

## Christmas Myths

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of December nearly the entire world, in various ways, celebrates the birth of a Man named Jesus who walked this earth for a mere 33 ½ years 2,000 years ago. He was born in poverty, and raised hated and scorned. His career was that of a Rabbi. It lasted only 3 ½ years. At the insistence of Jewish religious leaders He was executed by the Romans. During this short career, He performed thousands of healing miracles, including restoring life to the dead. He was absolutely sinless and never violated a single Biblical or Roman Law. The crime for which He was executed was that He claimed to be God. Many times during His teachings and debates, He made this claim, and thereby incurred the wrath of religious leaders who early on sought to have Him killed. The final time, when He so identified Himself, was when He was tried by the chief priests, and was forced under oath to claim or deny that He was God.

Given that there was a law against falsely claiming to be God, and having rejected all evidence that proved He was God, they had what they considered the legal basis for His execution. For such a law to exist may seem strange. However, their religious beliefs, which included what we call the Old Testament, include the assurance that one day such a God/Man, the Messiah would come to rescue them from their oppressions and become their king. How He was to be recognized was also carefully described so that when He came He could be surely so identified. Jesus clearly fulfilled every requirement, yet for reasons beyond this study, they refused to believe Him.

Was He God incarnate? Christianity is a unique faith that believes that He was and is. Many other religions accept the fact that He was a great teacher who made a profound impact through His moral teachings, but they deny that He was God incarnate who died and was resurrected. C.S. Lewis made a very astute observation regarding this issue. First, it is an undisputed fact that He lived, and was a profoundly great teacher who spoke moral truths never before heard, or expressed so clearly. Having unequivocally claimed to be God, as the Son of God, we must accept one of only three possibilities. They are:

A: He is not God, but in His insanity He believed he was, or

B: He knew that He wasn't, God but chose to lie about it, or

C: He was/is God.

Only one of those choices can be true. For those who have bothered to study just His literary legacy, the choice, while incredibly and physiologically disconcerting, should be very clear.

The purpose of this commentary is not to build a case for the truth of Jesus' deity, but merely to focus on some of the false beliefs that surround His birth.

With this pathetically abridged introduction as to who Jesus was as a Man, what follows I pray will be enlightening and will dispel some of the myths that have grown over the centuries regarding the circumstances related to His birth. To tell all that I would like to tell, all that is in my heart to cry out would fill a book. However, the purpose of this study is not to go over the many blessed details that are so wonderfully described in the Bible. It is merely to address a few of the myths, and to fill in some of the likely facts not mentioned in the Scripture account.

For some it's the natural "common sense" absurdity of the very idea that the Son of God would so enter His creation. To others it's the dread of the resulting accountability that must follow if the fact of His deity is accepted. This has led to many of the man-created false gods that are more user-friendly and non-condemning. As Lewis pointed out, the sublime beauty and unprecedented wisdom of His recorded teachings, could never have been conceived by either a mad-man or a liar. There remains but one other choice. Jesus' claim to have been God must stand as the truth. There are many religions begun by dynamic leaders who claimed many things. None however, not one, ever claimed to have been the Son of God, or had anything close to a several thousand year-old Book filled with dozens of prophecies precisely fulfilled by Jesus. Furthermore such would-be leaders are dead. Only Jesus rose from the dead, is alive and dwell in heaven, never having relinquished His God/Man oneness. The Bible says that He will soon fulfill one of the yet unfulfilled prophecies, namely that He will return to the earth, and govern it from the throne formerly occupied by King David. (Luke 1:32) "*He 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:”*

Perhaps the best way to convey these thoughts is to simply list them issue by issue as they come to me.

1. The nature and manner of Jesus’ birth: The world still scoffs at the idea and claims it to be a myth, that is that Jesus was both Man and God. They view the Scripture as mere myth fabricated by the Apostles. It should go without saying of course, that for God to have entered the realm of His creation, it had to have been a miraculous event, supernaturally orchestrated. Furthermore, it shouldn’t have been a surprise to Bible scholars of that day. It was an event alluded to in the Holy Bible as far back as Genesis 3:5 and predicted many times in various ways by several of the recorded prophets. This was not an event where the Man Jesus became God. It was God who chose to add unto Himself the Son of His own creation, the Man Christ Jesus, and at the same time add to Himself a genuine man. He had to be born of a woman. Only this way could He have become the flesh, blood and bone being in every physical way, a Man, and thus being able to die. To have somehow “short cut” that process would not have produced a real human man.

