that Luke drew from these sources is that he tells nearly a dozen stories two times. These stories are called the Lukan doublets. The reason that these doublets occur is that Luke told the story once using Mark's version of the story and once through another source like "Q." For example, Luke twice records the saying of placing a lamp under a basket (Luke 8: 16; 11: 33). The first reflects Mark 4: 21, and the second reflects the wording of Matthew 5: 15. The point is not to criticize Luke's practice in writing but to show that he carefully drew on sources, and rather than harmonizing his accounts, he was inclined to include redundant information when he was unsure whether the two accounts spoke of the same event. Luke also followed the order of the Gospel of Mark for the most part, although there are several places where Luke reshaped the order of Mark. The assumption is that Luke rearranged Mark's Gospel when he had another source that was more credible or more closely associated with an eyewitness. The source may have been the hypothetical "Q" document, in which Matthew and Luke placed great emphasis, or it may have been personal contact with eyewitnesses. In any case, Luke's structure and organizational procedure is not literary but instead historical. He appears to have reviewed his sources, accepted one as more authoritative, and then presented the story according to his own interests. It may also be that Luke 1– 2 are entirely the work of Luke, who seems to have formally begun his Gospel account in Luke 3: 1– 2. The two preliminary chapters add depth to the story, much in the same way that Matthew added chapters 1– 2 to his account to help readers understand events associated with Jesus's birth. Luke 3: 1– 2 broadly parallels Mark 1: 1, indicating that Luke felt he had something original to contribute to the telling of the Gospel story. This would also help explain why Luke at times includes Mary's thoughts or feelings (Luke 2:9).

Wayment, Thomas A.. *The New Testament: A New Translation for Latter-day Saints* (Kindle Locations 3954-3956). Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book. Kindle Edition.

Bonus content: (Use or ignore as you wish)

What is Matthew?

What is Luke?

What is a Gospel? (Synoptics and John) Balance of pre- and post-resurrection understanding of Jesus

Reading gospels as a whole

Reading gospels synoptically

What is the New Testament?

What is the Bible?

What is scripture?

Useful tools and resources

Synopsis

Fortress Introduction to the Gospels

Mark Powell, Introducing the New Testament

Raymond Brown,

EP Sanders, Studying the Synoptic Gospels

Episode Links:

Relationships between the Synoptic Gospels

