



The Hidden Treasures of Christmas

PART TWO

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Studies

A Two-Part Study Rediscovering What Tradition Has Obscured


TRADITION: ENEMY OF THE TRUTH

- Jesus said that tradition undermines God's Word – **Matt 15:6**
- Because of tradition people miss out on incredible truths and blessings
- Tradition blinds people and builds up walls against the truth
 - **So much so, that people will vehemently defend their tradition over the truth!**
- This is never truer than in regard to the Christmas narrative

TRADITION: ENEMY OF THE TRUTH

- At the outset we have to be prepared to let go of the tradition we have all been brought up with...
- In search of our hidden treasures, it is essential we have the correct starting point...
- ...and that is God's Word!
- God's Word alone, not man's, is true

HIDDEN TREASURES

- It's true that the Bible does not specifically give us the exact date of the Birth of Christ
 - There are certain details omitted from the text...
 - However, the Bible actually gives us far more than most realise regarding the 1st Christmas
 - Proverbs 25:2 tells us *"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter"*
- 
- An open wooden treasure chest sits on a wooden floor. The chest is made of dark, weathered wood and is open, revealing an empty interior. The lid is propped up, and the chest is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the image. The background is dark, making the chest stand out.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

- The story of Christmas doesn't begin 2000 years ago in a manger in Bethlehem...
- The origin of Christmas can be traced back to before the foundation of the world!
- For 4000 years God had been preparing for the 1st Christmas
- It wasn't an afterthought!

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

- It was the centerpiece of His Divine plan
 - But wasn't the Cross the centerpiece of all history?
- Yes!
- # Tradition's first disservice is to dissociate Christmas from Calvary!
 - The reason Jesus came at Christmas was to go to Calvary
 - Without Calvary there would be no Christmas!

TRADITIONAL ERRORS

- The traditional timing is wrong
- The traditional setting is wrong
- The traditional attendees are confused
- Therefore:
 - the reason for Bethlehem is obscured
 - The role and reason for Shepherds is obscured
 - The reason for the visit of the Magi is obscured
 - The traditional location for the Magi's visit is in error,
 - as is the notion of a star over a stable
- They all lead to wrong assumptions – which have even found their way into modern Bibles!

TIMING OF THE 1ST CHRISTMAS

- The announcement had been made 6000 years ago - **Genesis 3:15**
- A specific family had been chosen – **Genesis 12**
- The Passover had been instituted – **Exodus 12**
- The Law had been given – **Exodus/Leviticus**
- The Monarchy had been established – **2 Sam 7**
- The Town had been chosen – **Micah 5:2**
- The exact location had been set – **Micah 4:8**

THE PROMISE

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

- This promise of the 'seed of the woman'
- The seed is from the man!
- This is a divine promise of the Saviour, born of a virgin!

THE FAMILY

- 1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:
- 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
- 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

THE PASSOVER

- 3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house...
- 5 Your lamb shall be **without blemish**, a male of the first year

Exodus 12:3-5

- How could you know if the lamb to be offered as a sacrifice was without blemish?
- You would inspect it!
- Who would be the best to inspect a lamb?

THE MONARCHY

- I2** And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.
- I3** He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish **the throne of his kingdom for ever.**

