

## Lecture 14: Luke's Infancy Narrative

### Early Christian Gospels

Before turning to Luke's infancy narrative, I want to address briefly the issue of Luke's purpose in writing Luke-Acts.

Tuckett lays out for you the relevant data and he assesses the main proposals of Luke's purpose in writing this two volume set. As you know, he favors seeing these books written against an early form of a belief that would later become identified with Marcion: a rejection of Judaism as a base religion that had come to corrupt even early Christian writings.

The reservations I have about Tuckett's hypothesis are three. First, as he acknowledges, one's assumptions about Luke's audience will shape one's conclusions. And Tuckett's audience is based on Luke's persistent attempt to present this faith as springing from Judaism. The problem is that extrapolating from that to a polemic against Christians who sought to deny a connection to Judaism is a large leap. It's one way to read Luke's insistence on Judaism as Christianity's seed bed, but it's not the only one, especially since Luke provides no explicit indication he is targeting something like Marcion's beliefs.

Secondly, in constructing this scenario, there is an important strand of Lukan material Tuckett leaves aside: the friendly portrayal of Roman government. Whether it's Pilate trying to exonerate Jesus or the governor Felix, followed by his successor Agrippa, holding cordial conversations with Paul – Luke's portrayal of Roman rulers is very gracious. If Luke were primarily concerned to affirm Christianity's link to Judaism for a Christian audience, why this effort to put Rome in the best light?

Third, and most important, is the absence of any discussion of Luke's prologue. While Tuckett correctly says we know nothing of Theophilus, we have to take seriously Luke's stated intent to write to a Roman aristocrat who has been instructed in the faith and needs reassurance of the validity of what he has heard. That is certainly the *type* of audience Luke has in view.

With that in mind, understanding Luke-Acts as a kind of apology seems appropriate. While I agree with Tuckett that is certainly not an apology written to a general Roman audience, summaries of Jesus' teaching and early Christian preaching are just the sort of thing that would have been included in a tract written to a new believer.

Moreover, not only does Luke's sympathetic portrayal of Roman rulers fit this scenario, but so also does his insistence on the Jewish roots of the Christian movement and, equally, his depiction of the rift between Jesus and his followers, on the one hand, and the majority of Judaism on the other. After all, not only did Luke have to account for why Jesus was put to death as an enemy of the state, but

also why Judaism – to whose ancient star Luke hitched Christianity – rejected Jesus and his followers. Portraying Jesus as a classic prophetic martyr whose innocence Rome's surrogate recognized, and then portraying Paul, especially, as one whose innocence rulers like Festus and Agrippa recognized, was key to portraying the Jesus movement (the Way) in a favorable light for a Roman audience.

So, for what it's worth, I find that a more satisfactory explanation of the evidence available as to why Luke wrote his two volume work.

With this understanding Luke's purpose in mind, as well as a sense of how Luke went about editing and using the materials he received, we'll turn to his narrative, beginning with his infancy narrative in chapters 1-2.

Of course, Luke is not alone in providing such a narrative; Matthew likewise begins with two chapters about the beginning of Jesus' life. And yet, the Third Gospel's infancy narrative is strikingly different from Matthew's. Those differences become apparent if we bring in an outline of these two narratives so as to compare their contents side-by-side.

Matthew's narrative begins by tracing Jesus' genealogy from David down to Jesus. Luke also has a genealogy, but not within the birth narrative; it appears only after Jesus has begun his work. Moreover, Luke's genealogy traces Jesus' descent from Adam, rather than from Abraham.

The Lukan infancy narrative begins with an angel's promise to an older, childless couple that they will have a son, whom they are to name John and who will prepare the way for the Messiah. This episode is absent from Matthew, who instead, on the heels of his genealogy, tells of Joseph's consternation at finding out his betrothed pregnant and knowing he was not the father. An angel reassures Joseph that Mary has not been unfaithful; she carries a child engendered by the Holy Spirit.

At the corresponding spot in Luke, we find what is called the annunciation, which also involves an angelic visitation, but to Mary, announcing that she will bear a child by the Holy Spirit. In Luke this prompts Mary to visit her pregnant relative Elizabeth, upon which occasion she utters the *Magnificat*, extolling the Lord for his goodness to her. But all of this finds no parallel in Matthew, who also lacks Luke's next report of the birth of John.

While both gospels carry a report of Jesus' birth, Matthew's is much briefer Luke's. In fact, in Matthew Jesus' birth is mentioned almost in passing at the conclusion of the angel's words to Joseph, while in Luke Jesus birth is announced by the angels to a group of shepherds near Bethlehem, who then come to see the newborn child.

