



MATTHEW 1 AND LUKE 1

COME FOLLOW ME COMMENTARY

BY LYNNE WILSON

The Book of Mormon adds important details to the nativity narratives

Only in the Book of Mormon do we find prophecy foretelling the name of the virgin mother of the Messiah, and prophecy that she will be from Nazareth (Mosiah 3:8, 1 Nephi 11:13, 21). Four hundred years later, as the Nephites are further removed from the memory of their Judaic homeland, when Alma speaks of Jesus' birth, he uses a more general reference to the old world geography—"he shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem" (Alma 7:10). These details add to the reality that the text was ancient. A nineteenth century American would most likely claim Bethlehem as the birthplace not the larger city six miles away. These little details add to the historical account in the New Testament.

New Testament Birth Narratives Part 1

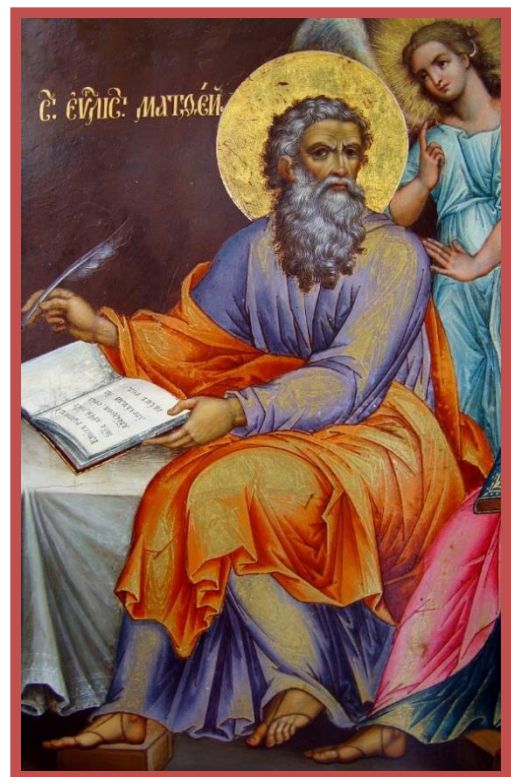
Only Matthew and Luke describe Jesus' birth stories. Matthew has Joseph as the receiver of divine dreams and the main character (with magi and Herod on the side). Luke has Mary as the visionary and main character (with angel Gabriel, Zacharias, Elisabeth, Gabriel, shepherds, Simeon and Anna as supporting figures).

MATTHEW

Matthew begins with a genealogy or “generations” in the KJV (which is Greek γενέσεως for “Genesis,” tying his opening to the first book of the Torah). Joseph’s genealogy is carefully organized around the number fourteen, as we read in Mt 1:17—

So all the generations from Abraham to David are **fourteen** generations; [-750 years]
and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are **fourteen** generations; [-400 years]
and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are **fourteen** generations. [-600 years]

The author wants to emphasize fourteen here and throughout his gospel,¹ even though his manipulated names and dates (omitting 6 kings, etc.) don’t add up to fourteen as written. Fourteen was significant as it represented the name David in Hebrew orthography.² Therefore, with both names and numbers it shows that Joseph is a descendant of King David. (Luke also includes Joseph’s genealogy, but not until chapter 3 for significant theological reasons we will discuss in chapter three.)



Saint Matthew the Evangelist. Image via Wikimedia Commons

I want to highlight two other interesting details about the genealogy. First, lineage was not a science and often skipped generations as we see here. Even though Joseph's follows kingly lines up to 598 BC (*Jechonias / Jehoiachin*, 2 Kings 24:8), we have no evidence that Joseph was the dauphin. Second, the genealogy includes the names of four women—all of whom had peculiar circumstance (including Ruth, the Moabite convert, and Tamar, who used adultery and incest carried on Judah's posterity, Genesis 38). I presume Matthew included them to add to the message that Israel includes variegated ancestors.

