

With Child of the Holy Spirit – Joseph willing to give her in marriage to his heir

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1. Introduction

In the Infancy Gospel of Matthew some remarkable facts are told, which seem strange when they are read without knowledge of some other sacred texts, such as the Infancy Gospel of Luke and the prophecy of Micah about the Messiah.

- 18 ¶ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit;
19 and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.
20 But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit;
21 she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."
22 All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:
23 "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us).
24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife,
25 but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus. Matt 1,18-25 (Revised Standard Version)¹

The first seemingly strange thing is that Mary, Joseph's betrothed, "was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit". It is normal that a woman can be found with child. But how can it 'be found' that the child was of the Holy Spirit?

Next, Joseph was unwilling to put Mary to shame and therefore was minded to divorce her quietly. But simply divorcing the pregnant Mary, whether quietly or not, was the surest way to put her to shame, for then she would become an unmarried woman with a child. It would make her seem an unchaste woman or an adulteress sent away by her husband or a woman that had left her husband herself. So how can "to divorce her quietly" be a means of preventing that she would be put to shame?

And then, while Joseph is afraid to marry Mary when she is found with child of the Holy Spirit, the angel tells him not to be afraid. And his argument seems to be that the child is of the Holy Spirit. But this was the very reason why Joseph was afraid to marry her in the first place.

Some might say that the expression "of the Holy Spirit" in verse 18 – "found to be with child of the Holy Spirit" – does not designate the fact that the pregnancy was already known to Joseph to be of this unique kind, but that it is "an explanation that Matthew offers to the reader" and "not part of the narrative flow"². The contention of this article is that the expression "of the Holy Spirit" is both an explanation that Matthew offers to the reader – it namely refers to the first chapter of Luke's Gospel that speaks about the overshadowing of

¹ All bible citations will be from the Revised Standard Version (RSV), unless otherwise indicated.

² R.E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York, first paperback edition 1999) 124

Mary by the Holy Spirit³ – and part of the narrative flow, indicating that Joseph already knew about the Holy Spirit’s role in Mary’s pregnancy before the angel spoke to him about it. Here a translation of Ignace de la Potterie (see chapter 4) shows that it is possible that the angel spoke to him, not to inform him about the Holy Spirit’s role, but to confirm the present already known cause of Mary’s pregnancy and to tell Joseph what he should do in this known special situation.

2. Mary found to be with Child of the Holy Spirit

The text that gives a clue how Mary could be found to be with Child of the Holy Spirit is in the Infancy Gospel of Luke. First an angel tells her she will conceive of the Holy Spirit:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?"

[How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? (Authorized Version)]

And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Luke 1,31-37 (RSV)

And then, in the days after this annunciation Mary leaves home and travels with haste to her blood relative Elizabeth:

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. Luke 1,39-40 (RSV)

Why would Mary go to Elizabeth with haste?

It’s not probable that the (only) reason why she hurried to go there was to help Elizabeth in the sixth month of her pregnancy in her old age⁴, for, after about three months Mary returns home and then Elizabeth’s baby is born. So, she returns when, or just before, the new mother is the weakest and the work the most.

And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. Luke 1,56-58 (RSV)

A reason why Mary could leave Elizabeth was probably that she knew that Elizabeth’s “neighbours and kinsfolk” would not only rejoice with her, but would also help her and her baby.

So, still, why Mary’s hurry to abide with Elizabeth for about three months?

³ “And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” Luke 1,35

⁴ Luke 1,7

In Judea: three months' proof for fertility or pregnancy

When Mary was found to be with Child of the Holy Spirit, she and Joseph were still only engaged, which in the Jewish law meant they already had the marital status, but did not live together in the same house yet⁵. Only after the angel's message to Joseph he "took unto him his wife" (AV)⁶, which means the wedding ceremony took place and he received her into his house. So, when the angel announced the divine pregnancy to Mary, she lived in Nazareth in one house and Joseph in another, probably also in Nazareth, for after their marriage Nazareth is called "their own city"⁷. An engagement could last several years:

"Several years might separate the betrothal from the marriage. [...]"

The Talmudic sources reflect differences between the practices in Galilee and in Judea in the relationship of husbands and wives. According to the southern custom the groom, prior to the marriage, was allowed to stay alone with his bride 'in order that he might become attracted to her' and if he did, he could not complain to the court after marriage that his wife had lost her virginity (*M. Ketuboth* 1:5; *T. Ketuboth* 1:4.). Further, according to one Tanna, if the groom died, even before marriage, a Judean bride was required to wait at least three months before marrying again to be certain that she was not already pregnant (*M. Yebamoth* 4:10)⁸.

In Qumran, but also in other cities⁹, members of the order of the Essenes, a certain religious sect among the Jews in the first century CE, had their own practices concerning betrothal and marriage. Of this sect most men didn't marry, but an Essene who chose to marry, would do this only after he had subjected his future wife to a probationary period of three years, and after having put her to the test of the three last months of their engagement, in which she had to prove her fertility:

"However, they try their spouses for three years; and if they find that they have their natural purgations thrice, as trials that they are likely to be fruitful, they then actually marry them"¹⁰.

Also in Scripture about three months is considered to be the time after which a pregnancy can be recognized. For example, when Judah had had intercourse with his disguised daughter-in-law:

About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; and moreover she is with child by harlotry." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." Gen 38,24 (RSV)

⁵ Matt 1,18; "Law and custom distinguished between betrothal, where the husband 'sanctified' his bride and she became as if formally married, and the wedding ceremony, called the chuppa (חופה) because it was held under a canopy. Not until the second ceremony did the bride move into her husband's home. [...] Several years might separate the betrothal from the marriage" (*The Jewish People in the First Century*, edited by S. Safrai and M. Stern, D. Flusser and W.C. van Unnik, under patronage of the foundation Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum (Assen/Amsterdam 1976) 754-757, 765).

⁶ Matt 1,24

⁷ "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin ... and the virgin's name was Mary. [...] And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth." Luke 1,26-27 2,39 (RSV)

⁸ Safrai a.o., *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 754-757

⁹ "They have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city" (F. Josephus, *Jewish War* II,8,4 (124))

¹⁰ Josephus, *J. War* II,8,13 (161)

A midwife capable of issuing an authorized certificate

As in Judea a bride in some cases, as described above, had to be put to the test of the three months, there also will have been some institution there that was trusted, discrete, and qualified to investigate the bride and issue a declaration concerning the result of the three months' test. As will be clear from the example of Tamar, above, and from the case of the adulteress that was rescued by Jesus from getting stoned¹¹, this declaration in some cases could result in the life or death of the candidate. It seems that a midwife, who would have professional knowledge and experience in matters of pregnancy and a woman's cycle, was such a qualified authority.

In the first century women giving birth faced a "very high maternal mortality rate"; "midwives assisted at childbirth, and the Halakah allowed the preparation of the mother's every need even on a sabbat, including bringing a midwife from a distant place"¹². A midwife was considered to be a special maidservant of the Lord, as can be deduced from the prayer spoken by the midwife Salome:

"O God of my fathers, remember that I am the seed of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; do not make a show of me to the sons of Israel, but restore me to the poor; for Thou knowest, O Lord, that in Thy name I have performed my services, and that I have received my reward at Thy hand." (Proto-evangelium of James 20,3)

A midwife was hired and paid by the husband, or other relative, of the travailing woman, and it was not considered an extraordinary thing that a midwife would investigate a woman's condition¹³. So, also in the case when pregnancy or fertility was to be ascertained by a three months' test, a midwife would be a qualified witness.

