

The Birth of Jesus Bible Study

Reflection and Thoughts



What was said about Jesus in this study?

This study gave us a glimpse into the purpose of Jesus on earth. It is a mere glimpse as it requires a far bigger study covering the whole of the Bible to fully comprehend the ultimate purpose as it has so many facets. The focus here was to gain as much information from the events immediately before, during and after Jesus' birth that could help us to better understand His purpose for coming to earth, and what it means for you and me. Let us summarize it here.

To **Zachariah** it was said that a son will be born to him WHO will prepare the people for the Lord. To **Mary** it was said that He will be great, that He will be called the Son of the Highest, and that the Lord God would give Him the throne of His father David. And He would reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. To **Joseph** it was said that he must call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins. To the **Shepherds** it was said a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, was born. **Simeon** said about Him that he would be a light that will bring revelation to the Gentiles, and to the people of Israel, the glory. **Anna** went about Jerusalem telling everyone that the redemption in Jerusalem has arrived.

Simeon wisely also warned Jesus's parents that His life would not only be filled with light and glory but that there would also be a very sharp edge to his life as He would be a test to so many people, and that this sharp edge would also cut into their souls. Not nice to hear but that was the reality of Jesus's existence amongst His own family and people.



Where does the wise men fit in?

There is much debate amongst historians about the exact time the wise men visited Bethlehem, and when the star that guided them, appeared. Astronomers again do not have consensus about what the star was, how long it existed and where in the sky it appeared. The Bible is also not very clear about it as well and it leaves one with a bit of guesswork. What we do know was that the wise men referred to Jesus as a Child and not a baby and so did Herod. And when the wise men did visit Jesus, he was in a home and not in the stable anymore. Furthermore, there was a 2-year age restriction given by Herod for killing all the first-born sons of the Jews. So, it seems to be unlikely that the wise men visited Jesus during or immediately after his birth. That was the privilege of a few other people whom we have met in this study. The wise men nevertheless played a big role in confirming that Jesus was in fact born to the Jews, and not so much why He was born and for what purpose. They were instrumental in the events that led the family to flee to Egypt and to become fugitives, as it was prophesied. We have become so accustomed to the star of Bethlehem

being so much part of the Christmas night story that even considering that it might not actually be so, is a big disappointment.



The important and significant role of Angels.

During our study we encountered several angelic visitations, and one by a multitude of angels. Apart from the host of angels encountered by the shepherds, probably the most impactful was Gabriel's visit to Zachariah as Gabriel had a bit of arm wrestling to do. In no uncertain words Gabriel made it clear that he is the one that stands in the presence of the Most High and that he receives his orders and mission directly from Him! How more powerful can that be! Mary and the shepherd's encounter with the angels were less dramatic but without exception they got the fright of their lives and had to be comforted as well. One can almost sense that the angels knew what was coming. Joseph's angelic encounter was by way of a dream and therefore not face to face which spared him the stressful encounter. Not part of our study, but noteworthy is that Joseph had two more dreams in which angels appeared to him, before they fled to Egypt and during their stay in Egypt. It would be a good guess that it was the same angel who visited him on every occasion.

What we have learned from this study is that angels are indeed messengers of God. During each visit they had to deliver a very clear message. In no instance was there any confusion about the content. We learned that God in His wisdom decides which angel to send, where to send them, to whom and with what message. The multitude of angels which appeared to the shepherds had an altogether different purpose as they brought the heavenly ensemble down to earth for a mere moment which brought glory to the newborn King. No ensemble anywhere on earth can and would ever be able to replicate that! We will have to wait for heaven to experience that again! Were the shepherds not spoiled!



What we have learned about the Holy Spirit

John was filled with the Holy Spirit already in Elizabeth's womb. That must have been the reason why he already recognized the voice of Mary to be the mother of the One for whom he had to prepare the way. Mary was promised that the Holy Spirit will come over her and that it will result in her becoming pregnant. Joseph was comforted by the news that Mary's pregnancy will be the result of a supernatural event brought about by the Holy Spirit. And so it happened that the Holy Spirit did a physical miracle in Mary's womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit the moment she greeted Mary. It brought about not only a change in her tone of voice but also the revelation to her that Mary was to be the mother of her Lord. The Holy Spirit was already upon Simeon's life when we learned about him. The Holy Spirit again brought revelation in revealing to him that he would not see death before he had seen Jesus with his own eyes. What a comforting revelation! So it happened that when he saw Jesus, he knew immediately who He was. So did Anna who instantly gave thanks to the Lord and started to tell others about Him. None of this would have happened without the person of the Holy Spirit. Different experiences and stories to tell but it was the same Person who

worked in all of them. These were supernatural events, some of which lasted only a few seconds while others lasted a lifetime. We did not learn during our study that Jesus was at any point filled with the Holy Spirit, as it happened with those other people whom we have met in the study. That was meant for another time, and here John was meant to play a key role.



The birth of Jesus was a dusty journey!

Our study started at the temple in Jerusalem. It subsequently led to a 100-mile journey by Mary from Nazareth in the North to Elizabeth in the city of Judah south of Jerusalem. Three months later Mary returned to Nazareth only to learn that their family had to leave for Bethlehem for the census. Another 100-mile journey. And all the time while Mary was in advanced stages of pregnancy. From there, after Jesus's birth they had to leave for Jerusalem for the dedication. It is not clear if they returned to Nazareth before they had to flee to Egypt but if so, it only added to their already stressful itinerary. Considering that every journey was on foot if one could not afford the luxury of camels, horses, or a donkey, it was dusty, dangerous, cold and weary on the body and mind, and even more so for Mary who had to undertake these journeys either pregnant or with a newborn baby in her lap. It was likely also very costly as apart from travelling expenses they had to find accommodation along the way, or a friendly forgiving host or family member. Advance planning did not exist, one travelled in the hope of finding suitable accommodation at the end of the day. The birth of Jesus was meant to be in a stable, but it also proved the difficulty of hoping to find a suitable place to stay on a journey.

The difficulties of the journeys of Jesus' family before, during and after His birth often pale against all the glamour and lights of the traditional Christmas story. Although filled with joy it was likely a far more stressful event with hard and difficult journeys before and afterwards. The birth of Jesus and his subsequent life on earth was meant to be filled with difficulties so that He would become one of us, so that He could have compassion with us and ultimately pay the price so that we can endure our existence on earth with hope and joy until we will one day, and forever be in His presence! He was indeed born to be the Saviour of the whole world and not only the Jews!

Conclusion



In our study we discovered how ordinary God-fearing people were used by God to fulfill His plans and purposes on earth. They were chosen by Him for a particular time in History to play a key role in setting events in motion for the birth of Jesus. We also discovered how angels were sent from heaven to earth as His messengers to inform those people what is about to happen. And then the Holy Spirit was instrumental in powerfully bringing about those changes which were foretold. It is reminiscent of a carefully and well-orchestrated plan that was set out in the throne room in heaven and then came into fulfillment here on earth!



An invitation!

We trust that you enjoyed this study. Before we close, we have an invitation for you. In this study we learned the purpose of why Jesus had to be born and how different people played a role for that to happen. We could almost sit back and watch as the dramatic story unfolded. I want to make you part of this story. Jesus is not on earth at present but while we await His return, we would like you to become part of this story so that your name can also be written into this storybook. It is called the "Book of Life". To be able to become part of the story one needs to believe that everything that we have talked about here is true, that Jesus was indeed born, and that He was born to pay the price for my and your sins. He is indeed the Saviour of me, you and the world. Following is a short prayer that you can pray:

Lord Jesus I believe that you were born,

I believe that you were born to save me from my sins,

I admit that I am a sinner and that I need your salvation.

I invite you into my life and ask you to forgive me for my sins.

I commit my life to you and want to dedicate my life to your plan and purposes for me.

I want to become part of your story, forever!

Amen

If you have prayed this prayer, you can sign this page and keep it as a reminder of this moment that you discovered your Savior! Welcome to your part in the greatest story of all time.

Name: _____

Date: _____



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