

Advent & Christmas: Visitation



Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

The Gospel of Luke is the third book of the New Testament.

The New Testament: Advent

The word “Advent” means “coming.” The first couple chapters of Luke and Matthew serve as a prologue to the story of Jesus, focusing on the time just before and shortly after Jesus’ birth. This is what we refer to as Jesus’ *first coming*, when God took on flesh and became incarnate as a human being. Jesus’ *second coming* is when he will return again at the end of time.

Biblical Background

Scripture tells us that John’s mother Elizabeth and Jesus’ mother Mary were relatives (Luke 1:36), which makes Jesus and John cousins. Both women experienced unexpected pregnancies.

When Mary showed up at Elizabeth’s home, it was likely a happy surprise. It is interesting that Elizabeth’s unborn baby knew Mary’s news even before Elizabeth did. This points forward to the way that John would prepare the way for Jesus and make him known!

Introduction

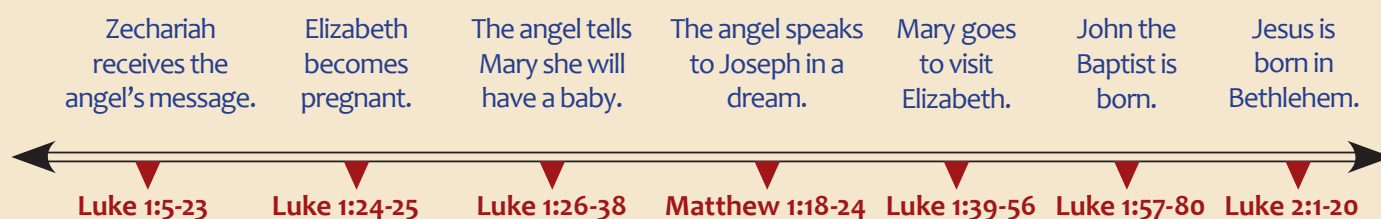
As proof of God’s promise to Mary that she would bear a child, the angel Gabriel had told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was also with child. This, too, was an amazing conception, since Elizabeth was well past child-bearing age. When the women came together, they rejoiced at the favor God had shown them.

Read: Luke 1:39-56

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

When in Time?

Only the Gospels of Luke and Matthew tell the stories just prior to Jesus’ birth. We hear what happened when John the Baptist was born to Elizabeth and Zechariah. Then we hear of Elizabeth’s cousin Mary and her fiancé Joseph, and the angel’s message that they would become the parents of Jesus.



Discuss: Luke 1:39-56

1. Read the lead-up to this story in Luke 1:35-38. How did Mary and Elizabeth know each other? Why would Mary have been motivated to go and see Elizabeth? How would this serve to confirm the promise made to Mary herself?
2. Which couple was older, Mary and Joseph or Zechariah and Elizabeth? Why were each of these pregnancies something unique and special?
3. What was it that caused Elizabeth to cry out upon seeing Mary? How is this similar to the way God worked through the prophets of old? Compare 2 Peter 1:21.
4. Who is the person Elizabeth refers to as “my Lord” in verse 43? Had she ever met this person?
5. The poetic passage in verses 46-55 are known as the Magnificat (from the word “magnify”). What is the overarching theme of these verses? Why do you think these words have been set to music so often in Christian history? Can you find these words in your church’s hymnal?
6. Who is the primary actor in verses 46-55? How is this also the case in our relationship with God? In what way does this tie back to the same definition of grace found in the angel’s first greeting to Mary: “Greetings, O favored one” (Luke 1:28)?
7. Was Mary chosen because she was better than all the other young women of that time? How do Mary’s own words in the Magnificat express her thoughts on that question?

Where in the World?

The map to the far right shows a close-up of the Holy Land, and the smaller map shows where this land is found in the region.

Elizabeth and Zechariah lived in the region of Judah. Though the Bible only tells us that their home was “in the hill country” (Luke 1:39), tradition holds that they were from the town known as Ein Karem, not far from Jerusalem.

Mary and Joseph lived to the north, in the region of Galilee, in the town of Nazareth. This was the town where Jesus grew up, learning the carpenter’s trade.

How far is it from the town of Nazareth to the town of Ein Karem? About _____ miles. This was how far Mary had to travel to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