The way in which the appearing or missing periods would be recorded may have been by a physical examination of the bride, for just some bloodstained clothes of the woman were no proof of her monthly flow. To preclude any kind of fraud¹⁴ it is most likely that the candidate had to arrive in the midwife's house one or two days before her next period was expected and then had to stay in some kind of seclusion in the midwife's house to see whether her period would start spontaneously. After also a normal heaviness and duration of the blood flow had been ascertained, the period could be recorded, and the candidate could leave the seclusion and return home. This procedure could be repeated in three consecutive months to reach the final result of the test. When a period did not come at the expected time the bride may have been obliged to stay in the midwife's seclusion to see whether certain signs of pregnancy, such as nausea, vomiting and change of appetite would appear. These signs could easily be hid if a woman was allowed to return home after a missing period.

¹¹ John 8,3-11

¹² Safrai a.o., *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 765; Halakah is the Jewish oral law.

¹³ Proto-evangelium of James 19,1-20,4 (www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf08.vii.iv.html)

¹⁴ The candidate could e.g. try to simulate a period by applying blood from some wounded part of her body.

Elizabeth's seclusion

Elizabeth and Zechariah lived in “a city of Judah”¹⁵. During his priestly ministration in the temple Zechariah heard from the angel Gabriel that his wife Elizabeth would bear him a son, even though Zechariah was “an old man”, and Elizabeth “barren” and “advanced in years”¹⁶. After having heard this message, Zechariah became “dumb” and “could not speak”, because he hadn’t believed God’s tidings¹⁷. Yet, he was able to write on “a writing tablet”, for this is what he later would do to declare the name of his new born son¹⁸. So, when he returned home from the temple “when his time of service was ended”¹⁹, he can and will have written the angel’s message on a writing tablet to inform his wife. This can be deduced as follows:

After the passage about the angel’s message in the temple the text reads:

“After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she hid herself” Luke 1,24-25 (RSV)

As Elizabeth was “advanced in years” and “in her old age”²⁰, she can not have noticed that she had conceived by the missing of a period, for she probably had her last period quite a long time ago after a series of irregular periods. So, though she may have thought that she had become pregnant by the signs of nausea or a changed appetite, Elizabeth can only have become sure that she had conceived, and – more important – can only have become able to prove that she was pregnant, after her pregnancy had begun to show, so in her fourth or fifth month. The text stating that she “conceived, and for five months she hid herself”, may sound as if she first conceived, then noticed that she had conceived and then hid herself for five months because she had noticed it. But this interpretation is not possible: two verses after the mentioning of these “five months” Luke continues his narrative with “in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent ... to a virgin”, and on this occasion the angel Gabriel tells Mary that “this is the sixth month with her”, i.e. with Elizabeth, who “has also conceived a son”²¹. The fact that, after Gabriel’s message to Mary “in the sixth month” of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, Mary is able to stay with Elizabeth another “three months” before Elizabeth’s “full time” (AV) of nine months comes²², proves that the five months of Elizabeth’s seclusion were approximately simultaneous with the first five months of her pregnancy. Besides, why would she hide herself after her pregnancy had become visible and she could finally show to everyone that she was pregnant and the Lord had taken away her “reproach among men”, as she herself would say²³?

So, there is not only no other solution, but it’s also much more logical, that first Elizabeth read the angel’s message of her coming pregnancy on Zechariah’s writing tablet, and then, after having thought and spoken about it with Zechariah, “hid herself” (‘periekruben eautēn’), which is also translated with “remained in seclusion” (NIV) and could also be translated with

¹⁵ Luke 1,39-40

¹⁶ Luke 1,7.13.18; “But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.” (Luke 1,13)

¹⁷ Luke 1,20-22

¹⁸ Luke 1,63

¹⁹ Luke 1,23

²⁰ Luke 1,18.36

²¹ Luke 1,26-27.36

²² Luke 1,26.38-40.56-57.

²³ Luke 1,25

“kept secluding herself”²⁴. She may have secluded herself for instance in a special room or part of their house that was locked from the outside and was only accessible to her husband. The purpose of entering into such a seclusion wouldn’t be to hide a pregnancy but to prevent any possible later doubt whether her pregnancy would have been caused by her old husband or by a younger man²⁵. Only a pregnancy from her husband, which could only be shown by a birth well after nine months since the start of her seclusion, would be the fulfilment of the angel’s message, that Zechariah and she would get a son. While in this seclusion, Elizabeth conceived from her husband and began to notice the signs of her pregnancy and kept secluding herself until her pregnancy would be unmistakably visible and undeniable to anyone: after four or five months since the start of her seclusion. That Elizabeth was not in seclusion in order to hide herself, i.e. to temporarily disappear from sight, can be deduced from the text that states that

“for five months she hid herself, saying, “Thus the Lord has done to me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.” Luke 1,24-25 (RSV)

So, while in seclusion she could speak and be heard, probably by her “neighbors and kinsfolk”²⁶ that knew and could see that she was in seclusion. That she was also visible in her seclusion is deduced from the fact that her neighbours could see that “Thus” the Lord had done: He had given her the visible signs of pregnancy such as a growing abdomen. After five months Elizabeth could leave her seclusion for her pregnancy had become obvious.

The idea of Elizabeth’s retiring into seclusion may have sprung from the couple’s home facilities and Elizabeth’s experience in practicing the art of a midwife and authorized three months’ tester. Elizabeth was a married woman without children, so she would be able to leave home at any moment, night or day, to assist in childbirth, not having to attend to her own children. And when the husband or other relative of the traveling woman took her to his house, Zechariah could guard their own house. Zechariah and Elizabeth and John the Baptist, who, according to tradition, lived in Ein Kerem, may have been Essenes, among whom the Rechabite members had lived in Bethhaccerem (see the appendix).

Mary in seclusion at Elizabeth’s

When Mary heard the angel’s message about her future Son, whom she would receive through conception by the Holy Spirit, she did not know when the pregnancy would start, or how long the pregnancy of her divine Son would take. She and Joseph were to have a celibate marriage (Mary asked the angel about the pregnancy: “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”²⁷), and Joseph may have been an Essene (see the appendix), but how could be shown

²⁴ Luke 1,24 Nestle-Aland (NA²⁷), *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine* (Stuttgart 1984, 27th edition 1991); Strong’s concordance 4032: ‘perikruptō’ = to conceal on all sides or entirely, to hide, seclude; “remained in seclusion” is the translation of the New International Version (1984). The tense of the verb ‘perikrupto’ in Luke 1,24 is the Imperfect Tense, which “generally represents continual or repeated action. Where the present tense might indicate “they are asking,” the imperfect tense would indicate “they kept on asking” (Strong’s 5775). So, the translation could also be: “Elizabeth conceived and kept on secluding herself for five months”.

