

From Bethlehem to Nazareth And a memorial in Bethany

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Introduction

In the New Testament only two of the four Gospels contain stories concerning Jesus' birth and childhood, viz. those of Luke and Matthew. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, we read that the Virgin Mary lived in Nazareth and that Jesus was conceived there by the Holy Spirit. Mary travelled with her husband Joseph to Bethlehem where her Child was born and laid in a manger. The birth of Jesus, the Messiah, at Bethlehem was made known to shepherds by angels, and all those who heard the shepherds' testimony of the angels' message and the newborn Child had wondered at it. Luke, chapter 2, also relates that after eight days the Child was circumcised and named Jesus, and that forty days after Jesus' birth at Bethlehem the Virgin Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. There He was recognized as the Messiah by Simeon and Hanna. This did not go unnoticed, for Hanna, who remained in the temple day and night, "spoke of him to all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem".¹ When the young family had performed all the duties prescribed by the law of the Lord they returned to their own city, Nazareth.² This is the story as related by Luke.

Matthew, chapter 2, tells another story³: that when the Child was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the East arrived in Jerusalem drawing the attention of Herod to the birth of the new king. After Herod had consulted all the scribes, and after a secret meeting with the wise men, the wise men departed and followed a star, which they had seen in the East, to the place where the young Child was. Matthew now suddenly speaks of a "house" (οικία), where they saw Mary and the Child, but he doesn't mention Joseph here.

9 ¶ When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy;

11 and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. Matt 2,9-12 RSV⁴

The wise men are warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and Joseph is summoned in a dream to flee to Egypt with the Child and its mother because Herod intends to kill the Child. They remain in Egypt until the death of Herod, when an angel tells Joseph to return to the land of Israel. There, after another warning in a dream, Joseph returns to Galilee and the city of Nazareth.

¹ Luke 2,8-38 RSV

² Luke 2,39

³ Matt 2,1-23

⁴ All bible citations are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) unless otherwise indicated.

I. The problem

The question is how these two stories can be harmonized. This harmonization is an indispensable and essential condition ('conditio-sine-qua-non') for the possibility that both accounts are completely historical. The problem is that Luke states that the family returned to Nazareth after the presentation of the Child to the Lord in the temple, but doesn't relate anything pertaining to the flight to Egypt as told by Matthew. According to Matthew, Joseph only came to Nazareth after the flight to Egypt. So, the question is where Matthew's story about the wise men and the flight to Egypt should be situated in relation to Luke's story (see table 1).

Table 1. The harmonisation problem of the Nativity Gospels

Luke	Nazareth	Bethlehem "a manger"	Jerusalem Temple	?→Nazareth	
Matt.		"when Jesus was born in Bethlehem ..."	? "where the child was" ? "the house" ?	?→Egypt	→Nazareth

II. Solutions until now

Until now at least the following constructions have been proposed:

A: One of the possibilities is that, after the presentation in the temple, the family first returned to Nazareth (Luke 2,39), and then moved from Nazareth to Bethlehem from where the flight to Egypt would have taken place (Matthew 2,14) (see table 2).⁵

Table 2. Solution A of the harmonisation problem:

Luke	Nazareth	Bethlehem "a manger"	Jerusalem Temple	Nazareth	<i>(moved to Bethlehem)</i>
Matt.		"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem ..."			

"where the child was" "the house" <i>(Bethlehem)</i>	Egypt	Nazareth
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⁵ Implicitly R.E. Brown rejected this harmonisation (R.E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (first paperback edition 1999, New York: Doubleday 1977) 35-36).

B: Another possibility is that after the presentation in the temple (Luke 2,38) the family returned to Bethlehem and from there fled to Egypt (Matthew 2,14). So Matthew's verse about Joseph's arrival in Nazareth after the return from Egypt (Matthew 2,23) is seen as parallel to Luke's verse about the return to Nazareth (2,39).

In a diagram this assumption would look like this (see table 3):

Table 3. Solution B of the harmonisation problem:

Luke	Nazareth	Bethlehem "a manger"	Jerusalem Temple	Nazareth		
Matt.		"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem . . ."		"where the child was" "the house" (Bethlehem)	Egypt	Nazareth

However, each of these proposals has its flaws. The positive side of solution A is that the story of Luke is left intact, and this is also true for the story of Matthew. But the connection between these two stories is the assumption that the family would have made an undocumented move from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

In solution B the strong link in Luke between the presentation in the temple and the return to Nazareth is broken in order to insert Matthew's story. But this link is actually very strong, because in a single sentence (Luke 2,39) it is stated that after the family had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to their city, Nazareth.

III. A new solution: returning to Nazareth without arriving

The proposal of this article is another one altogether, a rather simple one (see table 4).

Table 4. A new solution

Luke	Nazareth	Bethlehem "a manger"	Jerusalem Temple	→towards Nazareth			
Matt.		"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem . . ."			"where the child was" "the house" (an inn on the way)	Egypt	Nazareth

It appears possible to leave the story of Luke intact up to and including verse 2,39 about the return to Nazareth. Matthew's story about the visit of the wise men and the flight to Egypt and the child massacre can then be situated immediately after Luke's verse 2,39. In this case Joseph and Mary, together with their Child Jesus, returned to Nazareth from Bethlehem or from Jerusalem,⁶ but without necessarily arriving in their own city of Nazareth. An arrival is

⁶ They also may have spent most of the forty days after Jesus' birth and before his presentation to the Lord, at the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth in a city of Judea, where Mary already had been a guest for three months (Luke 1,39-40). The Jerusalem Calendar (dated before 638) mentions Ein Kerem by name as the place of a festival in memory of

not necessarily included in Luke's text. Here, in Luke 2,39, the expression (including the variant readings of NA²⁷) is:

επεστρεψαν (ἕπεστρεψαν) εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν εἰς (τὴν) πόλιν ἑαυτῶν Ναζαρεθ
 (καθὼς ἐρρεθῆ δια τοῦ προφητοῦ ὅτι Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται)
 ἕpestrepsan (hupestrepsan) eis tēn Galilaian eis (tēn) polin heautōn Nazareth (kathōs
 errethē dia tou prophētou hoti Nazōraios klēthēsetai)
 they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth (that what was spoken by the
 prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene")⁷ (Luke 2,39)

It has the aoristus of the verb ἐπιστρέφω (epistrephō) = to turn, to revert, or ἕποστρέφω (hupostrephō) = 1) to turn back, to turn about 2) to return⁸; these verbs designate the beginning and the direction of the journey but not necessarily an arrival at its goal. The aoristus can, among other things, designate the beginning or the end of the action, or an attempt to perform the action. The preposition εἰς can indicate the directions into, unto, to, towards, for and among.⁹

The journey on foot from Jerusalem to Nazareth took three days (see fig.1).¹⁰

Elizabeth (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ein_Kerem). Ein Kerem (also spelled Ain Karim) is approximately 5 miles (or 8 km) southwest of Jerusalem.

⁷ Some manuscripts (D a) have Matthew's verse 2,23 b ("that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene") immediately after Luke 2,39 (NA²⁷), which may indicate that the complete story of Matthew could be inserted here.

