



# CHRISTMAS

The birth of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke

# OVERVIEW

- Opening Reflections on the Experience of "Christmas" Today
- Overview of key Gospel selections in Advent, Christmas and Season of Christmas
- Gospel of Matthew
  - Reflections from Matthew
- Gospel of Luke
  - Reflections from Luke
- Some Overall thoughts

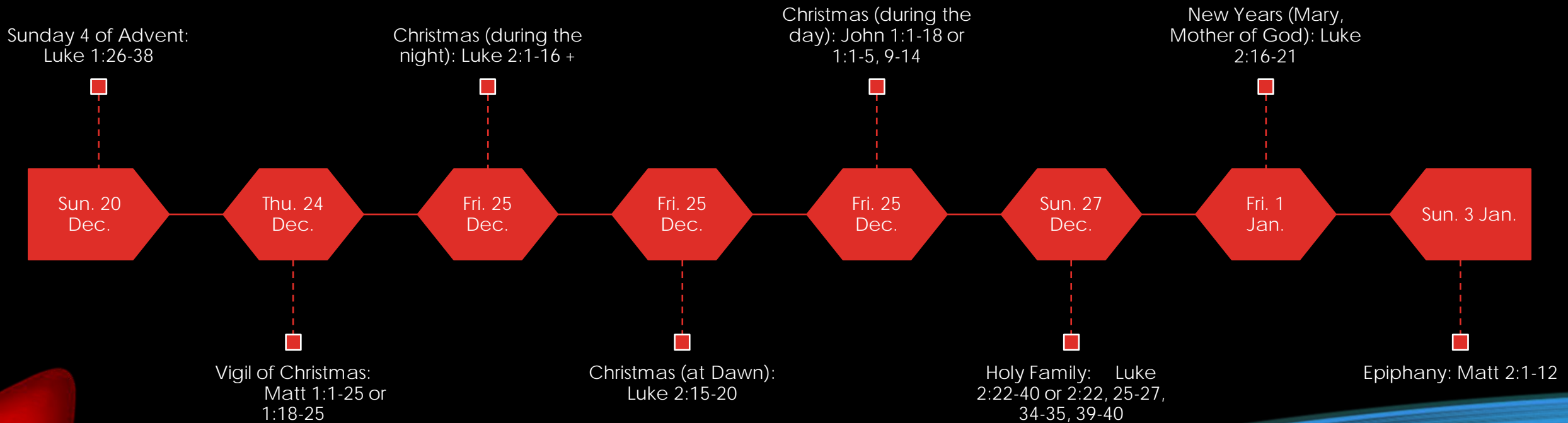


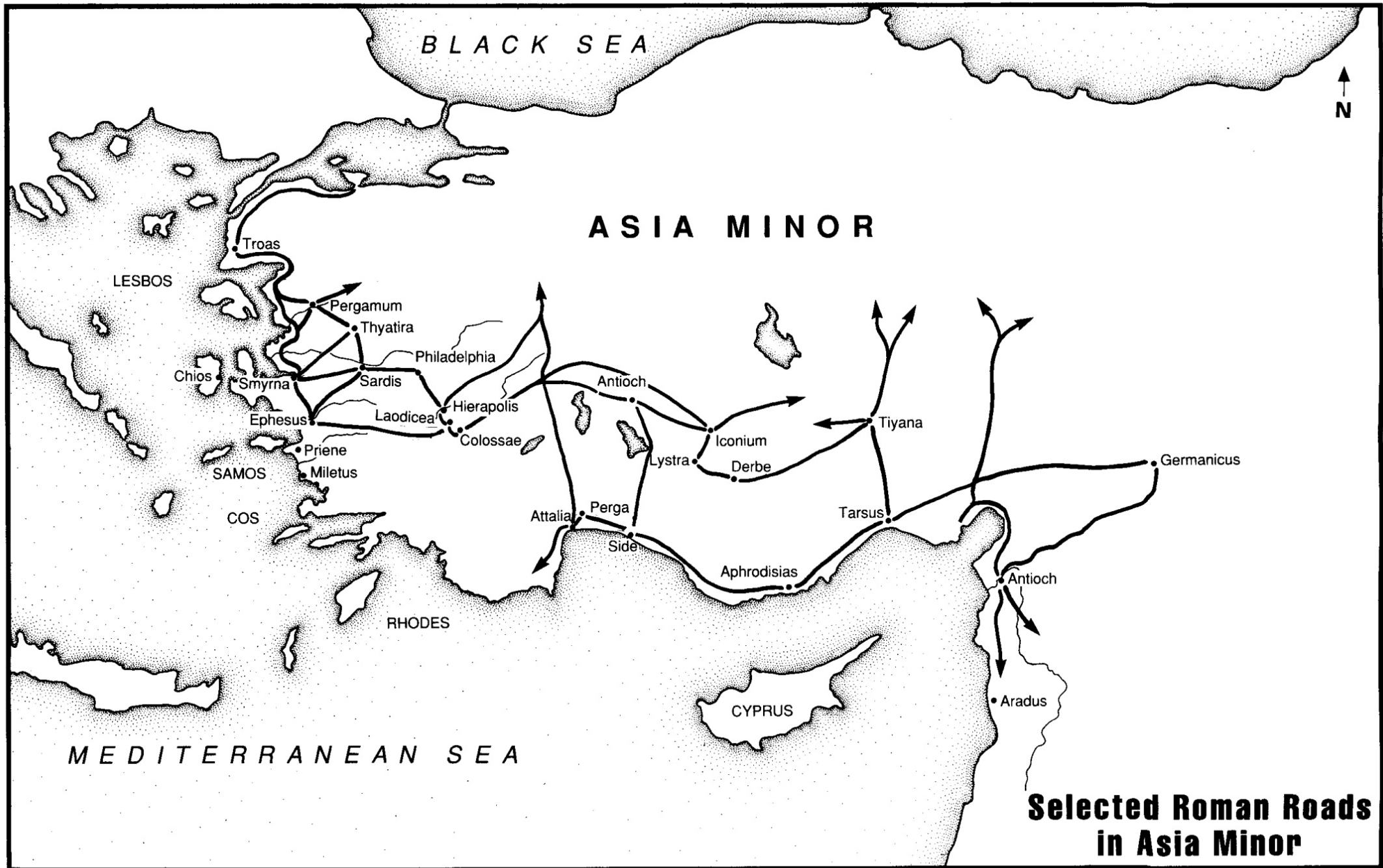


# THE GOSPELS OF MATTHEW & LUKE

- Sun 20 Dec: Sunday 4 of Advent: Luke 1:26-38
- Thurs 24 Dec: Vigil of Christmas: Matt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25
- Fri 25 Dec: Christmas (during the night): Luke 2:1-16 +
- Fri 25 Dec: Christmas (at Dawn): Luke 2:15-20
- Fri 25 Dec : Christmas (during the day): John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14
- Sun 27 Dec: Holy Family: Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22, 25-27, 34-35, 39-40
- Mon 28 Dec: The Holy Innocents: Mt 2.13-18 +(19-23)
- Fri 1 Jan: New Years (Mary, Mother of God): Luke 2:16-21
- Sun 3 Jan: Epiphany: Matt 2:1-12

