

7. Q & A - Understanding the Annunciation in Matthew's Gospel

1. Why Doesn't Matthew Include Gabriel's Visit to Mary?

Matthew does not include the Annunciation to Mary (where Gabriel tells her she will conceive Jesus) because his Gospel is structured around Joseph's perspective, not Mary's. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes:

- Jesus as the Son of David (thus, his legal lineage through Joseph matters).
- Joseph as a righteous man, obedient to God's will.
- Dreams as divine communication, echoing Old Testament figures like Joseph, the son of Jacob. By framing the infancy narrative through Joseph's experience—his dilemma, his dream, and his response—Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic hopes in a way that aligns with Jewish tradition.

2. Was This an Omission?

It wasn't an omission in the sense of leaving out necessary information. Rather, Matthew and Luke had different theological emphases. Luke focuses on Mary's perspective and her faithful response ("Let it be done to me according to your word" in Luke 1:38). Matthew, on the other hand, presents Joseph as the central figure responding to divine revelation. Neither Matthew nor Luke had an obligation to tell everything—they shaped their narratives to highlight specific theological points.

3. Where Do We See the Angel Gabriel?

Gabriel only appears in **Luke** (Luke 1:19, 26), where he announces the births of John the Baptist to Zechariah and Jesus to Mary. Matthew does not name the angel who appears to Joseph—it is simply "an angel of the Lord" (Matthew 1:20, 2:13, 2:19). In **John's Gospel**, there is no infancy narrative at all—Jesus' divine identity is introduced with the famous prologue ("In the beginning was the Word..." in John 1:1). The focus is on Jesus as the pre-existent Logos rather than on angelic announcements.

4. Did Matthew Use Mark as a Source?

Yes, but Mark doesn't have an infancy narrative. Here's a simplified view of the Gospel sources:

- **Mark was written first** (ca. 65-70 AD).
- **Matthew and Luke both used Mark** as a source.
- **Matthew and Luke also had another source**, often called "Q" (from the German "Quelle," meaning "source"), which contained sayings of Jesus.
- **Matthew and Luke each had their own unique material**, called "M" (for Matthew's special source) and "L" (for Luke's special source). Matthew and Luke did not use each other as sources. They independently structured their infancy narratives based on their theological themes:
- **Matthew** emphasized Joseph, fulfillment of prophecy, and Jesus as the new Moses.
- **Luke** emphasized Mary, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus as the savior of all humanity.

5. What Was Matthew Trying to Say?

By centering Joseph in the story, Matthew:

- Shows Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy (Matthew 1:22-23).
- Highlights Joseph's obedience and righteousness, paralleling Old Testament figures.
- Presents dreams as a means of divine revelation, as seen in Genesis.
- Establishes Jesus as a true Son of David through legal adoption. In contrast, Luke's focus on Mary aligns with his Gospel's themes of humility, the marginalized, and the Holy Spirit's direct action.

6. Conclusion

Matthew doesn't omit Gabriel's visit to Mary because he never intended to include it. His goal was to emphasize Jesus' Davidic lineage, divine fulfillment, and Joseph's faithfulness. Luke, on the other hand, emphasizes Mary's unique role and the action of the Holy Spirit. Both narratives tell the truth about Jesus, just from different theological angles.