⁸ Strong's Greek Lexicon

⁹ Strong's Greek Lexicon

¹⁰ The Jewish People in the First Century, (S. Safrai et al., eds., 2 vols.; Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) vol. 2, 901

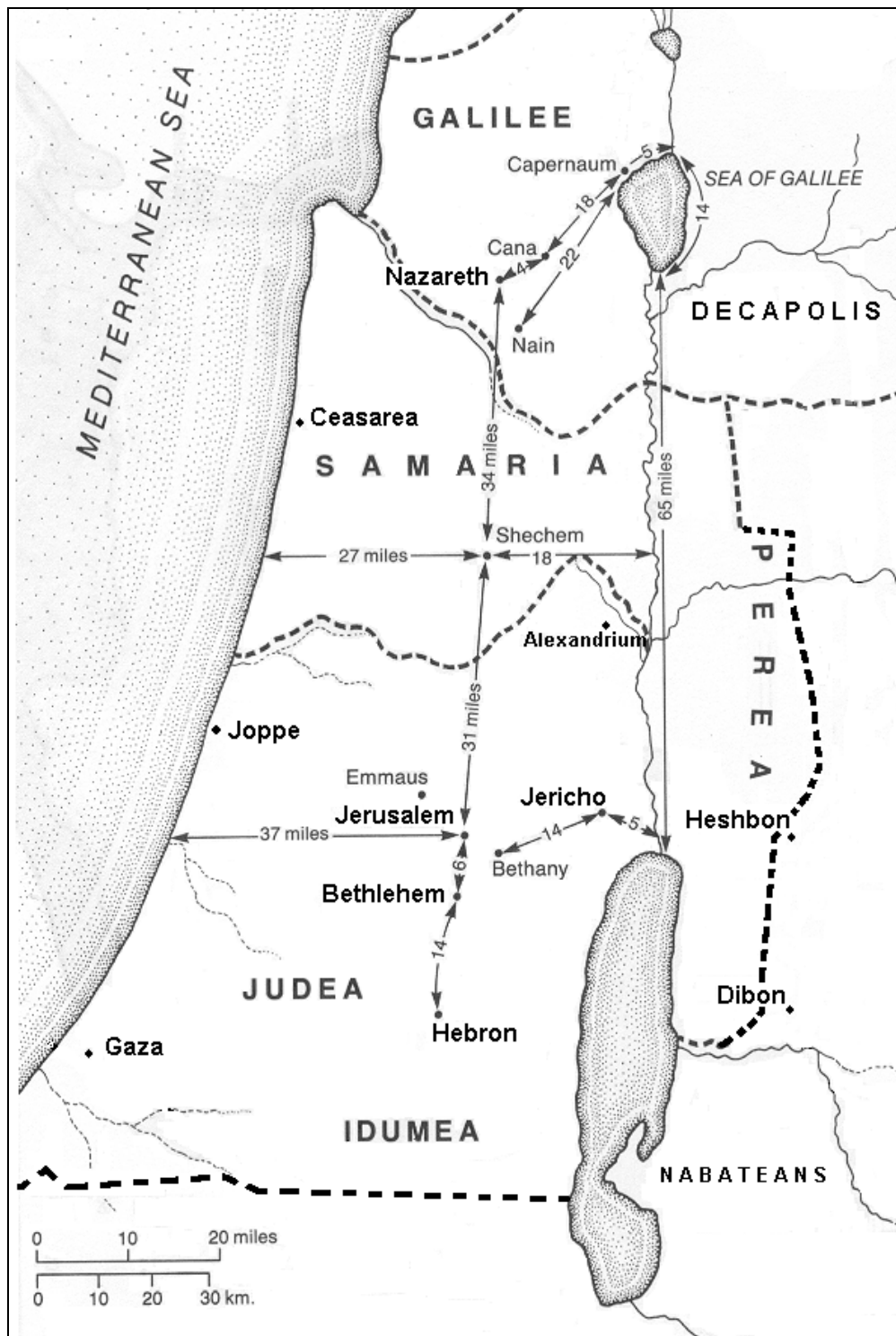


Fig. 1. Map of Palestine
(Adapted from the Distance Map appearing in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah: New Updated Edition* by Alfred Edersheim © 1993 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

Joseph and Mary, after walking from Bethlehem to Jerusalem in the morning for the presentation of Jesus in the temple - a distance of about six miles - could have travelled on towards Nazareth that afternoon. For instance, they could have started to walk down the road from Jerusalem to Jericho in order to travel north on the plain road towards Galilee on the eastern bank of the river Jordan.¹¹ For their first overnight stay they may have slept at an inn, for instance the 'inn' between Jerusalem and Jericho that is mentioned in the story of the 'Good Samaritan'.¹² As they tried to find a "place for them in the inn" when they arrived in Bethlehem (Luke 2,7), they may also have tried to find a place for them in an inn on their way home. And apparently they found it.

IV. No Bethlehem Star

However, as we know from the Gospel of Matthew, in the "house" where they spent the night on their way home they were unexpectedly visited by the wise men from the East. These men had followed a star which had gone before them "till it came to rest over the place where the child was".¹³ The Child was not in Bethlehem any longer and had not yet arrived in Nazareth. It is unlikely that the star had shone during the wise men's journey to guide them from the East towards Jerusalem. The wise men had simply come to Jerusalem because they expected to find the king of the Jews here. They had "seen his star in the East", as they say, but it did not guide their way.¹⁴ Herod then sent them to Bethlehem claiming that he, too, wanted to worship the Child. The wise men, being wise, promised neither to go to Bethlehem nor to return to Herod: "When they had heard the king they went their way".¹⁵ At that moment the star they had seen in the East appeared to them again and it "went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was".¹⁶

One would assume that the star went before them to Bethlehem. But it makes much more sense to think that the star appeared at that very moment not to guide them to Bethlehem but to prevent them from going to Bethlehem, and instead to lead them to the house where the Child actually was. To find the Child in Bethlehem the wise men would not have needed a miraculous star, for the shepherds had "made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child" and all who heard it had wondered at it and would not have remained silent about it.¹⁷ Still, God performed a miracle to make the wise men find the Child at the right place and the right time.¹⁸ On seeing the star the wise men "rejoiced exceedingly with

¹¹ This route was an alternative for pilgrims and other Jews that didn't want to cross the land Samaria (Ibid. 901).

¹² Luke 10,34-35

¹³ Matt 2,9-11

¹⁴ Matt 2,2; In Matt 2,2 and 2,9 'in the East' is a translation of εν τη ανατολη (a singular, NA²⁷), which is an astronomical expression, meaning 'in its rising' (NLT) or 'when it rose' (NET Bible). In Matt 2,1 απο ανατολων (a plural without article, NA²⁷) is a geographical expression for the place or direction where the wise men were from: it denotes the rising of the sun in the East. (The Biblical Studies Foundation, NET Bible (Biblical Studies Press 1996-2003) note 6 to Matt 2,2).

¹⁵ Matt 2,9

¹⁶ Matt 2,9

¹⁷ Luke 2,17-18

¹⁸ The gifts of the wise men provided Joseph and Mary, after their sacrifice of the poor in the temple at the occasion of Jesus' presentation (Luke 2,24), with the necessary money to pay for the unforeseen flight to Egypt, their sojourn there and their return, without anyone from Bethlehem or Nazareth knowing from where their flight had started or where they had gone.

great joy,” probably because the star had sent them in another direction than Herod had intended, and also because they trusted the star unconditionally.

The star probably became visible in the same constellation in which the wise men saw it first while they were in “the East”. Otherwise they would not have recognized it. From the place where it became visible in the evening in Jerusalem, for instance just above the south-eastern horizon, it may have moved – against astronomical laws – towards the east to Jericho. If it had risen, rotated slowly to the south and then declined slowly towards the south-western horizon, with all the surrounding stars, it would not have been clear to the wise men that it was showing them the way. But if it moved to the east and even “came to rest” above a certain house – no star can ‘come to rest’ or remain fixed in the sky except the pole star –, it would have been clear to the wise men that this was a very extraordinary event which they could not neglect.