The Old Testament speaks many times of God manifesting in the form of a physical man. However, in these instances, He appeared as what is called a theophany, which was not a mortal man, even though He had the physical appearance of man. This was God the Son, in all His power and glory reaching into His creation at various times for various reasons in His guidance of mankind during his earlier days. One of many examples of this occurred at the tent of Abraham (Genesis, chapter 18) where three “men” walked by on their way to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

As we read of this event it is clear that one of the “men” was the Son of God and the other two were angels. It was the same theophany that appeared to Joshua before the battle of Jericho and also to Jacob, whom he fought all night (Genesis 32). To enter His creation as a Theophany served many of His purposes during the earlier ages. However, in order to accomplish His once-and-for-all task of redemption of sinful man, God’s plan required that He come as a flesh and blood man, so that He was able to suffer and die, as well as to experience nearly every other human limitation. It was however the, spiritual suffering as He hung on the cross, when He was so covered with the sins of the world, that the Father affectually disowned and removed Him from the Triune Godhead. This is evidenced by His cry “My God why hast thou forsaken me?” When the price had been paid, the Father restored Him back to His rightful place within the Godhead.

The one, human characteristic that He would not have was to sin. He had to be and was completely sinless all of His life in order to become that perfect Lamb of God whose sacrifice would allow for the redemption of mankind and thereby provide the means by which God could eventually populate His eternal kingdom.

A helplessly sinful nature exists in man from the moment of conception. It is transferred to him from the sexual union between a sinful man and a woman. Therefore God Himself provided the seed thereby by-passing the original sin, and the sin nature that characterizes all mankind. Thus Jesus, the Man was truly the Son of Man in the physical sense. He was also the Son of God spiritually in that the Son aspect of the Father Son and Holy Spirit. This made Him the God/Man.

How all of this works, and why, is difficult to apprehend, however, it must be accepted as fact when one accepts the Bible as the Word of God, which it most certainly proves itself to be. While the Bible is inerrant and can be so demonstrated in many different ways, just the fulfilled prophecies that are about Jesus alone are sufficient to prove that fact for those who come with open minds free of fear and presumptions. For instance, prophecies that predicted that He

would be both God and Man are found in Isaiah 7:14, and 9:6-7), in Jeremiah 23:5-6), Micah 5:2, Zachariah 12:10, 13:7, Psalms 80:17, 110:7 and 1Chronicles 17:10-14)

2. His birth date: We have no record anywhere in Scripture regarding the actual date of Jesus' birth. From my studies, it appears that currently, only a few biblical scholars accept December 25<sup>th</sup> as the actual date. It is believed by many that the 25<sup>th</sup> of December was made official, probably around 326AD, within the reign of Roman Emperor Constantine who ended the persecution of Christians. Some believe that this date was also claimed as the date of Jesus' birth by several second and third century writers. How they determined this is not mentioned. Just because it was written that early proves nothing. There were "church fathers" of that era who wrote Bible commentaries that we now know to be inaccurate. The purity and simplicity of the Christian faith had survived well up to the time of Constantine, because it, through centuries of persecution, necessarily remained set apart from the worldly ways.

After it had been "liberated" however, and its adherents began mingling with the pagan culture, it didn't take long for it to become wrongly influenced and increasingly compromised. This human weakness has already been described when the Jews conquered Canaan and contrary to God's demand, comingled with pagans and thereby lost the integrity of their religion. Eventually it can be said as Jesus predicted (Revelation 2:12) "Christianity" would embrace many elements of paganism and false teaching, the result of which would be a perverted marriage of spiritual beliefs. That marriage, eventually become the Roman state religion. The time of the winter solstice had been a pagan period of worship since the rule of the world's first dictator, Nimrod, around 2182BC, only about 150 years after the flood. Constantine ended the 250 years of Christian persecution, many believe, for political reasons. It was believed that he thought that the peculiar, peaceful, forgiving and obedient ways of these people would have a mollifying effect on

the pagan citizenry so as to bring greater peace and control over the entire population.

The pagans, with their many gods, had no problem adding Jesus to their list of gods, and the Christians were so grateful to be freed of persecution, that accepting some amount of what seemed to be harmless pagan influence, such as the celebrating and dating of some of their holidays, was a small price to pay. Was December 25<sup>th</sup> the commonly accepted date of Jesus, and “coincidentally” a pagan holiday? It may have been because a few of the earlier writers claimed that this as the date of Jesus’ birth.

Thus we find both Christmas, that is the celebration of Jesus’ birth and Easter, the celebration of His resurrection as occurring on major pagan holidays. It is widely known by biblical scholars that the date when Jesus’ resurrection occurred was not necessarily the date that is universally celebrated as Easter. As evidence of the pagan connection, the name Easter, is derived from Estar, the pagan goddess of fertility. That is why rabbits and eggs are, even today, symbolic of this celebratory day. What possible relationship do rabbits and eggs have to do with the resurrection of Jesus?