The rest of Matthew's birth narrative is organized around five prophetic scriptures and five dreams:



King David Playing the Harp by Gerard von Honthorst. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

SCENE	SCRIPTURE	CONTENT
Introduction	1:1-17	Genealogy
Scene One	1:18-25 (Isa 7:14)	First dream of Joseph
Scene Two	2:1-12 (Micah 5:1)	Magi go to Herod, then Bethlehem, and receive a divine warning
Scene Three	2:13-15 (Hosea 11:1)	Second dream of Joseph and journey to Egypt
Scene Four	2:16-18 (Jer 31:15)	Herod kills the male infants of Bethlehem
Scene Five	2:19-23 (Isa 4:3?)	Third and fourth dreams of Joseph and journey to Nazareth

We will look at Matthew 2, next week, and only touch on scene one here.

Matthew Scene One 1:18-25

Mt 1:18 The Greek word, “γένεσις/genesis” is repeated and translated as “birth” and “generations,” to connect the genealogy to the nativity narrative.³ The references to genesis, begetting, and Holy Spirit, in this verse all speak of the OT creation theme (Gen 1-2).

This verse tells of Joseph’s “μνηστευθείσης/ espousal / pledge.” This refers to the first of the two-part Jewish marriage ceremony. During the first part, a public ceremony was held where the fathers or guardians of the couple wrote out a marriage contract.⁴ This made the betrothal more than an engagement or party. It included vows as binding as the marriage—which could only be broken by divorce or widowhood.⁵ Usually, after a year, the second party occurred when the couple repeated their vows in the groom’s house, had another grand party, and the young couple lived in the groom’s family home (usually for a few years until the couple could afford their own place).⁶

At the time of the New Testament (NT), fathers (or guardians) arranged their daughter’s marriage before she turned twelve and a half.⁷ According to the Mishnah, the ideal age for a groom to marry was 18, but we find a many between 12–24.⁸ It was common to betroth someone in the same socio-economic class who shared familial ties.⁹

Mt 1:19 “To put her away,” was to divorce her. A Jewish fiancé/husband could divorce his wife for a range of reasons from burning supper and infertility. It was a religious duty to divorce a woman for adultery (and anything that suggested moral uncleanness). One could arrange a divorce either publicly or privately.¹⁰



Jewish Wedding in Morocco by Eugène Delacroix. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Mt 1:20 Joseph made up his mind to have a private divorce until an angelic messenger redirects him.¹¹ According to Jewish thought, a dream was a reliable source of information from God.¹² The fact that the announcement came to Joseph in a dream would dispose him to receive it all the more. The angel honored Joseph by calling him a “son of David.” Other than Jesus, Joseph is the only person in the NT, to receive this kingly title.

Mt 1:21 When a father named a baby, it represented his claim to the child, or adoption. The angel instructs Joseph to name Mary’s son after the prophet Joshua / *Yeshua* (in Hebrew: to save-*verb*, or salvation-*noun*) from *Yehoshau* (Yahweh helps), which is Jesus in Greek. The shared name suggests shared experiences.

JOSHUA

JESUS

Born in Egypt (Num 14:26–31)

He was born into the world or symbolic Egypt

Called to leave Egypt (Ex 3:7–10)

Called forth from Egypt (Matt 2:20)

40 yr purification in the wilderness (Num 14:27–33)

40 days of Jesus' purifying fast (Mt 4:2 Mk 1:13 Lk 4:2)

Defended plan go to the Promised Land (Num 14:27–33)

Defended Father's plan to for agency (Moses 4:2–3)

Named Moses' successor (Num 27:18, 23) and anointed with hands on his head and promised by God: "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, not forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5)

Named the Father's chosen Son (Abr. 3:27), the Anointed one, or *Messiah*. "He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone" (John 8:29)

Lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land (Deu 3:28; Josh 1:2, 3:5,13–17). Israel left their old life and entered into a new covenant, as a symbolic baptism, "all the people were passed clean" (Deu 3:17), walking through the river Jordan near Bethabara.

Will lead the way for all mankind to enter an Eternal promised land, starting with His baptism at Bethabara as an example for all to follow (John 1:28–34)

Fought and conquered enemies of Israel so that his people could enjoy the promises of their fathers (Joshua 4).