The “house” (Matthew 2,11) where they saw the Child with his mother Mary is not a stable with a “manger” (Luke 2,7) in Bethlehem. The star had gone before them only during a part of the night, for it was still visible above the house. The house, then, must have been within a day’s journey from Jerusalem and so not in Nazareth. That the wise men could walk into the house and see the mother and the Child without having to meet Joseph indicates that this house was not their private home and was therefore probably an inn, where the host (cf. “the host” paid by the Good Samaritan (Luke 10,35)) showed them in, and Joseph slept in a separate room from Mary and the Child.

The wise men must have offered their treasures – gold, frankincense and myrrh – to the Child Jesus after his presentation in the temple, for there his parents had offered the offering of the poor: two young doves.¹⁹

V. Dream warnings

The wise men were “warned in a dream not to return to Herod” that same night, for Joseph seems to have had his dream a little later the same night.²⁰ This indicates two things. First, that the wise men were able to rest in this house, not a surprising fact if this was a guest-house. Second, that they had arrived before the night was over. After all, they slept there, which again indicates that the inn was less than a full day’s travel from Jerusalem.

Apparently God considered it necessary to warn the wise men not to return to Herod. If the Child was still in Bethlehem then it would not have made much difference whether Herod found this out from the wise men or by searching for the Child himself. He would have found the Child in the city anyway, since everyone knew of the angels’ message and the birth of the Messiah in their midst. If the Child was in an inn not far from Jerusalem on his way home to Nazareth, and the wise men had reported this to Herod, then he could easily have found Him, for his soldiers on horseback or in carriages²¹ could search the roads to Nazareth or simply wait for the Child’s arrival there.

But the wise men returned home without visiting Herod. The king waited for one or two days or longer for the wise men to return to Jerusalem. He would have believed that the Child was somewhere in or near Bethlehem. The result was a massacre of young boys in and around Bethlehem. Only after this massacre would the king find out that the little Messiah had already left the city for Nazareth, viz. after the parents of some of the unfortunate young boys told Herod’s soldiers that their own child was not the Messiah, but that the child Herod was looking for had already left their city and was on his way to Nazareth. In Jerusalem as well

¹⁹ Luke 2,24, Lev 12,8

²⁰ Matt 2,12-14

²¹ H. Daniel-Rops, *Het dagelijks leven in Palestina ten tijde van Jezus*, (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1965) 320-21

Jesus would already have been known as from Nazareth, for when He was recognized as the promised Messiah by Simeon in the temple,²² people undoubtedly asked Joseph and Mary who they were and where they were from. And Hanna, who remained in the temple continuously, also “spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem”.²³ So it is not impossible that Herod’s soldiers also searched for the Child in Nazareth, a city belonging to Herod’s territory. It is even probable that this happened, for the angel in Joseph’s dream had said that Herod would “search for the child, to destroy him” and that for this reason Jesus should flee to Egypt and should only return to the land of Israel after “the death of Herod”.²⁴ Herod did not find the Child, for Joseph had not travelled on to Nazareth, but by order of the angel Joseph had fled to Egypt with “the child and his mother”.²⁵ A journey from Bethlehem to Egypt required at least ten days,²⁶ so from Jerusalem, or further down the road to Jericho, it would have taken a little longer. Because of the dream warnings to the wise men and to Joseph, Herod had no idea where the family had gone even after searching the roads and in Nazareth, and even if he had guessed that it was Egypt, Joseph would already have a head start of at least a couple of days over Herod’s soldiers. Herod would also not have known which road the family had chosen.²⁷ If the guest “house” where Joseph and Mary stopped overnight was the inn on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, then instead of passing Jericho and the River Jordan and turning left in order to proceed on the road to the north along the eastern bank of the river, they may have followed the road which rose eastwards beyond the River Jordan, opening on the Nabatean Trans-Jordan high road which, east of the Dead Sea, lead from Damascus to the south past the Nabatean cities Heshbon and Dibon (see fig. 1).²⁸ In that case the young family was already out of Herod’s territory after one night and part of the morning, since the distance from Jerusalem to River Jordan was about twenty-seven miles and that from the river to the Nabatean border about thirteen miles.²⁹ So the distance from the inn to the border could be only about forty miles or less.

A tradition says that Joseph and Mary and the Child, during their flight from Herod, found refuge in a certain cave near the River Jordan in the area of Jericho. The cave belongs to a cluster of seventy caves or cells, which in the fifth century AD were occupied by Saint Gerasimus and his fellow monks.³⁰ In the first century BC and AD the cave convent may very

²² Luke 2,25-35

²³ Luke 2,26-38

²⁴ Matt 2,13-15, 19-20

²⁵ Matt 2,13-14

²⁶ Catholic Encyclopedia at ‘The Blessed Virgin Mary’, New Advent edition, 1997, <http://www.newadvent.org>

²⁷ ‘they may have followed the ordinary road through Hebron; or they may have gone by way of Eleutheropolis and Gaza, or again they may have passed west of Jerusalem towards the great military road of Joppe’ (Ibid.)

²⁸ H. G. May, Oxford Bible Atlas (London: Oxford University Press 1974) 49

²⁹ Jerusalem – Jericho: 21 miles, Jericho – Jordan: 6 miles (A. Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Peabody: Hendrickson, 7th repr., 2002) 4,15 (639) and 4,24 (716)). River Jordan – Nabatean border is about half of the distance from Jerusalem to River Jordan (R.H. Gundry, A Survey of the New Testament (Michigan: Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1970, 4th ed. 2003) maps p. 16 and p. 27)

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerasimus_of_the_Jordan ; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavra>;
This very cave complex seems to be the place where in 570 AD, according to Antoninus of Piacenza, the burial cloth was that was over Jesus’ head (John 20,7; see my article “The seam and missing corners of the Turin Shroud as characteristics of John Mark’s temple garment” <http://jesusking.info/The%20seam%20and%20corners.pdf> or http://www.academia.edu/1536599/The_seam_and_missing_corners_of_the_Turin_Shroud_a_s_characteristics_of_John_Marks_temple_garment).

well have been a community of Essenes, who had settlements in the area of Jericho and Qumran.³¹ It would have been a logical place to go for Joseph and Mary, who probably were an Essene couple,³² and who wanted to leave Herod's territory quickly and safely. But it is doubtful that territorial borders would have kept 'Herod the Great' from searching for and killing the Child.

The fact that Joseph, on his return from Egypt, "went to the land of Israel" without entering Judea ("he was afraid to go there") and that he "withdrew to the district of Galilee", indicates that he entered the Holy Land in Samaria, which in the time of the kings had been called Israel.³³ Returning from Egypt he could either have followed the high road east of the Dead Sea - the same road as the one he may have followed on his flight as well - and the road on the eastern bank of the Jordan, only crossing this river after he had passed Alexandrium at his left hand side, or he had found a ship that took him from Egypt to Caesarea in Samaria (see fig. 1).

VI. The child massacre – The time the star had appeared

Matthew, chapter 2, starts with the verse: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem" (Matt 2,1). It is unknown how much time passed between the birth of Jesus and the arrival of the wise men. The reasons are that we do not know whether the star indicated the birth of Jesus or his conception in the womb, which is his incarnation, and we do not know how long afterwards the wise men started on their journey. We also do not know how long it took them to arrive. What we do know is that Herod, after having heard the time of the appearance of the star, killed all the boys in Bethlehem "who were two years old or under".³⁴ The question now is whether the wise men could have seen the Child when it was forty days old, as is the assumption of this article.