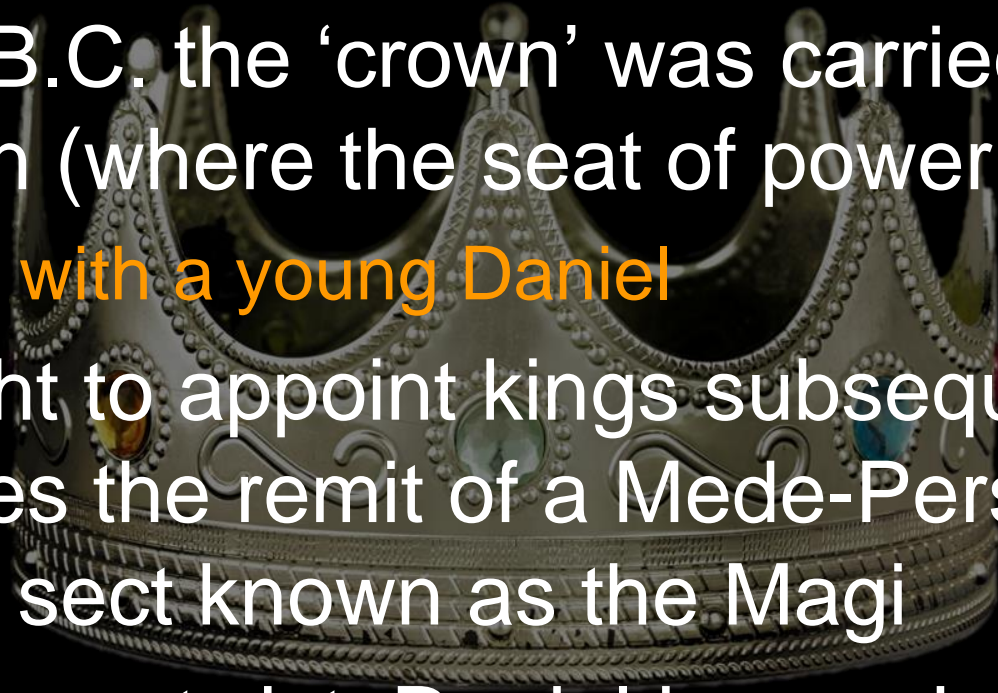
2 Samuel 7:12-13

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

- 14** Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
- 15** Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.
- 16** For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

THE KINGDOM

- Zedekiah was the last king of Judah
- In 587 B.C. the 'crown' was carried away to Babylon (where the seat of power remained)
 - Along with a young Daniel
- The right to appoint kings subsequently becomes the remit of a Mede-Persian priestly sect known as the Magi
- In a bizarre twist, Daniel is appointed as chief of the Magi and reveals to them the prophecies of the coming Messiah [Jer 39/Dan 2:38](#)



THE LAW

- 4 But when **the fulness of the time was come**, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,
- 5 To redeem **them that were under the law**, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Galatians 4:4-5

THE TOWN

2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2

- So Bethlehem was chosen as the town...

SUMMARY

- Abraham was chosen – he was a man of faith, willing to offer his own son as a sacrificial offering – *“God will provide Himself a Lamb”*
- The Passover was instituted as a model in advance and required the shed blood of a lamb
- The Law was instituted, with the sacrificial system – *“without the shedding of blood there is no remission”* - Hebrews 9:22
- The Monarchy was necessary, and David was a shepherd & man after God’s own heart – *1 Sam 13:14*
- But why Bethlehem?
- Was it just a random choice?
- Why not Jerusalem?

TIMING OF THE 1ST CHRISTMAS

- The 29th September in 2 BC ‘just so happened’ to be the Feast of Trumpets!
 - Trumpets were blown to announce war or proclaim joy!
 - The feast of Trumpets required an offering made by fire to the LORD – Jesus was this!
 - Zacharias specifically links the trumpet (ram’s horn)
 - to the birth of Christ [Lk 1:69](#)
 - The trumpet was linked to the giving of the Word of God at Mt Sinai [Ex 19:19](#)
 - The trumpet was used to proclaim liberty [Lev 25:9](#)

TIMING OF THE 1ST CHRISTMAS

- Rules Regarding Feast Days:
 - If it were a feast day, people would be required to keep ceremonially clean
 - If a person were defiled, they could not celebrate
 - Even if your parent died you were not allowed to touch the body, or you would become defiled
 - Similar laws applied to women with ‘an issue of blood’ – Lev Ch12, Ch15
 - Anyone who touched a women at this time would also be defiled
 - This also applied childbirth!

TIMING OF THE 1ST CHRISTMAS

- Rules Regarding Feast Days:
 - Anyone who so much as touched Mary – OR EVEN LET HER INTO THEIR HOUSE – would be at risk of being defiled!