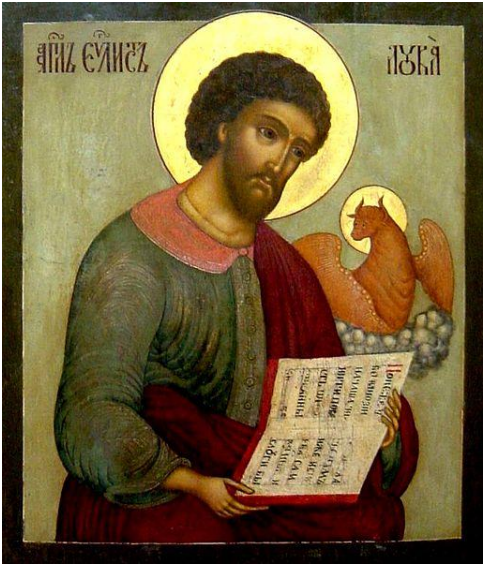
Defeated the enemy of all righteousness, even Satan and saved all of Israel (Rom 11:26–27)

He distributed promised lands to those children of Israel who survived the purification in the wilderness (Joshua 13–22). He established peace and a government as the Prophet / High Priest and Judge.

He will give promised kingdoms of glory to all mankind who pass their first estate, and judge their second estate (D&C 76). He will establish a government of peace and reign as the Prince of Peace, the Great High Priest, (Rev 22, Isa 9:6).

Mt 1:22 Matthew's organizing core begins with: "the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise..." (1:18), and then focuses the message, "to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" (1:22). We find versions of this verse, or "fulfillment passages," 14 times throughout Matthew (see footnote 1). They illustrate how Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy of the Promised Messiah.

LUKE



Saint Luke the Evangelist via Wikimedia Commons

Chronologically, Luke’s nativity story comes first. He begins his gospel with a classical Greek prologue (1:1–4), and then changes styles to recount the story of Zacharias and Elisabeth (Luke 1:5–25; 56–79). Luke does not record an exact history or chronology, but shows how Christianity is the logical outgrowth of Judaism. Luke organized his first two chapters into parallel episodes of John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ birth—always highlighting Jesus’ supremacy. Jesus is shown as more than a man, he was more than a prophet, he was Jehovah, the great Creator of the World, the Son of God. In fact, Luke uses that title, “Son of God,” for Jesus seven times. John the Baptist and his parents resemble upright Israelites prophets bridging the Old and New Testaments.

Luke’s Parallel Structure of John the Baptist and Jesus

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Annunciation by Gabriel (1:5–25)

Greeting of Elizabeth to Mary (1:39–45)

Birth (1:57–58)

Circumcision, Naming (1:59–63)

Declaration of Destiny by Zacharias (1:64–79)

Conclusion (1:80)

JESUS

Annunciation by Gabriel (1:26–38)

Greeting of Mary at Elizabeth’s home (1:46–56)

Birth narrative & Declaration of Destiny by Angel (2:1–20)

Circumcision, Naming (2:21)

Presentation at the Temple (2:24)

Destiny Declared by Simeon & Anna (2:29–38)

Conclusion (2:39–40)



Replica of Herod's Temple. Image via Wikimedia Commons

Luke Scene One: Annunciation to Zacharias in the Temple

Lk 1:5 While Herod came from three Semitic groups (he was half Idumean and Nabatean, and feigned allegiance to the Jewish Law of Moses), it was his Roman citizenship, and ambition that propelled him into political power. In 40 BC the Roman Senate appointed Herod the Great as King of the Jews, but the Jews rigorously fought his position for three years. In 37 BC, he crushed the Jews into submission in order to control Palestine. His jealous, brutal reign caused his Jewish subjects to detest his leadership. History remembers his reign most from his paranoid jealousy (which led him to murder thousands), and his grandiose building programs.¹³ In contrast to this despised king (and the Roman Caesar in chp 2:1), Luke introduces another king through the voices of a priest and priestess, Zacharias and Elisabeth, in the sanctuaries of the temple and their home.¹⁴

