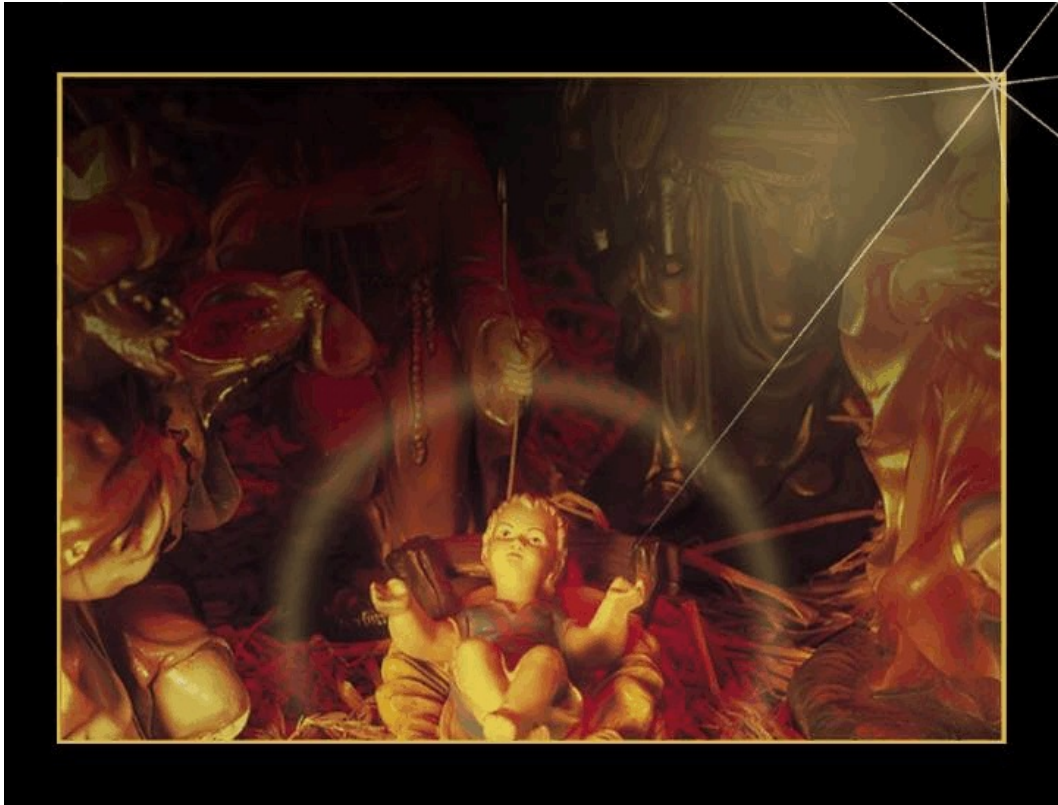


*Comparing
the
Christmas Story*



*with the
Bible Story*

Comparing The Christmas Story With The Bible Story

Introduction:

- A. This season of the year presents some interesting challenges to us as Christians.
 - 1. Prominent signs are beginning to be put into place advertising special services, plays, cantatas and programs that certain churches have organized.
 - 2. Some are eagerly anticipating a high and holy day—the birthday of the Son of God.
 - 3. We see billboards pleading with us to “Put Christ Back Into Christmas.”
 - 4. Others claim that Christmas has become too commercialized and say that we are overlooking the real meaning of Christmas.
 - 5. Some preachers will ask, “*What are you going to give Christ on His birthday?*”
 - 6. For many, this is an occasion for wild indulgence, all kinds of immoral activities, drinking and lascivious behavior.
 - 7. But it is also a time for families to get together, a national holiday; for that reason there is a great deal of sentiment attached to it that is perfectly innocent and good.
- B. For the next few moments, let’s calm our spirits, open our Bibles, and look at this issue.
 - 1. Let’s see if we can get our story straight about this time of the year.
 - 2. Let’s compare *the Christmas story* with *the Bible story*.
 - 3. And let’s try to determine what our attitude should be toward this very real question.
- C. Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-20.

