

Portrait by Tiffany Simmons

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The Confusing Case of Zacharias

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The most frequently occurring personal name in the Bible is *Zechariah* (also spelled *Zachariah* or in the New Testament as *Zacharias*). At least thirty kings, princes, priests, prophets, servants, sons, trumpet players, and gatekeepers claim this name, which means “Jehovah remembers.”¹ We should not be surprised to find some confusion about the biblical Zechariahs given that the name spans over a thousand years and fifty-five separate verses. It appears that the Gospel of Matthew may have confused two Zechariahs. Chapter 23 mentions the ninth-century high-priestly martyr Zechariah but incorrectly assigns him a different father—Barachias, the father of the *sixth-century* prophet. Where Matthew mixed up the two Zechariahs, the parallel account found in Luke 11:51 did not.

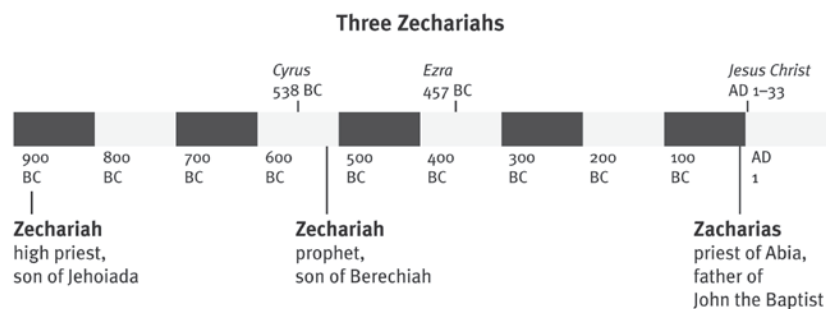
Matthew 23:35

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Luke 11:50–51

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple.

Complicating matters further, early Christian writers built on this mistake with their own apocryphal spin. Then, after hundreds of years, the apocryphal story filtered down to Christian newspapers, including the Latter-day Saint newspaper in Nauvoo.² This investigation attempts to separate fact from fiction by first unraveling the web of confusion around three biblical Zechariahs, and then demonstrating the impact of this confusion on Latter-day Saint religious education.³



The three biblical Zechariahs we will investigate lived in the ninth, sixth, and first centuries before Christ.

Ninth Century BC—Zechariah, High Priest, Son of Jehoiada

In the ninth century BC, “Zechariah, son of Jehoiada,” served in Jerusalem as a high priest in Solomon’s temple until King Joash had him stoned to death in the courtyard of the temple (see 2 Chronicles 24:6, 20–22). The irony of Zechariah’s martyrdom lies a generation earlier. Zechariah’s parents saved the then infant King Joash from political overthrow and secretly raised him in the temple for six years. Then Zechariah’s father, the high priest Jehoiada, led an uprising to return King Joash to the throne. But when Jehoiada died at 130 years old (v. 15), King Joash forgot his allegiance to God and the family of Jehoiada and turned to idolatry.⁴ The Lord called Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, as the new high priest to preach repentance to the king. Zechariah denounced King Joash, “Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord,

that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you” (v. 20). King Joash did not appreciate Zechariah’s call to repentance, nor did the king remember “the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son [Zechariah] . . . in the court of the house of the Lord” (v. 22, 21).

The story of Joash slaying Zechariah in the temple courtyard remained well known over a thousand years later when the Jerusalem and Babylon Talmuds were written.⁵ The Talmud elaborates on the murder of Zechariah in the court of the priests by adding dramatic retributions. As a consequence, the Talmud describes slaying eighty thousand priests to atone for the high priest Zechariah’s blood.⁶

Sixth Century BC—Zechariah, Minor Prophet, Son of Berechiah

The second Zechariah we consider lived in the sixth century BC and became categorized as the eleventh of the twelve minor prophets in the Hebrew Bible. Initially, he lived in Babylon among the captives and then left Babylon to assist Zerubbabel in rebuilding Jerusalem (see Zechariah 8:8; Ezra 5:1–2; 6:14). The book of Zechariah is named after him and begins with his genealogy, “the word of the Lord [came] unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet” (Zechariah 1:1). The book includes eight visions and multiple prophecies—including the famous foretelling of the promised Messiah: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9). The New Testament quotes the book of Zechariah more than any of the other so-called minor prophets; in particular, the Gospel of Matthew quotes Zechariah three times, suggesting Matthew’s familiarity with “Zechariah, the son of Berechiah” (Zechariah 1:1).⁷

The context of the New Testament passages in question, Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:50–51, includes the Lord’s denouncing the scribes and the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and unbelief. After presenting a list of “woes,” the texts condemn their murderous thoughts and claim that they are responsible for “all the righteous blood shed” since two famous Old Testament martyrs, Abel and Zechariah (see Genesis 4:8; 2 Chronicles 24:20–22). Among the textual differences of Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51, we find Matthew adding “son of Barachias” after “Zacharias,” while Luke did not. I perceive two plausible explanations for the Matthean genealogical addition:

