

The Good News About Jesus as Luke Wrote It

Chapter 2:1-52

HoneyBee base version for oral translation

September 2023 Draft¹

Background

- Caesar Augustus (Octavian), the first Roman emperor, reigned from 27 BC into AD 14. He was the Roman king/emperor when Jesus was born.
- Publius Sulpicius Quirinius (c. 51 BC – AD 21) governed the Roman province called Syria. The Romans had made Judea (Palestine) a Roman district within Syria.
- Joseph's family probably owned (or had owned) property in Bethlehem town, near Jerusalem. Residents of Bethlehem are known to have migrated to Nazareth.
- Mary birthed Jesus in the lower level of a house where animals were kept, because the upper level was occupied.
- Israelites associated the Holy Spirit with prophecies about a better future for Israel and for Gentiles.
- Widows or widowers who never married again were thought to be especially pious/godly.
- Nazareth was located about 150 kms from Jerusalem, so about a five-day journey.
- Passover was a week-long festival that Jewish men were supposed to attend at Jerusalem if they could.

History

- Mary became pregnant, just as an angel from God had predicted.
- Joseph obeyed God's angel and married Mary.
- Augustus had decreed that every property owner in the empire register to be taxed.
- Daniel's prophecy of 490 years till a 'messiah' would come (Dan 9:24ff), made many Jews ready.
- Jesus' soon birth had been foretold by angels, before Simeon and Anna recognized him in public.
- Jews living in Judea were heavily taxed by both Roman and local governments.

Themes

- the long-awaited Messiah has come, birthed by the virgin Mary after she was married to Joseph who was a descendant of King David.
- Jesus' name in Hebrew is Yehôshuaʿ, Yeshua for short, which means 'rescuer/deliver'.
- Righteous people obey both God and human authorities.
- Messiah has come, announced and proven by angel and human messengers.
- The Holy Spirit empowers men and women to speak messages from God.
- Wise children remain obedient to their parents.

¹ Licensed for use under Creative Commons. Text in *italics* is implied from historical or cultural context. Superscripted ^(pl) means plural, ^(sg) singular, ^(inc) inclusive, ^(exc) exclusive pronoun.

Jesus is born

¹ About that time,² the Roman Emperor Augustus³ commanded government workers/officials everywhere to write lists showing the names for all people *who lived under his rule who owned lands or houses, so that he could make them pay taxes later.*⁴ ² That was the first time that they wrote down landowners' names *in Syria province, which included the Judea district.* They did this while Quirinius was the governor over Syria province. ³ All *land/property owners*⁵ had to go to the towns *where they owned it,*⁶ *so that government workers could write their names in a book there.*

⁴ So Joseph went from Nazareth town in Galilee district, to Judea district, to Bethlehem town, which was also called David's City. Joseph had to go there, because he was descended from King David, *whose family owned land/property there.*⁷ ⁵ Joseph took Mary with him *from Nazareth to Bethlehem,* so that the government workers/officials would register her name with his name. He did this because he was going to marry her,⁸ and she was already pregnant.

⁶⁻⁷ When they arrived *in Bethlehem (along with many other travelers),* there was no place/space for them to stay in the house where travelers stay.⁹ *So, they stayed in a lower house room/area where livestock stayed.*¹⁰ When the time came for Mary to give birth, she gave birth to her first son there *in the animal's area/shed.* She wrapped him in cloth strips and placed him in a trough¹¹ *where people put food for the animals.*¹²

Angels announce to shepherds about Messiah Jesus' birth

⁸ That night, there were some shepherds who were guarding¹³ their sheep *as usual* in the open fields near Bethlehem. ⁹ *Suddenly,* an angel from the Lord¹⁴ appeared, standing before them, and a very bright/heavy light from God shone on them and around them. So, they became very afraid/terrified.¹⁰ But the angel said to them,

“Do not be afraid! I have come to tell you good news, which is for all people¹⁵ everywhere to cause them to be very happy! ¹¹ Today a child/baby was born in Bethlehem, King David's city.

² OR Near the time when John was born.

³ OR Augustus, who was the Big/Chief King over all the lands that the Rome people-group had conquered.

⁴ OR (omit the words in *italic*).

⁵ “Egyptian census records show that people had to return to their homes for a tax census ... where they owned property, not simply where they were born (censuses registered persons according to property).” IVPbbc

⁶ OR Every person had to go to the town where his most famous ancestor had lived.

⁷ OR (omit the words in *italic*).

⁸ OR he was engaged to her. “Engaged” is a perfect passive, implying that they intended to be married.

⁹ OR in their family's house.

¹⁰ OR in a lower level in the house which was a cattle shed. Many houses at that time had two levels or floors: an upper level (*kataluma*) where the family stayed, and a lower level (*phatne*) for their livestock.

