

# The Real Christmas Story – 3-1

## I. Luke 1:26-56

V26...supernatural from the start.

V29...Mary was troubled...you would be to if you saw an angel.

V30...angels always say 'Do not be afraid' when they appear to humans...why?

What is your idea of what an angel looks like? Biblically, angels would seem to be very awesome.

V31...the word 'Jesus' is Yeshua or Joshua...it means 'Yahwah is salvation'.

V32...the messiah was to come from the house or lineage of King David. Jesus satisfies that. Matt 1:1-17 Joseph's side, note V6....Luke 3:23-37 probably Mary's side, note V31.

V34 & 35...born of a virgin...another prophecy fulfilled by Jesus (see Isaiah 7:14)

V36 & 37...Hey Mary, not only can God cause your old relative to have a baby well past her child bearing years...but He can even cause a virgin to have a child because nothing is too hard for our God.

V37...but why a virgin? See Gen 3:15 'the seed of a woman', not of a man. For Jesus to be 100% God and 100% man, He had to be both. If Joseph was His biological father, then He would be just a man but not God. This way, God the Father was His father and Mary was His mother. This melding of the 2 unions of God & humanity is called the 'hypostatic union'.

V39...I'll bet she did hurry.

V46-55...the 'magnificat' of Mary.

## II. Matt 1:18-25

V18...Mary was probably about 12-14 years old. Joe was about 17-18 years old, rather old to be married. Speculation...maybe he had waited for Mary to be of marriagable age. What a dilemma!

V19...Jewish betrothal was like engagement but much more serious. Betrothed women were treated like they were married (see Gen 20:21), except that they didn't live together or have sex. A betrothal could only be broken by getting a divorce. Joe, in good conscience, could not marry Mary, who was now thought to be unfaithful. But he didn't want to expose her to public disgrace by divorcing her publicly either. Also, the Law of Moses prescribed death by stoning for adultery. The Law of Moses also allowed for a private divorce before only 2 witnesses (see Numbers 5:11-31). Joe was going to do this as it would leave both his righteous (his conformity to the Law of Moses) and his compassion & love for Mary intact. What a position for Joe to be in.

V20...Joe tried to solve his dilemma in what to him, seemed to be the best way possible. Only then did God intervene with a dream. Notice that God didn't rebuke Joe ...but He reassured him that what Mary had said happened was really what happened.

V21...the angel says that Jesus will save people from their sins....but Jews knew that only God could save people from their sins (Psalms 130:8)...thus, the angel is calling Jesus, God.

V22,23...see Isaiah 7:14

V24,25...What obedience Joe modeled....no sex until after Jesus was born...Joseph ROCKS!

## The Real Christmas Story – 3-2

### I. Matt 2:1-12

V1,2...King Herod...73 B.C.- 4 B.C....by 37 B.C., with Rome's help, he was the undisputed ruler of Judea. He was wealthy, politically gifted, an excellent administrator, his famine relief was superb, his bldg. Projects were admired even by his foes...but he loved power, taxed people heavily, and in his later years, was given to fits of rage, jealously killed his close associates, his wife & 2 sons. He treated very ruthlessly, the threat of another 'king' taking his kingship away.

V1,2....the Magi...Magi is plural for Maggus (it has a very broad meaning), the root word for our word 'magic'. Magi were 'court astrologers' or 'wise men'. They were held in high esteem. Some Magi were charlatans, some were astrologers some were men of science & learning (Daniel 1:3,417-20) and some were political leaders. Since they came from the 'East', they were probably Persians or Babylonians. Magi often went from one 'king's court' to another 'king's court' to attend and/or announce the birth of a king/prince. During the years preceding Jesus' birth, there were numerous struggles between Rome & Persia. Israel was a "buffer" state. One of the duties of the Magi was in selecting the Kings of Persia. Their King was in ill health and old. Herod had been installed as the King of the Jews (though he was only half Jewish). But it was a full 3 years before he could occupy his capital city of Jerusalem as the Persians had driven him out of it earlier. So he and the rest of Jerusalem was "greatly troubled" when he heard 'wise men' announcing the birth of a King of the Jews. Of course they got an audience with Herod as he wanted to find & destroy this "King of the Jews".

