

## Monday **Week 28** **Early Life of Jesus**

Bible Reading: Luke. 2:21-33

Q 109 How did Simeon know that Jesus was the Messiah?

A. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that Jesus was the Messiah.

A Christian lady heard that a young man had cancer. She was concerned and so she prayed about it. Sometime later, while he was still having treatments, she came to the young man and said, "I've prayed for you and I believe the Lord has answered me. You are going to get well." She was right. He did get well. And he had no cancer for many years after that. How did she know? She was in touch with God. God answers prayer. Sometimes God lets His people know what He is going to do. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Simeon was an old man who was waiting for the Messiah. He was a man of prayer. God's Holy Spirit showed him that he would see the Messiah before he died. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple as a little baby, Simeon recognized that this was the One he was waiting for. Simeon rejoiced to see this special baby. He was at peace to go to heaven. He had seen God's promised One.

### Thinking Deeper

Mary and Joseph did not come to the temple with Jesus and make an announcement that they were there. They came in accordance with Jewish custom to make sacrifice for the first born child. What made them different than any other couple that brought a child to present to the Lord? How did Simeon know this couple's child was the Messiah? Also, just at that time an old woman came and when she saw the baby, she also recognized who it was and broke into spontaneous praise. Did this little family have halos on their heads, as medieval art depicts? No. There is no evidence that anything was different about the couple and their baby. The difference was that both Simeon and Anna were close to the Lord. They had a prayer life. They knew the scriptures. They were lead by the Holy Spirit.

Both Simeon and Anna feared the Lord. They had a daily relationship with Him. They had communion with God. As a result, they were in tune with God's Spirit. They heard His "still small voice."

We read that God "is no respecter of persons." Can we know His secrets? Can we be in tune with the Holy Spirit? Yes. The Psalmist wrote "The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (Psalm 25:14).

Tuesday **Week 28**

## **Early Life of Jesus**

Bible Reading: Matt. 2:1-10

Q 110 How did the wise men know Jesus was in Bethlehem?

A. King Herod told them to go to Bethlehem to find the Christ child.

Three brothers and a sister from America were in a small city in Russia. They were looking for some relatives. They followed directions to an address, but when they got there, they could not find a house with that number. Somebody told them that the house had been torn down. When they kept asking about their relatives, they found out that the family had moved into a nearby apartment building. So they went to the building and knocked on the door. Sure enough, they found their relatives. They were thankful someone told them the right place to go.

When the Wise Men came to Jerusalem, they were looking for the Messiah. The star had led them that far, but they didn't know where to go next. So they went to see King Herod. He asked some Bible teachers if they knew where to find the Messiah. They did. He would be in Bethlehem. So the Wise Men went to Bethlehem where they found Jesus.

Do you know that you can find Jesus today? He is at the door of your heart. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

### Thinking Deeper

Was the star that the Wise Men followed a natural phenomenon? Speculations include it being a supernova, a conjunction of planets, The Planet Venus, even an alien invasion. There are problems with these explanations. If the star was some exceptional happening thousands of miles away, how could it have led them? Any star, planet or conjunction of planets anywhere in the sky will give the impression of movement throughout the night as the world turns. But a bright spot slowly moving in the sky is hardly able to lead someone to a specific nation, let alone to the tiny area we call Israel. Even if astronomers confirmed that two planets did appear to come together, that does not explain how that would have led anyone anywhere.

When the Wise Men were told to go to Bethlehem, we read that "the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." The distance between Jerusalem and Bethlehem is about six miles. Venus is at least forty eight million miles away from the earth. How could that possibly "go before" the wise men and then "stand over" the place where Jesus was? It's not that God couldn't make it happen – He caused the sun to stand still for Joshua – but it doesn't make sense that a tiny dot in space would fulfill the description of the Bible passage. It makes more sense that God did something special for the Wise Men, something on the order of what He did for the shepherds. Part of the aura surrounding the Christmas story is the mysterious and miraculous events that brought it all together. The description of the star fits in with that aura.

Wednesday

Week 28

Early Life of Jesus

Bible Reading: Matt. 2:13-18

Q 111 Why was Jesus taken to Egypt?

A. Jesus was taken to Egypt to escape Herod, who wanted to kill him.

“We are moving to America,” are the words Jenny heard from her mother. How exciting it was to be going to a new country! In her home country of Russia, Jenny had been attending school that was run by the Soviet government. Her teacher had been teaching that there was no God, and one day she had made fun of Jenny for believing the Bible. Jenny’s mother had prayed that they could find a place to live where they could worship God without fear. Now they were going to America where they could freely worship God. Jenny was grateful that God had answered her mother’s prayers. God cares about all of His children.

When Jesus was very young, his parents moved away from their home in Israel. Herod the King had heard from the Wise Men that a new king was born. Herod was jealous. He sent soldiers to kill the little babies in and around Bethlehem. His plan was to kill baby Jesus. But God spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him what was happening. Joseph took Mary and Jesus and they escaped to Egypt. God was watching out for Jesus, His only begotten Son.

Thinking Deeper

Why does God allow evil people to be in power? Why doesn’t He just do away with them? Why did He allow Hitler to live to kill millions of people? Why did He allow Stalin and Mao to live to kill multiplied millions of people? Why does he allow wicked people to live to abuse people, to enslave women, to harm children, to spread diseases that are incurable by their selfish and wild sexual behavior? Why did He allow Herod to live and seek the life of His Son? Why did He allow Herod to kill all those little children?