¹¹ OR animal food box. OR food trough.

¹² OR from which animals eat. OR (omit these words).

¹³ OR watching after/over.

¹⁴ OR an angel from Yahweh.

¹⁵ OR all people-groups.

That child *is the one who will save/deliver*¹⁶ you all from the evil one!¹⁷ That child is (also) the Messiah (*the man God promised to send to you all*) who is also your Lord/God! ¹² You will know that what I say is true when you find a baby/child whose mother has wrapped him in cloth strips and laid him in an empty food trough *where people put food for animals.*¹⁸

¹³ Suddenly many angels from heaven appeared and joined with the other/first angel. They all were praising God, singing/saying,

¹⁴ “Everyone in the highest heaven¹⁹ will praise God!
And everyone on earth who pleases God will live peacefully!”²⁰

¹⁵ After the angels left the shepherds, returning to heaven, the shepherds said one to another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem to see this thing, which the Lord/God has told us about!” ¹⁶ So they went quickly. They found the house where Mary and Joseph were staying, and they saw the baby/child lying in an animal food trough.²¹ ¹⁷ Then they told Mary, Joseph and others what the angel had told them about this child. ¹⁸ Everyone who heard what the shepherds said to *them about the angels appearing and the Messiah’s birth* were amazed. ¹⁹ Mary memorized what the angel had told the shepherds, and kept thinking much about it. ²⁰ After the shepherds returned to their sheep *in the fields*, they kept praising God very much for all the things that they had heard and seen, because everything happened exactly as the angel had told them.

Baby Jesus at the temple

²¹ Seven days later,²² *someone*²³ circumcised the baby, and they²⁴ named him Jesus. That was the name that the Lord’s angel had told them to give to him, before Mary became pregnant. ²² Forty days after Jesus was born, they went to the temple in Jerusalem where Mary had to offer a sacrifice/gift to God to show that she was *ceremonially* pure/clean after birthing a child.²⁵ ²³ There they also dedicated the child to the Lord, because in the Law that God gave to the prophet Moses,²⁶ it is written:²⁷

¹⁶ The Greek says that the child is a Saviour. It does not say specifically from whom or from what he will save them. (The Jews wanted Messiah to save them from the Romans oppressing them. But Yahweh wanted first to save them from their sinful rebellion against him, which was much more important.)

¹⁷ OR from the separation/exile from God caused by your sins. OR from your enemies. OR (omit these words).

¹⁸ OR from which animals usually eat. Use the same description/words as you used in Luke 2:7.

¹⁹ OR in the skies. OR high up in heaven.

²⁰ OR give them peace.

²¹ OR a food box from which livestock usually eat. See Luke 2:10.

²² OR the eighth day after that. OR a week later. OR When the baby was eight days old.

²³ a priest came and.

²⁴ OR Joseph and Mary. Be careful to not say ‘his parents’ in your translation as this might indicate/infer that Joseph was the baby’s biological father.

²⁵ The Jewish ceremonial laws (Leviticus 12) says this: a woman births a male child; she is ceremonially unclean for seven days; on the eighth day, they circumcise the child; 40 days after giving birth, she brings a sacrifice to the Lord as a substitute for her son (to cause her son to belong to God); after that, she is ceremonially clean again.

²⁶ OR Moses long ago.

²⁷ OR the laws that God gave to the prophet Moses say.

“When a woman births her first son,
his parents must dedicate him to the Lord/to God.”

²⁴ In the same Law that God gave to Moses, he commanded that a poor woman who births a child must sacrifice to God “two doves or two pigeons.”²⁸ *So Joseph and Mary did all that.*

Simeon and Anna confirm that the baby Jesus is the Messiah

⁵ *In those days,*²⁹ there was an old man living in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. That man respected God by obeying God’s laws, because he was waiting for God to comfort them by fulfilling the promises that he made to Israel’s descendants. So God’s Holy Spirit was guiding him.²⁶ God’s Holy Spirit previously revealed to³⁰ Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah whom the Lord/God promised would come *to the Israel people-group.*

⁷ *About 40 days after Jesus was born,* Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus to the temple, *to dedicate him to God* as God’s Law commands. *That same day, the Holy Spirit led Simeon to enter into the temple’s courtyard, revealing to him that Jesus was the Messiah.* ²⁸ So Simeon took Jesus in his arms and began praising God, saying:

O My Master,³¹ I am your servant.
You can now let me die in peace as you said to me,
because I have now seen with my eyes the one/person
whom you have sent to save people *from the death caused by their sins.*³²
³¹ You will cause all people-groups to learn about this child,
³² because he will reveal/make known your truth to all people-groups,
and he will make your people-group Israel to be honored.