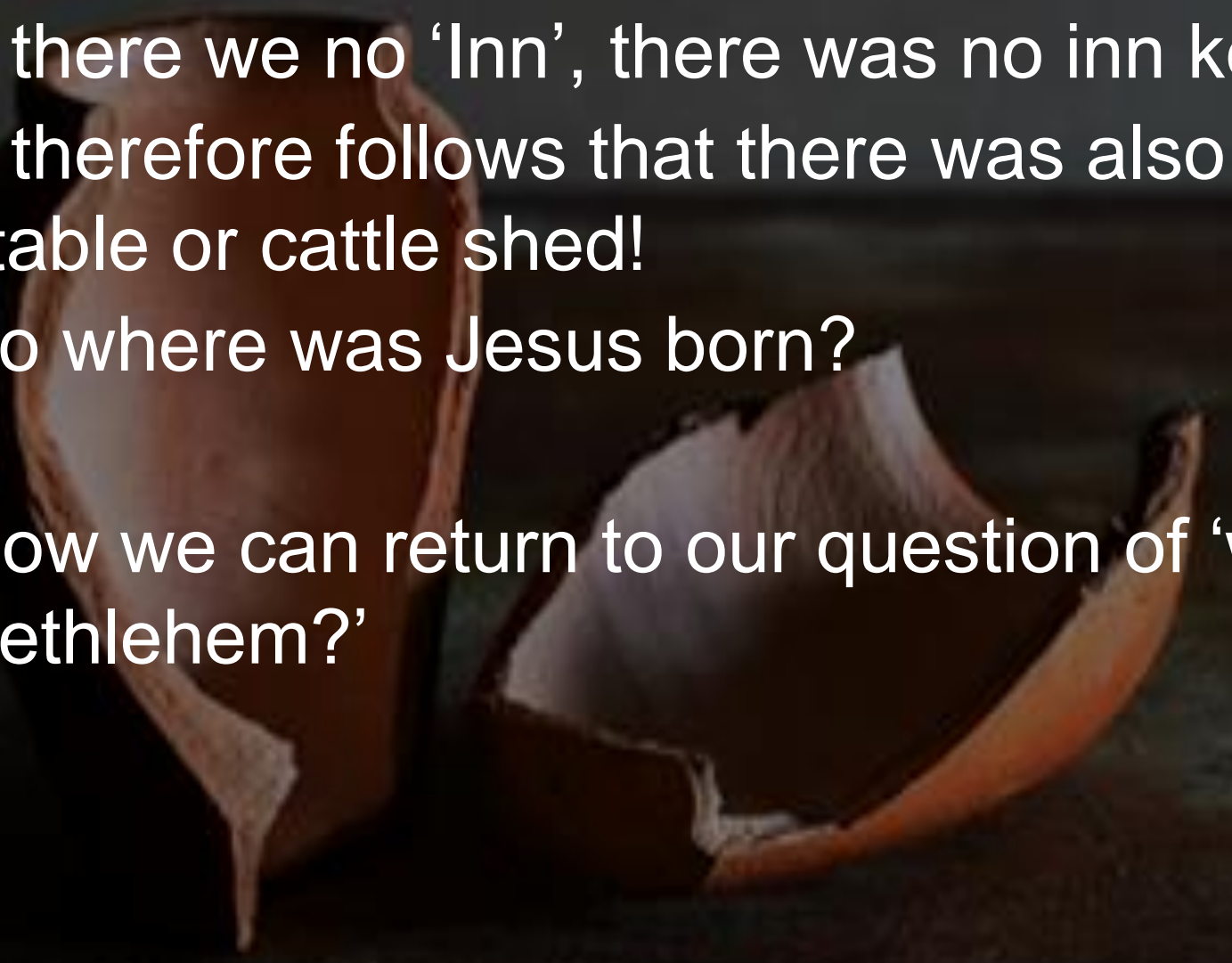
7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no **room** for them in the **inn**.

Luke 2:7

- Gr. '*topos*' 80x 'place' 5x 'room'
- 'There was no place for them'
- Lit. 'they were not welcome'
- Gr. '*Katalyma*' 'Guest chamber', annex on a house (Mark 14:14 / Luke 22:11)
- Nowhere is it used to imply 'hotel'

TRADITIONAL ERRORS

- If there were no 'Inn', there was no inn keeper!
- It therefore follows that there was also no stable or cattle shed!
- So where was Jesus born?
- Now we can return to our question of 'why Bethlehem?'



WHY BETHLEHEM?

- Abraham was chosen – he was a man of faith, willing to offer his own son as a **sacrificial offering**
 - *“God will provide Himself **a Lamb**”*
- The Passover was instituted as a model in advance and required the **shed blood of a lamb**
- The Law was instituted, with the **sacrificial system**
 - *“without the **shedding of blood** there is no remission”* -
Hebrews 9:22
- The Monarchy was necessary, and David was a **shepherd** & man after God’s own heart – *1 Sam 13:14*
- But why Bethlehem? Was it just a random choice?
- What did everything else have in common?

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

Luke 2:8-9



10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Luke 2:10-12



13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

Luke 2:13-15



16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

Luke 2:16-18



19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Luke 2:19-20



WHO WERE THE SHEPHERDS?