The Jewish day for the celebration of Passover is the true date of Jesus’ crucifixion, with the third day after being the actual date of His resurrection. This would be the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the Jewish religious calendar month of Nisan. Even the actual year of Jesus’ birth is not known with certainty. Our present calendar was intended to begin on the year He was born. It is widely accepted however, that a mistake was made on that official determination. It is believed that He was born four years earlier, or 4 BC.

To the redeemed Christian, these things are of little importance. What is important is that our Redeemer lives! We know that God Himself, did enter His creation choosing to do so by being born of a woman, so that He could take on the

mortal character of man. Thus He grew to manhood and allowed His physical body to be killed by those whom He came to save. We know that He came to vicariously suffer and die so that all who would believe on Him would have eternal life. We know that three days later He rose from physical death, ministered on earth for 40 days, and then ascended to heaven. That's the bottom line of the matter!

Nevertheless I have been persuaded to dig into the matter of Jesus' possible birth date. Based on what I have observed, most Bible scholars do not believe that December 25<sup>th</sup> was in fact Jesus' birthday. Because this is not a "democratic issue" where the majority belief is considered the truth, does not prove that this date was not the true date. I don't believe as yet, that any specific date can be firmly determined. However, after studying the available information, there is considerable biblical evidence that seems to make some other season of the year other than winter, more likely. The contrary evidence that I find reasonable, as I have searched for an answer may be summarized as follows:

- Much of the evidence used by those who seek the answer centers around John the Baptist's date of birth, and how it relates to when Jesus may have been born. For a detailed study from this perspective, see John D Reid's analyses (*Forerunner, Dec 1994*). What follows is taken from that and other relevant studies. Dr. Missler has written a very similar study of this issue.

Scripture tells us that John's mother was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:24-36). Supposedly, if we can determine when John was conceived, we can make a good approximate at least, in what season Jesus was born. John's father Zacharias was a priest serving in the Temple during the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). He was one of the 24 priests, each of whom were assigned one week of such service on a rotating basis. The Talmud describes the details of the rotation. This rotation continued for a second time each year causing each to serve two

weeks. For the three extra weeks of the Hebrew calendar, all 24 priests served together. Therefore each served a total of five weeks a year.

All of this began when David instituted this ritual (1Chronicles 24). The first course began on the first of Nisan which occurs in the spring. The course of Abijah, or Abia, was the eighth one (verse 10). This process continued up to the Temple destruction of 70AD. While he was assigned the eighth course, it was most likely that he served these during the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> week, because two of the all-priests services, that is Passover and Shavuot, the Feasts of Unleavened Bread, had already occurred prior to the eighth course. Apparently, depending on the year, these sometimes overlapped.

After working the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> week, there was another all-priests service celebrating the Feasts of Weeks called Shavuot, which we call Pentecost. It varied in time within the 27<sup>th</sup> of Iyar to the 12<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, or from about June 3 through the 17<sup>th</sup>. (Georgian calendar) Thus each priest served for 2 +3 or 5 weeks in the Temple.

The determining of the likely date that John was conceived is subject to many logical, but not necessarily accurate assumptions. Most of the Bible scholars who seek to determine Jesus' birth date, through the mentioned 6 months connection with John's time of birth, generally conclude that Jesus was born in the fall. They tend to believe that John was born on the or near the time of Passover, that is the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, which is in the spring, and therefore Jesus would have been born in the fall. This conclusion is based on the assumption that Elizabeth conceived soon after he came home from the first course. Some believe this on the assumption that it was after Zacharias' had served during the second round of courses. In this case, it would have been after his second 8<sup>th</sup> course, or possibly the 9<sup>th</sup>, depending on whether the third all-priests celebration occurred before



or after his course. This reasoning obviously resulted in an entirely different season of the year. Several Bible scholars seem to be convinced that Jesus was born on the first day of the Feasts of Tabernacles which fell in September, with the 12<sup>th</sup> some how being their favored day. Because all of these analyses are based on a compounding of assumption, it is difficult to feel comfortable with any of the specific dates, or even the season. However, the fall, that is September or October, seems to be the most widely favored time during which Jesus might have been born, because of some other very logical reasons.

- A most commonly held reason why many believe that Jesus was not born on December 25<sup>th</sup>, or anytime in the winter, is because during this season it was often too cold for the shepherds to be *“abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.”* If they were yet in the fields, then this would have been an unusually warm winter. What the climate is now is hardly a reliable indicator of what it was 2000 years ago. However, in having personally monitored it from the 10<sup>th</sup> of December to the end of the year 2013, I found that it snowed heavily for two days, and the night temperature were continuously in the 30’s and low 40’s.

