

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

Lesson Plan: The Birth of Jesus - Pt. 1

Learning Goals: Students should understand the unique features of the birth narratives of Jesus as found in Matthew and Luke as well as being familiar with the major characters involved in the story (Mary, Joseph, Zachariah, Elizabeth, John, Herod, Anna, and Simeon)

Question: In what ways was Jesus' birth unique or special?

Prayer.

Discuss question on board. (5 minutes)

How many birth stories do we have about Jesus?

- We have nothing from Mark
- John is doing something altogether different ("In the beginning...")

Compare and contrast the events leading up to Jesus' birth in Matthew and Luke

Matthew:

- Told from the perspective of Joseph
- Appearance of the angel in a dream/vision
- Given name "Immanuel" (God with us - messianic overtones; connection to OT prophecy - Isaiah)
- Organized around OT prophecies

Luke:

- Told from the perspective of Mary
- Miraculous birth of John the Baptist (Elizabeth and Zechariah)
- Angel Gabriel appears directly to Mary (no mention of dream/vision) - only angel to be named in the gospels
- Given name "Jesus" (connection to Joshua, deliverer who brought the Israelites into the promised land)
- Mary's visit to Elizabeth - testimony of John in womb (leaping)
- Includes the songs of joy and praise (before and after the birth)
- Organized to provide an overview of God's plan of salvation history and the differences between Jesus and John

The Infancy Stories of Jesus	
Matthew	Luke
conceived of a virgin (1:18-25)	birth of John the Baptist predicted (1:5-25)
born in Bethlehem (2:1-12)	birth of Jesus predicted (1:26-38)
out of Egypt (2:13-15)	the two mothers visit (1:39-56)
wailing in Ramah (2:16-18)	birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)
called a Nazarene (2:19-23)	birth of Jesus (2:1-40)
	Jesus in the temple at age 12 (2:41-52)

John the Baptist

During the days of King Herod (began ruling in 40 BCE - died 3-4 BCE)

Both parents of John the Baptist were descendants of a priestly line

(How did they decide who were priests?)

- Zechariah - division of Abijah
- Elizabeth - from sons of Aaron

Both parent described as what?

- “righteous before God”
- “a blameless follower of the Torah” (commandments and statutes)

They were barren - why? Because they had sinned? NO! (see above)

They were barren as part of God’s sovereign plan.

They were also up in years (sounds like another story from the O.T. - Abraham and Sarah)

Zechariah is serving before the Lord (in the temple - important theme for Luke)

(talk briefly about the priests’ garments - bells on the bottom of their robe so they could be heard, a rope tied around their ankle to pull them out if they dropped dead)

Angel appears to Zechariah and he is not able to speak because . . . he doubted

Jesus’ Earthly Parents:

Mary

- Was a young girl betrothed to Joseph (Joseph was probably significantly older than her)
- Betrothal - a contract in this culture - if you broke the betrothal, you would have to have a divorce (not like an engagement); they entailed the following:
 - Two families coming together in an agreement
 - a public announcement must be made
 - Couple married soon after and lived with the husband’s family
- Angel Gabriel appears to Mary
- Tells her the baby’s name will be Yeshua (Jesus) - “YHWH saves” or “The Lord Saves”
- Virgin Birth - the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit (miraculous)
 - It shows that salvation ultimately must come from the Lord.
 - The virgin birth made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person.
 - The virgin birth makes possible Christ’s true humanity without inheriting sin (fallen nature).
- Incarnation - the Act whereby the Son of God took on human flesh/nature without ceasing to be the 2nd person of the Trinity (without being divine)

Joseph

- Principled
- Discrete and Sensitive
- Righteous
- Obedient to the Holy Spirit

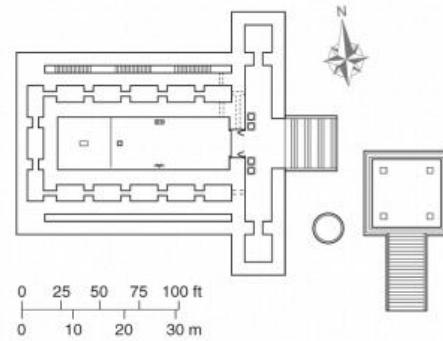
Songs of Praise/Prophecy

- Mary’s Song
 - Theme of reversal - scattered the proud, brought down the mighty, filled the hungry, sent the rich away empty
- Zechariah’s Song/Prophecy
 - after John born and he gives him the name the angel prophesied, his mouth is opened
 - John is fulfilling OT prophecy (Isaiah - 40:3-5)
- The Angels’ Song - we will look at this tomorrow
- Simeon’s Song - we will look at this in a couple of days