1. An author or editor confused two famous Old Testament Zechariahs and accidentally gave the paternity of the minor prophet, “Zechariah, the son of Berechiah” (Zechariah 1:1), to the high priest “Zechariah son of Jehoiada” (2 Chronicles 24:20), who was “stoned . . . in the court of the house of the Lord” (v. 21).⁸

2. The Lord introduces an unknown martyr who happened to share names—both his *own name* and his *father’s name*—with the Old Testament prophet. Furthermore, this new, unknown Zacharias also happened to have a similar martyrdom to the Old Testament high priest Zechariah.

The former option—that someone made a mistake—is now generally accepted by biblical scholars.⁹ The latter option—that the Lord referred to yet another Zechariah who shared several similarities to Old Testament figures—developed from the theory of inerrancy. It claimed all biblical authors were infallible.¹⁰ In the late eighteenth century, Protestant clergy clung to this doctrine as a fail-safe text justifying widespread access to divine authority.¹¹ However, the Prophet Joseph Smith spoke against the theory of inerrancy: “I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors.”¹²

First Century AD—Zacharias, Father of John the Baptist

Unfortunately, the confusion between these two Zechariahs was not limited to Matthew 23:35. The matter became further entangled in the second century AD, when much Christian literature came forward to satisfy the early Christians’ hunger for more details about Jesus’ early life. One of these pieces, the noncanonical *Protevangelium of James*, elaborates on the miraculous birth narratives of Mary, John the Baptist, and Jesus.¹³

Portions of this book may date to AD 150, although the section on Zacharias emerges later.¹⁴ Although the book claims the name and authority of one of the biblical Jameses, Apocrypha scholar Wilhelm Schneemelcher regards it as “pious fancy . . . ignoran[t] of Palestinian geography and of Jewish customs.”¹⁵ Another authority on the *Protevangelium of James*, J. K. Elliott, sees it as an “elaboration of the canonical infancy narratives” and attributes it to the “doctrines of Mariology.”¹⁶ The oldest titles of the book included “Birth of Mary” and “Birth of Saint Mary, Mother of God.”¹⁷ In the sixteenth century, publishers first printed it with the name *Protevangelium*,

or “pre-Gospel,” to imply that the events supposedly occurred prior to those recorded in the four Gospels of the New Testament.¹⁸

According to Schneemelcher’s analysis, later versions of the *Protevangelium* developed a story which further misconstrued the identity of the Zacharias in Matthew 23:35.¹⁹ These later versions contended that the Zechariah slain near the temple altar was neither the ninth-century high priest “Zechariah, son of Jehoiada” nor the sixth-century prophet “Zechariah, son of Berechiah,” but a first-century Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.²⁰ The *Protevangelium* incorrectly introduces the priest Zacharias, husband of Elisabeth, as the reigning high priest: “And the high priest went in, taking the robe with the twelve bells into the holy of holies. . . . And behold an angel of the Lord stood by him, saying unto him: Zacharias, Zacharias, go out.”²¹ Following his vision, the text unfolds his murder:

And when Herod knew that he had been mocked by the Magi, in a rage he sent murderers, saying to them: Slay the children from two years old and under. And Mary, having heard that the children were being killed, was afraid, and took the infant and swaddled Him, and put Him into an ox-stall. And Elisabeth, having heard that they were searching for John, took him and went up into the hill-country. . . . And Herod searched for John, and Herod was enraged, and said: . . . [Zacharias] son is destined to be king over Israel. And he sent . . . [to the temple] again, saying: Tell the truth; where is thy son? for thou knowest that thy life is in my hand. And Zacharias said: I am God’s martyr, if thou sheddest my blood; for the Lord will receive my spirit, because thou sheddest innocent blood at the vestibule of the temple of the Lord. And Zacharias was murdered about daybreak . . . [his] clotted blood beside the altar . . . turned into stone. . . . The priests consulted as to whom they should put in his place; and the lot fell upon Simeon. For it was he who had been warned by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death until he should see the Christ in the flesh.²²

This apocryphal text interpreted the Matthew 23:35 phrase “Zacharias son of Barachias” as a reference to John the Baptist’s father, who shared the same name, but not the same paternity or priesthood position. This additional confusion compounds the problem of separating the sixth-century prophet from the ninth-century martyred high priest in Matthew 23:35.

