

Series #22: Epiphanies, Theophanies, and the Incarnation
Session 1 – The Nativity
Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Schedule

January 12 – The Nativity

January 19 – The Epiphany

January 26 – The Baptism of Our Lord

February 2 – The Presentation of Jesus Christ in the Temple

February 9 – The Wedding at Cana

February 16 – The Transfiguration

What is a Theophany?

- A visible manifestation of a deity (Merriam-Webster Dictionary online)
- The “appearance of a deity” = the manifestation of a deity in an observable way. This term has been used to refer to appearances of the gods in ancient Greek and Near Eastern religions. While the *Iliad* is the earliest source for descriptions of theophanies in classical antiquity (which occur throughout Greek mythology), probably the earliest description appears in the Epic of Gilgamesh. A specific usage for Christians and Jews, with respect to the Bible: theophany refers to a manifestation of the Abrahamic God, a revealed presence sensed by a person. Traditional analysis of the Biblical passages led Christian scholars to understand theophany as an unambiguous manifestation of God to man, where “unambiguous” indicates that the seers or seer are of no doubt that it is God revealing himself to them. (Wikipedia)
- A manifestation or appearance of God or a god to a person. (Dictionary.com)

The Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas)

- The biblical story is told in two versions:
 - Matthew 1:18-25 (+ Matthew 2:1-23)
 - Luke 2:1-20
 - What differences do you notice between the two versions?
- Fulfillment of OT Prophecies (formula quotations)
 - Matthew 1:23 (Isaiah 7:14)
 - Matthew 2:6 (Micah 5:2 & 2 Samuel 5:2)
 - Matthew 2:15 (Hosea 11:1)
 - Matthew 2:17-18 (Jeremiah 31:15)
 - Matthew 2:23 (Several possible OT references, but none specific)

Historical Connection

- The Christmas Proclamation (from the Roman Martyrology)
 - Today, the twenty-fifth day of December, Unknown ages from the time when God created the heavens and the earth and then formed man and woman in his own image. Several thousand years after the flood, when God made the rainbow shine forth as a sign of the covenant; Twenty-one centuries from the time of Abraham and Sarah; Thirteen centuries after Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt; Eleven hundred years from the time of Ruth and the Judges; One thousand years from the anointing of David as king; In the sixty-fifth week according to the prophecy of Daniel; In the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad; The seven hundred and fifty-second year from the foundation of the city of Rome; The forty-second year of the reign of Octavian Augustus; The whole world being at peace: Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father, desiring to sanctify the world by his most merciful coming, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, and nine months having passed since his conception, Was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary. Today is the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.
- Jesus was probably born between 6-4 BC. Herod the Great died in 4 BC.
- Historians and scholars do not believe that the biblical account is accurate.
 - Was not included in Mark's Gospel – the first written.
 - Matthew and Luke give two different genealogies. It was not possible to trace lineage 42 generations.
 - The details of the events in Matthew and Luke are quite different.
 - The main concern was not historicity, but the theological message.



1. Annunciation to Joseph	1. Annunciation to Mary in Nazareth
—	2. Census of Quirinius (6–7 CE)
—	3. Joseph and Mary travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem
2. Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem	4. Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem
3. Magi visit Herod in Jerusalem	5. Annunciation to the shepherds in the fields
4. Adoration of the Magi in Bethlehem	6. Adoration of the shepherds in Bethlehem
—	7. Presentation of Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem
5. Joseph, Mary and Jesus' Flight into Egypt	—
6. Massacre of the Innocents in Bethlehem	—
7. Death of Herod (4 BCE)	—
8. Joseph, Mary and Jesus return to Israel	—
9. Joseph, Mary and Jesus relocate to Nazareth	8. Joseph, Mary and Jesus return home to Nazareth