

God Came to Earth - Part 4

Christians Know Things

A prepared people, living in the nation of iron and clay described in Daniel chapter 2 are about to receive the Messiah. It is 2,000 years after Abraham, and 1,000 years after David, in the fullness of time, meaning all is ready, The birth of two boys is about to be announced to their mothers. The first announcement is really to the first boy's father, who is offering incense on the Golden Altar, in front of the same curtain that will be torn from top to bottom at the death of the second boy some 34 years later. Between the two events is the story of Immanuel, which interpreted means, God, With Us. God who put on flesh and walked among humans.

Luke begins his gospel narrative with the first revelation to come from heaven in about 400 years. *"In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth"* (Luke 1:5). As Zacharias stood in the Temple offering incense, *"An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense"* (Luke 1:11). Zacharias and Elizabeth were beyond the age of childbearing. But the angel said, *"Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John"* (Luke 1:13). The angel also said, *"It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"* (Luke 1:17). It is as if the angel had told Zacharias that his son was the one spoken of by Isaiah (Isaiah 40:1-5).

Six months later, the angel Gabriel, who first appeared to Zacharias (Luke 1:19), appears in the city of Nazareth (Luke 1:26). The angel appeared to a young, single woman named Mary. In not a few words, he told Mary that she was the maiden mentioned by Isaiah, *"Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). Mary could not understand how that could be because it would be a long time before she would be with her betrothed husband, Joseph, also of the tribe of Judah. Therefore, the angel said, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God"* (Luke 1:35). **Immanuel, Jesus, would be born, The Son of Man through Mary, and The Son of God through the Holy Spirit.**

The first witness - Mary went to Judea to visit Elizabeth about the things the angel had said to her. *"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; ... And she cried out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ... For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy'"* (Luke 1:41-44). While still in the womb, John identified Jesus as the promised Messiah, and the Holy Spirit explained this to Elizabeth. After John was born, his father told of the duties John would perform. *"You, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare his ways; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins"* (Luke 1:76-77). *"A voice calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God'"* (Isaiah 40:3).

The witness of angels - Luke 2:1-7 gives an account of the birth of Jesus in the city of Bethlehem, where Micah said Messiah would be born. Luke gives criteria to verify the facts relative to the birth. An angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds in the area and told them, "Do not be afraid; for

behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David, there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

The Temple, 41st day from birth - To keep the commandment of the law, Leviticus 12:2-6, Joseph and Mary presented Jesus in the Temple and paid the redemption. The firstborn son belonged to the Lord and would remain with the priests for Temple service like Samuel was (1 Samuel 1:1-11), if not redeemed by the parents. Jesus was The Son of God but was to be raised by human parents.

Simeon and Anna - At the Temple was a man whose name was Simeon and a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel who, by the Spirit, recognized and identified the baby as the promised Messiah who would save the people from their sins. We do not know when or how the promise came to them, but they knew who the baby was and testified to the truth of it (Luke 2:25-38).