In place of the shepherds' visit, Matthew tells of a trio of magi (astrologers) who arrive in Jerusalem, following a star they observed in the east some time earlier.

After being directed to Bethlehem, they worship the child Jesus. Of course, this leads to Joseph and Mary's flight from Bethlehem to Egypt, just before Herod slaughters all Bethlehemite children two years and younger, based on information he had gained from the Magi.

This tragic incident is not found in Luke, who reports instead a scene of Mary and Joseph traveling to Jerusalem to present their infant according to the rituals demanded by temple law – a scene not narrated by Matthew. However, Matthew and Luke both conclude their infancy narratives with a report about Jesus growing up as a child in Nazareth.

In fact, one of the most striking differences between Matthew and Luke we encounter in their narratives regards the role of Nazareth and Bethlehem in Jesus' early life.

Matthew's narrative, on the one hand, provides no explanation as to what Joseph and Mary were doing in Bethlehem; that's simply where the story of Jesus' birth unfolds. In fact, the first time Matthew says anything about where Jesus was born is in his story of the arrival of the Magi, where Bethlehem is mentioned rather casually: "In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem." What's more, Herod's deduction from the Magi's report that he should kill all males two years and younger suggests that significant time has elapsed between Jesus' birth and their visit. And yet, they still find Jesus and his parents in Bethlehem, and in a house, no less! Matthew seems to assume a more extended and settled stay in Bethlehem than does Luke.

Moreover, when Joseph and Mary (in Matthew) return from Egypt after having fled Herod's wrath, they apparently intend to return to Judea until they receive discouraging news: "<sup>21</sup>Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup>But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup>There he made his home in a town called Nazareth." The words, "he made his home in a town called Nazareth," give the impression this is the first time Joseph had lived in Nazareth. And the narrative implies he wouldn't have wound up there if it hadn't been for the continuing threat; he would have returned to Judea – which is peculiar if, as *Luke* reports, Joseph traveled to Bethlehem simply to fulfill the requirements of a census.

In fact, Luke paints Nazareth as Joseph and Mary's *hometown*: "<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary." It is only because of a census requiring a journey to ancestral homes that they end up in Bethlehem: "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.”

After Jesus' birth, the family returns to Nazareth, and there Jesus spends his youth.

My point is not to say, “Look, we caught Matthew and Luke disagreeing about geography,” but to highlight that both of them treat geography as a means to saying something about Jesus. In the case of Matthew, the point of Jesus originally being from Bethlehem is that it fulfills scripture. When Herod consults with the scribes, they are able to answer his question about where this new “king of the Jews” has been born based on the scriptures: “<sup>5</sup>They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup>“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for *from you* shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.””

Equally, the flight to Egypt and the return allow Matthew to find another fulfillment of prophecy in the events of Jesus' infancy: “This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “*Out of Egypt* I have called my son.” And again, when the family sets up housekeeping in Nazareth, Matthew is able to find in this a fulfillment of prophecy: “There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazorean.” Matthew uses geography to draw correlations between statements in the Hebrew Bible and Jesus, in keeping with his emphasis (as we shall see) that Jesus culminates Israel's story.

Not surprisingly, Luke uses geography for similar purposes in his infancy narrative. Unlike Matthew, Luke makes nothing of Nazareth as Jesus' hometown or that of his parents. However, he uses the story of a compulsory trip to Bethlehem to show that Jesus' family roots run back to David. That's why the angel announces to the shepherds, “To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” -- For Luke the issue is not a prophecy that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, but that Jesus' birth in that village proves his descent from David, and thus of royal blood.

Given these stark differences, we cannot trace these elements back to a common source like Q. At the same time, however, there are some striking parallels in the midst of these differences.

E.g. both Matthew and Luke, in their angelic visitations, characterize Mary as a virgin, attributing Jesus' birth to the Holy Spirit; and they forecast Jesus' birth in virtually the same language: “She/You will bear a son, and you will/are to name him Jesus.” These words are based on Isaiah 7.14, which Matthew alone cites:

<sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel.” So in these accounts we find shared the assumption that Mary is a

virgin, attribution of her pregnancy to the Spirit, and the use of similar language to forecast Jesus' birth to her.

Elsewhere Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, even if they disagree about how that came about. Correlatively, they agree that Jesus spent his child-hood in Nazareth, even if they disagree about how Mary and Joseph settled there.