WHO WERE THE SHEPHERDS?

- Do we know anything about the shepherds to whom the angels appeared the night of Jesus' birth?
- The traditional view is that they were ordinary shepherds who were the “outcasts of society,”
- It is suggested that this is why the Angels appeared to them:
- *“God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” 1 Cor 1:27*

WHO WERE THE SHEPHERDS?

- The Mishnah advised against a number of professions, including that of shepherd.
 - *A man should not teach his son to be an [donkey] driver or a camel driver, or a barber or a sailor, or a herdsman or a shopkeeper, for their craft is the craft of robbers (M. Kidd. 4.14).*
- But the Bible described the God of Israel as a Shepherd - **Psalm 23**
- Some of Israel's greatest national heroes—including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David—were shepherds.

WHO WERE THE SHEPHERDS?

- God promised that He will someday shepherd Israel - **Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:11–15**
- The work of Israel's future Messiah as that of a shepherd - **Micah. 5:2–4**
- Jesus described Himself as the “good Shepherd” who “lays down His life for the sheep” - **John 10:11**

WHO WERE THE SHEPHERDS?

- So who were the shepherds in Luke 2?
- ...and why did God choose to send His angels to them?
- What significance did they have?
- ...and what does the Bible really say?
- Remember: Tradition makes the Word of no effect! - **Mark 7:13**

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- Alfred Edersheim, was a nineteenth-century Jewish scholar and convert to Christianity
- Edersheim highlighted that the flocks kept around Bethlehem were destined for temple sacrifice - something obfuscated by tradition
- The shepherds keeping watch over these sheep knew very well the intended purpose of the lambs under their care.
- Their job was to guard their sheep from becoming injured or blemished.

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- *“The shepherds of these lambs were the elite shepherds all from the priestly tribe of Levi whose job it was to care for these lambs so they would remain without blemish or spot”.*

- Chaim Bentorah

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- So it was to those watching over animals destined for temple sacrifice that the angels announced Jesus' birth.
- The arrival of the ultimate Lamb of God was revealed to those responsible for watching over the sacrificial lambs that had always pointed toward Jesus.
- Bethlehem was chosen as the place of Christ's birth for precisely this reason!

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- In the Jewish Mishnah: (Shekelim Ch7: Section 4)
- *“The lambs that were raised in this particular place were particularly special in that they were from a unique flock that was made up of sheep that were designated to be sacrificed in Jerusalem, and in particular, the sacrificial lambs for the Passover sacrifices”*
- The men who kept them were specifically trained for this task, and were educated in what an animal to be sacrificed had to be like.

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- Their job was to make sure that none of the animals were hurt, or damaged because they had to be 'without blemish' according to the Torah
- And for that reason, these lambs, when they were born, were wrapped in "swaddling bands" to protect them from injury,
- So, being themselves under rabbinical care, these shepherds would maintain a ceremonially clean 'stable' for a birthing place

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- According to the Talmud, all sheep found in the area “from Jerusalem as far as Migdal Eder” [Bethlehem] and on both sides were deemed to be holy and consecrated
- They could *only* be used for sacrifices in the temple...
- ...in particular for the Peace offerings and Passover sacrifices.

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- *“Luke's original audience would have immediately picked up on the religious significance of the Bethlehem shepherds watching their flocks by night”*
- *“Aware of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and the Jewish Temple worship of the day, they would have known that when you said Bethlehem, you said "sacrificial lambs". The hills around Bethlehem were home to the thousands of lambs used in ritual worship in the Temple”. - Harold Smith*

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- *“As a boy from Bethlehem, King David would likely have tended sheep destined for the daily offerings or used in the sacrifices on the high holidays in these very hills”.*
- *“Every day, according to the Torah, two lambs were required for a daily sacrifice in the Temple, meaning that 730 were needed each year plus the tens of thousands more lambs needed for Pesach (Passover) as well as for the other religious rituals”. - Harold Smith*

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- *Everyone in Israel recognised Bethlehem as being synonymous with sacrificial lambs.*
– Harold Smith

¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

Luke 2:19

BETHLEHEM'S SHEPHERDS

- For 1st Century Christians:
- *Hearing that Yeshua was born in Bethlehem would have automatically triggered an image of the Lamb of YHVH who takes away the sin [of the World].*
- *With that in mind, it's easy for us to imagine one of Luke's listeners saying, 'Of course the Lamb of YHVH would originate in Bethlehem - all the lambs for sacrifice came from there.'*

– Harold Smith

MICAH'S PROPHECY

² But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2

- Do you know what else Micah prophesied?

O HOLY NIGHT

- Upon arriving in Bethlehem 'no place was found' for Mary & Joseph
- Jesus was therefore 'born in a manger'
 - Tradition has told us that the Inn Keeper directed them to his/a stable
- The Shepherd's were in the fields around Bethlehem
- The angels appeared to announce Jesus' birth (the Messiah!)
- The angles gave the Shepherd's a sign
 - But no directions!

THE SIGN!

12 And **this shall be a sign unto you;** Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Luke 2:1-18

THE SIGN!

¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find **A babe** wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in **THE manger.**

Luke 2:1-18

- The Greek text indicates they were to find **A babe** lying in **THE manger** (definite article)
- Thus a babe lying in the manger wrapped in swaddling bands would itself be the sign that would confirm the words of the angel
 - These details were obviously significant to these shepherds.

A REASON TO CELEBRATE

- The Shepherds were fearful & afraid
– and no doubt a little bemused!

²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. Luke 2:20

- Why would just seeing a baby in ‘a stable next to an Inn’ cause such overwhelming joy?
- Because they didn’t go to a stable next to an Inn!
- So where did Mary & Joseph stay that night?

MICAH'S OTHER PROPHECY

⁸ And thou, **O tower of the flock**, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

Micah 4:8

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- The Hebrew phrase tower of the flock here, is "migdal edar" [mig-dawl ay-der]
- It refers to a particular tower that was built in ancient times to watch over the valley on the edge of Bethlehem, to protect the city,
- The name means "watch tower of the flock"
- Several of these towers are recorded in scripture
 - We find them in Judges 8:71, 9:46, & 9:51; and in 2 Kings 9:17, 18:8; and in Nehemiah 3:1

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- Rabbi Short states:
- *“This Migdal Eder was not the watchtower for the ordinary flocks that pastured on the barren sheep ground beyond Bethlehem... but it lay close to the town on the road to Jerusalem”*. **Book 2 chapter 6**
- Migdal Eder, is also mentioned in the Jewish Targums and is translated *“The anointed one of the flock of Israel”*

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

21 And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.

Genesis 35:19-21



Jerusalem: 8 Miles

Migdal Eder

Bethlehem-Judah



THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- It was built as a watch tower...
- ...to be used by shepherds for protection from robbers and wild animals
- Given the significance of the sheep around Bethlehem (destined for Temple sacrifice), it was an important look-out to guard against trouble
- But it served a dual purpose...

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- During lambing season, the sheep were brought to the tower from the fields, as the lower level functioned as the 'birthing room' for these sacrificial lambs.
- Being themselves under special rabbinical care, these shepherds would strictly maintain a ceremonially clean birthing place.

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- Once birthed, the shepherds would routinely place the lambs in the hewn depression of a limestone rock known as "**the manger**"
- They would "wrap the new-born lambs in **swaddling clothes**," preventing them from thrashing about and harming themselves "until they had calmed down" so they could be inspected for the quality of being "**without spot or blemish**"
 - *Jewish oral tradition & Alfred Edersheim, the Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.*

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- Approaching this subject from the Hebrew perspective will show, that while swaddling "cloths" were used in the handling of newborn babies, swaddling "bands" (as referenced in Job 38:9) were used for subduing animals prior to sacrifice. These "swaddling bands" were strips of gauze-like cloth used to restrain a lamb being prepared for inspection before sacrifice to prevent thrashing that they not "blemish" themselves.

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- A sacrifice had to be "bound" (Hebrew `aqad) in order to be valid. "Binding" an animal for sacrifice is the Hebrew akeida specifically mentioned in Abraham's "binding" of Yitzchak (Isaac) for sacrifice to the Almighty in Genesis 22:9
 - *Jewish oral tradition & Alfred Edersheim, the Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.*
- These swaddling bands were made from old priestly robes!

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- So there was no need for the angels to give these shepherds directions to the birth place, because they already knew it!
- These were the men who raised sacrificial lambs that were sacrificed in the Temple, that were birthed, laid in a manger & wrapped in swaddling bands at Migdal Edar
- When the angelic announcement came, they knew exactly where to go!

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- They would also no doubt be aware of the prophecy from Micah that the Messiah would make His appearance to Israel at their tower!

