

“WHAT IS CHRISTMAS TO YOU?”



TEXT: Luke 1:34

THESIS: To show the various responses a person may have toward the incarnation.

INTRO.: A. Responses vary to the same news. Ex. A woman hears she is about to have a baby. If she already has 8 children, her response may be “Oh, no!” If she has only 1 or 2 children, her response may be “Oh, that’s great.” If she has none & has been hoping & praying for a long time, her response may be: “Praise the Lord!!!”

B. In the same way responses varied to the news of Jesus’ birth. They ran the gamut from excitement & anticipation to uneasiness & dismay to worry & rage. The issue we want to examine is how do YOU respond to the incarnation of Christ? Or put another way: **“WHAT IS CHRISTMAS TO YOU?”** Is it time off from work or school? A shopping nightmare? Another year of debt & disappointment? Or do you look at it as a celebration of the birth of our Savior?

TRANS.: Let’s look at how some responded to the birth announcement of Jesus...

I. SOME WONDERED: (SKEPTICS)

A. Mary:

Lk.1:34 *Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*

1. The Miraculous Conception (NOT Immaculate Conception!) of Jesus by the Holy Ghost would be an unprecedented miracle indeed!
2. The Virgin Birth would be considered an impossibility then & now!

ILLUS.: The fact that Mary would be skeptical should not come as a surprise. Any right thinking, logical person would be. That the Holy Ghost (invisible) would impregnate a human being is unthinkable, maybe even blasphemous! Can it be? That a woman who had kept herself pure for her fiancée, would suddenly be pregnant was both far-fetched & scandalous!

But Mary’s incredulity was treated tenderly by the angel Gabriel & by the Lord, whereas, Zacharias’ skepticism when he questioned the birth of John the Baptist because of an age problem, was met with chastening by God & he was struck dumb! (Lk.1:18-20) Why the difference? The Virgin Birth was unprecedented, whereas Zacharias, a priest of Israel had the example of Abraham & Sarah. The fact that he was older & a priest also may have had a bearing on the Lord’s response. Plus it seems that he was demanding a sign from the Lord. It isn’t the response, but the motive behind it that makes a difference.

B. The Shepherds:

Lk.2:9 *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.*

1. They had heard about angelic appearances & people having visions, etc. but now they couldn’t believe their own eyes & ears!
2. They had heard the ancient prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, but they doubted it could ever happen in their lifetime.

ILLUS.: Are we very different? Do we REALLY expect the Savior to show up in our lifetime? We want to believe, but do we really? On the way up in the Rapture many of us will probably be asking “Is this really happening?!”

II. SOME WORRIED: (DOUBTERS)

A. Joseph:

Mt.1:19-20 *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*

1. Joseph properly worried about Mary’s reputation (& possibly his own).
2. Joseph, even after accepting the concept of the Virgin Birth, probably also worried about his responsibility in raising the Messiah - the God-man!

ILLUS.: The Hypostatic Union, or the perfect blending of the two natures of Christ, that of God & man in one Theanthropic Person in as unfathomable as the Virgin Birth. How would you like to be the father of a perfect child? What do you do -just hang around?!! This was surely a test of Joseph’s faith. The concept of accepting Jesus as God is the ultimate test of *our faith* as well!

B. Herod:

Mt.2:1-3 *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, 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. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

1. Herod was worried for different & very selfish reasons.
2. When he heard that another King had been born, he had reason to worry.
3. These Persian Princes coming throwing their support & their nations support behind a new King would not only threaten Herod, but “all Jerusalem.”

ILLUS.: The son of a King is not a King - he is only a Prince, a potential King. But this child had been “*born King of the Jews...*”! Herod’s response was to doubt, but but that soon turned to rage. He decided to kill all children 2 years & under in His jurisdiction. (A far worse “slaughter of the innocents” is taking place here in America -**abortion!**)

III. SOME WORSHIPPED: (BELIEVERS)

A. The Shepherds:

Lk.2:15-16 *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. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.*

1. They could have joined the ranks of skeptics & doubters, especially when they came & saw the circumstances; no King is born in a stable.
2. Instead they became believers!

B. The Wise Men:

Mt.2:11 *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.*

1. These Persian Princes may have become believers because of the ongoing influence of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego & later Esther & Morecai.
2. *No-one worships a baby! But they had studied the Scriptures & believed them, so when Herod “...demanded of them where Christ should be born... they said unto (Herod), In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet.”*

IV. SOME WITNESSED: (SERVANTS)

A. Shepherds:

Lk.2:17-18 *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.

1. There are many believers, but too few servants or laborers: “...*the laborers are few...*”
2. There are many believers, but too few witnesses.
3. It is intensely interesting that we do not read of Mary & Joseph witnessing!

ILLUS.: Some believers think that if they have a close walk with the Lord in their devotional life, they don't have to witness. Not so!

CONCL.: So just “**WHAT IS CHRISTMAS TO YOU?**” What does the incarnation of God mean to you? Are you still a **skeptic?** A **doubter?** A **believer?** Or are you a real **witness?**

Was Christ born on Dec. 25th? The following note appears in the *Defender's Study Bible*, & written by Dr. John Morri regarding the **Lk.2:13** and the heavenly host: “The probability is that this mighty angel, leading the heavenly host in their praises, was Michael the archangel; this occasion was later commemorated by the early church as Michaelmas (“Michael sent”), on Sept. 29, the same date of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. It would have at least been appropriate for Christ to have been born on such a date, for it was at His birth that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt (literally tabernacled) among us” (Jn.1:14). This would mean, then, that His conception took place in **late December**. Thus, it might well be that when we today celebrate Christ's birth at what we call Christmas (i.e., “Christ sent”), we are actually celebrating His miraculous conception, the time when the Father sent the Son into the world, in the virgin's womb. This darkest time of the year - the time of the pagan Saturnalia, and the time when the sun (the physical “light of the world”) is at its greatest distance from the Holy Land - would surely be an appropriate time for God to send the spiritual “Light of the world” into the world as the “*Savior, which is Christ the Lord*” (**Lk.2:11**).