

PROLOGUE:
THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH, JESUS OF NAZARETH*

CHAPTER 1

The Genealogy of Jesus.* ¹ The account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,* the son of David, the son of Abraham.^a

- 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac,^b
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.^c
- 3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, with Tamar*
being their mother.
Perez was the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,^d
- 4 Ram the father of Amminadab.

a Gen 2:4; 5:1; 22:18; 1 Chr 17:11; Gal 3:16.—b 2:17; Lk 3:23-38.—c Gen 21:3; 25:26; 29:35; 1 Chr 2:1.—d Gen 38:29-30; Ru 4:18; 1 Chr 2:4-9.

1:1—2:23 Who was Jesus? Where did he come from? The prologue of Matthew's Gospel immediately confronts us with this question. The author has not simply gathered up some scattered recollections to complete his album on the life of Christ; rather, from the very first moment he is transmitting the Church's testimony of faith.

1:1-17 To the ancients a genealogical tree was not only a set of data on one's civil status but also a manifestation of one's membership in a community and the importance of ancestry (Gen 5:1-11; Ex 6:14-24; 1 Chr 1—9; Ezr 2:59-63). The genealogy of Jesus is drawn up with special care; it is perhaps somewhat artificial, but it is quite solemn. In bringing Jesus on the scene, the entire history of the nation is recapitulated. He is the son of Abraham, in whom all the nations shall be blessed (Gen 18:18); he is the son of David, to whom the future of the people was entrusted (2 Sam 7:13-14); in other words, he is the one who will carry out God's plan for Israel and the entire human race; he is the One Sent, the consecrated of God (Messiah, Christ).

The opening sentences of the Gospel are thus a "Book of Genesis," an account of the new beginning of humanity and the world (Gen 2:4; 5:1). Luke will carry the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam himself (Lk 3:23-38). In Matthew's list Joseph plays a well-defined part: it is by means of him that Jesus is given a *de jure* place in history. But at this point the Gospel unexpectedly avoids the phrase "the father of" ("begot"), and Joseph is simply the husband of Mary. The entire mystery of Jesus' origin is already stated in these few words.

1:1 *Christ*: is the Greek translation of the Hebrew "Messiah," which means "anointed," that is, consecrated. Priests were anointed (Lev 4:3, 5; 16:15); so were kings (1 Sam 10:1 [Saul]; 16:11 [David], etc.), so much so that the reigning monarch was sometimes given the title of "Messiah," or "Anointed One" (see Pss 2:2; 89:38; etc.). The name "Jesus Christ," which at this point was still an alternative for or associated with "Jesus of Nazareth," is already to be found in the initial preaching of the apostles (see Acts 3:6).

1:3 The genealogy names four women: Tamar (see Gen 38; 1 Chr 2:4), Rahab (see Jos 2; 6:17), the wife of Uriah, i.e., Bathsheba (see 2 Sam 11; 12:24), and Ruth (see Book of Ruth). These four women were foreigners who in some way became part of the history of Israel. They symbolize the salvation that God intends for all peoples.



JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHES—“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand” (Mt 3:2).

The Parable of the Measure.* ²⁴ He also told them, “Pay careful attention to what you hear. The measure you give will be the measure you will receive, and you will receive more in addition. ^v ²⁵ To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who does not have, even what little he has will be taken away.” * w

The Parable of the Secretly Growing Seed.* ²⁶ ^x He went on to say, “The kingdom of God is like this. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, while he sleeps and while he is awake, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not understand how. ²⁸ The ground produces fruit of its own accord—first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ And when the crop is ripe, he immediately stretches out the sickle, because the time for harvest has come.”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed.* ³⁰ ^y He then said, “With what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to explain it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. ³² But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the greatest of all plants, and it puts forth large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” z

The Usefulness of Parables.* ³³ ^a With many such parables as these he spoke the word to them so far as they were able to comprehend it. ^b ³⁴ He never spoke to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were by themselves.

v Mt 7:2; Lk 6:38.—w Mt 13:12; 25:29; Lk 19:26.—x 26-29: Mt 13:24; Jas 5:7; Rev 14:15-16.—y 30-32: Mt 13:31-32; Lk 13:18-19.—z Dan 4:12.—a 33-34: Mt 13:34.—b Jn 16:12.

4:24-25 As an example of the way in which the sayings of Jesus were handed on, we may observe that the parable about measure is applied here to the reception of the “word,” but is used in Matthew (7:2) and Luke (6:38) with reference to judgment of one’s brother or sister.

4:25 *To the one who has, more will be given . . .*: one of the meanings of this text is that those who appropriate the truth more will receive more truth in the future; however, those who do not respond to what little truth they may know already will not profit even from that amount.

4:26-29 This parable, the only one peculiar to Mark, illustrates his idea of the power of the Gospel. The term *harvest* is an image of the judgment (see Joel 4:13; Rev 14:15).