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- ...as Luke 2 indicates, the sign of the manger could only mean the manger at the base of the Tower of the Flock, as it is found in the original Greek wording of **Luke 2:7,12 and 16!**
- You cannot explain the meaning or direction of the sign they were given or their response unless you have the right manger, the right shepherds and the proper Hebraic perspective.

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- When there was no room for them in the 'guest chamber' ...
- ...Joseph had to find shelter and a place for Mary to give birth
- On their route into Bethlehem they would travel right passed this Tower of the Flock
- And it was to this place that Joseph takes Mary
- And it was in this special place at Migdal Edar that Christ was born, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- Prophetically, Migdal Edar - (the tower of the flock), is the exact place in Bethlehem for the Christ to be born,
- God was faithful in assuring Israel that he would fulfill his promises to them of the kingdom

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- Prominent Jewish writers concluded in the Midrash,
 - (an early Jewish commentary on the O.T.)
- That of all the places in Israel, it would be the “Migdal Eder”, The tower of the flock in Bethlehem, where the arrival of the Messiah would be declared first!

MICAH'S OTHER PROPHECY

⁸ And thou, **O tower of the flock**, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

Micah 4:8

MICAH'S OTHER PROPHECY

- Warren Wiersbe, comments:
- *“As the pregnant woman must deliver the child, So Judah must be taken captive to Babylon. It would be a time of pain but it would eventually bring blessing. God promised to deliver them and restore them, and Micah uses the prophecy of the Babylonian captivity of Judah as a pledge to guarantee the birth of Christ at “Migdal Edar” at Bethlehem, which is exactly where it took place!”*

MICAH'S OTHER PROPHECY

- Warren Wiersbe, comments:
- *“Micah prophesied that as surely as the Babylonians would soon carry away Judah in the north, so the messiah would come and establish his kingdom, & here Micah pledges that as surely as Babylon would carry away Israel, into captivity, so the messiah would arrive at the tower of the flock. And of course Micah goes on with the prophesy in Ch. 5”*

THE TOWER OF THE FLOCK

- *Migdal Eder, the Tower of the Flock, was the place where lambs destined for the Temple were born and raised. Every firstborn male lamb from the area around Bethlehem was considered holy, set aside for sacrifice in Jerusalem. Generations of hereditary shepherds tended the sacred flocks.*
 - Why A Manger? - Bodie and Brock Thoene

SO WHY SHEPHERDS?

- These shepherd's role was to inspect the lambs to be used as sacrificial offerings
- They were chosen to inspect and confirm that the baby lying in their manger was indeed without blemish
- This was the purpose of Christ's first coming...
- "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" – [John 1:29](#)

WHO WERE THE MAGI?

- 1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
- 3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:1-3

- 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
- 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
- 6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Matthew 2:4-6

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Matthew 2:7-8

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

Matthew 2:9-10

THE WISE MEN

- Who were they?
- Where did they come from?
- Why did they travel so far?
- How did they know about this King?
- How many were there?
- Why was 'all Jerusalem' troubled?

THE MAGI

- The Magi were actually one of the most powerful groups of men in the ancient world.
- The Magi would have been well known at that time

THE MAGI

- The Priests of the Media
- Renowned for interpreting dreams
- Mixed up the science of astronomy with their superstition of astrology
- They started trying to predict the future
 - Fortune telling / Sorcery
 - Magic is derived from Magi
 - As is the word 'magistrate'
- They had a political and religious component

THE MAGI

- As their reputation grew, they were looked to for advice
- No government in the east would be without their team of Magi!
- Important decisions would first be run passed the Magi
- Particularly the appointment of a king
- They make a number of Biblical appearances...

THE MAGI

¹³ Then the king said to the **wise men**, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment...

Esther 1:13-16

THE MAGI

¹ And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

² Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

THE MAGI

⁴⁸ Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the **wise men** of Babylon.

Daniel 2:46-48

CHIEF OF THE MAGI

- This was a hereditary order! ...
- Yet Daniel actually became Rabmag – (Jer.39), meaning Chief of the Magi.
- King Nebuchadnezzar gave up the worship of Ishtar, (from where we get 'Easter') and was apparently converted.

CHIEF OF THE MAGI

- So, it seems that much happened to the magi under Daniel's ministry...
- In Daniel chapter 5 verse 7 we find the account of Belshazzar's feast
 - Where Items from the Jewish Temple we desecrated
- Note: the new king at that time, calls the soothsayers, but the **magi** are mysteriously not present!
- It seems that many of the magi, carried on as true believers looking for the coming Messiah from this time, under the influence of Daniel himself.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

68 BC – 476 AD



A PRECARIOUS VISIT?

