

Reflections on the Birth of Jesus

David Flatt

Christmas is a special time of year. Families come together and enjoy the traditions of the season. When I was growing up, I enjoyed eating mom's Christmas cookies and anxiously waiting for Santa. Yet, there was a bit of uneasiness around the holiday. We did not recognize Christmas as the birthday of Jesus. The Bible does not identify the date of Jesus' birth. However, were people thinking and singing about Jesus bad? As a kid, this was confusing.

Of course, the Bible does not instruct us to commemorate the birth of Jesus as it instructs us to commemorate His death. Regrettably, though, the birth of Jesus is rarely considered. As an adult, I appreciate how people acknowledge the birth of our Savior.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke highlight specific details of the birth of Jesus. They emphasize a critical aspect of the nature of Jesus. Jesus was not just another baby born in the world. Jesus was divine. He was God born in the flesh. He was able to provide for the needs of our souls: salvation from our sins. This is what makes His birth significant.

Some of the most spiritually rich songs ever composed were written about the birth of Jesus. For example, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" is about what Jesus' birth means for the world. Read the lyrics.

*Hark the herald Angels sing
"Glory to the newborn king"
Peace on Earth, and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled*

*Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With Angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark the herald Angels sing
"Glory to the newborn king"*

*Christ, by highest Heaven adored
Christ the everlasting Lord
Late in time, behold Him come
Offspring of the favored one*

*Veiled in flesh, the God had seen
Hail the incarnate deity
Pleased, as man with men to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark the herald Angels sing
"Glory to the newborn king"*

*Hail the Heaven born Prince of peace
Hail the son of righteousness
Light and life to all He brings
Risen with healing in his wings*

*Born to realize his pouring life
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of Earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark the herald Angels sing
"Glory to the newborn king"*

This song mentions Jesus' reconciliation, the salvation of the nations, divinity, healing, and new life. The song praises Jesus as King. This song calls the world to Jesus for who He is and what He alone can do. How many people have been drawn to Jesus by the truth of these lyrics?

The birth of Jesus forces us to confront unavoidable truth. We cannot treat the nativity of Jesus as a mere decoration of the season. There are consequences in how we respond to Christ. Notice three lessons taught through the birth of Jesus.

1. There is no middle ground with Jesus. If Jesus is God with us, can we ignore Him? If Jesus is King, can we refuse Him our obedience? Of course, we cannot. Yet, we often try. Some will praise Him in December, but not throughout the rest of the year.

Kings demand full allegiance from their subjects. Jesus is no different. He will permit our rebellion, but only for a time. Jesus is depicted in the Bible as much more than a sweet newborn wrapped in swaddling clothes. As King, He is our Judge (Acts 17:30-31). He will save His people and punish those who have rebelled against Him. Therefore, we must surrender to Him in obedience.

2. There is no fear of the future with Jesus. Shortly after Jesus was born, His parents took Him to be dedicated at the Temple. An old priest named Simeon had been living in hope of the Messiah, the Consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would live to see the Messiah. Simeon responded with joy and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32). Simeon did not fear death. He could die with peace.

Jesus came to the world to save us from the consequence of our sin: eternal death. Believers in Jesus do not have to fear death. Jesus assures their future: eternal life.

3. We can be saved by Jesus. The angel Gabriel declared that Mary's child would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Who are Jesus' people? Who are His family? As an adult,

Jesus once asked this question to an audience. He said those who do the will of His Father are His family (Matt. 12:48-50). We must become part of His family by doing the will of His Father.

Christmas is a happy time of year; however, for some, the holidays are sad and depressing. Many people in the world who are broken, sad, and lonely. Those are also Jesus' people (Luke 4:17-21). The birth of Jesus can make a meaningful difference in the lives of the brokenhearted. Through faith, Jesus can heal, forgive, and renew the hopeless. Jesus came to save everyone from their sins. This is good news of great joy for all people!

Conclusion

While the Bible does not instruct us to celebrate the birth of Jesus as a church, this does not mean we should ignore His birth. Take the opportunity of the season to talk about Jesus. Maybe you know someone hurting in the brokenness of sin. Tell them of the importance of Jesus being born to save them from their sins. Rather than holiday music being the background noise, pay attention to the lyrics. They contain the timeless truth of Jesus, our Savior. Don't just sing along. Follow along. Follow Him. Give your life to Christ, our glorious King.