

“Now The Birth Of Jesus Christ Was As Follows...”

Matthew 1:18

Or

The Gospel Of Jesus According To Hallmark

How much of what you believe about the scripture is based on truth and how much is based on Hallmark greeting cards? You might be surprised to find out the answers. Take a trivia test on the birth of the Savior. Match wits with your friends, family and coworkers. Better have a Bible with you to prove you're right. Some beliefs about Christ's birth are so strong, yet so wrong that you will become an instant expert when you point them out. Good luck, have fun and remember, before Christmas pageants, before mini-series, before Hollywood, before Hallmark Cards... there was the Bible.

A Word From The Author: Before you begin the exciting journey of learning once and for all what God the Holy Spirit has revealed to man concerning the event surrounding the birth of Christ please allow me as the author to suggest some creative uses for this tool.

The Advent Calendar: You will notice that there are sixty one questions on the “Christmas Test”. This is to allow you to use it as an Advent Calendar. By taking two questions each day you can meditate on the truths of the Incarnation for the month before Christmas.

Family Devotionals: You will find your children (of all ages) intrigued by what the Bible actually says concerning the birth of Christ. They will be fascinated to discover that they believe many erroneous facts. They will be excited to learn new and eternal truths. By taking two or three questions each evening at the evening meal you will find a lively discussion often ensues. I would strongly suggest that the father read the questions and master the answers as your children will more and more desire the deep spiritual truths of the Incarnation of Christ rather than the stories and fables which are so often fed to them. This is an excellent tool to begin your family in daily evening devotionals. Having finished the Christmas Test you will want to continue reading the Bible each evening at the dinner table and discussing the content of what is read with your children.

Bible Studies and Sunday School Classes: Many Bible studies and Sunday School classes function on a semester basis. The month of December is often considered a dead month because of sporadic attendance. This is an excellent tool to maintain an interest in Bible study during this time. You will find, especially among adults, many wrong convictions which are strongly and emotionally held. The Christmas Test will keep your class awake amid the lively discussion and provide a motivation for faithful attendance during the hectic days of the Christmas holidays.

Personal Edification: Last but not least the test with the answers and Scripture are presented for your personal edification. Many immerse themselves in the questions and Scripture simply for their personal spiritual benefit that they may speak confidently and truthfully concerning the Incarnation of Christ – both the Historical Revelation and the Doctrinal Truths.

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How much of what you believe about the scripture is based on truth and how much is based on Hallmark greeting cards? You might be surprised to find out the answers. Take a trivia test on the birth of the Savior. Match wits with your friends, family and coworkers. Better have a Bible with you to prove you're right. Some beliefs about Christ's birth are so strong, yet so wrong that you will become an instant expert when you point them out. Good luck, have fun and remember, before Christmas pageants, before mini-series, before Hollywood, before Hallmark Cards... there was the Bible.

(T = True; F = False)

According to the Bible...

- 1) ____ In the style of all great heroic epics of the Greco/Roman period the Christmas story begins with the birth of a god-man, a superhero, conceived of the gods and imbued with both human traits and divine power.
- 2) ____ Of the four Gospels only one, the book of Luke, gives an account of the actual birth of Christ.
- 3) ____ Jesus was born on December 25th.
- 4) ____ In accordance with the early Church in the Book of Acts and the teachings of the Apostles, we celebrate the birth of Christ each year.
- 5) ____ Contrary to conventional wisdom, the Christmas Revelation actually spans a period of several years.
- 6) ____ Unlike many of the priests, Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes of the time, Zacharias was both righteous and blameless in his service of the Lord.
- 7) ____ In the temple, Zacharias was confronted by the Angel Gabriel, who foretold the birth of a son to his wife Elizabeth and commanded that he be named “John”.
- 8) ____ Because of this and other duties the Angel Gabriel is known as the “Messenger Angel”.
- 9) ____ His role (Gabriel) continues in that he also announced the coming birth of Jesus to both Mary and Joseph.
- 10) ____ At the time of Christ's birth many Gentiles were also waiting expectantly for a Messiah. Among these were Wise Men, righteous god seekers, skilled in the interpretation of God's working through the stars and signs. These were the Wise Men who came to Jesus bearing gifts

- 11) _____ The Magi, although Gentiles, were familiar with the Biblical prophetic texts and no doubt kept them among other sacred religious and mystical writings in their libraries. They recognized the star as the fulfillment of these prophecies and, as a result, headed out for Bethlehem to offer their gifts to the new born king.
- 12) _____ Even if you had known the prophecies concerning Jesus, you would not have been able to join the shepherds in worshipping the baby Jesus as He lay in the manger.
- 13) _____ The angels who appeared to the shepherds were led by Gabriel
- 14) _____ The angels told the shepherd where to find the baby Jesus
- 15) _____ The birth, although prophesied in scripture, was hidden from all except those to whom God chose to reveal it through His angels.
- 16) _____ The Christmas Revelation relates the birth of two babies.
- 17) _____ In the Christmas Revelation, the first appearance of an angel is to Mary.
- 18) _____ The Angel appeared to Mary at the time of the Immaculate Conception by the Holy Spirit
- 19) _____ The Angel appeared to Mary and Joseph on the same evening.
- 20) _____ While the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, the name of the Angel which appeared to Joseph is not recorded in Holy Scriptures.
- 21) _____ At no point did Mary hear directly from God concerning the birth of Jesus.
- 22) _____ Mary was selected by God because of her righteousness and piety to Him. She was above all a woman worthy of this honor and was chosen because of her deep faith and devotion to God
- 23) _____ In contrast nothing is said about Joseph's righteousness before the birth of Christ.
- 24) _____ Mary believed the Angel of the Lord when he revealed to her that she would bear the Messiah.
- 25) _____ From beginning to end Mary's faith and acceptance of Jesus' deity as the Messiah was unwavering
- 26) _____ There was a lot of gossip concerning the legitimacy of Jesus both before and immediately after His birth.
- 27) _____ Mary was a teenager at the time of her conception by the Holy Spirit.
- 28) _____ No one believed Mary's claim that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

- 29) _____ Joseph's initial intention was to break off the engagement and marriage, but quietly and in a righteous manner
- 30) _____ The birth of John the Baptist holds a central position in the Christmas Revelation
- 31) _____ Because of their sharing the unique experiences of miraculous pregnancies, their respective son's close ties in ministry and their own ties of family, Elizabeth and Mary shared a life long friendship resulting in Elizabeth being a great support and encouragement to Mary throughout her life.
- 32) _____ The birth of Jesus came at an inopportune time. A better time would have been before or after the census, thus not requiring a trip to Bethlehem.
- 33) _____ Mary rode on a donkey to Bethlehem.
- 34) _____ Joseph wandered through Bethlehem knocking on doors trying to find a place to stay but he was turned out everywhere he looked.
- 35) _____ Jesus was born in a Manger. Joseph and Mary ended up in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.
- 36) _____ At Jesus' birth a star shown over the manger.
- 37) _____ In accordance with the scriptural account, "the little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes...", the baby Jesus did not cry, as many babies do, and as a result began to manifest His deity on the very first night of His birth.
- 38) _____ At the time of Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph were married.
- 39) _____ After the birth of Jesus, Mary remained a virgin and in a state of perpetual virginity and purity devoted herself to the service of God all her life.
- 40) _____ The angel of the Lord who made his proclamation to the shepherds appeared to them in the sky, hovering above them.
- 41) _____ It was an act of grace for God to first reveal the location of the baby Jesus to shepherds as shepherds were considered by the Law to be unclean.
- 42) _____ The angels who appeared to the shepherds had white robes, wings and halos.
- 43) _____ The angels came proclaiming, "Peace on earth and good will towards men"
- 44) _____ The shepherds found the manger unaided by the star.
- 45) _____ The angels took the shepherds to the manger.

- 46) ____ At the manger, the angels hovered overhead, praising God, as the shepherds worshiped the baby Jesus.
- 47) ____ The angels, when they appeared to the Shepherds, were singing. The picture is of an “angelic choir”.
- 48) Unlike the Shepherds who were dumbfounded by the information provided by the angles, Mary, who also was visited by an angle, in contrast boldly shared the information she received publicly and with all who would listen.
- 49) ____ The Magi consulted the Holy Scriptures which led them to Bethlehem and the baby Jesus.
- 50) ____ The Magi, upon seeing the star in the east, followed it directly to Bethlehem.
- 51) ____ There were no prophecies, however, concerning the exact location of Jesus’ residence which is why the Magi needed the star to guide them.
- 52) ____ The chief priests and scribes consulted the Holy Scriptures which isolated Bethlehem as Jesus’ birthplace.
- 53) ____ After receiving their instructions from the priests and scribes, the Magi came to visit the baby Jesus in the manger.
- 54) ____ There were three Magi who came riding camels and bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- 55) ____ The gifts of the Magi (Magi) – gold, frankincense and myrrh, were of prophetic significance concerning the Messiah and the death He would experience.
- 56) ____ One of the indicators of the special position Mary would someday hold in the church was the fact that when the Magi arrived they paid homage to Mary and venerated her as the “mother of God”.
- 57) ____ The shepherds and the Magi all converged upon the baby Jesus in the manger.
- 58) ____ The Magi were from the East.
- 59) ____ From it’s first appearance, the star led the Magi directly to Jesus.
- 60) ____ Although the Magi found their way to the baby Jesus in quite a miraculous way, there was nothing particularly miraculous about their return home.
- 61) ____ The pagan Magi were the only people in the Christmas revelation to hear directly from God.
- 62) ____ After Jesus’, Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem and set up housekeeping.

- 63) _____ Shortly after Jesus' birth they were married and at the ceremony the prophetess Ramona prophesied concerning the death of the baby Jesus.
- 64) _____ Jesus was a beautiful baby who grew into a handsome man with long flowing hair.
- 65) _____ The Christmas Revelation ends with the arrival of the Magi.
- 66) _____ Mary was one of the great witnesses of Jesus in the New Testament Church. Both the Gospels and The Book of Acts has accounts of her ministry and her impact on the early church.
- 67) _____ In the early church pilgrimages were regularly held to the locations associated with the birth of Christ. The Inn, the stall, the manger and most notably the swaddling cloth in which he was wrapped - all become sources of veneration and numerous miracles are associated with these locations and objects.

Answer Key:

1. **F – Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35; John 1:14; Philippians 2:5 - 11; Romans 5:17 & 18 (In the style of all great heroic epics of the Greco/Roman period the Christmas story begins with the birth of a god-man, a superhero, conceived of the gods and imbued with both human traits but divine power.)**

The immaculate conception of Mary and the Incarnation is not the story of a man conceived of the gods who becomes a heroic figure worthy of the great mythologies of the day. Jesus Incarnation differs from these decadent tales of mythology in a number of ways.

