

“Biblical Facts and Worldly Myths Surrounding the Birth of Jesus”

By Doug Hamilton

This is the time of year that many in the world are celebrating the holiday called Christmas. We have heard all the stories and traditions that people have surrounding this event, but what does the Bible say

Luke 1:30–38 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.”³¹ “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.”³² “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”³⁵ The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”³⁶ “And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.”³⁷ “For nothing will be impossible with God.”³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

The conception of Jesus was miraculous. **FACT**

- At this time Mary was already engaged to be married to Joseph. The angel Gabriel came to Mary to announce that she would conceive a child, even though she was still a virgin. Mary did not have a degree in molecular biology, but already knew where babies come from. For her to become pregnant without having relations would be impossible, but with God all things are possible! She would conceive Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a miraculous conception.
- We must remember that conceiving a child out of wedlock was very much frowned upon by her culture. According to the above text from Luke’s account, Mary had gone out of town for the three few months of her pregnancy. She was visiting her cousin Elisabeth until she gave birth to John the Baptist. When she came back to her fiancé Joseph, the four month baby-belly had begun to show. Naturally this would have caused great emotional turmoil for Joseph.
- It was common knowledge back then that the average pregnancy was nine months. When Mary and Joseph were married and had a healthy baby boy four to five months later, they figured that Jesus was the product of a fornicating relationship. This is likely what was meant by the snide remarks from the hostile Jews in John 8:41 Jesus said to the Jewish leaders concerning their devilish actions, *“You are doing the deeds of your father.”* They said to Him, *“We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.”*
- Turning our focus back to the pregnancy, the account of Matthew brings us more of those details from that point.

Matthew 1:18–25 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.²⁰ But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”²¹ “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”²² Now all this

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took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” ²⁴ And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife, ²⁵ but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

- Being engaged in the first century was nearly equivalent to being married. In fact one would have to acquire a divorce decree to even break it. When Joseph found out that she was pregnant after returning home, he naturally thought she was messing around with another man. He could have made a major event out of the situation, but was righteous and decided to divorce her privately. That is when an angel of God came in a dream to Joseph and communicated the facts of the conception. Joseph awoke and took the path of marrying her instead. It was a miraculous communication.

The events surrounding the conception of Jesus were nothing short of miraculous. That is a fact of biblical history.

Three Wise Men visited Jesus the night of His birth. **MYTH**

Other than the fact that there were “wise men”, the rest is a myth. Tradition tells us that three wise men named Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar came from the East the night of Jesus’ birth and presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Let’s sort this out.

1. It does not say “three” wise men, but “wise men” or “magi” depending on the version. The tradition of the number “three” came from the three types of gifts that were given. It is very unlikely that these “wise” men would have traveled from such a great distance with treasure and make it in only a group of three. That would make them three “foolish” men because they would have been robbed long before they made it.
2. The names of the wise men were added many centuries later. The Bible knows nothing of who they were. This was added to attempt to prop up the tradition that was started by men.
3. They did not come the night of Jesus’ birth, but when He was nearly two years old. We know this based on the following texts:
 - *Matthew 2:1–2* Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” The wise men (apparently astrologers) saw the star sometime in the past and came to Jerusalem to locate the “King of the Jews”.
 - *Matthew 2:7–8* Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.” Herod determined from the wise men the time the star first appeared to them. He felt threatened when hearing about a possible “new king” that could threaten his grip of power. Note: We still do not know the date of the appearance of the star.
 - *Matthew 2:16* Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in

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Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. The wise men went to see Jesus and did not return back to Herod to report what they discovered. He was tricked by the wise men and sought to wipe out the young “King of the Jews”. He determined the age of Christ to be around two years based on the sighting of the star as earlier reported from verses 7-8.

It is a myth that three wise men came to newborn Jesus the night He was born.

Many Shepherds visited Jesus the night of His birth. **FACT**

Luke 2:13–20 And suddenly there appeared 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 men with whom He is pleased.” ¹⁵ When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

- The night the Jesus was born in Bethlehem angels appeared to the shepherds and captured the glory of the moment. They informed the shepherds where they would find baby Jesus. They immediately left their flocks and headed out to the scene of the birth. They even reported the account of the angelic appearance. Mary treasured this report in her heart.

It is a fact that many shepherds came the night of the birth of Jesus.

Jesus was born on December 25th. **MYTH**

There are those that propose that Jesus was born on December 25th, but is that a myth or fact?

Luke 2:4–8 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵ in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶ While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. ⁸ In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

- There are three observances that must be made to rule out this as the time of Christ’s birth.
 1. The shepherds were out at night. In the rural areas of Israel, the average nightly temperature in December averages in the low-40s. Shepherds did not have the sheep out at night during this time of year because it would be deadly to both. It usually was not until shortly before the Passover in mid-March to the first rain in

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early October that the shepherds would be in the field “at night” (Adam Clark Commentary Volume 5 page 347).

2. Jesus was laid in a manger.

- When the winter season was in force, the same shepherds would bring the sheep and other livestock into the home. It was not just any home, but one that was two or three stories. The families lived in the upper rooms of the house and the bottom floor was for the livestock. The animals not only were protected from the harsh cold, but actually provided heat for the upstairs. All they would have to do is feed and clean up after them.
- It was in the feeding troughs which were fastened to the side of the walls were called mangers. Jesus was laid in one of these mangers because it was empty, for the animals were out at night. In fact the Bible mentions nothing about the barn animals surrounding the newborn Christ, for they simply were not around at the time of His birth.

Jesus being born on December 25th is nothing more than a myth.

The “Star of Bethlehem” was a miraculous event. **FACT**

There is a widely accepted theory called the Triple Conjunction Theory. It teaches that on October 4th, 4 BC, three planets (Jupiter, Saturn and Mars) lined up exactly as one light in the horizon, causing the astrologers/astronomers in the east to take notice and seek answers. This does not line up with the scriptures for three primary reasons.

1. First, the dating of the birth of Christ places Jesus being born a couple of years before the death of Herod the Great. According to Josephus, Herod died in March of 4 BC, six months prior to the Triple Conjunction Theory date of Oct 4th of the same year.
2. Secondly, the Jewish and Christian teachings of the first century shunned anything to do with astrology for it was against the scriptures. Often the heathen of ancient times would use the signs from the stars to participate in pagan worship of the created instead of the Creator (Romans 1:25).
3. Thirdly, there is even more compelling proof in the text of the Bible concerning the pursuit of the star. All astronomical entities in the sky follow the rotation of the earth, from east to west. The sun, the moon, the planets and stars all appear rise on the eastern horizon and set in the west. It says in Mt 2:9 concerning the star “...and lo, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was.” When the wise men left Jerusalem for Bethlehem, they would have to travel south/southwest 6 miles. If the star went on before them and eventually ended up directly above them and the child Jesus, then that would not follow the laws of physics, defying the east to west pattern of all astronomical bodies. This is what made this star special and willing to pursue for there was nothing like it in all the heavens. This star traveled south to north, the exact opposite of what astronomy teaches. It was a miraculous astronomical event.

It is a fact that the “Star of Bethlehem” was a miraculous event.

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In summary:

It is a biblical fact of history that there was a real child named Jesus that was born in humble circumstances during the trouble times of a hopeless nation. We know the place of His birth, the people of His birth and many circumstances of His birth. It is for the following reasons of His birth that we find the greatest **FACTS** of all.

Hebrews 2:14–18 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.¹⁶ For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

If Jesus had not been born...

1. He could not have experienced our relationships.
2. He could not have experienced our struggles.
3. He could not have experienced our death.
4. We could not have experienced His salvation!