In addition to this misinterpretation of the Zacharias in Matthew, this excerpt from the *Protevangelium* also contradicts the Lucan and Matthean nativity narratives in at least five other ways. First, Luke 1:5 introduces Zacharias as a priest “of the course of Abia,” which was one of the twenty-four courses of Aaronic priests that David organized.²³ The course of Abia included hundreds of priests who rotated between the twenty-four Aaronic courses for their five weeks of temple service each year.²⁴ Joachim Jeremias

(a Second Temple scholar), estimated that eighteen thousand common priests and Levites lived in Palestine at the time of Jesus' birth.²⁵ Luke portrayed Zacharias as one of these common priests, not as the one reigning high priest—which office had deteriorated to a short-term, arbitrary political appointment made from among the chief priests.²⁶ Furthermore, the common priests received the honor of lighting the incense altar each morning and evening, not the high priest.²⁷ Luke 1:8–19 described the angel Gabriel visiting Zacharias as he fulfilled his duty in the Holy Place—not the Holy of Holies. Yet the *Protevangelium* claims that Zacharias was the high priest, a position whose duties would be performed in the Holy of Holies.

Second, Matthew describes Herod's troops going to Bethlehem to kill the "young child" Jesus, but the *Protevangelium* adds that "Herod searched for John" as well. Unlike the biblical narratives, the *Protevangelium* expands the story with several tangents about John and his family. In so doing, it twists details from both nativity narratives and concludes that the infant John (not Jesus) "is destined to be king over Israel." The apocryphal account elevates John to take over Jesus' role as king. Furthermore, Herod's search for John stretched the story to include Zacharias' martyrdom, which is not biblical.

Third, the *Protevangelium* disregards the passage of time between the Lucan and Matthean accounts. Unlike Luke's text, which describes the night of Jesus' birth in a stable, Matthew recounts a year or two later, when Jesus is a "young child" (*paidion*) and the holy family lives in a house (see Matthew 2:13).²⁸ The apocryphal version ignores that timing. When Herod's troops come to Bethlehem, the *Protevangelium* claims that Mary is still without housing and attempts to hide the infant Jesus in "an ox stall," with no reference to Joseph's dream to flee to Egypt.²⁹

Fourth, in contrast to Matthew 2:16, the apocryphal work claims that Herod's slaughter of the baby boys extended far beyond the sparsely populated pastoral community of Bethlehem³⁰ to include a broader swath across the hill country of Judea and Jerusalem.³¹ As part of that larger geography, the *Protevangelium* includes that "Herod searched for John," contradicting the biblical account. This search supposedly led to Herod killing Zacharias because he would not divulge his son's whereabouts.

Fifth, the *Protevangelium* connects the "devout Simeon" from the temple scene in Luke 2:25, 34, with Zacharias. Luke shares a few details about Simeon but never includes any exchange between the two aged men. In fact, Luke 2:26 insinuates that after Simeon saw "the Lord's Christ," the old prophet

would be free to leave his mortal existence. Yet the *Protevangelium* does not have him die but instead asserts that Simeon succeeded Zacharias as the high priest. Both points are not biblical and contradict the documented lists of high priests in Jerusalem at that time: 5–4 BC, Matthias ben Theophilus; 4 BC, Joazar ben Boethus; 4–3 BC, Eleazar ben Boethus; 3 BC, Joshua ben Sie; in or before AD 6, Joazar ben Boethus; and AD 6–15, Ananus ben Seth.³²

Partially because of its lack of historicity and authority, western popes attacked the *Protevangelium*. Nevertheless, because the stories venerated the Virgin Mary,³³ they spread among the Eastern Orthodox, Ebionite, Syrian, Coptic, and Armenian churches.³⁴ Leaders like the Orthodox patriarch Peter I of Alexandria (300–311) and a spokesman for the Syrian Christians, Bishop Solomon of Bassoria (1222), perpetuated the tale that the martyred Zacharias cited in Matthew 23:35 was actually the father of John the Baptist.³⁵

Other Christian and Muslim Legends of Zacharias

Other early Christians also wondered what happened to John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, but they related different answers. For example, Origen (184–253), Gregory of Nyssa (335–395), and Cyril of Alexandria (376–444) passed on different versions of the story—still within the temple setting and still emphasizing Mary's virginity.³⁶ The narrative blamed the Jews for Zacharias's death, as he supposedly allowed Mary to stand in a part of the temple reserved exclusively for virgins.³⁷ The Jews felt Mary's presence violated the sanctity of the temple because, from their perspective, Mary's maternity disproved her virginity. The Jews stoned Zacharias for allowing her to enter.

Even a Muslim legend described what happened to Zacharias (spelled *Zakariya*), the father of John the Baptist. The account depicts Zakariya escaping from his pursuers by hiding in a tree.³⁸ The tree miraculously opened to admit and enclose him.³⁹ Unfortunately, the hem of his priestly cloak protruded from the base of the trunk. When his pursuers recognized it, they sawed the tree and Zacharias into pieces. Noble to the end, Zacharias did not utter even a faint cry as he died a martyr's death. Clearly, the question of what happened to John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, interested many.

Nineteenth-Century American Interests

These different apocryphal tales enjoyed a resurgence of interest in antebellum America. During the Second Great Awakening, a general interest in religious topics soared. Newspapers, periodicals, and books propagated the tale from

the *Protevangelium of James*.⁴⁰ The *American Biblical Repository* explained that their purpose in publishing the apocryphal story was to “establish the fact of a constant tradition during the first centuries of the Christian era” that purported “the father of the Baptist had been murdered.”⁴¹ To appreciate the volume of attention this apocryphal account received, I looked up one of the many editions of the *Protevangelium of James* and found it published in English in 1820, 1821, 1824, 1825, 1832, 1835, 1847, and 1849. Thousands of copies filled the nation.⁴²

In the summer of 1842, several periodicals across the United States alluded to information in the *Protevangelium*: from Andover, Massachusetts, and Boston, the *Biblical Repositor and Quarterly Observer*; from New York City, the *American Biblical Repository*; and from Nauvoo, Illinois, the *Times and Seasons*. This Mormon newspaper ran an unsigned article entitled “Persecution of the Prophets” on Thursday, September 1, 1842. It included the following version of the *Protevangelium* account:

When Herod's edict went forth to destroy the young children, John was about six months older than Jesus, and came under this hellish edict, and Zechariah caused his mother to take him to the mountains where he was raised on locust and wild honey. When his father refused to discover [his] hiding place, and being the officiating high priest at the temple that year, was slain by Herod's order between the porch and the altar as Jesus said [in Matt 23:35].

The article appears to be a recap of the apocryphal lore floating around antebellum America. The question of authorship for this *Times and Seasons* article is important. Not only was no author listed for the article but also it was not signed by an editor (although the editor signed the following article in the same periodical). S. Kent Brown noted that “Joseph Smith typically signed his letters and editorials.”⁴³ Often, the man who served as editor of a newspaper did not write all the editorials,⁴⁴ and this seems to be the case with the *Times and Seasons*, where Joseph Smith was thinly spread as the supervising editor and as a prophet, president, mayor, and general with more pressing responsibilities.⁴⁵ Furthermore, “the writing style of the editorial matches most closely that of W. W. Phelps, not the Prophet Joseph,” who usually wrote in the first person, not third.⁴⁶ Seven months before the article was printed, in February of 1842, the Prophet delegated the full-time position of managing editor of the *Times and Seasons* to John Taylor.⁴⁷ The newspaper staff helped with the composition and printing of the newspapers in Nauvoo.⁴⁸ With the same periodical including other articles signed by the editor or authors, it is

doubtful that the Prophet sanctioned the article, especially because he was in hiding at the time.⁴⁹

Significantly, nearly a month previous to this *Times and Seasons* publication, on August 8, 1842, Joseph Smith was arrested for complicity in the Governor Boggs assassination attempt and went into hiding.⁵⁰ He stayed briefly with Edward Hunter, then Carlos Granger, and then retreated to an island in the Mississippi.⁵¹ The Prophet seemed to stay on top of some Church issues even while in hiding—on the day the newspaper article was published, he wrote a letter that was later published and canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 127. The text of this letter was published in the same issue as the *Protevangelium* account.⁵² But does that insinuate that he endorsed every article in the daily local newspaper? Even with the faint chance that Joseph consented to the article's printing, does that guarantee the article's historical accuracy?

Although we know of no evidence that Joseph Smith wrote, delegated, or approved the publication of this article referencing Zacharias, it still found its way into Joseph Fielding Smith's compilation, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, in 1938.⁵³ The pertinent problem lies in the fact that these teachings became interpreted by many as instructions to the Church from the Prophet. As a result, several Latter-day Saint books have spread the story as if it were a restored truth—including Sunday School and institute manuals.⁵⁴ Teachers mention the story not as an interesting remnant of early Christian Apocrypha but with a tone of prophetic precision. Those Latter-day Saints who believe that the story came from their prophet and seer, or those who believe that Joseph added his stamp of validation to this apocryphal story, now identify the lowly priest from the hill country of Judea as the martyred high priest—even though this narrative contradicts canonized scripture in multiple areas. By attaching Joseph Smith's name to Zacharias's purported martyrdom, some Church members have elevated this tradition to scriptural status.