First: Unlike the Greek and Roman mythological figures such as Hercules and others conceived of the gods, God the Son did not come into existence at His Incarnation. God the Son pre – existed His birth. Jesus Christ did not become the Son of God at His birth, rather God the Son came to earth at His birth. He was eternally God the Son before His birth, He was God the Son during the time of His Incarnation and earthly ministry and after His earthly ministry was finished He remains God the Son throughout eternity. (John 1:1-5, 14, 30; 8:58; Colossians 1:15 – 17; Hebrews 13:8)

Second: The immaculate conception of Mary is not the story of the lust of the gods but rather the Incarnation of God the Son. No sexual liaison is hinted at. In fact just the opposite is true. Mary was a virgin at her Immaculate Conception and remained a virgin till after the birth of Christ. The birth of Christ was not that of a violated human at the hands of the gods but rather the divine birth, the Incarnation of Christ via the Immaculate Conception of a virgin the birth of Christ by the virgin Mary. Mary was virgin both in conception and in birth. (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35; John 1:14)

Third: Both God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and God the Father were pure and sinless throughout the Incarnation, life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Unlike the debased and perverted mythological tales of the time the Incarnation of Christ is one of purity, truth and salvation. Also unlike the mythological heroes of the time Jesus Christ was not part man and part God – He was fully man but at all times fully God. He never ceased to be God nor was he ever separate from God. The unity of the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit was never broken and remained three, yet one, throughout the entire earthly ministry of God the Son. (John 1:14 – 18; 5:30; 8:28; 10:30; 14:9; Colossians 2:9)

Fourth: Christ came not to model the hero-warrior but to live the sinless life so as to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin. He did not come to offer a pattern, that if followed, one might also spiritually evolve from man to god. Christ came to offer Himself a sacrifice for man's helpless race thus providing salvation apart from works. (Mark 10:45; Ephesians 2:8 & 9; Philippians 2:5 – 11; Hebrews 9:23 – 26)

Lastly: All mankind lies under the curse of the imputed sin of Adam. Man is sinful not because he sins, but rather man sins because he is sinful. Man is born with Adam's sin and Adam's curse imputed into him. Man is born helpless and depraved, unable to offer works or remedy for his sinful condition. Christ, born of a virgin, was born with His perfect nature and not the imputed sin of Adam. It was absolutely necessary for Christ to be born of a virgin and this birth lies at the heart of the great doctrine of Imputation. (Ephesians 2:1 & 2; Romans 5:15 – 19)

2. **T – (Of the four Gospels only one, the book of Luke, gives an account of the actual birth of Christ.)**

Only the book of Luke gives an account of the birth of Christ (Luke 2:6 & 7) *“And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”*. The book of Matthew covers the period before (Matthew 1:18 – 25) and after (Matthew 2:1 & 11) but does not actually give an account of the birth of Christ. The book of Mark (Mark 1:1 – 4) begins with the adult ministry of John the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus. The book of John begins with the doctrine of the Incarnation (John 1:1 – 14) but does not cover the actual historical events of Christ's birth. Like Mark, the Historical Revelation of Christ begins in the Gospel of John with the ministry of John the Baptist, his testimony concerning Jesus; Jesus testimony concerning Himself and the beginnings of His discipleship.

ministry (John 1:15 – 51). Isaiah 7:17 gives us the prophecy “*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*” But this passage is prophetic in nature and not an actual account of the historical events of birth of Christ. Only Luke covers the actual birth of Christ and the events of that night (Luke 2:1 – 20).

3. F – (Jesus was born on December 25th.)

The Bible does not fix a certain day, month and year for Jesus’ birth. There are historical events which the divine revelation refers to that can fix the approximate time in history (for example: the death of Herod and the governorship of Quirunius) but, as Unger’s Bible Dictionary points out, “the modern chronologist is confronted with no inconsiderable difficulty at the very outset to fix the exact date of the nativity of Jesus Christ.... This is due to the fact that he is compelled to base his computation on dateless documents written in a remote antiquity. For neither sacred nor profane authors in those time were at all accustomed to record historical facts under distinct dates. All demands were satisfied when known occurrences were referred to definite periods, as within a certain generation, or under a specific dynasty, or within the reign of a given ruler already familiar to the contemporaries addressed; for our modern method of historical notation according to the calendar was something altogether unknown to the ancients.” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary, page 197; Moody Press.) We can therefore accurately fix the era and even an approximation of the year but not the day. Christmas, then, is celebrated as the remembrance of the birth of Christ and not as the exact date. It is the celebration of an historical event, not of an historical day. In Luke 1:1 – 5 and Matthew 2:1, we learn it was set in the general period of the lifetime of Theophilus, during reign of Herod; in Luke 2:1 – 6, we learn it was during the census of Caesar Augustus, under the governorship of Quirunius. Beyond this Deuteronomy 29:29 tells us that the “*secret things belong to the Lord, the things revealed to man...*” and God has kept this date secret and we should leave it at that. (**Authors note:** This should also lay to rest once and for all the pseudo scientific extrapolations of the positions of the stars, planets and constellations on the day of Christ’s birth in an effort to give some sort of scientific or astronomical credence to the appearance of the star. This also applies to astrological mystics who seek to do the same. Since these dates - the appearance of the star, the birth of Christ and the arrival of the Magi, are withheld from us by God, all such speculation is meaningless as the data necessary to make them is purposefully hidden from us by God.)

4. F – (In accordance with the early Church in the Book of Acts and the teachings of the Apostles, we celebrate the birth of Christ each year.)

There is no record in the Holy Scriptures of the celebration of Christmas. Both Galatians 4:8 – 11 and Colossians 2:16 – 19 free us as Christians living under the New Covenant from the forced observances of dates. Romans 14: 4 – 8, allows for the free observance of dates as a form of worship and faith. The observance of Christmas as an act of worship, thanksgiving and meditation is a matter of conscience and one may choose to observe or not to observe this holiday as a matter of personal conviction. In terms of Church history, the actual celebration of Christmas has not been uniform. In fact there was a time in England during the period of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan roundheads that the celebration of Christmas was outlawed. This was done not out of secular but rather, religious conviction. The date of Easter, being fixed by the Bible was remembered, but Christmas being neither fixed in scripture, nor alluded to in the Word of God, was outlawed as Roman Catholic superstition. Christmas as we know it today, and the prevalent message of the ambiguous “spirit of Christmas” is as widely attributed to the writings of Charles Dickens. Should secular governments cease to recognize a “Christmas Holiday” they would do so in violation to the Doctrine of Dickens, but it would have no significance in light of the Holy Scripture. As Christians, this observance is an excellent opportunity to share Christ within our sphere of influence and we should by all means take advantage of the support of popular culture as long as it lasts.

5. T - Luke 1:1-2:38; Matthew 1:18- 2:23 (Contrary to conventional wisdom, the Christmas Revelation actually spans a period of several years.)

The Christmas Revelation as described in the Holy Scriptures, spans a time period of several years. The actual time frame work extended from the announcement of the impending pregnancy of Elizabeth and subsequent birth of John the Baptist to the return of Jesus from exile in Egypt.

6. T – Luke 1:5 – 9 (Unlike many of the priests, Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes of the time, Zacharias was both righteous and blameless in his service of the Lord.)

Unlike many of the participants in the events surrounding Christ's birth who were either by standers (the shepherds), ignorant (the scribes), corrupt (Herod) or out right pagan (the Magi) it is recorded of Zacharias in Luke 1:6, that he was, *“righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.”*

7. T – Luke 1:13, 18 & 19 (In the temple, Zacharias was confronted by the Angel Gabriel, who foretold the birth of a son to his wife Elizabeth and commanded that he be named “John”.)

The Angel who appeared to Zacharias was Gabriel.

8. F – Deuteronomy 29:29; I Corinthians 4:6; I Timothy 4:7 (Because of this and other duties the Angel Gabriel is known as the “Messenger Angel”.)

Gabriel is referred to in no other way in the Word of God than Gabriel. In Luke 1:19 Gabriel is indeed sent as a “messenger” by God to Zacharias. Again, in Luke 1:26 the Angel Gabriel is sent to Mary. It was Gabriel who visited the prophet Daniel (Daniel 8:16 & 9:21). Gabriel is one of the few angels in the Word of God who is mentioned by name. Gabriel identifies himself not as the “Messenger Angel” but rather *“I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God”* (Luke 1:19) Although having the role of a messenger in Scriptures, readers should refrain from making Gabriel “The Messenger Angel” from these historical texts. No such designation is given him by the Holy Scriptures. We should refrain from attributing to angles roles, names and status which is not specifically revealed to us by God the Holy Spirit in His Word. It is well that we remember the admonition of God the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy 29:29 *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”* If God the Holy Spirit has held something back as a “*secret thing*” belonging only to the Lord we should respect His decision and not as warned in I Corinthians 4:6, *“... exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant...”* Likewise as instructed by God the Holy Spirit in I Timothy 4:7 *“But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women...”* we should refrain from all mythological speculations.

9. F – Luke 1:26; Mathew 1:20 (His (Gabriel's) role continues in that he also announced the coming birth of Jesus to both Mary and Joseph.)

In Luke 1:26 the Angel Gabriel is sent to Mary but in Matthew 1:20 the Angel who appears to Joseph is not designated but simply called “an Angel of the Lord”.

10. F - Matthew 2:1 – 6; Acts 13:6 – 8; Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; James 2:19 (At the time of Christ's birth many Gentiles were also waiting expectantly for a Messiah. Among these were Wise Men, righteous god seekers , skilled in the interpretation of God's working through the stars and signs. These were the Wise Men who came to Jesus bearing gifts.)

The origin of these men is not known. The Greek word for these men is MAGOS and in all other Scriptural passages it is translated “Magician” or “Sorcerer”. If this class of men were indeed considered “wise” (thus the sometimes used transliteration “Wise Men”) their wisdom was in the magical arts and not in academic studies. The Greek word for “wise men” – PHRONIMOS ((I Corinthians 10:15) is not used in this passage, rather the word MAGOS meaning Sorcerer. These men should not be confused with the classical Greek

and Roman philosophers and scholars of the day. These men were not from the West, rather they were Sorcerers from the East. It is a great leap from Greco/Roman Mathematical Astronomy to Eastern Occult Astrology. These men were of the latter class, they were pagan sorcerers. In every other passage of Scripture where the word MAGOS is used it is in the context of spiritual conflict (Example Acts 13:6 – 8) and should not be romanticized. The fact that they did homage to Christ is no indication of their righteous character nor that they somehow had special insight into God's plan hidden from His elect, unrevealed in His holy Word, yet revealed to these sorcerers through their incantations or profane writings. Throughout the Word of God both demons and those demon possessed fear Christ and pay him homage. This began here at His birth and continues throughout His earthly ministry (Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; James 2:19). The actions of these Magi, these Sorcerers should be neither embellished nor romanticized at the expense of holy Scripture.

