

CHRISTMAS

Lesson

Christmas 2009 w/Answers

This week, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, Immanuel, God With Us. I read somewhere many years ago that Christians actually have their holiday celebrations reversed. That is, that the holiday that we should spend more time celebrating and doing gift-giving for is Easter, when Jesus died and rose again -- giving us the gift of eternal life.



As we prepare to celebrate His birth, I think that it is worth remembering that, as we give gifts to each other, Jesus has already given us the greatest gift of all. With that in mind, let's once again this year read the story of the birth of Christ. To help tie His birth into our Old Testament Survey series of lessons, we will use Matthew Chapter 1 through Chapter 2, verse 12.

After reading Matthew 1:1-2:12, consider the following:

1. What was the name of the Mother of Boaz, and what was her background?
 - a. ANSWER: Rahab the harlot from Jericho, who helped the Hebrew spies just before Joshua's army captured the city. Thus we find in Jesus' bloodline a prostitute.
2. What was the name of Solomon's mother and what sin did his father commit with this woman, and with the woman's husband?
 - a. ANSWER: Solomon's mother was Bathsheba, who had an illicit sexual encounter with David while her husband Uriah was fighting in David's army. Compounding this first sin, David then planned and commanded Uriah's murder so that he could marry Bathsheba. Thus we also find an adulterer and a murderer in Jesus' bloodline.
3. Using only Genesis 22 and Matthew 1, how can we tell that God had a plan for saving his creation from the beginning, and that the birth of Jesus was accomplished exactly according to this plan?
 - a. ANSWER 1: The lineage itself was in accordance with the prophecy God gave Abraham all the way back in Genesis 22:15-18. In it, God promises that He will send a blessing for all nations on the earth through Abraham's offspring.
 - b. ANSWER 2: The exactness as demonstrated by Matthew - the precise number of generations required to bridge each period, from Abraham to David, from David to the exile in Babylon, and, finally, from the exile to the Christ.
4. Contrast the attitude of the Jews during the time of Mary "being with child" with the attitude of society today. How would Mary be viewed in today's society, versus then?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Today, unmarried pregnancies are accepted, and for some, expected. The number of working women alone who elect to have a child without ever getting married is growing rapidly.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Society today is not focused on family and traditional family values, in contrast to the way it was during the time of Mary.

5. If today Mary said that the "Holy Spirit" had caused her to be "with child", what are some of the reactions she would get?
- ANSWER 1: "Crazy!"
 - ANSWER 2: "Cool, girl!"
 - ANSWER 3: "Whatever."
 - ANSWER 4: "What commune do you belong to?"
 - ANSWER 5: A cult following would develop.
 - ANSWER 6: "Which fertility clinic did you use? Are they expensive?"
 - ANSWER 7: "Do you also have a tattoo?"
6. What can we observe in the lives of Mary and Joseph before the baby Jesus is born that provides us an indication of what kind of people they will be after Jesus is born?
- ANSWER 1: Both were aware of the law and scriptures and what was required of them.
 - ANSWER 2: Both recognized God's presence and the angel of Lord.
 - ANSWER 3: Both complied with secular law and took seriously their obligation to be included in the census.
 - ANSWER 4: Both were aware of society's dim view of an unmarried pregnant woman.
 - ANSWER 5: From all of the above, we can tell that Mary and Joseph will raise the baby in a very moral, scripturally-based, and law-abiding home within Jewish society, as tradition and the teaching of the local rabbis would dictate.
7. As we consider Joseph and Mary and the baby, we can see why they would be celebrating the birth of Jesus - since it was just as God had foretold them during Mary's pregnancy. We can see that they, and the shepherds in the field, were joyful even though times were difficult -- the government was harsh, and hope seemed a distant dream. Now look at Matt. 2:1-12 and translate this event into a present-day story that we might read in a newspaper about a struggling family whose son suddenly comes into wealth. How would this story play out in society today?
- ANSWER 1: Today we would view the gifts of the foreign dignitaries as something akin to someone winning the lottery - sudden wealth for which no work was required, potentially putting that person in a position of never having to work again.
 - ANSWER 2; We would probably see lawyers come rushing to the "aid" of the child by "shielding" his new-found wealth and preventing the quarrelling parents from getting access. Or worse, convincing the child to go to court in order to get "divorced" from his parents.
 - ANSWER 3: I believe that you can see where I'm going: Today as a society, we seem to be more focused on gaining or storing up wealth so that we don't have to work; or, should we come into great wealth suddenly, we live a lavish lifestyle until the wealth is gone. Society today is not looking for God's salvation, nor do they care about His only Son and the great gift given to us.
8. As this year comes to a close, and we see around us tough financial times, an uncertain economy, and failure of the basic institutions that we depend on, are we also seeing a rise in people visiting or returning to church?
- ANSWER: No. In fact, if you compare people's reaction when the Twin Towers fell in New York with their reaction when Wall Street fell, you will observe quite a difference. In 2001, people flooded into churches, even when they weren't open. Churches added services, opened their doors for longer periods of time, and prayer at work became almost commonplace. But not this year. Mankind instead is focusing internally, believing that through their own power, hope can be restored to the world - because today we believe that hope and security come solely from financial security and wealth.

9. The Jews believed that Christ would come and put an end to the repressive Roman Rule and that He would restore the Jews to the great nation that they once were. They confused having a strong government with providing peace and security. As a society today, what do we believe will give us peace and security? Is it Christ?

- a. ANSWER: We believe that a strong dollar, a solid economy, cheap oil, less government, full employment, and major medical breakthroughs will provide this sense of peace and security. No one who does not know Christ as their personal savior is looking to Him for their source of peace - but they should be.

10. Why should we be celebrating the birth of Jesus this year in particular?

- a. ANSWER 1: Just as with the Jews during the time of Christ's birth, Jesus brings us a hope and sense of peace during a time of great turmoil and uncertainty.
- b. ANSWER 2: Even more so today, we do not have one government suppressing people - we have many. We don't have one economy in turmoil - we have economies in trouble globally.
- c. ANSWER 3: Today there is no place anyone can turn anywhere in the world to find peace through wealth, or politics, or position. No asset class, stocks, bonds, commodities, art, gold etc can be depended on for security.
- d. ANSWER 4: Today we have lost our sense of trust in all institutions, including the church.
- e. ANSWER 5: Today we have also lost our trust in people. No leader, no captain of industry - indeed, no industry - can be trusted to survive, to prosper, or to provide any security or peace.

Today more than ever, there is only one person we can turn to – Jesus, the Christ. Imagine the world today if Jesus had never been born; imagine the complete and total lack of hope – the dark of night. But Jesus' birth brings God's light into a dark and dying world. There is hope – eternal and unchanging – hope, and a peace beyond understanding. That is what we celebrate this Christmas – that Immanuel, God With Us, has been born, lived, died, and rose again – and...He's coming again! Hallelujah!

Let's celebrate that God's great light has been born into the world, and let's celebrate that through Jesus, hope reigns eternal.

Have a great and joyful Christmas, and praise Christ for His great gift!

In Christ,

Wes