# THE GOSPELS OF MATTHEW & LUKE









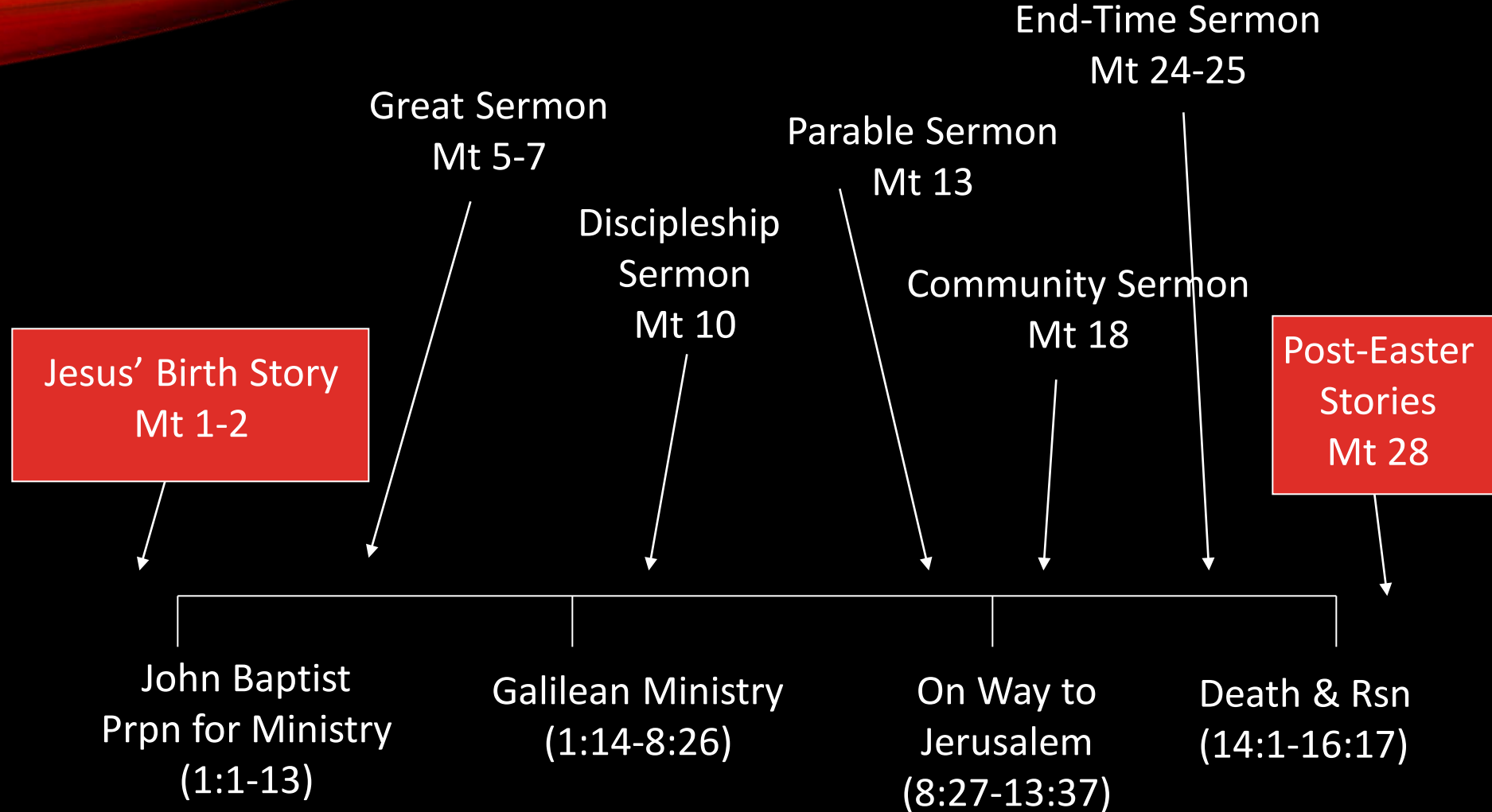


# BACKGROUND

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- Date
  - 80-90 CE
- Author
  - Jewish-Jesus Follower
- Locale ?
  - Antioch of Syria, N.Israel, Tyre, Caesarea Maritime, Pella
- Context
  - Transition & Tension
- Purpose & Christology
  - Identity & Fidelity
  - Future? Gentiles?
  - Jesus: Moses-like teacher of the Torah
- Social Structure
  - Sectarian Jewish Jesus followers?