- 11. F – Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:17; Matthew 2:1 - 6 (The Magi, although Gentiles, were familiar with the Biblical prophetic texts and no doubt kept them among other sacred religious and mystical writings in their libraries. They recognized the star as the fulfillment of these prophecies and, as a result, headed out for Bethlehem to offer their gifts to the new born king.)**

There is no prophecy concerning a star and the coming of Christ in the Bible. In the Scripture the word “star” is often used with a figurative meaning. (In Numbers 24:17, II Peter 2:1 and Revelation 22:16 the word “star” has Messianic symbolism. Contrastingly, in Isaiah 14:12 the word “star” represents satan. In Amos 5:26 and Acts 7:43 the star is the symbol of a demonic cultic pagan god. None of these nor any of the others can be construed to be a prophecy calling the reader to look for a star in the east which would in turn signal a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.) It is not known why the Magi associated the star with the birth of Christ. It is not known why they would associate the birth of Christ to be of such importance that they should travel to Him bringing Him gifts. Although the Magi responded to the appearance of the star and presupposed the birth of a king, there is no evidence whatsoever of their having used the Holy Scriptures to ascertain this. The Bible contains no prophecies concerning a star as an indication of the coming of the Messiah. If you will carefully read Matthew 2:1,2 you will find that upon their arrival the Magi made no claim of prior Biblical research which resulted in following a star to Jerusalem, what they said was, “*we have seen His star in the east*” nor did they reference any special revelation nor any pagan writings. There is absolutely no evidence for the teaching that pagan writings and prophets foretell divine Scriptural prophetic events such as the coming of Jesus the Messiah. Such superstitious teachings lower the value of Scriptural prophecy and assume a level of validity for other pagan mythologies which are never granted by God nor His Holy Word.

- 12. T - Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:2-6 (Even if you had known the prophecies concerning Jesus, you would not have been able to join the shepherds in worshiping the baby Jesus as He lay in the manger.)**

Even though you were versed in the Holy Scriptures, expecting the Messiah, had decided to live in Bethlehem in order to be there for the Messiah's birth, you would not, from Holy Scriptures, be found to be waiting with shepherds in the open air, associate Jesus and the manger nor have any idea of the exact day of His birth. To find Jesus you would need assistance either from the angels or the shepherds. Since there is no mention of a “star” in any of the prophecies concerning the birth of Christ you would not be looking for it's appearance nor associate it with the birth of Christ.

- 13. F – Luke 2:8 – 15 (The angels who appeared to the shepherds were led by Gabriel.)**

The only Angel referred to is “*an Angel of the Lord*” (Luke 2:9) who was accompanied by a “*multitude of heavenly host*”. (**Authors Note:** Some scholars universally attribute the appearance in the Old Testament of “the angel of the Lord” with Jesus, the second person of the Trinity. The fact the “angel of the Lord” is appearing to the shepherds while Jesus is in the manger should give us pause for reflection on this tendency.)

14. T – Luke 2:11 & 15; Micah 5:2 (The angels told the shepherd where to find the baby Jesus.)

The angels indicated the baby would be found in Luke 2:11 *“the city of David”* which the shepherd took to be Bethlehem. Also Micah 5:2 clearly places the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. If you were a shepherd versed in Holy Scriptures this would immediately come to mind. The angels then went on to be even more specific in Luke 2:12 by describing His exact location, *“... you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger.”* The shepherds then had two aids, prophecy and the angels testimony. However, to find the exact location of a baby in a town, you would need more than this to go on. Bethlehem was a starting point but you still needed to find the exact location. There is at this point no star and the angles did not lead the shepherds. Rather they were left to their own initiative.

15. F - Luke 2:21- 35 & 36 - 38; Matthew 2:1 – 6; Mark 15:43 (The birth, although prophesied in scripture, was hidden from all except those to whom God chose to reveal it through His angels.)

Evidently there were people looking for the Messiah at or around the time of Christ’s birth. Mentioned in Scripture are, among others, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna

16. T - Luke 1:5 - 17, 26 -38 (The Christmas Revelation relates the birth of two babies.)

The birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus Christ.

17. F - Luke 1:8 - 14 (In the Christmas Revelation, the first appearance of an angel is to Mary.)

The Angel Gabriel first appears to Zacharias in the temple.

18. F - Luke 1:34 & 35 (The Angel appeared to Mary at the time of the Immaculate Conception by the Holy Spirit.)

The Angel appeared to Mary and it was only later that she actually conceived of the Holy Spirit. (*“the Holy Spirit will come upon you”*) There is no record of how this (the conception) happened or if Mary was even aware of its occurrence at the time. The popular media depictions of a light or other visible presence at the time of the Immaculate Conception are pure fabrication. Although not simultaneous with the visitation by the Angel, Mary’s immaculate conception was evidently a short time after the Angel appeared because the pregnancy had time to become noticeable before Mary’s wedding to Joseph..

19. F - Matthew 1:18-24 (The Angel appeared to Mary and Joseph on the same evening.)

The Angel appeared to Mary before her conception. It was after this that she conceived of the Holy Spirit.(Matthew 1:18 *“the Holy Spirit will come upon you”*). Enough time then passed for her pregnancy to become known to Joseph (Matthew 1:19) and the families. It was at this time that Joseph determined to put her away. Then and only then, did the Angel appear to Joseph.

20. T – (While the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, the name of the Angel which appeared to Joseph is not recorded in Holy Scriptures.)

Matthew 1:20 only indicates that *“an Angel of the Lord”* appeared to Joseph, while Luke 1:26 – 28 does record that Mary was visited by the Angel Gabriel.

21. T – (At no point did Mary hear directly from God concerning the birth of Jesus.)

- ✠ Mary first hears from Gabriel in Luke 1:26 – 33;
- ✠ from her cousin Elizabeth in Luke 1:41 – 45, who confirms her baby as the promised Messiah;
- ✠ from Joseph in Matthew 1:18 – 25, when the message is also confirmed as a result of the revelation to Joseph by an Angel in a dream;
- ✠ from shepherds in Luke 2:8 – 20, who bring word of the divine nature of Jesus;

- ✠ from the Magi in Matthew 2:10 & 11, who attest to His Deity;
- ✠ finally from both Simeon (:25) and the prophetess Anna (:36) in Luke 2:21 – 38 who attest to His being the Messiah.

At no time did God directly speak to Mary as He had done in the past on momentous occasions such as Noah and the building of the Ark in Genesis 6:13 or Moses and the burning bush in Exodus 3:4.

22. F - In Luke 1:26 – 28 & 38 (Mary was selected by God because of her righteousness and piety to Him. She was above all a woman worthy of this honor and was chosen because of her deep faith and devotion to God.)

Mary is referred to as a “*virgin*” and as the “*favored one*”. It is proclaimed to her that “*the Lord is with you*”, and she submits with “*behold the bond slave of the Lord*”. Her life has many high points in the Holy Scriptures and there is nothing to indicate that her life before the birth of Christ was anything but as should befit a good Jewish girl. There are high points in Mary’s faith such as her submission to God at the announcement of her immaculate conception (Luke 1:38 “*Behold the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.*”) and her prayer of praise upon her meeting with Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-56). Mary’s humble submission and faith is in stark contrast to Zacharias’ lack of faith in Luke 1:18 – 22.

Equally true, though, is that there is no indication from scripture that she was anything other than a Jewish girl who responded in faith and obedience to God. There is nothing in the Word of God to indicate any special virtue or piety on her part that determined God’s selection of Mary to bear the Messiah. She was not mentioned in any special way as were...

- ✠ **Zacharias and Elizabeth**, “*righteous and blameless in all their ways*” (Luke 1:5 & 6)
- ✠ **Joseph** “*being a righteous man*” (Matthew 1:19;
- ✠ **Simeon** “*this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.*” (Luke 2:25),
- ✠ **The Prophetess Anna** who gave herself to worship, fasting and prayers, both recognizing Jesus and proclaiming His deity. (Luke 2:36 - 38)

The veneration of Mary, particularly her sinless nature as taught in the doctrines of her own immaculate conception and immaculate ascension into heaven has no Biblical base and is not recorded in Holy Scripture. Pope Pius the Second, announced these doctrines in 1854. Before this time none of these special aspects of Mary were held by the Church. The mythological and apocryphal teachings concerning her sinlessness, her own immaculate conception, her miracles, her ascension, her ability to receive prayers and mediate between man and God and her role as co-redemptress with Christ are alien to the Holy Scripture and have no basis in the divine revelation of the Word of God.

23. F – Matthew 1:18 & 19 (In contrast nothing is said about Joseph’s righteousness before the birth of Christ.)

Much to the amazement of many, just the opposite is true. Joseph is presented in Matthew 1:18 & 19 as “*being a righteous man*”. This is in contrast to many church speculations, traditions and embellishments which have no basis in Scripture. Mary is often portrayed as being selected by God, because of her piety, while Joseph is portrayed as at best incidental in his lifestyle. Some even go so far as to assume Joseph abandoned Mary, since he disappears from the narrative later in Scripture. In contrast to these myths, the Bible speaks out boldly of Joseph’s righteous character which precedes this event and shapes his reactions to the appearance of the angel and the pregnancy of Mary.

If we are going to speculate about Joseph’s behavior, why harp on the negatives. The Bible clearly says that he was a righteous man, why not give a righteous explanation to his absence from the Biblical narratives? It is true that after the incident at the Temple Joseph ceases to be mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. This does not however necessitate our creating myths concerning Joseph’s abandonment of Mary or his rejection of

Christ. It would be just as easy to say that Joseph was embarrassed by Mary's harping on Jesus. Examples Mary's behavior being...

- On their visit to Jerusalem *"Son, why have You treated us this way? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You."* (Luke 2:48);
- At the wedding feast in Cana *"They have no wine."* (John 2:4);
- At the outset of His ministry *"He has lost His mind"* (Mark 3:21)
- Again at the outset of His ministry, *"Come home"* (Mark 3:32)

It would be just as easy to speculate in a positive manner about Joseph. One could just as easily speculate that Joseph, being a righteous man and desiring as a good father to not crowd Jesus, to instead stay in the back ground so as not to not give other's an opportunity to confuse his earthly role as father with the role of God the Father. I can easily see Joseph receding into the shadows, giving Jesus plenty of space, plenty of room to shine on His own. Joseph's absence during Mary's embarrassing statements and actions can indeed reflect on Joseph's character in a positive light. Why not give Joseph the benefit of the doubt. Better yet, why not just say, "the Bible is silent and so am I".

24. T – Luke 1:45 (Mary believed the Angel of the Lord when he revealed to her that she would bear the Messiah.)

Luke 1:45 states, *"blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."*

25. F – (From beginning to end Mary's faith and acceptance of Jesus' deity as the Messiah was unwavering.)

Mary did submit to the revelation of Gabriel (Luke 1:38), she did believe the revelation of the Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:45), she did respond in faith and obedience (Luke 1:38) and her prayer in Luke 1:46-55 does reveal great faith.

