

A Biblical Perspective on a Worldly Perspective of the Bible

By Doug Hamilton

Luke 1:27-33 There was “...a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”

- There was a man named Joseph of the lineage of David who was engaged to a young woman named Mary. We must understand that engagement meant something more than what it means today, for it was a binding agreement that could only be broken through a death or a divorce decree. For all intensive purposes, the initial engagement was considered legally binding while awaiting the ceremony and consummation to follow about a year later. Mary was legally the partner of Joseph and was hopefully looking forward to a happy marriage and family.

²⁸ And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹ But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. ³⁰ 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.”

- Angels typically appeared before men for three reasons, 1) To bring a message from God 2) To bring judgment from God or 3) To bring deliverance by God. In this case it was the former, for Gabriel announced that Mary would soon become the mother of the Messiah.

Luke 1:34-37 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.

- Mary might not have held a biology degree from the University of Jerusalem, but in common sense she mentioned the fact that virgins do not have children. Her marriage ceremony and consummation had not yet taken place, hence no children in that womb.
- The angel Gabriel explains that the Holy Spirit of God will overshadow her and cause pregnancy. This most certainly would seem impossible, in fact a miracle if it were true. Gabriel reveals to Mary that her barren and aged cousin Elizabeth was in the sixth month of her pregnancy. For years it was accepted that Elizabeth was barren, but God opened her womb and soon she would have a baby named John the Baptist. If Elizabeth could conceive a child in her ripe old age, then “nothing will be impossible with God!” With that, the Holy Spirit overshadowed her and she conceived Jesus.

Luke 1:39-45 Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

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- Having been revealed that her aged cousin Elizabeth conceived, Mary immediately headed out for the 70+ mile trip to go visit her. She probably traveled in a caravan of others heading in the same direction, a safety practice that was common sense in the dangerous world of the first century.

⁴¹ *When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.* ⁴² *And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"* ⁴³ *"And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?"* ⁴⁴ *"For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy."* ⁴⁵ *"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."*

- It is here that we have it confirmed that Mary was pregnant, carrying the fruit of her womb, Jesus. Apparently Elizabeth is under the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, for she could not have known of this information from any other source.
- Verse 45 appears to confirm that Mary believed the angel when the announcement was made prior, but now it was doubly confirmed with the Spirit-filled words of Elizabeth.
- The passage closes in verse 56 with a three month stay of Mary in the home of Elizabeth. She probably stayed for the birth of John and then headed back

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.

- Having returned back to Nazareth, three months pregnant, it would not have been hidden for long. Joseph discovered she was pregnant and he obviously was not the father. He would have obviously been upset because this was his fiancé and she apparently was not a virgin anymore, at least he thought.
- There was two primary decision that were before Joseph since he was in a legal marital arrangement:
 - execution of Mary by stoning (Dt. 22:21)
 - a divorce decree under the charge of "indecency" (Dt. 24:1)

¹⁹ *And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.*

- He chose the second option because he was a righteous man. He was not going to allow his anger to put her to death, but would divorce her in a quiet and civil manner.

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 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."

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- God was not going to leave Joseph and Mary in a terrible dilemma. He sent an angel in a dream to Joseph. He was informed of all the divine information that Mary had previously been provided a few months prior. This plan had been in the works for centuries, just as Isaiah prophesied in 7:14.
- It is at this part of the historical record that I would like to introduce our lesson title: *A Biblical Perspective on a Worldly Perspective of the Bible*. We are in a season where much of the world has the account of the birth of Christ on their minds, for that is a national tradition. The world has a way of teaching in the name of the Bible that which is not even in the Bible. The aim of this lesson is to use actually use the Bible to expose the misrepresentations of the Bible by the world.

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.*

- Joseph ended up marrying her just as he was advised in the dream. There was probably shame that came with that decision from those in their community that would not have known the truth. It is likely that the average person in the village figured that Joseph and Mary could not wait until the wedding date.

Myth #1 The Perpetual Virgin Mary???

- There are those in the religious world that teach that Mary was a *perpetual virgin* after the birth of Christ, insinuating that she did not have relations with Joseph. This is not true for she was kept a virgin “*until she gave birth*”. We actually know from the Bible that Jesus had at least 6 half-siblings. *Mark 6:3 “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him.* As Bible readers, we should take offense at those that teach something in the name of the Bible that is not in the Bible!

Luke 2:1-7 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ² This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. ⁴ 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.

- There was a census to be taken by the Romans for the purpose of taxation. Everyone was supposed to report to their hometown to register and for Joseph this was in Bethlehem. Many months have passed since Mary’s conception, yet they were still in the legal betrothal phase of the relationship. The ceremony was apparently put off until a later date since the “perceived consummation” had taken place.
- It was while in Bethlehem that Mary gave birth to Jesus. Because there were likely more people than usual in this little town, there was no room for them in the upper part of the house called the “Inn” in which they were staying. They had to reside in the lower section

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of a split-level foyer house/barn. That was why Jesus was laid in the manger, the food trough for the animals, for it was the best piece of furniture at hand. It was probably mounted on a wall of the barn as per the building practices of the day.