I. When was Jesus born?

- A. That seems to be the most obvious question, doesn’t it?
 - 1. And it seems to have an obvious answer because we calculate the days and the years on the basis of the birth date of Jesus. So we are in 2009 still, *Ano Domini, the year of our Lord*.
 - 2. So it was 2009 years ago, right?
- B. But it’s not that easy. The truth is, we’re not certain what year Jesus was born.
 - 1. It seems to have been somewhere between 7 B.C. and 4 B.C, which means that our own calendar doesn’t accord with the facts of history.
 - 2. History documents a calendar error made in 526 A.D. by a man named Dionysius who placed the birth of Jesus at **753 A.U.C**, (*from the founding of Rome*).
 - a. People have not always determined the date from the birth of Jesus. There was a time when the date was determined based upon the founding of Rome.
 - b. And during that time a mistake was made in the calendar—**we don’t know what year Jesus was born.**
- C. The second reason we know that Jesus not born at 0 A.D? History tells us that Herod the Great (*spoken of in Matthew 2*) died in 4 B.C. That is a historically verifiable fact.

1. By our own calendar, Herod died in 4 B.C.
 2. But Jesus was born before the death of Herod the Great, so we know that it was at least before 4 B.C. that Jesus was born.
- D. Another thing that helps us to get some idea of the approximate date is that Herod had all of the male children killed up to the age of two.
1. That would seem to indicate that there must have been some passage of time between the birth of Jesus and when this horrendous act of Herod took place.
 2. To the 4 B.C. date, we could add perhaps two years.
- E. We've got some less substantive evidence about the time of the census of Luke 2.
1. We aren't sure about the exact date of that census, but we do know that a Roman census tended to have been taken every fourteen years.
 2. And we do know that there was a census conducted in 104 A.D.
 3. Counting back, that would put us in that 4-5-6 B.C. range.
- F. Luke, in his gospel, speaks of Quirinius, a man who history tells us served as governor of Syria from 9-4 B.C.
- G. **Do you know what all of that means?** We can't be certain about the year of Jesus' birth.
1. But we know that it was not 0.
 2. Our own calendar does not reflect the year of the birth of Jesus.

II. What About The Month And The Day?

- A. Once again, that's absolutely unknown.
1. It comes as a shock to many that the Bible doesn't tell us when Jesus was born; but we can be reasonably certain that He was not born in what we call December.
 2. Nearly everyone remembers reading—or at least hearing—about the appearance of an angel to the shepherds.
 - a. In Luke 2:8 we read, “And in that same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”
 - b. That, in and of itself, would *seem* to raise strong questions about the birth of Jesus as a winter event.
- B. **Why?** Why would this time of year be fairly unlikely?

According to this statement, Jesus cannot have been born in December, in the middle of the rainy season, as has been since the fourth century supposed...According to Jewish history, the driving forth of the flocks took place in March, the bringing in of them in November (Critical And Exegetical Handbook To The Gospels Of Mark And Luke, H.A.W. Meyer, pg. 273)

1. Now, that may not be absolute evidence that this time of year could not have been the season; we don't know anything about what the temperature was, how mild the winter, etc.

2. But it does seem to raise at least some question about this time of the year.
- C. Adam Clarke makes this observation:

It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the Passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain; during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the Passover occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to our part of October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the twenty-fifth of December, when no flocks were out in the fields (Adam Clarke's Commentary, pg. 857).

1. Once again, that may not be absolute evidence against this time of year...
 2. ...but it does seem to raise big questions about this time of the year.
- D. The bottom line is, **we don't know the month and the day of Jesus' birth**, but it seems unlikely at best to have been in December.

III. When Did People First Start Observing This Special Day?

- A. To answer *that* question, we've got to go outside of the New Testament.
- B. We've got to go to history, which plainly tells us that no one claimed that Jesus was born at this time of the year until much later in history.
- C. It was nearly three centuries after the death of Christ before a day was set aside for a special observance of His birth.
 1. Christmas was first observed in **Rome** in **354 A.D.**
 2. In **Constantinople** in **379 A.D.**
 3. In **Antioch** in **388 A.D.** (*Commentary On The Gospel Of Luke*, Norval Geldenhuys, pg. 102).
 4. Grasp that point; more than three centuries go by before anything is done to attach special religious significance to the actual birthday of Jesus.
- D. **Chrysostom**, a well known preacher in 386 A.D, mentioned the late origin of a special observance in a recorded "Christmas" sermon: "*It is not ten years since the day was clearly known to us...*" (*Unger Bible Dictionary*, pg. 196).
- E. *The Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us, "*Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church, and before the fifth century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether January 6th, March 25th, or December 25th*" (Vol. 5, pg. 641).