The Prophet did mention John the Baptist in two Sunday sermons within a year after the *Time and Seasons* article appeared. The first he gave on January 29, 1843, which three scribes recorded.⁵⁵ Joseph's sermon answered why John was called “one of the Greatest of Prophets.” He taught that John, as the “legal administrator holding the keys of Power,” was the only one authorized to baptize Jesus. Modern revelation teaches that John “was ordained by the angel of God” (D&C 84:28). Six months later, on July 23, 1843, Joseph returned to a similar topic. Only one of the five scribes who recorded details of the

sermon included a statement about Zacharias, saying that “he [was] the only lawfull [*sic*] administrator in his day.”⁵⁶ Yet three of the scribes included something about John being “the only lawful administrator,” confirming Joseph’s message from his earlier sermon. Nowhere in the available scribal notes from these two sermons did the Prophet refer to any of the information from the *Times and Seasons* editorial on Zacharias.

Conclusion

The biblical account of the high priest “Zechariah son of Jehoiada,” who was slain by King Joash in the temple (2 Chronicles 24:20), has fascinated biblical students for centuries. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim literature retells this story, each tradition perpetuating different legends. The *Protevangelium of James* adapted the biblical account of the ninth-century high priest Zechariah’s martyrdom referenced in Matthew 23:35 to claim that John the Baptist’s father was the high priest slain in the temple, due to Herod’s edict—not King Joash’s conspiracy. Because the account made its way into *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Latter-day Saints have also propagated it. I wrote on this subject in order to illuminate the sources for the account and to arrest its further spread among Latter-day Saint educators as a revealed teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith. **RE**

Notes

1. My independent research counted thirty separate men named Zachariah/Zechariah. For a slightly different, more detailed list, not organized by book, see John W. Wright, “Zechariah,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1057–60.

2. In addition to the *Time and Seasons* article, the information is also found in several other LDS sources. A chronological sampling of Latter-day Saint authors within the last few decades who accept the apocryphal account as endorsed by Joseph Smith include *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 261; Robert J. Matthews, “John the Baptist, A Burning and a Shining Light,” *Ensign*, September 1972, 25; Alma E. Gygi, *John the Baptist: A Voice in the Wilderness* (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1978); Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 2:32. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979–81), 1:304; Robert L. Millet, “A Revelation on Priesthood,” in *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 1, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Sandy, UT: Randall Book, 1984), 315–16; Joseph Fielding McConkie, “Special Witnesses of the Birth of Christ,” in *The New Testament and the Latter-day Saints* (Sandy, UT: Randall

Book, 1987); Willard Cleon Skousen, *Days of the Living Christ*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Ensign, 1992). Jay M. Todd, “Our New Light on Jesus’ Mortal Life and Teachings: John the Baptist’s Palestinian Ministry,” *Ensign*, January 1995, 33; Richard D. Draper, *The Savior’s Prophecies: From the Fall of Jerusalem to the Second Coming* (American Fork, UT: Covenant, 2001), 21. Michael Allred, “Let Him In,” in *We Believe in Christ*, comp. Victor W. Harris (Salt Lake City: Granite, 2001). Gary P. Gillum, ed., *General Authority Commentary on the New Testament* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005).

3. Other Latter-day Saint authors who address Matthew 23:25 as a biblical error, or accept the corollary that the story from the *Times and Season* may not have been written by the Prophet Joseph, include S. Kent Brown, “Zacharias and Elisabeth, Joseph and Mary,” in *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, vol. 1, *From Bethlehem through the Sermon on the Mount* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 96–97, a portion of which reads, “The reference to the death of Zacharias, father of John, by execution at the temple arises in a document more than a hundred years after any such event might have occurred, raising questions about its veracity. . . . A question arises because of an editorial that ran in the *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo, Illinois, on September 1, 1842, which plainly refers to information in the *Protevangelium* and claims that the martyred Zacharias of Luke 11:51 was John’s father. At issue is whether Joseph Smith wrote that editorial . . . the evidence stands against Joseph Smith’s authoring the editorial.” In addition, James E. Talmage stated in a note on Matthew 23:35 that “it is the opinion of most Bible scholars that the Zacharias referred to in Matthew’s record is Zechariah son of Jehoiada. In the Jewish compilation of Old Testament scriptures, the murder of Zechariah appears as the last recorded martyrdom; and the Lord’s reference to the righteous men who had been slain, from Abel to Zechariah or Zacharias, may have been a sweeping inclusion of all the martyrs down to that time, from first to last. However, we have a record of Zechariah son of Berechiah (Zech. 1:1, 7), and this Berechiah was the son of Iddo.” *Jesus the Christ* (1916; repr., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 567.

4. Unlike the organization during the Second Temple period, during the First Temple period, the office of high priest was usually hereditary and held for life (see Leviticus 22:2–3). With this in mind, I assume that the high priest Jehoiada’s son Zechariah became an only high priest throughout his life. See Isaiah Gafni, “high priest,” in Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, eds., vol. 9, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., ed. Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder (New York: Thomson and Gale, 2007), 99.