Another reason why it is not likely, is that the very practical Roman administration would not have called for a census in the winter due to the very evident and unpredictable problem that winter travel would have caused in that region. However, in the fall, when the essential labors of the harvest were over, and they had the fruits of their year-long effort in hand, would seem to have been a good time to have most easily collect the tax.

- There is another very impressive clue that is found in Luke 2:22-24, and 36-38 *“22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that*

*openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” “36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity: 37 and she was a widow of about four score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”*

In verse 22 we read that when Mary's days of purification were completed she, in accordance with the Law of Moses, went to Jerusalem (that is the temple) to present the baby to the Lord. A woman was considered impure for 40 days after giving birth. Therefore, being a faithful adherent to Hebrew laws, her arrival at the temple was some days after this 40 days following Jesus' birth. Next we find, in the Temple compound, Anna, this 107± year old woman, who “*served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*” Here is where it gets interesting. Notice it was in the Temple where she was this “night and day”. I believe that we can safely conclude that “in the Temple” meant in the woman's area just outside of the Holy Temple where only the priests were allowed.

In searching the Scriptures, the Talmud, Jophesus and other relevant sources, it appears that the whole Temple compound was emptied of all visitors and the gates locked when the Temple priests went to their quarters for the night. The Talmud and other sources tell us that there were 24 guards stationed all night on the perimeter walls and a captain of the guards who made sure they stayed awake. It appears that there were certain sacred days when the priests continued their service into the night, but as I understand it, the gates were closed and none but the priests, could remain in the compound at night.

Regarding this, there is a great deal of interesting information provided in the apparently well researched writings of a converted Jew named Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889). He described the night watch as three shifts of 24 watchmen each guarding the perimeter of the compound. Then he tells of the guard captain and how he checked on the guards to make sure that they kept awake. One found asleep would either be beaten, or his clothes set on fire. This has sometimes been given as an explanation of what Revelation 16:15 says: “...*Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*” There may also be some connection with those watchman of the Temple compound with Luke 12:37 where it says: “*Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching:...*” Verse 38 makes clear that it is the night watchmen, to which He is referring. Remember, the Temple services continued for another 40 plus years after Jesus spoke these words. Those who heard Him were quite familiar with the Temple system, and so would have better understood these analogies.

If in fact the Temple grounds were open all night for a particular holy day, and the story of Anna seems to make it fact, than the Day of Atonement would most certainly have been that 24 hour day. This was the one and only day of the year that the chief priest could enter the Holy of Holies where he sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the mercy seat and on the floor where the Lord’s feet would rest when He was there. It was the day that all seriously believing Jews would pray, and seek to remember and confess (probably to God and themselves) all of the sins that they had committed since the last Day of Atonement. It was believed that through the intercession of the priest’s prayers, the blood on the Mercy Seat, the scape goat, and other rituals, that their confessed sins would be covered, and no longer held against them. Of course this needed to be attended to every year. As we know our Lord Jesus’ suffering death and resurrection

as the sacrificial Lamb of God, paid once and for all time, for the sins, of those who would believe, and make Him, their Lord as well as their Savior and Master.

For those who may wonder how the Old Testament worshippers were saved before Jesus came as the One and Only Savior, this ritual explains how. It was through their faith, which resulted in their sincere confession, prayers and belief that this God-ordained “ritual” caused their sins of the past to be covered. It was not a “once saved always saved” as it is now that Christ has come. In order for their sins to be covered, they had to do this each year. If they did, then at death their soul/spirit went to Sheol, to “Abraham’s bosom”, there waiting for Jesus to come, and remove their covered sins so that they could be washed away by His blood, thereby allowing their ascension to heaven.

As we look back, we can see that this would explain how Anna was able to pray night and day at the Temple. It was that only, that is on the annual Day of Atonement were the Temple grounds open to the public for a full 24 hours. This then would mean that Jesus was born 40+ days before that sacred day which always occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the Hebrew calendar month, Tishri. By our calendar, this usually occurred between late September or mid-October. Subtracting, say 50 days would put His birth in the latter part of the month Av, which appears to be in late August.

Looking again at all of this, I tend at this time, to favor this last analysis of when Jesus was born. Certainly it satisfies the weather and census issues, and is a simple uncomplicated Scriptural based explanation. Therefore I tend to consider the other John the Baptist centered attempts to be multiple “rabbit trails,” because each seems to end up indecisively and is the result of multiple compounded assumptions. With this, after prayerfully searching, collecting, compiling and analyses, all of which I believe the Lord led me to, I finally feel released from this

quest so that I can resume the agenda regarding other studies that He has assigned me. While I no longer feel compelled to deal with this issue, it doesn't mean that it has been settled. This last analysis seems logical and scripturally based. However, it too is based on an assumption that may not be verifiable. Therefore, I tentatively accept it as the more likely of the alternatives until a more sure time of His birth is revealed. Thank you Dear Lord! All of what follows next in this study was written before I was prompted to re-examine more fully what I had written regarding His time of birth.