IV. Some Revealing Commentary From Throughout The World Of Denominationalism

- A. Some very straightforward comments by **Albert Barnes** (*Presbyterian*):

The exact time of His birth is unknown. There is no way to ascertain it. By different learned men it has been fixed at each month of the year. Nor is it of consequence to know the time. If it were, God would have preserved the record of it. Matters of moment are clearly revealed. Those which He regards as of no importance are concealed.

- B. **The Catholic Encyclopedia** (*approved*): “Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church.” That’s something that’s readily admitted.
- C. **Adam Clarke** (*Methodist*):

The time in which Christ was born has been considered a subject of great importance by Christians. However, the matter has been considered of no moment by Him who inspired the evangelist, as not one hint is dropped on the subject by which it might be possible to guess nearly to the time. Learned and pious men have trifled egregiously on this subject making of importance that which the Holy Spirit by his silence has plainly informed is of none.

- 1. Clarke says “they” have spent a great deal of useful time to no purpose on a subject that the Holy Spirit has said is of no consequence.
 - 2. We cannot know the time. We cannot know the date. It’s impossible to know.
 - 3. Why? Because the Holy Spirit didn’t feel that it was important to tell us.
- D. **We need to think about that.**
- 1. The Holy Spirit of God did not give the information to us—the sort of information that would be a natural part of the biography of anybody (*the time, the place, etc.*)—the kind of information that is significant in writing the story of someone’s life.
 - 2. But it’s not there! All four gospel writers leave out some of the most basic details as to when.

V. **Why, Then, Was December 25th Chosen?**

- A. It’s one of the most significant national holidays we have in this country.
 - 1. It is the consequence of long centuries of practice.
 - 2. But we need to get our story straight. ***Why this date?***
 - a. If we don’t know the year, month, and day, why December 25th?
 - b. We’ve already tried to show that it first came out of the 4th century A.D. That’s when it began.
- B. History tells us that there were a number of great controversies in the 4th and 5th centuries over the nature of Jesus.
 - 1. Was He really “in the flesh”?

2. Was He really a mortal man?
 3. In what sense was He truly divine?
 4. How was He both man and God? How did that incredible equation fit together?
- C. There were great councils of men that met in those days and wrestled with those questions.
- D. Finally, in the 4th century A.D., people began to observe a festival known as **Epiphany** on January 6th.
1. **Epiphany** means “appearing.” That festival celebrated the time when the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon Jesus at His baptism.
 - a. It was at that point, some said—at His baptism—that Jesus “became God.”
 - b. He wasn’t God before that, but when the Holy Spirit descended at His baptism, then He “became God.”
 2. Many of the same people said that when Jesus died, the Holy Spirit left Him just before He expired.
 - a. That’s why Jesus cried out in Matthew 27:46, “My God, why have you forsaken me?”
 - b. They didn’t believe that God could die.
 - c. They didn’t believe that Jesus was really associated with the flesh.
 - d. And so, they made this great distinction, but at the cost of considerable controversy. Some believed that He *was* God from His birth.
 - e. *Now*, what are we going to do? We have this fundamental disagreement.
- E. **But here is the answer!** To distinguish ourselves from those heretics who are claiming that Jesus wasn’t God until He was baptized by John, *we* will celebrate His birth, thus declaring Him to be divine from the very beginning.
1. What was this? It was a heretic detector.
 - a. If you observed the 6th of January, you held the view that Jesus was not divine until after His baptism, and perhaps that He ceased to be divine before His death.
 - b. But if you celebrated His **birthday**, that meant you acknowledged that He was divine from His birth.
 2. The Eastern Orthodox Church still observes the “festival of baptism” (**Epiphany**) on the 6th of January to this day.
- F. But if those heretics have chosen the 6th of January as their day, which day will “we” choose?
1. That was the question Rome struggled with.
 2. The emperor Constantine had chosen to align himself with the “gospel” – with Christians.
 - a. And he sought to totally change the Roman Empire, *from* the principle persecutor of Christians, to an ally.

