



The Christmas Story – Parting Fact and Fiction

December 23, 2018

The Christmas season has become so much a part of our national life that it is practically impossible to isolate oneself from it. Manger scenes, the movie "Christmas Story" in schools, choirs sing, and appeals a multitude of signs, posters, and ads claiming that we must put Christ back into Christmas. Almost daily I hear "Jesus is the reason for the season." As a Christian I have the responsibility to effectively present truth from what are really fictional parts of what most believe is the true Christmas Story.

There are mostly fictional parts to the whole theme of Christmas, and they have no foundation or part in truth and fact. Neither the Scriptures or historical record tell otherwise. 1 Thessalonians 5 and 21 commands us to, "*Test all things; hold fast what is good.*" To accomplish this we each must be willing to investigate biblical teaching concerning the Birth of Christ and to separate fact from fiction. Doing this will keep us believing whatever truth is presented and practice whatever is authorized and also keep us from practicing error. We also should want to avoid believing that which isn't justified in the scriptural account.

Fiction Surrounding Jesus's Birth

"¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem... ¹¹ And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matt. 2:1, 11). It is fiction that there were three wise men which is mostly attributed to the three gifts. There could have been 10 wise men and three gifts, as easily as there could have been only two who brought the three gifts. The only thing we know for sure is that there were wise men, plural who came and gave three gifts. Truth is that the Bible doesn't say how many came.

It is fiction that the wise men visited the stable. In spite of the thousands of manger scenes depicting Jesus, the wise men, Mary and Joseph there, Matthew 2:11 clearly says they visited Jesus in a house. The flight to Egypt after their visit, as well as the public presentation in the Temple at age of 40 days, would indicate the wise men came after 40 days (See: Lev. 12:1-4).

Another fictional point is the date given for celebrating when He was born, i.e. December 25. Nowhere does the Bible give a date of the Lord's birth. What is true about the date, is that many learned men have put the date in various months of the year. Articles in every encyclopedia will show lack of evidence to support December 25th as being Jesus' birthday! Online, not a great source, but a source, Wikipedia encyclopedia States: "The date of birth of Jesus is not stated in the gospels or in any historical reference, but most theologians assume a date of birth between 6 BC and 4 BC. The historical evidence is too incomplete to allow a definitive dating, but the date is estimated through two different approaches—one by analyzing references to known historical events mentioned in the nativity accounts in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, and the second by working backwards from the estimation of the start of the ministry of Jesus." All that to say they narrowed it down to a 2-year period. December the rainy season of Palestine makes it very unlikely that shepherds kept flocks out in the fields.

TODAY WE CHOOSE TO REJOICE

Psalm 25:5

"Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day."

Extremely fictional is that Christ wants or commands us to observe a special day in honor of His birth. To this I would note that too often too many are inclined to attend only special observances rather than regular observances of the Lord's day. Shame to those who render worship services in spurts. What every Christian is to remember is His death on the only special day practiced by the N.T. church – the first day of every week, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2. Our walk is by faith, which is all based upon the Word of God. If it's not in there, it needs to be out of there. We must not make a special religious observance of any day in the absence authority from the Scriptures.

The True Facts Concerning the Birth of Christ

It is a fact that a baby boy named Jesus was born in Bethlehem 2018 years ago. Fact also that He became one of the most influential men of history. Biblical and extra-biblical sources prove His birth. Josephus the Jewish Historian, Tacitus a senator and a historian of the Roman Empire, Suetonius a Roman historian, and Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus better known as Pliny the Younger a lawyer and author: All these support the fact that Jesus lived and was believed in by many and followed just as the N.T. teaches. It is also a fact that he was born in a stable. *“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”* (Luke 2:7). Side Note: Think about that for a moment; The innkeeper was just the first in a long line of people who have turned away the Son of God. To this day He still finds no room in the lives / hearts of most people. As for there being no room in the inn, archaeological discoveries have confirmed the general accuracy of Luke's account of the circumstances. For years it the census ordered when Quirinius was governor (Luke 2:2) was denied. But since archaeological finds have shown three things of scripture to be true – 1.) papyrus documents indicate a census every 14 years, 2.) that Quirinius was governor on two occasions that would allow him to have been governor at the date of Jesus' birth, and 3.) that Roman-ruled countries were required to return to ancestral homes for taxation.

It is a fact that angels announced His birth to shepherds (Luke 2:8-14).

It is a fact that wise men from the East came to worship Jesus. These were magi, possibly priests or philosophers from the Euphrates Valley with the learning of the East, guided by the Lord by means of “His Star” (Matt. 2). They came asking the location of the new-born King!

It is a fact that Jesus was born of a virgin. Just read Matthew 1:22 and 23. Let me point out some evidences for the virgin birth. 1.) Mary immediately went to see Zachariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45), who we're told in verse 6 *“they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless”*. 2.) What would Zachariah, a priest, do hearing Mary was with child and not married? He would have condemned her for adultery. 3.) At the cross Mary remained silent when her admission of adultery would have certainly saved Jesus from death. What kind of mother was this? Loving and Blessed! Joseph: 4.) Why would Joseph invent such a story? 5.) Elizabeth, Matthew, Luke, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and others preached Jesus was not the son of a mere man. Acceptance of these things prepares one's heart to accept everything the Bible has to say about Jesus. Repudiation or rejection undermines the trustworthiness of the whole Bible and closes your heart to the Lord's salvation.

It is a fact that Jesus came on a mission of salvation *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21). *“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.”* (Luke 2:29-32).

So, when “Parting Fact and Fiction” make every effort to rightly divide (2 Tim. 2:15). As a national holiday, December 25th may be observed by Christians as any other such holiday; but we should not attach any religious significance to the practice of “Christmas” or any other.

Knowing & Doing God's Will

Proverbs 11:14

All Christians should give every day of their lives that Jesus loved us enough to be born in this sinful world and for His willingness to sacrifice His life on Calvary's cross so we, through faith and obedience to His will, may have hope of eternal life with him in Heaven (John 14:1-4).

I pray for all who have read this and have not yet obeyed the gospel to the saving of their souls, praying that today is the day you do.

Love

David Scarpino, evangelist