

# THE NATIVITY

## An Unchained Gospel Original Narrative

For decades Israel had been occupied and dominated by the Roman Empire and the people of Israel longed for the promised king spoken of by their prophets. He was going to conquer their enemies, and reign forever on the throne of His ancestor, David.<sup>1</sup> But even before the prophets spoke of this coming King, God Himself made a promise to Adam and Eve, after they had sinned in the Garden of Eden, that He would send a Son to defeat the ultimate enemy, sin and death.<sup>2</sup>

Our story begins over 2000 years ago in a tiny town in Israel called Nazareth<sup>3</sup>. There we meet a young woman named Mary, who was engaged to be married to a carpenter named Joseph<sup>4</sup>. But before the marriage took place, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> An angel from the presence of God named Gabriel<sup>6</sup> appeared to both Mary<sup>7</sup> and Joseph<sup>8</sup> separately to tell them that this child would be called the Son of God and would fulfill God's promise to His people by saving them from their sins.

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. All people returned to the hometown of their ancestors in order to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was very far along in her pregnancy and they made the 80 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And while they were there, the time came for Mary's baby to be born, but there was no room available for them at the inn.<sup>9</sup>

When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman<sup>10</sup>, and Mary named the child Jesus, as the Angel had directed.<sup>11</sup> She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.<sup>12</sup> This was the Son of God who existed in the beginning with God and was God.<sup>13</sup> The Son of God became a man and made his home among us<sup>14</sup> as He had prophesied to Isaiah, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).<sup>15</sup> He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.<sup>16</sup> So God set a star in the sky as a sign<sup>17</sup> and sent Angels to announce the

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 9:6-7, Jeremiah 33:14-17

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:15

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:26

<sup>4</sup> Luke 1:27

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 1:18

<sup>6</sup> Luke 1:19

<sup>7</sup> Luke 1:26-38

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 1:19-25

<sup>9</sup> Luke 2:1-7

<sup>10</sup> Galatians 4:4

<sup>11</sup> Luke 2:21

<sup>12</sup> Luke 2:7, 12, 16

<sup>13</sup> John 1:1-2

<sup>14</sup> John 1:14

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 1:23 | Isaiah 7:14

<sup>16</sup> John 1:10

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 2:2

Messiah's arrival to lowly Shepherds.<sup>18</sup> Also at that time some wise men from eastern lands<sup>19</sup> followed the star they had seen in the east and it guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was.<sup>20</sup> They entered the house and bowed down to worship him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.<sup>21</sup>

So the family returned to the town of Nazareth. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.<sup>22</sup> When he was about 30 years old, Jesus began his public ministry.<sup>23</sup> He taught regularly in their synagogues<sup>24</sup>, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God<sup>25</sup>. People were brought to him who were lame, blind, crippled, those who couldn't speak, and Jesus healed them all.<sup>26</sup> And they praised the God of Israel.<sup>27</sup> Many among the crowds believed in him. "After all," they said, "would you expect the Messiah to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?"<sup>28</sup>

The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in the Bible.<sup>29</sup> The Apostle John said, "if they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written."<sup>30</sup> But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."<sup>31</sup> And many people did believe in him, including some of the religious leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue.<sup>32</sup> For they loved the praise of people more than the praise of God.<sup>33</sup>

As the time drew near for Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them that he would be betrayed into the hands of the religious leaders.<sup>34</sup> They would sentence him to death and hand him over to the Romans to be crucified. But on the third day he would rise from the dead.<sup>35</sup> Around that same time the religious leaders were plotting how to capture Jesus secretly and kill him.<sup>36</sup> They found a willing accomplice in one of his closest followers, who betrayed Jesus to them for 30 pieces of silver.<sup>37</sup> Jesus was then arrested and handed over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who condemned Jesus to be crucified.<sup>38</sup>

But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed.<sup>39</sup> For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus

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<sup>18</sup> Luke 2:8-14

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 2:1b

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 2:9b

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 2:11

<sup>22</sup> Luke 2:52

<sup>23</sup> Luke 3:23a

<sup>24</sup> Luke 4:15a

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 4:23 | Luke 4:43

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 15:30

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 15:31b

<sup>28</sup> John 7:31

<sup>29</sup> John 20:30

<sup>30</sup> John 21:25

<sup>31</sup> John 20:31

<sup>32</sup> John 12:42

<sup>33</sup> John 12:43

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 20:17-18

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 20:19

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 26:3-4

<sup>37</sup> Matthew 26:14-16

<sup>38</sup> Mark 15:1

<sup>39</sup> Acts 2:23a

sacrificed His life by shedding his blood.<sup>40</sup> For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.<sup>41</sup> But Jesus was not a victim, He willingly laid down His life<sup>42</sup> and was nailed to the cross to atone for the sins of the whole world.<sup>43</sup> After Jesus died on the cross, there was a great earthquake. The Roman soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and said, “This man truly was the Son of God!”<sup>44</sup> Even in His death, Jesus was proving to the world to be who He said He was.

With their Messiah now dead, most of Jesus’ followers were fearful of a similar fate and were in hiding.<sup>45</sup> But two religious leaders, who previously were followers of Jesus in secret, stepped forward to care for the body of Jesus.<sup>46</sup> They wrapped His body with spices and long sheets of linen cloth<sup>47</sup> and laid him in a new tomb that had been carved out of rock.<sup>48</sup>

But the other religious leaders remembered Jesus’ words about rising from the dead in three days and requested that the Romans post soldiers at the grave to prevent his disciples from stealing the body and later claiming their master had resurrected.<sup>49</sup>

In the early morning on the third day, women who had faithfully served Jesus came to the grave to anoint the body.<sup>50</sup> But instead of encountering Roman soldiers, they were met by an angel and the stone that had covered the grave had been rolled away.<sup>51</sup> The angel proclaimed that Jesus was not there, but indeed had risen from the dead<sup>52</sup> and by doing this He proved that He alone had the power over sin and death.<sup>53</sup> We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him.<sup>54</sup> When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God.<sup>55</sup>

God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.<sup>56</sup> The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David’s family line, and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>57</sup> If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.<sup>58</sup> And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.<sup>59</sup>

We are thrilled that you took time to join us in celebrating the birth of our Savior Jesus. It is our prayer that you would make our joy complete by sharing with us that you have accepted God’s gift of Salvation by placing your faith in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>40</sup> Romans 3:25a

<sup>41</sup> Hebrews 9:22b

<sup>42</sup> John 10:18

<sup>43</sup> 1 John 2:2

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 27:54

<sup>45</sup> John 20:19a

<sup>46</sup> John 19:38-39

<sup>47</sup> John 19:40

<sup>48</sup> Luke 23:53

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 27:62-66

<sup>50</sup> Mark 16:1-2

<sup>51</sup> Mark 16:4

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 28:6

<sup>53</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:57, Romans 5:17, Romans 7:24-25a

<sup>54</sup> Romans 6:9

<sup>55</sup> Romans 6:10

<sup>56</sup> Romans 1:2

<sup>57</sup> Romans 1:3-4

<sup>58</sup> Romans 10:9

<sup>59</sup> Romans 6:4b