- That leads to the next point of discussion: Why would they put Jesus in the barn animals' food trough at risk of danger to a newborn? That does not sound smart at all for the new parents.

Luke 2:8-12 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

- We now know where the flocks of sheep and goats were, in the pasturelands at night. From March to October, shepherds in Israel actually stayed out in the grazing lands with the flocks because to go miles back to the home on a daily basis was simply not feasible. It was typically not until after the fall harvest that the animals were brought back to the barn section of the house for winter.

Myth #2 Jesus was not born on December 25th

- The world teaches us that Jesus was born on December 25th, but it is obvious that He was not, for the flocks were out in the field at night. The average night temperature in the open field in this part of the world for December is below 40 degrees. There simply were not shepherds willing to subject their flocks and themselves to such conditions. When was He born the Bible does not say. The best arguments seem to point toward the fall harvest, but that is simply an educated guess.
- Does that make date set aside for observance of this historical fact on December 25th any less important? Not as long as we educate what the Bible does say. People of the Bible must discuss what the Bible does say and not what it does not say. The angels savored the moment of Jesus birth and so can we if it is in the right perspective. *Luke 2:13-14 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.”*

⁹ *And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.* ¹⁰ *But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;* ¹¹ *for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* ¹² *“This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

- The birth of Jesus was never meant to be concealed from human ears, for how could He be the Savior of the World if He did not come into the world?
- Notice the announcement of the SAVIOR, WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD; He sounds AWESOME! What will be the sign of this great KING from the city of David? He is in the humble state of a rag-covered newborn infant in a feeding trough. Talk about a rough start, but God does His best work in humility.

Myth #3 The shepherds, wise men and farm animals were not all part of the first nativity scene.

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- Remember that we are trying to base this on what the Bible says instead of what the world “says” the Bible says. It was only the shepherds at this time period of the birth. The next stop in the historical account takes us two years down the road in Matthew chapter 2.

Matthew 2:1-6 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.” ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: ⁶ ‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’ ”

- A simple look at a modern nativity scene reveals that the world teaches us that there were three wise men carrying gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Bible knows nothing of this for it simply says “magi”. They were a caste of wise men specializing in astronomy, astrology, and natural science. They saw something in the sky that stood out to them and connected it to the coming Messiah.

Myth #4 There likely were not three “wise men”.

- They were carrying valuable treasure from the east to present a gift to the . To travel in a group of three with that treasure would have qualified them to be the “foolish men”, for they would have been robbed. A typical long distance caravan such as that could have easily been several dozen armed men accompanying the magi. It most certainly would not have been three guys and a bag of treasure for they likely would not have made it.
- The gifts that they gave Joseph and the family would have likely been useful for the approaching surprise trip to Egypt as they fled for their lives. We see gifts of treasure, but they saw the substance of survival.

Matthew 2:7-12 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸And 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.” ⁹After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

- Herod was distressed over the Messiah issue and sought to investigate. Verse 7 reveals that Herod dated the star appearance based on the “exact time” as given by the magi. Later when Herod ordered a murderous execution of all male children from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi (Matthew 2:16). There appears to have been 2 ½ years elapsed from Matthew 1:23 to 2:1.

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- With that in mind they arrived at a house which Jesus was residing. He was likely walking and talking by this time. There was no mention of shepherds and flocks in this section of scripture.

Myth #5 The Bethlehem Star was an explainable astronomical event.

- There have been many in the scientific world that has sought to prove that the “star of Bethlehem” was an explainable event like a comet or planetary alignment. There were even some respectable astronomers that proposed what the magi saw was a Super Nova star that burned out after a short time and never to be seen again. This does not line up with the text.
- According to what the Bible actually says, IT WAS A MIRACLE that defied the immutable laws of physics. The Bible said in Mt 2:2 “*For we saw His star in the east and have come...*” They followed the star from the east while traveling west toward Jerusalem. With the movement of the earth the stars rise in the east and set in the west. If it were a predictable astronomical event, then it could still be explained.
- It is when we read Mt 2:9 that we run into the impossibility, “*...and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was.*” Bethlehem was south of Jerusalem. For them to walk south in pursuit of a star that would soon be directly above their head is an impossibility because stars do not travel through the sky from south to north.
- The only explanation that would fit is that of a miraculous nature. It was almost as if God had dangled a bright heavenly object in sky to be their personal guide. For someone to attempt to explain a miracle does not do the scripture justice.

There are just five myths that have been put forth as biblical and yet are not true. A simple scan of the Bible confirms it. What happens when the same people put forth other non-biblical messages concerning the rest of the Bible? Is there a danger that others who don't read the Bible might be led further astray? 2 Corinthians 4:4 *in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

In conclusion:

- On this day the world is willing to talk about the day that Jesus the Christ was born in the small town of Bethlehem. It is the job of the Biblical Christian to use every occasion to focus on what the Bible truly teaches.
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...*”
- It is okay to glory in the fact that Jesus came forth from the WOMB, but it is when He came forth from the TOMB that God wants our focus to eventually reside! Yes He was born in a town called Bethlehem, but have you been BORN AGAIN to the fact that “Up from the grave he arose; with a mighty triumph o'er his foes; he arose a victor from the dark domain, and he lives forever, with his saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!”