This faith and obedience was not however a constant in her life. In Luke 2:41 – 50, the incident at the temple on the occasion of Jesus' 12th birthday and Jesus' referral to God as His Father, went right past Mary – *"And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them."* Again in Mark 3:20 & 21, 31 – 35 we find Mary, with the family, coming to take Jesus away, whom they perceive to be demented – *"And when His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses.... And His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him, and called Him.'" This is truly a low point in Mary's spiritual life. It is at this time that Jesus disavows His earthly family and proclaims His spiritual family, His true family, to be made up of those who follow Him in faith. Luke 8:19-21 "And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. And it was reported to Him, 'Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.' But He answered and said to them, 'My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.'"*

26. F - Matthew 1:18-23 (There was a lot of gossip concerning the legitimacy of Jesus both before and immediately after His birth.)

The only record of anyone questioning Jesus' legitimacy before his birth is that of Joseph's reaction. The Bible is careful to point out that this was carried out in a righteous manner and kept private, Matthew 1:19 *"And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly."* During His ministry Jesus' deity was often questioned as a result of His being the son of Joseph and Mary (John 6:42) but never His supposed illegitimacy. No doubt, if the Pharisees had this card to play they would not hesitate to do so as it would also allow them to get at Jesus through attacks on Mary as well. (John 8:3 – 11 clearly indicates the Pharisees zeal in making adultery a public issue.) Evidently Joseph did an outstanding and admirable job of protecting Mary's reputation both before and after the

revelation of the divine nature of her conception. The revelation of the immaculate conception is not the story of an unwed mother but rather that of a virgin mother. These are two completely different things and must not be confused.

27. F – Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:27 (Mary was a teenager at the time of her conception by the Holy Spirit.)

No ages are given for either Mary or Joseph. Mary is referred to as a “virgin” – Greek – PARTHENOS, which is best translated as “maiden”; “virgin” or “unmarried daughter”. There exist no primary source material to establish Mary as a young teenage girl. There is no primary source material to establish that loving, caring Jewish parents gave their daughters away in marriage as young teens. Given the godly nature of Joseph, I doubt seriously that he was interested in a young teenage girl for his wife. Frankly I find the fixation of many pastors in describing Mary as a girl in her early teens not only without basis for fact but morally questionable.

28. F - Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:39-45; Luke 2:22 -38 (No one believed Mary’s claim that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.)

There is no evidence that Mary ever argued for the divine nature of her conception. God however, was not silent on this issue and did bring others to her side. First Gabriel, then other angels, next Joseph, then Elizabeth, this being followed by the shepherds, the Magi and lastly Simeon and Anna at the temple. All these attested to the divine nature of her child. In all these events though Mary remained silent. There is not a single instance in Scripture of anyone questioning the legitimacy of Jesus birth during His earthly ministry nor of Mary as having to defend her virtue.

29. T - Matthew 1:19 (Joseph’s initial intention was to break off the engagement and marriage, but quietly and in a righteous manner.)

This is in stark contrast to what could have taken place. The public humiliation of the adulterous woman in John 8:1 -6 could have been called for - including her subsequent stoning, which was entirely consistent with the Law of Moses. (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22)

30. T - Luke 1:57 - 80 (The birth of John the Baptist holds a central position in the Christmas Revelation)

The Christmas Revelation begins, not as is commonly presented on stage with the Angel’s appearance to Mary, but rather with Gabriel’s appearance to Zacharias in the temple (Luke 1:5 - 17). The birth of John the Baptist and subsequent Messianic prophecies hold a central position in the Christmas Revelation.

31. F - (Because of their sharing the unique experiences of miraculous pregnancies, their respective son’s close ties in ministry and their own ties of family, Elizabeth and Mary shared and life long friendship resulting in Elizabeth being a great support and encouragement to Mary throughout her life.)

It may be surprising to learn that after the birth of John the Baptist, Elizabeth disappears from the Biblical narrative. Like most of the other participants of the historical events surrounding Jesus birth, she is never heard from again – Joseph, Mary and John the Baptist being the exceptions. (Those who are never heard from again include – Zacharias and Elizabeth, the shepherds, the wisemen, Simion, Anna and most notably, Joseph)

32. F – Luke 2:6; Galatians 4:4; Luke 2:4 – 6; Matthew 2:1 – 6 (The birth of Jesus came at an inopportune time. A better time would have been before or after the census, thus not requiring a trip the Bethlehem.)

Although much is made of the bad timing of Jesus birth in terms of the census, the trip to Bethlehem, the crowded conditions, etc, etc, nothing could be further from the truth. In this aspect as in all aspects God

reigned supreme, Jesus only did the will of the Father and events played out exactly as pre-ordained by God. Jesus came forth into the world when “the days were completed”; God the Holy Spirit reveals in Galatians 4:4 that this was in the “fullness of time”. It was not poor timing to travel to Bethlehem but rather the fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus often told His disciples when speaking of His coming crucifixion, “My hour is not yet come” (John 2:4). In His birth, His ministry, His crucifixion, His resurrection and His return, all things are as they should be, as foreordained by God, as fulfilled by prophecy. Things may seem to be out of control in the eyes of mere mortals when in fact God is in complete control and things are as exactly as they should be. This is an important lesson for modern day Christians. Just as we should see the circumstances and timing of the birth of Jesus through the lens of Scripture so we should see His return. Things are not out of control, Jesus is not “late” and He will come as he came at exactly the right time in the right circumstances.

33. F - Luke 2:4 & 5 (Mary rode on a donkey to Bethlehem.)

In the historical revelation of Jesus’ birth, no mode of transportation is given in terms of Joseph and Mary’s trip to Bethlehem to register for taxes. It only states that they traveled to the city and that she gave birth there. *“And Joseph also went up from Galilee... along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.”* If you have ever seen someone trying to ride a donkey, you would be very skeptical of a woman in the last days of pregnancy choosing this as a mode of transportation. The Bible does not say, but if we were to speculate, given Joseph’s profession as a carpenter, it is more plausible that he built a cart, filled it with hay and then either pulled it himself or used an ox or a donkey. This is far more believable than a woman, just days before giving birth, clip clopping along on the back of a donkey – especially given what we know about Joseph’s righteous character and sensitivity to Mary.

34. F – (Joseph wandered through Bethlehem knocking on doors trying to find a place to stay but he was turned out everywhere he looked.)

In Luke 2:7 the Bible only records Joseph being turned away from one Inn and from there going directly to the location of the manger.

35. F – Luke 2:4 - 7, 12, 16 (Jesus was born in a Manger. Joseph and Mary ended up in the manger because there was no room for them in the inn.)

A manger is by strict definition a crib or feeding trough. It can be by association also used to identify the crib or area in which it is located. The meaning of the word as used in Luke 2:2, 7, 12 & 16 though is clear and no other use of the word may be taken from these verses than that of the primary definition, of a feeding trough, thus Joseph and Mary could never stay in nor dwell in a manger. In Luke 2:7 it is recorded that when Joseph could not find room in the Inn, that he resorted to other options. As previously stated, the depiction of the manger as a stall is not the first meaning of the word nor the context. Notice the use of the word in the following verses - Luke 2:7 *“And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”* Luke 2:12 *“And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger.”* Luke 2:16 *“And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.”* The first meaning of the Greek word PHANTE used here and in the other passages is that of a crib or feeding trough. God the Holy Spirit does not fill in for us all the details in the Historical Revelation of Christ’s birth. A number of key events though are clearly recorded –

1. Joseph’s first choice for his wife was the Inn
2. There was no room at the Inn so Joseph took another option. It is not recorded whether he immediately lit upon an environment where a manger would be handy or whether this was settled upon after an extensive search. Either is plausible, neither is revealed to us by God the Holy Spirit.
3. It was in this context that Christ was born. This may have been in a barn, a stall, a dugout, in the shelter of the Inn’s overhang, or in the open air, the Bible does not say. In the Scriptural narrative no mention of cows, sheep or other animals is mentioned. Again, it is a plausible conclusion but God the Holy Spirit is silent on the details

4. After giving birth, Jesus was wrapped in cloths and laid in a manger, a feeding trough, which was commandeered for use as a make shift crib.
5. Joseph and Mary were themselves never in a “manger” as this is where Jesus was laid, not where they took shelter.

36. F - Luke 2:1 – 20; Matthew 2:1,9-12 (At Jesus’ birth a star shown over the manger.)

At Jesus’ birth there was no star. The shepherds followed the instructions they were given by the angels (see question 11) in order to ultimately find their way to where Jesus was lying in the manger. The star did not appear until later, most likely more than a year later, guiding the Magi. The common manger scenes sold in stores with the star attached to the pitched roof of stall is fabrication for the sake of convenience.

Authors Note: To ask the rhetorical questions “What is the big deal?” strikes at the heart of reformation Christianity. The “big deal” is that the Bible is God’s Word, it is the Revelation of God the Holy Spirit (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20 & 21) and should be represented to the world in its pure form and truth. The stories of Santa Clause, Ebenezer Scrooge, Father Christmas, Father Frost, Frosty the Snowman, The Snow Queen and others are merely children’s stories – how they are recounted and the liberty taken with the details are of little or no consequence. The Revelation of God the Holy Spirit is another matter. Misrepresenting the Word of God which is the direct Revelation of God the Holy Spirit is of great consequence. Christians everywhere need to return to the truth of Revelation 22:18 and heed it’s admonition, “*I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book;*” Now think a moment about your own life. Supposing you had gone to great lengths to put together a resume. This resume would impact how others viewed you and in many ways determine if they accepted you. What would your reaction be if those representing you began to embellish, change, rearrange and distort the exact factual data you had taken great pains to record? The application being – “Don’t mess with God’s resume!”

37. F – Luke 2:51 & 52; 19:41; John 11:35 (In accordance with the scriptural account, “the little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes...”, the baby Jesus did not cry, as many babies do, and as a result began to manifest His deity on the very first night of His birth.)

The phrase “the little Lord Jesus no crying He makes...” does not come from the Word of God but rather from *Little Children’s Book for Schools and Families*, by J. C. File (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1885). The author of this song is unknown. John T. McFarland later added a third verse, but the author who penned the memorable, yet erroneous phrase, “no crying He makes” is unknown.

Except for two events, the Bible is completely silent about the specifics of Jesus’ life from the period birth to the beginning of His earthly ministry as an adult. The two exceptions are, First: His dedication at the Temple (Luke 2:1 – 39) and later the incident at the temple when He was 12. (Luke 2:41 – 52). Beyond these two events, all that God the Holy Spirit reveals to us about Jesus is given in broad generalities. We know that...

- ✠ He lived in subjection to His parents and grew in wisdom, stature and favor with God and man. (Luke 2:51 & 52)
- ✠ He experienced all the temptations of childhood, yet lived a sinless life. (Hebrews 2:14 – 18; 4:15)
- ✠ As God incarnate He did not become God by not sinning but rather did not sin because He was God.
- ✠ We also know that in His adult life He cried on more than one occasion (Luke 19:41 & John 11:35) and there is no reason to believe He did not cry as a baby.