In more general terms, they agree that Jesus' parents were Joseph and Mary, and that the news of his birth was attended by divine signs, due to which those who witnessed them visited and adored the child.

This list of common features in Matthew's and Luke's infancy narratives suggests that, at the least, they shared traditions about the birth. And despite the differences between them, the sharing of the motif of visiting worshippers who had been notified by a divine sign, and (above all) their use of the similar formulation, "She/You will bear a son, and you will/are to name him Jesus," encourages the inference that there is some sort of relationship between these two narratives. But what is it? For now, let's study the Lukan narrative to see what answers we can glean from it.

Luke sets up the births of John and of Jesus in what amount to a pair of panels, each divided in half. The first half of each panel has to do with the annunciation of the births. Luke interweaves these announcements artfully, drawing comparisons and contrasts. In both stories the mothers-to-be have impediments to bearing the children promised: Elizabeth has been unable to conceive, while Mary is a virgin. Consequently, the birth of each child is due to divine intervention.

Moreover, in both cases the Spirit is involved. In the case of John, it is predicted that he will be filled with the Spirit – language used throughout the Hebrew scriptures for the empowerment of a prophet. In Jesus' case, of course, the Spirit is explicitly said to engender him. And then, of course, later on, at his baptism, he receives the Spirit, just as John has.

Another parallel between these annunciations is that in both cases the child's name is assigned in advance. This becomes a bigger issue in John's birth than in Jesus', since people protest naming the child John until his mute father writes a note confirming this as his name.

The assignment of the child's role is another parallel. The statement about John emphasizes his role as a prophet, drawing on language from the end of the prophetic book of Malachi to say that he will have the spirit and power of Elijah so as to prepare the people.

The statement of Jesus' role begins like that about John, saying that "he will be great." And yet, this announcement is stated in terms of his royal office as a descendant of David, sitting on the throne of David. Luke appropriates language from Isaiah 11 about the lack of a limit to his rule. Even the language about being

“Son of the Most High” must, in this context, be understood in terms of this royal office, for Israel’s king was always spoken of as the *son* of the deity.

When we turn to the lower halves of the panels, which narrate the birth, circumcision and naming of the children, we once again find similarities amidst differences.

For one thing, both children are circumcised on the 8th day after birth (as the Torah requires), and on that occasion each is given the name specified by the angel – a fact that is highlighted in ways unique to each narrative. On the one side, there is the insistence that “John” will be the child’s name, in accord with the angel’s directions and over the protests of friends. In the case of Jesus, Luke specifies, “After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, *the name given by the angel* before he was conceived in the womb.” -- So each narrative emphasizes that the name specified by the angel was assigned to the child.

Another parallel between these two panels is that the response to each child’s birth is wonder. In the case of John, friends and neighbors express astonishment when Zechariah recovers speech after confirming the name of the child: “Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.”

In the case of Jesus’ birth, it is the people in the environs of Bethlehem that marvel at what they have heard from the shepherds, who visited the birth site and then spread the news.

Yet another similarity between these two sections of the narrative is that the birth and naming of each child is capped with a proclamation of their significance. In the narrative of John’s birth, the proclaimer is his father, whom, you will notice, is portrayed functioning as a prophet: “Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

You'll notice that after the initial blessing of the "Lord God of Israel," the first half of Zechariah's speech delights in "a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David," so that these verses (through v. 75) actually refer to the anticipated birth of Jesus, not to John. And the plaudits Zechariah utters portray this deliverer as a royal figure, a descendant of David, whom the prophets had promised, just as the angel had stressed.

Not until the second half of this speech does Zechariah address his son, referring to him as "the prophet of the Most High," parallel to the earlier reference to Jesus as "Son of the Most High." And curiously enough, his role will be to give knowledge of salvation to the people by the forgiveness of their sins.

What makes this intriguing is that while Matthew interprets the meaning of the name "Jesus" as one who has come to "save people from their sins," in Luke this is *John's* role. The expected role of the one to come, on the other hand, is that he would save us "from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us." The result of such salvation is to be that "we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days." -- So Jesus is described as more of a traditional national deliverer, while John brings forgiveness.

Now, corresponding to this proclamation at John's birth, we find an acclamation of Jesus shortly after his birth, on the day Joseph and Mary fulfill the requirement of presenting their first born son at the temple. In the temple that day was an elderly man named Simeon, whom Luke characterizes not only as looking for the salvation of Israel, but also as one on whom the Holy Spirit rests (= a prophet), to whom the Holy Spirit had made revelations, and who was present this day because the Holy Spirit had led him there. This Spirit-laden man makes a statement about the infant Jesus, acknowledging him as the long-awaited deliverer of Israel who will also serve as a light to the Gentiles.