²⁵ In the beginning of the year 2005 a Rumanian woman of 66 years old gave birth to her own biological child (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4179057.stm>). So, it is not impossible for a woman “in her old age” to conceive and give birth.

²⁶ Luke 1,58

²⁷ Luke 1,34 (AV)

to Joseph – and to anyone else –, that her Son would be of the Holy Spirit and not of Joseph or of any other man?

Methods

Only when could be proved that she didn't know any man about the time of the conception, her pregnancy would be proven to be from the Holy Spirit. The only way in which the evidence could be obtained during her betrothal and pregnancy was

(A) to have Mary's next period recorded and to let her stay in an authorized seclusion from then until her pregnancy would be ascertained.

Secondly, not during her pregnancy, but after the birth of Jesus, the virginal conception could also be proven to have been from the Holy Spirit, if

(B) Mary had been in seclusion for more than a month at the time that the conception must have taken place to be able to give birth at the time she did. The normal duration of a pregnancy is 38 weeks from the moment of conception, with a minimum of 35 weeks and maximum of 40 weeks. So, if could be proved that Mary had been in seclusion from about the 42nd to 30th week before giving birth – for about the three months, during which she must have conceived –, her child Jesus would be proved to have been conceived supernaturally. This method however can not have been used while Joseph and Mary were still only betrothed, for this proof could only be obtained after the birth of the Child.

There was also a third method, which could even be used if Mary didn't have any periods yet:

(C) to ascertain her pregnancy and also her virginity by a physical examination²⁸.

In this article will be discussed how method A may have been effectuated, since the proof of method B would be too late, and method C would only be considered necessary if A had failed.

Since God considered it fitting to tell Mary in advance that she would conceive of the Holy Spirit, and since she and Joseph thus could try to make preparations to be able to prove this divine pregnancy, it is not illogical to suppose that God also provided her and Joseph the means by which to prove this divine pregnancy: a recorded last period before conception and a recorded seclusion (and/or female escort) since then.

Seclusion plus three month's test of pregnancy

The seclusion in Zechariah's and Elizabeth's house would be fitting to the needs of Mary, for she would be in the care of a person who had also conceived in a very special way herself and therefore would not deny Mary a three month's seclusion in her house, for she would believe in the possibility of a divine conception. Furthermore, Elizabeth's house was in a city of Judah, which could be reached from Nazareth within three days on foot and probably within one or two days if one left this city in a hired carriage ("with haste") that would take the

²⁸ A possibility is that Mary, at the moment of the annunciation, was still too young to have a woman's cycle (a girl usually entered into betrothal when she was between twelve and thirteen years old, but she continued to live at her own family home, usually for a year (Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 123-124)). In this case Mary could only be "found to be with child of the Holy Spirit" by method B or if her pregnancy was ascertained and her virginity was found physically intact at the same time.

shortest road straight through “the hill country” of Samaria and Judah²⁹. The fact that the seclusion would be far away from Joseph’s house in Nazareth would make the argument of a pregnancy without a man’s part in it more convincing, especially when Joseph would deliberately show himself to his Nazareth neighbours a couple of times each day. Then Joseph would have witnesses who could declare that he couldn’t have been in or near the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth in Judah. The fact that Mary received the annunciation of her Son in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy – as told to Mary by the angel in divine providence – implies that Elizabeth had already left the seclusion herself and Mary could take her place. Another (Judean) bride would have to wait some months before she could be tested by Elizabeth.

Recording the last period

- 1) If Mary’s next period was expected about a week or more after the annunciation, she may have travelled to Elizabeth’s first with haste, in order to arrive before the start of her period, so it could be recorded there by Elizabeth (see fig. 1: A.1. late period).
- 2) If Mary’s next period was expected only two or three days after the annunciation, Joseph and Mary may have decided to have her period recorded in Nazareth. They then would have needed a (Galilean) midwife in whose house Mary was welcome to stay for a couple of days for the period test, or who would be willing to stay at Mary’s house for the duration of this test. Joseph and Mary then also would need a female escort who could bring Mary, after her period, to Elizabeth’s in Judah as soon as possible (see fig. 1: A.2. early period)

Conception

In case 1) the conception could only occur while Mary was in seclusion at Elizabeth’s (see fig 1: A1 late period, late conception).

In case 2) the conception could either occur a) while Mary was in ritual purification or on the way, or b) while at Elizabeth’s (see fig.1: A.2.a and b). The chance of a conception after intercourse before day 8 or after day 19 of a woman’s cycle is not zero but 4,75 %.³⁰ So, if the divine conception took place during the first week of Mary’s cycle, an ovulation may also have taken place, constituting the natural human component of the divine incarnation.

Which of the moments of conception is most probable depends on the interpretation of Elizabeth’s benediction of Mary and the (future) Child.

According to the translation of the New International Version of 1984 Elizabeth’s benediction addressed Mary and her future Child:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!” Luke 1,42 (NIV)

Other translations and also the original Greek have a benediction of “the fruit of your womb” without specification:

²⁹ Luke 1,39; Nazareth is about 75 miles from Jerusalem.

³⁰ according to the Standard Days Method (www.irh.org/sdm.html, accessed 24-1-2005); “Because the ovulation may occur as early as day 7 of the menstrual cycle, assume you may be fertile from just after menses (if your cycles are no less than 25 days in length) until your temperature has remained elevated for at least 3 consecutive days.” (<http://www.irh.org/resources-SymptothermalMethod.htm>)

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” Luke 1,42 (RSV)
ευλογημενη συ εν γυναιχιν και ευλογημενος ο καρπος της κοιλιας σου (NA²⁷)

Mary seems to have understood the benediction as for her present Child, for she answered Elizabeth rejoicing and saying: “behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name”. The “great things” probably referred to Jesus’ divine conception and the “has done” in Luke 1,49 translates an aorist as the aorist of “he [God] has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden” in Luke 1,48. So, Mary probably thought the conception had been “done” when Mary and Elizabeth met. As this early conception is also the traditional interpretation, now a schedule of the possible effectuation of method A.2.a (early period and early conception) is described. Method A.1. (late period), and methods B and C, speak for themselves.

The sixth month, about three months, and the full time

The proof for Mary’s divine pregnancy can have been gathered in the course of the four months that passed from the beginning of Elizabeth’s sixth month to her “full time” (AV) of childbirth³¹ (see fig. 1). The following consecutive events may have taken place: when Mary had received the message from the angel Gabriel, she simply told this to her betrothed Joseph. They both will have considered that the only natural way a pregnancy from the Holy Spirit could be proven was by the three methods mentioned above.