- b. In 325 A.D., peace was initiated between the Empire and Christians. The Empire actually began to support the worship of Jesus.
 - 3. Constantine felt that all of the old pagan festivals should be **“Christianized.”**
 - a. There ought not to be any more worship of the Sun god in what we know as December.
 - b. Romans used the **winter solstice** (*when the days begin to get longer*) as their marker—darkness had been prevailing up to this point; the gods of the darkness had been prevailing.
 - c. But now, at the solstice, the Sun takes the ascendancy and the light is victorious.
 - d. This was the time when Romans celebrated the God of light. We still have the roots of that paganism in the fact that we call this day ***Sunday***.
 - 4. Constantine basically said, “We need to take care of this—since Jesus is the light, since He is the true Sun that rises, then we will just celebrate His birthday on this occasion.”
- G. Bishop Liberius—whom the Roman Catholic church puts in their list of Popes—was the bishop of Rome, and on December 25th, 360 A.D, he *“Consecrated one Marcella who was a sister of Ambrose, a nun or bride of Christ and addressed her with these words: ‘**You see what multitudes are come to the birth festival of your bridegroom.**’”* (Schaff’s History of the Christian Church)
- H. This started in the first half of the fourth century and reached various places of the empire over the next hundred years, to the point where it was eventually celebrated generally as the “birthday” of Jesus.
- I. The Roman Catholic Church of the twenty-first century explains it like this:

Numerous theories have been put forward through the last 2,000 years to explain December 25th as Christmas Day. The most likely one however, the one most generally accepted by scholars now is that the birth of Christ was assigned to the date of the winter solstice. This date is December 21st in our calendar, but was December 25th in the Julian calendar which predated our own. The solstice, when days begin to lengthen in the northern hemisphere was referred to by pagans as ‘The Birthday of the Unconquered Sun.’ During the third century, the Emperor Aurelian proclaimed December 25th as a special day dedicated to the Sun-god, whose cult was very strong in Rome at that time. Even before this time, Christian writers had already begun to refer to Jesus as the Sun of Justice. It seemed quite logical, therefore, that as Christianity began to dominate the Roman Empire, the date of the ‘new-born Sun’ should be chosen as the birthdate of Christ. Apparently, it bothers some people that the date

for Christmas has its roots in a pagan feast. Be that as it may, it's the best explanation we have for the choice of December 25th to celebrate the birth of Jesus (The New Question Box, Catholic Catechism, pg. 28-29).

1. As far as the Catholic church is concerned, that's the answer.
2. That's what the Catholic Encyclopedia will tell you.
3. This December observance originated with pagans as a feast day to their sun-god and it was changed into a "Christian holy-day" by the Roman Catholic Church.

J. **That's** where it came from.

1. Not from God. Not from the instruction of the Holy Spirit.
2. This celebration of the birth of Jesus is not something that Christians engaged themselves in for more than 300 years.
3. It came as a consequence of two forces:
 - a. Controversy within the church about the nature of Jesus.
 - b. The desire to "Christianize" some of the pagan holidays that were characteristic of the Roman Empire when many of the leaders became "Christians."

K. **What does *Christmas* mean?**

1. You break down the word and see *Christ-mass*. That shows us that it has a Catholic source.
2. It was started as a Catholic mass in honor of the birth of Christ.

Conclusion:

- A. I'm aware of the fact that some people think we are absolutely out of our minds because of what we have talked about this morning in such great detail, or what we will talk more about, Lord willing, this evening. We hope to actually compare **the Bible story** with **the Christmas story** in more detail this evening.
- B. Many think us "just strange" that we would take such careful notice in saying "you don't know there were three wise men!"
 1. It seems like such a harmless detail.
 2. But what we're trying to say is that we need to get the story straight.
 - a. Why? Some of it may be a "small" matter, but if we can depart from what God has said in *this* matter and presume to add details that are not there, can't we do that anywhere?
 - b. In fact, the problem **is** here; so much of this entire construct has come from the minds of men.
- C. "Christmas" is not from God. **The birth of Jesus is.**
 1. The fact that God took up His residence in human flesh, is.
 2. That the cry of God was once heard in a newborn babe, is.
 3. That this was the means by which God brought His Son into the world, is. That's true.