3. The Nativity Scene: The so-called nativity scene which shows the baby Jesus in a manger with the "3 Kings" bringing gifts is completely unbiblical. There were no such kings ever mention in the Bible. They were "wise men" from the east. (Matthew 1:2) Also the only people mentioned as having visited Him in a manger were shepherds, while in the fields tending their sheep as written, "*...the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone about them;...*" and the angel told them that "*...a Savior, which is Christ the Lord*" was born that day in Bethlehem, and that they could find Him there in a manger (Luke 2:9-11, 15, 16) The "kings" idea was concocted centuries later and drew its pseudo-credence from sloppy exegesis, based the fact that three gifts were given to the Baby Jesus.
4. The Three Kings: Again there is a widespread belief that three kings came to worship Jesus in the manager. There is no Scriptural basis for such a belief. As best as I can see, someone started the rumor, and it became "immortalized" in the hymn "The First Noel," where it speaks twice of the three wise men, thus seemingly given some credence to the idea that only three people came from the east. It's much more likely that many more than three worshippers came. These visitors were wise men from the east, otherwise known as the magi, from which we get the word "magician and "magistrate." They were of a priestly class, descendents of many generations the Chaldean astrologers, magicians and dream interpreters.

We find in Exodus that such a sect is also mentioned as advisors to the Egyptian Pharaoh. Scripture tells us that similar sects were advisors to the kings of Babylonian and Persian courts. In Persia, the magi were called “Magavan” meaning “great ones”. They were said to be the keepers of the ancient secret knowledge by which they could interpret the signs of the heavens and also do miraculous things.

At the time here under consideration, it was these wise men who came out of the east which was then called Parthia. This seems to have been the nation that eventually rose out of the ashes of the Persian Empire that Alexander had conquered. Parthia was a formidable enemy of Rome at the time. They had pushed Rome out of the Israeli region, and it had been only a few years BC when the Romans had retaken Jerusalem and the rest of so-called Palestine. Therefore, Israel in the first century was a border state and battle ground between Parthia and the Roman Empire, as it had been between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires for centuries after 323 BC when Alexander died.

The general belief among those biblical Scholars who recognize this is that there probably were a dozen or more Magi in a caravan protected by perhaps a hundred or more soldiers. I believe this also and most ??? Because there was a tenuous peace between Parthia and Rome, this caravan from the east would have attracted considerable attention as it traveled to Jerusalem. However, given its nature, size and purpose, it would also have appeared as a typical peaceful trading mission, and so wouldn't have alarmed the Romans. We read that the Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to give to Jesus. Again, this is why the idea sprung up later, that there were only three visitors.

There is no Scriptural reason regarding how it came to be believed that they were kings. Perhaps it was because of the costly nature of the gifts. It has been observed that there is much symbolism in these gifts. Gold symbolized royalty. Frankincense expressed deity, that being the very costly incense used in the

Temple worship. Myrrh symbolized death in that it was a major embalming herb. That this King would have to die for His people was probably known to them from ancient prophesies, the origin of which we will mention next.

5. The Star: The “star” and its relationship to the Magi’s journey into Israel has triggered much fantasy and generated several questions that beg satisfactory answers rather than the cloudy myths that surround them. What caused the Magi to make this trip at that particular time? How did they know that Messiah the King had come as a child? What was the “star” they “followed,” and how did they know it was in any way connected to the Christ Child, the future and eternal King of the Jews? While there is nothing in Scripture that answers these questions specifically, there is much that is compelling implied, and gives us answers with which we can feel quite satisfied. When we go back to the Book of Daniel, we find what I believe is a basis for being able to understand what happened.

Daniel was an extremely precocious young teenager taken into captivity from Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 606BC. He soon won the favor of the King Nebuchadnezzar, when through God’s grace, he correctly interpreted a complicated dream that none of the king’s Magi had been able to do. As a result, Daniel was made the number one man directly under the king, and was also appointed chief of the Magi. He held this position throughout the remaining 64 years of Babylonian independence.

After the Persian/Mede Empire conquered Babylon, Daniel was appointed to a similar position under both Cyrus and Darius who were the first rulers of that Empire. Daniel had an unprecedented 70+ year long career as the number two man in two of the seven great ancient world empires. During all these years he was also the head of the priestly orders of Magi for both kingdoms. When we study the career of this remarkable man, we also discover how magnificently God used him to reveal the future, especially about the coming Messiah. His many

recorded prophecies are so accurate and detailed that skeptics insist that they could only have been written after the fact.