If the wise men had seen the star at the moment of Jesus' birth and had left their homes right away, then they could have arrived in Jerusalem within the forty days when Jesus was still in Bethlehem. But in this case there is hardly any logic to Herod's decision to kill of all boys less than two years of age, for the Child could only have been about forty days old.

³¹ The Essenic colonies of Jericho and of the City of Palms are mentioned as inhabited by the disciples of Elijah and Elisha (Targum Yer. Deut. 39,34). The Essenes held in the Rechabite fathers Jonadab, Jabez and Jethro, prototypes, and possibly founders, of the Jericho colony (Mek., Yitro, 2; Sifre, Num. 78; Sheq. v. 48c; Nilus, "De Monastica Exercitatione,"iii.; "J. Q. R." v. 418); See my article on the historical link of the Essenes and Nazarenes with the Rechabites – craftsmen also called the Notzerim – and with ascetic prophets like Elijah and Elisha who lived near Jericho: "The Eleven – Jesus appeared risen to the Officers of the Temple prison" (especially chapter 8, fig. 6, and tables B to K) <http://jesusking.info/The%20Eleven%2001-08-2010.pdf> or http://www.academia.edu/1536551/The_Eleven_-_Jesus_appeared_risen_to_the_Officers_of_the_Temple_Prison

³² See my article "With Child of the Holy Spirit – Joseph willing to give her in marriage to his heir" <http://jesusking.info/With%20Child%20of%20the%20Holy%20Spirit%2023-03-2009%204.pdf> or http://www.academia.edu/1536574/With_Child_of_the_Holy_Spirit_-_Joseph_willing_to_give_her_in_marriage_to_his_heir and "Jesus and Isaac – Joseph Caiphas" <http://jesusking.info/Jesus%20and%20Isaac.pdf> or http://www.academia.edu/1536583/Jesus_and_Isaac_-_Joseph_Caiphaz

³³ Matt 2,20-22; 'Israel': 2 Ki 17,21-24

³⁴ Matt 7,16

But if the wise men saw the star at the moment of Jesus' conception/incarnation and arrived about forty days after his birth, they would have told Herod that the star had shone about ten months ago. Now Herod, not knowing whether the star had indicated the new king's conception or his birth, would have considered that the child could be perhaps ten months old or perhaps only one, and therefore he could suffice with killing all boys of about one year old with a margin of a year more and a year less. So it is possible that the wise men saw Jesus and his mother immediately after the presentation in the temple when Jesus was forty days old. It also seems possible for a constellation to be visible during an evening in the spring, and then to be visible again in winter, nine months and forty days later.³⁵

The conclusion is that the main condition for the complete historicity of the Nativity Gospels is met, for a simple harmonisation of Luke 2 and Matthew 2 is possible by letting them touch on one another at the inn ("the house") where Joseph and Mary spent the night on the way from Jerusalem to Nazareth.

VII. Bethany revisited

Jesus, when He was about thirty three years old, preached the Gospel in all the land and at a certain stage He and his disciples drew near to Jerusalem:

1 And when they [Jesus and his disciples] drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,
 2 and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it. [...]
 7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and he sat upon it. [...]
 11* And he entered Jerusalem, and went into the temple; ... Mark 11,1-2.7.11 (RSV)

If Jesus, Mary and Joseph right after the presentation in the temple had spent the night in an inn between Jerusalem and Jericho, this could have been the guest "house" of Martha in Bethany (John 12,3), which was less than a journey of one day from Bethlehem and "about two miles" from Jerusalem.³⁶

In that case Jesus followed again the road, which He as a young Child, probably on an ass in the arms of his mother, had covered about thirty three years ago from the temple to Bethany. But now, at the height of his life, He followed it in the opposite direction: from Bethany to the temple³⁷ sitting on a colt of an ass. Jesus, as a grown man, returned to the place where his young life suddenly had turned another direction. From where He then had been acknowledged to be the "king of the Jews" by the wise men,³⁸ He now starts his royal

³⁵ A constellation that was visible from the land of Judea would also have been visible in the land 'East' of Judea, for both lands are at the same northern latitude. If the star that the wise men saw "as it rose" first appeared in a certain constellation high in the south-eastern sky at the beginning of an evening in early spring, then nine months and forty days later, in the middle of winter, this constellation would be visible again in the lower south-eastern sky at the beginning of the night.

³⁶ John 11,18; See the appendix "Martha's house an inn".

³⁷ Mark 11,11 Jo 12,1.12

³⁸ Matt 2,2.11

entrance into Jerusalem, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah: "as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on an ass's colt!" (John 12,14-15 RSV).³⁹

15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he [Jesus] did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant;

16 and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise?'"

17 And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. Matt 21,15-17 (RSV)

The children, who applauded Jesus in the temple with "Hosanna to the Son of David", and which Jesus compares to "babes and sucklings", make one think of the Son of David and babe that Jesus was Himself at his presentation in the temple. The contrast in the temple between the praise of the children and the displeasure of the chief priests and scribes is a clear fulfilment of Simon's prophecy, made in this very place when Jesus was presented to the Lord: that Jesus would be "a sign that is spoken against [...] that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed".⁴⁰

That Jesus, after his royal entrance in the temple, lodged in Bethany is also described in the Fourth Gospel and in Mark:

1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

2 There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at table with him.

3 Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. [...]

7 Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. (RSV)

(7 Allow her, for she has kept it for the day of My burial. (Green's literal translation 1993)

7 Let her alone. She has kept this for the day of My burial. (Green's modern KJV 1993)

7 Let her alone: for the day of my burial hath she kept this. (Revised Webster Bible 1995)) John 12,1-3.7

1 It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth, and kill him;

2 for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult of the people."

3 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. [...]

6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.

(she hath wrought a good work on me. (AV))

³⁹ See Zech 9,9

⁴⁰ Luke 2,34-35

- 7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me.
 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying.
 9 And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."
 10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. Mark 14,1-3.6-10 (RSV)

From the comparison of the texts appears that in the last week before the Passover two anointments seem to have taken place: one over Jesus' feet on the sixth day before the Passover and one over Jesus' head on the second day before the Passover⁴¹. The anointing of the feet was done by Mary of Bethany, but the anointing of the head was done by "a woman", who came to Him.⁴²

A classic catholic interpretation of about a century ago is that Mary of Bethany was the same as the woman who anointed Jesus' head and that these two anointments were parts of only one anointing on the second day before the Passover; the sixth day before the Passover is considered as only the day when Jesus arrived in Bethany. In this interpretation it is also held that Mary of Bethany was the same as Mary Magdalene, who, in her turn, is supposed to be the "sinner", the "woman of the city" ("a city called Nain") who had anointed Jesus' feet there (Luke 7,11.36-50). Another interpretation from one or two centuries ago, more adhered to by protestants then, is that the female sinner of Luke 7 was not the same as Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus' feet in this village, but that Mary of Bethany may have been the same as the woman who anointed Jesus' head, or else the latter was still another (third) woman.

