



Quaker Universalist Voice

Luke 1–2: The Birth of John and Jesus by Luke ~ A Christmas Gift of the Gift of Christmas

Introduction and Notes for the Translation for Children
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Introduction

Chapter 1:

After a formal beginning, Luke tells a story about the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. By telling the story of these two births, Luke is able to summarize and point out the main ideas in the whole Gospel of Luke. John the Baptist is seen by Luke as the person who stood between, and joined, the old and new days. Luke wrote both of these birth stories in the same way birth stories had been written in the Old Testament. By telling about the birth of John and Jesus together, Luke makes it clear that Jesus is the Chosen Ruler*, the Messiah*. Luke puts John in the smaller role as a person sent from God to prepare for Jesus, the Christ*. John's birth is used to tell the "good news" of God's plan of salvation*. There is to be joy and gladness when the reader learns about the birth of a baby who will have a role in the salvation* of people.

Chapter 2:

At first, Christians said that Jesus became the Christ* at the time of the resurrection*. Soon, they began to say that Jesus was the Christ at the time of the baptism*. By the time that Luke was written, Christians wanted to say that Jesus was the Christ* at birth.

Luke starts this gospel (Chapter 2) with the same joy that was expressed in the resurrection. The power of God, which was shown in the resurrection, is now shown in the birth of Jesus. Luke's birth story has been used to give the idea of a new creation. God's spirit, creative force, that was active in the first creation of life was active again in the birth of Jesus.

Luke starts the story with a worldwide census to give the idea of the worldwide importance of Jesus.

Dictionary to Help the Reader of Luke 1 -2

Altar (Luke 1:11) is the table on which gifts for God are placed. These gifts are offerings or sacrifices.

Baptism is a religious act using water as a symbol of cleaning and purifying. Jesus' baptism also marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Christ is a common title used for Jesus. It means the "anointed one" in the Greek language. When the title "Christ" was used, it meant the one that God would choose to rule, serve, and protect God's people. "Chosen rules" would be another way to translate the Greek word "Christ" or the Hebrew word "Messiah" into English.

Circumcision (Luke 1:59, 2:21) is the act of cutting off a piece of skin from the penis. It was done by the Hebrews eight days after the birth of a boy as a sign of the covenant* between Yahweh and Israel. (See Genesis 17:10-14) It was an act of bringing a child into the covenant community. It was a time for joy and celebration.

Covenant (Luke 1:59, 2:21) is a very serious promise. Special words or actions were used as a sign of the covenant*. These words or actions were used so that everyone would know how serious and important the promises were. The covenants told about in the Bible were holy* promises made by Yahweh God to the People of Israel.

Divine Ruler (Luke 1:43, 2:11) is a translation of the Greek word "kyrios." Luke's story about the birth of Jesus was written in the Greek language. Many people who have translated Luke's story into English have used the English word "Lord" for the Greek word "Kyrios."

Because the Hebrew people felt that Yahweh was too great, too big, too important to even speak the name Yahweh, they used many other words to talk about their God, but they did not say or write the full word for God's name, "Yahweh." Most of the old testament was written in Hebrew. One of the Hebrew words used at the time of Jesus, instead of Yahweh, was "Adonai", which was translated into the Greek word "Kyrios."

All three words – "Yahweh", "Adonai", and "Kyrios" – have often been translated into English as "Lord," even though there were many meanings for these Greek and Hebrew words. In Luke's story about the birth of Jesus, the Greek word "Kyrios" is used to refer to Yahweh sometimes and sometimes it refers to Jesus. The translator decides which word to use in English. When it seems to refer to Jesus it has been translated here as "Divine Ruler." Divine shows a relationship to God and says that something is godly. When the word seems to be a translation of the Hebrew "Adonai" meaning "Yahweh," into the Greek "Kyrios," it has been translated as Yahweh.

Freedom (Luke 2:38) is from a Greek word that is often translated as "redemption." It includes the meaning of a price paid for freedom.

Holy (Luke 1:12, 1:35, 1:70) is used to mean that something is godly. Whenever God's presence is felt, people have a sense of the mystery of holiness, which is an unusually great power and strength.

Holy Prophets (Luke 1:70) are people who are led by God and speak for God.

Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41) is the mysterious power of God that comes to people. It is God's creative force. It is the holy spirit, which takes hold of people and gives them wonderful strength, courage, wisdom, and the knowledge of what God wants and what needs to be done. It is by the Holy Spirit that people know how God works in the world.

Holy One (Luke 1:49) is another name for "Yahweh" God.

Incense (Luke 1:11) is a special mixture made to be burned in the Temple sanctuary* as an offering to God. The smoke had a pleasant smell as it went up. The good smell of the incense smoke was like prayers to God.

Manger (Luke 2:12) is the stone box used to hold feed for farm animals.

Most High (Luke 1:76) is the exalted one, the highest god of gods. It is a title taken from other people who believed in many gods. The term was used by the Hebrews to mean "Yahweh."

Passover (Luke 2:41) is a festival celebrated once a year by Jewish people. It celebrates God's act of bringing Israel out of slavery in Egypt to freedom.

Prophet (Luke 1:67, 1:70, and 1:76) is a person who speaks to human beings for God.

Resurrection is the raising of the dead. It is a special birth in a new creation. The resurrection of Jesus was a new act of creation. It was the signal that there was a division between the old world and the new one.

Sacrifice (Luke 2:24) is the giving of something one owns to be used in a special way as a gift of God. If the sacrifice was birds or animals, they were killed in a special way.

Salvation (Luke 2:25, 2:30, and 2:32) is to be saved from destruction. Yahweh is a god of salvation. God has saved us and God will save us.

Savior (Luke 1:47, 2:11) is the one who saves. The title "Savior" is used for God. Luke says that God's purpose of salvation or deliverance was brought by Jesus. Luke also used "Savior" as a title for Jesus in 2:11.

Spirit (Luke 2:27) is God's creative force (See Holy Spirit)

Temple (Luke 1:8, 2:27, and 2:46) is the building where people went to worship. Often the word "Temple" is used for the building and the surrounding grounds. In Jerusalem, everything that was inside a large wall that was like a high stone fence was sometimes call "the temple."

Temple Sanctuary (Luke 1:21) is a special place inside the temple building where only the priests could go to say prayers and make offerings to God.