- It was then that a group of Persian-Parthian king makers entered Jerusalem in the latter days of the reign of Herod.
- *“The Magi, likely traveling in force with unimaginable oriental pomp and adequate cavalry escort to insure their safe penetration of Roman territory, certainly alarmed Herod and the entire populace of Jerusalem”* – Chuck Missler
- Herod’s reaction was understandably one of fear when one considers the background of Roman-Parthian rivalry that prevailed during his lifetime.

THE KING MAKERS

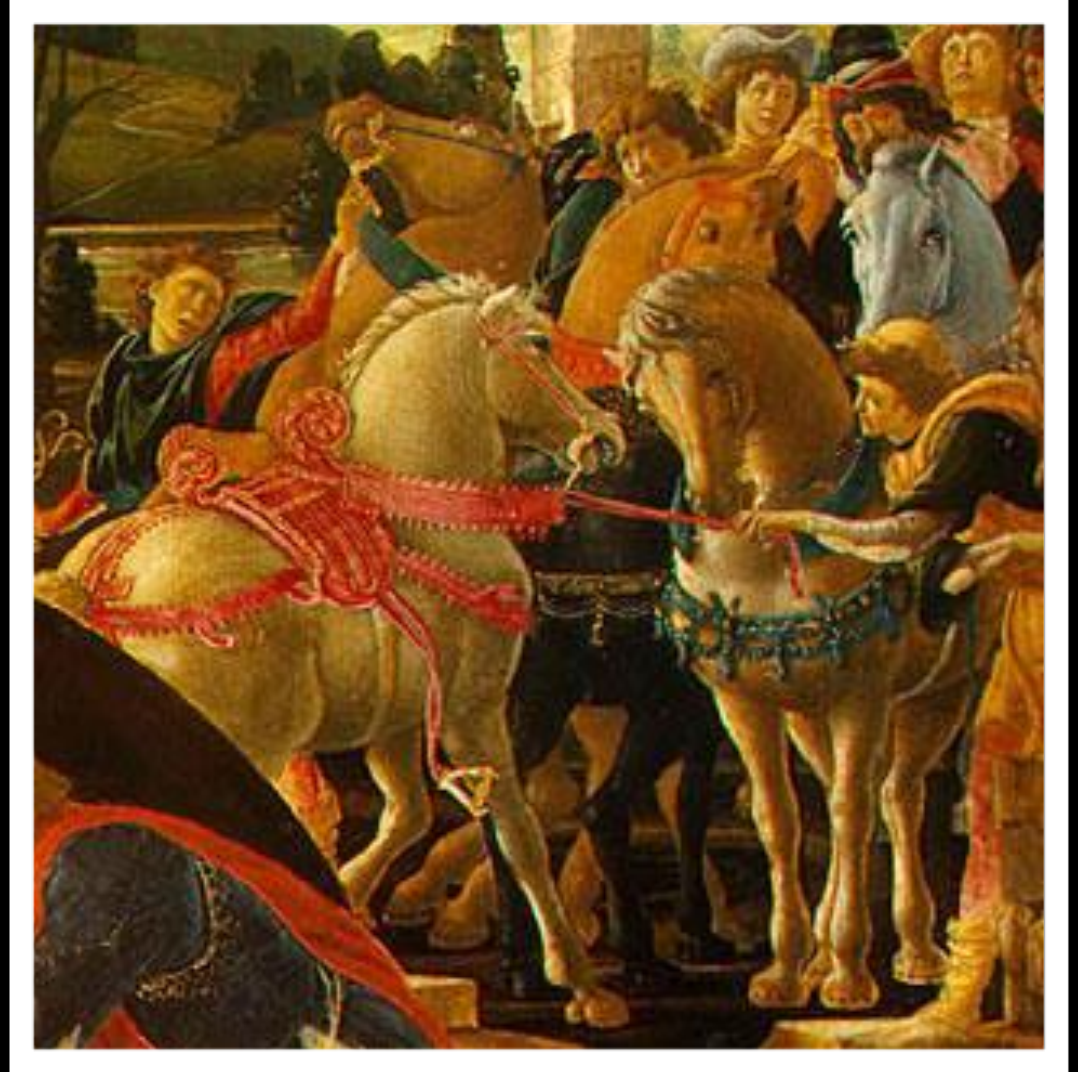


Picture by Giovanni, called the "Journey of the Magi"
- Note the horses (not camels!)