Lk 1:6–7 Luke emphasizes their righteousness three times, because the society assumed that infertility was God's punishment for sin—even though, many noble OT mothers were barren: Sarai or Sarah (Gen 25:21), Rachael (Gen 29:31), Samson's mother (Judg. 13:3), and Hannah (1 Sam 1:2).¹⁵ These “look-a-likes” connect the NT infancy narrative with the OT patriarchal narratives of Israel. Elisabeth and JHpst fit the pattern of past prophets. As planned, “All things were types of things to come” (Mosiah 3:13, also Hosea 12:10). Luke teaches the readers that the origins of JHpst (and Jesus in the next scene), involves a new creation, or a restoration of the covenant made with the patriarchs. The nativity account creates a bridge between the two testaments.

Lk 1:9 The OT outlines the Aaronic and Levitical temple service.¹⁶ The OT explains that priests served in the temple from age 30–50 years old (Numbers 4:3, 23, 35). In Ex 29:29, Aaron and his descendants are told to wash, anoint and consecrate or purify themselves before they serve. After they washed, they donned special white linen temple clothes within the precincts (Lev 16:3–4). They were also to repent and purify their actions and words (Ezekiel 44:17–27). As with most things religious, there is symbolism behind the priestly clothing. It replaced the daily garb to figuratively transport the priest from this world to heaven.

Five weeks a year the priests service in Herod's temple (one week for each Pilgrimage: Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of the Tabernacles, plus two other weeks bi-annually). Each morning before dawn and again in the early afternoon, the priests gathered in the “Hall of Polished Stones” to assign the daily temple assignments by “lot.”¹⁷ The privilege to light the incense within the sanctuary was given only once in a lifetime.¹⁸ So this is Zacharias' special day. The incense symbolized Israel's accepted prayers and was the most solemn part of the day's service.¹⁹ Performing this intercessory act was the only time a priest entered the sanctuary or Holy Place.²⁰ It was there, near the veil, that the angel Gabriel came to make his announcement to Zacharias.²¹

Lk 1:11–21 We have five angelic annunciations in the Bible (Ishmael, Isaac, Samson, JBPst and Jesus). In each one the angel begins with fear not, calls them by name, and prophecies of the birth of a son, and often gives the baby's name and a sign.²²

Lk 1:22 When Zacharias²³ finally came out of the Holy Place, those at the Temple were waiting to offer the priestly benediction, but “*he could not speak unto them.*” His silence was a louder witness of his vision than his voice would have been. The KJV “speechless” in Greek can include both deaf and dumb (Luke 1:62).

Lk 1:24 Elisabeth, like Sarah, felt God's grace in answering her prayers for a child. Her heartfelt rejoicing after decades of humiliation, was kept within her home though as her culture encouraged women indoors most of the time.

Scene Two: Annunciation of Jesus, Luke 1:26-38

Lk 1:26 Nazareth was a relatively unknown little rocky town on a hill in the middle of Galilee. The roots of the name mean “branch.” Only in the Book of Mormon is there a prophecy that foretells the virgin mother of the Messiah will be from Nazareth (1 Nephi 11:13, 21). Archeologists estimate the population was only a few hundred.

Lk 1:27 Luke emphasizes Mary's chastity by his choice of “παρθένου/ *parthenos* / virgin,” not merely “*pais* / girl” or “*paidiske* / maid. It sounds as if Mary was also Davidic, but perhaps that is through marriage. Later we learn she has a relative who is Aaronic, Elisabeth.

Lk 1:28–31 Gabriel addresses Mary/Mariam with honor and peace and to fear not. Mary found favor with God by obedience, a soft heart, purity, and by developing faith, hope, and charity. She is the greatest woman born.