They may have decided to have Mary’s next period recorded in Nazareth by a (Galilean) midwife who would also be willing to stay with Mary from the beginning of her period until she would have reached Elizabeth’s home. During her monthly flow a Jewish woman was not allowed to travel because of her ritual impurity. So, only after the end of her period and after Mary had prepared herself (Mary “arose” (Lu 1,39), “Mary got ready” (NIV)³²), she went with haste to Judah, escorted by the midwife. The ‘getting ready’ may have consisted of a ritual bath to restore ritual purity. The escort stayed with Mary until Mary would have entered into the authorized seclusion. To travel with an escort was the most logical and wise step anyway for a young woman, also if there would have been no need to prove her virginity at all. The reason why Mary, after her period, hurried to enter Elizabeth’s seclusion, may have been a combination of safety and clarity: the sooner she would be at Elizabeth’s the longer would be the time of seclusion before conception and thus the clearer the proof of a miraculous conception.³³

At arriving at Elizabeth’s Mary entered into seclusion and Mary’s escort could declare to Elizabeth in writing, that Mary hadn’t know a man from the start of her last period until she entered Elizabeth’s seclusion. The escort could then return to Nazareth and report to Joseph that Mary had arrived safely at Elizabeth’s. While in seclusion, Mary waited with Elizabeth to see whether her next period would come or stay away indeed and the usual signs of pregnancy would appear: nausea, change of appetite and a growing abdomen. If these signs appeared the conception of the Child would have to have happened while Mary was either with escort on the way from Nazareth to Judah, or else while she was in seclusion. And as Mary had

³¹ Luke 1,57: ‘eplēsthē ho chronos’ (NA²⁷), literally “the time was fulfilled” (Darby-translation 1884)

³² “arose” is ‘anastasa’ (NA²⁷) from ‘anisthēmi’ = “to rise, to stand up” also “for those who prepare themselves for a journey” (Strong’s 450)

³³ If Mary would not have had an appropriate escort to bring her from Nazareth to Judah, the argument of this version of method A would halt, for the probability of a conception after intercourse on day 1 to 8 since the first day of menstruation or after day 19 -- so also on the day(s) of Mary’s journey -- is not zero.

witnesses who could show that Mary hadn't known a man since her last period, her pregnancy had to have begun with a divine conception.

To be able to prove a pregnancy at least three periods would have to be missing, and the size of her abdomen had to have grown so much (with other physical signs), that only a pregnancy could be the cause of it, and this also happens after at least three months. So, after her arrival in Elizabeth's seclusion in the first half of Elizabeth's sixth month Mary had to stay there until at least the first half of Elizabeth's ninth month. And as it follows from the text of the Gospel that Mary abode with Elizabeth "about three months" and left her before Elizabeth's "full time" had come at the end of the ninth month³⁴, Mary's first three months of pregnancy will have more or less coincided with her first and only three months of seclusion. After her third missing period in the first half of Elizabeth's ninth month and after her pregnancy had begun to show, she may have stayed with Elizabeth for another one or two weeks to let the signs of her pregnancy become more perceptible. Then Elizabeth could declare with certainty, and in writing, that Mary had not become infertile after her last period, but that she had become pregnant without having known a man³⁵. Mary was "found to be with Child of the Holy Spirit".

After the ninth month Elizabeth would possibly need Mary's room for her own baby and her helping neighbours. So, Mary left Elizabeth in the last half on her ninth month. Mary had been "found to be with child of the Holy Spirit" by Elizabeth and had received the certificate that proved her exceptional state.

Mary, by telling her husband immediately after Gabriel's visit about a future divine conception, even before any extant signs of pregnancy, performed an act of faith, just as Elizabeth had done by entering into seclusion after having read Zechariah's angel message on the writing tablet, and just as Joseph did by having Mary's period recorded and letting her stay with Elizabeth for a still unknown number of necessary months. Elizabeth, after having seen the fulfilment of the prophecy of her own son's conception, said to Mary when she entered Elizabeth's house:

... blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." Luke 1,45 (RSV)

Mary's entering Elizabeth's house (for entering into seclusion) was the visible sign of Mary's belief, also for Elizabeth.

3. Joseph considered to divorce her quietly

Since centuries the people of Israel had been expecting their promised 'Messiah' (Hebrew for 'anointed one', in Greek 'ho Christos' – 'the Christ'), their redeeming king, who would for ever reign in Israel but also would bring justice, peace and harmony all over the world, as promised in Scripture:

Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the
LORD and his anointed, saying,

³⁴ Luke 1,56-57 (AV)

³⁵ In this declaration Elizabeth may have specified that Mary had been in seclusion from week x until week y and that she left the seclusion pregnant and thus infertile for any other conception until she would have given birth. She may also have declared that physical examination had shown that Mary's virginity had remained intact until she left seclusion (method C).

"Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us."
He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD has them in derision.
Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,
"I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill." ... Psalm 2,1-6 (RSV)

According to the Holy Scriptures the Messiah would be from the royal house of David³⁶.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. Isa 9,6-7 (RSV)

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. Jer 23,5 (RSV)

According to the prophecy of Micah his "goings forth (would be) from of old, from everlasting" (AV)³⁷ and He would come forth out of Bethlehem:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. [...]

And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace, ..." Mic 5,2-5 (AV)

For this reason genealogies were kept of the members of the house of David³⁸, in order to know which man was the legal heir of king David and thus had the best papers to turn out to be the promised Messiah. Israel had no Davidic king in the days of Joseph and Mary because of the Roman occupation, and the Messiah was expected to end this occupation (Acts 1,6). Joseph, son of Jacob and husband of the Virgin Mary, was, according to his genealogy in the first chapter of the gospel of Matthew, a son of David and also of all the other Judean kings descending from David. Now, the angel who addressed Joseph in his dream, calls him "Joseph, son of David"³⁹. The expression "Son of David" was not just designating any ordinary man descending from David, but it was the expression by which the legal, royal heir of David, the crown prince and especially the last crown prince, the promised Messiah, was designated⁴⁰. So, according to the angel's address, Joseph may have been the legal crown prince of the royal

³⁶ Son of David O.T.: Ps 132,1; Isa 11,1-16; Jer 23,5

³⁷ Micah 5,2: ex hēmerōn aiōnos (LXX), a diebus aeternitatis (Vulgate), מִיְמֵי עוֹלָם (Ben Asher Hebrew Text)

³⁸ In Israel in Jesus' time one still used the expression 'the house of' when it was important to emphasize a decent of noble stock; in the families genealogies were kept that reiterated to the distant past, some even to Abraham (D. Rops, *Het dagelijks leven te Palestina ten tijde van Jesus* (Utrecht 1965) 173). According to Luke Joseph was "of the house and lineage of David" Luke 2,4; And also later, in the time of Domitian, descendants from David were still known as, and feared as, possible candidates to become the Messiah (the Christ), although most of them were poor and without any political influence. "But when this same Domitian had commanded that the descendants of David should be slain, ... some ... brought accusation against the descendants of Jude ... on the ground that they were of the lineage of David and were related to Christ himself. ... Information was given that they belonged to the family of David, and they were brought to the Emperor Domitian by the Evocatus. For Domitian feared the coming of Christ as Herod also had feared it. And he asked them if they were descendants of David, and they confessed that they were." (Eusebius, *Church History* 3,19-20)

³⁹ Matt 1,20

⁴⁰ Son of David NT: Mt 12,23 21,9.15 22,42 Mr 12,35

house of Judah. This is confirmed by Luke 2,4, which says that Joseph was not only of the “lineage” but also of the royal “house” of David⁴¹. And it’s possible that Joseph knew he was the crown prince. He may nevertheless have decided to contract a marriage that would remain celibate and thus without children and heirs, knowing that after his death the inheritance of the right to David’s throne would pass on to his younger brother, if he had one, or else to his father or the oldest brother of his father Jacob, if still alive, or to Joseph’s oldest cousin – in short: to his legal heir according to the genealogy of his family.

