

The Birth of Christ - Fact and Fallacy

Introduction.

1. This lesson will make a brief study of “The Birth of Christ.”
2. The scriptures will be examined to see what they teach about “The Birth of Christ.”
3. This lesson will attempt to separate fact from fallacy in regard to Christ’s birth.

Fact 1

1. “Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea.” (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1).

MIC 5:2 "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

MAT 2:1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

- a. Herod is Herod the great who reigned over Galilee 37 BC to 4 BC.
- b. Bethlehem is also called “Bethlehem Ephrathah.” (Mic. 5:2)
- c. It is also called “the city of David.” (Lk. 2:4; Jn. 7:42).
- d. It was a small city located about 5 miles south of Jerusalem.

2. Fallacy:

- a. Jesus was born in Jerusalem.
- b. That is what the Book of Mormon teaches. (Alma 7:10).

“And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.”

Fact 2

1. Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus. (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:24, 25; Lk. 1:26-35).
 - a. Both Matthew and Luke used the word “parthenos” [pahr **theh** nahs] meaning “virgin, chaste person.”
 - b. Mary knew she was a “virgin” and was shocked to hear she would have a son. (Lk. 1:34,35).

2. Fallacy:

- a. Mary remained a virgin for her entire life. That is what Catholicism teaches.
- b. The Bible teaches she did not remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus. (Matt. 1:25; Lk. 2:7).

MAT 1:25 and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

LUK 2:7 And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

- c. The Bible teaches Mary had at least six other children. (Matt. 13:55, 56; Mk. 6:3; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal 1:19).

MAT 13:55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"

MAT 13:56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"

MAR 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.

ACT 1:14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

1CO 9:5 Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?

GAL 1:19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Fact 3

1. On the night Jesus was born, an angel of the Lord informed some shepherds in the region of Bethlehem that Christ had been born. The shepherds went with haste and found "the Babe lying in manger." (Lk. 2:16).

LUK 2:16 And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. "Baby" is from "brephos" [**breh** fahs] meaning "baby, newborn."

2. Fallacy:

- a. The wise men who visited the infant Jesus came to the manger at the same time the shepherds did.
- b. Modern-day "manger scenes" often portray Joseph, Mary, shepherds, and wise men all together around baby Jesus in a manger.
- c. In truth, when the wise men/magi arrived where Jesus was, they went "into the house." (Matt. 2:11).

MAT 2:11 And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

- d. The truth is that some time had elapsed from the visit of the shepherds at the manger and the visit of the wise men who "came into the house."

- 1) Jesus was no longer a newborn.

2) Jesus was a young child. (Matt. 2:8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21). The Greek word is “paidion” [pi dee ahn] meaning “a child, a young child.” This is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 18:1-4.

3) Joseph was warned to take his family and flee to Egypt. (Matt. 2:13-15).

MAT 2:13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

MAT 2:14 And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt;

MAT 2:15 and was there until the death of Herod [the Great], that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "Out of Egypt did I call My Son." Hos. 11:1.

4) Herod commanded that the male children two years and younger at Bethlehem be killed. (Matt. 2:16-18).

MAT 2:16 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs [vicinity], from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi.

MAT 2:17 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying,

MAT 2:18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she refused to be comforted, Because they were no more."

5) This strongly suggests that perhaps as much as two years had elapsed since the birth of Jesus. See “star” Matt. 2:7.

6) This passage really teaches male children who had not reached their 3rd birthday were killed. A two year old child would be regarded as two years old until his third birthday.

7) These merciless soldiers, under the command of the wicked Herod, most likely killed every male that looked close to the age of two and under.

Fact 4

1. The wise men came from the East to see Jesus bringing Him gifts.

2. They gave them Him three types of gifts. (Matt. 2:11).

MAT 2:11 And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense [perfume] and myrrh [spices].

3. Fallacy:

a. The Bible says there were three wise men who visited Jesus after He was born.

b. In truth, the Bible does not tell us how many wise men there were.

c. Some believe there were three wise men because three gifts were given, but this is not proof.

d. A person might give his father or mother or wife or children more than one gift.

e. Jacob sent ten sons to carry six different type of presents to Joseph in Egypt. (Gen. 43:11).

GEN 43:11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the

land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

- f. The number of givers is not always the same as the number of gifts given.
- g. This is certainly not a salvation matter, but neither is it a Bible fact that there were three wise men.
- h. The number is not known and is unimportant.

Fact 5

1. Jesus was born “in the days of Herod the king,” and when Augustus was emperor of the Roman Empire. (Matt. 2:1; Lk. 2:1).

MAT 2:1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea **in the days of Herod the king**, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

LUK 2:1 Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from **Caesar Augustus**, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. “Caesar Augustus” lived 63 B.C. to A.D. 14, and was Emperor of Rome 27 B.C. to A.D. 14.