- D. Someone asks, “***Should we remember it?***” Always.
1. It’s a part of the greatest story the world has ever known (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 2. It’s the beginning of the story that culminates and climaxes in the sacrificial death and triumphant, glorious resurrection of the Son of God.
 - a. If He does not become man, His blood cannot be shed.
 - b. If His blood is not shed, He cannot be raised from the dead.
 - c. If He is not raised from the dead, He cannot be the atoning sacrifice that we so desperately need because of our own sins (1 Corinthians 15:17-22).
- E. We **ought** to remember, we **must** remember the birth of Jesus; but if we are committed to the idea of speaking where the Bible speaks and remaining silent where the Bible is silent, we won’t do it in this way.
1. We won’t do it by bringing a Christmas tree into our place of assembly and having a Christmas pageant and organizing an enormous celebration cantata.
 2. There’s not a word about that in the Scriptures.
- F. Has the Lord left us any memorials? He has left us **three** that are a part of the gospel record.
1. ***The Lord’s Supper.***
 - a. He specifically asked for that (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).
 - b. What does it remind us of? (1 Corinthians 11:26).
 2. Our ***assemblies of worship*** each first day of the week.
 - a. Reminding us of His resurrection.
 - b. Sunday is the day Jesus was raised from the dead!
 3. ***Baptism.***
 - a. Every time someone is baptized in water for the remission of their sins, they are reenacting the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus.
 - b. Romans 6:3-4.
- G. Those are the memorials we find in the Scriptures.
- H. **What will we do in this assembly the Sunday closest to December 25th?**
1. We’ll do what we always do.
 2. We’ll break bread, just as we do today. We’ll remember how He died for us.
 - a. And as we remember how He died, we remember that He was a man, that He came into this world as a little baby.
 - b. And He grew up; He faced the same challenges that we face.
 - c. And because of that, He is the perfect high priest for us, without sin.

Comparing The Christmas Story With The Bible Story (2)

Introduction:

- A. Christmas and Easter are not the same as the birth of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus. They are human arrangements to celebrate those things.
- B. Matthew 1:18-2:23.

VI. Where Was Jesus Born?

- A. You might say, “*Well, I didn’t know that was even a matter of controversy.*”
- B. Matthew 2:1 “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king...”
- C. So we’ve got the town. ***But where in Bethlehem?***
- D. Luke 2:6-7.
 - 1. Can you identify this object?



- 2. Don’t feel bad if you don’t recognize it—a Jew from the 1st century would never recognize the “manger” displayed in the typical nativity scene today.
- 3. A manger is a feeding trough, generally found in a stable.
 - a. In Bible times, mangers were made from clay mixed with straw or from stones held together with mud; sometimes they were carved in natural outcroppings of rock.
 - b. That particular picture is taken from the remains of the ancient city of Megiddo in Israel where this manger was used in the stables of King Ahab.
- D. **But where was the manger?** We don’t know.
 - 1. Was it right next door to the inn? It could have been a lower-level room or stall for animals attached to the living quarters of a private residence. We don’t know.

2. Was Jesus born in a stable? We don't know.
3. In 160 A.D., Justin Martyr said, "*Finding no place in the town, Joseph took his portage in a certain cave in the village.*" We can't prove that one way or another; it might have been a cave, but even Justin was more than a hundred years removed from the actual event.
4. Jerome said that the cave had lain defiled from the time of Hadrian – 135 A.D. – to the time of Constantine.
 - a. What he meant by "*defiled*" was that Hadrian's men had intentionally gone around trying to defile all of the places loved by the Christians because he was trying to root out the religion.
 - b. He would routinely establish pagan altars in the same places.
 - c. During the reign of Constantine, there was a large-scale effort to get all of that cleaned up.
5. And today, when you visit Bethlehem you can visit the "Church of the Nativity," constructed in the fourth century over a traditional cave site in Bethlehem. Beneath that building is an actual cave.



6. Is that the place? It could have been a cave used as a shelter for animals. The bottom line is, we don't know.
 7. It could have been a feeding place under the open sky, perhaps in the town square. We don't know the precise location.
- E. What we **do** know for sure is that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. *Where* within that city is a mystery.
- F. We **do** know that the Lord of glory, the Chosen One destined to take up the throne of his father David and eventually be seated at the right hand of the God of the universe, was placed in a common feeding trough somewhere in Bethlehem.

