

The Mind of Christ

Jesus – A Birth Like None Other

INTRODUCTION:

- I. This is the time of year when people are turning their attention to the birth of Jesus Christ.
 - A. But the Biblical account of the birth of Jesus indicates this event did NOT occur in the winter, but more than likely occurred in the Spring.
 1. People are often surprised to learn that December 25th had actually been a pagan holiday that was changed centuries ago by the Roman Catholic Church into the “official day” when the birth of Christ would be celebrated.
 - a. But the Bible says: “*Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.*” (Luke 2:8)
 - b. It’s a know historical fact that you would **NEVER** find Judean shepherds “living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night” in the dead of winter – that was something they did in the Spring and Summer months.
 - d. By early fall, the shepherds would be bringing their flocks down from the high pasture lands where they would winter back at

home in large sheepfolds – large fenced-in pastures next to the shepherd's home.

2. People are also surprised to learn the Bible says nothing at all about first century Christians celebrating the birth of Jesus – there are no examples, no commands, nor is there anything that even remotely infers early Christians celebrated this event.
 - a. Rather than celebrate the birth of Jesus, first century Christians memorialized the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus every first day of the week – a far more important series of events.
 - b. This is why WE celebrate the death, burial and resurrection of Christ just as first century Christians did – in our weekly observance of the Lord's Supper (communing with the Lord in the breaking of bread and in the partaking of the fruit of the vine).
 - B. But the birth of Jesus IS important, for if Jesus had never been born, He could have never died for our sins. So, even though the birth of Jesus was never celebrated by first century Christians – at least as far as we can tell from the Bible – it IS a significant event, and one that can tell us a great deal about the character of Jesus Christ.
- II. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the birth of Jesus Christ is its simplicity and humility.

- A. The most profound moment in the history of the world – when God the Son would come into the world in the form of a tiny baby boy – went completely unnoticed, except for the young mother, Mary, her fiancée, Joseph, and a hand-full of shepherds.
1. Mary and Joseph travel all alone some 85 miles from Nazareth to the city of Bethlehem to be counted in a national census. Joseph walked, and Mary, who was nine months pregnant, rode sidesaddle on a donkey, feeling every jolt, every rock in the road, every rut.
 2. When they arrived in Bethlehem, probably exhausted from the long journey, they were given the only accommodations that were left. Since all the inns were already filled with the overflow crowds – Mary and Joseph were escorted to a nearby stable – crowded with the animals of the inn’s guests.
 3. A feeding trough was made ready to serve as a crib. Hay was most likely placed in the trough to serve as its only mattress.
 4. And when the moment of birth finally came, the only ones present were Mary and Joseph – they were all alone, and miles away from family and friends.
 5. There was no one to help Mary during the pain of childbirth but Joseph – a nervous and confused young man.
 6. Oh, yes, the birth of Jesus was announced by the angels of heaven – but only to a small, lowly band of shepherds.

7. And there was a bright star that shone that night, but it was noticed by only by a few kings who cared enough to start out on a long caravan that would take them weeks at best to arrive – not at the stable where Jesus was laying in a manger, but arrive weeks later when the child and his parents were lodging in a nearby house.
8. It was not the kind of Royal Birth we would expect for the Son of God – a silent night in the little town of Bethlehem when the Son of God entered the world – and the world slept, not even aware of what had just happened.

III. Without the birth of Jesus Christ, there would be no Christianity. But let's not lose sight of the simplicity and the purity of God's plan to introduce Christ into the world.

A. It's easy for us to allow ourselves to become wrapped up in all the glitz and glamour of this event – to lose our devotion to Christ amid all the tinsel and glitter of life.

1. In **2 Corinthians 11:3**, the apostle Paul warned of this danger: *“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*
 - a. God wanted our devotion to Christ to be pure and simple – to be genuine and from the depths of our heart.

2. Therefore, let's focus on the purity and the simplicity of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus – and attempt to understand why such a world-shaping event was done so simply that practically no one noticed.

BODY:

- I. The first thing we need to understand about the birth of Jesus is that Jesus Christ was no ORDINARY man.
 - A. He came into the world as God wrapped in human flesh. He was God the Son, and possessed all the qualities and characteristics of deity.
 1. In **John 1:1-3**, several important facts are revealed about the divine nature of Jesus Christ:
 - a. First, there was never a time when He did not exist. He existed before the earth was created: *“In the beginning was the Word... He was in the beginning with God.”*
 - b. Second, He was God – not God the Father, and not God the Holy Spirit, but God the Son: *“and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*
 - c. And third, He was the Creator of all things. He created the heavens and the earth, and everything that is in them: *“All things*

were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

- B. Just as Jesus was no ordinary man, neither was His birth ordinary. Since Jesus came into this world to eventually die on the cross for our sins, He would have to be born into this world as a human.
 - 1. God could have chosen to bring His Son into the world differently – to simply create Him as He created angels.
 - a. But the Scriptures speak of the fact that Jesus came in a body – in His own body; a body that God had prepared for Him:
“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.’” (Hebrews 10:5)
 - b. Therefore, Jesus Christ came into this world inhabiting His own body – one that had been prepared by God through a most unusual kind of birth.
 - 2. In the birth of Jesus, there was something ELSE that would be unlike any other in the course of human history – Jesus would be born of a virgin. He would be the seed of woman only (not the product of the seed of man and woman, like us).
 - a. Remember when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God pronounced a curse on the Serpent who had beguiled Eve – God said, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman,*

*and between your seed and **her Seed**; **He** shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise **His** heel.” (Genesis 3:15)*

- b. Later, when the apostle Paul wrote in retrospect about the birth of Jesus Christ, He said, *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, **born of a woman**, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5)*
- c. And about 800 years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah stood before King Ahaz and prophesied of a special event that would serve as a sign to the nation of Israel. He said, *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a **sign**: Behold, **the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son**, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)*
 - (1). In the ancient Hebrew, the word “*virgin*” (Hebrew “*almah*”) simply meant “*young woman*” or “*young maid*,” one who may or may not be a virgin as we understand the word. But the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, translates the word “*virgin*” into a word meaning “*one who had not known another intimately*” – the Greek word “*parthenos*.”

- (2). These translators understood that the passage in **Isaiah 7:14** was meant to be interpreted much narrower than to simply say, “*A young woman shall conceive and bear a Son.*”
 - (3). A young woman giving birth to a son is hardly a SIGN. But a VIRGIN conceiving and giving birth to a Son who would rightly be called “*Immanuel*” (translated “*God with us*”) – now, THAT’S A SIGN!
3. In Luke’s account of the birth of Christ (beginning first with **Luke chapter 1**), Luke makes significant use of the word “*virgin*” when describing Mary, the mother of Jesus.
 - a. He writes, “*Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.*” (**Luke 1:26-27**)
 - (1). Luke uses the word “*virgin*” twice in **verse 27**. But in the verses that follow we understand exactly how this word “*virgin*” is to be interpreted.
 - b. Beginning with **verse 28** the angel Gabriel said to her, “*Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!*” *But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying,*

and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ (Luke 1:28-33)

- c. Now notice carefully Mary’s response to this revelation. The way she responds tells us the exact meaning of the word “*virgin*,” for, “*Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ (Luke 1:34)*

(1). In fact, other translations of this verse make it even clearer:

- (a). Young’s Literal Translation says: *And Mary said unto the messenger, “How shall this be, seeing a husband I do not know?”*
- (b). The International Standard Version reads: *Mary asked the angel, “How can this be, since I have not had relations with a man?”*
- (c). The New American Standard Version says: *Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”*

(d). The New Century Version says: *Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen since I am a virgin?”*

(e). New Living Translation puts it into plain, simple English: *Mary asked the angel, “But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin.”*

(2). The implication is clear – since she had never known a man intimately, it would be physically impossible for her to give birth to a child.

d. So, in **Luke 1:35**, in response to her question, the angel explains the details of this miraculous birth to Mary: The angel said, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”*

4. Of course, critics may argue that she was only a virgin at the time of the angel’s revelation to her, and later she had relations with Joseph that produced the child. But Matthew’s account (in **Matthew chapter 1**) he refutes that theory.

a. Matthew writes, *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.”*

(Matthew 1:18)

- (1). Matthew takes special care to note that Mary was pregnant **before** she and Joseph came together.
- (2). According to Jewish custom, the betrothal was a twelve-month long engagement that was an official, binding commitment that could only be broken legally by divorce, or, in the case of unfaithfulness, by death from stoning. The betrothed couple were so legally bound together that the couple were often spoken of as already being husband and wife. This is why Joseph is spoken of as being Mary's husband – even though the marriage ceremony had not yet taken place. Therefore, in **Matthew 1:19**, Matthew says, *“Then Joseph **her husband**, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.”*
- b. Furthermore, we learn that Joseph was stunned to hear that Mary was with child, and found himself in a quandary between his conviction as a faithful Jew, and his love and compassion for Mary. But the angel clarifies the situation. Matthew writes, *“But while he (Joseph) thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that*

which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20-21)

- c. In the **next two verses**, Matthew comments on this miraculous event, saying it is the same “**sign**” referred to in Isaiah’s prophecy of **Isaiah 7:14**. The angel continues by saying, “*So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’” (Matthew 1:22-23)*
- d. In **Matthew 1:24-25**, Matthew then adds a happy conclusion to this series of events by telling us that, “*Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.”*

- II. The virgin birth has far-reaching ramifications of practical significance.
- A. Christianity is completely centered in and around the person and the deity of Jesus Christ.
1. If Jesus was only a man, then Christianity would be only a human religion, following only a human leader.

- a. A human redeemer cannot provide spiritual salvation, nor can a natural savior provide supernatural help.
 - b. If Jesus were strictly a human savior, he could not offer divine hope.
 - c. In fact, a human savior is really no savior at all.
2. But the fact that Jesus is both human **and** Divine makes a significant difference, since your faith and mine is founded on a **Divine leader** who was God clothed in human flesh.
- a. As a **Divine Redeemer**, He provides us with spiritual salvation, and as a **Supernatural Savior**, He provides us with supernatural help.
 - b. Because Jesus is God in the flesh, He provides us with a divine hope beyond the grave – He provides us with the hope of the resurrection, and with the hope of heaven.
 - c. And most importantly, because He is God the Son, He is truly *“Immanuel, which is interpreted, ‘**God with us**,’”* and is our only Savior and our only Redeemer.

CONCLUSION:

- I. When Mary and Joseph came into the little town of Bethlehem on the night of Jesus’ birth, there was no room in the inn.

- A. The fact that there was no room for Jesus in the inn foreshadowed the response of many to Jesus, who *“came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”* **(John 1:11)**
1. Sad, isn't it? Jesus *“came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”* He came to redeem the world, but the world of His day rejected and crucified Him.
 2. They rejected and scorned the very One who had come to be their Savior and their Redeemer.
- B. But today – right now – Jesus stands at a door seeking entrance – the door to your heart.
1. He is saying to you and me the same thing He said to the church at Laodicea, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”* **(Revelation 3:20)**
 2. What about your heart? Is it open – is there room for the Savior?
 - a. Some have never opened the door of their heart to the Savior – and He's still standing outside asking patiently to be allowed inside.
 - (1). You can respond by opening your heart to Him, and inviting Him into your life by surrendering your will to His in complete obedience to the Gospel of Christ – by believing in Him,

repenting of your sins, confessing Him before men, and by being buried with Him in baptism for the remission of your sins.

- b. However, others have only relegated Jesus to a stable at the outskirts of their heart, rather than allow Him to have a place in an inn at the center of their heart.
 - (1). There is **nothing**, nor is there **anyone** who deserves to have the place of honor in our hearts more than Jesus.