



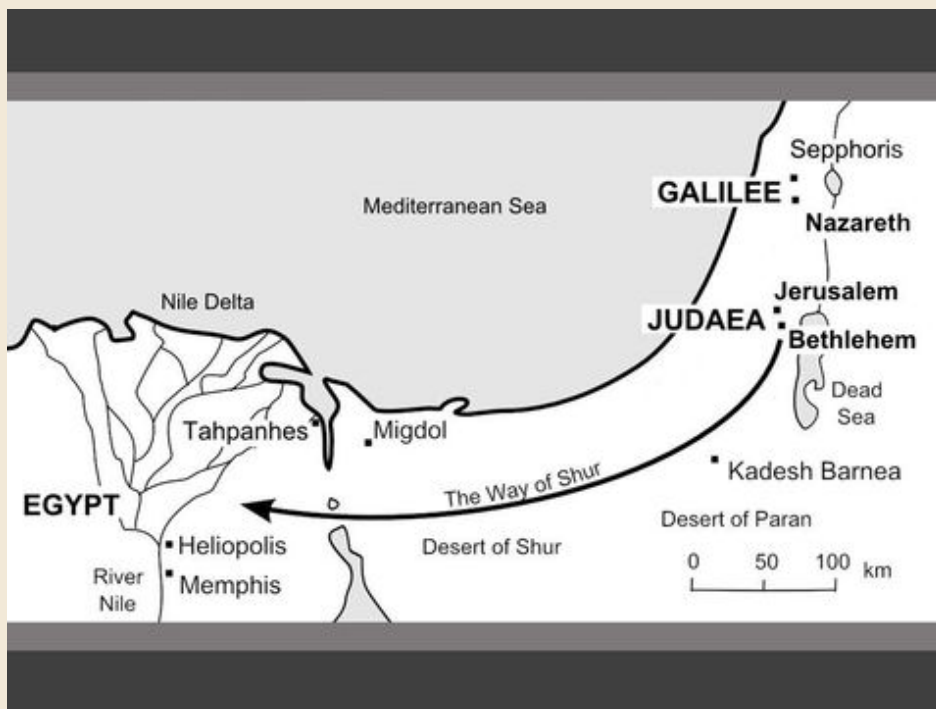
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In anticipation of the birth of Jesus, this newsletter covers his early biography in detail until he returned from Egyptian exile to Nazareth
(continued on the next page)
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- A young girl named Mary lived in Nazareth. Nazareth was in northern Israel, about 65 miles north of Jerusalem.
- She was betrothed to a man named Joseph in her early teens. The Gospels give no indication of his age but we know that females were usually married after going through puberty. We don't have betrothals today: think of it as between engagement and marriage. The couple did not live together or sleep together, but it was still a legal arrangement; if someone wanted to break the betrothal they had to get a divorce. Mary was legally bound to marry Joseph, but they were not sleeping or living together.
- An angel appeared to Mary and told her she would become pregnant. Mary did not understand how this was possible since she was virgin; but the angel told her that the power of God would cause her to become pregnant; this meant it was a miracle.
- Once she became pregnant, she told Joseph, and he decided to break the betrothal and divorce Mary.
- Then he was told in a dream that Mary was pregnant through the power of God, and, therefore, he married her.
- At the same time, the Roman government decided to take a census and counted everyone in the empire. Jews had to travel to their ancestral hometown in order to be counted. For Joseph, this meant traveling to Bethlehem.



- Joseph took his pregnant wife, Mary, with him.
- Once there, he could not find a room in the inns (what hotels were called in those days), and so they stayed where the animals stayed. The Gospels do not say where the animals lived; they could have been in a stable, barn, or cave.
- After Jesus was born, he was placed in a manger (where food for the animals was placed, like a small trough).
- Shepherds showed up to welcome the new baby and saw him in a manger; this must have been the same day or perhaps the next day after Jesus was born.

<https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/bj-jesus-journeys-47-maps/>

--According to the Covenant between God and Abraham, all Jewish boys were circumcised at 8 days of age. (Genesis 17:12) Since Jesus was a Jew, he would have been circumcised. This probably happened in Bethlehem.

--Special note: This paragraph contains guesses about what happened next. According to the census, Jews had to go to their hometown, and Joseph went to his hometown of Bethlehem. This must have meant that Joseph had family living in Bethlehem. When the Magi (mentioned below) finally found Jesus, he was living in a house. This must mean that, between the time that shepherds found Jesus in a manger and the Magi found Jesus in a house, Joseph contacted his family in Bethlehem, and Joseph, Mary, and Jesus moved in with Joseph's family members. But this is just a guess.

--According to Leviticus 12:3-8, a child was to be presented at the Tabernacle (and then Temple after it was built) when he/she was 41 days of age. Therefore, Jesus was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem right before he was 41 days old and then returned to Bethlehem. Note: Jerusalem was about 6 miles from Bethlehem. While there, Simeon and the prophetess Anna, who stayed at the Temple, met the baby Jesus. (Luke 2:25-38)

--The "Magi" came next. Scholars are not clear what a Magi was; it is a Greek word with no clear translation. But they brought three expensive gifts, and, so, it is popularly believed that there were three of them, hence "3 Wise Men" or "3 Kings."

--The Magi first went to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. Why? They were looking for the new king and naturally headed to Jerusalem, which was the capital.

--They told King Herod the Great they were looking for the new king. Herod was surprised, since he did not know anything about the birth of a royal child. He told the Magi to find the new king and then return and tell him where he could find the new king.

--They eventually found Jesus in Bethlehem in a house and gave him their gifts. They were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod and so went home.

--King Herod realized that the Magi were not coming back, and he was furious.

--He wanted to kill the new "king," though, and so had all baby boys two years and under in that area killed.

Why did Herod care about rumors of a new Jewish king? Because he wasn't a real Jew and he wasn't a real king. His father became a Jew for political reasons, and the Romans had chosen Herod to be king even though his father was not a king. Therefore, he was very concerned and even paranoid about any possible Jewish uprising. He probably thought a real Jewish royal baby had been born in secret and tried to kill him by killing all the baby boys in that region. He was probably concerned that the baby king would grow up and lead a rebellion against his sons.

--Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fled to Egypt.

--After Herod died, they moved back to Nazareth. Herod died in 4 BC. The Bible does not indicate the age of Jesus when the small family moved from Egypt to Nazareth.

--Special note: This paragraph contains guesses about what happened next. According to Matthew 2:21, 22, Joseph wanted to return to Bethlehem to live and raise Jesus. Why? He had family there and might have thought that Bethlehem was a better option than Nazareth. He changed his mind because Herod's son, Archelaus, ruled southern Israel after his father's death, and Bethlehem was in his territory. Archelaus was a violent man, so violent that the Romans eventually removed him from his office because he killed so many Jews. Instead of moving to Bethlehem, then, Joseph moved his family back to Nazareth.