VII. The Biblical Accounts vs. the Christmas Story

- A. As we zero in on the actual *Biblical* accounts, we recognize that there are only two:

1. ***The Gospel According To Matthew*** (*tells of the wise men*)
 2. ***The Gospel According To Luke*** (*tells of the shepherds*)
- B. For whatever reason, however, in this day and age, it seems hard to get the two straight.
- C. We begin in ***Luke's gospel***.
1. Luke 2:8-14.
 - a. To whom did the angel appear? The shepherds.
 - b. What did the angel tell them? (Luke 2:11)
 - c. What were they supposed to look for? (Luke 2:12)
 - d. What was their reaction? (Luke 2:15-20)
 2. What happened next? We don't know, until Luke 2:21.
 3. What happened next? We don't know until Luke 2:22-24.
 - a. When would this have taken place?
 - b. Leviticus 12:1-4, 6-8 indicates that it was to be done when the child was forty days old.
 - c. While Joseph, Mary and Jesus were at the temple, Luke 2:22-38...
- D. But here is where the typical manger scene begins to make a deviation.
1. Picture in your mind the usual manger scene that you have seen from your youth.
 - a. Within that scene you see a place that looks like a stable or a shed.
 - b. Above it we see the shining star.
 - c. On one side of it we see the shepherds bowed in adoration.
 - d. On the other side, we see the three wise men who have come to bring their gifts to baby Jesus.
 - e. Mary is there with the child and there is a great halo around her head, perhaps a halo around baby Jesus' head.
 - f. Finally, the angels are singing above them.



2. But what we know, *through a careful examination of the Scriptures*, is that such never happened.
 3. **“Well, are you saying Jesus wasn’t born?”**
 - a. Of course He was. We are talking about a real, historical event. This is no myth.
 - b. But what we *are* saying from the Scriptures is that the shepherds and the wise men never appeared at the stable together; the star didn’t shine above the stable; the angels never sang over the stable.
 - c. The angels sang, but the Scriptures tell us that they announced the good news to the shepherds in the field.
 - d. *Then* the shepherds came to the place where Jesus was laying, they showed their reverence, and that was it. That’s all that we read. We don’t even read of a star in connection with the shepherds.
 - e. That’s the event. Most inauspicious. An exceedingly simple occasion.
- E. Matthew’s account gives us some subsequent details—Matthew 2:1—and as chapter 2 opens, the time frame has jumped ahead upwards possibly of two years!
1. “Wise men,” magi, came from the east—*how many were there? We’re not told*. There were at least two, but beyond that, we can’t be sure.
 - a. Magi is a term used in early records to refer to a priestly caste in ancient Persia, possibly as far away as Babylon.
 - b. The Magi were leading figures in the religious court life of their country, using a variety of scientific (*astrology*), diplomatic (*wisdom*), and religious means to try to understand present and future life.
 2. If they came from the area of Babylon, they would have traveled more than 900 miles.
 3. It could have taken several months from the time they first saw the star until they arrived in Jerusalem.
- F. Matthew 2:2-6.
1. A quote taken from Micah 5:2.
 2. It will be in Bethlehem.
 - a. It was a small and seemingly insignificant village.
 - b. But it was noted as the home of Ruth and Boaz, the ancestors of King David, and the birthplace of David himself.
 3. It was part of a fairly widespread Jewish expectation (John 7:40-43).
- G. Matthew 2:7-11.
1. They are sent to Bethlehem—six miles south/southwest of Jerusalem.
 2. What they find is that the baby is now a “child.”
 3. The family is *not* in a stable still entertaining shepherds; the family is in a “house...in Bethlehem of Judea.”
- H. And the wise men brought gifts into that house—when you approached royalty or someone of high religious, political, or social status, gifts were often brought to demonstrate humility.

