

## 5. God's Indescribable Gift

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Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus is not God. According to their doctrine, before he lived on earth, he was Michael, the archangel. On earth he was a man who lives a perfect life. After dying on a stake, not a cross, he was resurrected as a spirit. He is not coming back again. He already returned invisibly in 1914 in spirit.

The Mormons say that Jesus is a separate god from the Father who is Elohim. They also deny the Biblical account of the virgin birth. It teaches instead that the human body given to Jesus at His birth was the product of sexual relations between God the Father who visited earth and Mary who was previously his spirit daughter in Heaven.

Islam's doctrine says that Jesus is one of the most respected of over 124,000 prophets sent by Allah. Jesus was sinless, born of a virgin, and a great miracle worker, but not the Son of God. His virgin birth is like Adam's creation. Jesus is not God.

Did you notice one common denominator among these three very popular cults? Jesus is not God. They all deny the deity of Jesus Christ. They also deny that He died for the sin of mankind so that we may have eternal life through His atoning sacrifice on the cross. It is not just these three cults that deny the deity of Christ; actually, every one of them does. They cannot admit that mankind needs redemption through Jesus' death.

In His infinite wisdom and sovereignty, the Lord made sure that the writers of the Gospels clearly traced the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the indescribable Gift from our God the Father, all the way through king David, Abraham, Adam, to God Himself.

### A. THREE GENEALOGIES OF JESUS CHRIST

*Matthew 1:1-2 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers.*

The reason for Matthew starting with the genealogy is that genealogies were very important to the first-century Jews. Genealogy proves that the person was indeed an Israelite.

Christ's genealogy is crucial to historic Christianity. Matthew traced the lineage of Christ from Abraham to Jesus to show that He not only was a Jew, but also back through king David, to inform the readers that Jesus is qualified to rule on the throne of David and fulfilling the OT prophecies.

We find the second Jesus' genealogy the third chapter in the Book of Luke that is from Mary's side, while the genealogy of Matthew shows us the connection to the royalty between the ancestors of Joseph and Jesus. However, they are different up to king David since he had many children.

Another difference is that instead of stopping at Abraham like Matthew's genealogy, the one from the Book of Luke goes all the way up to Adam to show the humanity of Jesus. I guess you can say that Jesus was a member of "Adam's family".

No Jew today has his legal genealogy. All the records were destroyed in A.D. 70 when the temple was ruined. Jesus Christ is the only Jew alive today who can prove His rights to the throne of David.

The third genealogy is very simple. It is located in the Book of John to prove His divinity.

*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

## **B. JOSEPH'S ENCOUNTER WITH AN ANGEL**

*Matthew 1:18-25 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.*

We need to change the scene from the genealogy of Jesus to Joseph – the earthly father of Jesus.

In Jewish culture, marriage covenant was made about a year before the consummation. It was during the one-year period of betrothal that Mary was found to be pregnant. Joseph knew that he didn't touch Mary in a sexual way, but she was pregnant. What would you think if you were him? According to Deuteronomy 22, Mary could have been stoned as an adulteress.

It took great faith for Joseph to believe God's message in the dream. His love for God and for Mary made him willing to "bear reproach" for Christ. Joseph must have been quite a godly young man.

In this portion of the Scriptures, the author of this Book, Matthew painstakingly explains that Joseph is not the physical father of Jesus in order to establish Jesus' qualifications to be the Savior of all people: Jesus was God's Son and not merely Joseph's. Matthew elaborated on Jesus' kingship while Luke detailed His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit.

These three verses, from v21 to v23, are the summary of the entire NT:

- The name Jesus which means "Jehovah saves" was fairly common in that day.
- Immanuel – It means "God with us." This title of Jesus refers to both His deity "God" and His identification and nearness to man "with us."

Christ means "Messiah" in Greek and "Anointed One" in Hebrew. It is not Jesus' last name, certainly not a cuss word.

### C. THE REAL KING BEHIND A KING

*Luke 2:1-3 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.*

Caesar Augustus of Rome was ruling in their vast Roman Empire, but God was in charge. The Lord simply used Caesar's decree to move Mary and Joseph eighty miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill His Word. Rome took a census every fourteen years for both military and tax purposes, and each Jewish male had to return to the city of his ancestors to record his name, occupation, property and family. The Lord prophetically arranged the timing of Mary's delivery at the time when the census would be done almost 700 years before. Augustus thought that he was in charge.

*Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."*

### D. NO ROOM IN THE INN

*Luke 2:4-7 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Bethlehem means "house of bread," the ideal birthplace for our Jesus who is also known as 'the Bread of Life'.