God anticipated this attack on His Word and had the entire Old Testament translated into Greek about three centuries before Jesus' birth and about 200 years after Daniel's time. What Daniel wrote is therefore in two languages separated by centuries, distances and languages, all so effectively separated that such chicanery would have been impossible. Daniel was given, and recorded the very day, over 500 years later when Jesus would declare Himself the Messiah. He also predicted Jesus' death for the sins of others, and made detailed descriptions of what would happen during the end times including the second coming of the Messiah. The Book of Revelation, which is the chronicle of things soon to come, is wholly consistent with, and quotes many of His prophecies.

What is the need to have discussed Daniel's career, even in such a cursory manner? In the realm of truly godly men mentioned in Scripture, Daniel stands among the highest. Scripture tells us that he was "greatly beloved" by the Lord and makes it very clear that even though he spent his entire life in a pagan culture, he never compromised any of his faith in the One True God, even when he had been put to a certain death overnight in a den of starving lions. Such faith had to have had a big impact on some of those around him, in particular the Magi over whom he presided for those many years. While Scripture tells us of the many prophecies that God revealed to him, it does not necessarily reveal to us all that he was given.

It is my contention that over these many years of stewardship over the Magi, he brought many to his faith and that some vestiges of that faith, or at least some of the revelations he shared with them, survived to the time when Jesus was born. I believe that Daniel shared many details about Jesus' coming that are not found in Scripture including the star-like light that would one day announce His birth and



then, when they reached Bethlehem, it would lead these successors to where the Messiah the incarnate God-King could be found and worshiped.

Now what about that “star” as it’s called in the Bible? The Greek word is “aster” and can be used “literally or figuratively” as a star according to Strong’s Concordance. The root meaning of the word is simply “radiance” or “brilliance.” There have been many conjectures as to what this “star” was, and how it moved so strangely so as to guide these magi to the very spot where Jesus could be found. Some have tried to reason that there was a particular alignment of actual stars or even planets, which could have collectively produced a special directional brightness. However, to think that this “star” was any natural light from the galaxies of stars is ludicrous when one realizes how it appeared and disappeared, moved east to west, and then north to south, finally leading them at camel pace to the very house in Bethlehem where the Baby Jesus was.

No star, as far away as stars are in the sky could provide such a discernable uniqueness and intelligence as this “star” exhibited. It clearly was a divinely guided, “low flying”, supernatural source of light that God provided for this specific purpose. A real star close enough to even approach such discernable accuracy as a specific house location, would have moved the earth out of its orbit and burned it to a crisp. The only answer to the question as I believe it to be, is that it was another instance of God’s Shekinah Glory. It was not just a light, it was the Light of His own presence, as He Himself guided these “wise men” to His Son whom He had given to the world for its salvation!

This particular event was the culmination of all of God’s “outreaches” to pagan nations to recognize Him, just as he had been doing when He sent Jonah into Nineveh, and Moses into Egypt. We find that the light simply appeared to the Magi where they lived at that time, most likely in Susa, the Old Persian capital, where Daniel ended his years. It probably appeared to them at the moment of

Jesus' birth, but by the time they set out to find Him and traveled the 1000 miles to Jerusalem, a year or more had passed.

The "star" did not guide them to Israel, as usually assumed. It only appeared to them "in the east" that is where they were, and simply served to alert them to the fact of His birth, an event that they had expected, and had been waiting for, for centuries, because of what Daniel had taught them. They already knew who He was, and where to go, that is to Israel, because I believe that was part of Daniels' revelation to the earlier Magi. Notice they went directly to Jerusalem the capital, because they didn't know where He was in Israel. There they asked, "*Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the east, and have come to worship Him?*" **WORSHIP HIM!!** That is interesting. We should note they saw His Star in the east.

Again, it is not that they were necessarily looking toward the east. Being in Susa, they were already about as far east as the Old Testament civilizations are mentioned. What is meant is that they saw the star overhead where they lived, that is, in the Far East. It says nothing about following the star. They knew that He was a deity and that was why they came to worship Him. They knew that He was an infant destined to become far more than a Jewish King. Obviously, they held this long standing belief that He was far more than a human baby who was destined to be a king. It's beyond belief that they would have traveled that great distance to worship anyone they thought to be less than that great deity, which they felt compelled to worship. They probably knew very little about Israel, as a country. What they did know was that it was a faraway place where Deity was and where they must go to worship Him.

Obviously there was far more here than there seemed to be. That they came to **WORSHIP HIM** speaks volumes about what was known and believed, and what they knew was indeed the truth about who He was. How strange and tragic it is that God's people whom He had blessed with His own written Word which told of

the arrival of His Son, didn't know anything about Him until they were prompted by foreigners to "look it up". Even then, they chose at first to not believe their prophets. However, to be sure He didn't grow up and compromise their power and prestige. To be certain of this, they killed all babies 2 years and younger so as to be certain that He would never reign over them!

Scripture indicates that Herod the Rome-appointed king knew nothing about the "child king". After his advisors consulted the Bible they found references to such a birth prophesied by the prophet Micah (Micah 5:2) *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

Notice carefully, God's message to Mica. It speaks of this "ruler" of Israel as One "whose going forth have been from old, from everlasting" This is typical of one of the ways, quaint as it seems to us, that the Hebrews had when they spoke of the eternal God! I believe that this is the basis for the Magi's unique knowledge about Him and their effort to find Jesus so as to worship Him as they did. They were believers in His coming! The fact that even the Temple priests didn't know the prophecy, speaks much about the state of the Jewish religion of that day. It leads one to believe that the Old Testament, at that time, was more of an ornament than a seriously studied sacred book. Herod, not even a Jew, but only a puppet of Rome knew nothing at all about God's Word. He only cared about holding his political position.

We may summarize and compile all of this as follows:

- A. The shepherds are the only ones that Scripture speaks of as having visited Jesus in the manger, other than the angels that directed them there and told them who He was. (Luke 2)
- B. Nowhere does Scripture speak of kings having visited the Christ child.

- C. The only other people that the Bible speaks of as having visited the Baby Jesus were the “wise men” from the east (Matthew 2:1-12), but this was a year or more later. The Greek word for wise men is “astrologers: magoy or magi.
- D. Somehow these magi knew that when they saw the “star,” this unique light in the sky over their City of Susa, it meant that the long predicted Messiah, the Man/God had finally been born. They knew, based on Daniel’s teaching to their ancient predecessors, that He was somewhere in Israel, from where He was destined to eventually rule the world. It seems evident that this could only have been known through the knowledge that God provided Daniel, and which he shared with his contemporary magi.
- E. In response to that “signal light”, they followed no light to Jerusalem. They traveled to Israel to find and worship this Son of God. This light was only a signal. It didn’t continue as a guide, because they already knew to go to Israel. When they got there, it was necessary for them to inquire of the authorities as to where in Israel this “king” could be found. Had the “star” been a continuous guide, they wouldn’t have the need to ask!
- F. All they were told by the priests whom Herod sent to search the Scripture was that their “records” claimed that He would be born in Bethlehem.
- G. When they left Jerusalem, the “star”, that is that the brilliant light again shown, probably being only a few hundred feet above them, directing them southward toward Bethlehem and directly to the particular house where the now year old Jesus could be found.
- H. I’m convinced, that this aurora of brilliant light was the Shekinah glory, that is God manifesting Himself as He had several times in the past, and in this case directing them to His beloved Son. That by then Jesus was age one year or older is evidenced by the fact that Herod ordered all children in the Bethlehem area two years old or younger

“to be killed.” For the magi to have made their preparation and traversed the 1000 mile trip by camel, would have taken them many months. However God had warned Mary and Joseph about Herod’s plan and ordered them flee to Egypt with the Baby Jesus soon after the Magi left. Because they were very poor, it was the gifts given them by the Magi which probably provided the means by which the couple could go and stay in Egypt until Herod died, and the danger disappeared.

6. There are several Christmas Carols that proclaim that the angels sang when Jesus was born. We find this in the First Noel, Silent Night, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, It Came Upon a Midnight Clear, Joy to the World, O’Come Ye all Ye Faithful, What Child is this, While Shepherds Watched Their Sheep, With wondering Awe, and several others. The fact is that nowhere in this portion of Scripture regarding Jesus birth, is it written that any angels sang! Many scholars even claim that no where in Scripture does it say that angels sing. However, some cite, Job 38:7 to be the one exception.

There in Job we read: *“when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”* The sons of God in the context of that time were the angels, just as they are so identified in Genesis 6:12. I suspect, but not without reservation that they probably did sing at this or other events.