# MATTHEW

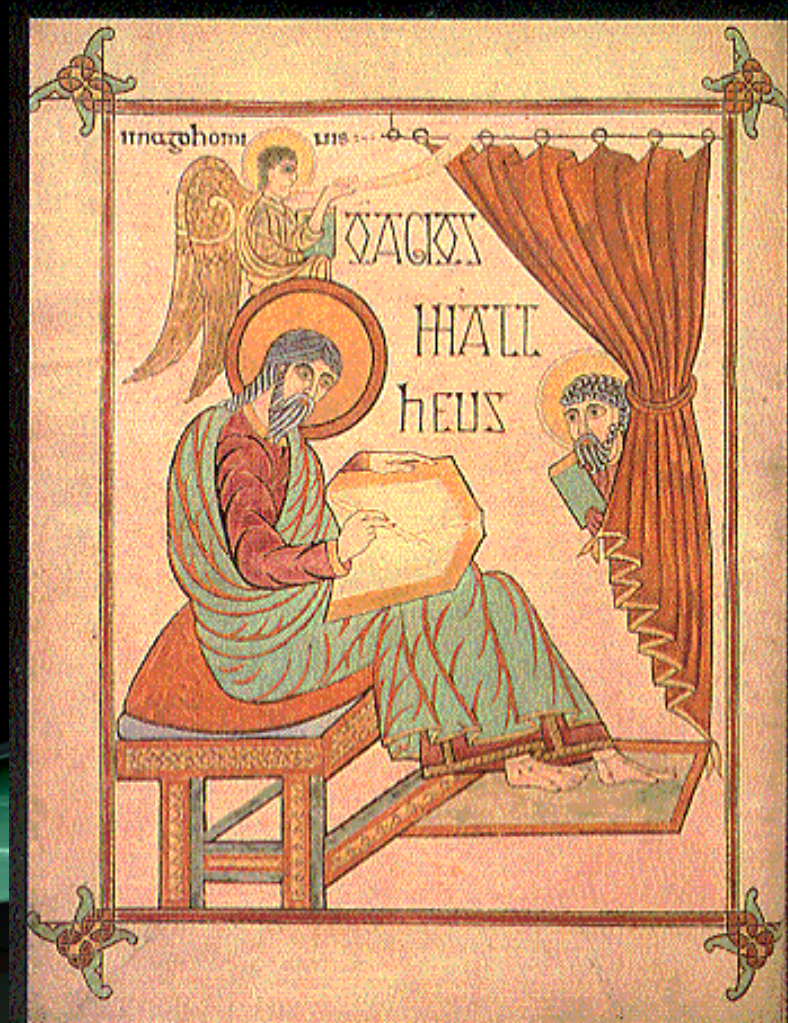


# MARK



# THE “WHO” AND “WHERE” OF JESUS

Mt 1:1—2:23



# Mt 1-2 Story Outline

- 1.1: Title of the Gospel
- 1.2-17: Genealogy of Jesus (from Abraham—King David—Exile—Joseph)
- 1.18-24: Unnamed angel announces Jesus' birth to Joseph (in a dream)
- 1.25 & 2.1a: Mary's son is born in Bethlehem in Judea and named Jesus
- 2.1b-12: Magi from the East come; they first visit Herod, then Jesus
- 2.13-21: Joseph (warned in a dream) and Mary flee to Egypt with the child Jesus; Innocents are murdered, the three return to Israel
- 2.22-23: Journey to Nazareth (for the first time—place of Exile)



## Mt 1.1-17

## The Genealogy

- 1:1 “An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” (Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ)
  - Relies on 1 Chronicles 2-3; Ruth 4.18-22
  - Reflects domestic, political-legal, religio-theological issues of Mt’s present
  - Presence of the women (Tamar –Gen 38.6, 27-30; Rahab—Josh 2.11f; Ruth, Bathsheba—2 Samuel 11; Mary)
    - Disrupts the patriarchal and androcentric flow
    - Concerned with Sex: outsiders, with troubling sexual encounters/relationships with ‘important men’ and are honoured
    - Questionable sexual relationship doesn’t define God’s action
    - How do we view the ‘outsider’, righteousness and challenge to authority.
    - Jesus’ line can include ‘imperfection’, ‘impurity’ from the ‘foreigner’ and that which is morally questionable (?)
  - Focus on multiples of 7
  - Jesus’ ancestry: Abraham & David
  - Jesus born at an opportune time

## Mt 1.18-25

## Jesus' Birth

- 18: 'birth' = 'genesis';
- Jewish marriage practice (12 yrs :girls; 14 yrs: boys)
- 'Holy Spirit' = God's Spirit / Wisdom / Presence
- '*dikaio*s' = 'being just' vs public procedure (Dt 22.23-27)
- 'Jesus' = 'Joshua' = 'God saves'
- 'Fulfillment' language: divergence from MT or LXX = scribal 'targumatising' activity
  - Jesus household 'anthologies' / borrowing of theological idea or theme / express Mt's convictions about Jesus
- Isa 7.14—'alma' (Heb)—'Parthenos' (LXX) → natural conception and birth process
- Jesus as Jewish and 'Son of God' (= 'Child of God') from conception