The Greek Fathers, as a whole, distinguish the three persons:

- the "sinner" of Luke 7:36-50;
- the sister of Martha and Lazarus, Luke 10:38-42 and John 11; and
- Mary Magdalene.⁴³

Compliant with this distinction is my opinion that there were three different women who anointed Jesus in some way:

- 1) an anonymous sinner who anointed Jesus' feet in Galilee (Luke 7:37-38)
- 2) Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha and Lazarus, who surely anointed Jesus' feet in Bethany (John 11:1-2) before his festive entrance into Jerusalem (Jesus' arrival in Bethany "six days before the Passover" John 12:1; anointment of the feet: John 12:2-8; festive entrance on "the next day": John 12:12-19)
- 3) Jesus' incognito virgin mother, known as Mary Magdalene,⁴⁴ who was "the woman" (Matt 26:10) who anointed Jesus' head after his festive entrance into Jerusalem and two days before the Passover (festive entrance: Mark 11:1-10 and Matt 21:1-11 and three arrivals in the temple on three subsequent days ("already late" Mark 11:11, "the next day" vss. 12-15, "evening came"... "in the morning" vss.19-27), anointment of the head: "It was now two days before the Passover" Mark 14:1-9 and Matthew 26:6-13).

⁴¹ sixth day: John 12,1-3; second day: Matt 26,2-7 Mark 14,1-3

⁴² Mary of Bethany: John 11,2; "a woman" Matt 26,7 Mark 14,3

⁴³ Catholic Encyclopedia at 'St. Mary Magdalen', New Advent edition, 1997, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>; this item of the encyclopedia I misinterpreted in my previous version of "From Bethlehem to Nazareth – And a memorial in Bethany", published in 2008, which has now (2016) been corrected.

⁴⁴ For their identification, see my article "Jesus and Moses – Mary Magdalene"

http://jesusking.info/Jesus_and_Moses.pdf or http://www.academia.edu/1536586/Jesus_and_Moses_-_Mary_Magdalone

Most of the Western medieval Church held that the sinner of Luke 7, Mary of Bethany of John 11-12 and Mary Magdalene, were one and the same woman.⁴⁵ For instance, Pope Gregory the Great, in his sermon 33, on Luke 7,36-50, identified Mary of Bethany of John 11-12 with the sinner of Luke 7 and with Mary Magdalene of Luke 8:2, from whom seven demons had departed.⁴⁶ In 1910 AD, his view was defended by the author of an article of the Catholic Encyclopedia, Hugué Pope, who equated the anointing of the feet of John 11-12 with the anointing of the head of Matthew 26 and Mark 14, and from there connected the high praise and memorial for the woman in Matthew and Mark with Mary Magdalene, because she is so prominently present in the Gospel descriptions of Jesus' cross and burial and "was the first recorded witness of the Resurrection".⁴⁷ Greek Orthodox Church, however, always held that the three women were three separate persons.⁴⁸ Since the reform of the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar in 1969, Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene are explicitly celebrated on two different days by the Catholic Church as well, each woman having her own liturgical memorial (22 July for Mary Magdalene⁴⁹ and 29 July for Martha, Mary and Lazarus of Bethany)⁵⁰, and Mary Magdalene's liturgy does not have a reading about the sinner of Luke 7 any longer.⁵¹

Both Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother are mentioned in both the Gospel of Matthew and that of Mark,⁵² in which the anointing of Jesus' head is described. So, if some hold that it's

⁴⁵ Catholic Encyclopedia at 'St. Mary Magdalen', New Advent edition, 1997, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>; Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2001, ISBN 0-691-05850-4, p.35

⁴⁶ Sancti Gregorii Magnum Romani Pontificis, XL Homiliarum in Evangelia, Libri Duo, published by Oeniponte, Libreria Academica Wagneriana, 1892, <https://archive.org/stream/sanctigregoriim00igoog>, p. 264; English translation of the specific part of the 33rd homily: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalen and <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/who-was-mary-magdalen-119565482/?no-ist=&cmd=chdjys1wdwitmjy0ndqynti0nte5mdk0nw&page=4>

⁴⁷ Catholic Encyclopedia at 'St. Mary Magdalen', New Advent edition, 1997, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>

⁴⁸ Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2001, ISBN 0-691-05850-4, p. 35

⁴⁹ Since 3 June 2016, the celebration of St. Mary Magdalene has the dignity of liturgical Feast instead of only memorial, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/06/10/0422/00974.html>

⁵⁰ Latin text of *Calendarium Romanum* of the Blessed Paul VI: http://www.binetti.ru/collectio/liturgia/missale_files/crg7.htm

⁵¹ On 22 July the *Calendarium Romanum*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1969, says "No change has been made in the title of today's memorial, but it concerns only Saint Mary Magdalene, to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection. It is not about the sister of Saint Martha, nor about the sinful woman whose sins the Lord forgave (Luke 7:36–50)" (p. 131) and "it will make mention neither of Mary of Bethany nor of the sinful woman of Luke 7:36–50, but only of Mary Magdalene, the first person to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection" (p. 98) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalen); Latin text of *Calendarium Romanum* of Paul VI on July 22: http://www.binetti.ru/colf/22_07.htm

⁵² Magdalene: Matt 27:56,61 28:1 Mark 15:40,47 16:1,9, mother: Matt 1:18 2:11 (2:13,14,20,21) 12:46-50 13:55 Mark 3:31-35

probable that, in spite of the singular anonymity of “the woman”, this woman may have been Mary Magdalene, then this anonymous woman might as well have been Jesus’ mother.⁵³ According to Matthew Jesus called her “the woman” (Matt 26,10), but this is in line with the fact that He called his mother “woman” at the wedding in Cana and at the cross (John 2,4 and 19,26).⁵⁴ In fact there is no verse in the New Testament in which Jesus calls his mother “mother”.

The “alabaster” of boxes of ointment, according to the honourable Bede, possibly referring to information of Pliny, came from Thebe (Egypt) or from Damascus (Syria) or from India.⁵⁵ The “pound of costly ointment of pure nard” which Mary of Bethany poured over Jesus’ feet – ‘litran murou nardou pistikēs polutimou’ –, may have been of the same “myrrh” (‘smurna’ of the same root as the word ‘murou’), which the wise men from the East (India?) had presented to the Child Jesus.⁵⁶ Of this myrrh his parents can have left a box in Bethany when they fled to Egypt, for Mary of Bethany had “kept” it: in Greek *τητηρηκεν*, the indicative perfect of the verb ‘thēreō’: to attend to carefully, to take care of: a) to guard b) to keep.⁵⁷ Also the price, at which Judas set down the ointment, indicates that it was of the most precious kind.⁵⁸

With the anointment over the head the “woman” gives Jesus, being from the house of the high priest Aaron via his mother and of the royal house of David via his father, as it were the royal and high priestly anointment.⁵⁹ Where He then, as the young “king of the Jews” had received the myrrh from the wise men, He now (by his mother who had kept some of this myrrh for this occasion?) gets anointed to be the King indeed.

In this way Jesus becomes literally “the anointed”, in Greek: the ‘christos’, and Jesus’ statement “truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her,” has become true in the sense that wherever the Gospel is preached Jesus is called “the Christ”, which refers, besides to the biblical title of the expected ‘Messiah’ (the Hebrew word for “anointed”),⁶⁰ also implicitly to the anointment by the “woman”.

Jesus says that she “anointed my body beforehand for burying”. This means that both the woman and Jesus knew that his death was very near. Before the anointment Jesus indeed told his disciples “after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified” and the woman may have heard this.⁶¹ And taking into account that Jesus

⁵³ For their identification as one and the same person, see my article “Jesus and Moses – Mary Magdalene” http://jesusking.info/Jesus_and_Moses.pdf or

http://www.academia.edu/1536586/Jesus_and_Moses_-_Mary_Magdalene

⁵⁴ The reason why Jesus calls his mother “the woman” (Matt 26,10) is discussed in my article “Jesus and Moses – Mary Magdalene” http://jesusking.info/Jesus_and_Moses.pdf or

http://www.academia.edu/1536586/Jesus_and_Moses_-_Mary_Magdalene

⁵⁵ S. Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: myth and metaphor* (London: HarperCollins, 1993) 109.

