

Jesus: Connecting the Past, Present, & Future

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Thesis

By looking at Jesus's infancy narrative, as seen in first two chapters of The Gospel According To Luke and of The Gospel According To Matthew, one can note how the connection between the past, present, and future builds upon Jesus as a person and his mission as savior, even before he begins his journey.

The Past as seen in Matthew: Mary & Joseph

- Prophecy: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear / a son, / and they shall name him Emmanuel” (Matt. 1: 23)
- Story: “Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly” (Matt. 1: 19)
- Recalls: Tamar & Judah’s story and his reaction before the revelation of the child being his, but with a different tone (Gen. 38: 24)
- Significance:
 - The difference in behavior between Judah & Joseph show the emphasis on compassion which is key in Jesus’s later teachings
 - Tamar is an ancestor of the Davidic line that traces down to Jesus (Matt. 1: 2-16)

The Past as seen in Matthew: King Herod & The Three Wise Men

- Prophecy: “A voice was heard in Ramah, / wailing and loud lamentation, / Rachel weeping for her children; / she refused to be consoled, because / they are no more” (Matt. 2: 18)
- Story: After the Three Wise Men don’t tell King Herod where Jesus is, he calls for the death of, “children in and around Bethlehem who [are] two years old or under” (Matt. 2: 16)
- Recalls: The Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, and their defiance against the Pharaoh’s orders & how he then calls for his people to kill all newborn males (Ex. 1: 17 and 22)
- Significance:
 - Fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the mass destruction of innocent lives and the defiance that brought about the travesty begins the destabilization of power, and the reminder of what happens in Exodus emphasizes it
 - Similar roles taken by Hebrew Wives & Three Wise Men show how God protects his people, especially his chosen—and Jesus is his chosen son

The Past as seen in Matthew: Out of Egypt

- Prophecy: “Out of Egypt I have called my son” (Matt. 2: 15)
- Story: After having to flee to Egypt, Joseph is told through a dream that King Herod is dead and can come home (Matt. 2: 19)
- Recalls: Moses and his journey out of Egypt (Book of Exodus)
- Significance:
 - Through Moses, God delivers his people & through Jesus, he will deliver them once more
 - Adds legitimacy to Jesus as the savior of the people

The Future as seen in Luke:

- Prophetic Hymn: “And you, child, will be called the prophet / of the Most High; / for you will go before the Lord to / prepare his ways” (Luke 1: 76)
- Story: Zechariah, after being made mute by Gabriel, foretells his newborn son’s mission
- Significance:
 - John to prepare the path of Jesus, setting up Jesus’s story
 - Looks into the future through the Holy Spirit

- Prophetic Hymn: “This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Luke 2: 34-35)
- Story: Simeon tells Mary in a temple about Jesus’s future and difficult journey
- Significance:
 - Sets up tension as Jesus is betrayed by his own, and the most reactive to his work are Pharisees, known to strictly follow the scripture
 - Looks into future through the Holy Spirit

The Present as seen in Luke & Matthew

- Matthew:
 - Story: During the Three Wise Men's visitation, they kneel down to Jesus and then, "[offer] him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" before they, "[leave] for their own country" (Matt. 2: 11-12)
 - Significance:
 - As Gentiles, they recognize his chosen status which shows how Jesus is here to be savior of all people, not just his own
- Luke:
 - Story: During Passover as a child, he stays behind in Jerusalem at a temple with teachers, "[a]nd all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2: 46). When his parents come to get him, Mary tells him how they've been searching for him. He replies, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2: 49).
 - Significance:
 - Even as a child, he demonstrates great clarity of who he is, and he his knowledge surprises even the most experienced of teachers

Conclusion

Jesus's infancy narrative might be the shortest of his stories, but even so it contains such rich connections that lay out the journey to come. The Gospel According to Matthew points to the fulfillment of prophecies that also links Jesus's infancy story to past important figures. The Gospel According to Luke looks into the future through prophetic hymns that emphasize the significance of Jesus's journey and how John is to prepare for it. And both Luke and Matthew offer a present moment that neither looks to the past nor future, but just shows who Jesus is to stand up for and why he is seen as special. By bringing the past, present, and future together one can get a better of understanding of who Jesus is and his mission, even before the journey begins.