But Simeon is not the only one to so acknowledge Jesus. Luke reports that the same day a prophetess named Anna was also in the temple, and that she began "to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." I.e. she began to proclaim that this infant was the promised deliverer.

So on both sides of these panels we find proclamations about a recently born child, one of whom brings forgiveness, the other deliverance.

A final parallel built into these panels is that both halves of the narrative conclude with similar summary statements. The conclusion to the story of John's birth reads, "The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel." The conclusion to Jesus' infancy narrative reads similarly: "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him."

Therefore, virtually every feature throughout each of the two threads of this narrative has a counterpart in the other thread.

What's the importance of these parallels Luke develops? First of all, they help us perceive that these infancy narratives are carefully crafted. They aren't simply a writer recounting "what happened," but are carefully constructed to make a couple of points.

One point is that John and Jesus form a matched set. John, like Simeon and Anna, will be a prophet preparing the way for Jesus. But more than that, John's mother and Jesus' mother are related, which provides opportunity for Elizabeth to acclaim Mary and gives John the chance to jump in Elizabeth's womb when Mary comes for a visit – again highlighting the intimate relationship between Jesus and John. And there are no less than 5 other times throughout Luke's Gospel (that is, beyond the birth narrative) that attention is drawn to parallels between John and Jesus in a way distinctive to Luke.

E.g. Matthew has Jesus offer his disciples an exemplary prayer (the "Our Father") as part of his instruction about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, after warning them to avoid the abuses of the Gentiles, who "heap up empty phrases," supposing "they will be heard because of their many words."

Luke, on the other hand, sets Jesus' teaching of this prayer in the context of his own praying: "He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray...." This shift in situation isn't surprising if we recall that in deleting Mark's report of a journey to Caesarea Philippi as the occasion for Peter's confession of Jesus' identity, Luke substituted this setting: "Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him...." Prayer is another of Luke's distinctive emphases, as is apparent in his creation of prayer as the context for Peter's confession and again for the story of Jesus teaching his disciples to pray.

And yet, it is not simply Jesus' provision of an exemplary prayer in the context of his own prayer, nor even that it is requested by a disciple, that is significant for us at this moment, but more so that the disciple requests Jesus teach them to pray, "as John taught his disciples." The drawing of this parallel is unique to Luke and is one of those instances where the evangelist draws a parallel between Jesus and John. Thus portraying John and Jesus as a "matched set" in his infancy narrative tags into a portrayal Luke creates elsewhere.

Another point made by these interlocked narratives is that the significance of each child is validated by prophecy. Following their births, people on whom the Spirit rests prophecy concerning them and their roles. This ties into Luke's emphasis on prophecy as a means of depicting the inevitability of what happens with Jesus. But more than that, while Matthew stresses the fulfillment of prophecy

to show Jesus as the culmination of Israel's expectations, Luke uses it more to show the *prophetic character* of both John and Jesus.

Luke's infancy narrative stresses Jesus' role by placing parallel the annunciations to Elizabeth and Mary, each of whom has an obstacle that must be overcome for the prophecy to be fulfilled. Thus both children are specially engendered emissaries of God. Not only that, but the birth of each child is accompanied by prophetic speeches and wonders. Via these comparisons and contrasts Luke is able to proclaim Jesus not only as the promised deliverer, but also (and especially) as a prophet.

Now that we have seen how Luke structured his infancy narrative and with what themes, let's inquire about his sources and how he composed this narrative.

One conclusion that is readily discernable is that Luke composed the infancy narrative only *after* he had completed his gospel and the book of Acts. Tuckett, of course, objects to this conclusion, asserting, "these are probably no afterthought, added as an optional extra to the rest of the story. Rather, they incorporate many key Lukan themes." But these are two separate issues. I concur with Tuckett that the infancy narratives "incorporate many key Lukan themes," but that doesn't guarantee that they were written as part of the original composition of Luke's Gospel. I'll highlight three features suggesting otherwise.

First, the narrative of preparation for Jesus' ministry, in chapter 3, is prefaced by this formally structured sentence: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness."

This single, complex sentence accords with the style of other Greek works having a formal preface. And this would form a fitting introduction to the main narrative after the address to Theophilus in 1:1-4, which also conforms to the style of dedicatory prologues in Greek literature. These passages are conspicuous for their literary form and beg to be juxtaposed.