- a. His birth is now dated between 4 and 6 B.C.. It was before the death of Herod in 4 B.C., and as already noted Jesus and His family were in Egypt when Herod died.
 - b. It was discovered that a 4 year mistake had been made in separating B.C. and A.D..
 - 1) B.C. stand for “before Christ.”
 - 2) A.D. stands for the Latin phrase “anno domini” meaning “in the year of our Lord.”
 - 3) All history is divided in regard to God’s beloved Son.
 - c. Furthermore, it is often overlooked that Jesus may have been as much as 2 years old when his parents took him to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. (Matt. 2:19, 20).
2. It is also a fact that Jesus was born “when the fullness of the time had come.” (Gal. 4:4).

GAL 4:4 But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

- a. The “fulness of time” is not explained, but likely means when the time was just right. See Dan. 2:44.
 - b. It was time for God’s prophecies to be fulfilled, and it was a time when the world had peace, Greek as a common language, and roads that made transportation easier.
3. Fallacy:
 - a. The Bible gives the specific month and day of Jesus’s birth.
 - b. The Bibles does not, however, give the month or day of His birth.
 - c. We do not know the day of Jesus’ birthday, and have no way of ever knowing that day.
 - d. It is pretty certain Jesus was not born in December.

- e. December is winter time in Israel, and it is not likely that shepherds would be in the field watching over their flock.

LUK 2:8 And in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night.

Fact 6

1. The first-century Christians worshiped on the first day of every week.
 - a. They partook of the Lord's supper on that day. (Acts 20:7).
 - b. They also gave as they had been prospered on that day. (1 Cor. 16:1,2).
 - c. They also worshiped on other days. (Acts 2:46; 5:42).
2. There is no record of the early Christians celebrating the birth of Jesus.
 - a. This does not mean they did not sing about it or give thanks for it.
 - b. It does not mean they did not study and teach what the Old and New Testaments teach about Christ's birth.
 - c. Without the birth of Christ all mankind would be lost.
3. Fallacy:
 - a. The Bible teaches that believers in Jesus should or must celebrate Christmas or the birth of Christ.
 - b. The word "Christmas" is not in the Bible.
 - c. Christians are not taught by word or example to designate a special day to celebrate the birth of Jesus.
 - d. No one has the right to bind this man-made celebration on others. (Mk. 7:7; Matt. 15:8, 9).

MAR 7:7 'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'

MAT 15:8 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.

MAT 15:9 'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' "

- e. There is no authority to make this a special holy day.
- f. We are to have authority for what we bind. (Matt. 28:20; Col. 3:17).

MAT 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. "

COL 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Fact 7

1. It is scriptural to remember the birth of Christ and thank God for it as long as we do not teach it is His actual

birthday and seek to bind this on others.

- a. No one argues it is wrong to teach what the Bible teaches about the birth of Christ.
- b. Most do not have a problem teaching or singing about Christ's birth except at Christmas time.

2. Fallacy:

- a. Christians cannot participate in Christmas in any way.
- b. Those who hold this position are most often sincere, but very inconsistent.
- c. Many opposing it do some or many of the following things during the Christmas season.

Exchange gifts	Take days off	Sing songs about Christ's birth and other holiday songs
Attend Christmas parties	Send and receive Christmas cards	Have Christmas trees
Accept Christmas bonuses	Accept gifts from others	Attend Christmas functions at school, etc.

2. Romans 14 gives the Christian liberty in observing days. (Rom. 14:5,6).

ROM 14:5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.

ROM 14:6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

- a. Paul makes it plain that Christians have liberty in observing days.
 - b. These might be days of prayer or fasting or both. These might be days devoted to helping others.
 - c. Christians must not bind those days on others or seek to make them holy days.
 - d. They must not criticize or condemn others for not observing them.
 - e. Those choosing not to observe them are not to criticize those who observe them.
3. There is nothing found in scripture to suggest or mandate that the Christian should not remember the birth of Christ or to give thanks for it through songs and prayers.
- a. The New Testament does not limit the Christian in regard to the content of his praise of Christ.
 - b. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are very generic and do not set forth the exact content of our singing. Thousands of hymns have been written throughout the centuries by uninspired writers.
 - c. Christians can sing praise about the birth, the life, the miracles, the goodness, the Deity, the death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, exaltation of Christ, second coming, etc..
4. Christians must a big mistake to **become anti-religious** when the lost world is worshiping Him or paying special attention to Him.

Note:

1. Americans celebrate Thanksgiving each year.
2. Most Christians have no problem with this day although the Bible nowhere sets forth that we should set aside a special day to give thanks.
3. The Bible teaches Christians to be thankful, but not on a special day. (Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:18).
4. Celebration of this day is a matter of liberty, but not a matter of commandment.
5. We must not observe it [Thanksgiving or Christmas] in such a way that causes others to fall from the faith. (1 Cor. 8:13; Rom. 14:13).

1CO 8:13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.

ROM 14:13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

- a. These scriptures do not teach one must avoid something because others do not like it.
 - b. They do not teach one is to avoid **what is commanded** because others do not like it.
 - c. They teach one must not practice non-commanded things that cause others to stumble, that is, fall away from the faith and lose their souls.
6. It is essential that we do not violate our conscience.

ROM 14:23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

7. It is imperative that we do not force it on others.

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