

“The Two Annunciations”

Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives* (2012)

Read Matthew 1.18-25, Luke 1.5-38

1. The sources

Read and discuss > Luke 2.19 and 2.51

2. Announcement of the birth of John the Baptist

2.1 Discuss > What does it mean that John the Baptist was a priest? (see Luke 1.15)

2.2 Discuss > What is the meaning of the place and time of the announcement of the birth of John? (See Luke 1.8-11)

2.3 Read and Discuss > Daniel 9.20-24 and Luke 1.19. These are the only two moments in the Bible when Gabriel appeared.

3. Announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ in Luke: Mary central

3.1 The greeting to Mary: Luke 1.28 Not shalom (peace) but Chaire (rejoice). Same word again in Luke 2.10, and John 20.20, John 16.22. Heart of the Gospel: Rejoice.

3.2 Compare > with Zephaniah 3.14-17. (Zeph 3.15, 17, in your midst = in your womb, Luke 1.31) Temple Language: **Read and Discuss** > Luke 1.35

3.3. Promise to King David. **Read and discuss** > Luke 1.32-33 and compare with promise to David in 2 Samuel 7.16: “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” (NIV)

3.4 Mary’s response: **Read and Discuss** > Luke 1.29, Luke 1.34, Luke 1.38

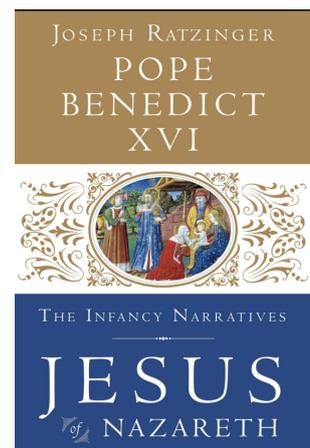
4. Announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ in Matthew: Joseph central

4.1 Read and discuss > Matthew 1.19-20. Why is Joseph presented as son of David and as a righteous man (zaddik) ?

4.2 Discuss > what it means that Jesus is presented as the one who ‘will save his people from their sins’.

4.3 Read and Discuss > Matthew 1.22-23. One theologian calls the reference Isaiah 7.14 a ‘stray passage’: ‘But the LORD will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel.’ (CEV). He compares that with Isaiah 53 which he also calls a ‘stray passage’. Read Ratzinger p. 50.

4.4. Discuss > ‘Virgin birth’ According to Ratzinger, ‘The accounts of Matthew and Luke are not myths [...] They are firmly rooted in



terms of their basic conception, in the biblical tradition of God the creator and Redeemer. As far as their specific content is concerned, though, they are derived from the family tradition, they are tradition handed down, recording the events that took place.’ (p. 53)

Ratzinger, pp. 56-57:

[There] are two moments in the story of Jesus when God intervenes directly in the material world: the virgin birth and the resurrection from the tomb, in which Jesus did not remain, nor see corruption.

These two moments are a scandal to the modern spirit. God is “allowed” to act in ideas and thoughts, in the spiritual domain—but not in the material. That is shocking. He does not belong there. But that is precisely the point. God is God and he does not operate merely on the level of ideas. In that sense, what is at stake in both of these moments is God’s very godhead. The question that they raise is: does matter also belong to him?

Naturally we may not ascribe to God anything nonsensical or irrational, or anything that contradicts his creation. But here we are not dealing with the irrational or contradictory, but precisely with God’s creative power, embracing the whole of being. In that sense, these two moments – the virgin birth and the real resurrection from the tomb—are the cornerstones of faith.

“If God does not have the power over matter then he is simply not God. But he does have this power, and through the conception and resurrection of Jesus Christ he has ushered in a new creation. So as the Creator he is also our Redeemer. Hence the conception and birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary is a fundamental element of our faith and a radiant sign of hope.

