

What is Matthew *up to* this Christmas?

'If we don't meditate on Jesus' birth, we shall miss the sweetness.' Martin Luther

'We had the experience but missed the meaning.' T.S. Eliot

We'll have some fun and take some time during this Christmas pandemonium to read through Matthew's & Luke's birth accounts. There's a difference: Quirinius and an Imperial Decree for census registration vs. Herod on the throne of David (but see Luke 1---John the Baptist is conceived and Herod's alive).

We can also look at geography: In Matthew, Mary and Joseph are residents of Bethlehem. Luke's Mary and Joseph are residents of Nazareth. For Luke: How to get to Bethlehem & then **homeless**!? For Matthew: How to get to Nazareth? Take a moment for Nathaniel's question, "Can anything Good come out of Nazareth?" [John 1:46] And Philip's response: Matthew & Luke want us to 'see' the 'hidden' Jesus.

Matthew's Jesus pre-, and post- birth Gospel--

Genealogy of Joseph- Mt. 1:1-17 Note the presence of 'outlier' women married to Joseph's ancestors—the first, Tamar, dresses up like a prostitute; the second, Rahab, *is* a prostitute; the third is Ruth the Moabite (!); the fourth is Bathsheba (!) (not named, 'the wife of Uriah'!). They are not mentioned in Luke's genealogy (Lk. 3:23-34).

Pre-Birth: 'Righteous Joseph' Mt. 1:18-25 (annunciation). The first of the (12) 'fulfills:' Isaiah 7:14/8:8 [O.T. Prophecy: 'This took place to fulfill...' 1:22]

No birth story (a la Luke 2) -but see 1:25 'until' ['Silent' Joseph!]

Magi! Who, whom? 2:1-2:12 (Micah 5:2) & see 27:54: The 'Gentiles' worship of Jesus bookends his life. [see Numbers 24- Balaam the Magus] In the end: The Great Commission- Mt. 28:19—to the 'nations' (Greek 'ta ethne' to the Gentiles)

Flight! *The Holy family are Refugees:* Egypt! (Hosea 11:1) [Jacob & Joseph & Moses, too]: JESUS IS ON THE RUN—some king, eh? [Matthew 27:35ff]

Slaughter: 2:16-18 'Rachel weeping for her children' (Jeremiah 31:15)

No Homecoming for Jesus: 2:19-23: 'Nazarene or Nazorean' [?]

So, take time, during this strange time, to marvel at this God entering this world. Matthew wants us to 'see' how 'hidden' God is [so does Luke (a manger!) and Jesus homeless (!), angel choirs notwithstanding] The birth, Luther says, is more marvel than miracle. Mirabile dictu (Marvelous in the telling)!