# Mt 2.1-23 Visit of the Magi & Flight into Egypt

- Major concern: 'Where?'
- Magi = Persian priests, astronomical interpreters: anticipation of Gentiles believers
- Astral phenomenon connected to births and deaths of great figures
- The house context
- V16: Jer 31.15 = Rachel wife of patriarch Jacob
- Herod the Great dies 4BCE → Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Philip
- V23: Nazareth, 'nazar' = 'devoted to God' (Jdg 13.5,7) / 'neser' = 'branch' (Is 11.1)

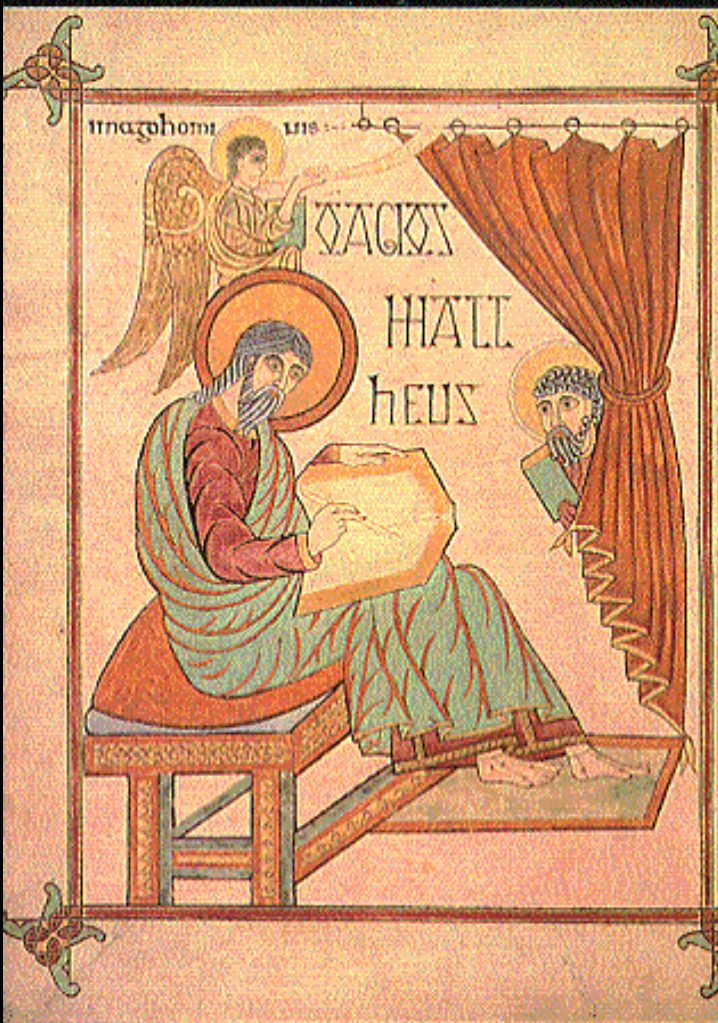
## (Mt 2.1-23) Visit of the Magi and Flight into Egypt

“The Magi’s role as pre-figuring the acceptance of Gentiles into the Christian community points toward the universal character of the gospel; It is meant to be shared with all peoples.”

- D. Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 50



# REFLECTIONS FROM MATTHEW



- Jesus:
  - Child of God
  - Child of Israel
  - Mirror or figure of Moses
- Anticipates the passion
  - Coalition of powers, civic and religious, against Jesus
- Mt's Jesus allows us to name personal & (inter)national tragedies, sufferings, struggles and the desire for affirmation
- To experience 'the divine embrace' = Emmanuel



