

The Day That Jesus Was Born - Berean Call

We are not referring to December 25. That may or may not have been when Christ was born. There are conflicting theories: 1) that December 25 was set by Christians to counter the Roman Saturnalia celebration each December 17-23, which "led to widespread drinking and debauchery, so that among Christians...'saturnalia' came to mean 'orgy'"; 2) that early Christians set the date of December 25 by assuming that Mary visited Elizabeth immediately after her (Mary's) conception, and then calculating the time of Elizabeth's conception as six months earlier ([Lk 1:23-25](#))--based on Jewish records and tradition concerning the schedule of priestly temple duties and Zacharias's "course of Abia" ([Lk 1:5](#));¹ and 3) that it replaced the feast of Saturnalia, as Will Durant claims,² which is probably the most popular criticism of the date.

Regardless of the day, Christ's virgin birth into this world as a babe was an event of such stupendous proportions that Paul declared: "great is the mystery..." (1 Tm 3:16)! The Creator of all ([Jn 1:3](#)) entered into His creation as one of its creatures, knowing everything He would suffer at the hands of those rebels that He had brought into existence through Adam and Eve. The hatred, misunderstanding, false accusations, abuse, rejection, mockery, and finally, the scourging and crucifixion that He would endure from those who owed their very existence to Him had long been foretold by Hebrew prophets under His inspiration.

His mother, Mary, was not "the spouse of the Holy Spirit," as Roman Catholicism says. She was the spouse of Joseph and not a polygamist. The "Lord of glory" ([1 Cor 2:8](#)) humbled Himself to live as a baby, child, man, and finally unto "the death of the cross" ([Phil 2:5-8](#)). As a child, he was subject to his "parents." When Mary or Joseph asked the boy Jesus to do some menial task, He didn't respond, "Who do you think you're ordering around? I'm God!" He quickly and humbly did their bidding.

Joseph was not His father, yet the child Jesus lived such a normal life that even Mary, who had at first pondered much in her heart ([Lk 2:51](#)), fell into the habit when speaking to Jesus of referring to Joseph as "thy father" ([Lk 2:48](#)). Joseph was certainly the head of the household, and the child Jesus obeyed him.

The One who had made the universe out of nothing and who knew every particle--from the innermost depths of each atom to the outermost reaches of the cosmos--confined Himself to an obscure life in a small home and carpenter shop in Nazareth. There, as Joseph's bright young apprentice, He "learned" to fashion wood with crude tools and became known as "the carpenter's son" ([Mt 13:55](#)). His workmanship and creativity must have been fantastic. We are told nothing about those early days, except for His visit to the temple at the age of twelve ([Lk 2:41-52](#)), when He astonished the rabbis and reminded Mary and Joseph that His real Father had sent Him into this world for a special purpose.

It was infinite love beyond our comprehension that caused our Lord to leave the glory and power He had rightfully known for eternity as God the Son, to become a man in order to purchase a bride with His own blood.

He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10). When He accepted that mission from His Father ("my Father hath sent me"-Jn 3:17, 10:36, 20:21; [Heb 1:6](#)), our Lord well knew that the incarnation would not be temporary but eternal. He forever became one of us but without sin.

On David's throne in Jerusalem, as Israel's promised Messiah, He will "reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (Lk 1:33). He remains "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tm 2:5), the only mediator between God and man, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" ([Heb 13:8](#)). For all eternity He will bear the marks of Calvary, and heaven's throne will forever be "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rv 22:1).

How could anyone have known who He really was, since His glory was veiled in human flesh? Any true believer of that day who was in touch with God, knew the Word, and looked for the Messiah, would have known Him. Daniel 9 and [Nehemiah 2](#) plainly told everyone who was willing to read and understand that it was the prophesied time for the Messiah to come. Anna the prophetess and Simeon, a devout Jew who looked for the Messiah, both recognized Him immediately, even as a baby (Lk 2:25-38).

Though there was some excuse for not knowing Him as a child, there was no defense for not recognizing Him after He began His ministry. The miracles alone that He did were sufficient to prove that He was the Messiah. And He must have been a very special person. Even the officers sent by the Pharisees to arrest Him acknowledged, "Never man spake like this man" (Jn 7:46)!

Who could have failed to realize that here was "God...manifest in the flesh" (1 Tm 3:16)? Almost everyone! Very few recognized and admired the God-likeness of Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, their innate sinfulness despised His purity. Of the vast majority, in fulfillment of prophecy ([Ps 35:19, 69:4](#), 119:161), Christ sadly declared, "They hated me without a cause" (Jn 15:25). It seems incredible!

John the Baptist recognized that Jesus was sinless: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Mt 3:14). Yet later, even he doubted (Lk 7:19), in spite of all of the proofs God had given him (Jn 1:33-34). The Apostle John was one of the few who recognized Him: "We beheld his glory...as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth....That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested..." ([Jn 1:14](#); [1 Jn 1:1,2](#)).

Tragically, "though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him" (Jn 12:37). The Pharisees knew that His miracles were genuine, that He had raised Lazarus after four days in the grave; but they still justified themselves in determining to kill Him and Lazarus to preserve their positions of leadership. No wonder God declared, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" ([Jer 17:9](#)).

The devils recognized Him during His ministry, even though they may not have known who He was as a babe: "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24). Jesus did not cast out demons in the name of the Father but by His own authority, and they obeyed Him (Mt 8:28-32; [Mk 1:25](#); [Lk 4:35](#)).

The universe, which He as the eternal Word had spoken into existence, knew and obeyed His voice. He calmed storms with a word (Mk 4:39). Yet even then His disciples did not know who He was. They were afraid and "said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41).

Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" ([Jn 17:3](#)). That does not mean that any neighbor acquainted with Him as a child when He grew up in Nazareth had eternal life. It means to know Him in spirit and in truth--the way that we must worship God (Jn 4:24). It is not enough to say the words with one's lips ("I love you, Lord...I worship you") but to know and love Him in one's heart as He truly is.

Even though Jesus is God, and Mary is the mother of Jesus, that does not make her the "mother of God," as Catholicism teaches. Nor did she remain a virgin. The birth of her "firstborn son" (Mt 1:25) in Bethlehem was not the birth of Christ as God but of His human body, soul, and spirit--"a body hast thou prepared me" ([Heb 10:5](#)). She was the honored mother of the man Christ Jesus. But she was not the mother of the eternal Son of God, who created this universe, is one with the Father, and "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14).

Christ existed as God's Son long before the incarnation (Ps 2:12; Prv 30:4; Is 9:6; Dn 3:25, etc.). He had, from all eternity, ruled with the Father on His throne as the Son of God: "Unto the son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom" ([Heb 1:8](#)); "whose goings forth have been from...everlasting" ([Mic 5:2](#)). To call Mary "the mother of God" is the worst blasphemy possible.

Paul makes a particular point of saying, "He was...seen of angels." They witnessed the unfolding of this mystery. We are not told the angels' thoughts or whether they had any advance notice of the incarnation, but Christ's birth into the world as a man must have been a mystery even to the "multitude of the heavenly host" that praised God at Christ's birth ([Lk 2:13](#)).

Could this really be the One they had worshiped as the eternal Word, the Creator of all--and here He was a helpless baby in Mary's arms nursing at her breast?! Could that be possible? Yes, there was the command: "When he bringeth the firstbegotten into the world...let all the angels of God worship him." ([Heb 1:6](#)). What a mysterious occurrence that day when Jesus was born!

Paul calls this most amazing and important event in the history of the universe not only a great mystery--but *the* mystery: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in

the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tm 3:16). The mystery of godliness was unveiled in the incarnation of Jesus Christ!

Invading this rebellious planet from heaven itself came the only perfectly godly man who would ever live. All the rest of mankind are sinners. Eternally, those in heaven will be sinners--saved by grace.

Yes, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"--except for one man. It is a great mystery how anyone who is fully man, as Christ is, could live without ever sinning. Yet Scripture assures us: He "did no sin" (1 Pt 2:22); "who knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21); and "in him is no sin" ([1 Jn 3:5](#)).

Indeed, it was not possible that Christ could sin. He faced every temptation, but He never had to struggle to keep from yielding. Sin had no attraction for Him: "The prince of this world [i.e., Satan] cometh, and hath nothing in me" (Jn 14:30). There was nothing in the "Holy One of God" (Lk 4:34) that was in the least attracted to sin.

He left us "an example, that [we] should follow His steps" (1 Pt 2:21). But how can we follow the steps that lead to the Cross? If we are to be godly, the only godly One must live in us: "I travail in birth...until Christ be formed in you" (Gal 4:19). It must be "not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal 2:20). But how can He indwell sinners? This is another part of the "mystery of godliness."

There was only one way mankind could be redeemed from the penalty of eternal death. For a holy, righteous God to justly forgive sinners, the full penalty for sin must be paid ([Rom 3:9-28](#)). A sinless man, undeserving of death, would have to die for the rest of mankind: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19).

Although the eternal Son of God, through the virgin birth, became fully man, He remained fully God. As sinless man, He could justly die for sinners. And only as infinite God could He pay the full penalty for the sins of all mankind. Even as a fetus in Mary's womb, He did not cease to be the One who said, "I am the Lord, I change not" ([Mal 3:6](#)). This is the most difficult part of the mystery. We cannot understand it, but we believe it because God says it--and we realize there was no other way.

As God and man in one person, Christ took the full weight of God's wrath upon sin for all mankind. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). He tasted "death for every man" ([Heb 2:9](#)). That had to include "the second death," which all who refuse to believe on Him who died for them will endure for eternity in the Lake of Fire (Rv 20:11-15).

Calvinism, however, teaches that Christ died only for an elect whom God had predestined to heaven. It claims that God loves the entire world--but not with the same kind of "redeeming love" for all: those who are

predestined to eternal torment are loved with a lesser love, but loved nevertheless, because God blesses them in this life with sunshine and rain, etc. That is why we titled the book, *What Love Is This?* It is not love of any kind to fail to rescue any who could be rescued. Calvinism claims that God could save everyone if He so desired, but doesn't. That is not love.

The parallel Old Testament passage to "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23) is "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way..." (Is 53:6). Isaiah adds, "and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The iniquity of all who "have gone astray" [i.e., who have sinned] was laid on Christ at the Cross.

Christ said that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:14-15). Poisonous serpents were sent by God as punishment for Israel's sin. Those bitten were dying. The serpent is a picture both of Satan and of sin that has bitten all mankind unto the death. God's remedy was: "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and...[not an elect among those dying, but] *every one that is bitten*, when he looketh upon it, shall live. [It] came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" ([Num 21:5-9](#)--emphasis added).

Christ said that just as all who had been bitten could look in faith upon the brazen serpent and live, so all who have sinned can look in faith to the "Lamb of God [on the Cross] tak[ing] away the sin of the world" ([Jn 1:29](#)), and receive eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. That is the good news of the gospel. We need to proclaim it everywhere.

What a day it was when Christ was virgin-born in Bethlehem! And what a day it is when He comes to live eternally in the hearts of those who believe on Him! This is the victory of godliness that every Christian should be experiencing--yet many do not know all that is theirs in Christ. Let us live godly lives and proclaim the good news to all. **TBC**