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## **The Promised Christ is Born**

**Key verses:** Matthew 1: 1-25; Luke 2:1-20; John 1:1-18

**Key personalities:** God, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Wiseman, and Herod

**Timeline:** The God of Eternity; then, He entered as a Man, being fully God and fully Man, at a fixed point in time, about 4-6 BC.

It's Christmas! The classic scene, wise men guided by a star sought out the new King. An uproar occurs that causes Joseph to flee with his new wife and child far away from his home, work, relationships, religious community and family. All because Christ is God incarnate and demands a response from His creation. So, we all respond to Him in various ways. The response to Christ's birth in 5 BC: The universe responded with a star, the gentiles responded with honor, and the Jewish rulers responded by trying to kill Him. The question is, how do you respond?

His birth and name were foretold centuries beforehand! (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 42:8)

**Key Happenings,** Immanuel, God is with us!

The time has come, and the time is now, the King has come! The Creator and soon Redeemer of the world, humbles Himself and comes as a lowly human being, in fact a helpless, needed baby born in poverty, not what was culturally expected, but what was promised. God is at His mighty work and His work cumulated, as all of history, all of time and space intersect in the humbleness of a simple occasion and place, a cave and in a manger, the feed trough of farm animals. Jesus, the visible expression and image of the invisible Holy God has become one of us.

This is called the "Incarnation," Jesus being fully God and then comes to us as fully Man too, is birthed into humanity. Then, He walks the earth, lives the life of a human being, experiences what we experience, feels what we feel, lives a perfect life on our behalf as a fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He travels around a small area in the first century and proclaims the good news, the gospel, develops twelve key people, instructs them with the necessary principles to know God intimately, as never experienced in all of humanity, precepts for a life that glorifies God, makes positive relationships, and be a Kingdom impact.

- The birth of Jesus is of One who is different from any human being who ever has or ever will exist. A person is normally conceived by two human parents who are born in sin and without divine intervention. Christ was not just born; He came into our world not as a man, like a petty Greek god; rather, as a baby, no less! He was brought into this world as any baby would be, with the extreme exception that Mary did not have normal sexual relations to conceive Him! Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He was pre-existent, and He was sinless.
- The birth most likely occurred in the springtime (defiantly not in the cold of winter! The date of Christmas was moved to December 25<sup>th</sup> in the 4<sup>th</sup> century to get rid of the pagan holiday of 'Winter Solutes,' around when we celebrate Easter. The clue is when the census was taken along with the Passover. This was the only way to gather all the heads of the Jewish households in Jerusalem, as most would have traveled there anyway.
- *Found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.* This refers to what is called the "Virgin Birth." Jesus' birth was an unprecedented miracle! This is vital to our faith and practice and the understanding of the Gospel (Matt. 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-56; 2:4-7; John 1:1-9).