5. John Pitman, ed., *The Whole Works of the Rev. John Lightfoot, D.D.*, vol. 9, *The Temple-Service and the Prospect of the Temple* (England: Dove, 1823), 416. The Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud were compiled in different centuries, yet both include stories of Joash slaying the high priest Zechariah.

6. Joseph Barclay, *The Talmud: Tractate Ta’Anit, Part II* (London: John Murray, 1878), 4.8, 69a–b.

7. See Matthew 21:4–5; 26:31; 27:9–10; compare Zechariah 9:9; 11:12–13; 13:7.

8. Matthew 27:9 also cites Jeremiah, but in the KJV, NJB, NAB, REB, NRSV, and many other English Bibles, the text parallels Zechariah 11:12–13 more closely than it

does any passage from Jeremiah. With the scarcity of biblical texts during the Second Temple era, I wonder if the author recited the text and had a memory lapse, or if an editor added “son of Barachias.”

9. See Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 3rd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 61. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2005), 947; Michael D. Swartz, *The Signifying Creator: Nontextual Sources of Meaning in Ancient Judaism* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 112. In contrast to these scholars, others question if the text introduces a new person. See W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew: A New Translation with Introduction and Notes*, vol. 26, *The Anchor Bible*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 282.

10. The theory of inerrancy fundamentally purports that the biblical writers *could not* make a mistake as they functioned as tools of the Holy Spirit to produce scripture. From this perspective, Zecharias’ paternity as recorded in Matthew 23:35 cannot be wrong. Saint Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430) clearly supported the absolute inerrancy of the biblical texts and the infallibility of its authors: “[I] believe most firmly that none of their writers has fallen into any error.” Quoted in *Providentissimus Deus: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Study of Holy Scripture* (St. Peter’s, Rome, November 18, 1893), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus_en.html.

11. Hanz Hillerbrand, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), “Biblical Inerrancy,” 1:250. Furthermore, Charles Hodge, the head of Princeton’s school of theology, ascribed to Protestantism: “(1.) That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are therefore infallible, and of divine authority in all things pertaining to faith and practice, and consequently free from all error whether of doctrine, fact, or precept. (2.) That they contain all the extant supernatural as of God designed to be a rule of faith and practice to his Church. (3.) That they are sufficiently perspicuous to be understood by the people, in the use of ordinary means and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, in all things necessary to faith or practice, without the need of any infallible interpreter.” Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1871), 1:152. Later, Hodge continued, “Apostles constantly refer to the Scriptures, showing beyond doubt that they believed and taught, that what sacred writers said the Holy Ghost said.” Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:160; see also 129, 138–40, 154–55, 161, 163, 180).

12. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 6:57. A similar idea is expressed in the eighth article of faith.

13. The *Protevangelium of James* focuses on the perpetual virginity of Mary and the immaculate conception of Mary, which freed her from original sin. *Edgar Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL Wilson, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1963–1964), 1:333, 345, 372–373, 401.

14. *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:371, 345. By AD 248, Origen quotes part of the *Protevangelium of James*, which he calls the “Book of James” in his *Commentary on Matthew* 2:17.

15. *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:333. Nevertheless, Cullmann thinks that “the contents do not suggest a Jewish Christian author. On the contrary, ignorance of Palestinian geography and of Jewish customs . . . point to a non-Jew” (*Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 372).

16. James Keith Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48.

17. *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 371.

18. *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 370.

19. *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 371. Schneemelcher observed that in the early stages of the *Book of James, or Protevangelium*, “it is obvious that the murder of Zacharias . . . probably did not yet form part of the book in the time of Origen, for although he cites it in referring to the first marriage of Joseph, he elsewhere gives a completely different version of the reason for the death of Zacharias.” Schneemelcher included the *Protevangelium* among the “later infancy Gospels” because it demonstrates the “growth of legend.” *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 404.

20. F. F. Bruce summarized this portion of the *Protevangelium*: “When Herod fails to find the infant, after the visit of the wise men from the east, he tries to lay hands on the child John (later the Baptist), but when he too is not to be found (having been hidden with his mother Elisabeth in a hollow mountain) Herod has his father Zechariah put to death in the temple court.” *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 86–87.

21. Ron Cameron, ed., *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Westminster: John Knox, 1982), 113.

22. Cameron, *Other Gospels*, 120–21.

23. According to Chronicles, David organized the Aaronic descendants into twenty-four courses, or divisions (1 Chronicles 23:6; 24:1–19), with Abijah (or Abia in Greek) as the eighth course. After the Babylonian exile, only four of the original courses returned to Palestine—Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur, and Harim (Ezra 2:36–39; 10:18–22). When we read Ezra with Nehemiah, it appears those four were redivided into the traditional twenty-four courses and assigned the same names as listed in Nehemiah 12:1–7.

24. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, “Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of the Tabernacles or Booths,” 523. “Every *mishmarot* [course] would work during its assigned week until the round was completed and was then begun anew . . . a period of only two weeks per year.” The number of priests grew by the late Second Temple period, so “the rabbis stated that every priestly division was composed of several households each of which had a fixed day of the week for its work . . . and the entire division would officiate on the Sabbath (cf. Men 107b). During the pilgrim festivals all the division served together.” See also Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple and Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1874), 118.

25. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 198–206. Josephus, in *Contra Apionem* II.8, 108, speaks of four courses of priests returning from Babylon. At one point in time he states that each course contained over five thousand men, for a total of approximately twenty thousand priests. His numbers may be exaggerated, though, as Ezra records that only 4,289 priests originally returned from Babylon to Jerusalem (see Ezra 2:36–39).

26. James VanderKam, *From Joseph to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 408–13; Bruce, *New Testament History*, 3–4; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 159. From the time of King Herod's rule, the position of high priest was transferred from an ancient Zadokite high priest lineage to an eminent priest. The natural outcome of this new order developed into rivalry among the chief priests vying for the position of high priest. Also under the Roman rule, the appointment of high priest ceased to be either lifelong or hereditary.

27. See Edersheim, *Temple and Its Ministry and Services*, 160, 166–67; see also Mishnah Tamid 3:1. The priests gathered every morning before sunrise, and again in the afternoon, to cast lots for their various responsibilities of the day. The priest who won the third assignment of the morning or the afternoon lot chose two priests to assist him in the Holy Place to clear and prepare the incense altar. When his assistants left, the chosen priest awaited a musical signal and then lit the incense as a representation of prayers ascending to heaven (see Exodus 30:1; Psalm 141:2; Revelation 8:4).

28. The borders of Herod's kingdom extended only thirty-eight miles south of Bethlehem to Masada and west across to Gaza. Joyce Reid, trans. and ed., *Atlas of the Bible* (New York, London: Nelson and Sons, 1957), 116.

29. Matthew creates a tie between Jesus' birth and death narratives here with two wicked rulers trying to kill Jesus. He uses the same word, *apollumi* ("destroy"), in Matthew 2:13 as he does in Matthew 27:20: compare "Herod will seek the young child to *destroy* him" (2:13; emphasis added) with "But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and *destroy* Jesus" (27:20; emphasis added). Matthew also includes the same backdrop in both accounts. A Jewish leader is trying to kill Jesus in both the nativity and the passion narratives. Whether Matthew's double use of *apollumi* was intentional or not, Raymond Brown asserts that Herod's attempt to murder Jesus makes the infancy narrative a Gospel in miniature, including both a birth and death and foreshadowing what is to come in the passion and Atonement. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 50–54.

30. Albright and Mann estimate the population of Bethlehem at the time at only three hundred. *Matthew: A New Translation*, 19. In 1999, Brown estimated that the population would have been at most one thousand, to prove his point that even at that extreme, very few male infants were killed by Herod's troops. *Birth of the Messiah*, 204. Literature on the subject in the last decade also uses Brown's general population estimate of under a thousand.

31. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 204–5. Brown argues that considering the high infant mortality rate in the ancient world, there would have been so few male children from two years old and under in the area near Bethlehem that Herod could have caused

the death of scarcely more than twenty children. History tends to exaggerate the number of children that Herod's troops slaughtered. Brown quotes Justin, who claimed that Herod had all males killed without a reference to their age. The Byzantine liturgy claims that fourteen thousand "holy Children" were murdered. In his list of Herod's atrocities, Josephus does not include Herod ordering the murder of infant males in Bethlehem. Josephus, *Antiquities* XVII, 11.2. As a result, some assume that the killing of the young boys in Bethlehem was fictional. Others, like Brown, defend the biblical account by assuming the slaughter in Bethlehem was too minor for Josephus to include in Herod's catalog of more bloody atrocities. Moreover, Josephus' data does not always prove historically accurate. See, for example, *Antiquities* XV, 3.5–9; *Wars* I, 2.2.3, 4.

32. VanderKam, *High Priests after the Exile*, 408–13. See also Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 377.

33. The *Protevangelium of James* focuses on the perpetual virginity of Mary and the immaculate conception of Mary, which freed her from original sin. *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:333, 345, 372–73, 401.

34. *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 373–74. Alban Butler notes that "Zechariah was venerated throughout the East, and in 415 his supposed relics were taken to Constantinople." Alban Butler, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, ed. Sarah Fawcett Thomas and Paul Burns (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 12:38.

35. Harry Bober, "St. Zacharias the Prophet and Martyr," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11–12 (1948): 52. See also Benedictine Monks, *Book of the Saints* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 273.

