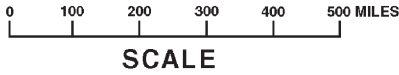


WHAT GOD GAVE THE WORLD

His Ultimate Manifestation, The Incarnation, Jesus the Redeemer and Jesus Filled with the Holy Spirit



By building the Temple Mount with its colonnades, Herod had unknowingly provided the place for Jesus to minister to the people in Jerusalem outside the Jewish Temple. It was into this milieu, God decided to send His Son to provide the way to redeem man back himself.

Meanwhile in Jerusalem it was about 6-7 B.C. Luke told us in 65 A.D. when he wrote his gospel how he came to know this information. ***AB Luke 1:1-2. Since (as it is well known) many have undertaken to put in order and draw up a (thorough) narrative of the surely established deeds which have been accomplished and fulfilled in and among us. Exactly as they were handed down to us by those who from the (official) beginning (of Jesus' ministry) were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word (that is, of the doctrine concerning the attainment through Christ of salvation in the kingdom of God.*** He said several have undertaken to put in order the eyewitnesses of the Word and the salvation through Christ.

The attainment of salvation or redemption of man started with a man named Zacharias who was a priest of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. He performed his priestly duties two or three times a year when it was his turn because he only had to travel from his home in Bethany. He received his job because of his lineage and it was a mark of prestige in the Jewish world. During his adult life Zacharias had only known Roman rule over Judea and had watched in amazement at the changes in Jerusalem. Herod, an appointed king, had built a huge Temple Mount area that stood high above the Kidron Valley on the east. The Mount area had colonnades around its perimeter with the beautiful new Jewish Temple located on the west side. The Agora in the middle had become the city center for Jerusalem. I'm sure Zacharias was proud of the new Jewish Temple but he had to wonder about the Temple Mount area because it made old Jerusalem into a new Greco-Roman city. The Greco-Roman influence was everywhere as there was a garrison of Roman soldiers stationed in the Antonio Fortress on the northwest corner of the Mount area.

This day Zacharias proceeded to the Temple Mount area and into the Jewish Temple to assume his duties in the Holy Place. There an angel appeared and told him Elizabeth, his very old wife, would bear him a son. He was to name the son John. **AB Luke 1:15-17. For he will be great and distinguished in the sight of the Lord. And he must drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit, even in and from his mother's womb. And he will turn and cause to return many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will (himself) go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah.** I'm sure this surprised Zacharias because nothing had been heard of the Spirit of God in over 400 years. The Jews during this time had been pushed between pillar and post and they hardly knew who was in charge of the city gates. Zacharias, an old man himself, was overjoyed about this proclamation. When he questioned the angel, he was struck dumb and told to be silent until these things are fulfilled in the proper time.

About six months later in a small town in Galilee a virgin girl who was betrothed to a man named Joseph was also visited by an angel. Her name was Mary and she was a cousin of Elizabeth of Bethany. **NIV Luke 1:35. The angel answered, "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.** She was told her baby would be called the Son of God. Don't you know these words stuck with her the rest of her life? Her baby was to be the ultimate manifestation of God because He came from Holy Spirit.

After John was born his father, Zacharias' tongue was loosened and he prophesied to the little one. **NIV Luke 1:67-68 & 76. His father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him . . . "Deliverance and redemption have come to us and you are to go before the Lord", said Zacharias.**

Meanwhile, Mary's betrothed, Joseph, also had a word from the Lord in a dream. He was told about Mary's pregnancy from Holy Spirit and that His name shall be Jesus. This was to fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah 7:14. **NIV Matthew 1:23. "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"---which means, "God with us."**

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in 6 B.C. and this fulfilled many prophecies of the Old Testament including the first one in the Garden of Eden. God told the serpent (Genesis 3:15) "He shall bruise and tromp thou head under foot" . . .

The birth was immediately announced to the lowly shepherds in the field. It was not announced in Jerusalem at the Temple because God knew either the young family would be eliminated or made a part of the Jewish hierarchy. Neither of these was what God had in mind. In eight days, Joseph and Mary took the child to Jerusalem for his circumcision. There they met a man named Simeon in the Temple Mount area. He had a word of knowledge for Joseph and Mary about their son. **AB Luke 2:26. And the Holy Spirit was upon Him and it had been divinely revealed (communicated) to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One.** Don't you know they were impressed by this word especially after the shepherds had come to them at the manger? The baby Jesus was also visited by the Magis from the east that were looking for the new king of the Jews. Their trip was probably based on Daniels predictions made for the Persian kings. It's interesting these foreigners were more familiar with the Jewish Scriptures about Daniels' prophecies than the leaders in Jerusalem. Because of the Christ Child, God had broken His silence and was now manifesting Himself to mankind through these prophecies and words of knowledge from the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus was twelve years old, he accompanied his parents to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. Imagine His thrill at seeing the magnificent Temple Mount and the Jewish Temple with the throngs of people in the Agora area. A twelve year-old boy would have to explore every nook and cranny of this huge edifice. When the feast was over,

Joseph and Mary and their younger children left with the caravan and probably thought Jesus was up ahead with some other family. After a day's travel they realize Jesus was not with the caravan so they went back and found him with the Jewish teachers. He was probably in the Royal Stoa on the south end of the Agora where the Sanhedrin met when they were in session. This illustrates how large and crowded the Temple Mount was during these festivals.

Jesus grew up in Nazareth where he helped his father in the carpenter trade. At a young age, he witnessed the brutality of the Romans. Judas of Galilee led an uprising against the Romans in 6 A.D. which resulted in over two thousand Jewish crucifixions. These crosses were lined along a road for all to see not far from Nazareth.

John the Baptist began his preaching about 25 A.D. He reminded the Jews of their wayward ways and preached the Baptism of Repentance. This was a personal repentance rather than for the Jewish people as a whole. His father prophesied to him as a baby, "Thou shall go before the face of the Lord and make ready His ways". (Luke 1:76) John the Baptist told the Jews; don't presume you have Abraham for an ancestor. God can make descendents from these stones. ***AB Matt 3:11. I indeed baptize you in (with) water because of repentance-that is, because of your changing your minds for the better, heartily amending your ways with abhorrence of your past sins; but He Who is coming after me is mightier than I, Whose sandals I am not worthy or fit to take off or carry; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*** The one that comes after me will bring the Holy Spirit to everyone. In 26 A.D., Jesus came down from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. John at first resisted, saying you should be baptizing me, but Jesus prevailed. ***AB Matt 3:16-17. And when Jesus was baptized, He went up at once out of the water, and behold, the heavens were opened, and he (John) saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him; And lo, a voice out from heaven said, This is My Son, My Beloved, in Whom I delight.***