⁵⁶ ‘murou’ John 12,3, NA²⁷; ‘smurna’ Matt 2,11, NA²⁷.

⁵⁷ “kept it”: Green’s literal translation, Green’s modern KJV, Revised Webster translation, Darby translation and others, Jn 12:7, (Strong’s concordance, Online Bible Lexicon); *τητηρηκεν* in TR; *τηρηση* in NA²⁷ WH = Aorist Active Subjunctive of ‘thēreō’.

⁵⁸ John 12,5; G. Ricciotti, *Leven van Jezus* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1944) 566.

⁵⁹ Jesus’ mother Mary was a blood relative (‘sungenis’) of Elisabeth, who was “of the daughters of Aaron” (Luke 1,5.36 NA²⁷); Mary’s husband Joseph was a descendant of all the kings of Judah: “of the house and lineage of David” (Matt 1,1.6-16.20 Luke 1,32); anointment of the high priest: Lev 6,20 21,10; of the king: 1 Sam 16,1.12-13.

⁶⁰ Ps 2,2 Dan 9,25-26.

⁶¹ Matt 26,1-2

could still escape this death⁶² but, as He said, “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”⁶³, and that Simon had predicted to Mary: “this Child is set ... for a sign which shall be spoken against; Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also”⁶⁴, it is reasonable to assume that the royal and high priestly anointment “beforehand for burying” was for Jesus a sign of his mother’s consent to his sacrificial death and that He was to set off for the royal city (this would be a parallel of what happened in Cana: Jesus performed his first miracle – changing water into wine – only after his mother had shown Him her concern⁶⁵). Instead of the silent departure of the wise men away from Herod, and the flight of “the young Child and his mother” to Egypt, now, from the same house, follow the silent departure of Judas Iscariot to the chief priests⁶⁶ and the definite walk of Jesus and his mother to Jerusalem. From where they then had to flee, they are now purposefully heading for his Passion: “there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother”.⁶⁷ She, who had been Jesus’ co-operator in his “coming in the flesh” (2John 7), was also his co-operator in his “becoming obedient even unto death, and *that the death of the cross*” (Php 2,8).⁶⁸

VIII. A Memorial – A Full Reward

6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. (καλον εργον ηργασατο εν εμοι NA²⁷; ‘kalon ergon ērgasato en emoi’; she hath wrought a good work on me. AV) ...

8 She has done what she could (‘ο εσχεν εποιησεν NA²⁷; ‘ho eschen epoiēsen’); she has anointed my body beforehand for burying.

9 And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." (*this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her AV; και ‘ο εποιησεν ‘αυτη λαληθησεται εις μνημοσυνον αυτης NA²⁷; ‘kai ho epoiēsen hautē lalēthēsetai eis mnēmosunon autēs’) Mark 14,6-9 (RSV)

Because of her sinless soul (‘kecharitōmenē’ NA²⁷ Lu 1,28 = gratia plena (Vulgate) = full of grace) and because she made possible (by letting Christ “come in the flesh”: Lu 1,38 2John 7), and consented in, and incited to, the redeeming sacrifice of her Son (Mark 14,6-8) - which is the ransom for many, “securing an eternal redemption” as it “redeems them from the transgressions”⁶⁹ -, she perhaps could be officially called the Co-redeemer (Associate of the Redeemer).⁷⁰ Such a “memorial of her” “in the whole world”, could be regarded as part of the “full reward” that she would “receive” for what she had “wrought” together with, or according to, the author of 2John.

⁶² “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father.” John 10,17-18

⁶³ Matthew 20,28

⁶⁴ Luke 2,34-35

⁶⁵ John 2,1-11

⁶⁶ Mark 14,10

⁶⁷ John 19,25

⁶⁸ Both citations are from the 1884 Darby Version.

⁶⁹ Heb 9,12-15

⁷⁰ Father Georges Cottier, theologian of the Papal Household, used and defended this title, and its feminine form ‘Co-redemptrix’, for her in 2002 on a world videoconference (<http://zenit.org/article-17236?l=english>).

- 1 The elder unto the elect lady (κυρια 'kuria' NA²⁷) and her children, whom I love in the truth ... 2 because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us for ever:
 3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love. ...
 5 And now I beseech thee, lady (κυρια 'kuria' NA²⁷), ... that we love one another. ...
 7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.
 8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. (AV)
 (Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward. (RSV); βλέπετε ἑαυτοὺς ἵνα μὴ ἀπολεσῆτε (–σωμεν) ἅ ἐργασασαμεθα (–σασθε) ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πληρῆ ἀπολάβητε (–βωμεν) NA²⁷; 'blepete heautous hina mē apolesēte (-somen) ha eirgasametha (-sasthe) alla misthon plērē apolabēte')
- 9 Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son.
 10 If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; 11 for he who greets him shares his wicked work (his evil works (AV); τοῖς ἐργοῖς αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς NA²⁷ 'tois ergois autou tois ponērois'). 2John 1-10

The verb 'ergazomai' (wrought, worked) is in both Mark 14,6 (referring to the anointing) and 2John 8, and the noun 'ergon' (work) is in both Mark 14,6 and 2John 11. The Blessed Virgin Mary is considered to be the "Lady" ('Kyria') in 2John 1 and 5 by several scholars.⁷¹ Other correspondences between Mark 14, on the woman who anointed Jesus' head in Bethany, and 2John, on what the elect Lady worked for, and Luke 1-2, on the Blessed Virgin Mary, can be found in table 5, in which the "good work" of Mary (the 'anointer'), is opposed to the "evil works" of the "antichrist". This refers to what "the LORD God said to the serpent,... "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed"" Gen 3,14-15).

⁷¹ e.g. C. Missler (www.khouse.org/article.phmtl_article_code=335), Knauer (Stud. U. Krit., 1833, Part 2, p.452ff; q.v. J.E. Huther, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, translated from the German, 11 vols., Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), and the author of "Who Is the 'Elect Lady' of II John 1?" (Richard T. Ritenbaugh, ed., <http://cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/BQA/k/207/Who-Is-Elect-Lady-of-II-John-1.htm>). See also my article "The Elder and the Elect Lady – Joseph 'Peter' and Mary in Rome" http://www.academia.edu/1536594/The_Elder_and_the_Elect_Lady_-_Joseph_Peter_and_Mary_in_Rome or <http://www.jesusking.info/The%20Elder%20and%20the%20Elect%20Lady.pdf>

Table 5. The “good work” of Mary, the “woman” anointer, as opposed to the “evil works” of the “antichrist”, showing the “enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your seed and her seed” (Gen 3,14-15).