HEROD'S TEMPLE IN THE TIME OF JESUS

Herod began construction of this magnificent temple in 20/19 B.C., during the 18th year of his reign. The main construction phase was completed within about a decade. Detailed descriptions of the temple exist in Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 15.380–425; *Jewish War* 5.184–247) and in early rabbinic writings (esp. Mishnah, *Middot*). The Roman army under Titus destroyed the temple during the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The temple was 172 feet (52 m) long, wide, and high (about 16 to 20 stories tall).

Temple Architectural Plan

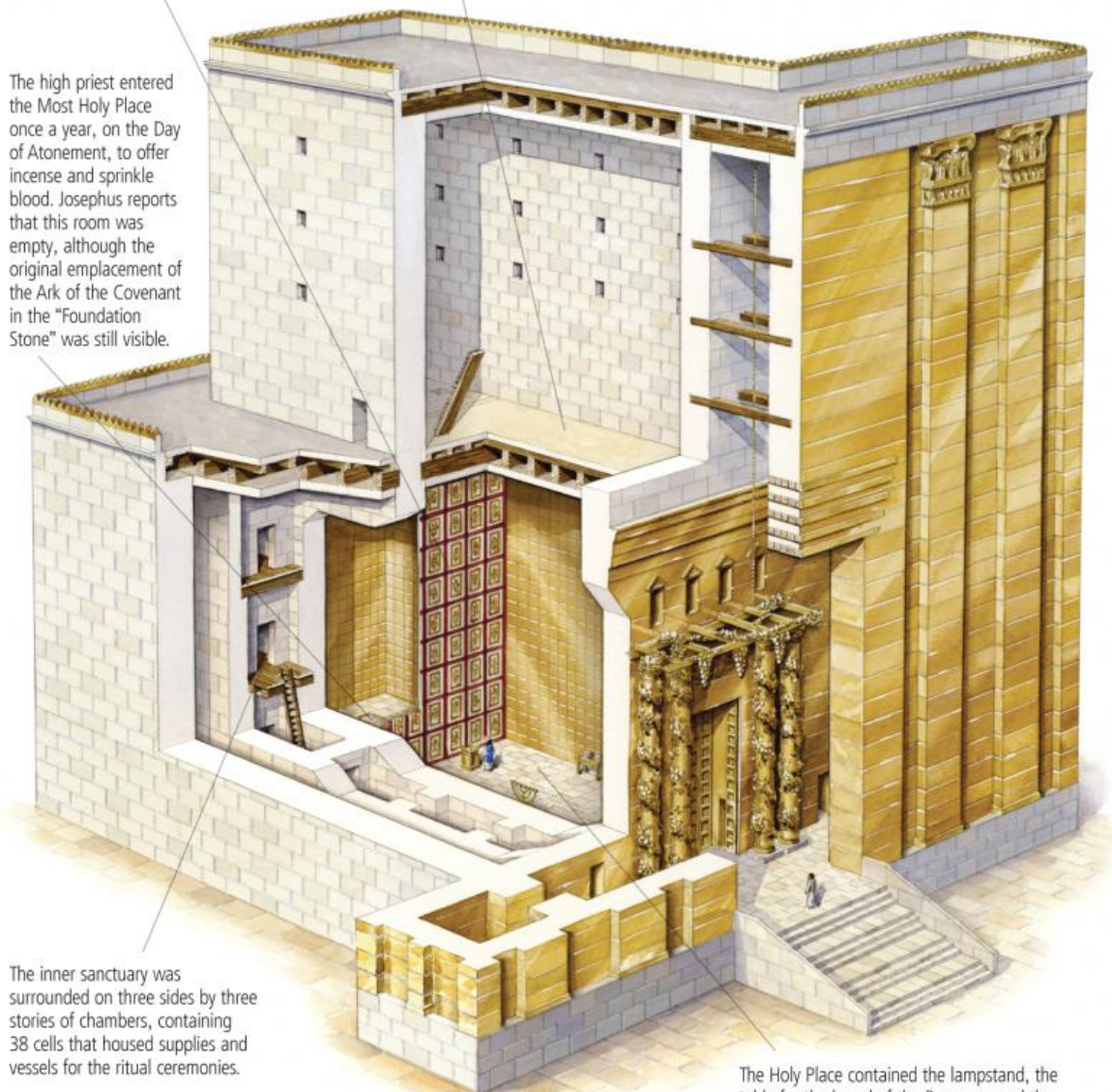


A massive curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. When Jesus died, this curtain was torn in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

