



The Birth of Christ

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Published by International Missionary Baptist Ministries
Publications

271 Mayfield Drive

Smyrna, TN 37167

www.imbmpodcasts.com

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Introduction

I suppose that Christmas is observed by the majority of the non-Muslim world. What I want to do is to give you the facts about the season that we call Christmas. We know for a fact that the birth of Christ was not observed until much later in human history.

I want to look at the origin of Christmas and how it came down to us today and why. I do not do this to spoil your celebration of the season nor to try to convince you of anything against your will. I simply want to give you the facts from a Biblical and historical reference.

Chapter One
Biblical Facts
“Behind the Scenes”

Luke 1:26-38

26And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. 29And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 31And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. 37For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Introduction

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The Biblical Facts

Let us examine the details of Luke's account. The first question that might come to mind is what is the significance of the "sixth month?"

If you consider the first 25 verses of Luke 1, you will see that the majority of them pertain to the birth of John the Baptist. Elizabeth, John's mother, was six months pregnant with John when the events with Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, began.

The messenger was an angel by the name of Gabriel. We know that he was the head of the angels of the intellectual realm.

Joseph and Mary were both from Nazareth in Galilee. In John 1:46, we find that the Jews held Nazareth in derision. "...can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

This was the original home of Joseph and Mary and to which they returned when they came back from Egypt. This was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy as well. (Matthew 2:23) Matthew 2:23, *And he came and dwelt in a city called*

Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

I want to look at the word “virgin” as it is used here in Luke. The Greek word is parthenos, which literally means “a maiden; by implication an unmarried daughter.” I can understand why those who wish to destroy the doctrine of the Virgin Birth say that Mary was only a young maiden and not a virgin.

Unless you take into the consideration the culture and practice of the Jewish marriage, and you ignore it, you can make that verse say that she was not a virgin. But that would be misusing that verse. It makes it say something that it isn't intended to say.

Jewish culture and custom expected for a young previously unmarried young woman to be a virgin. If on her wedding night she was found not to be a virgin, her husband could then get rid of her by having her stoned to death. We find in Matthew that Joseph loved Mary so much that when he found out that she was pregnant with Jesus, he wanted to hide her instead of having her stoned to death.

Instead, we find that he married her before the betrothal period was over, which was the groom's prerogative. We find in verse 28 that Mary was chosen by God Himself to be the mother of Jesus. God would not have chosen a woman who was not up to His standards, which would have been a virgin. Nothing else would have fit the parameters of Old Testament prophecy.

In Luke 1:34, Mary herself confirms that she is a virgin. Luke
1

*28 And the angel came in unto her, and said,
Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is
with thee: blessed art thou among women.
(KJV)*

*34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall
this be, seeing I know not a man?*

The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 7:14 that a virgin would conceive and bring forth a Son and His name would be Immanuel.

*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a
sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear
a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

Mary's question was one of biology. So, the biological question receives a biological explanation, based on the movement of the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, upon and within her, as follows and certified in John 6:63 and 2 Corinthians 3:6, which reads, "The spirit giveth life."

She was a virgin before she conceived, after she conceived, and after she brought forth Jesus, till she and Joseph "came together," Matthew 1:25.

*Matthew 1:25 And knew her not till she had
brought forth her firstborn son: and he called
his name JESUS.*

This fulfilled the sign-promise of Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22, 23.

*Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall
give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive,
and bear a son, and shall call his name
Immanuel.*

Matthew 1:22, 23 *22Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*

In normalcy of conception, virginity is broken in conception, and no young woman is a virgin after conception, or after giving birth to a child, but Mary was. No woman, regardless of the age, is a virgin after the first act of sexual intercourse.

Whether or not she really understood, or if we really understand what really happened, Gabriel gave Mary the answer, verse 35. The word that is used to explain this is the Greek word *episkiazo*, “overshadow.” This is a very interesting word! It means “to cast a shade upon, i.e. (by analogy) to envelop in a haze of brilliancy; figuratively, to invest with preternatural influence: --overshadow.”

Luke 1:35 *And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* (KJV)

Now, let's take a look at the other account of the birth of Jesus. Only Luke and Matthew give us the account.

Matthew 1:1-25 *1The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his*

brethren; 3And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; 4And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; 5And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; 6And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; 7And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; 8And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; 9And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; 10And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; 11And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: 12And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; 13And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; 15And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; 16And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

18Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. 20But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 24Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Verses 1-17 gives us Matthew's account of the genealogy of Jesus. Verse 18 begins the explanation of the genealogy which verse 16 leads one to expect. That Jesus was the legitimate legal son of Joseph and heir to David's throne is here justified.

At this point I want to consider the word "betroth." Eason's Bible Dictionary has this to say about the meaning: "to promise "by one's truth." "Men and women were betrothed when they were engaged to be married. This usually took

place a year or more before marriage. From the time of betrothal, the woman was regarded as the lawful wife of the man to whom she was betrothed (Deuteronomy 28:30; Judges 14:2, 8; Matthew 1:18-21).”

Deuteronomy 28:30 *Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.*

Judges 14:2, 8 *2And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.*

8And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.

In Judges 14:8, the word “time” is used. The Hebrew word is “yownl.” It means, “a space of time defined by an associated term.”

Deuteronomy 28:30 *Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.*

In this passage in Deuteronomy, God gives the results of not hearkening to what God says to Israel about His commandments and statutes. He says that the curses of which verse 30 is a part of, would come upon them and overtake

them. The point is that their betrothals would not be completed and everything that they do would be for nothing.

Now, let's look at Judges 14:2, 8.

Judges 14:2 *And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife....*8 *And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.*
(KJV)

The space of time in this reference was the period of time for the Jewish betrothal. When Joseph became aware that Mary was pregnant, he was faced with a hard problem to solve. He could not overlook an apparent (seeming) fault in Mary, yet loving her, in spite of her seeming moral infidelity, he did not want to expose her, but wanted to deal tenderly in becoming legally released from his engagement to her. He was not at all resentful of her visible child-expectancy to any point of wanting to humiliate her by bringing public moral charges against her. He might publicly repudiate her or quietly cancel the engagement. In affection he had settled on the latter course. He made up his mind to release her privately from her engagement and his former pledge to marry her, by giving her a written certificate of divorce, in the presence of two witnesses, but no cause need be stated. His deliberate decision was a kind one. What he purposed to do was in keeping with the Mosaic Law found in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 22:23, 24 *23 If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a*

man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24 Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. (KJV)

Deuteronomy 24:1, 2 *1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. (KJV)*

While Joseph was pondering on the action to take with Mary, Gabriel appeared to him in a dream to confirm to him that he should go ahead and make Mary his wife because she had done nothing that had morally betrayed him or that would ruin his reputation. It appears that there was no hesitation on Joseph's part to take her as his wife. With reverent joy he took her in marriage tenderly to care for her as his wife, awaiting the birth of the child Jesus. His heart now needed have no more fear or shame for God had spoken, revealed himself through His angel to Joseph.

Even though she had returned from a several months visit with Elizabeth, visibly pregnant, a matter that disturbed him, God's message of coming fulfilled prophecy through the child to be born, drove away his fear, and gave him faith in a coming unparalleled honor.

The last verse of Matthew 1 reveals to us that Joseph and Mary had no sexual intercourse until the birth of Jesus and Mary's time of purification. Leviticus 12:1-5 states that a woman who gives birth to a baby boy was to have a period of purification of forty days (verse 2), during which she was to stay at home in private. For the birth of a baby girl, her time of purification was to be 80 days. There was also no sexual intercourse between the husband and wife during this time as well. So, we can well establish that Joseph and Mary did not have any sexual intercourse until several months after he took her as his wife.

Leviticus 12:1-5 1And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. 3And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. 4And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. 5But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.

Conclusion to Chapter One

This has been an overview of the facts that the Bible reveals to us in relation to the birth of Christ. Consider all of these to have “been behind the scenes” events that were not made

public. In other words, no one outside of the immediate individuals involved were even aware of the situation.

In Chapter Two, we will look at the Biblical Facts concerning the revealing of Jesus to the world. Later chapters will examine how the birth of Jesus and what we know as Christmas came to be intertwined.

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