The Messiah to be born in Bethlehem – or else to be ‘put to shame’

When Mary was found to be with Child of the Holy Spirit, Joseph, the son of Jacob, and “Son of David”, considered divorcing her⁴². The reason can not be that he thought that Mary had committed adultery, for he already knew that she was “with child of the Holy Spirit”, as Matthew’s verse 1,18 says⁴³, and as had probably been shown by Elizabeth’s certificate. And he also knew that this Child was the Messiah, for this had been the angel’s message to Mary (see paragraph 2, Luke 1,31-33).

But Joseph will also have known that the Messiah would have to get born in Bethlehem, according to Micah’s prophecy, cited above. Also all the chief priests and scribes of his time knew that the Messiah would have to get born in Bethlehem, for this is what they told the foreigner Herod, referring to Micah’s prophecy.

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, [...] and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.’" Matt 2,3-6 (RSV)

Now Joseph, not knowing how long the supernatural pregnancy would take, must have considered that if he would marry the pregnant Mary and take her into his house in Nazareth, the Child would most probably get born at home in Nazareth: Micah’s prophecy about Bethlehem would not come true and the Messiah-hood of Mary’s Son and the divine virginal conception connected with it (“he [shall] come forth unto me [=God] that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”⁴⁴), would become disputable: Mary and her Son would be “put ... to shame”⁴⁵. Note that the verb ‘paradeigmatizō’ (= make a public example, put to open shame) is used only twice in the New Testament, namely for Mary here in Matt 1,19 and for the crucified Jesus in Heb 6,6⁴⁶:

... her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame ((para)-deigmatizai’), resolved to divorce her quietly. (RSV) Matt 1,19 (NA²⁷)

⁴¹ Luke 2,4

⁴² Matt 1,16.18-20

⁴³ In the introduction is already explained that the expression “found to be with child of the Holy Spirit” can be both an explanation offered to the reader and a part of the narrative flow: that Joseph knew the child was of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁴ Micah 5,2 (AV)

⁴⁵ Matt 1,19

⁴⁶ NA²⁷

For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, [...] if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt ('paradeigmatizontas'). (RSV)

For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened [...], If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame ('paradeigmatizontas'). (AV) Heb 6,4-6 (NA²⁷)

History showed that Joseph was right in considering that Mary and Jesus would be 'put to open shame' if one didn't know of a birth in Bethlehem, since this 'putting to open shame' for this reason is exactly what happened.

Open rejection

To the priests and scribes of Jesus' adult days, who were completely ignorant of his birth in Bethlehem, just as everybody else, He was a pretender, who could not be the Messiah, and thus He was rejected openly.

In Jerusalem, for example, there was this discussion:

When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So there was a division among the people over him. John 7,40-43 (RSV)

And Nicodemus, who was of opinion that one should hear Jesus and know what He was doing, was silenced by the Pharisees by the in every man's eyes indisputable argument of Jesus' Galilean descent:

Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee." They went each to his own house [...]. John 7,50-53 (RSV)

And Nathanael, who said that nothing good could come out of Nazareth, was called sincere by Jesus Himself:

Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" John 1,45-47 (46-48) (RSV)

The adult Jesus was only known as "of Nazareth" and for some reason, which is discussed in another article, nobody knew of his birth in Bethlehem, let alone of his virginal conception⁴⁷. The Jews of Jesus' time can not have rejected Him as Messiah because of what He hadn't done yet, such as establishing his kingdom in Israel, for, as long as He was alive, He was still in the opportunity to do so. And so, they didn't reject Him because of what He hadn't done yet, but because of what He hadn't been from the start: He was not from Bethlehem. He was openly rejected as the king of the Jews:

⁴⁷ "And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee" Matt 21,11; "Jesus of Nazareth": Acts 10,38 and many other verses; The ignorance of his divine and Bethlehem descent: Matt 13,54-55; Mark 3,21.31; Luke 2,42-50; John 1,45-47(46-48) 7,5.40-43.50-53. My article on this subject is "Jesus and Moses – Mary Magdalene", www.JesusKing.info, April 26, 2009.

They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."
Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. ... John 19,15-16 (RSV)

And just as most Jews until our times don't accept Jesus as Messiah, as a result of the rejection by the scholars and leaders of His time, they don't accept His divine conception from a virgin either⁴⁸: also Mary is still put to shame⁴⁹.

Divorce her quietly

So, Joseph, when considering Mary's pregnancy of the Holy Spirit and the verses of Micah 5, realized that the Child was not to get born in Nazareth but in Bethlehem. And, not knowing the duration of Mary's extraordinary pregnancy and when the Child would get born, Joseph must have thought that a marriage of Mary with one of the male members of his family at Bethlehem would be the best way to enhance the probability of a birth in this city. And Joseph, "being a just man"⁵⁰, did not want to obstruct the Lord's scheme, and so he thought about divorcing Mary "quietly" by arranging a marriage with one of his Bethlehem brothers, uncles or cousins. He could show them Elizabeth's certificate of Mary's supernatural pregnancy⁵¹. He could even surrender to her new husband the right to the throne of David, just as Esau, Isaac's oldest son, had sold his birthright to his younger brother Jacob⁵². Apparently, Joseph was either not wealthy enough to move and buy a house in Bethlehem – he would offer the sacrifice of the poor at the presentation of Jesus in the temple⁵³ – and/or not able to find a job or other source of income in or near Bethlehem.

But the order of the angel of the Lord to Joseph, the "Son of David", in a dream, to take his wife Mary unto him, on one side, and the unforeseen command of Augustus, the Roman

⁴⁸ Some modern Jews reject Jesus as Messiah because He hasn't become the triumphant King of Israel (yet) and they don't believe in his second coming, although it is implied by Daniel's time table (A.G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Time Table According to Daniel the Prophet*, an online article originally published in the "Jews for Jesus" - periodical called ISSUES (San Francisco) 5:1)

For others the main reason why they reject Him is that He has been rejected by the priests and sages of his time. Rabbin Aryeh Kaplan seems to have belonged to these modern scholars (H.G. Koekkoek, *Was Jezus de Joodse Messias?* (Alphen aan de Rijn 2003) 206).

The reason why the divine virginal conception is rejected by modern Jews is (also) because some Gospel texts are seemingly incompatible with their Gospel context and/or hard to understand. For instance, the two Infancy Gospels seem incompatible at first sight, but this problem has been solved in my article "From Bethlehem to Nazareth – and a memorial in Bethany" (www.JesusKing.info). Then there is the seemingly total ignorance of Jesus' parents about His divine origin, when He is in the temple as a 12 year old boy (Luke 2,42-50), and later not even His own family nor anyone else knows of his divine origin (Matt 13,54-55; Mark 3,21.31; John 7,5). These objections, listed on the "Jews for Judaism" website, are answered in my article "Jesus and Moses – Mary Magdalene", www.JesusKing.info.