In fact, in contrast to that very detailed situating of the story of Jesus in the web of Roman administrative bureaucracy, the following serves as the introduction to Luke's infancy narrative: "In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah." -- Whereas 3.1-2 carefully specify not only the emperor, but also the various governors in the area surrounding Judea – even Lysanias, who is never mentioned again in Luke-Acts – chap 1, v. 5 speaks simply of "Herod," without noting that he ruled over Judea, Samaria, Galilee, the Decapolis and more, during the reign of Caesar Augustus – an important distinction, since another Herod (Herod Antipas) is mentioned in 3.1-2. Most important, it doesn't provide the kind of bearings for a Roman reader,

unfamiliar with the political life of Roman Palestine, that Luke provides in his later statement about the political lay of the land.

You might recall that subsequently in the infancy narrative, as an introduction to the story of Jesus' birth, Luke provides more precise information for his reader: "1In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria." -- This belated specification of a time-frame is quite different than the comprehensive heading of chapter 3, however. On the one hand, even though it specifies Augustus as the Emperor and dates this subscription to the time Quirinius was the Syrian legate, it is bare bones information.

And more importantly, in contrast to 3.1-2, whose list of rulers is the primary information given, so that John's work is subordinated to this list, the note at the head of chapter 2 is subordinated to the preceding narrative by the phrase "In those days." This information is supplemental to the narrative, not a prime assertion that sets the stage for it, as in chapter 3. What's more, the subjoined note that "this was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria" functions more as a parenthetical identification of *which* subscription this was, rather than an identification of which Roman appointee was ruling over which territory, as in chapter 3. In sum, this note plays a subordinate role.

So one of the features favoring the inference that 1.5-2.25 was inserted only after Luke and Acts had been composed is that the comprehensive statement of 3.1-2, following on the dedicatory address of Theophilus, would have constituted a fitting introduction, according to the conventions of Greco-Roman literature – although this by itself is not conclusive.

A second observation supporting this conclusion is that a narrative beginning with John the Baptist (as would be the case without the infancy narrative) finds strong parallels. First of all, naturally, it accords with what we find in the Gospel of Mark, which starts with the work of John the Baptist. But so also does the Gospel of John, which lacks an infancy narrative. While the Gospel of Matthew begins with Jesus' birth rather than John's mission, Matthew makes the transition from his infancy narrative to his story of Jesus ministry without a sharp break: "In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Matthew alone presents John's work as simply a new phase in the story, rather than a beginning.

What's more, Luke, in Acts 10, expresses the notion that Jesus' story begins with John. It is widely recognized that Luke, following the convention of the Greek historians, composed the speeches of Acts blending what he knew of the characters with his judgment of what words would have befit the situation. And so it is noteworthy that when Peter addresses the Roman centurion, Cornelius, Luke gives him the following words: "36You know the message he (God) sent to the

people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup>That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced.” -- In Peter's (and thus Luke's) estimation, the message about Jesus begins with his work “in Galilee, after the baptism that John announced.” And that's precisely where Luke prefixes his formal statement of circumstances when Jesus appears in Luke 3. This focus on events from the time of John the Baptist on, in accord with Mark and John, supports – although does not prove – the inference that Luke's infancy narrative is a late supplement to his gospel.

More significant support comes from the genealogy Luke provides for Jesus in 3.23-38. It's not the content of the genealogy that's significant, but *where* it is positioned: namely, *after* the report of John's activity in vv. 3-20 (concluding with John's arrest by Herod), and after the report of Jesus' baptism in vv. 21-22. On the other end, it stands just prior to Jesus' temptations in the wilderness, followed by his foray into Galilee. In fact, Luke resumes the story line after the genealogy with the statement, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.” Saying that Jesus “returned from the Jordan” reminds the reader where Jesus was *before* the genealogy.

This is a natural position for this genealogy, *if* the scene of Jesus' baptism is the first time he appears in the narrative. This sort of parenthetical delineating of Jesus' identity makes perfect sense, in that case.

If, on the other hand, we assume that Luke penned his infancy narrative as the beginning of his gospel, then this is a very awkward position, given that the genealogy interrupts what would otherwise be a natural sequence from Jesus' baptism into the temptation account.

Moreover, if we recall Luke's tendency to transpose passages in Mark to create a better narrative sequence – as he does in moving the report of John's arrest from the middle of Mark to the end of his narrative about John – then it is most peculiar that Luke has placed the genealogy here rather than integrating it into the story of Jesus' birth. Indeed, Matthew provides a much more natural setting for his genealogy as a preface to his infancy narrative.