There is no Biblical teaching that it is sin for babies to cry. We do know that Christ was sinless (Hebrews 4:15) and as a result, since Jesus did cry and yet did not sin, crying can take place without there being sin. From these passages we may affirm that any crying Jesus did as a baby would be communication or sorrow, but never temper tantrums, sinful anger or selfishness.

All mythological stories concerning Jesus’ childhood and mythical miracles associated with Jesus, Joseph or Mary during his childhood years should be categorically rejected. In His adult ministry Jesus condemned, in

Mark 7:8, those who were overly fond of myths and apocryphal sayings with His rebuke ***“Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”*** Again God the Holy Spirit warns us in I Timothy 4:7 ***“But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. ...”*** We should be careful not to be found in this class of people – those who stray from the exacting Word of God and into myths and fables. Where the Bible is silent, we too should be silent (Deuteronomy 29:29) and reject all myths and traditions as handed down by man and not God.

38. F - Luke 2:4 & 5; Matthew 1:18 & 25 (At the time of Jesus’ birth, Mary and Joseph were married.)

At the time of Mary’s Immaculate Conception Joseph and Mary were engaged, or betrothed to one another. Matthew 1:18 ***“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.”*** Although stronger and more binding than the engagements of our culture, never-the-less it was not marriage. Joseph had not yet finalized the engagement or betrothal. (Matthew 1:20 ***“But when he had considered this, behold, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.’”***) As such, in terms of marriage, both in the eyes of the law and of the Jews, Mary was a single mother.

It must be emphasized, though, that she was not an unwed mother. She was a virgin mother, which is completely different from an unwed mother. A virgin mother is a state of special grace, while an unwed mother carries the stigma of the sin. In the of adultery or fornication both the mother and the father carry this stigma. In the case of rape, the mother is free from any guilt or stigma, yet sin is still present - though not associated with the mother but rather the male rapist. No sin was involved in Mary’s pregnancy, neither on the part of Mary nor on the part of Joseph, nor on the part of any other male.

- Matthew 1:18 states clearly that Mary became pregnant during the betrothal period, e.g., their engagement before any sexual activity had taken place between Joseph and Mary.
- Luke 2:4 & 5 states that at the time that Joseph and Mary went to be registered they were still engaged.
- Matthew 1:24 & 25 clearly states that Joseph took Mary as his wife. This reading does not necessitate that the wedding was immediately after he arose. Rather, he made his intentions clear to all and did indeed follow through and at some point married Mary. She was to be made his wife and Joseph did fulfill his word and take her as his wife. He may have wakened the family and made his honorable intentions immediately known but the actual wedding did not take place till after the birth of Jesus.
- Luke 2:4 & 5 places the date of the official marriage after the birth. (Luke 2:4-6 ***“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.”***)
- It is important that Mary was a virgin at the birth of Jesus and not just His conception because of prophetic Scripture. Isaiah 7:14 clearly states, ***“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”***
- Joseph did indeed marry Mary at some point for in the lineage of Matthew 1:16 he is referred to as ***“Joseph the husband of Mary”*** but he kept Mary as a virgin until after the birth of Christ and then at some point after the birth of Jesus they were married.

39. F - After the birth of Jesus, Mary remained a Virgin. In this state of perpetual virginity and purity she devoted herself to the service of God all her life.

The fable concerning Mary’s perpetual virginity flies in the face of numerous passages in the Word of God. From the divine revelation of God the Holy Spirit we learn that...

1.) Marry married Joseph

Matthew 1:16 ***“Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”***

Matthew 1:24 *“Joseph... took her as his wife,”*

2.) Mary was publically associated with Joseph as his wife

Matthew 13:55 *“Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”*

John 1:45 *“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’”*

John 6:42 *“And they were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?’...”*

3.) After the birth of Jesus, Mary bore other children as a result of her union with Joseph her husband

Matthew 13:55 *“Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”*

Luke 8:19-20 *“And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. And it was reported to Him, ‘Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You’.”*

John 2:12 *“After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brothers, and His disciples; and there they stayed a few days.”*

John 7:3 *“His brothers therefore said to Him, ‘Depart from here, and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may behold Your works which You are doing’.”*

4.) The fact that Mary bore Joseph other children was a fact publically known and held in the early church and carried with it no stigma or loss of status on the part of Mary.

Acts 1:14 *“These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”*

1 Corinthians 9:5 *“Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?”*

5.) There is no special grace or righteousness associated with preserving ones virginity in marriage. In fact just the opposite is true. Not only is it not spiritual or righteous for a woman to preserve her virginity after marriage, it is sin to abstain for more than brief periods from sexual activity. (1 Corinthians 7:1 – 5) In fact it is a blessing for a wife to minister to her husband’s sexual needs and desires and this extends beyond mere procreation to include the enjoyment of their intimate moments together for love’s sake. (Proverbs 5:18 & 19; Song of Solomon 1:13 – 16)

Very little is known of Mary’s life during the ministry of Jesus, but enough is known to establish that she did not live the life of Anna in fasting, prayer and abstinence at the Temple. Rather Mary lived the life of a wife and mother who was publically associated with her husband, was known by all for her role as wife and mother, was sexually active and bore Joseph at least four natural children.

40. F – Luke 2:9, 13 - 15 (The angel of the Lord who made his proclamation to the shepherds appeared to them in the sky, hovering above them.)

When the angel of the Lord in Luke 2:9 appeared to the shepherds he was standing before them. Luke 2:9 *“And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.”* Although the Word of God does refer to the accompanying angels as “heavenly host” it does not say that they were in heaven praising God. (Luke 2:13) The phrase “heavenly host” can just as easily refer to their place of origin, especially since they are described as returning to heaven when their proclamation had been completed. (Luke 2:15) In the account of the angels nowhere is it mentioned that they are flying or hovering in the air.

41. F – (It was an act of grace for God to first reveal the location of the baby Jesus to shepherds as shepherds were considered by the Law to be unclean.)

There is no injunction in the Law of Moses which declares the keeping of sheep as rendering one “unclean”.

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42. F - Luke 2:8-15; Hebrews 13:2 (The angels who appeared to the shepherds had white robes, wings and halos.)

There is no scriptural basis for the current fashion of depicting angels with white robes, wings, long flowing hair, halos and who speak in a special mystical language. In fact, the Angel who spoke to the shepherds stood before them, (Luke 2:9), and made his proclamation in their language (as do all Biblical accounts of angels). There is no specific mention of the heavenly host being in the air or flying when they were praising God and giving their revelation, nor is there any indication that, using wings, they flew away afterward. Nowhere is there depicted in the Bible angels, in human form having white robes, wings, long hair and halos. Nowhere in the Bible are angels depicted as beautiful young women or as babies. The only depiction of feminine angles in the Bible are of fallen angels, demons. These indeed were women with beautiful long wings, as in Zechariah 5:9, ***“Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens.”*** As for babies with wings, this is a purely pagan depiction taken right out of Roman and Greek pagan ritual. Upon visiting Roman ruins in England I was amazed to see the commonly depicted Renaissance baby angles adorning the pagan grave stones and temples for Roman pagans.

In stark contrast to the current fad of feminizing angels, all angelic descriptions in the Bible are decidedly masculine in nature (and often fearful, violent and bloody). All named angels had male names. The fearful response given to the appearance of angels surely brings into question the wimpy, effeminate angels which are sold in most Christian book stores and appear on greeting cards. A careful study of history will reveal that these depictions are pagan in nature, harking back to the sculptures found in ancient Rome and Greece rather than the Bible. I doubt seriously the Death Angel or the angels whose appearance struck such fear into men that they fell on their faces unable to speak, appeared in long effeminate flowing robes with sappy expressions on their faces. All of these depictions are simply artistic fabrications and fables, which pander the predominantly female clientele of modern Christian bookstores and should be avoided (I Timothy 4:7 ***“But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women...”***)

Baby angels, angels with wings and effeminate depictions of angels are simply artistic recreations of Roman and Greek pagan deities. The use of halos in depicting angels, saints or Biblical figures was begun in the middle ages by painters who wished in some way to indicate the individual when he was painted in a group setting. Although in some early paintings arrows with annotations are used, slowly this was replaced by the use of halos. These were considered more esthetically appealing and carried with them the growing superstition, that like Moses when he came down from the mount, so surely all great saints, glow with the glory of God. Hebrews 13:2 makes it clear that angels are so human like in their appearance, speech and actions that we can entertain them in their earthly duties without ever even knowing it. (Authors Note: It is true, the Seraphim and Cherubim of Ezekiel 1 & 10 had wings but these were not in human form and are a form of angelic life known as “living being”.)

43. F – Luke 2:13 & 14 (The angels came proclaiming, “Peace on earth and good will towards men”)

Although the quote “Peace on earth and good will towards men” appears almost universally on Christmas cards and in Christmas pageants the actual quotation is found in Luke 2:14; ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”*** Two key elements are almost always left out when the angels are quoted.

First: ***“Glory to God in the highest...”*** – the birth of the Messiah has to do with the glory of God. It is not man-centered but God-centered. God, not man, is the center of the universe. The center of the Christmas Revelation is God, what God is doing and the glory due Him, not man, nor what man is getting.

Secondly: ***“with whom He is pleased”***. The peace which Christ brings is not a universal peace. It is a peace extended to those to whom God, through His good pleasure is pleased to reveal Himself (Galatians 1:15). It is only a peace, a hope, for those who acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior of mankind, who submit to Him and put their trust in Him as their personal Lord and Savior. For the

rest of mankind there is no peace, (Isaiah 48:22; 57:20 & 21); there is the turmoil of sin followed by the eternal judgment and agony of Hell (Revelation 20:10 – 15).

The message of peace in the Christmas revelation is a message of peace to those who put their trust and faith in Christ. The reality of the incarnation brought with it no end to wars, no end to poverty, no end to crime, no end to man's cruelty to man, no end to despotic rule and unjust governments. It brought with it no universal peace on earth. These acts continued on unabated. Rather, it brought peace on earth to those ***"with whom He is pleased"***, those who place their faith in Christ. True, the possibility of peace is presented to the world, but the reality of peace is for those with whom God is pleased and this is limited to those who trust Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. The rest of mankind experiences the displeasure of God, the turmoil of sin in this life and the prospect of the eternal judgment of God in Hell in the next. Just as in Satan's dialogue with Eve where the Words of God are misquoted and distorted, so here the angelic message is so often misquoted and distorted to bring a generic message of "peace" and "goodwill" where the call for repentance in the face of judgment should instead be given.

(Authors Note: The phrase, "peace on earth goodwill toward men" is not taken from Scripture but rather from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem/carol – "I Heard The Bell's On Christmas Day", which was written in 1864, during the American Civil War. Longfellow was in despair at the time having been recently widowed and now learning of the wounding of his son in battle. It was on Christmas day that he penned the words to this poem which was latter set to music. The phrase "peace on earth goodwill toward men" is repeated at the end of each stanza.)