⁴⁹ Even a charge exists that says that Jesus was an illegitimate son of Mary. Celsus, drawing upon Jewish sources, wrote in 177-180 CE that she committed adultery with a soldier named Panthera, and Tertullian in 197 CE mentions a charge of Jewish origin, that Jesus was a son of a prostitute (Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 535).

⁵⁰ Matt 1,19

⁵¹ Ibid.; If the new husband would want to have normal marital relations, there would also be the proof of the virginal blood at the first wedding night. "Talmudic sources report early differences between Judaea and Galilee as regards the first wedding night, for the southerners were very suspicious and exacting in all that regarded the confirmation of the bride's virginity. The Judaeans would examine the groom and the bride, prior to the wedding, in order to preclude all fraud as regards virginal blood." (Safrai a.o., *The Jewish People...* 759-760)

⁵² Gen 25,33

⁵³ Luke 2,24; Lev 12,6-8

emperor, to travel to one's own city – for Joseph: Bethlehem – for the census, on the other side, lead to the birth of Mary's Child at Bethlehem under the legal fatherhood of Joseph⁵⁴ (see table 1. The two conditions for Messianity are met). Joseph, son of Jacob, as the legal father, had the right, the duty, and the honour of calling the Child's name Jesus⁵⁵.

	Bethlehem born	Divine conception
Micah 5,2	But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel;	he [shall] come forth unto me [=God] that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.
Luke 1,35		And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.
Matt 1,18		Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit;
Matt 1,20.24.25	"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife [...] When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. (NIVUS)	But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. (NIVUS)
Luke 2,39	their own city, Nazareth.	
Luke 2,1-7	In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. [...] And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son ...	
Luke 2,39	And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth.	
Matt 2,23	And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."	

Table 1. The two conditions for Messianity are met

⁵⁴ Matt 1,20-2,1; Luke 2,1-7

⁵⁵ Matt 1,16.21.25

4. True, the conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, but ...

As already mentioned before, it is strange that, although Mary had already been found to be with Child of the Holy Spirit and Joseph had already feared to marry her (apparently for this reason), the angel seems to urge Joseph to marry Mary using the very argument why Joseph had been afraid to do this from the start: that she was with Child of the Holy Spirit. The usual translation of the angel's words are:

... "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus ..." Matt 1,20-21 (RSV)

The mariologist Ignace de la Potterie⁵⁶ wrote that he had the same opinion as many Fathers of the Church did, viz. that Joseph had already heard from Mary that she would receive of the Holy Spirit. And Mary had been "found with Child of the Holy Spirit" indeed, as Matthew 1,18 says. To explain how the angel's message to Joseph then could be read in a more complying way, de la Potterie looked at the two Greek words 'gar' and 'de', used in the angel's message:

‘... mē phobēthēs paralabein Marian tēn gunaika sou’ to *gar* en autē gennēthen ek pneumatos estin hagiou. texetai *de* (soi) uion, kai kaleseis to onoma autou Iesoun’ Matt 1,20-21 (NA²⁷; ‘soi’ = “to you” is in the codices sy^{s,c}; the punctuation needn’t be in the manuscripts)

He argued that these particles don't have to be translated with 'for' and an omission of a translation of 'de', as in the Revised Standard Version, but could also be a composite expression meaning: 'for, true, ... , but ...'. He used the verses Matt 18,7 and 22,14 as examples of this translation of the composite expression 'gar ... de'⁵⁷:

"Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes! Matt 18,7 (RSV)
(‘ouai tō kosmō apo tōn skandalōn’ anankē *gar* (eisin) elthein ta skandala, plēn ouai tō anthrōpō (ekeinō) di hou to skandalon erchetai.’) Matt 18,7 (NA²⁷);

... there men will weep and gnash their teeth.’ For many are called, but few *are* chosen. (RSV)
(‘polloi *gar* eisin (hoi) klētoi oligoi *de* (hoi) eklektoi’) Matt 22,13-14 (NA²⁷)

This would change the English translation of the angel's message into:

... do not fear to take Mary your wife: for, true, that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, but she will bear a son (to you), and you shall call his name Jesus ...

The emphasis in this case would be on the expression "you shall call his name Jesus". In Judaism it was the father who named his child⁵⁸. The angel's words to Joseph thus meant: *you* (Joseph) shall be his legal father, and not your brother, uncle, or cousin, but you; you shall call his name. And this is also the final act of Matthew's chapter one: "he [Joseph] called His

⁵⁶ I. de la Potterie, *Het Mariamysterie in het Nieuwe Testament* (Bonheiden, Brugge 1985) 74, 81, 84-86

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Gen 17,19 41,51-52; e.g. Zechariah named his son John: "they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." (Lu 1,62-63)

name Jesus”⁵⁹. Joseph was still the Virgin Mary’s husband and the royal heir, and now his legal son and heir Jesus was a “Son of David” too.

5. Conclusion

This article contains three theses concerning Matthew’s chapter one. The arguments are based on biblical texts and first century customs in Judea. The first is that, during her betrothal with Joseph, Mary was “found to be with Child of the Holy Spirit” by the midwife Elizabeth after a three months’ seclusion of Mary in Elisabeth’s home. The next is that the “open shame”, to which Joseph didn’t want to put Mary and her Child, consisted of the rejection of Jesus’ Messiah-hood – and, connected with it, Mary’s virginal motherhood – because of a birth in Nazareth instead of the foresaid Bethlehem. For this reason, when Joseph considered to “divorce her quietly”, he probably considered the arrangement of a marriage of Mary with one of his male Bethlehem heirs and relatives. The last thesis is of Ignace de la Potterie: that the angel didn’t inform Joseph about the virginal conception, but only told him what to do in this special situation: take Mary into his home in Nazareth anyway. The unforeseen command of the Roman emperor August lead to the birth of the Child in Bethlehem.

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⁵⁹ Matt 1,25

Appendix Joseph an Essene

In the description of the Essenes by Josephus in *Jewish War* II,8,2-13 (119-161) there are some parallels with the person of Joseph, the Virgin Mary's husband (see table 2):

Jewish War II,8, ...	The Essenes	Joseph, son of Jacob (Matthew, Luke, John)
2 (119)	Jews by birth	"of the house and lineage of David" (Luke 2,4)
2 (120)	... esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue	Joseph doesn't speak in the Gospel and contracted a celibate marriage with Mary.
2 (121)	They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women	Joseph did marry Mary: He "took unto him his wife" (Matt 1,24).
3 (122)	These men are despisers of riches ...among them all there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches	Joseph and Mary had little money or other precious things at the moment of the presentation in the temple, for there they offered the offering of the poor (Luke 2,24).
4 (124 -125)	They have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own; and they go in to such as they never knew before, as if they had been ever so long acquainted with them. For which reason they carry nothing at all with them when they travel into remote parts, though still they take their weapons with them, for fear of thieves. Accordingly, there is, in every city where they live, one appointed particularly to take care of strangers, and to provide garments and other necessaries for them.	Would Joseph have used these facilities on his flight to Egypt?
5 (133)	... which silence thus kept in their house appears to foreigners like some tremendous mystery; the cause of which is that perpetual sobriety they exercise	Of Joseph no spoken words have been recorded.
6 (134)	... they do nothing but according to the injunctions of their curators;	Joseph obeyed the angel / the warning in his dream right away four times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking Mary his wife unto him; • The flight to Egypt; • The return to Israel; • The withdrawal to Galilee and the dwelling in Nazareth. (Matt 1,24-25.13-15.19-21.22-23)
6 (135)	They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion.	Joseph was "a just man" (Matt 1,19).
7 (140)	... tremendous oaths, that, in the first place, he will exercise piety towards God, and then that he will observe justice towards men, and that he will do no harm to any one, either of his own accord, or by the command of others; that he will always hate the wicked, and be assistant to the righteous; ..	He was "a just man and unwilling to put her [Mary] to shame" (Matt 1,19).
7 (140)	he will ever show fidelity to all men, and especially to those in authority, because no one obtains the government without God's assistance;	He obeyed the command of the emperor August to travel to his own city Bethlehem.