Mark 14	2John	Luke 1-2 (and 24)
		Mary (1,27)
a woman (“the woman”, “this woman” Matt 26,10.13) (cf. “woman” (in Cana, and at the cross) John 2,4 19,26)	the elect Lady (‘Kuria’)	blessed among women (1,28)
she has <u>worked</u> a good work on me	lose not what you have <u>worked</u> for	she gave birth to her first-born son (2,7)
she has done what she could	for he who is saying to him, ‘Hail,’ has fellowship with his evil works (2Jo 11 YLT)	And Mary said, Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord (1,38)
she has anointed my body beforehand for burying	(For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of) Jesus Christ (= the anointed) in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist .	born a Saviour, Christ the Lord (2,10-11)
she has anointed my body beforehand for burying	the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh	she gave birth ... born a Saviour, Christ the Lord
she has anointed my body beforehand for burying	what you have worked for -- any one who goes ahead (beyond) and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. (obedient unto death Php 2,8)	born a Saviour , Christ the Lord --- salvation in the forgiveness of their sins (1,77) --- salvation , before all people, ... set for a sign which shall be spoken against ; Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also (2,30-35)
	many deceivers (‘planoi’ = corrupters) - the deceiver ; (seducing (‘planoi’) spirits, and doctrines of devils 1Ti 4,1)	set for a sign which shall be spoken against
wherever the gospel (‘euangelion’) is preached in the whole world	many deceivers have gone out into the world	I bring you good tidings (‘euangelizo’), which shall be to all people: born a Saviour, Christ the Lord (Lu 2,10-11) --- salvation , before all people --- that forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations (Lu 24,47)
wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world	many deceivers have gone out into the world	good tidings, which shall be to all people : born a Saviour, Christ the Lord --- salvation , before all people --- that forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations ---
	(full reward)	all nations shall call me blessed (Lu 1,48)
in the whole world , what she has done will be told in memory of her	full reward	all nations shall call me blessed

Jesus' mother is already spoken of by Christians and Muslims in the whole world as the virgin mother of Jesus, which may be seen as a partial fulfilment of Mary's own words: "all nations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1,48). But if of the special anointing of Jesus in Bethany could be accepted that it was done by his virgin mother,⁷² consenting in and inciting to the redeeming sacrifice of his life, this deed will be spoken of for an even more explicit memorial of her who has "worked a good work on me" – on Jesus (Mark 14,6) – , and who has "done what she could" (Mark 14,8) for the salvation of the world.

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(updated June 15, 2013 and June 21, 2016).

⁷² That the anointing of Jesus' head was done by his virgin mother is shown in A.A.M. van der Hoeven, 2016, The Virgin Mary anointed her Son the Christ and for burial in Bethany – Coredeptrix.

https://www.academia.edu/26377098/The_Virgin_Mary_anointed_her_Son_the_Christ_and_for_burial_in_Bethany_Coredeptrix

Appendix “Martha’s house an inn”

The house in Bethany where Martha was “distracted about much serving” and where Jesus was a guest and a friend, seems to have been an inn. Note that the pericope about the Good Samaritan which speaks of an “inn” (Luke 10,25-37) is followed immediately by this pericope about Jesus, Martha and Mary (Luke 10,38-42). “[...] the Talmud (Pes. 53) specially mentions Bethphage and Bethany as celebrated for their hospitality towards festive pilgrims”.⁷³

Martha’s house was big enough to be an inn, for not only Jesus and his twelve apostles and his accompanying women could take a meal in this house, but also “many of the Jews” were able to be present “in the house” where they tried to comfort Mary in the loss of her brother and where they saw her rise up hastily and go out.⁷⁴ And later again a “many people of the Jews” were free to come and see Jesus and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead⁷⁵. The Gospel tell us that, after Mary had anointed Jesus’ feet while He sat at table for supper, a great multitude of the Jews “therefore” (‘oun’ John 12,9 NA²⁷) got to know that Jesus was there. This is explained by the following: when “the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment” (John 12,3) – which was only worth mentioning if the house was big –, this will unintentionally have drawn the attention of the other guests of the inn to the presence of Jesus, who “no longer went about openly among the Jews” (John 11,54). These guests apparently spread the news of his presence there, for after this scene “many people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead” (John 12,9 Revised Webster). If the house had been a private house, how would the Jews have got to know that He was there and how would they have been so free to simply come and see Jesus and Lazarus?

⁷³ A. Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, ch. 11 “The Passover”, http://philologos.org/_eb-ttms/temple11.htm

⁷⁴ Mark 11,11 Luke 10,38 John 11,1-3 12,1-8 (“women”: Matt 27,5 Mark 15,41); (Matt 26,6-13 Mark 14,3: “in the house of Simon the leper”. This Simon, while still healthy, could have been the father or husband of Martha, and the “host” that was paid by the Good Samaritan (Luke 10,33-35); the house could have remained named after Simon, also after he had died or left as a result of his leprosy (lepers weren’t allowed to live in the villages and towns, but only at a certain distance from them). Martha received Jesus into “her house” (Luke 10,38) and besides perhaps their brother Lazarus, Martha and Mary don’t seem to have another man living in the house. And their names aren’t specified with a husband’s name, although this was the custom if a woman was married. Perhaps the illness that caused Lazarus’ death (John 11,1.14) was also (a complication of) leprosy, transmitted to him by (his father) Simon the leper. While a leper, he may have lived on a short distance from Bethany, for “when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him” and also later “Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him”, and here both Martha and Mary told Him “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11,20-21.32). Lazarus is only found in the house of Martha and Mary after he had been raised from the dead by Jesus (John 11,38-44 12,1), and thus was without leprosy. Before that time Martha only complained about Mary not helping her in the serving of the guests and not about Lazarus not helping her (Luke 10,38-42), probably because Lazarus didn’t live in the house then.) John 11,19.31.45

⁷⁵ John 12,1-9 (Revised Webster translation)

And the young ass that stood “tied by the door outside in a place where two ways met” (Revised Webster) in “Bethphage and Bethany” and that Jesus borrowed – knowing nobody had sat on it, and promising He would return it, and knowing the owners would understand the apostles’ designation ‘the Lord’⁷⁶ – could have been standing by the road at this very inn, the inn of Jesus’ and the apostles’ friends (John 11,11), to which Jesus returned in the evening: He “went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there”.⁷⁷ The place “where two ways met” in “Bethphage and Bethany” was, according to Lightfoot, the place to where a religious Jew who walked from Jerusalem to the countryside on a sabbath day, was allowed to walk.⁷⁸ The maximum distance on “the mount called Olivet” was “a sabbath day's journey away” (Acts 1,12). At that point of the road “a mark was set up [...] where the sabbath-way from the city, and the common way thence into the country, touched on one another.”⁷⁹ At the mark a pious Jew could either return to Jerusalem or wait there until the sabbath’s afternoon had ended and it was allowed to proceed. Or one could spend the night there, in order to walk down the way to the country the next morning. For this reason it is understandable that Bethphage and Bethany were celebrated for their hospitality towards festive pilgrims and other Jewish travellers who wanted to leave or reach Jerusalem on a sabbath. And their hospitality was probably also extended to citizens of Jerusalem who simply wanted to enjoy the sabbath by taking a walk towards the countryside with a rest and refreshment at one of the inns.

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⁷⁶ Mark 11,2-3 The verb ‘apostellō’ doesn’t only mean ‘to send’, for in Mark 4,29 it is used as ‘to put in’ and in Luke 4,18 as ‘to set at liberty’; and the commentary of The Fourfold Gospel explains that “These words are usually construed to be a promise on the part of Christ that he would return the colt when through with him.”

⁷⁷ Matt 21,1-2.17 Mark 11,1-6.11 Luke 19,29-35

⁷⁸ J.B. Lightfoot, A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica - A Chorographical Decad; searching into some places of the Land of Israel; those especially whereof mention is made in St. Mark, chapter IV, Section 1: A sabbath-day’s journey (www.ccel.org/ccel/lightfoot/talmud.iv.i.html)

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Errata

p. 13, text:

According to the Greek Fathers⁸⁰ the three women who anointed Jesus in some way, were three different women and they hold that the woman who anointed Jesus' head was Mary Magdalene, who had been in the company of Jesus.⁸¹ Another option is that the three distinct women were:

- 1) an anonymous sinner who anointed Jesus' feet in Nain (Luke 7),
- 2) Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus' feet in Bethany (John 12), but
- 3) Jesus' virgin mother Mary as the "woman" who anointed Jesus' head two days before the Passover (Mark 14 and Matthew 26).

