

The Christmas Story

I have waited until Christmas Day to post this lesson about the meaning of Christmas. Now I'm sure that most of you realize that Christmas is when we celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ, hence the name Christmas (Christ Day). I want to take a few moments to look at a few of the essential aspects of Christ's birth and talk about what they really mean. I know that this is a busy and tiring time and this is a long story, so I'll keep my comments brief

Before going further let's review the Scriptures associated with the birth of Christ.

Matthew 1:18-25

- (18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- (19) Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.
- (20) But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
- (21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.
- (22) Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
- (23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.
- (24) Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:
- (25) And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Luke 2:1-20

- (1) And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.
- (2) (*And* this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)
- (3) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
- (4) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- (5) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
- (6) And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.
- (7) And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.
- (8) And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

- (9) And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
- (10) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
- (11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
- (12) And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
- (13) And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
- (14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
- (15) And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.
- (16) And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
- (17) And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.
- (18) And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.
- (19) But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.
- (20) And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Matthew 2:1-23

- (1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- (2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
- (3) When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
- (4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
- (5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
- (6) And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
- (7) Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
- (8) And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
- (9) When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
- (10) When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

- (11) And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.
- (12) And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.
- (13) And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.
- (14) When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:
- (15) And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.
- (16) Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.
- (17) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,
- (18) In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.
- (19) But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,
- (20) Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.
- (21) And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.
- (22) But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:
- (23) And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Now with the Scriptures reviewed let's look at the fact that Christ was born of a virgin. There is one obvious importance to this – it is not natural for a child to be born without the aid of both a mother and a father. This, though, of itself does not tell the whole story. You see, Satan may imitate the virgin birth, but not without the “seed of a man.” This is what's really important here. Jesus Christ is the seed of the woman that is talked about all the way back in Genesis 3. Sin entered into the world by Adam and was passed upon all men (Romans 5:12). If Jesus had been the seed of man then he would have been the seed of Adam and would have been subject to death because of Adam's transgression. It is because of the virgin birth that Jesus Christ is able to take away the sin of the world. He is not the seed of Adam.

I would also here like to point out that Mary did not remain a virgin throughout her life as is taught by some. According to the Scripture she remained a virgin until after she had

brought forth her firstborn son. Most likely she gave up her virginity before leaving Bethlehem. I only mention this to point out that Mary was just a virtuous young woman who had kept herself pure for her husband. Joseph also showed a great deal of restraint. Young men and women today would do well to follow their example, but Mary nor Joseph are objects to be worshipped.

Next I would like to talk about the lowly beginning that Jesus had. There are those who talk about Christ as being poor and homeless. I guess in one sense this could be true, but not really. You see, Mary and Joseph were travelers. While they probably didn't have a lot of money the Scripture indicates that they had searched for an inn, so they apparently could have afforded a room. We also find that they bought a house in Jerusalem soon after Jesus was born because the wise men came to visit the house. We'll talk more about them in a few moments.

The next thing that I want to briefly discuss is the shepherds. God chose the lowliest of people to be the first heralds of Christ's coming. This should tell us today that no matter what our estate in life we can make a difference. These also show that Christ came first to the Jews.

The wise men from the east bring the Gentiles in to focus. It is the Gentiles who would be enriched by Christ. It is the Gentiles who were brought into the fold through Christ.

The star that the wise men followed represents the beacon of hope that Jesus brings. It also shows us that when we search for the way we will find it, but we must keep our eye on Christ rather than getting bogged down in how we think things should be.

Jesus went down to Egypt just as Israel had gone generations before. Egypt was a picture of sin, and Christ came to remove sin.

Jesus returned to Nazareth, so he is called a Nazarene. Note that this is not a Nazarite as were some in the Old Testament. There may have been times in Christ's life when he took the vow of the Nazarite, most notably the 40 days that he spent in the wilderness after his baptism, but he was not a Nazarite from birth. We will talk about the vow of the Nazarite at another time.

Finally, I would like to point out that Satan has declared war on Christ and His church. He tried to destroy Christ before he could bring the gospel. He has tried through the ages to destroy Christ. Today he is succeeding on many fronts, but the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.

Merry Christmas!

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich