

INTRO: I want to speak today about the birth of Christ perhaps in a way few people have ever heard it before for much has been added to the original Christmas story that is not necessarily Biblically accurate but has been added and accepted by tradition over the years. I am not trying to bring doubt into the minds of individuals, I am simply showing when we speak about the things of God we need to be accurate and have our facts straight. In every Christmas pageant, skit or play that you will see, including the one that will be presented tonight at our church, there are some embellishments to the story that have been added and may or may not be totally accurate according to scripture. But I want us to all know that when we get into a discussion about the things of the Bible with a non-believer we need to understand those things that have been added and those things that are scripturally sound. 2 Timothy 2:15. One should be able to see that after we list these added "stories" about the birth of Christ, it does not in any way take away from the significance, the importance, the miraculous birth of Christ and should help us to see this story in perhaps a new light.

A. Let us start by understanding when Jesus Christ was born, the world did not come to a stop, the masses did not recognize His birth, the political system did not halt at the announcement, life did not slow down as the world observed His birth, rather everything was going on as usual. People were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, the shops were busy, that towns were active, the government was collecting taxes, the cheats were cheating, the thieves were stealing, workers were working and life was usual in the case of the majority of people.

1. We read of a few shepherds, a few wise men (who related the story to King Herod) and a couple in the temple that recognized Jesus Christ as someone special and not many more knew of His birth. Here was the Son of God being manifest in the form of a human baby, but with no pomp and circumstance as if a political king had been born, but recognized by very few. The average church-goer of today thinks there was this almost world-wide phenomena occurring when Christ was born when in reality, there was little recognition and little change, except in the lives of a few.

2. This is a far cry from the events surrounding His Second Return where we read "**Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him...**" Revelation 1:7; Daniel 7:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:17. At this time, there will be little doubt about who Jesus Christ is and the whole world will know - when He came the first time few knew of the event.

B. I want to list a few misconceptions concerning the birth of Christ, arguments that one may hear from a person trying to cast doubt upon the miraculous birth of Christ. We need to know the facts of the story and those embellishments that have come from tradition so we will be strong in our defense.

1. Did Mary ride a donkey to Bethlehem? Not necessarily so, there were other means of transportation that Joseph could have used - all the Bible record says is that she came with Joseph to Bethlehem. The story of the donkey came from a painting and from an apocryphal type book called "The infancy of James" which said "**AND THERE WAS AN ORDER FROM THE EMPEROR AUGUSTUS, THAT ALL IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDAEA SHOULD BE ENROLLED. AND JOSEPH SAID: I SHALL ENROL MY SONS[....]. AND HE SADDLED THE ASS, AND SET HER UPON IT; AND HIS SON LED IT, AND JOSEPH FOLLOWED.**"

2. Did Mary give birth the night she arrived in Bethlehem? The Bible simply says that "**...the days were completed (accomplished) for her to give birth.**" May seem more reasonable to think they arrived days, if not weeks before the birth of Christ.

3. Did Joseph and Mary speak to the Innkeeper, as we seen in almost every Christmas story? The Bible does not say anything about them speaking to an innkeeper, it simply says "**...there was no room for them in the inn.**" Also interesting to note that "inn" is from the Greek "*kataluma*" which actually means a lodging place or guest-chamber. This same word is used in Mark 14:14, "The Teacher says, "**Where is My quest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?**" Many Biblical archaeologists think that Jesus Christ was probably born in the house of a relative in Bethlehem, probably outside the normal living and guest quarters. The Bible only says He was "**...laid in a manger,**" which means a stall or crib for feeding cattle. When we hear the word "manger", we think it must have been in a barn but in those days there were also "mangers" in certain rooms of the house, generally on the first floor with the family sleeping above them on the second floor. They have uncovered such dwellings throughout the region of the Holy Land. Some have even said, if they had been in the home, why would they have not been in the normal living quarters of the house? In the

culture of that day, as well as today in many eastern cultures, the elders received the best rooms and others simply occupied what was left. This would also go along with the idea of the Wise Men visiting young Jesus in "**the house**" Matthew 2:11.

4. Did angels sing at the birth of Christ to the shepherds? Don't know - the Bible only says an angel appeared and spoke, and then appeared "**a multitude of the heavenly host praising God**" Luke 2:13.

5. Bible says nothing about 3 Wise Men coming on camels to worship the new born king and their names are not noted as Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar. None of the church fathers mentions these Wise Men as being "Kings" and as previously noted Jesus Christ was a child, not a baby when they finally reached Him. All we know is there were more than two for it is plural, could have been two or twenty just as easily. Only three gifts are mentioned, not three men.

6. Then was He really born on December 25th. It is pretty well reasoned this could not have been the date of His birth - the Bible does not specify a month or day and it would be uncommon for shepherds to be "in the fields" in winter tending the flocks. Usually they were in the fields between spring and autumn, plus that would have been a difficult time for Mary and Joseph to travel 70 miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The Roman Catholic church is who came up with December 25th as the birth of Christ. For those that believe Halloween is evil and should not even be recognized or observed in any way by Christians, it might be noted that December 25th is often associated with Saturnalia, the festival day for celebrating the return of the Sun. In other words, Christmas could be said to be based upon a pagan holiday as well. Speculation, not proof, often fits better with the birth of Christ being in September, rather than December.

C. But notice all these things that have been mentioned concerning the birth of Christ and inaccuracies concerning His birth takes nothing away from the Son of God's miraculous birth: He was born "**of a virgin**" in the city of Bethlehem as had been prophesied hundreds of years before; He was conceived not by Joseph, rather by the Holy Spirit and according to John, He existed before the birth; He is still part of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit); still came with a purpose and that to die for the sins of mankind and become their Redeemer.

1. To those that try and take some of these inconsistencies to disprove the existence of Jesus Christ - there is still more archaeological proof for the existence of Jesus Christ than for the existence of Julius Caesar and Jesus' life, death and resurrection has never been disproved though men have tried for thousands of years. Do I believe the Son of God was born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem, lived as a sinless man, died a sacrificial death for my benefit, suffering the consequences of sin for me so I may have eternal life with Him? Yes, I believe and nothing has been discovered to make me doubt Who He is or what He has done.

2. It's just kind of strange we spend the birthday of Christ concentrating about giving presents to one another and giving little thought for Christ. It is just strange that Christmas has become little more than a time of debauchery, and a time to make money to the majority of our world.

CONCLUSION: I enjoy family, I enjoy getting together at Christmas to enjoy one another's company and even giving to others, for as I get older I can truly say it is "more blessed to give than receive", though not everyone agrees with me on that thought. But let us not forget, maybe Jesus was not born on that day - makes little difference, perhaps everything did not go the way our modern pageants may portray it- makes little difference, and perhaps Christmas in our time has become nothing more than commercialism at the highest level - makes little difference. What does make a difference is we believe that Jesus Christ was born, died for our sins and rose again unto eternal life so we may have a promise of an eternal future we never would have had without His coming in the first place. In our celebrations, do not forget the One we are supposed to celebrate, do not leave HIM out of your celebrations, rather let's include Him in this joyous time. Make Him part of it, do not become so enamored with your personal pleasure that you forget all the benefits that God has bestowed upon you. Those gifts you either give or receive (more than any of us need) were supplied by the blessings of God. Yes I am grateful for His birth, but every year I believe I say the same thing "He is no longer in the manger, He is no longer a baby, He is the living Son of God, seated at the right hand of God ever making intercession for those that are His! Because of this, this should be a great time of celebration! Remember Jesus Christ this Christmas!