There was an upper chamber above the sanctuary, which allowed access (through holes in the floor) for cleaning of the gold-covered walls below. A ladder (shown partly cut away in this section) gave access to the upper roof level.

The high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to offer incense and sprinkle blood. Josephus reports that this room was empty, although the original emplacement of the Ark of the Covenant in the "Foundation Stone" was still visible.

The inner sanctuary was surrounded on three sides by three stories of chambers, containing 38 cells that housed supplies and vessels for the ritual ceremonies.



The Holy Place contained the lampstand, the table for the bread of the Presence, and the altar of incense. An angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah on the right side of the incense altar (Luke 1:11).

THE TEMPLE MOUNT IN THE TIME OF JESUS

Herod's Temple Mount was the focal point of Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. Sitting atop Jerusalem's northeastern ridge, it occupied one-sixth of the city's area. Under Herod the Great, the Temple Mount's foundation was expanded to encompass approximately 1.5 million square feet (140,000 square meters). Its foundational walls were constructed using gigantic stones, the largest found being 45 feet long, 11.5 feet high, and 12 feet thick (13.7 m by 3.5 m by 3.7 m).

Wilson's Arch formed a bridge over the Tyropoeon Valley below, leading from the Temple Mount to the Hasmonian Palace. A section of the western wall south of Wilson's Arch (167 feet/51 m long, sometimes called the Walling Wall) has been a place of prayer for Jews for the last 700 years. The lowest seven stone courses, which can be seen at ground level, are Herodian.

Robinson's Arch and its massive stairway led from the Tyropoeon Street below up to the Royal Stoa.

The early square Temple Mount preserved its identity as a separate area with its own walls and gates.

The Antonia Fortress was where Herod (and later the Romans) commanded the garrison in order to protect the temple and to suppress religiously motivated rebellion.

Herod's Temple (for a detailed cutaway drawing, see p. 1943)

The Court of the Women was the farthest point of the inner temple complex that women could enter.

The Pool of Israel was probably used to wash sacrificial animals before they were led to the Temple Mount.

The Golden Gate, then known as the Shushan Gate

Stairs descended from the Muster Gate into the Kidron Valley and eventually went up to the Mount of Olives.

The eastern city wall of Jerusalem

Solomon's Porch, the portico built along the eastern wall, was a place of congregation (cf. John 10:23; Acts 3:11).

The Double Gate and its monumental stairway

A ritual bath-house for pilgrims to cleanse before entering the temple precincts

A Council House for legal proceedings

The Triple Gate and its stairway

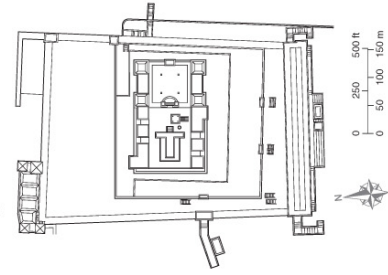
Small shops, which had a narrow street built above them, were built along the southern wall of the Temple Mount.

The sores (a low, latticed screen or railing) prohibited Gentiles or non-purified Jews from entering the temple courts.

The Court of the Gentiles was the area between the sores and the outer walls of the early square Temple Mount.

The Royal Stoa was a 912-foot-long (278 m) portico, containing four rows of 40 columns. The Sanhedrin met in the central apse after c. A.D. 30. This may have been where Jesus cleansed the temple. The southeast corner overlooking the Kidron Valley created a drop of 140 feet (43 m) to the street below, and 300 feet (91 m) to the valley below. This may be the "pinnaide of the temple" mentioned in Matt. 4:5 and Luke 4:9.

Temple Mount Architectural Plan



0 50 100 250 500 ft
0 50 100 150 m

Lesson Summary /Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Mary
- Joseph
- Jesus
- Elizabeth
- Zechariah
- Gabriel
- Betrothed
- Incarnation
- Immanuel