# LUKE'S STORY OF JESUS BIRTH

Lk 1-2



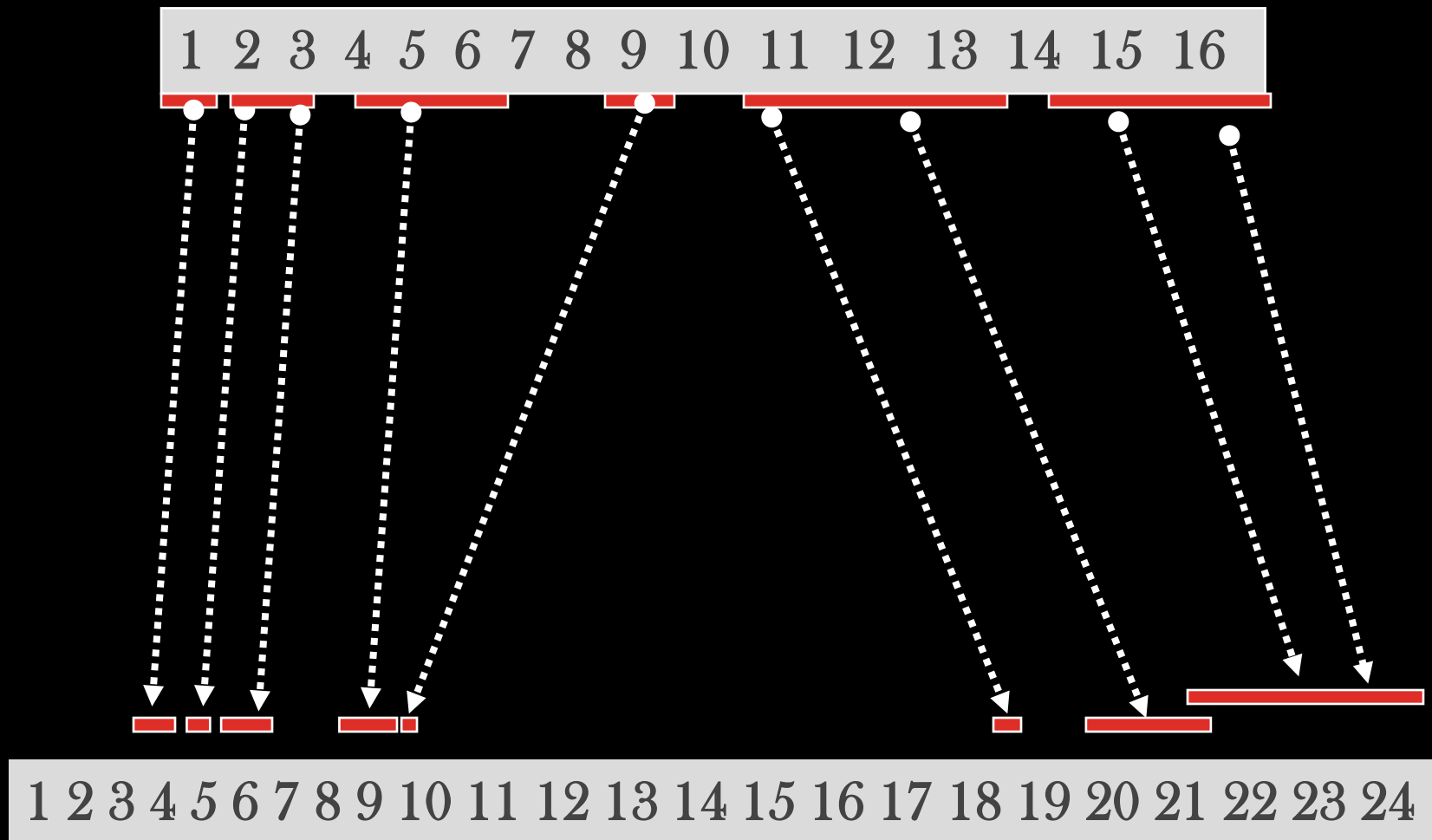


# LUKE'S CONTEXT

- 2-3<sup>rd</sup> Generation of Greco-Roman Jesus Followers
- C 85 CE, adaptation of Mark's Gospel
- Negotiating Greco-Roman World
- Two writings: Gospel of Luke & Acts of the Apostles
- Portrait of Jesus (and followers eg. Paul in Acts) as wisdom, ascetic teacher
- Luke's audience: Social mix, rich, poor, master, slaves, domestic residents
- Gospel addressed primarily (though not exclusively) to the wealthy, status-driven members
- Intention: to reconfigure Greco-Roman expression of "friendship" & social structures



