



CHRISTMAS INCARNATION: A STUDY OF JESUS' BIRTH

Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, Wisconsin Rapids, WI, USA



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1. Mary, the Virgin Mother (Luke 1:26-45)

The points of this announcement.

- Mary will become pregnant.
- Mary will give birth to a son.
- The child will be given the name "Jesus" (see Matthew 1:21).
- The child will be a great Person.
- His is "Son of the Most High."

He will inherit "the throne of His father David.

He will reign over the house of Jacob forever."

He is the long anticipated King of the Jews, the Lord's Messiah, the "Son of David,"

He will reign over the Kingdom of God.

Finally, "His kingdom will never end."

Discussion Questions:

Q1. (Luke 1:31-34) What did the angel's announcement say about who Mary's Child was and who He is and who He will be?

Q2. (Luke 1:34) In what ways does Mary's "How?" question (1:34) to the angel's declaration differ from Zechariah's "How?" question (1:18)?

Why was Mary blessed and Zechariah disciplined?

Q3. (Luke 1:35) What does the virgin conception teach us about Jesus' nature?

How central is the doctrine of the virgin conception of Jesus Christ to His Gospel message?

Q4. (Luke 1:38) What is the core of Mary's positive response to the angel?

What can I learn from her response for my own life?

In what sense was Mary's response like an "informed consent"?

When I respond to God's announced blessings, to what do I consent?

Q5. (Luke 1:42-43) In what sense are the titles "Blessed Virgin Mary" and "Mother of God" appropriate for Mary?

Why are we sometimes hesitant to exalt Mary as "blessed among women"?



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2. Joseph, the Stand-In Father (Matthew 1:18-25)



Q1. What would Jesus have learned as the son of a carpenter?
To what experiences would this have exposed Him?

Mary's pregnancy had placed her at considerable risk in first century Bethlehem-Ephratah:

1. **Husband.** Her betrothed husband would reject her.
2. **Penalty.** She could be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 22:13-30).
3. **Shunning.** If not stoned, she and her child would be shunned, left to the whims of Romans.
4. **Remarriage.** The stain of adultery would surround her and taint the reputation of any future husband.
5. **Nowhere to go.**

Q2. (Matthew 1:19) What were unwed Mary's options being pregnant, carrying a baby not her husband's?
What kind of character did Joseph exhibit by deciding to divorce Mary quietly and leniently?

Q3. (Matthew 1:21) What is the significance of the name Jesus?
Why was God's message through the angel given to both Mary (Luke 1:31) and Joseph independently?



Prophecy in the Old Testament, the time before Christ's birth:

1. **Direct or Rectilinear prophecy**, e.g. In Psalm 16:10, "You will not abandon Me to the grave, nor will You let your Holy One see decay." On Pentecost, Peter revealed David was not talking about himself. But was a prophet who saw what was ahead and "spoke of the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:29-31)
2. **Typological / Foreshadowing, prophecy**, e.g. The bronze serpent of Moses fore-shadowed Christ on the cross. Jonah and the great fish was a foreshadowing or a type of the resurrection of Christ.
3. **Combined Prophecy**, a more contemporary event prophesied that is also connected to a distant event about Christ. An intermediate fulfillment re-emphasized the coming Messiah. God's words to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 about David's future son's rule (Solomon) and David's future Son and His rule (Jesus) 1 Chronicles 22:6-10 and 1 Chronicles 28:5-7.

Q4. (Matthew 1:23) How did prophecy through Isaiah about a virgin conception and name of "Immanuel" find their fulfillment in Jesus?

Q5. (Matthew 1:24-25) What does Joseph publicly taking Mary as his wife say about how the Gospel worked in Him?



Joseph "named" the Child "Jesus". What does this display about God's prophecies?

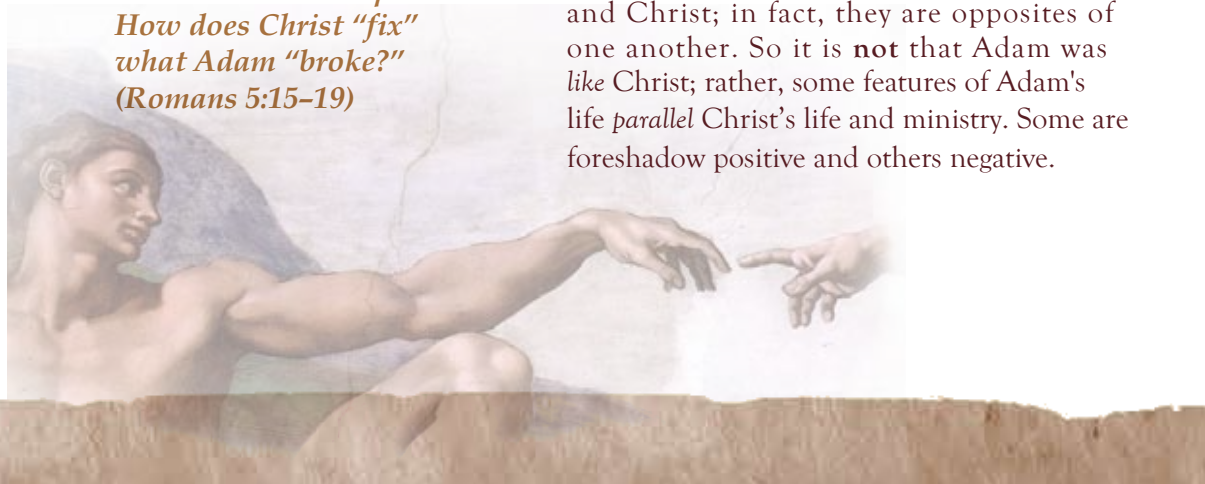
Adam

Adam was the first person created in the Garden of Eden. His arrogant defiance of God's commandment introduced sin and death to all creation. All humanity and all creation was ruined by sin and death.

ADAM	CHRIST
Adam was the first person in this creation.	In His resurrection, Jesus is the first Person in this New Creation (1 Corinthians 15:23).
Adam was called a son of God (Luke 3:38).	Christ is the Son of God (John 1:14).
Adam was God's administrator or ruler (Genesis 1:28).	Christ is God's Anointed to be King (Matthew 1:16).
Adam was the head of the race (Genesis 3:20).	Christ Jesus is the Head of the New Creation (Romans 5:12-24).
His actions brought consequences to his children causing them to inherit sin and death (Genesis 3:16-19).	His actions brought consequences to God's children causing them to inherit righteousness and life (Romans 5:12-19, 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 45-49).
Adam joined Eve and rebelled against God (Genesis 3:6).	Christ redeemed His bride (the Church) by obeying God (Revelation 19:7-9).
Adam's shame required the death of an animal to cover it (Genesis 3:21).	Christ was shamed, stripped and slain to cover our shame (Matthew 27:27-35).
Instead of closeness with God, we experience isolation and loneliness. Instead of love and care for each other, we experience violence and hatred.	Through Christ's work of salvation, we are given new life, a child-relationship with God and His merciful kindness and care for others.

Questions and God's Answer

Because of Adam's sin, the good world God made became corrupt. How does Christ "fix" what Adam "broke?" (Romans 5:15-19)



Adam is a good example of *type, or foreshadowing*.

Typology prophecy focuses on specific events or character traits.

There are big differences between Adam and Christ; in fact, they are opposites of one another. So it is **not** that Adam was *like* Christ; rather, some features of Adam's life *parallel* Christ's life and ministry. Some are foreshadow positive and others negative.

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3. The Shepherds' Sign of the Manger (Luke 2:1-20)

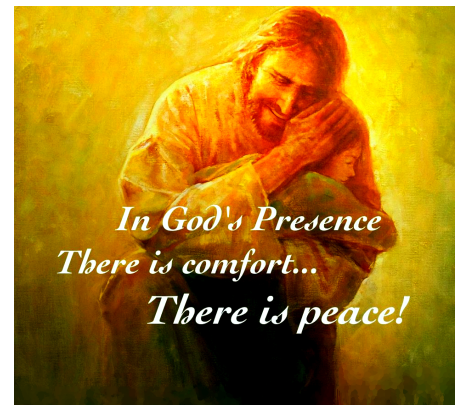
Q1. (Luke 2:1-2) Why does Luke name the rulers in 2:1-2?
What points is God making?