Both Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother were mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark,⁸² in which this last anointing is described. So, if the Greek Fathers hold that it's possible that, despite of the singular anonymity of the "woman", this woman may have been Mary Magdalene, then this anonymous woman might as well have been Jesus' mother.⁸³

replaced by:

The Greek Fathers, as a whole, distinguish the three persons:

- the "sinner" of Luke 7:36-50;
- the sister of Martha and Lazarus, Luke 10:38-42 and John 11; and
- Mary Magdalene.⁸⁴

Compliant with this distinction is my opinion that there were three different women who anointed Jesus in some way:

- 4) an anonymous sinner who anointed Jesus' feet in Galilee (Luke 7:37-38)
- 5) Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha and Lazarus, who surely anointed Jesus' feet in Bethany (John 11:1-2) before his festive entrance into Jerusalem (Jesus' arrival in Bethany "six days before the Passover" John 12:1; anointment of the feet: John 12:2-8; festive entrance on "the next day": John 12:12-19)
- 6) Jesus' incognito virgin mother, known as Mary Magdalene,⁸⁵ who was "the woman" (Matt 26:10) who anointed Jesus' head after his festive entrance into Jerusalem and two days before the Passover (festive entrance: Mark 11:1-10 and Matt 21:1-11 and three arrivals in the temple on three subsequent days ("already late" Mark 11:11, "the next day" vss. 12-15, "evening came"... "in the morning" vss.19-27), anointment of the head: "It was now two days before the Passover" Mark 14:1-9 and Matthew 26:6-13).

⁸⁰ This is how the second century apologists (defenders of the content of the Christian faith) are called.

⁸¹ Catholic Encyclopedia at 'Mary Magdalen', New Advent edition, 1997, www.newadvent.org; Luke 8,2

⁸² Magdalene: Matt 27,56.61 28,1 Mark 15,40.47 16,1.9, mother: Matt 1,18 2,11 (2,13.14.20.21) 12,46-50 13,55 Mark 3,31-35

⁸³ See also my article "Jesus and Moses – Mary Magdalene" http://jesusking.info/Jesus_and_Moses.pdf or http://www.academia.edu/1536586/Jesus_and_Moses_-_Mary_Magdalen

⁸⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia at 'St. Mary Magdalen', New Advent edition, 1997, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>; this item of the encyclopedia I misinterpreted in my previous version of "From Bethlehem to Nazareth – And a memorial in Bethany", published in 2008, which has now (2016) been corrected.

⁸⁵ For their identification, see my article "Jesus and Moses – Mary Magdalene" http://jesusking.info/Jesus_and_Moses.pdf or http://www.academia.edu/1536586/Jesus_and_Moses_-_Mary_Magdalen

Most of the Western medieval Church held that the sinner of Luke 7, Mary of Bethany of John 11-12 and Mary Magdalene, were one and the same woman.⁸⁶ For instance, Pope Gregory the Great, in his sermon 33, on Luke 7,36-50, identified Mary of Bethany of John 11-12 with the sinner of Luke 7 and with Mary Magdalene of Luke 8:2, from whom seven demons had departed.⁸⁷ In 1910 AD, his view was defended by the author of an article of the Catholic Encyclopedia, Hugué Pope, who equated the anointing of the feet of John 11-12 with the anointing of the head of Matthew 26 and Mark 14, and from there connected the high praise and memorial for the woman in Matthew and Mark with Mary Magdalene, because she is so prominently present in the Gospel descriptions of Jesus' cross and burial and "was the first recorded witness of the Resurrection".⁸⁸ Greek Orthodox Church, however, always held that the three women were three separate persons.⁸⁹ Since the reform of the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar in 1969, Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene are explicitly celebrated on two different days by the Catholic Church as well, each woman having her own liturgical memorial (22 July for Mary Magdalene⁹⁰ and 29 July for Martha, Mary and Lazarus of Bethany)⁹¹, and Mary Magdalene's liturgy does not have a reading about the sinner of Luke 7 any longer.⁹²

Both Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother are mentioned in both the Gospel of Matthew and that of Mark,⁹³ in which the anointing of Jesus' head is described. So, if some hold that it's probable that, in spite of the singular anonymity of "the woman", this woman may have been Mary Magdalene, then this anonymous woman might as well have been Jesus' mother.⁹⁴

⁸⁶ Catholic Encyclopedia at 'St. Mary Magdalen', New Advent edition, 1997, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>; Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2001, ISBN 0-691-05850-4, p.35

⁸⁷ Sancti Gregorii Magnum Romani Pontificis, XL Homiliarum in Evangelia, Libri Duo, published by Oeniponte, Libreria Academica Wagneriana, 1892, <https://archive.org/stream/sanctigregoriim00igoog>, p. 264; English translation of the specific part of the 33rd homily: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalen and <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/who-was-mary-magdalen-119565482/?no-ist=&cmd=chdjysIwdwitmjyOndqyntiOnte5mdk0nw&page=4>

⁸⁸ Catholic Encyclopedia at 'St. Mary Magdalen', New Advent edition, 1997, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>

⁸⁹ Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2001, ISBN 0-691-05850-4, p.35

⁹⁰ Since 3 June 2016, the celebration of St. Mary Magdalene has the dignity of liturgical Feast instead of only memorial, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/06/10/0422/00974.html>

⁹¹ Latin text of *Calendarium Romanum* of the Blessed Paul VI: http://www.binetti.ru/collectio/liturgia/missale_files/crg7.htm

⁹² On 22 July the *Calendarium Romanum*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1969, says "No change has been made in the title of today's memorial, but it concerns only Saint Mary Magdalene, to whom *Christ* appeared after his resurrection. It is not about the sister of Saint Martha, nor about the sinful woman whose sins the Lord forgave (Luke 7:36–50)" (p. 131) and "it will make mention neither of Mary of Bethany nor of the sinful woman of Luke 7:36–50, but only of Mary Magdalene, the first person to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection" (p. 98) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalen); Latin text of *Calendarium Romanum* of Paul VI on July 22: http://www.binetti.ru/colf/22_07.htm

⁹³ Magdalene: Matt 27:56,61 28:1 Mark 15:40,47 16:1,9, mother: Matt 1:18 2:11 (2:13,14,20,21) 12:46-50 13:55 Mark 3:31-35

⁹⁴ For their identification as one and the same person, see my article "Jesus and Moses – Mary Magdalene" http://jesusking.info/Jesus_and_Moses.pdf or http://www.academia.edu/1536586/Jesus_and_Moses_-_Mary_Magdalen

p. 13, text removed:

According to Matthew Jesus called her “the woman” and ~~“this woman”~~ (Matt 26,10-13)

p.13 text removed in note

^{note} The reason why Jesus calls his mother “the woman” and ~~“this woman”~~ (Matt 26,10-13) is

p. 15, text:

in greek ‘thēresē’

replaced by:

in Greek τετηρηκεν

p. 15, note 57,

John 12,7 NA²⁷ (Strong’s concordance)

replaced by:

Jn 12:7, (Strong’s concordance, Online Bible Lexicon); τετηρηκεν in TR; τηρηση in NA²⁷
WH = Aorist Active Subjunctive of ‘thēreō’.

p. 19, addition of note,

referring to my new article “The Virgin Mary anointed her Son the Christ and for burial in Bethany – Coredeptrix”