44. T – Luke 2:1- 16 (The shepherds found the manger unaided by the star.)

First things first – in the Historical Revelation by God the Holy Spirit, no star is mentioned at the time of Jesus' birth. As for the shepherds, all we know in terms of what they specifically had to go on was the information provided by the angels in Luke 2:11-12; ***"for today in the city of David (Bethlehem) there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger."*** Of course, the angels may have been more specific and the information is simply not recorded (John 21:25) but this is mere speculation. (See question 11) All we really know as a result of divine revelation is that one way or another they, ***"found their way to Mary and Joseph. and the baby as He lay in the manger."***

45. F – (The angels took the shepherds to the manger.)

The angels in Luke 2:12 gave the shepherds a general idea of how to find Jesus, ***"you will find a baby, wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger."*** But not only were they silent as to the exact location of the manger, but after the heavenly host appeared praising God, they left the scene. In Luke 2:15-16 we find the shepherds left to their own ingenuity in finding Jesus. Either because of the number of the shepherds or because of the relative few manglers in Bethlehem, Jesus was located that same night. It could well be that any shepherd worth his salt knew where the manglers in a nearby city were located making the task a relatively simple one. Manger scenes depicting the angels at the manger are pure fabrications. The angels did not lead the shepherds to the manger, did not escort them to the manger and did not reappear at the manger, rather the Word of God records that it was after, ***"the angels had gone away from them into heaven,"*** and only after the return of the angels to heaven, ***"that the shepherds began saying to one another, 'Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.'"***

46. F – (At the manger, the angels hovered overhead, praising God, as the shepherds worshiped the baby Jesus.)

When the Angel of the Lord in Luke 2:9 appeared to the shepherds he was standing before them. Luke 2:9 ***"And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened."*** Then in verse 13, a multitude of heavenly hosts appears with the angel, praising God. ***"And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God..."*** In neither verse is there any indication that the angels are in the sky. When the angels do

depart in verse 15, they went away from them *“into heaven”*, leaving the shepherds to follow their instructions in finding the baby Jesus. This may have been a literal ascension or a mystical transference. The Holy Scriptures are not exact as to the visual manifestation of this event, instead they simply record for us what took place. Thus at the manger itself no angels are mentioned or alluded to by the Bible, they having long since departed into heaven.

47. F – Luke 2:8 – 15 The angels, when they appeared to the Shepherds, were singing. The picture is of an “angelic choir”.

The angels are presented as praising God and speaking to the shepherds but no mention is made of singing nor of a heavenly choir.

48. F – Luke 1:26 – 38; 2:18 – 20, 51; (Unlike the Shepherds who were dumbfounded by the information provided by the angles, Mary, who also was visited by an angle, by contrast boldly shared the information she received publicly and with all who would listen.)

Both Mary and the shepherds received angelic visitations concerning the birth of Jesus as the Messiah. Their reaction is in marked contrast. Mary for the most part kept quiet. She had a burst of enthusiasm in regards to Elizabeth Mary was very forthcoming but unlike the shepherds of whom it is recorded in Luke 2:17-18 *“When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.”* Mary by contrast remained quiet Luke 2:19, *“But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.”* There is no Biblical record of Mary ever publicly witnessing to the fact that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

49. F - Matthew 2:1 - 6 (The Magi consulted the Holy Scriptures which led them to Bethlehem and the baby Jesus.)

There are no prophetic Scripture which speak of a star. There is no indication that the magi were relying on any special ancient writings and certainly not the holy Scripture. An indication of this is that King Herod had to have the Holy Scriptures consulted for them. The Magi were simply responding to the appearance of a miraculous star, why they responded in this way, we do not know. (See question nine)

50. F - Matthew 2:1 & 2, 9 - 11 (The Magi, upon seeing the star in the east, followed it directly to Bethlehem.)

The answer to this question requires one to erase virtually all he has learned from Christmas cards, movies, TV and church Christmas pageants and to start over with the Word of God. It also requires of us a rudimentary knowledge of geography. Last but not least it requires of us a willingness to subject ourselves to the Word of God.

Preface: A short lesson in geography. If you had a map of the middle east before you, you would first locate Jerusalem. To the west would be the Mediterranean Sea but the Magi are from the east so you would look to the east of Jerusalem to determine where the Magi resided. Looking east you would see Assyria, Babylon, Persia, India, China and any number of other great eastern city states and domains. Having done this you would place the star in the eastern sky. Since we do not know which of these cities the Magi were from, but we do know that the star was in the east, then any city will suffice, given the fact that know city chosen will change the spatial orientation of the star. As you draw a line from one of these eastern cities to Jerusalem you would find yourself moving westward, the star being to your back. Having moved your Magi to Jerusalem, your next city of interest is Bethlehem. You will notice on the map that Bethlehem resides south of Jerusalem. Thus after leaving Jerusalem the Magi did not continue westward but rather traveled in a southerly direction. According to the Biblical account the star was now leading them to Bethlehem and the residence of Christ. This is a radical change for rather than being in the east it is now in the south leading them onward. Having touched lightly on the geography involved lets look at the Biblical Revelation of the movements of the Magi and the star.

First: The Word of God says that the Magi, who were themselves from the East, saw the star in the **East**,

then traveled to Jerusalem which would have been to the **West** placing the star at their back as they traveled. At that point the star was not providing specific aide in locating Jesus but rather was a sign which for some unknown reason caused the Magi to travel to Jerusalem. This is the first myth that must be overcome, that of the Magi were following a star to Jerusalem. Think now for a moment. Where were the Magi – “*in the East*”. Where did they see the star – “*in the East*”. Thus the Magi, east of Jerusalem, saw a star to their East, of both Jerusalem and the Magi. As a result of seeing this star which way did they have to travel – the answer being West. The Magi of the East, seeing a star in the East, traveled Westward to Jerusalem, the star at their back. We do not know why these Magi from the East, upon seeing a star in the East, would then choose to travel West. We do not know why they associated the star with the birth of a king. We do not know why they chose Jerusalem out of all the great cities to their west. We do not know why they unquestionably believed the scribes when they searched the Scriptures. There is no Biblical answer for any of these questions.

Second: We do not know why they came to Jerusalem. A star such as the North Star may lead us in a general direction but certainly not to a specific city. If you were in Chicago, Illinois you could locate the North Star and by keeping it to your back travel in a southerly direction. You could not however use the North Star to guide you to Houston, Texas. The Magi were not following a star Westward to Jerusalem. The star remained in the East as they traveled from the East westward to Jerusalem, keeping the star to their back. Using this type of celestial orientation it would have been impossible for them to have guided themselves to a specific city. Why they chose Jerusalem as opposed to one of the great western capitals of Egypt, Rome or Greece (or one of the other great city states of the middle east) is not known. What is known is that there were Magi east of Jerusalem. These Magi saw a star in the East. For some reason they associated this star with the birth of an Israeli king and set out for Jerusalem. The Bible does not say why they chose to go to Jerusalem. Many plausible explanations abound, but since the Bible is silent, so we must also be silent. It should be noted though that no prophecy of scripture foretells a star, no precedence in scripture sets the scene for the star. No one who was looking for the Messiah, as a result of studying the Holy Scriptures, would associate the star with His birth. For a reason, apart from the Word of God, the Magi saw the star and traveled to Jerusalem. The why of it remains a complete mystery.

Third: After Herod consulted the scribes and priests on behalf of the Magi, the star led them **South**, directly to Bethlehem and the residence of Jesus. Thus the star took them on an indirect route, first, prompting them, (for some reason unknown to us) westward to Jerusalem and then, contrastingly guiding them southward directly to Bethlehem and then finally bringing them to the exact house where Jesus was living.

The first star could have been a standard star created by God for this purpose or a comet or some other phenomenon put in place by God. This could have been created miraculously on the spot or something set in motion in the past and by the plan of God making it's appearance at Jesus' birth. Since it was a sign in the east it could have been any number of natural phenomenon miraculously put in place or motion by God.

The star which led the Magi from Jerusalem southward to Bethlehem and the child Jesus is however another matter. It's characteristics were distinctly different in this appearance than in it's first. This can be no natural star, comet or celestial event. It went on before the Magi leading them directly to the house where the boy child Jesus was residing. Notice the Biblical account in Matthew 2:9-11

9 *And having heard the king, they went their way; and lo, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was.*

10 *And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*

11 *And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.*

✠ The star which appeared in the East now repapered causing them to rejoice

✠ This star now was geographical specific leading them to the exact location of Jesus

✠ Since Bethlehem is to the south of Jerusalem the star moves southward, leading them on.

✠ Jesus is now a child and not a baby

✠ Jesus is now residing in a house with Joseph and Mary and not in a manger.

An interesting footnote: The popular carol, “We saw three ships come sailing in...” (A traditional; English Christmas Carol of unknown origin and authorship. It first appeared in print in *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern*, by William Sandys London: Richard Beckley, 1833).) This Carol seeks to deal with the dilemma that if the Magi were indeed following the star in the East then they would have to come from the West, perhaps Egypt or some other north African local, thus logically putting them in the Mediterranean ocean, traveling on three ships. Since the Bible does not state the mode of their transportation this would be plausible if the geographical center of the Christmas Revelation was Europe or the Americas. An American, an Englishman or European could easily view all the major African coastal cities as “from the east”. It is important to remember that the geographical frame of reference for the Christmas Revelation is Israel and not some European or American city. Thus east refers to east of Israel or more specifically Jerusalem. We must also remember that the Word of God states they were “*from the east*”, “*saw His star in the east*” and then went to Jerusalem (west) “*to worship Him*”.

51. T – Micah 5:2; Luke 2:11, 12; Matthew 2:9 (There were no prophecies, however, concerning the exact location of Jesus’ residence which is why the Magi needed the star to guide them.)

This is true. Although the city of the birthplace of Jesus, Bethlehem, was clearly foretold, neither the time nor the location of Jesus’ birth nor where He would reside after His birth, was indicated in prophecies. Without the miraculous nature of the star shining directly down upon Jesus’ house the Magi would have had to make a door to door search.

52. T - Matthew 2:4-6 (The chief priests and scribes consulted the Holy Scriptures which isolated Bethlehem as Jesus’ birthplace.)

It was the Holy Scriptures, not the star, that first isolated the city of Bethlehem as the home of Jesus, only later was the star moved to the south to guide them.

53. F - Matthew 2:11 (After receiving their instructions from the priests and scribes, the Magi came to visit the baby Jesus in the manger.)

By the time the Magi arrived Jesus was a child, living in a home, with his parents, Joseph and Mary. The Greek word for child, here, being PADION. It is different from TENKNION which refers to a little child, rather it can be used to signify either a young or a more advanced child, as it is used here in Matthew 2:11. The arrival of the Magi took place well after Jesus birth. The new family were now living in a house. The Greek is very clear on this. The word OIKIA is used which means a dwelling or house. The Magi were never at the manger at the time of Christ’s birth. The Word of God clearly states in Matthew 2:11, “*After coming into the house (OIKIA) they saw the Child (PADION)...*” Thus the scene depicting the arrival of the Magi is that of a young child, living in a house, with his parents.

