

# THE NATIVITY SCENE

## A Fresh Look at the Babe

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The life of Christ has no beginning. He is eternal – without beginning or end. Thus His existence did not begin as a Babe in a manger. John introduces his Gospel account by saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This is the phrase the Jehovah’s Witnesses have tried to change. This is the phrase the Muslims hate. But it’s also the one phrase that Christians love. False religions see Jesus only as a man (or a prophet), and nothing more. However, we Christians see Him as the Eternal God. John 1:1 is the scripture that proves Christ has always existed before He became flesh. To the natural mind, this is impossible, yet the mystery of the incarnation remains today. Although He created the world and He was “in the world” yet “the world knew Him not.”

For some reason many people want to look at Jesus. During the Christmas season, we see many symbols, paintings, and figurines that make the Nativity scene come alive to us as Americans. In every race which has embraced Christianity, there is this unconscious desire to depict Jesus in some physical manner. Yet God, in His wisdom, left no visible portrait of His Son lest people venerate a picture. Before Jesus was born in the Bethlehem manger, many people had prayed for the Messiah to come. One such man was Simeon, to whom the Holy Spirit revealed he would not see death before looking upon the Messiah. In fact, he was allowed to hold the infant in his arms and pronounce a blessing upon him. What a joy!

A brilliant star led the wise men to Jesus. These Magi (wise men) were probably either Persian or Chaldean. They are believed to have been a priestly class who interpreted dreams, studied the stars, and made predictions about the future. How did they know the appearance of the star meant the birth of a king? Some scholars suggest they had learned about the prophecies of Judaism from Jews of the Dispersion. But why did they have to ask the scribes in Jerusalem where the Christ should be born if they were familiar with the Old Testament prophecies? The scribes knew the prophecies and probably mentioned one of the most specific Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament: “*And thou, Bethlehem, land of Judah, art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come forth a governor, who shall be shepherd of my people Israel*” (Matthew 2:6, Micah 5:2). I am not opposed to believing the Magi had direct instructions from God from the beginning. Why? Because later, after having found the Holy Child, God instructed them directly to return home by a different route. This proves God is not limited, and will reveal Himself to any person or people who seeks His will.

The Bethlehem Babe is no myth. The virgin birth is a fact. Harnack and Lobstein point out that the belief in the virgin birth of Christ can be traced back to the very “cradle of the church” and that it would take decades for such a myth to be developed from heathen sources. Powerful evidence is seen in the Septuagint Version translated at Alexandria in Egypt at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.). It translates “almah” in Isaiah 7:14 by the Greek word “parthenos”. It is certain the word means virgin in this passage. “Almah” is used six times in the Old Testament, and in every case means “virgin”. Martin Luther once said, “If a Jew or Christian can prove to me that in any passage of scripture *almah* means a married woman, I will give him 100 florins, though God alone knows where I may find them. To this day, no person has taken Luther up on his challenge.

It is important for us to remember Who this Babe is. He is no longer the Bethlehem Babe, but the risen Christ who sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for you and me. As the Christmas season draws near, let us honor Him lest we become slack in our efforts to proclaim His truths. Sadly, some Americans don’t know Him as Savior. To them He is only a baby, a myth, a face on a canvas, or some type of Santa Claus. But we know and worship Him as Lord. This is why we must tell others who He really is so they too can experience the true joy of Christmas. Today He reigns supreme as the risen Christ and our soon coming King. ***Let’s put Jesus first during this Christmas season! After all...Jesus is the ONLY reason for the season.***

*Merry Christmas from my family to yours.*

*Bro. Harbuck*