Astrology and astronomy were not separated from each other until about the 1500's. So, not all astrologers were what we would call astrologers today. Some were actually more like astronomers. Let's be clear.....the Bible condemns astrology (predicting future events by the positions of the stars & planets)...Deut.18:9-14...Isaiah 47:8-15...Jer 10:1,2.....SPECULATION..in Babylonia(east of Israel), there was a sizable & influential Jewish community still there from Daniel's day. Daniel rose up to the #2 position in the country (around 580 B.C.). Since Daniel was given dreams & visions and the ability to interpret them by God (Dan 2:17-28), its very possible that God could have told Daniel the positions of the stars when the Messiah would be born. This would explain Matt 2:2. This is how the 'star' could have appeared to them but nobody else would have noticed it. So, these wise men may have been Jewish. This is the 1<sup>st</sup> appearance of the 'star of Bethlehem', but at some point after the Magi were guided to Jerusalem, the star disappeared.

V3...the Magi had said that they had come to worship the one who was born King of the Jews. King Herod and the people understood why the Magi came to a country....to celebrate the birth of a king....that's why King Herod and the people of Jerusalem were 'disturbed'. They had no idea who this King was. Plus, Herod was feeling very threatened and guess what he did when he felt that way?

V4-6....Herod called the Jewish religious leaders to find out where this took place....the religious leaders answered but, apparently, couldn't care less....and this was their own Messiah. Again, they didn't even realize prophecy was being fulfilled–Micah 5:2  
One other note....if the Magi weren't Jewish, how ironic that God used gentiles to announce the Messiah's birth....and if they were Jewish, how ironic that God used them instead of the 'religious leaders'.

V7....proof that the 'star of Bethlehem' wasn't out of the ordinary to the untrained eye.

V8....yeah, right!

V9,10....the star appears a 2<sup>nd</sup> time.

V11....notice that the Magi came to the 'child's house', not to a baby in a manger. From the time when they 1<sup>st</sup> saw the star....they had to prepare for their journey & then make the journey. All of that took 1-2 years. We'll explain how we know this later on in V16-18. This appearance of the 'star' was supernatural because it came to rest over the house.

V11....how many wise men were there? Crime was rampant in the deserts, so generally, caravans consisted of 25-100 people, mostly for protection. There were 3 gifts, not 3 wise men. But why these particular gifts? Because they were extremely valuable while not taking up much room. They could be traded for cash, food or clothing by Jesus' parents on their not-yet-announced journey (see V13-15). Joe was leaving his business and they'd need to re-locate. The symbolic value of the 3 gifts....gold for royalty, incense for divinity & myrrh for suffering and burial. God prepared for their need before they even had it.

V12....God's concern for even the Magi is touching.

The wisdom of the Magi was not astrological for the following reasons:

1. Planetary configurations can't foretell the birth of kings/princes.
2. Why would God condemn astrology and then use it in such a positive manner.

God, apparently purposefully, didn't tell us that much about the 'Star of Bethlehem'...only that it was just a sign and a guide to the Magi. Don't spend too much speculation on it. God didn't count it that important.

V16-18...Jesus was probably 1.5 years old when the Magi visited Him. So, to be on the safe side, King Herod killed all of the male boys 2 & under in Bethlehem. This is known as the 'slaughter of the innocents'.....King Herod thought he was eliminating a potential rival for his throne. He never guessed that he was fulfilling prophecy—Jer 31:15 Judging by the population of Bethlehem, boys under 2 years of age, there would have been about 20 or so that were slaughtered. The Jewish historian, Josephus, doesn't even mention it in his works but he does mention things like Masada, where many more people were killed. Twenty boys wouldn't have been such a big deal in such violent times.....unless it was your son. Imagine the havoc this played in each couple's lives....the law enforcers became the law breakers and there was nothing anybody could do about it.

In all, Jesus Christ fulfilled about 365 distinct prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. Peter Stoner, in the book *Science Speaks*, takes just 48 of those prophecies and mathematically figures out the chances of just one man fulfilling them literally. There is one chance in 10(157) power. One chance in 10(53) power is the mathematical definition of impossibility.