These kinds of questions make some people think that God doesn’t exist, or worse, if He does that He doesn’t care. We can’t answer all the questions that surround this, but we do know several things. God exists or we wouldn’t even know it was wrong to murder. God cares, or He wouldn’t have made a way for Jesus to be taken to Egypt to escape the murderous intent of Herod. There are other things we know from this. The free will of man can be exercised to do great evil, and the results of man’s choices will happen. We do reap what we sow. Life is not a game, but very real, and there are very real consequences to the actions of people, whether good or bad.

Even though we can’t answer all the questions, we can be part of the solution instead of being part of the problem. The Gospel is the good news that evil people can be saved and changed. Despite Herod’s attempts to destroy Jesus, God made sure salvation would be provided.

Thursday

Week 28

Early Life of Jesus

Bible Reading: Matt. 2:19-23

Q 112 In what town was Jesus raised?

A. Jesus was raised in Nazareth.

David was born in Bellefonte but was raised in State College. Jon was born in El Dorado and Julie was born in Topeka but they were both raised in Lyndon. Jeana was born in Atchison and Jeffrey was born in Topeka but they were both raised in Vassar. In this family, only one was born and raised in the same place – Janice in Melvern. Some children have been born during war and had to move. Others had to move away from their place of birth because their parents changed jobs. There are a lot of reasons why people are not raised where they were born.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but was raised in Nazareth. After they left Egypt, Mary and Joseph were afraid to go back to their home area because Herod's son was king. Maybe they were afraid someone might remember about how they had fled and tell the king that they were back. Maybe the new king would remember why his father had killed the babies and get jealous and look for Jesus again. They didn't want to take that chance. They wanted to protect Jesus, so they went to Nazareth.

Thinking Deeper

During the Presidential election of 1964, Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee was questioned regarding his birth. The reason for the question had to do with Constitutional requirements for being a U. S. President. One requirement is that the person must have been born in the United States. Immigrants cannot be President. At issue was the fact that Goldwater had been born in Arizona while it was a territory and not a state. The issue was resolved when the courts ruled that being born in United States' territory, whether or not it was an actual state, met the requirement the Constitution had set. Before people understood that, they questioned Goldwater's qualifications. They needed more information.

There was a question about Jesus being the Messiah from people who apparently knew the Micah passage that stated he would be born in Bethlehem. When Jesus was introduced at the beginning of his ministry, he was known as Jesus of Nazareth. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" was the question. How could Jesus be the Messiah if he came from Nazareth? The question was valid. But it was based on incomplete information. Yes, Jesus was from Nazareth, but he had been born in Bethlehem. If they assumed that since he was from Nazareth that he was born there, it would have been a false assumption. Knowing more about Jesus resolved the question.

Many issues like this are complicated because we don't have enough information. The Christian faith has had to withstand many assaults from people who have operated with incomplete information. Don't get nervous about the questions. The Bible has stood the test of time.

Friday    **Week 28**                    **Early Life of Jesus**

Review the Week's Questions

- Q 109 How did Simeon know that Jesus was the Messiah?  
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Lk. 2:21-33
- Q 110 How did the Wise Men know Jesus was in Bethlehem?  
A. King Herod told them to go to Bethlehem to find the Christ child.  
Matt. 2:1-10
- Q 111 Why was Jesus taken to Egypt?  
A. Jesus was taken to Egypt to escape Herod, who wanted to kill him.  
Matt. 2:13-18
- Q 112 In what town was Jesus raised?  
A. Jesus was raised in Nazareth.  
Matt. 2:19-23

Anita was playing in the front yard with her little sister Nancy. It was fall and leaves covered the ground. Anita buried Nancy with leaves. Just then, their brother walked into the yard. Anita whispered to him, "Go jump on that pile of leaves." She thought he knew Nancy was in the leaves. He thought Nancy was somewhere else. He ran fast toward the leaves. He was going to jump right on them. Just a second before he jumped, something inside him warned him not to land on the leaves. He jumped over the pile. Suddenly, his little sister crawled out of the leaf pile. He shuddered to think how close he had come to harming her. And then he thought how good the Holy Spirit was to warn him not to jump on the leaves. He had heard that "still small voice."

The people who recognized that Jesus was God's Son, were people who listened to God. Simeon listened to God, and welcomed Jesus at the temple. The Wise Men listened, and were led to the place where they found Jesus. Joseph and Mary listened and saved Jesus from Herod. God's Holy Spirit is faithful to speak to his people and help them. He will lead you if you seek Him.

Thinking Deeper

Jesus' birth was unusual in the most literal sense. It was unusual for a baby to be born of a virgin – that just doesn't naturally happen. It was unusual for his name to be Jesus, or "Jehovah is Salvation" – who can save others from sin? It is unusual for his place of birth to be predicted from hundreds of years before – who can tell that a significant person will be born in a small town 400 years from now? It was unusual that shepherds found him the night of his birth – how many people get a direct message from angels? It was unusual that Simeon and Anna, without any human coaching, recognized that the baby was the Messiah – how many others at the temple recognized him? It was unusual because Jesus is one of a kind, God's "only begotten Son," the Messiah of Israel, and the Savior of the world, sent "in the fullness of time."