54. F – Matthew 2:1 (There were three Magi who came riding camels and bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.)

The picture of three Magi, on camels, following a star, each carrying a different gift of gold, frankincense or myrrh is a fabrication of the Christmas greeting card industry. The number of Magi is not known. Who carried what, the quantity and mode of transportation are all unknown. What is known is that they were Magi (plural form), thus there was more than one and that they bore three gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh. What are the chances though that dignitaries such as they would travel across the desert with fabulous wealth, by themselves with no armed guard and no retinue? What are the chances that three men, entering a city, would be ushered in to the presence of the king? More than likely they came up over the horizon as a large regal procession. The tower guard, seeing this, called for the captain of the guard who in turn immediately informed the commander of the garrison. Soon word made it’s way to the highest level of the court and the king prepared himself to meet these impressive visitors. What actually happened is unknown to us, but again, it is doubtful that it was three lone men traveling across the desert on camels. And they most certainly were not following a star. (see question 41)

55. F – (The gifts of the Magi (Wise Men; Sorcerers) – gold, frankincense and myrrh, were of prophetic significance concerning the Messiah and the death He would experience.)

Although much has been made by writers and preachers about the prophetic significance and symbolism of the gifts of the Magi, the Holy Scriptures are completely silent on this area. There are both precedence and opportunity for these gifts to have prophetic significance, should the Holy Spirit had wished them to do so. He is nevertheless silent. All through the Holy Scriptures the Holy Spirit interjects the reality of fulfilled prophecy and the birth of the Messiah is no different. (Matthew 1:22; 2:15, 17,23; Luke 1:20 to name a few). Yet, despite this precedent of meticulously sighting fulfilled prophecy concerning the birth of Christ, the Word of God is silent as pertaining to the Magi's gifts. They played no role in the prophetic revelation of the Holy Spirit, neither in the past, fulfilling prophecy, nor in the future, prophetically pointing to events in Jesus' life. It should be remember from question number nine, that the Magi were MAGOS, pagan eastern sorcerers. They should not be elevated above this level. As a result we should not look to them as having some special spiritual understanding of Christ. Their actions should be simply taken as stated, Matthew 2:11 *"And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh."*

56. F –One of the indicators of the special position Mary would someday hold in the church was the fact that when the Magi arrived they paid homage to Mary and venerated her as the "mother of God".

In the Historical Revelation of God the Holy Spirit the Magi worship Christ but nothing special is said of their association with or recognition of Mary.

57. F – Luke 2:8 - 16; Matthew 2: 11 (The shepherds and the Magi all converged upon the baby Jesus in the manger.)

The shepherds came upon Jesus as a newborn, in the manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths. The Magi came later to Jesus' house and found him as a young boy living in a house.

58. T – (The Magi were from the East)

Matthew 2:1 states, *"Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem"*. The geographical orientation of "from the east" refers specifically to Jerusalem and not to the reader. This is important in understanding other references in Scripture such as the star being seen in the east by the Magi. That would be east of the Magi who were east of Jerusalem.

59. F - Matthew 2:9 - 11 (From it's first appearance, the star led the Magi directly to Jesus.)

The Magi first went to Jerusalem, not being lead by the star but rather as a result of the star's appearance in the eastern sky. (See question 41) After consultation with the scribes via Herod's court the city of Bethlehem was isolated. It was only after Scriptures were consulted and they continued on their way, south, to Bethlehem that the star began giving them specific help. They were only able to find the specific house Jesus was in by following the star which went on before them and directed them ultimately to the house where Joseph, Mary and Jesus were living. Thus it was by an indirect route and they needed other aides, such as Herod, the scribes and the Word of God to find Jesus.

60. F – (Although the Magi found their way to the baby Jesus in quite a miraculous way, there was nothing particularly miraculous about their return home.)

Nothing could be further from the truth. In a mind boggling event recorded in Matthew 2:7 - 12, God personally intervenes by directing the Magi in a dream to ignore Herod's orders and head home by another route. This type of revelation to a pagan is very rare. It had not occurred since the time of Daniel in Daniel 2:1 – 49 and before that one has to go all the way back to Joseph and Pharaoh (Genesis 41:15, 16 & 25) and even then both these kings needed a man of God's choosing to interpret their dreams. This revelation however separates itself out from these two events in that it is divine revelation by God, to pagans without

the need of interpretation by the people of God. One must go all the way back to the time of Abraham when in Genesis 20:3 God spoke directly to King Abimelech in a dream to find a similar occurrence in Scripture – that of God speaking directly to a pagan.

61. T – (The pagan Magi were the only people in the Christmas revelation to hear directly from God.)

- ✠ In Luke 1:11, Zacharias hears the news from an Angel,
- ✠ in verses 26 – 28, Mary receives word via the Angel Gabriel,
- ✠ in Matthew 1:18 – 20, Joseph gets his information in a dream from an Angel,
- ✠ in Luke 2:8 & 9, the shepherds are instructed by an Angel,
- ✠ in Matthew 2:2 & 3 Herod gets clued in, not by the scribes and priests but by leaders of a pagan cult, this is only later confirmed by the scribes and priests
- ✠ it is only the leaders of this pagan cult who hear directly from God in a dream (Matthew 2:12).

62. T - Matthew 2:11 (After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem and set up housekeeping.)

By the time the Magi found Jesus, Mary and Joseph were no longer at the manger. They had evidently found a house to live in and had set up housekeeping. Jesus was living in a house, with His parents in Bethlehem.

63. F – Revelation 22:18 & 19 (Shortly after Jesus' birth they were married and at the ceremony the prophetess Ramona prophesied concerning the death of the baby Jesus.)

There is no historical narrative of the wedding of Joseph and Mary. We do know from the lineage of Jesus in Matthew 1:16 that Joseph and Mary were at some point married. We also know that in Matthew 1:24 God the Holy Spirit specifically tells us that Joseph “*took Mary as his wife*”. This however is all that is known. All non-biblical traditions and speculations of Joseph's and Mary's wedding, Joseph's reaction to Jesus' Deity, Joseph's and Mary's marriage, how Joseph and Mary raised Jesus during His childhood and teen years, what became of Joseph during Jesus' earthly ministry and the state of the marriage of Joseph and Mary during Jesus' earthly ministry, all these and more are purely fictitious and should be avoided as commanded by the Holy Scriptures in I Timothy 4:7.

64. F - Isaiah 53:1-3; Deuteronomy 22:5; Matthew 13:54 – 56; I Corinthians 6:9; 11:14 (Jesus was a beautiful baby who grew into a handsome man with long flowing hair.)

The Bible clearly says that Jesus was not of striking appearance and would not stand out in a crowd. (Isaiah 53:1 – 3) His appearance was certainly not of the nature that would strike awe into people. People tended to be impacted by what Jesus had to say. His appearance did not seem to exert any influence upon them in terms of belief in His teachings or acceptance of Him as a great man or teacher. (Matthew 13:34 – 36) The prohibition of God the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy 22:5 of dressing like a woman, the prohibition of men wearing long hair in I Corinthians 11:14 and the prohibition in I Corinthians 6:9 of being effeminate in appearance or manner, would deny Jesus the long flowing hair and effeminate dress and demure, as is so often attributed to Him in paintings. The actions of God the Son will always conform with both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit and it is unthinkable to assume that He would ever be in conflict with the standards put forth by God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. Classic sculptures of the time, which have remained intact to this day, depict men of that period and locale as clean shaven with short closely cropped hair. As a carpenter's son, Jesus was certainly not the wan, skinny figure depicted in Renaissance paintings. Rather this depiction of Christ reflects the decadence of the aristocracy of the Renaissance period, rather than historical and Scriptural accuracy. Who knows how our continued insistence to depict God in pictures and sculptures, despite the Biblical injunctions to the contrary (Exodus 20:4 & 5), will confuse and muddle the truth of Christ in future generations? Certainly it has already been a great distraction and stumbling block in the modern mission movements as these depictions create a false impression in the minds of Africans, Asians and Middle-Eastern cultures that Christianity is a Western Religion. It is not the Word of God that creates this impression but rather the misplaced zeal of western artists.

65. F – Luke 2:21 – 40 and continued in Matthew 2:13-23 (The Christmas Revelation ends with the arrival of the Magi.)

The Christmas revelation actually ends with Jesus' family return to Nazareth from the exile in Egypt and His subsequent dedication in the temple with the accompanying prophecies. In Matthew 2:13 & 14, an Angel of the Lord warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt and then in verses 19 – 23 an Angel appeared again in a dream to Joseph and instructed him to return to Israel to reside in the city of Nazareth. The Revelation continues on in Luke 2:21 – 40 with the presentation of Jesus at the temple and the prophecies which took place at that time. The Historical Revelation of the "Christmas Story" ends with the return of the Joseph and Mary to Nazareth in Luke 2:40

66. F – (Mary was one of the great witnesses of Jesus in the New Testament Church. Both the Gospels and The Book of Acts has accounts of her ministry and her impact on the early church.)

The last mention of Mary, the mother of Jesus is Acts 1:14. There is no Scriptural indication that she played any part in the growth of Christianity nor the expansion of the church. Although in the Book of The Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles numerous women are mentioned as laboring in the church as teachers and laborers Mary's name, unlike those of his brothers, is consciously absent. From the beginning her actions are in marked contrast with others around her. An example of this can be seen in the Historical Revelation of the birth of Jesus in Luke 2:18 – 20. While both the angels and the shepherds are openly proclaiming Jesus Mary is quiet, keeping things to herself.

67. F – (In the early church pilgrimages were regularly held to the locations associated with the birth of Christ. The Inn, the stall, the manger and most notably the swaddling cloth in which he was wrapped - all become sources of veneration and numerous miracles are associated with these locations and objects.)

From the Scriptural account it becomes obvious that during the years after the life of Christ, the years after resurrection of Christ, the period of the expansion and the establishment of the church and on until the completion of the Scriptures no special mention nor attention was ever given to the geographical events of Christ's life nor the physical objects associated with His life. You can search both the historical records of the Gospels and book of Acts as well as the writings of the Apostles and holy Scripture and you will not find a single instance of a pilgrimage, miracle nor even interest in the locals and objects associated with the life of Christ. The early church was completely indifferent to these places and objects, the emphasis being placed upon the person of Christ, the Word of God and the ministry of the Church. The obsession of 21st Century Christians with the spiritual, mystical and yes, even magical aspects of pilgrimage locations and objects (as associated with miracles and apparitions) is in stark contrast with the ministry of the early church and Apostles. Both the Apostles and the early church were so indifferent to these pseudo-religious practices that no effort was made to preserve neither the locations of Jesus ministry (Examples Being: The Inn, the manger, the Upper Room, the home of Mary and Joseph where Jesus grew up, the list goes on...) nor the objects associated with His ministry (Examples Being: The manger, the swaddling cloth, the robe, the crown of thorns, the cross, again the list is almost endless.)

Lessons To Be Learned From The Christmas Test

I. Become a man or woman of the Word.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

"For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it."

God's Word is given to us to know and master for ourselves. It is our personal responsibility to know what God's holy, eternal, inerrant, written Word says about the birth of Jesus. We are all to be as Ezra as revealed in Ezra 7:10 – *"For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel."* It is our personal responsibility to study, apply and then be able to correctly teach the truths of Christ's Incarnation. As a result, the first thing we must ask ourselves is, "Where have I been getting my information about Jesus' birth?" I remember going to the dentist and he noticed abrasions on my teeth. He asked me how much toothpaste I was using. I replied, illustrating it with hand motions, that I put a layer over the bristles and then curled it back over with a second layer. He smiled and asked me why, to which I replied, "Because that's how they do it on TV." He smiled, called his nurse in, the scene was repeated and they both became very animated. "Why would you look to TV ads to care for your teeth?" they both wanted to know. He then went on to tell me that all you need is just a little dot of toothpaste on the bristles. I had seen the adds so many times that I had just assumed they were right. It never occurred to me to ask the dentist. It is the same way with our doctrine. Why would we look to TV or Christmas cards for the doctrine of Christ's birth? Yet we see the repetition of unbiblical events surrounding His birth so often that we just assume they are right. Go to your dentist, not the media for truth in dental care. Go to the Bible, not the media, for truth in your spiritual care.

2. Learn to study the Bible for yourself.

II Timothy 2:15

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."

The second thing we must ask ourselves is, "What other things do I believe incorrectly about the life of Jesus and the Bible". It is our personal responsibility to be *"handling accurately the word of truth."* The Word of God says concerning the Bereans in Acts 17:11 *"Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."* We too must become students of the Word of God, examining the Holy Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so. We must take personal responsibility for our command of the Holy Scriptures.

3. Stop expecting the world to protect sound doctrine and stop maligning the world for something you have been unwilling to do.

II Corinthians 4:4

"in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

A third lesson is to stop attacking the world for corrupting the meaning of Christmas when we have not taken the time to study the Word of God in an depth manner ourselves. Remember, it is not your local retailers responsibility, it is not Hallmark Cards' responsibility, it is not the shopping mall's responsibility, it is not Hollywood's responsibility to preserve the purity of the doctrine of our faith. In fact it is impossible

for the world to know and correctly communicate the true meaning of Christmas. It is our responsibility and ours alone. We cannot expect the unregenerate world system to even understand the gospel, more or less to persevere it in its pristine truth. II Corinthians 4:4 states, “***in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.***” And again I Corinthians 2:14 teaches us, “***But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.***” Do not be angry, do not even be surprised when the fallen world system misses completely the meaning of Christmas. We can expect nothing less. The spotlight turns not upon the world but upon us as Christians. If we cannot score a 100% on this test, then isn’t it just a little bit hypocritical for us to chide the poor, blind, lost, dying and enslaved world for not knowing and accurately representing the truth concerning the birth of Christ? Remember it is not the responsibility of non-Christian merchants and advertisers to persevere the doctrine of the birth of Christ, rather it is yours.

4. Do not fall into satan’s trap of a joyless Christmas and critical spirit.

James 1:19-20

“This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

It might be helpful for us to ask ourselves, “What is my response to the loss of the true meaning of Christmas?” Honestly review your month so far. Has your response been, with compassion, to seek to lead others to Christ so they can understand the meaning of Christmas, or has it been to simply gossip and complain among yourselves? I remember vividly the joy of my first Christmas as a new Christian. Let us always remember, non-Christians are not the enemy. Satan is the enemy. Ephesians 6:12 states, “***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.***” Non-Christians are the enslaved civilian population we have come to liberate. Don’t fall into satan’s trap of becoming a crotchety, gripping scrooge at Christmas time. Satan does not care how much you hate the commercialism of Christmas, in fact he likes you to hate. Satan does not care how angry you become at merchants and shoppers at Christmas time, in fact he wants you to be angry. He doesn’t care how distasteful your office mates and neighbors become to you as they celebrate materialism and partying, in fact he wants all non-Christians to be so distasteful to you that you will have nothing to do with them. Christmas is a wonderful time to tell others about Jesus. To open your home in love to your non-Christian friends, to give New Testaments and Jesus Videos to your business contacts, your merchants, co-workers, friends and neighbors. To bring “***good news of great joy which shall be for all people!***” (Luke 2:10)

5. Do not exceed what the Word of God has clearly stated.

I Corinthians 4:6

“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in you you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.”

One of the lessons from this study is how easy it is for the sake of expedience to exceed the Word of God. The typical manger scene as played out in countless churches has little to do with reality. A manger with three Magi, shepherds, a star, angels replete with halos and wings – all converging simultaneously upon Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus has little to do with the actual revelation of the Word of God. Similarly too, many ministers cannot resist adding their own devotional observations as if they were the prophetic Word of God. A prime case in point is the number of sermons preached at Christmas in which the gifts of the Magi of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, are given prophetic significance, as if we, as ministers, may declare prophetic significance by our own powers of observation. A third example is the abundance of apocryphal teachings concerning the culture and customs of the times. From here we go into sermons replete with pseudo-science on the star; apocryphal history concerning the Magi and the supposed ancient

documents to which thy refereed and even down to the giving of their mythical names. From Magi, to shepherds, to inn keepers we speak with authority concerning that which we have not studied, for which we have no primary sources, for which there is no scientific or historical evidence. We simply pass along unchecked and unreferenced apocryphal myths as we raise up another generation of Christians in ignorance and superstition. We demean the authority of Scripture by adding to it our own apocryphal psuedo historical and cultural references which have not been researched or proven as true. In His adult ministry Jesus condemned, in Mark 7:8, those who were overly fond of myths and apocryphal sayings with His rebuke ***“Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”*** We should be careful not to be found in this class of people ourselves. Remember, it is no small matter in God’s eyes for man to add to or take away from the holy, eternal, inerrant, written Word of God. In the closing of the Scripture in Revelation 22:18 & 19 God the Holy Spirit gives this dire warning, Revelation 22:18-19 *“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”* It is one thing for a greeting card to teach false doctrine, it is another altogether for a pastor or church to sit idly by while half truths and myths are presented as the Word of God. Where the Bible is silent, we too should be silent and reject all myths and traditions as handed down by man and not God. Now is the time to reflect, “what other areas have we changed the Word of God to fit our egos and personal expediency of time and space?”

6. Do not be too quick to relegate the Word of God to the status of a children’s story.

Matthew 5:19

“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Many of us have failed to do an in-depth study of the revelation of the birth of Christ simply because we have relegated it to the status of a children’s story. How vain is this approach to the Word of God. What other aspects of God’ Revelation have you glossed over as a children’s story? This is simply satan’s attempt at devaluing the Word of God and we should not succumb to it. One mental discipline you can begin to employ is to use the phrase “Revelation” or “Historical Revelation” in the place of “story” or “Bible story”. Instead of “What is your favorite Bible story?” which seems to relegate the Bible to the same level as any other “story”, “Which Historical Revelation is your favorite?”. Or instead of “I just love the Christmas story” why not, “I just love the Christmas Revelation”. Seek to elevate in both speech and action, the Word of God to it’s lofty position. It is not simply traditions and stories handed down over the centuries by the church but rather the holy, eternal, inerrant, written Word of God. What to teach in terms of the Christmas Revelation can present the teacher with a quandary of sorts. If he is to simply cover the birth of Christ, then that limits him to Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:1 – 20. If the teacher decides to do this he rules out the mention of the Magi, the star, the angelic visits, the flight to Egypt and more. He is limited to the Manger and the shepherds. To include more one must begin to move beyond the night of Jesus’ actual birth and then one must find some arbitrary point at which to cut off the divine historical Revelation of the events surrounding the Birth of Christ. Far from being a simplistic event as depicted by so many manger scenes, children’s story books and Christmas plays, the divine Revelation in the Word of God concerning the birth of Christ is not one event but rather is comprised of Ten separate historical events...

- I. Zacharias Visited By Angel**
- II. Zacharias, Elizabeth and John the Baptist**
- III. Mary Visited By The Angel**
- IV. The Immaculate Conception**
- V. Joseph’s Dream**
- VI. Mary and Elizabeth**
- VII. Birth, Shepherds, Angels and Manger**

- VIII. Magi, Gifts and Home
- IX. Flight to Egypt and Return
- X. Temple Dedication

The divine revelation, rather than reading like novel, actually presents us with a series of historical vignettes or incidents. Each true and divinely revealed but separated one from another by time. They can be approached as a series of one act plays. In fact they lend themselves readily to a Christmas pageant or "Drive Through" format and it is a shame that modern churches do not take advantage of this to present to the world the historically true revelation of the events surrounding the birth of Christ rather than settling for the traditional Christmas Cresh which has little to do with reality in terms of the historicity it represents. The world still waits for the church, the publisher, for the pageant which correctly presents the historical Revelation of the birth of Christ as presented by God the Holy Spirit through the eternal, inerrant, holy, written Word of God.

7. Separate what is worth fighting for from what is simply engrained in our culture.

Matthew 23:23-24

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"

Are there aspects of the Christmas celebration which you hold dear, yet the Word of God does not? In our culture, Christmas is a major holiday but in the history of the church this has not been uniformly true. There is no evidence from the book of Acts that the early church kept or even knew the day of Christ's birth. There is no evidence that first century Christians kept or even knew the date of Christ's birth. During the age of the Puritans in England and especially during the rule of Oliver Cromwell the celebration of Christmas was banned as papist superstition. What we understand as the celebration of Christmas came about largely through the writings of Charles Dickens and his contemporaries as they sought to broaden the meaning of Christmas to include a general spirit of goodwill. Thus the phrase, "the spirit of Christmas" came to be employed. No doubt, were the celebration of Christmas in terms of a Holiday where days off from work are allotted, to be done away with, many Christians would fight, loose their jobs and perhaps go to jail. All this for something that is not commanded, mentioned or practiced in the Word of God. What if Christmas were dropped from the calendar, dropped from governments holiday schedule, would you see this as a violation of Scripture? What if Christmas were not celebrated as a secular shopping holiday but rather relegated to a special mid week worship service at your church. Would you view this as a loss of "the meaning of Christmas"? Even at this level the church would be hard put to make a Scriptural argument for a mandatory day of celebration in terms of the birth of Christ. There is certainly nothing wrong with celebrating the birth of Christ as an act of worship, but it is important to remember that the celebration of the birth of Christ as Holy Day on our calendar or as a Holiday is purely cultural and not a part of the divine commandants and revelation of Scripture. As dark days approach, Christians should be clearly aware of what is worth dying for and what is simply a cultural anomaly.