

The Infancy of Jesus

St. Luke 2:21-38, St. Matthew 2:1-23: "The Baby Jesus Came with a Purpose."

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### In Nomine Iesu

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**St. Luke 2:21** – *Circumcision/Naming of Jesus (8 days from birth)*

And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

**Prayer:** O Lord God, for our sakes You made Your blessed Son, our Savior, subject to the law and caused Him to endure the circumcision of the flesh: Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit, that our hearts may be pure from all sinful desires and lusts; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

**Hymn #158** – "The Ancient Law Departs"

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**St. Luke 2:22-38** – *Presentation in Temple (40 days from birth)*

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word;  
for my eyes have seen Your salvation  
that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel."

And His father and His mother marveled at what was said about Him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

<sup>(ESV)</sup>

**Prayer:** O God our heavenly Father, You have shown Your love toward us by sending Your only-begotten Son into the world, that all might have life through Him: We pray that You would speed forth these good tidings of great joy to every nation, that the people who sit in darkness may see the great Light and may come to worship Him who is called Wonderful, even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Hymn #151.1-4** – “Thou Light of Gentile Nations”

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**St. Matthew 2:1-12** – *Wise Men Visit (about a year from birth)*

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ‘*And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.*’”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him.”

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

**Prayer:** O God, by the leading of a star You manifested Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles: Mercifully grant that we, who know You now by faith, may after this life enjoy the fullness of Your glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

**Hymn #120.1-4** – “Bright and Glorious Is the Sky”

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**St. Matthew 2:13-23** – *Move to Egypt and Nazareth (first years of Jesus’ life)*

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the Child, to destroy him.”

And he rose and took the Child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “*Out of Egypt I called my son.*”

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled

what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: *“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”*

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, *“Rise, take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.”* And he rose and took the Child and His mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: *“He shall be called a Nazarene.”* (ESV)

**Prayer:** O Lord God, heavenly Father, You allowed Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, to become a stranger and a sojourner in Egypt for our sakes, and led Him safely home to His fatherland: Mercifully grant that we poor sinners, who are strangers and sojourners in this perilous world, may soon be called home to our true fatherland, the kingdom of heaven, where we shall live in eternal joy and glory; through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Hymn #173.1-2, 5 – “The Star Proclaims the King Is Here”**

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In Christ Jesus, who *“made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men”* (Phi. 2:7) in order to be our Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

When we hear about the infancy and early childhood of Jesus, there is nothing impressive about the way He is described. His skin did not glow with an inner light, and His face did not shine like the sun. Any of the local people who saw Him in Mary’s arms would have concluded that He was just another little boy.

This is such a great mystery. Because the Boy in Mary’s arms was the eternal Son of God! *“All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made”* (Joh. 1:3). He was Mary’s God who gave her life, and yet now she had given birth to Him, the Christ-Child. He was willing to be fed by her and be rocked to sleep. She changed His diapers and kept Him from wandering off when He started using His toddler legs.

During His early years, Jesus doesn’t look like much of a Savior. In today’s readings, the emphasis is on what was done for Him. Jesus appears totally helpless, totally passive. Eight days from His birth, His skin was cut at His circumcision and He bled. Forty days from His birth, Joseph and Mary brought Him to the temple where Simeon took the Baby into his arms. Within the next year or so, the wise men knelt before Jesus and gave Him gifts. And then Joseph had to rush his family away from Bethlehem to escape the jealous rage of Herod.

But while Jesus appeared to be passive in all these events, He was fully engaged in them. All these things were happening according to the will of God the Father, and His Son was in perfect obedience to His will. Jesus was circumcised so that He would be bound to keep the Law of God to the smallest detail. He was presented in the temple to show that He was set apart for the Lord’s work. He drew the wise men by a star to Bethlehem to prove that He had come not only

for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. He traveled to Egypt and then back to Nazareth in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Hos. 11:1, Isa. 11:1).

Everything in His early years had a purpose. All of it was focused on the salvation of sinners, even though His ultimate sacrifice on the cross would not come for some thirty years. He came in total humility, not making full use of His divine powers. This is why the knife cut into His flesh at His circumcision. This is why He remained silent while Simeon and Anna identified Him as the Messiah. This is why He did not show His glory to the wise men. This is why He relied on Joseph to lead the family to safety.

God's Son humbled Himself, so we would be exalted. As the apostle Paul wrote: *"when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons"* (Gal. 4:4-5). Jesus put Himself under the Law to redeem us, to buy us back from eternal death. We have all sinned against the Law of God, breaking it in every way, and *"the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23).

But because Jesus kept the Law perfectly for us, we are now counted as righteous before God. If Jesus had only been a perfect Man, His keeping of the Law could only count for Him. But He is also true God. That means when He kept the Law perfectly as a Man, it counted for all men. And we have received adoption as sons of God, because our Brother Jesus gave His life for ours on the cross. He paid the penalty for our sin. He endured His Father's righteous wrath in our place.

That little Baby may not have looked like our Savior, but He was. Because of His perfect life and death for us, we know we enter this New Year with God's favor. Jesus' holy blood cleanses us from every sin, and His perfect righteousness covers us, so that no spot or blemish can be seen on us anymore. So with the hymnwriter we give thanks to Him and pray:

I am pure, in Thee believing,  
From Thy store  
Evermore  
Righteous robes receiving.  
In my heart I will enfold Thee,  
Treasure rare,  
Let me there,  
Loving, ever hold Thee. *Amen.*  
(*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #115, v. 14)

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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