Several readers have asked about my comment that Matthew and Luke appear to contradict each other in their birth narratives, especially when Matthew indicates that Jesus’ family fled to Egypt after his birth but Luke claims they went straight back to Nazareth, a month later. I’ve posted on this issue several times over the years on the blog, but maybe a refresher would be helpful for those with questions. Here is how I explain the matter in my book Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium, slightly edited. (See especially my final point.)

Matthew and Luke the only Gospels that narrate the events of Jesus’ birth (in both Mark and John, Jesus makes his first appearance as an adult). What is striking – and what most readers have never noticed – is that the two accounts are quite different from one another. Most of the events mentioned in Matthew are absent from Luke, and vice-versa. In itself, this doesn’t necessarily create historical problems, of course: two persons could write completely accurate accounts of WWII and never mention the same events. The problem is that some of the differences between Matthew and Luke are very difficult to reconcile with one another. At least, as we’ll see, this is one of the problems.

Let’s begin with …

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