Lk 1:31–33 Gabriel tells Mary to name the child Jesus (see 2 Nephi 25:19). Gabriel's message rings with OT scripture and the Messianic role outlined by the prophet Nathan in 2 Sam 7:9–16 (also Isaiah 9:7; 2 Sam 7:8–16; Amos 9:11). We have to assume that Mary's questioning came from a different heart than Zacharias' questions, as the outcome is different. Many English translations state her question as, "I am still a virgin." It was humanly impossible, but Gabriel explains the powerful Holy Spirit can work miracles. Mary believes, "with God nothing is impossible." The "holy thing" becomes the "Holy One of God" in Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; and John 6:69; and the "Holy One" in Acts 3:14. Jesus is set apart and consecrated to the service of God as the Holiest of all born on the earth.



An Angel Fortells Christ's Birth. Image via LDS Media Library

Lk 1:35 Luke tells us that there was never a moment on this earth when Jesus was not the Son of God—unlike much biblical debate over the subject.

Lk 1:36 Elisabeth is the only blood relative we know of Mary's (unclear kinsman, cousin, aunt?). Elisabeth points to OT examples of barren women like Sarah, Rachael, and Hannah.

Lk 1:37 This message of great faith sounds like Genesis 18:14 "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" and Job 42:2 "I know that thou canst do everything."

Lk 1:38 Mary submits herself as a “*doule* / handmaid” (involuntary or voluntary female slave). She expresses her humility as the slave/servant of the Lord (also see Zephaniah 3:14–17, and Zechariah 9:9). Female slaves at the time were considered a type of concubine who could bear children for their master.²⁴ With one-third of the Roman empire as slaves, Mary knew the implications of this word.²⁵ She is the first NT mortal voice of the Christological message.

Lk 1:39 A young maiden was not allowed to travel alone in Judea, or even go out all.²⁶ We presume she traveled with a local caravan or pilgrimage. It demonstrates her faith in Gabriel’s message and her courage and determination to fulfill her new calling “with haste.” The Judean hill country (1 Sam 1:1) is in the south and extends from the coastal plain inland and eastward. As a priest, Zacharias was encouraged to live within a day’s journey of the temple.

Elisabeth’s Witness

Lk 1:40–45 Gabriel promised that the baby John would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb (Lk 1:15); additionally, Elisabeth is filled with the Spirit. She expresses unrestrained joy as she prophesied of Mary’s child as “Lord.” The first two mortal witnesses of Jesus’ birth were women. This is contrary to Hebraic tradition that did not allow a woman to bear witness.²⁷ Those who are blessed of God (or fortunate) can also refer to all who believe the Lord will fulfill his promises.

Mary’s Magnificat

Lk 1:46–55 Mary’s becomes the spokeswomen for all down trodden who come to God.²⁸ Her poetic response is a mosaic of OT phrases from Isaiah 12:2, “God is my salvation;” Psalms 24:5, “God of his salvation;” Psalms 136:23, “Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth forever;” 1 Sam 1:11, “if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid;” Leviticus 11:44, “I am holy;” and etc.²⁹

Lk 1:56 Mary returns to Nazareth, after three months, shortly before Elisabeth delivers. The timing seems odd, but was probably scheduled around a group of people departing to Galilee.

Birth of John the Baptist (JBpst)

Lk 1: 57–5 The healthy and miraculous arrival of Elisabeth’s son fulfilled Gabriel’s promise that the birth would bring rejoicing. Her “relatives” rejoiced with her and for her. God’s mercy is credited for her the baby’s birth (1:14).

Lk 1:59 A son’s circumcision was a “token of the covenant” (Genesis 17:4) and performed on the 8th day—even if it were a sabbath (Leviticus 12:2–3). D&C 84:27–28 tells us a little more about this great day. John was “ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power [the Aaronic Priesthood?] to overthrow the

kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power.” The priesthood that holds the keys of the ministering of angels was bestowed by an angel.

Lk 1:60 Elisabeth intervened against the customs of the day. She exerts her faith in Gabriel’s promises.

Zacharias Testimony and Prophecy

Lk 1:63–79 After Zacharias testifies by writing, he is “immediately” allowed to verbally witness again.

