

6. Births and Dedications

**Fill in Chart IV**

a. Discuss your findings

7. Clash of the Titles

**Look up scriptures in Chart V**

a. Discuss your findings

8. The Luke's Overture Conclusion and another Octavian story

**Read Luke 2:41-52**

a. What does this passage tell the reader about Jesus'

Jewish upbringing?

b. About what age are bar mitzvahs and confirmations and coming of age ceremonies?

c. How is this another comparison to Caesar Augustus?

9. Describe how you now view Luke's overture.

a. Does it change your perspective of his birth narrative(s)

b. If so, how?



NEXT WEEK:

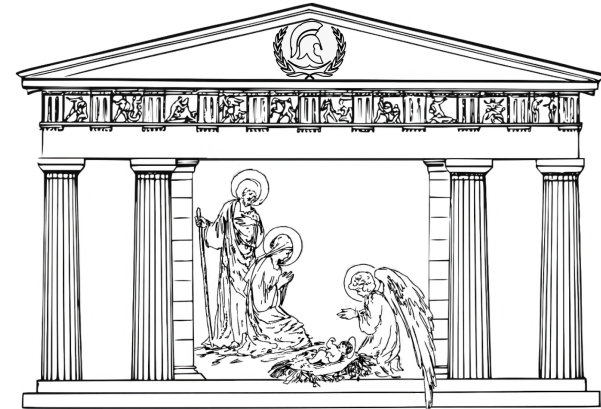
"CLASH OF THE TITLES"

OR

"WHO ARE THESE GUYS?!"

<sup>[1]</sup> *The First Christmas* ©2011 Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan ©2011 HarperCollinsPublishers. p. 220

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL



## OVERTURES FROM THE (HOLY) GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

### SESSION FOUR

#### LUKE'S OVERTURE PART I

#### "OUT WITH THE OLD; IN WITH THE NEW"

LUKE 1 & 2

FOCUS SCRIPTURE:

LUKE 1:1-4

"Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I, too, decided, as one having a grasp of everything from the start, to write a well-ordered account for you, most excellent lover of God, so that you may have a firm grasp of the words in which you have been instructed."

## VOCABULARY TERMS:

**Theophilus:** (Θεόφιλος) literally, "lover of God," also, friend of God.

## CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Matthew and Luke's overtures are set within a metaphor of two tectonic plates grinding against each other; the plate tectonics of Imperialism vs. Judaism become the Kingdom of Rome vs. the Kingdom of God. "That clash of kingdoms is the context of our Christmas texts."<sup>[1]</sup> Of note is an issue for Followers of the Way as more Gentiles are grafted in to the community. The Romans bring with them their Roman culture and beliefs, which naturally clash with the Jewish beliefs and customs. Recall the letters of Paul to the churches. He was dealing with all the squabbles and misunderstandings between these two very different cultures 10-20 years prior. Both Gospels are speaking to the Jewish believers about Jesus' Jewishness and fulfillment of the ancient covenant, and speaking to the Romans about Jesus' superiority to the Emperors.

Keep in mind both Gospels are focusing on events nearly 100 years prior, but living in and writing to Jesus-followers during the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96) who is said to be the absolute worst of all the emperors. Rome, since Octavian, is believed to be the last and greatest and everlasting kingdom on the earth, maintaining "peace through strength" (meaning peace through whatever means necessary).

As Matthew introduces Jesus as the new Moses, Luke is convincing us that Jesus is the final fulfillment of the covenant between God and the Hebrew nation. Luke equates Jesus to one who is prophesied to have the spirit of the great prophet Elijah. Which is why Luke begins his overture with the miraculous birth of Jesus' cousin, John, as John himself is referred to as the return of Elijah.

Luke's Gospel is going to focus on Jesus' culmination of the Abrahamic covenant, and a beginning of a new covenant. Luke will also introduce Jesus as a greater son of God, over and against Octavian by using Caesar's titles for Jesus. Luke is going

to spend time introducing a savior that is much different from the Caesars.

Luke not only uses all the titles for Caesar Augustus to describe Jesus, he also uses an Octavian story to conclude his overture: Julius Caesar's mother dies (51 BCE). Octavian, at 12 years of age is chosen to emergence into the public square, and give the oration at her funeral. He makes such an impression he is eventually enrolled in the best universities available to him at the time.

Luke's overture, and his entire Gospel will shine a light on 1.) Women, 2.) the Poor and Marginalized, and 3.) the Spirit of God, something holy and hopeful for the times in which we live today.

## STUDY:

### 1. Let's Pretend Luke is Writing to Us, God Lovers

#### **See scripture on this lesson's cover**

a. What is Luke's reason for writing to us?

### 2. Luke's Genealogy: although Luke does not include the genealogy in his overture, there are notable comparisons to Matthew's genealogy, and Luke's Gospel themes.

#### **Open to Luke 3:23-38**

a. Which direction does Luke take, forward or backward?

b. Matthew's genealogy places Jesus as a legitimate Jew, with Abraham as his ancestor. What does Luke say of Jesus? (v. 38)

### 3. Divine Births

**Fill in Chart I** - Compare these well known Old Testament stories (Elizabeth is still part of the Old Covenant).

a. How is Luke comparing the Old Covenant (Sarah, Hannah & Elizabeth) with a New Covenant?

b. What does it mean to you that God worked through the men in these Old Covenant stories, but corresponded directly to Mary?

### 4. Angelic Messengers

#### **Fill in Chart II**

a. Discuss your findings

### 5. The Birth Announcements

#### **Fill in Chart III**

a. Discuss your findings