- The name *Jesus* means, "Yahweh is Salvation," as in *God is salvation*. This was a common name, which was a declension of Joshua. For Jesus, this was a title of His office and Nature, over and above a name to be called. It had extra significance because God intervened and gave this name, when the family lineage was usually used to give a person a name with a meaning behind it (Jer. 23:5-6; Matt. 2:6; 15-23; 7:21-23; 28:19-20)
- *Immanuel*: Meaning "God with us," inferring that He is *our salvation*. For us, this means that Jesus is with us, because as God, He was, and is able to take our sins upon Himself and appease God's wrath because of our sin. He is "God amongst us," because He walked, lived, worked, and existed in all aspects as any human ever has. He became identified as one of us while still remaining God, the Creator of us! Jesus is both God and man; He is not a hybrid like Hercules, nor a percentage of one over the other; He is fully God and fully human. He was birthed into history and into this world, yet, He was not from it (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 10:21; 11:1; Matt. 1:23). His Name is also His nature; *God is with us*, for He is God indeed (John 1:1-3,14; 4:9-10; 8:56-59; 17:5; Rom. 1:3-4; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:17; 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:17-18).
- Why? If Jesus is God, then He could not have been born as a normal baby by a mother who was younger than He! He could not have been comparable to "normal" babies. Thus, He was not merely born, but came into this world through the birth canal as His passage of choosing (Matt. 28:20; Is. 7:14; John 18:37; 1 Pet. 1:19).
- Why is this so important? If Jesus had a human father, then the Bible is untrustworthy, there would be no reason for His supernatural life, and He would have no ability to save us! Without the "Virgin Birth" we have no deity, no miracles, and no salvation. Thus, this is an essential doctrine, and if the Bible and Christ are true, the Virgin Birth must be true also! Otherwise, He could never have conquered death and Satan, or have taken our place of suffering and death.
- Jesus was born into the world, yet was not from it. That is, He did not come from it (since He created it), nor is He corrupted by it, lest He be corrupted by sin. Jesus Christ is God incarnate!
- Jesus must also be born/formed in you Have you allowed Jesus into all aspects of your life? Are you surrendered and poured out to be His Bethlehem? For Him to be in you, you must yield all of your rights and will to Him! Then Christ can use you to "form" others around you. We cannot do the work of God unless we are the people of God, as Christ is formed in us (John 3:7; Gal. 2:20; 4:19).
- *He will save His people from their sins*: This is His "office," meaning salvation and faith will be through Jesus Christ as God now gives humanity a new Covenant (Jer. 31:31-37). We are saved from the consequences of sin, the wrath of God, and our guilt by His blood interceding on our behalf (Matt. 1:21; John 3:16-17; Rom. 5:8-9; 8:1-2,12-14; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:24-25; Rev. 7:13-17).
- *Fulfill*: Matthew uses this term twelve times to make the point that this is the Messiah, then proves that he has indeed fulfilled the Old Testament requirements (Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9). The events of Jesus' life, death, Lordship, and Salvation in the New Testament were predicted in accurate details and are a powerful testimony and proof for the infallibility of the Bible by its exactness.
- But, this is not what was expected! Jews, at the time of Christ thought a royal king would come to save them; that is why they accused Him of blasphemy. Even though they knew the Scriptures, they refused to accept the Word or Him, and held to their presumptions instead! People will accept a human Jesus, but not a divine Jesus-the same problem we have today, both in our presumptions and our acceptance of true Truth!
- The visit Of the *Magi/Wise Men* occurred when Jesus was between 1 month and 2 years old. Herod died in 4BC, thus Jesus was born in 5 to 6 BC (Matt. 2:16; Luke 2:22-39). The honored family was

now living in a house in Bethlehem, and not in their hometown of Nazareth as it is over 50 miles way, a tough several day journey from Jerusalem with a newborn.

- The Magi were not kings themselves, but scientists, philosophers and advisors to kings. They were from the Persia/ Babylonian areas (modern Iran and Iraq) where Abraham was from and Daniel and the Jews lived in captivity for 70 years. Thus, they would have been well acquainted with the Scriptural predictions from their former Jewish captives, from Daniel's, and Balaam's prophecy (Nub. 24). In the first century period, no king in the near east could rise to power without being discipled and then crowned by the Magi! Thus, they held considerable power and influence (Dan 5, Acts 8:4-25).
- The principle point of the visit of the Magi is, "*We have come to WORSHIP Him*" (Matt. 2:2, 11). It is a picture of God's sovereignty even as a helpless infant, He was worshiped. He is the Eternal God and Creator and sits on the throne of Haven; He is our Savior and Lord.
- The Magi were a superb example of spiritual diligence! Consider the cost and time and danger to travel back then. That they believed without all the resources we have today! Are we willing to sacrifice or at the very least be diligent to find Christ, to serve Christ and to worship Christ? Even though we live in a callous and unbelieving world, let us be diligent and contrite as the Wise men were! True servants of the Lord can be found in unlikely places, and those who we expect to be the true servants such as the chief priests and scribes can be faked (John 1:11; 2 Tim. 2:19)!

Three pagan kings saw this, do you? Does your church? Or do we just seem Him as a helpless baby in a manger so cute and so uncontrived? We have to see Christ as Lord, not just as a mere cute cuddly baby. A baby is dependant and in need, it is no threat or hazard or conviction. We control a baby, and the baby is totally dependent on us as caretakers and protectors. Christ was a baby in His human form; However, He is no longer a baby! Yet, He is in many Christian minds, perhaps for the aforementioned reasons. As a baby, we can control Him and not worry of His conviction or precepts. So, Adore Jesus as a baby, worship Him as Lord. But, do not ever think of Him as merely a baby that you have power or control over, for He is still Sovereign and our God!

What we must grasp is this, worship was honored to Him! The wise men were able to go beyond their cultural misgivings and knew that Jesus was worthy to be worshiped and that is the point here! Whereas the officials of Judaism were not!

Jesus the King, who was also the son of David and of Abraham, fulfilled that promise! Abraham is the one whom God used to initiate His promise and plant His seed. It was a lineage of faith from the Patriarchs and their descendants, birthing a nation that was to honor the One, True, Sovereign God. Judaism was meant to show who God was and how all can know Him through the priesthood, law, the faith of obedience, and the heart. It was a call to show the carnal world His Way by faith and obedience, and finally bringing The Way-Christ, as Savior and Lord (Gen 12:1-3).

**Key Takeaway:** Jesus is Transcendent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent. Although He is Sovereign, at the same time, He is *Immanuel*, that describes God in the most powerful and profound language the Jews have and/or that we have: God, THE God who walks beside us and holds us. He is God and is fully able to save us by substituting Himself in our place, living a sinless life, and taking God's wrath upon Himself so we would not be lost forever. He is a God who indeed carries us through both the trials of life and through our jubilations too (Isaiah 7:14; Psalm 24:7-8; Prov. 1; Matt. 1:23; John 1:1-3,14; 4:9-10; 8:56-59; 17:5; Rom. 1:3-4; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:17-18).

In Matthew 22: 42, Jesus asks "Who do you say I am?" The answer for us is *Immanuel*, as Christ was birthed in history, He must also be birthed into you and evident in you! He is touching you, discipling you so He is fully engaged in your heart and mind, and so He is Supreme in you, too. Your transformation and Fruit are the evidences of Christ carrying you. For Him to carry you, He must be evident in you!

**The Call to the Church?** *Where is the newborn king of the Jews*, the visitors asked? The very same question is asked of us, where is He in us and in our church? Is Jesus just a mere baby that is under our domain, or is He the LORD sitting on high? How we see Jesus and how we worship Him in our hearts and minds will govern how you are in life and how you grow in Him. This is the question that spawns, how will your church be, how will it grow spiritually with conviction and discipleship, or decline from Him and be a meager club? If so, all you will be doing is keeping the natives happy and content while God goes unnoticed and dishonored and people go unfulfilled and unfed by His Word and Spirit. Herod was deeply disturbed by Jesus, even as a baby. Yet, Jesus comes to disturb! He comes to wake us up from our meager life and complacency and thus convict us of our sin so to lead us with His love, care and grace to the wonders of life and the eternity to come. So do we give Him our treasure or our disdain of contempt?

Do we allow our being to be disturbed so we are convicted and grow, or do we recoil in complacency, or hate and pride?

### **Questions to Ponder**

1. What Christmas traditions do you and your family have? How do they point to Who and what Jesus is and will do? How can we do this better?
2. Would you have a strong foundation for your faith and hope? How did Mary and Joseph deal with their scandalous beginning and struggles while countering some of their cultural ideals?
3. How did Joseph decide to obey God and trust in Him rather than in his cultural peer pressure? What does this mean for you?
4. Jesus as a baby who needed all the things a baby needs, diaper changes and a breast to be fed from, was still fully God and Creator and to be worshiped. How is this humbling? Why did He do this?
5. What can you learn from the Magi? Even though we live in a callous and unbelieving world, how can you be diligent as the Wise men were?
6. Why do some people like Jesus only as a baby? Why is Jesus as a baby more appealing and comforting to some, than a God teaching the truths of the Kingdom?
7. Are you willing to sacrifice or at the very least be diligent to find Christ, to serve Christ and to worship Christ?
8. How does the birth of the Lord impact you, considering the way He came into this world as a helpless baby?
9. Are you ready to receive the reality of who Jesus is? What gets in the way?
10. His Name is also His nature, how can this fact empower you further in your spiritual growth? What about your interpersonal relationships?
11. How do you respond to Christ as Lord? How is Jesus Supreme in you? How do you know it and show it?
12. What can your church do to apply the Incarnation in its life?