7 (140)	and that if he be in authority, he will at no time whatever abuse his authority, nor endeavor to outshine his subjects either in his garments, or any other finery;	He probably didn't boast of being the legal crown prince, the "Son of David" (Matt 1,20).
7 (142)	... will equally preserve the books belonging to their sect, and the names of the angels [or messengers].	Three or four times an angel appears to Joseph in a dream.
9 (145)	in the judgments they exercise they are most accurate and just	He was a just man.
9 (146)	They also think it a good thing to obey their elders, and the major part.	Joseph's obedience to the angel and to the warning.
10 (151)	They condemn the miseries of life, and are above pain, by the generosity of their mind.	He didn't seem to complain about the flight and unprepared stay in Egypt.
12 (159)	There are also those among them who undertake to foretell things to come,* by reading the holy books, and using several sorts of purifications, and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets; and it is but seldom that they miss in their predictions. *: in the History of the War, I,3,5 Judas foretold the death of Antigonus at Strato's Tower; in II,7,3 Simon foretold from a dream of Archelaus that he should reign but nine or ten years; and in J. Antiq. XV,10,4-5 Manahem foretold that Herod should be king, and should reign tyrannically, and that for more than twenty or even thirty years. All this came to pass accordingly.	The priest Zechariah prophesied (Luke 1,67(.68-79)); maybe also in Mary's family some (Elisabeth and Zechariah and later John the Baptist) belonged to the Essenes and thus the celibate marriage between Mary and the Essene Joseph may have been arranged (see below for the arguments from my article "The Eleven").
13 (161)	they try their spouses for three years; and if they find that they have their natural purgations thrice, as trials that they are likely to be fruitful, they then actually marry them.	Mary may have had a three months' test at Elizabeth's (Luke 1,56).
13 (160)	they do not use to accompany with their wives when they are with child, as a demonstration that they do not marry out of regard to pleasure, but for the sake of posterity.	"But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son." (Matt 1,24-25 NIVUS)

Table 2. Joseph an Essene

That Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John the Baptist, and also Joseph, Mary, and perhaps even the young Jesus, may have been Essenes, has been shown in table K of my article "The Eleven – Jesus appeared risen to the Officers of the Temple Prison").⁶⁰ In the article is defended that of the Kenite Rechabites – also called the 'Notzrim' –, who were teetotalist itinerant craftsmen who lived in e.g. Bethhaccerem, and probably Rimmon and Gittaim, some became the temple's prison officers, and together with some orthodox temple priests formed the Essene sect in Qumran.⁶¹ The pre-Christian Nazarenes (= 'Notzrim') were the northern branch of this sect (Epiphanius, Panarion 1,18-19), living in Nazareth (= settlement of the Nazarenes) as craftsmen, e.g. carpenters.

The following arguments (see table 3) are from table K of my article "The Eleven ...":

⁶⁰ www.JesusKing.info

⁶¹ Texts from Jewish tradition indicate that the Rechabites among the Essenes were called "the water-drinkers" (Mek., Yithro, Amalek 2 (Jewish Encyclopedia on Abstinence)) and that the Essenes beheld in Jonadab, son of Rechab, and in Jabez (Targum 1Ch 2,55 4,10) and in Jethro the Kenite prototypes and possibly founders of the Essene sect (Mek., Yitro, 2; Sifre, Num. 78; Shek. v. 48c; Nilus, De Monastica Exercitatione 3; J.Q.R. v. 418)(Jewish Encyclopedia on Essenes) (www.jewishencyclopedia.com).

<p>John the Baptist is Elias who is to come</p>	<p>a city of Judah: Ein Kerem = Bethhacerem; desert; wilderness of Judea (Gittaim?); Jordan (Bethabara/ Bethany beyond Jordan) Aenon / ('Ainōn')/ Ain near Salim (Middin, the same as Midyan, is called 'Ainōn' in Jos 15,61 LXX); beyond Jordan (Ain is near Rimmon) Ain = Ain Karim?</p>	<p>Lu 1,15.39.80 Matt 3,1-6 Joh 1,28 Joh 3,23.26 John 10,40 Mt 11,14 Jos 15,61 LXX Jos 15,32 19,7</p>	<p>Theodosius (530) says that the distance from Jerusalem to the place where Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, lived is five miles. The Jerusalem Calendar (dated before 638) mentions the village by name as the place of a festival in memory of Elizabeth celebrated on the twenty-eighth of August: "In the village of Enquarium, in the church of just Elizabeth, her memory" (Wikipedia on Ein Kerem). "Beth-hacerem House of a vineyard ... It is probable that this place is the modern 'Ain Karim, or "well of the vineyards" ... (Easton).</p> <p>John: shall <u>drink neither wine nor strong drink</u>: required from a nazirite, and also pertaining to the obedience of the Rechabites. But John was of priestly descent (Lu 1,5), so he wasn't a Rechabite. The equation of the places Bethhacerem and Ein Kerem (=Ain Karim), supports the probability of a close contact and even an overlap between the Rechabites and the Essenes (see below), who probably raised/adopted John after his parents had died (they were "advanced in years" when John was born Lu 1,7). Perhaps Zachariah and Elisabeth were themselves Essenes? Did John live with the Essenes in the desert (either in Ain Karim or in Qumran)? He came to Jordan (Bethabarah? Gittaim?) to baptize (<u>near water</u> needed for smiths, and complying with the Essene purity rules); moved to Aenon near Salim (with itinerant Rechabites or to another Essene community?), there was <u>much water</u> there (needed for baptizing and smiths); his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins (cf. Elijah); Jesus: "this is Elias, who is to come".</p> <p>Aenon: the Syriac and Persian versions of John 3,23 call it Ain (בְּעֵי-יַרְדֵּן). Ain is in the south of Judah, mentioned before Rimmon Jos 15,32 19,7 and in the neighbourhood of Hebron Jos 21,16, so it may have been a place that had been inhabited by Kenites. Aenon may even have been Ain Karim, which probably used to have a lot of water, as the name Ain (= 'well', 'spring') indicates, and for which the Rechabites lived there. Middiyn, the same as 'Midyan' (a place inhabited by Midjanites, the original tribe of the Kenites and Rechabites) is called 'Ainōn' in LXX Jos 15,61: In the wilderness, Betharabah, Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, the City of Salt, and Engedi: six cities with their villages. ((Arabah ('plain', 'desert'), mentioned twice in Jos 18,18 (border of Benjamin), and Betharabah Jos 18,22 (inheritance and city of children of Benjamin); Betharabah ('house of the desert valley' or 'place of the depression') Jos 15,6 (border of Judah) and Jos 15,61 (in the wilderness/desert 'midbar' of Judah): is this a double city in Judah and Benjamin?))</p> <p>Is Gittaim or Arabah the place in the 'wilderness of Judea' where John baptized Jesus (Mt 3,1.6 Mr 1,4-5 Lu 2,3-4)? Lu 2,3: he came into all the region about Jordan: so into more places than one or two. In Bethabarah the messengers from the Pharisees came to John (John 1,28); then John pointed at Jesus saying Behold the Lamb of God, ... I saw the spirit descending from heaven. So, John was in Bethabarah after Jesus was baptized.</p>
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<p>(the blessed virgin) Mary (blood relative of Elisabeth)</p>	<p>From Nazareth to Ein Kerem (Bethhacerem) for three months</p>	<p>Lu 1,26-56 (Lu 1,36)</p>	<p>26... Nazareth ... a virgin betrothed to ... Joseph ... And the virgin's name was Mary. ... 39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ... 56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.</p> <p>The Essenes put their future brides to a test of three months during which they had to prove their fertility: "they try their spouses for three years; and if they find that they have their natural purgations thrice, as trials that they are likely to be fruitful, they then actually marry them." (Jos. War 2,8,13 (160)).</p> <p>The betrothed Mary travelled from Nazareth (probably a settlement of Nazarenes, the northern branch of the Essenes) to Ein Kerem (where probably was another settlement of Essenes, some of whom probably descended from the Rechabites of Bethhacerem in the time of Malchiah, son of Rechab), and she stayed there for three months. So perhaps Elisabeth was a midwife who was consulted by the Essenes when their brides had to be tested. In Mary's case she proved her fertility by her (virginal) pregnancy.</p> <p>So this is another indication for the closeness of the Nazarenes/Essenes and the Rechabites.</p>
<p>Joseph</p>	<p>offering of the poor in Jerusalem</p> <p>flight to Egypt</p>	<p>Mat 1,20 Lu 2,24</p> <p>Mat 2,13-15</p>	<p>Matt 1,20 Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit;</p> <p>Lu 2,24 to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.</p> <p>Although Joseph was the Dauphin, since he was the "son of David", he still brought the offering of the poor: two doves. The reason may have been that he was a member of the (poor) community of Nazarenes in Nazareth, whose members shared all property.</p> <p>13 ¶ And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. 14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.</p> <p>There was an Egyptian branch of the sect of the Essenes (called the Therapeutae) near Lake Mareotis at Alexandria, which city also had a Jewish quarter.</p>