Luke's peculiar placement of the genealogy is intelligible, however, if we follow the other evidence pointing to his having prefixed his infancy narrative to his gospel secondarily.

But if it is secondary, how do we know that Luke is the one who supplied it? Couldn't it have come from someone else in imitation of Matthew?

Here I agree with Tuckett: themes in the infancy narrative are linked to key themes in Luke-Acts. On the one hand, we've already observed that the infancy narrative works out on a larger scale the sorts of correlations between John and Jesus that Luke hints at in the body of his gospel. Moreover, there are significant links between Luke's infancy narrative and the book of Acts that both suggest he

composed the narrative *and* that he did so only after writing Acts. Those links have to do with imagery and concepts in the infancy narrative that are more in sync with the book of Acts than the Third Gospel.

E.g. you'll recall the numerous times people in the infancy narrative are said to be filled by the Spirit to speak or act, as when Elizabeth pronounces a blessing on Mary, introduced by the narrator with the words, "<sup>41</sup>And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup>and exclaimed with a loud cry...." Later in the chapter, after Zechariah confirmed in writing that his newly born son was to be called John, Luke reports, "Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy...." Even the annunciation of John's birth includes the forecast, "even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit." While certainly Luke introduces Jesus' confrontation with the devil with the statement that he returned from the Jordan "filled with the Holy Spirit" and similarly announces that Jesus came away from that contest into his work in Galilee, "filled with the power of the Spirit," never again is this language used, even for Jesus.

And yet, talk of people being filled with the Spirit is a staple of Acts, as in chapter 2, v. 17, where Peter, on the day of Pentecost, explains the behavior of Jesus' followers as fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel: "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

This sort of "democratization of the Spirit," as we might call it – the Spirit's accessibility to all humans, regardless of age, gender, or any other distinction – is a persistent theme in the book of Acts. For example, in Acts 4.9, with Peter and John on trial before the religious leaders, Peter's words are introduced by Luke this way: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...." Here we find the language about being "filled with the Holy Spirit" that we saw applied to characters in Luke's infancy narrative.

Equally notable is Acts 10, where Luke reports the following occurrence as Peter preaches to a Roman centurion, Cornelius, and his family: "<sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, <sup>46</sup>for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God."

The fact that in the book of Acts we find the Spirit falling on diverse people, whereas in Luke's gospel, that is the experience of Jesus alone – *except* in the infancy narrative – is one clue that these chapters were written *after* the book of Acts and not as the original beginning of the Third Gospel.

Another indication of this is that the infancy narrative has frequent appearances by angels. One appears to Zechariah as he serves in the temple, to announce

John's conception and birth. The same angel subsequently appears to Mary to announce that she will conceive and bear a son. And then, of course, there are the angels who announce Jesus' birth to the shepherds. Angelic appearances and announcements are found again only at the end of Luke, where women come to prepare Jesus body, but are greeted by two angels announcing that he has risen. And that pericope, of course, Luke inherited from Mark.

In the book of Acts, on the other hand, appearances by angels are commonplace. Thus, in chapter 5, Luke tells us that one night, after the apostles had been incarcerated by the religious leaders, “an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said,<sup>20</sup>“Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life.”

Similarly, the episode that concludes with Peter preaching to Cornelius and his household begins with Cornelius having “a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius....Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. <sup>5</sup>Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter.” -- Such angelic visitations are common to the book of Acts and to Luke's infancy narrative, but are absent from the gospel, save for the angels who appear to the women at the tomb.

I'll note briefly one other point of contact between the infancy narrative and the book of Acts. It has to do with a unique title for Jesus that combines “Lord” and “Christ.” We find it first in the angels announcement to the shepherds in Luke 2.11: “to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Christ, the Lord.”

The next time we encounter this combined title is in Acts 2, where Luke has Peter telling the crowds on the day of Pentecost that the resurrection affirms “with certainty that God has made him both *Lord and Christ*, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

The use in the infancy narrative of these titles in tandem – found nowhere else in the Synoptics – both identifies Luke as the author of that narrative and stands alongside the language of people being filled with the Spirit, as well as the frequency of angel visitations, as evidence that the infancy narrative was authored only *after* Luke had written his Gospel and Acts, and that he did so in the same frame of mind in which he wrote his second volume.

Next time we'll consider what we can discover about where Luke got his information about the circumstances of Jesus' birth, and how he composed his infancy narrative.