4:30-32 See notes on Mt 13:31-32 and 13:32.

4:33-34 These words mitigate and partly explain the warning in v. 12. Jesus with his parables adapted himself to the imaginative eastern mentality, without running



JESUS IS RAISED FROM THE DEAD—“Do not be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised” (Mk 16:6).

which Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna are prominent (1—2) to the events of the day of the Resurrection in which women have a large role (24:1-10), Luke brings out the major role that women played in the life and ministry of our Lord.

Finally, Luke calls for unconditional attachment to the things that can be truly good and the renunciation of material things (12:16-21; 16:19-31). Moreover, throughout his Gospel Luke stresses and exalts poverty (5:11; 5:28; 18:22). The evangelist also issues a series of warnings against the danger of riches (6:24; 12:13-21; 14:33, etc.).

The Gospel of Luke may be divided as follows:

Prologue (1:1-4)

I: The Infancy Narrative (1:5—2:52)

II: The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (3:1—4:13)

III: The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (4:14—9:50)

IV: The Journey to Jerusalem (9:51—19:27)

V: The Activity of Jesus at Jerusalem (19:28—21:38)

VI: The Passion and Resurrection (22:1—24:53)

CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE*

¹ Since many different individuals have undertaken the task to set down an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, ^a ² in accordance with their transmission to us by those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word from the beginning, ^b ³ I too, after researching all the evidence anew with great care, have decided to write an orderly account for you, Theophilus, who are so greatly revered, ⁴ so that you may learn the unquestioned authenticity of the teachings you have received. ^c

a 1-4: Acts 1:1; 1 Cor 15:3.—b Jn 15:27; Eph 3:7.—c Jn 20:31.

1:1-4 Like the Greek historians of his time, Luke begins his book with a prologue. He dedicates the work to a distinguished person, Theophilus (otherwise unknown to us), who has already been taught the good news. Some scholars believe that the name is symbolic for it means "lover of God," hence all Christians.

1:5—2:52 The Gospel is first and foremost a proclamation of what Jesus did and taught and, above all, of his Death and Resurrection for the salvation of humankind; everything that the preachers of the mission and message of Jesus proclaimed led toward the mystery of Easter. But, like Matthew, Luke decided to preface all that with a description of the period preceding the public appearance of Jesus, because the Church wanted to know the mystery of Jesus back to its very beginnings.



THE BIRTH OF JESUS—“[Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Lk 2:7).

PSALM 25*

Prayer for Guidance and Help

1 * Of David.

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;^x

2 in you, O my God, I trust.^y

Do not let me be put to shame,
or permit my enemies to gloat over me.

3 No one who places his hope in you
will ever be put to shame,
but shame will be the lot of all
who break faith without justification.^z

4 * Make your ways known to me, O LORD;
teach me your paths.^a

5 Guide me in your truth and instruct me,
for you are God, my Savior,
and in you I hope all the day long.

6 Be mindful, O LORD, that mercy and kindness
have been yours from of old.^b

7 Remember not the sins of my youth
or my many transgressions,
but remember me in your kindness,
for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.^c

8 * Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore, he instructs sinners in his ways.

x Pss 86:4; 143:8.—y Ps 71:1.—z Ps 22:6; Isa 24:16; 49:23; Dan 3:40; 2 Tim 3:4-5.—a Pss 27:11; 86:11; 119:12, 35; 143:8, 10; Ex 33:13; Jn 14:6.—b Ps 98:3; Sir 51:8; Isa 63:7.—c Ps 106:4; Job 13:26; Isa 64:8.

Ps 25 One admires the inner quality of the righteous man who addresses himself to God in this alphabetical psalm. He does not believe that he is totally innocent. He takes false steps and deserves his wretchedness and his isolation because of his sins. His confession testifies to much uprightness and honesty. It is the attitude of a humble person who knows he is loved by God and trusts in him; he hopes to receive pardon, counsel, and assistance from the Lord. The theme of this beautiful prayer is given in the cry of hope in verses 1-2, which the Liturgy puts on the lips of Christians at the beginning of Advent.

In praying this psalm, we can dwell on the fact that in his un failing love God is pleased to lead us back to the right path when we go astray and to keep us on it. Christ gives us salvation through the remission of sins (see Lk 1:77-79).

25:1-3 Prayer for relief from distress and the ensuing slander from one's foes.

25:4-7 Prayer for guidance and pardon. *Your ways*: that is, "your commandments" (see Pss 27:11; 86:11; 128:1; 143:8). *Kindness*: see note on Ps 6:5.

25:8-15 Trust in the Lord's covenant blessings.