7. False Beliefs Surrounding Mary’s Virginity

Everything we know about the conception, birth and life of Jesus is found in the Holy Bible and no where else. The prediction of His birth as well as the manner in which it would occur are found scattered throughout the Old Testament. For the purpose of this one issue we will quote Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6, 7. Genesis 3:15 says *“and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed;...”*

God is speaking to Satan and is referring to a woman who will bear a son through her seed, indicating that the Son would have no human father. It subtly tells us that the woman who would give birth would be a virgin. It also indicates that this Son would be of such greatness, and power that He would hurt Satan severely while Satan would be able to inflict only a minor wound. The very next mention of “the woman” fitting the description is found in Isaiah 7:14 where it confirms the fact that she is a virgin, and that she will give birth to a Son wholly capable of effectually dealing with Satan. This we find in the name He is given “Immanuel” which means “God with us.” In Isaiah 9:6 we learn much more about Him.

*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* A child is born speaks of Jesus as the physical Son of Man. A Son is given speaks of God giving the Son of the Triune Godhead. Then we have here predicted that Jesus would be both Son of God as well as Son of Man. Verse 7 clearly indicates His deity in that His reign will be “forevermore”

Only God can be spoken of in this “forever more” term! When we read that He will govern from David’s throne, we find the direct link to Jesus when we read what Mary was told in Luke 1:31-33 *“<sup>31</sup> And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He 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: <sup>33</sup> and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”*

The linkage between Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6, 7 regarding the virgin birth and Jesus is also established by Matthew in chapter 1 verse 24 where Isaiah 7:14 is quoted, as clearly referring to Jesus. However, those who choose to deny the deity of Jesus often begin their attack by claiming that Isaiah 7:14 doesn’t claim that a virgin would be with child, because the word translated “virgin” is the Hebrew word

“Almah” which can mean a damsel, maid or virgin and therefore they say that the prophecy need not be referring to a virgin. The word “almah: is used 6 times in Hebrew Scripture with the context always making it clear that it means virgin. Of these, three times it’s translated virgin in Genesis 24:43, Song of Songs 1:3, 6:8. Twice it is translated a maiden, as in Exodus 25:8 and Proverbs 30:18, 19 and once as damsel in Psalms 68:25. In that culture, “damsel” and “maiden” were synonymous with “virgin.”

Why would its seventh use deviate from that consistency? Furthermore, of what prophetic value and uniqueness would it have been if Isaiah had meant a young non-virgin. In that culture, a young woman was either a virgin or was married. While a non-married, non-virgin is common in our end times pagan culture, this would have been non-existent back then. No man would ever marry such a woman, and if discovered to be such, she would have been stoned to death. Only pagan cultures had harlots and had no problem with free sex. Nevertheless, many used this to negate the prophecy and thus cast doubt as to there having been any virgin birth predicted. The false idea was presumably concocted by New Testament critics in order to build credence to the “big lie of Jesus’ deity”

Then there is the other issue, that is that Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life. A fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church is that Mary was just as sinless as Jesus, and was taken to heaven as was Jesus. Thus she is there to be prayed too, as the immaculate Mother of Jesus, having great intercessory authority. There is absolutely NO basis for this belief anywhere in ALL of Scripture!! In Matthew 1:25 God tells us *“and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.”* This is referring to Joseph her husband who “knew her not” which means he had no sexual intercourse with her TIL that is UNTIL after her first Son was born! If she had remained a virgin there would be no “until”, nor would the term “firstborn” be used if there wasn’t to be a second born! The fact is that we know that she and Joseph had at least 5 sons and two daughters as we learn from Matthew 13:55, 56. There, four of Jesus’

half brothers are named and “sisters” mentioned. They are referred to as being Jesus “brother” and specifically indentifying Mary as their mother. Those who insist on her continued virginity simply claim that Joseph was much older and had these children by a previous marriage. This conjecture finds no credence whatsoever in Scripture. The text in both of the above references is clear concise and totally contrary to the continued virginity claim.

Regarding the belief that she remained immaculate, that is sinless all her life, we might observe that in Luke 1:47 we read of her saying “*and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.*” It seems apparent that she considered herself a sinner, or she wouldn’t have spoken of God as her Savior. While she was no doubt an incredibly virtuous woman, or God would not have chosen her, she nevertheless was born, as were all of us, infected with the original sin, and a sin propensity. Nothing in Scripture, when we read it in context, offers any reason to believe that Mary had avoided that curse. If she had, then hers also would have to have been a virgin birth with God as her Father, just as was Jesus. Nothing in Scripture states or implies such a thing.

That completes the list of myths about which I have been prompted to report. While most are defendably myths, some, such as Jesus’ date of birth, can be considered questionable, because of the elusiveness of any definitive information. Also the belief regarding the deity of Mary is most certainly myth, even though the believers of Roman Catholics, from the Pope on down believe it to be true. Serious study of God’s Word makes it abundantly clear that Mary did not remain a virgin after Jesus’ birth and that she was a self proclaimed sinner as has been ever person who ever lived, except for Jesus. Any claim otherwise is man contrived, and not based on God’s Holy Word.