

Monday **Week 27** **The Birth of Christ**

Q 105 What was special about the birth of Jesus?

A. Jesus was born of a virgin.

Luke 1:26-35

Moms and Dads often tell their children if a new brother or sister is coming into their family. One mother asked her little boy if he would like to have a new baby in the house. The boy thought for a little while and then answered, "I want to keep the one we have." He thought he might have to give up his little sister if a new baby came. His mommy explained to him that they would keep his baby sister, but get a new baby brother, too. The boy thought that would be fine.

God wanted Mary to know that she was going to have a baby. He wanted her to know that her baby would be special. He wanted her to know that this baby would have a special Father. God sent an angel with the message that this baby was going to be the Son of God. Mary was happy she was going to be the mother of a special boy. But she was not proud. She humbly gave thanks to God that He had chosen her.

We should be thankful for the special things God gives to us. It is always good to be thankful.

Thinking Deeper

Jesus was unique in history. He was the Son of God and he was the Son of man. He was born of a woman, but did not have a physical earthly father. The Bible always ascribes sin that is passed down through the generations to Adam. Adam is the one through whom the sinful nature descends. Jesus came as the Second Adam. He had no inherited sinful nature. As God, Jesus was holy. As man, Jesus was sinless. Being a sinless man, the Second Adam, Jesus was perfectly qualified to die for the sins of the descendants of the first Adam. Jesus was the only human being in the history of the world who was qualified to die for the sins of others. Everyone else has his own sins, thus would not qualify to die as a substitute sacrifice for others. Jesus is the only possible sacrifice for the sin of mankind. This is why the virgin birth was so critical to God's plan of salvation. Without the virgin birth, there would be no one qualified to die for the sins of man. Without the virgin birth, there would have been no incarnation. "God with us" would not have happened. But it did happen. "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). Jesus was born of a virgin. Thank the Lord for His wonderful gift.

Tuesday Week 27 The Birth of Christ

Q106 How did Joseph know what name to give Mary's baby?

A. The angel of the Lord told Joseph to name the baby Jesus.

Matt. 1:18-25

If Chinese parents name their child *Lifen*, it is likely that they are happy to have the baby. *Lifen* means "beautiful fragrance." But what would you think if the name was *Yun*, which means "cloud?" The Algonquin name *Kimi* means "secret." Who knows what the parents thought when they gave that name? The Zapotek tribe family who named their child *Nayeli* didn't want any question about how they felt: it means "I love you." Some Russian parents named their fourth child *Yevgeniya*, indicating she was quite a proper child. Her name means "well born." Another family had expectations for their little girl when they named her *Nadya*, which means "hope." Your name most likely has a meaning, also. You could ask your parents why they gave you your name.

Mary and Joseph were each told by an angel to name the Christ-child Jesus. The name *Jesus* means "God is Salvation."

Thinking Deeper

When Jesus was given his name, Mary and Joseph were fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah which said, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." According to Matthew's Gospel, Immanuel denotes that God is with us. God is the only Savior, thus when the name Jesus was given, the whole meaning denoted that God, who is salvation, is with us. God had spoken in the past that He was the only salvation. "...*there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me*" (Isa. 45:21b). Now God has come down, as a baby, to be the Savior of the world. The mystery of the Trinity is revealed in the very name of Jesus. He came, as the Son of God, to be the Son of man, to save man from his sin. If there is only one God, and He is the Savior, and there is only one Savior, and He is Jesus, then Jesus is that God who is the One God. Yet God was in heaven when Jesus was on earth. So the explanation that Jesus, as the Son, came from heaven to be the expressed image of the Father, is explained by the Trinity – Three Persons, one God.

Wednesday **Week 27** **The Birth of Christ**

Q 107 Where was Jesus born?

A. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea.

Luke 2:1-7

Do you think it matters where you were born? If you were born in the United States of America, you have privileges that only citizens have. For example, you can be President of the United States. According to the Constitution, people who were not born in the United States' territory are not allowed to be President. In other things it doesn't matter where you were born. Regardless of where you were born, you are still part of your family. And you are still important to God. It did matter, though, where Jesus was born.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The reason that is important is because it fulfilled a prophecy made hundreds of years before his birth. Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The wise men had two clues that led them to Jesus. Their first clue was the star. They knew it was special and that it would lead them to the new born king. The second clue was that he would be born in Bethlehem. They got that clue when they went to King Herod in Jerusalem. They found Jesus just where the Bible said he would be born.