36. Schneemelcher, *Hennecke New Testament Apocrypha*, 371; *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, 38; Edward Bean Underhill, *The Baptist Record and Biblical Repository* (London, England: Aylott & Jones, 1848), 512.

37. Origen, *Tract*, xxvi.

38. *E. J. Brill's First Encyclopedia of Islam, 1913–1936*, ed. M. T. Houtsma (New York: E. J. Brill, 1987), 7:1202.

39. *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. Hamilton A. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957), 654.

40. See, for example, *The Holy Bible Explained; or the Old and New Testament Digested and Illustrated by Way of Question and Answer* (Baltimore, MD: Henry S. Keatinge, 1808), 320; "The Annunciation of the Birth and Character of John the Baptist, to Zacharias," *Christian's Magazine: Designed to Promote Knowledge and Influence of Evangelical Truth*, August 1811, 419–25; Edward Robinson, *The Biblical Repositor and Quarterly Observer* (Andover, MA, and Boston, 1842), 139. *American Biblical Repository and Classical Review*, second series, No. XV, XLVII, 138–39; Moses Stuart, *Critical History and Defence [sic] of the Old Testament Canon* (London: William Tegg, 1849), 246.

41. *American Biblical Repository*, second series, no. VIII, 135.

42. William Hone, *The Apocryphal New Testament, Being All the Gospels, Epistles, and Other Pieces Now Extant* (London: Ludgate Hill, 1820–46), 36. I checked WorldCat

and found 120 copies of the 1820 edition still available in libraries across the nation, from Harvard to Stanford.

43. Brown, "Zacharias and Elisabeth, Joseph and Mary," 97n16. Brown credits Richard L. Anderson with this observation.

44. *Saturday Magazine*, September 17, 1837, 108. "The conductor of a London daily *newspaper* frequently does not *write* more than a single article in each number of his paper; for, in the establishment of the leading journals, a separate, but subordinate, *editor* is intrusted [*sic*] with the task."

45. See *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. and ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), appendix B.

46. Brown, "Zacharias and Elisabeth, Joseph and Mary," 97n16.

47. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching," *BYU Studies* 24, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 557n165. In a footnote, Anderson expresses caution about the authorship of multiple articles attributed to Joseph Smith: "However, John Taylor was managing editor, and in the monthly issues of this period those items signed 'Joseph Smith' are of more certain authorship by the Prophet. In any event, John Taylor explained the official position of the Church under the Prophet's general supervision."

48. Robert T. Bray, "Times and Seasons: An Archeological Perspective on Early Latter Day Saints Printing," *Historical Archaeology* 13 (1979): 53–119. In the fall of 1841, the leaders of the Church decided the Church "should own the *Times and Seasons*" (60). "Smith apparently never became directly involved in editing the paper; however, because he, as Trustee in Trust for the Church, immediately sold the print shop, press, bindery and foundry to John Taylor, Taylor took over the thriving business. . . . In Taylor the Twelve evidently had found an editor who would do always as they wished, for he was to continue in that capacity until the last issue of *Times and Seasons* which appeared February 15, 1846. . . . Smith, pleading insufficient time to attend to *Times and Seasons*, had turned that paper over to [Taylor]" (60–61).

49. See *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 524–25.

50. See *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, appendix B.

51. See *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 524–25; Susan Easton Black, conversation with the author, November 2011.

52. See *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 543. While the Prophet was in seclusion, he said he learned "important things" concerning baptisms for the dead. "On September 1 and again on September 6, Joseph wrote two letters to the Nauvoo Saints" respecting that information (543). Also during his time in hiding, Joseph made a few appearances in Nauvoo, including at a Relief Society meeting on August 31, 1842. See "Daily Events in the Life of Joseph Smith: August," *Joseph Smith Resource Center*, LDS.org, <http://lds.org/josephsmith/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=e581001cfb340010VgnVCM1000001f5e340aRCRD&vgnnextfmt=tab2&month=8>.

53. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 261. The article is introduced, "From an Editorial in the 'Times and Seasons,' by the Prophet" (260).

54. See endnote 2.

55. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, comp. and ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 162–63: "Ans to 1st His greatness consisted in 3 things 1st His appointment to prepare the way before the Lord Jesus Christ 2nd His privilege to Baptise him or induct him into his Kingdom 3d His being the only legal administrator in the affairs of the Kingdom that was then on the Earth consequently the Jews had to obey his instruction or be damned by their own Law & Christ fulfilled all righteousness in becoming obedient to the Law which himself had given to Moses on the mount and thereby magnified it and made it honorable instead of destroying it." This passage is from Franklin D. Richards; the other accounts are similar.

56. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 235. Within the same paragraph, James Burgess repeats a very similar statement about both Zacharias and John as legal administrator while the other scribes only list John as such.