# M A R K



# L U K E

<u><a href="#">Matthew 1-2</a></u> (only 48 verses, including genealogy)	<u><a href="#">Luke 1-2</a></u> (total of 132 verses, plus 16 more in genealogy)
1 - Title of the Gospel	1:1-4 - Literary introduction to the Gospel
2:1-17 - The Genealogy of Jesus (from Abraham to King David to Exile to Joseph)	(Genealogy included later, in Luke 3:23-38)
	1:5-25 - Angel Gabriel announces John the Baptist's birth
18-24 - An unnamed angel announces Jesus' birth to Joseph in a dream	1:26-38 - Angel Gabriel announces Jesus' birth to Mary while awake
	1:39-56 - Mary visits Elizabeth (incl. Mary's "Magnificat")
	1:57-58 - Elizabeth gives birth to her son (John the Baptist)
	1:59-80 - John the Baptist is circumcised & named (incl. Zechariah's "Benedictus")
	2:1-5 - Joseph & Mary journey to Bethlehem for the census
25 & 2:1a - <b>Mary's son is born</b> in Bethlehem of Judea, and he is <b>named Jesus</b>	2:6-7 - <b>Mary gives birth to her son</b> in Bethlehem of Judea (but the infant is not named until v. 21)
	2:8-14 - Angels appear to some shepherds (incl. the angels' "Gloria")
	2:15-20 - Shepherds visit Mary & Joseph & the infant lying in a manger
	2:21 - The infant is circumcised & <b>named Jesus</b>
	2:22-38 - Jesus is presented to God in the Temple (incl. Simeon's "Nunc Dimittis")
1b-12 - Magi from the East come; they first visit Herod, then Jesus	-
13-21 - Joseph & Mary flee to Egypt with the child Jesus; the Innocents are murdered; the Holy Family returns to Israel	-
22-23 - They journey to Nazareth (for the first time)	2:39-40 - The family returns to Nazareth
	2:41-52 - At age twelve, Jesus & his parents visit the Jerusalem Temple

# STRUCTURE OF LK 1-2

John Baptist	Jesus
<b>Birth Annunciation (1:5-25)</b>	<b>Birth Annunciation (1:26-38)</b>
Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (1:39-45)	
Canticle: Magnificat (1:46-55)	
<b>Birth of John (1:57-58)</b>	<b>Birth of Jesus (2:1-20)</b>
	<i>'...Gloria in Excelsis..'</i> (2:13-14)
<b>Circumcision (1:59-79)</b>	<b>Circumcision (2:21)</b>
<i>'Benedictus'</i> (1:67-79)	Purification in Temple Simeon & Anna (2:22-38) <i>'Nunc Dimittis'</i> (2:28-32) Return to Nazareth (2:39)
<b>Growth of Child (1:80)</b>	<b>Growth of Child (2:40)</b>
	Finding in Temple (2:41-51) Growth of Child (2:52)



# WHO IS JESUS?

1:26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was **much perplexed** by his words and **pondered** what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

# WHO IS JESUS?

1:32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since **I do not know a male?**" 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy... 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

# MARY IN LK-ACTS

Lk 1:29

‘..But she was *dietrachte* by his words & *dielogizeto* what sort of greeting this might be...’

‘*wonder*’/ ‘*dialogue about...*’

‘*disturb deeply; confusion*’

Lk 2:19

‘...but Mary *suneterei* all these words and *sumballousa* them in her heart...’

Compare, meditate upon,  
hit upon right meaning

Tension

Watch closely, preserve,  
keep safe, keep in being



# LK 2:1-7

2:1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 *And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

EMPEROR

PEASANTS

URBAN ELITE

LANDLESS  
&  
DISPOSSESSED

## LUKE 2:8-16

<sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> So they went...



LK 2:14

Glory

among the highest to God

and upon on the earth peace

among human beings

*eudokias* (good will, favoured, chosen)!





# REFLECTIONS FROM LUKE

- Jesus:
  - Child of God
  - Child of Earth
  - Agent of the Spirit
  - Source of Joy
  - Gift of and to Creation and Humanity
- Hospitality central
- Jesus' birth affects the Culture & Politics of the Day
- Lk's Jesus allows us to celebrate and rejoice in the presence & action of God now
- To experience 'the divine salvific act' = "Jeshuah" (Lk 1.31)





# CHRISTMAS

Some Overall Thoughts

# SOME OVERALL THOUGHTS

- Reclaim an “Adult Christ” this Christmas
- These are adult Gospel stories intended for adults
- Allow Children to celebrate them in their own way—resist the temptation to make the stories ‘childish’ or only for children
- Affirm the theological intent of each of the Gospel traditions in Lk and Mt
- Moment of ‘evangelisation’—one of the few times that families attend churches—or desire to attend, albeit with Covid restrictions.
- How can hospitality be key encounter in the parish or faith community?