**Religion, Philosophy and Ethics A Level**

**Summer Task**

**Week 1: Religious Figures and Sacred Texts – Jesus: His birth.**

1. **Read through the passage describing Jesus’ birth in Matthew 1-2. Highlight and annotate the key elements of Jesus birth.**

***Matthew 1:19-2:23 (NIV)***

***19****Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A19-2%3A12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23164a)*] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

***20****But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.****21****She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A19-2%3A12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23166b)*] because he will save his people from their sins.”*

***22****All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:****23****“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A19-2%3A12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23168c)*] (which means “God with us”).*

***24****When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.****25****But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

*The Magi Visit the Messiah*

***2****After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A19-2%3A12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23171d)*] from the east came to Jerusalem****2****and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”*

***3****When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.****4****When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.****5****“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:*

***6****“‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
    are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
    who will shepherd my people Israel.’[*[*e*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A19-2%3A12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23176e)*]”*

***7****Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.****8****He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”*

***9****After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.****10****When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.****11****On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.****12****And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

*Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”* ***14*** *Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt,* ***15*** *and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”*

*The Massacre of the Infants*

***16*** *When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.* ***17*** *Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:*

***18*** *“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”*

*The Return from Egypt*

***19*** *When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said,* ***20*** *“Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.”* ***21*** *Then Joseph[*[*m*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3A18-2%3A23&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-23191m)*] got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.* ***22*** *But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee.* ***23*** *There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazorean.”*

1. **Read through the passage describing Jesus’ birth in Luke 1-2. Highlight and annotate the key elements of Jesus birth.**

# Luke 1:26 – 2:40 (NIV)

### *The Birth of Jesus Foretold*

*26In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”*

*29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid,Mary; you have found favor with God. 31You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”*

*34“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”*

*35The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-38%3B+2%3A1-20&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24929a)*] the Son of God. 36Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37For no word from God will ever fail.”*

*38“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.*

***Mary Visits Elizabeth***

***39*** *In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country,* ***40*** *where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.* ***41*** *When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit* ***42*** *and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.* ***43*** *And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?* ***44*** *For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.* ***45*** *And blessed is she who believed that there would be[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24931d)*] a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”*

***Mary’s Song of Praise***

***46*** *And Mary[*[*e*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24932e)*] said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,* ***47*** *and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,* ***48*** *for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed,* ***49*** *for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.* ***50*** *His mercy is for those who fear him, from generation to generation.* ***51*** *He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.* ***52*** *He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;* ***53*** *he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.* ***54*** *He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,* ***55*** *according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”* ***56*** *And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.*

***The Birth of John the Baptist***

***57*** *Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.****58*** *Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.*

***59*** *On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father.* ***60*** *But his mother said, “No; he is to be called John.”* ***61*** *They said to her, “None of your relatives has this name.”* ***62*** *Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him.* ***63*** *He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And all of them were amazed.* ***64*** *Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God.* ***65*** *Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea.* ***66*** *All who heard them pondered them and said, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.*

***Zechariah’s Prophecy***

***67*** *Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:*

***68*** *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,*

*for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.*

***69*** *He has raised up a mighty savior[*[*f*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24955f)*] for us*

*in the house of his servant David,*

***70*** *as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,*

***71*** *that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.*

***72*** *Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,*

*and has remembered his holy covenant,*

***73*** *the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,*

*to grant us* ***74*** *that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,*

*might serve him without fear,* ***75*** *in holiness and righteousness*

*before him all our days.*

***76*** *And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;*

*for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,*

***77*** *to give knowledge of salvation to his people*

*by the forgiveness of their sins.*

***78*** *By the tender mercy of our God,*

*the dawn from on high will break upon[*[*g*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24964g)*] us,*

***79*** *to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,*

*to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

***80*** *The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.*

***The Birth of Jesus***

***2*** *In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.* ***2*** *This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.* ***3*** *All went to their own towns to be registered.* ***4*** *Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.* ***5*** *He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.* ***6*** *While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.* ***7*** *And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

***The Shepherds and the Angels***

***8*** *In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.* ***9*** *Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.****10*** *But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:* ***11*** *to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,[*[*h*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24977h)*] the Lord.* ***12*** *This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”* ***13*** *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV" \l "fen-NRSV-24979i)] praising God and saying,*

***14*** *“Glory to God in the highest heaven,*

*and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”[*[*j*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24980j)*]*

***15*** *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”* ***16*** *So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.* ***17*** *When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;* ***18*** *and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.* ***19*** *But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.* ***20*** *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

***Jesus Is Named***

***21*** *After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

***Jesus Is Presented in the Temple***

***22*** *When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord****23*** *(as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”),* ***24*** *and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”*

***25*** *Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon;[*[*k*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24991k)*] this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him.* ***26*** *It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.[*[*l*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24992l)*]* ***27*** *Guided by the Spirit, Simeon[*[*m*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24993m)*] came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law,* ***28*** *Simeon[*[*n*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24994n)*] took him in his arms and praised God, saying,*

***29*** *“Master, now you are dismissing your servant[*[*o*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24995o)*] in peace, according to your word;*

***30*** *for my eyes have seen your salvation,*

***31*** *which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,*

***32*** *a light for revelation to the Gentiles*

*and for glory to your people Israel.”*

***33*** *And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.* ***34*** *Then Simeon[*[*p*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25000p)*] blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed* ***35*** *so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”*

***36*** *There was also a prophet, Anna[*[*q*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25002q)*] the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,* ***37*** *then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day.* ***38*** *At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child[*[*r*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-2%3A40&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25004r)*] to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

***The Return to Nazareth***

***39*** *When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.* ***40*** *The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.*

1. **Create a comparison table showing similarities and differences between the two birth narratives.**
2. **Log on to** [**https://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Jesus-Birth.htm**](https://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Jesus-Birth.htm) **Using the first table which is shown, add to your own table in purple pen, listing any similarities or differences you may have missed.**

**Week 2: Religious Figures and Sacred Texts – Jesus: His birth.**

**You will need your extracts and notes from Week 1 to help you.**

Write an answer to the following questions

1. Copy out the following definition:

*Redaction criticism: A method of investigating a text, to identify the alterations that an author has made to their sources, according to their bias and concerns: what he chose to include, or exclude, the images he used, the way in which he wrote about it.*

Why might redaction criticism be a useful tool when exploring biblical texts?

1. What is the overall theme of Matthew’s gospel? How do you know this? Use examples from the texts to support your answer.
2. What is the overall theme of Luke’s gospel? How do you know this? Use examples from the texts to support your answer.
3. In your opinion, do Matthew and Luke essentially tell the same story of Jesus’s birth? Why? Use examples from the texts to support your answer.
4. Why might the two accounts of Jesus’ birth found in the Bible include different information?
5. Given that certain elements of the story of Jesus’s birth found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke contradict each other, can we trust these stories to be factually accurate? Why/ why not?
6. Copy and complete the following table’

***“The differences between Matthew and Luke’s birth narratives mean that neither story can be believed.”***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| For | Against |
|  |  |

**Week 3: Religious Figures and Sacred Texts – Jesus: His birth.**

Write a response to the following essay question. You should aim to write at least one side of A4.

1. Compare the birth narratives in Matthew 1:18-2:23 and Luke 1:26-2:40 (20 marks)