			<p>Zechariah 13:3 And if any one again appears as a prophet, his father and mother who bore him ('yalad' = beget, bare, bring up cf. Genesis 50:23) will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD'; and his father and mother who bore him shall pierce him through when he prophesies.</p> <p>Zech 13,11-12 when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born. ... 12 The land shall mourn, ... the family of the Shimeites [= a family of Rechabites] by itself, and their wives by themselves;)</p> <p>The celibate marriage between Joseph and the virgin Mary may indicate that they both were Essenes, but not necessarily from the same location. The Roman Catholic Church memorates Mary's presentation in the temple on November 21, so Mary, as a (Zadokite?) daughter of Aaron like her bloodrelative Elizabeth (Lu 1,5.36), may have been a Jerusalem (celibate) Essene. Her bridegroom Joseph was a son of David, but may have joined the sect of the Nazarenes in Nazareth. After Mary was engaged to Joseph and when she heard the message of the angel Gabriel, she was living in Nazareth, perhaps as a guest of the local Essene-Nazarene community, whose members showed great hospitality to all other sect members. After their marriage both Joseph and Mary lived in "their own city Nazareth" (Lu 2,39).</p>
<p>Jesus: He shall be called a Nazarene ('Nazoraios')</p> <p>Jesus the Nazarene ('Nazoraios')</p>	<p>Nazareth</p> <p>Temple Jerusalem</p>	<p>Matt 2,23</p> <p>Matt 26,71 Mr 10,47 Lu 18,37 Jo 18,5</p> <p>Epiphanius, Panarion 1,18-19</p> <p>Mt 21,12 Mr 11,15</p>	<p>"Nazarene. In the New Testament, a title applied to Jesus and, later, to those who followed his teachings (Acts 24,5). In the Greek text there appear two forms of the word: the simple form, <i>Nazarenos</i>, meaning "of Nazareth," and the peculiar form, <i>Nazoraios</i>. Before its association with the locality, this latter term may have referred to a Jewish sect of "observants," or "devotees", and was later transferred to the Christians." (Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/eb/article-9055104/Nazarene).</p> <p>".. linguistically the transition from Ναζαρετ (Nazareth) to Ναζωραιος is difficult ... and it is to be borne in mind that Ναζωραιος meant something different before it was connected with Nazareth" (Bauer Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazarene_(sect)#cite_note-2)</p> <p>When Jesus was born the Nazarenes were the northern branch of the Essenes (Epiphanius, Panarion 1:18-19; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essenes#Rules.2C_customs.2C_theology_and_beliefs). They were probably called Nazarenes because most of them were Rechabites (Notzerim); their settlement - located at the site of Harasheth haGojim = 'smithy of the nations' - was called Nazareth by others or by themselves. Joseph brought Jesus to Nazareth, in order to let Him be called a Nazarene ('Nazoraios').</p> <p>So all inhabitants of Nazareth were Nazarenes, with the name of the place referring to the pre-existent (or else simultaneously formed) Jewish sect (instead of the name of the sect referring to a pre-existent place).</p> <p>Jesus violently restores order in the temple, as if he was a Rechabite prison officer: as one of the 'notzerim' and Nazarenes.</p>

Table 3. More Essene family of Jesus

Fig. 1 Time-schedules
 depending on time of last period: after (A.1.) or before (A.2.) arrival at Elizabeth's

A.1.

			At Elizabeth's										return towards Nazareth
Mary	Annun- ciation	fore- thought	haste to Judah	Start seclusion	Recorded period	purifi- cation	Conception	1 st missed period	2 nd missed period	3 rd missed period	return towards Nazareth		
		day 1	2-3	4	5	x, x+1, x+2, ... (x = 5 to 23)			x+28	x+56	x+84	max. 110	
Elizabeth	in 6 th month of Elizabeth							in 7 th month	in 8 th month	in 9 th month		birth John Bap.	

A.2.

			a) Conception?			b) Conception?							return towards Nazareth	
Mary	Annun- ciation	fore- thought	Midwife plus escort			At Elizabeth's							return towards Nazareth	
	Recorded period	purifi- cation	haste to Judah	Start seclusion	1 st missed period	2 nd missed period	3 rd missed period	return towards Nazareth						
	day 1	2-3	4-5-6-...	7	8	9		32	60	82	max. 114			
Elizabeth	in 6 th month of Elizabeth							in 7 th month	in 8 th month	in 9 th month		birth John Bap.		