Q2. Why do you think the journey to Bethlehem was difficult for Mary?
Do our feelings give a helpful indication that we are in God's will or not?
Argue for or against this proposition: "Being a consistent Christian causes more hardships on others than just going with the flow."

Q3. (Luke 2:7-8) What may God be emphasizing by sending message of Jesus' birth to shepherds, of all people? Jesus born in a stable with a manger for His bed? This is God's plan and is intentional. What points is God making to us today?

Q4. (Luke 2:11) What are the three titles of Jesus announced by angels?
What does each mean?
What does this tell us about Jesus' true identity?

Q5. (Luke 2:17-20) Wow-type-of-feelings:
Great joy, praise, CURIOSITY, AMAZEMENT,
urgent sending-out-news, thoughtful keeping-in-news,
Which of these responses to the Good News are present in my life? In what manner do such feelings display show up today? Shall I encourage or subdue responses like these?



What am I supposed to get out of this re-telling of God's history of Jesus' birth? I can think of several things:

1. **God brings Good News to the poor and humble.** The shepherds, sometimes despised by their countrymen, were the first recipients of the Good News of Jesus' birth. Since God is no respecter of persons, how can His family of faith be any different?
2. **The glory of the Lord is powerful and huge.** Just because we don't see it visibly does not mean that God is not active. the Lord often works in quiet ways. Only occasionally does He confirm His presence in miraculous ways or miraculous timing.
3. Jesus is the **Heir of David.**
4. Jesus is the expected **Savior, Messiah-Master-Lord-God** among us.
5. **The Good News is for all people,** Jew and Gentile, young, old, all nationalities: ALL.
6. **However, NOT all people receive God's peace.** God's peace rests only on those whom by His grace believe His Gospel.
7. **Appropriate responses of faith to God's Good News** include "great joy" (2:10), praise (2:13-14, 20), curiosity to confirm its truth (2:15-16), amazement (2:18), telling others (2:17), and thoughtful meditation (2:19). Nowhere do we see unbelief.

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4. Wise Men and the Christmas Star of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-12)

Q1. From where did the wise men come? The text says "the east", the direction from which the sun rises. There are three main possibilities:

1. Parthia or Persia.
2. Babylon
3. Arabia or the Syrian desert

Q2. What kind of "star" did they see?

1. A supernova or "new star"
2. A comet
3. A planetary conjunction
4. We don't know for sure.



Q3. (Matthew 2:1-2; Numbers 24:17) What is the significance of the Star of Bethlehem that the Magi saw?

Why did Magi seek out the Christ-child when they saw the star?

What did the Magi name this event they were watching in the night-sky?

Q2. (Matthew 2:11a) What do we learn from seeing the Magi prostrating themselves before the child Jesus?

What was the significance of this for them? How do I reflect this attitude in my worship of Him?

Q3. (Matthew 2:11b) Why was it appropriate for the Magi bring such gifts to the Christ-child? How does the extravagance of their gifts reflect their heart attitude?

What kinds of gifts are appropriate for me to bring?

Q4. Read Matthew 8:5-13; 21:33-44; 22:2-13; 24:14; and 28:19. What do they have in common? What relation does the visit of the wise men have to Matthew's theme of bringing the Gospel to the non-Jews, (the Gentiles)?

What are some ways I can carry this attitude out in my own life?

This section has several themes:

1. The King Heralded by a star (Numbers 24:17)
2. The King Honored by Foreign Nations (1 Kings 10:2, 10; Psalm 72:10-11, 15; Isaiah 60:5-6, 11)
3. The King's Enemies Exposed (Matthew 27:11, 37; John 18:33-37; 19:19-22)
4. The King's Infant Journey Explained
5. At the King's Gospel the World bows (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 28:14; 49:10; Psalm 22:27; 98:3; Isaiah 49:6; 66:19; Matthew 21:33-44; 22:2-13; 8:5-13; 24:14; Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8)
6. At the King's Gospel the Wise are wowed (1 Corinthians 2:6)
7. The Sovereignty of God

