HOW FAR IF AT ALL DO THE INFANCY NARRATIVES IN THE GOSPELS OF MATTHEW AND LUKE SET THE AGENDA FOR THE REST OF THEIR GOSPELS AND DO THOSE AGENDAS REFLECT COMMON MATTERS OF CONCERN?

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(Signature)
Abstract

The introductory chapter considers whether the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke are no more than a factual retelling of the events of Jesus’ birth. It concludes that there are inconsistencies between the accounts precluding such a conclusion. It argues that the narratives contain material that is more concerned with introducing literary and theological themes explored in the rest of the respective Gospels. It then sets out how those themes will be examined and how they relate to the rest of the respective Gospels.

Chapters two and three are concerned with Matthew’s Infancy Narrative. Chapter two sets the context in which this Gospel was written, concluding that its purpose was to teach and defend early Christian teaching and to justify the present authority of that teaching by demonstrating continuity with the past. Chapter three considers the literary and theological themes of Matthew’s Infancy Narrative, concluding that the Narrative and the main body of the Gospel share many of the same thought patterns.

Chapters four and five are concerned with Luke’s Infancy Narrative. Chapter four sets the context in which this Gospel was written, concluding that its purpose was not just to retell the past but to interpret its relevance for the present and future. Chapter five considers the literary and theological themes of Luke’s Infancy Narrative. It concludes that Luke’s Infancy Narrative seeks to link the past to the present and the future, which he then pursues in the rest of his Gospel.

The final chapter shows how both Matthew and Luke introduce a common agenda in their Infancy Narratives, which they then develop in their Gospels. Four key conclusions are drawn, showing how both evangelists seek to address the key issue of Jesus’ Messiahship by appealing to the past to affirm the truth of what is happening in the present and its importance for the future.
Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction: The Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke…………………1

Chapter 2: Matthew’s Infancy Narrative – Preliminary Issues………………………..7

2.1. Introduction……………………………………………………………………..7
2.2. Authorship……………………………………………………………………..7
2.3. Date of Composition……………………………………………………………8
2.4. A Hebrew Original…………………………………………………………..10
2.5. The Intended Audience………………………………………………………12
2.6. Structure………………………………………………………………………..15
2.7. Matthew’s Intended Purpose…………………………………………………17
2.8. Conclusions………………………………………………………………….19

Chapter 3: Matthew’s Infancy Narrative - An Agenda for His Gospel?……………..20

3.1. Introduction……………………………………………………………………..20
3.2. Matthew’s Use of Old Testament Citations…………………………………21
3.3. The Genealogy of Jesus in Matthew………………………………………….24
3.4. Jesus As ‘Son of Abraham’…………………………………………………...27
3.5. Jesus As the Son of David……………………………………………………29
3.6. Jesus – the New Moses?…………………………………………………….33
3.7. The Virginal Conception of Jesus……………………………………………38
3.8. The Visit of the Magi………………………………………………………..43
3.9. The Star of Bethlehem………………………………………………………48
3.10. The Relevance of Matthew’s Infancy Narrative to the Easter Story and Beyond………………………………………………………………………..50
3.11. Matthew’s Literary Genre………………………………………………….54
3.12. Conclusions…………………………………………………………………56
Chapter 4: Luke’s Infancy Narrative – Preliminary Issues

4.1. Introduction ........................................................................ 60
4.2. Authorship ........................................................................ 60
4.3. Date of Composition .......................................................... 62
4.4. The Intended Audience ...................................................... 62
4.5. Structure ........................................................................... 66
4.6. Luke’s Intended purpose .................................................... 68
4.7. Conclusions ....................................................................... 72

Chapter 5: Luke’s Infancy Narrative - An Agenda for His Gospel?

5.1. Introduction ........................................................................ 74
5.2. The Parallelism Between the Births of John the Baptist and Jesus ............ 75
5.3. Zechariah, Elizabeth and the Birth of John the Baptist ................................. 78
5.4. Mary, Joseph and the Virginal Conception of Jesus ..................................... 82
5.5. The Temple and Jerusalem .................................................... 86
5.6. The Shepherds .................................................................... 89
5.7. Role Reversal in Society ...................................................... 91
5.8. Universalism ....................................................................... 95
5.9. Salvation .......................................................................... 99
5.10. Fulfilment ........................................................................ 104
5.11. The Holy Spirit ................................................................. 108
5.12. The Canticles ................................................................... 110
5.13. Who Spoke the Magnificat? .................................................. 111
5.14. The Infancy Narrative and the Rest of the Gospel ..................................... 114
5.15. Conclusions .................................................................... 115

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Bibliography ........................................................................... 123