

THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” —MATTHEW 1:21

Several dramatic events surround the birth of Jesus: the divine conception of the virgin, Mary, and in strict Jewish tradition, the turmoil and dilemma that would have caused having been betrothed to Joseph; the magi from the Far East on a long trek across a desert, following the brightest star in search of the long-awaited King; the timing of the Roman census, forcing the arduous journey to Bethlehem; no room at the inn and settling into the humble abode of a stable; the actual birth of the Messiah; shepherds terrified by the sudden glory of the Lord appearing, but then given the Good News, and seeing a host of heavenly angels praising God; the magi commissioned by the evil intentions of Herod to report back to him (which they didn't), and then a sudden flight to Egypt.... considerable drama, but nothing at all compared to the dynamic reason Jesus was born.

The life of Jesus is the most profound and priceless gift God offers to everyone – a Saviour, the ultimate reason why Jesus was born. ‘Jesus’ means ‘saviour’ and ‘Emmanuel’, the other name given at birth, means ‘God with us’. Jesus came into the world so that on the basis of forgiveness, God could be with us through His Son. To understand the need for forgiveness, we need to understand the gravity of sin and how it grieves God. He is first and foremost a God of justice. Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death.” Without forgiveness, we remain in our sin and alienated from the life of God.

Born of the virgin Mary, Jesus had no sin, and grew to be the only one capable to offer Himself as the unblemished Lamb who would stand in our place, and take upon Himself the sin of the world. We cannot separate Christ's birth from His death, nor understand Christmas unless we understand Easter and unite them together. Christ's death and resurrection are the only means that make it possible to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

The deepest need of every human being is to be reconciled to God. In a Bethlehem stable over 2000 years ago, God gave us the reason for Christmas. He gave us His Son. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." The birth of our Saviour implements God's divine plan on earth for both salvation and restoration of His life back into human experience. As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us not forget the reason for it – to save His people from their sins.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, there are no words to express my gratitude for Jesus having stood in my place at Calvary, and then giving His life to indwell me. You are love, itself, and I thank You, God, for the birth of our Saviour.

TO REFLECT UPON: How would I describe what Christmas means to me?