1. **Gold**—valued throughout the ancient world as a medium of exchange as well as a precious metal for making jewelry, ornaments, and dining instruments for royalty.
 2. **Incense** or **frankincense** was derived from an amber resin, producing a sweet odor when it was burned. It was used a perfume.
 3. **Myrrh** was a mixture of resin, gum, and oil; it was used in incense, as a perfume.
- I. And when they had done what they came to do – Matthew 2:12-16...
1. Herod had wanted to know **exactly** when the star appeared, and he was told.
 2. Then, when he discovered that he had been deceived, he went out and had all of the male children up to 2 years of age killed.
 - a. Doesn't that tell us something about what he had heard?
 - b. It's been considerable time since Jesus was born and laid in the manger.
 3. **Then** the wise men came, and as we read the story, it was in a **house** that they found him. Much time has passed. We don't know how many there were.
- J. **But what we do know is that it DIDN'T happen the way so many millions in the world take for granted.**
- K. What a shame that so many, at least for a season, would be willing to acknowledge such a wondrous event, but fail to open their Bibles and tell the story the way it has been recorded for nearly 2,000 years!

Conclusion:

- A. We will close our study with the words of the heavenly host in Luke 2:14.
- B. "Glory to God in the highest."
1. Realize that the whole task of religion is to elevate and exalt God.
 2. Recognize that He is the One who has achieved this great redemption.
 3. Therefore, it goes without saying, as we approach Him, as we think about the birth of Jesus into this world, that everything we do ought to glorify Him.
 - a. And the only way to truly do that is to do what He says.
 - b. 1 Peter 4:10-11—**let us say and do what God has instructed us to do.**
- C. "And on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"
1. We hear from our youth that Christmas is a time of good will, "tis the season to be jolly." Christmas is an occasion when we need to be at peace with each other.
 2. But notice that **this** peace is not first, in principle, about peace among the nations, peace among coworkers or neighbors, etc.
 - a. It has to do first and foremost with my peace in relation to God.
 - b. Above all else, it is necessary for us to come and be reconciled to Him.
 - c. **Why?** Because there will be no real, lasting peace for anybody who is not reconciled to God.
 - 1) Sure, if men are reconciled to God, it will have a result in the community, there wouldn't be such hellish things going on all around us, etc.

- 2) But the angels, on that night, are presenting the possibility for a change, an alteration, in the disposition of mankind's attitude toward God.
- D. How strange, how ironic, that in celebrating the birth of Jesus, instead of glorifying God, we glorify our own traditions.
1. Instead of being concerned about being reconciled and well pleasing to God...
 2. ...we're concerned with being well pleasing to ourselves and to our fellow man.
- E. **It's a beautiful story.**
1. Isaiah 7:14
 2. Isaiah 9:6
 3. It's a wonderful story, fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.
 - a. Galatians 4:4-7
 - b. We'll always remember this.
- F. We remember—just as we remember all of the stories of Jesus, all of the things He said and did—that ought to be such a joyful part of our very lives!
- G. It's fine to get together with family and to do those things that families do to show love to each other; but it doesn't inherently have anything to do with some special celebration of the birth of Jesus. And anytime we slip into that, we have moved off of *the Bible story* and into *the Christmas story*.
1. If you want the Christmas story, then you want all of this other attendant traditionalism that goes with that; all of the ways of men that have developed through 19 centuries of history, rather than the ways of the Lord.
 2. ***The critical issue is that we come back to this and truly say "glory to God." Let His word rule over all, His way be our way so that we can be men and women pleasing to Him.*** Isn't that all that really matters?
- H. **Have you dealt with the sin problem?**
1. Realize that His birth never was the focus of the entire gospel story, even though the focus of many in our society is just that.
 - a. Many believe it's nice to keep Jesus a little baby. He is so innocuous, so manipulatable.
 - b. But the baby became a Man. And the Man suffered the horrors of the cross.
 - c. The baby doesn't speak about sin. The baby speaks of things being quiet in Bethlehem, and peace in the world. Some have taken that to mean, "*All that we need is a little good will and all of our problems will be solved.*"
 2. But Jesus was born...to die.
 - a. He had to die because if He didn't die, you and I would die.
 - b. If the judgment and the wrath of God didn't come upon Him, it would come upon you.
 3. Am I reconciled? Am I well pleasing? Have I come to celebrate God's Son as the Lord, my Lord? Am I willing to yield my will to Him, to be baptized into His death and raised up even as He was raised? Am I living in accordance with this great principle of truth?
 4. Colossians 2:12