Thinking Deeper

Some cities are not very famous. Nothing about them makes them stand out from others. Others are famous for various reasons: Paris for its fashions, London for its bridge and its history, St. Petersburg for its beauty, Pisa for its tower, Venice for its canals, New York for Wall Street, Washington for politics. Some cities have become famous because of a significant incident that happened. When we think of Gettysburg, we think of the Civil War Battle. Yalta was the site of conferences of the "Big Three" Allied leaders (Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt). Nuremberg brings the World War II trials to mind. Hanoi is a reminder of Viet Nam prisoners of war. Wittenberg reminds us of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. And Bethlehem reminds us of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Bethlehem was not really very important or famous until Jesus was born there. It was small and historically rather insignificant. But it was also a place mentioned in prophecy. When Jesus was born, Bethlehem suddenly showed up as an important place. King Herod took notice of it, for good when he sent the wise men there, and for evil when he sent his soldiers to kill the little children two years old and younger. Since then it has been famous. Every year at Christmas and Easter it gets national and international notice. Oh, little town of Bethlehem: how significant it has become since the birth of Jesus!

Thursday **Week 27 The Birth of Christ**

Q 108 How did the shepherds know that Jesus was born?

A. The angel of the Lord told the shepherds that Jesus was born.

Luke 2:8-18

Early one morning a man answered his phone. “Hello,” he said. On the other end of the line no one spoke. Instead he heard someone pushing the numbers on the phone. The tones of the numbers were making a melody – “Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb...” “What is that all about?” wondered the man. Suddenly he knew. His daughter’s name was Mary, and she had been expecting a baby. That was it! His daughter’s baby had been born. He started to laugh, and then his son-in-law told him about the new born child. He knew he had a grandchild because he got a phone call.

The shepherds did not have telephones to hear the news of the birth of Jesus. No one came to them with a telegram. They didn’t hear it on the news. They didn’t see the morning newspaper. They were shepherds, out in the fields watching their sheep. They got the news in a very special way. They learned that Jesus was born from the angel of the Lord and a multitude from heaven. “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God...”

Thinking Deeper

For a naturalist, who only considers phenomena that he can explain by natural laws, parts of the Christmas story are clearly unbelievable. The naturalist would not believe in the virgin birth. He would also not believe that angels actually came to the shepherds. Yet he would have a hard time explaining how the shepherds got to the manger the night of the birth of Jesus. There would be no natural reason for them to leave their job of tending sheep. Why would they at random suddenly get up in the night, abandon the sheep, go to Bethlehem, and start poking around in stables looking for a little baby? That’s incredible. But if you are a skeptic, you must believe something like that happened. If there are no angelic beings, then something else prompted the shepherds. Maybe they got frightened by a lion, fled to the city, and hid in a stable only to stumble onto this unlikely couple with a newborn baby.

Such explanations are highly imaginative, but imagination is the only resort of a skeptic when it comes to the Christmas story. For those who don’t keep their minds closed in by the narrow box of naturalism, the story is believable. Something prompted the shepherds to go to the stable in Bethlehem. They said it was a visit from angels. People have wondered at their saying that night and ever since. Why did the angels choose shepherds, anyway? They had no agenda other than keeping sheep – until they saw the Christ-child. Then that’s what they wanted to talk about. Maybe God knew no one else would be so honest in telling what happened. Makes you wonder, doesn’t it?

Friday **Week 27** **The Birth of Christ**

Review the Week's Questions

Q 105 What was special about the birth of Jesus?

A. Jesus was born of a virgin.

Q106 How did Joseph know what name to give Mary's baby?

A. The angel of the Lord told Joseph to name the baby Jesus.

Q 107 Where was Jesus born?

A. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea.

Q 108 How did the shepherds know that Jesus was born?

A. The angels told the shepherds that Jesus was born.

Have you ever been on a treasure hunt? Somebody hides clues that lead from one place to another until the last clue finally shows the way to a treasure. One family did treasure hunts on Halloween instead of going door to door and saying "trick or treat." Their mother hid clues upstairs and downstairs, outdoors to the chicken house, down the lane in the mailbox. The last clue finally led them to a bag full of all kinds of candy. They were so excited about the treasure hunt that the next year they asked to have it again.

The wise men and the shepherds had clues to lead them to the Christ-child. The shepherds got their clues from the angels. The wise men saw a star and followed it. Then they got another clue when they went to Jerusalem and learned he would be born in Bethlehem. As they followed the clues they finally found him. He was a great treasure! The Bible says that He was God's gift to man. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Thinking Deeper

The belief that we got where we are through the long process of evolution is based on the philosophic position of naturalism. Everything that is must have a natural explanation. Naturalists struggle with how things began in the first place, but they are valiantly working on things like "string theory" and some kind of oscillation of an energy field as the precursor to matter. They still must come up with where the energy field came from, but certainly someone will invent some idea that gives a natural explanation for that, too. With naturalism as a basis for thinking, it is impossible to believe in the supernatural.

In contrast, those who believe that the eternal God spoke the worlds into existence, have no trouble believing that He has supernaturally worked in the world. The virgin birth, the appearances of angels, the fulfillment of prophecy all are easily explainable as the works of the God who created the heavens and the earth and the seas and all that is in them. If God exists He can do anything! "Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27).