PSALM 57*

Trust in God amid Suffering

- 1 For the director. * According to "Do not destroy." A *miktam* of David. When he fled from Saul into the cave. ^p
- 2 Have mercy on me, O God,
have mercy on me,
for in you my soul * takes refuge.
I will seek shelter in the shadow of your wings
until the time of danger has passed. ^q
- 3 I call out to God Most High,
to God who takes care of me. *
- 4 May he send his help from heaven to deliver me
and put to shame those who trample upon me;
Selah
may God send his kindness * and his faithfulness.
- 5 I lie prostrate in the midst of lions
who are hungrily seeking human prey. ^r
Their teeth are spears and arrows,
and their tongues are razor-sharp swords. ^s
- 6 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; ^t
let your glory shine over all the earth. *

p 1 Sam 22:1.—q Pss 2:12; 17:8; 36:8.—r Pss 17:11-12; 22:22; 35:17; 58:7.—s Pss 11:2; 64:4; Prov 30:14.—t Pss 72:19; 102:16; Num 14:21.

Ps 57 The psalmist pictures evildoers like lions tearing away at him and ravaging his reputation. It is altogether natural for him, then, to call upon God to come in power to chastise the enemy and establish his kingdom on earth. A second tableau ends the psalm: the believer sings of God's deliverance, which comes like a dawn in the midst of the night of danger. Part of this psalm is duplicated in Ps 108 (57:8-12 is the same as 108:2-6).

This supplication may be justly applied to Christ during his whole public life and Passion. Surrounded and attacked by his enemies, he seeks refuge in his Father, who cannot abandon him. It can also fittingly be applied to us who are constantly threatened by our spiritual enemies.

57:1 *For the director*: these words are thought to be a musical or liturgical notation. *According to "Do not destroy"*: probably a note by an early scribe intended to prevent his manuscript from being discarded. *Miktam*: see note on Ps 16:1. For the event, see 1 Sam 24:1-3.

57:2 *My soul*: see note on Ps 6:4. *Shadow of your wings*: conventional Hebrew metaphor for protection; it may have been inspired by the wings of the cherubim spread over the Ark in the inner chamber of the temple (see 1 Ki 6:23-28).

57:3 *Who takes care of me*: an allusion to God's providence; other translations given are: "who puts an end to my troubles" and "who perfects his work in me."

57:4 *Kindness*: see note on Ps 6:5.

57:6 The psalmist asks that the kingdom of God may be manifested (see Ps 72:19; Num 14:21; 1 Chr 29:11; Isa 6:3; 33:10; Hab 2:14) by the deliverance of the faithful and the ruin of the wicked (see Pss 79:9; 102:16f; 138:5).

PSALM 131*

Childlike Trust in God

- 1 A song of ascents. Of David.
 O LORD, my heart * is not proud,
 nor are my eyes raised too high.
 I do not concern myself with great affairs
 or with things too sublime for me. ^r
- 2 Rather, I have stilled and calmed my soul, *
 hushed it like a weaned child.
 Like a weaned child held in its mother's arms,
 so is my soul within me. ^s
- 3 O Israel, put your hope in the LORD
 both now and forevermore. *

PSALM 132*

The Divine Promises Made to David

- 1 A song of ascents.
 Remember, O LORD, for David's sake,
 all the difficulties he endured. *
- 2 * He swore an oath to the LORD
 and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:

^r Pss 101:5; 139:6; Job 5:9; Isa 2:12; Jer 45:5; Mic 6:8; Rom 12:16.—^s Isa 30:15; 66:12-13; Mt 18:3.

131:1 *Heart*: see note on Ps 4:8. The psalmist has completely submitted himself to God in all humility (see Mic 6:8). He is not like the proud who rely only on themselves (see note on Ps 31:24). He knows that true holiness begins in a heart bereft of pride (see Prov 18:12), with eyes that do not envy (see Pss 18:28; 101:5; Prov 16:5), and a manner of life that is not presumptuous, not preoccupied with great things (see Jer 45:5) and achievements that are *too sublime*, i.e., too difficult or arduous, beyond one's powers (see Deut 17:8; 30:11).

131:2 *Soul*: see note on Ps 6:4. The psalmist keeps a guard over his desires. He is like a *weaned child*, who no longer frets for what it used to find indispensable and walks trustingly by its mother or lies peacefully in its mother's arms.

131:3 Likewise all Israel, all God's people, must hope only in the Lord. Weaned away from insubstantial ambitions, we must hanker for the sole solid fare: "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (Jn 4:34).

Ps 132 By means of this psalm, the pilgrims, assembled for the procession, sing the glory of Zion, the dwelling place of God and the residence of his anointed, i.e., the king descended from David and like him, was consecrated with holy oil. Doubtless, this is a celebration of the anniversary of the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem at the time of King David (see 2 Sam 6; 1 Chr 13-16). This hymn provides a splendid occasion to remind God of the commitment he made in favor of his people: