

THE REAL CHRISTMAS STORY



Theme: **The Birth of Jesus**

• The Promise of a Savior

- [700 BC] Isaiah 7:14 // Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.
- [400 BC] Micah 5:2 // But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

• The Mission of Jesus

- Jesus came to fulfill the promises and laws of OT Scriptures.
- Luke 19:10 // For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”
- Matthew 20:28 // even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- Jesus came to earth to rule & reign over all creation as our Prophet, Priest and King. (Rev. 19:16)

• The Virgin Birth of Jesus

- Scripture clearly asserts that Jesus was conceived in the womb of His mother Mary by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and without a human father.
- The virgin birth made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity of Jesus.
- The virgin birth also makes possible Christ's true humanity without inherited sin.
- The virgin birth shows us that salvation ultimately must come from God alone.

• The Incarnation of Jesus

- The Incarnation of Jesus: Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh. (John 1:14)
- Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh. (Rom. 8:3)
- Jesus emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant. (Phil. 2:5-11)
- Jesus was born of a human virgin woman named Mary. (Matthew 1:18-25) (Luke 1:26-38)

• The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-3 // In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. **(Mary and Joseph journey to Bethlehem slide)**

- Caesar Augustus (the exalted) reigned between 31BC - 14AD **(Caesar Augustus slide)**
- To avenge the murder of his uncle Julius Caesar, Augustus formed the Second Triumvirate to defeat the assassins. Augustus would then go on to birth the first phase of the Roman Empire and bring peace.
- People were counted and registered for the purpose of taxation and times of war. **(map slide)**

Luke 2:4-5 // And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

- Joseph and Mary traveled roughly 80 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered.
- On the surface, political reasons determine where Jesus is born, but the ultimate cause is the God who controls history and who guarantees that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6)

Luke 2:6-7 // And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. **(nativity scene slide)**

- Swaddling clothes or rags.
- The “manger” or feeding trough would have been located in a stable or cave. **(nativity scene slide II)**
- “the Inn” is thought to be the central publicly known lodging place for individual travelers & caravans.

- The greatest miracle in the history of the world, the eternal Son of God being born as a man, happens quietly in a stable in the obscure village of Bethlehem in Judea.

• The Shepherds and the Angels (field scene I & II)

Luke 2:8-9 // And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

- Shepherds were considered nomads, vile, immoral thieves and were despised.
- Shepherds worked on the Sabbath and were declared always 'unclean' as defined by the law.
- Shepherds were not allowed to enter the temples and synagogues to worship.
- God sent His Son to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10)

Luke 2:10-14 // And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and 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 among those with whom he is pleased!"

- Isaiah 9:2 // The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. (repeated in Matt. 4:16)
- In the first century it was routine to hire a herald to pronounce the birth of your first born son.
- This culture viewed the first born son as a blessing because the lineage would continue.
- God sends His angels to herald the birth of His Son Jesus.
- The angels proclaim the news about Jesus: the eternal, omnipotent Son of God has just taken "the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7), for "the fullness of time" has now come, and God has "sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal. 4:4-5).
- Peace comes to those who trust and place there faith in His Son as the Savior of the world.
- Jesus is the "Prince of Peace". (Isa. 9:6)

Luke 2:15-21 // 15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. 21 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

- The presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple shows us the devotion of Jesus' family to God.
- The name "Jesus" meaning Savior is the Greek equivalent of Yeshua (Joshua) in Hebrew, meaning "Yahweh saves" or "the Lord saves." There are two notable Joshuas in the OT. The first Joshua (Exodus) leads God's people into the promise land, the second Joshua (Zechariah) leads the children of God back into the promise land after the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. The third Yeshua (Jesus) sets the children of God free from the bondage of sin and leads us into eternity with Him in Heaven.

• The Magi (Wise Men) (The wise men I & II)

Matthew 2:1-12 // Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6 "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." (quoted from Micah 5:2)

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

- The wise men would likely have been familiar with OT prophecy through interaction with Jews in Babylon. Numbers 24:17 // A star shall come out of Jacob, and scepter shall rise out of Israel.
- By learning what time the star had appeared Herod then knew about what age Jesus would be. Herod would then decreed that all male children who were at the age of two and under be killed. (Matt.2:16)
- Most scholars and theologian believe that the wise men arrived at the "house" where Jesus lived about two years after His birth.
- The wise men from the east brought Jesus gifts and worshiped Him. The bible does not speak directly to the meanings of the gifts, however many speculate that the gifts had a special spiritual meaning.

» **Gold** is a precious metal that only the wealthiest of people and royalty had access to. In the OT many pagan gods were built from solid gold. The gift of gold was symbolic of His divinity and royalty as God in flesh coming as our salvation and ruling as our King.

» **Frankincense** is a white resin used in incense and perfumes, obtained from trees of the genus Boswellia. Frankincense was frequently used as incense burned on the altar in the presence of the Lord (Exodus 30:34). Frankincense is a symbol of purity, holiness and righteousness. The gift of frankincense was symbolic of His Priestly role and willingness to become a sacrifice, wholly giving Himself up as the sacrifice for our sins.

» **Myrrh** was also a product of Arabia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. It was a spice and was used in embalming the dead. Myrrh symbolizes bitterness, trials, suffering, and affliction, a prefiguring of Jesus' life and death. The baby Jesus would grow to suffer greatly as a man and would pay the ultimate price when He gave His life on the cross for all who would believe in Him.

• Application / Conclusion

- Galatians 4:4-5 // But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.
- Christmas is ultimately about what God has given us, His only Son and what His Son has done for us.
- From the crib to the cross, born to die, Jesus came for the those who are in need of a Savior.
- God desires to transform us into the likeness of His Son more and more each day, He longs for Christians that laid down their own desires and become a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him. When we become more like Christ we reflect God's love, holiness, goodness and supreme value to the world. God wants glory for Christmas. Give God the gift of devotion this year. Merry Christmas! (Romans 12:1-2; Romans 8:29; Isaiah 43:6-7)