³³ What Simeon said about Jesus amazed Joseph and Mary. Then Simeon blessed them, saying to Jesus’ mother Mary,

³⁴ “Listen! God has sent this child to the Israel people-group,
to show which people God will destroy,
and which people God will raise up.³³
Although Jesus will warn everyone *about the coming judgment,*
many people will oppose him.³⁴

²⁸ OR “two birds”. Doves and pigeons are not the littlest birds, but they are smaller and cheaper than chickens.

²⁹ OR *During the time that Jesus was born.*

³⁰ OR told.

³¹ My Sovereign Lord.

³² OR (omit the words *I italics*)

OR *from their enemies*

³³ R God will save / honor / resurrect from death to life.

³⁴ be against him.

³⁵ As a result, what people secretly think about God will become clear by how they cruelly treat Jesus.³⁵ This will *make you so sad that it will* be like someone has pierced you with a sword.”³⁶

³⁶ There was also in the temple courtyard a very old woman named Anna. She was a prophetess, whose father³⁷ Phanuel was from the Asher tribe. After she was married seven years, her husband died.

³⁷ After that, she remained a widow, and was now 84 years old.³⁸ She stayed in the temple area all the time, worshipping God night and day. She often fasted³⁹ while she prayed.

³⁸ While Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus were still in the Temple’s courtyard, Anna came to them. She first began praising God for the baby. Then she began speaking about Jesus to many people who were expecting/waiting for God to redeem⁴⁰ *people in Jerusalem from their enemies*.⁴¹

³⁹ After Joseph and Mary had finished doing what God’s Law required parents to perform for a first son, they returned to their home in Nazareth town, in Galilee district. ⁴⁰ As Jesus grew up, he became strong and very wise, because God’s powerful grace/favor was in him.⁴²

Young Jesus teaches at the temple

⁴¹ Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. ⁴² When Jesus was twelve years old,⁴³ they and he went to Jerusalem⁴⁴ to celebrate the Passover festival, as they always did. ⁴³ When the Passover festival ended, Jesus’ parents started to return home, while Jesus stayed in Jerusalem. But his parents did not realize that Jesus stayed there. ⁴⁴ They thought that he was with the other people who were traveling with them. After they walked all day, they started looking for him among their relatives/family and friends. ⁴⁵ They did not find him, so they returned *next morning* to Jerusalem to search for him.

⁴⁶ After three days⁴⁵ *searching*, they found him. He was in the temple courtyard, sitting with the religious teachers. He was listening to what they said, and he was asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone

³⁵ what they will do to Jesus.

³⁶ OR someone has pierced your soul/stomach with a sword. OR you will want to die. If you have an idiom in your language for describing great emotional pain and grief, use it here.

³⁷ OR Anna, who was able to speak messages from God. Her father.

³⁸ OR for 84 more years.

³⁹ OR abstained from food.

⁴⁰ OR free again. OR deliver again.

⁴¹ OR Jerusalem from her exile. OR Jerusalem. Often, when “Jerusalem” is mentioned in Scripture’s prophecies and poetry, Jerusalem is signified as a woman. Jerusalem can mean: (1) the literal walled city, (2) the people who live in the city; (3) Israel’s people-group/tribe/kingdom for whom Jerusalem is the capitol city; (4) people (no matter their ethnicity) who belong to God.

If possible, in your translation here, it might be best if you can leave unspecified the details around “God redeeming Jerusalem” – let it remain ambiguous so that wider/multiple meanings can more easily be derived

⁴² OR blessing was on him.

⁴³ OR age 12

⁴⁴ OR walked/traveled to Jerusalem.

⁴⁵ OR On the third day. OR Two days later.

who heard what Jesus was saying was amazed at how much he understood, and at how well he was answering the questions that the teachers were asking *everyone*.

⁸ When his parents saw/found him, they felt very relieved. His mother asked him, “My child/son, why did you do this to us?⁴⁶ Your father and I have been very worried while searching for you!”⁴⁹ Jesus replied to them, “You ought not to have been searching for me, because you know that I must be/stay in my Father’s house.”⁴⁷ ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he meant by what he said to them.⁴⁸

⁵¹ Then Jesus returned with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth town. He always obeyed them. And his mother Mary kept thinking about all these things.⁵² As the years passed, Jesus continued to become wiser, taller and kinder, showing respect both to God and to people.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ OR you ought not to have done this to us! OR you should not have treated us like this!

⁴⁷ Although in the OT the usual word for temple is ‘house’ (beth), the phrase ‘my father’s house’ occurs 19 times in the OT, but it never meant the temple. Jesus meant the temple, because he knew that God was his real Father.

⁴⁸ OR that he meant the temple which belongs to his real Father who is God.

⁴⁹ OR earning respect both from God and from people. OR and God and people (who knew him) were pleased with him more and more.