By the way, December 25th would not have been the real birthday of Jesus. This date was first popularized in the church since the fourth century. For the shepherds have their flocks in open area at night, it couldn't be winter time.

For centuries, these four simple verses have filled the imaginations of devout artists and writers, who have conjured up the most elaborate scenes. Somehow we also sanitized the place where Jesus was born a little too much.

What you see at the nativity scene is something like this:

Mary all dressed up with her hands folded in front of her, Joseph standing next to Mary with his staff in his hand and smiling, Baby Jesus cooing with a bright smile and His whole body glowing. Then you see the barn animals – clean, behaving themselves, lying down or standing there and adoring the Baby, and the Celestial angels hovering over this cleanest stable. Of course we have three wise men and the shepherds kneeling down.

Guess what? Everything is incorrect. Those three wise men were not even supposed to be there for at least two more years.

The real nativity scene would be anything but clean and sanitized as people think. The stable of the inn at the small hamlet of Bethlehem would be packed with the guests' animals and their stench, and there was no room in the inn. I am sure that Joseph found a little corner for Mary to settle down for the delivery. For the King of kings, the Creator of the universe, Joseph prepared the feeding trough for a crib that was layered with animals' saliva. With the final push by Mary in the most unlikely

place, the Messiah finally has arrived. And the Baby was wrapped in swaddling cloths instead the finest materials on earth.

### **E. THE RESPONSE FROM THE SHEPHERDS**

*Luke 2:8-18 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" 15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.*

Out of all the people God could choose, He chose this ragtag group of shepherds to be become an unlikely party of delegates to whom God's angel breaks the greatest news ever given to mankind. They were regarded as social outcasts. The class of shepherds had a bad reputation, because they had tendencies to steal from people. They were considered unreliable and were not even allowed to give testimony in the court of law during that time.

Why shepherds? Why not priests or scribes? By visiting the shepherds, the angel revealed the grace of God toward mankind. God is not impressed by human wealth and power. He calls the poor and the lowly in heart.

The Messiah came to be both the Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world. Perhaps these shepherds were caring for the flocks that would provide sacrifices for the temple services. It was fitting that the Good News about God's Shepherd and Lamb of God be given first to lowly shepherds. So the first evangelists to spread the word about God's precious Lamb are, fittingly, shepherds.

### **F. THE RESPONSE FROM THE MOTHER**

*Luke 2:19-20 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.*

Quietly, privately, Mary treasures the moment. She has protected and nourished this little Life inside her for nine months in spite of all the sinister remarks and glares around her from Nazareth. Finally, she gets to meet her intimate stranger face-to-face. The angel's message for the conception, Elizabeth's prayer, and the shepherd's report all race through her mind – she is cradling deity, the Lord of the universe, her own Creator and the Savior.

Have you ever wondered why God hasn't given up on the human race? After a few thousand years of getting snubbed, mocked and ignored, even God has His break-

ing point, doesn't He? How much easier it would have been to start over with a new universe rather than patching up the old one. If we were God, we've destroyed mankind the first time they went a wrong way. The Lord probably would have started over, if it hadn't been for one thing – the love for us.

The greatest demonstration of God's love for us has been sending His only Son into the world to give us eternal life through Him.

In the Bible, only four ways are noted to get a body:

- 1) Without a man or a woman – God did to Adam, made from the dust of the earth
- 2) With a man, but no woman – God did to make Eve, made from Adam's side
- 3) With a man and a woman – as all humans are born
- 4) With a woman, but no man – as Jesus was born, having an earthly mother but no biological father. It was important that Jesus be born of a virgin that He might have a sinless human nature, so that He can be a Kinsman Redeemer, conceived by the Holy Spirit that He may maintain His divinity.

Anyone who denies Christ's biblical virgin birth denies His eternal Godhead and deity. Either He is God, or He is an imposter. He can not be a good moral person if He is an imposter. Jesus does not give any human a choice to choose the middle ground. Either we accept Him as our Savior and Lord or reject Him.

### **G. APPLICATIONS**

**1) No matter what other religion tries to say about Jesus, He is God, the second person in the Trinity.**

Jesus came to die for our sins, so that we may live eternally in heaven with Him. What a loving God we serve!

**2) There is only God who redeemed us from eternal damnation with His own sacrifice. That is Jesus, no one else. He alone deserves our worship and adoration.**

**3) Do you have a permanent room for Jesus in your heart, not only as the Savior, but also as the Lord of your everyday life?**