Seventeen of the 19 uses of the word “immediately” in the NT are in Luke. The timing is a large part of the divine healing. Miracles are precisely timed to show God’s control of the elements and this healing is no exception. Zacharias’ first use of speech is appropriate—no frustration for the curse, but rather gratitude for the healing. While his previous words doubted, his next words spoke of his faith. He offers a hymn of praise known as the “Benedictus,” another mosaic of OT phrases and the Eighteen Benedictions.³⁰ (Zacharias’ blessing parallels Elisabeth’s in Luke 1: 42.) Filled with the Holy Ghost, Zacharias proclaims the restoration of the glories and offices of the temple, culminating with work for the dead.³¹

Lk 1:80–81 Luke parallel’s the experiences of John the Baptist and Jesus by summarizing their growth. When examining them we find Jesus’ character is even greater than the prophet John. Luke’s transition technique removes one person from the scene to give the spotlight to another. ❖

Header Image: *The Annunciation* by John Scott. Image via the LDS Media Library

ENDNOTES

¹ The gospel of Matthew cites 14 Old Testament (OT) prophecies and points out their fulfillment (Mt 1:22; 2:5, 15, 17, 23; 3:3; 4:14, 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9).

² In ancient Hebrew, orthography used numbers for meaning. David’s name, *D-W-D*, was 14. Biblical Hebrew numbers are written as letters of their alphabet. (It would be the same in English if A=1, B=2, C=3, and so on.) So, the name *dwd* would be, D=4, W=6, or 4+6+4=14. From the 5th C BC the accepted *gematria* of David’s name was 14.

³ Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 123.

⁴ *Mishnah*, “Ketubot,” 4:4–4:5

⁵ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel according to Luke I–IX* (New York: Doubleday, 1981).

⁶ Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, eds., *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. 22 vols. (Detroit, NYC, San Francisco: Thomson Gale, 2007), 13.565.

⁷ *Mishnah, Yebamoth*, 13.1. Rabbi Hillel (60 BC to 20 AD), wrote that a girl of twelve-and-a-half “may exercise right of refusal four or five times” in the selection of her husband. In reaction to this limit, the more lenient rabbinic school of Shammai retorted, “The daughters of Israel are no [such] ownerless property!” Shammai allowed the underage girl to stay in her father’s home until “she is come of age,” meaning the onset of puberty.

⁸ *Mishnah*, Abot 5:21 A. 689. The ideal age for young man’s marriage was eighteen. Caesar Augustus imposed a tax or fine for any female over 20, and male over 25, who were not married yet. Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization 7th ed.* (Belmont, CA: Thomson & Wadsworth, 2009), volume 1, 152.

⁹ The book of Jubilees recommends marriage with a cousin (Jub. 4:15.16, 20, 27, 28, 33; 11:7, 14)

¹⁰ Divorce could not be completely private, because it required a “writ of repudiation” before two witnesses (Brown, *Birth*, 128).

¹¹ D&C 130:5, “There are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it.”

¹² Alfred Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1898), 155. In reference to Proverbs 19:23, Rabbi Zera claims that three things showed God’s favor: “A good king, a fruitful year, and a good dream” (quoting ‘Ber. 55 b).

¹³ Herod’s building project included eight major fortresses (Masada, Machaerus, Herodium in Perea, Alexandria, Cyprus, Hurcania, and the Herodium southeast of Bethlehem), two elaborate Hellenistic cities (Augustus, and Caesarea Maritima). His crowning jewel, the Temple of Jerusalem (the rebuilding was begun in 20 BC and wasn’t completed until AD 62). Technically, this first King Herod ruled all Palestine, not just Judea.

¹⁴ Luke intrudes Zacharias as a priest (not the high priest). At the time of Jesus, the priesthood was divided into offices:

1. The reigning High Priest
2. The Chief Priests: The captains of the temple
 - a. The leaders of the 24 weekly divisions or “courses.”
 - b. Custody of the Temple: Temple overseers
 - c. Temple finances: Three treasurers
3. The Priests: 24 weekly courses each of four to nine daily courses with about 7,200 priests
4. The Levites: 24 weekly courses, each divided into:
 - a. Singers and musicians
 - b. Temple servants and guards with about 9,600 Levites

¹⁵ We find OT hints of this (Gen 16:4, 11; 29:32; 30:1; Lev 20:20–21; 1 Sam 1:5–6; 2 Sam 6:23), but by the time of the late second temple, the oral laws recorded in the Mishnah a husband’s religious duty to divorce his wife after 10 years of infertility.

¹⁶ David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 804. Levites or descendants of Levi were more numerous and took care of the more secular tasks of running the temple—acting as the temple police, gatekeepers, tax collectors, janitors, fire keepers, and musicians. They served at the temple between the ages of twenty-five and fifty, according to Numbers 8:24–25 (or age twenty, according to 1 Chronicles 23:24).

¹⁷ A “lot” was a private small stick placed in a dish. The one that fell out was supposedly chosen by God to serve that day.

MORNING LOTS

1. Cleanse the altar and to prepare its fires for the burnt animal offering.
2. Sacrifice the lamb, toss the blood, cleanse the candlestick and altar incense, and carry the animal up the ramp to the altar.
3. Burn incense and offer the priestly prayer
4. Places the meat offering on the altar.

EVENING LOTS (at the 9th hour or 3pm) Only the incense was offered as “a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations” (Ex 30:7–8). The afternoon lighting was “the time of prayer” (Acts 3:1).

¹⁸ *Mishnah*, Tamid 5:2–6:3. Before the “incense” lot was chosen the priests offered a blessing, recited the Ten Commandments, and the *shema* (Duet 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Num 15:37–41) as a confession of their faith.

¹⁹ *Mishnah* Tamid 6:3 and 7, describes a priest entering the sanctuary or Holy Place, then taking the incense from a bowl, onto the burning coals, and scatter it. After offering the incense, he “prostrated himself and went out.”

²⁰ Leviticus 16. The high priest alone went through the veil into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement.

²¹ Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos* (Salt Lake City, UT: Foundation of Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 42. “Civilization is heirocentric, centered around the holy point of the temple. ...The temple is also an observatory. That is what a *templum* is—a place where you take your bearings on things” (Ibid, 15,19).

²² Genesis 16:7–12; 17:1–21; 18:1; Judges 13:3–21; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:11–37; Luke 2:9–12.

²³ This the most common name in the OT, spelled both Zachariah and Zechariah. Do not mistaken this priest with the 9th Century BC high priest who was slain between the temple alter. See Lynne Hilton Wilson, “The Confusing Case of Zacharias,” *Religious Educator* 14, no. 2 (2013).

²⁴ Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament* (NYC: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), 23.

²⁵ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Bartchy, “Servant” 4.420, 545. Tim G. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins, 2003), 183.

²⁶ Judaeus Philo, *Special Laws III*, 7 vols. (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1967), 3.169, 171 “Marketplaces and council-halls, law-courts and gatherings, and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action – all these are suitable to men both in war and peace. The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house . . . A woman then, should not be a busybody, meddling with matters outside her household concerns, but should seek a life of seclusion.”

²⁷ Josephus, *Josephus Complete Works: Antiquities of the Jews*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, Reprint, 1978), IV.8:15. Skolnik, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 21.161.

²⁸ Brown, *Birth*, 335, 357

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 337; Exodus 6:6; 34:6; II Sam 7:15; Deut 4:34; Isa 13:11; 41:8, 44:1, 45:4; 1 Chr 29:18; Gen 50:4; Jer 17:11; 1 Sam 2:5–7;

³⁰ Skolnik, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1.73–74. From the time of the Second Temple, male and female Jews offered a set of eighteen benedictions, which began by referring to God: 1. of the patriarchs, 2. of nature, and 3. sanctification. The prayer then petitioned God for: 4. understanding, 5. repentance, 6. forgiveness, 7. redemption, 8. healing, 9. food, 10. gathering of exiles, 11. restore His righteous reign; 12. against heretics, 13. mercy for the righteous, 14. Jerusalem, 15. the messianic king, 16. hear our prayers, 17. return God’s presence to the temple, and 18. thanks to God for all his mercies. The prayer had slight variations for certain Sabbath services or holy days.

³¹ Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 43.