

As I indicated yesterday, I'm doing a series of posts leading up to Christmas, dealing with the accounts of Jesus' birth in the New Testament. Here's a discussion of the one most familiar to people, found in the Gospel of Luke.

As I've indicated, it is only Matthew and Luke that tell the tales of the infancy narrative, and the annual "Christmas Pageant" that so many of us grew up seeing is in fact a conflation of the two accounts, making one mega-account out of two that are so different up and down the line. And so, the Annunciation to Mary is in Luke, the dream of Joseph in Matthew; the shepherds are in Luke, the wise men in Matthew; the trip to Bethlehem is in Luke, the Flight to Egypt is in Matthew, and so forth and so on. You can compare them yourself, up and down the line, and see the differences.

In this post I want to focus on Luke's account. Then I will look at Matthew's. And then I will compare the two in a couple of key points in order to show that the differences between them are not simply different aspects of the same story - the accounts in fact are at odds with one another in rather important ways.

Luke's account begins with the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zechariah, followed by the Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary that she will conceive without having sex, through the Holy Spirit. Mary visits Elizabeth, breaks into song, John the Baptist is born, and Zechariah speaks a prophecy. All of that is in chapter 1, and a lot could be said about it (and *has* been said about it!). But for the purposes of these posts, I'm more interested in what happens in ch. 2.

Starting in 2:1 we're told that...

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