THE KING MAKERS

Botticelli's picture of "the adoration of the magi"

- Again, note the horses



THE KING MAKERS



“THE MAGI” CIRCA 1460

- 1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
- 3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:1-3

- 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
- 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
- 6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, **that shall rule my people Israel.**

Matthew 2:4-6

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Matthew 2:7-8

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, **which they saw in the east**, went before them, till it came and stood over where the **young child was.**

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

Matthew 2:9-10

- Why, at the point they come out from seeing Herod, would God send a star?
- Why would they even need the star at this point in time, if Herod had just given them the correct directions?
- They needed directions that Herod couldn't provide. Jesus was no longer in Bethlehem!

II And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:11

GIFTS

- Not necessarily all mentioned.
These mentioned because they are prophetic:
 - Gold
 - deity
 - Frankincense
 - priesthood (mixed into the shewbread by the priests)
 - Myrrh
 - when crushed, an ointment for burial
- Prophet; Priest; and King

DATING?

- Jesus was born in 2 B.C.
- How could He be born 'before Christ'?
- Various theories are put forward...
- However, does the Bible itself give the clue?
- Jesus born 2 B.C.
- Magi arrive 1 A.D.
- This is when Rome first hear of Jesus!
- This is when the first records document His existence!
- It may not be an 'error' after all!



The *Other* Christmas Story...

...the one that's never told!

The *Other* Christmas Story

- You know the traditional Christmas story...
- You might know the truth about Christmas...
- But do you know the *other* Christmas story?
- It's already been sung about for weeks:
- Supermarkets and Shopping malls have been declaring it:
- Yet 90% of churches in this country deny it
- Bible colleges will not teach it
- World governments actively seek to undermine it

The Other Christmas Story

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Luke 1:26-33

- The Throne of David is a nationalistic Jewish throne
- It demands the reestablishment of Israel, the royal throne of David, a Jewish King and Jewish Temple on the Temple Mt.

THE KING OF ISRAEL

² But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2

- Has Jesus ever ruled over Israel?
- Not yet!

TWO MESSIAHS?

- Isaiah 53 – The suffering Servant
- Psalm 2 – Rule with a rod of iron
- Not two Messiah's...
- But two comings!
- First: 'Lamb of God'
 - The Shepherds first
- Then: 'King of Israel'
 - The Magi some time later

KING JESUS

- King of Saints x1 Rev 15:3
- King of kings x3 1Tim 6:15 / Rev 17:14 / Rev 19:16
- King of Israel x6 Is 44:6 / Zeph 3:15 / Matt 27:42 / Mark 15:32 / John 1:49 / John 12:13 /
- King of the Jews x18 Mt 2:2; 27:11; 27:29; 27:37 / Mk 15:2; 15:9; 15:12; 15:18; 15:26 / Lk 23:3; 23:37; 23:38 / Jn 18:33; 18:39; 19:3; 19:19; 19:21(2)
- Thy King x4 Hos 13:10 / Zech 9:9 / Mt 21:5 / Jn 12:15
- Total = 28x to do with National Israel

SUMMARY:

- So, when you think ‘Christmas’ ...
- You should think...

‘Sacrificial Lamb’!

- The location, the details and the Shepherds themselves all speak of this great truth!
- But, that is only half the story (specifically Luke’s half!)...
- When you think ‘Christmas’ ...
- You should also think...

The King of the Jews

- These two aspects are summerised in Isaiah 9:6-7

Lamb & King

- “For unto us a *child is born*, unto us a *son is given*: and the *government shall be upon his shoulder*: and his name shall be called *Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*.
- Of the increase of his *government and peace there shall be no end*, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with *judgment and with justice* from henceforth *even for ever*. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”.

Isaiah 9:6-7

CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

- The Greatest present ever given!
- God's Son, given as the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world.
- Born in the town of the sacrificial lambs
- Inspected by the very shepherds who would approve the lambs to be offered in Jerusalem to atone for sin!
- Laid in *the* manger, and wrapped in swaddling bands to prevent any blemish
- He is the Lamb of God, born on the Feast of Trumpets to proclaim liberty to the captives...
- ...slain from the foundation of the world!



Calvary Chapel Portsmouth



Simply teaching the Bible, simply