

Jesus Christ – God Incarnate

1 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

1 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)

¹⁶Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith: Christ was revealed in a human body and vindicated by the Spirit. He was seen by angels and announced to the nations. He was believed in throughout the world and taken to heaven in glory.

- ***“Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith” – In 1 Timothy 3:16 Apostle Paul made a short list of the “great mystery of our faith” and he began with the incarnation of Jesus Christ – “Christ was revealed in a human body” and he concluded with Jesus Christ’s ascension after His suffering, death, and resurrection, to be at the right hand of the Father – “taken to heaven in glory.”***
- ***The importance of Jesus Christ coming in human form and being born of a virgin cannot be overstated. The Old Testament provides many wonderful prophetic words, pictures, and allusions that God Himself would be born in human form to redeem mankind through His own sacrifice. The New Testament takes this truth and fully reveals it and displays it in all the glory of God’s love, grace, and power.***
- ***The verses found in the New Testament regarding Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming in human form are so prolific and so interwoven with the Gospel message that without this fact there would be no Gospel message. “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5).***
- ***No serious reader of the New Testament could refute the fact that the Gospel message clearly portrays that the Son of God came in human form. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14). Even liberal theologians who do not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, His incarnation, His virgin birth, or His resurrection are forced to conclude that every New Testament writer wholeheartedly believed these truths.***
- ***The New Testament declares that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and that He became fully human while at the same time being fully divine. “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” (Romans 1:3-4).***

- *Jesus' incarnation and virgin birth are the beginning of the confession of our faith and His bodily resurrection is the conclusion of the confession of our faith. Both are essential for us to have saving faith.*
- *Although the birth of Christ is extremely important, the early church did not celebrate Jesus' birthday. It is not recorded in the New Testament that believers celebrated Jesus' incarnation on any specific day. The celebration of Jesus' birth on a specific day began to be practiced only during the fourth century and was instituted by the Roman Church. December 25th was chosen because it coincided with the winter solstice and the pagan celebration of the "rebirth" of the sun.*
- *It can be deduced by a careful study of the Gospel narrative that Jesus' birth mostly likely took place in the fall around our month of September. Many Bible scholars believe it coincided with the actual fall feast of the Feast of Trumpets which preceded the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles.*
- *However, even though the Bible does not instruct us to celebrate Jesus Christ's birthday, we are commanded to remember and celebrate His incarnation which not only includes His miraculous virgin birth but the perfect sinless life which He lived, His redemptive suffering and death on the cross, and His glorious physical resurrection.*
- *The Bible does not instruct us to celebrate His incarnation on a specific day but to remember it daily. Jesus even instructed us on how to specifically remember and celebrate His incarnation—it is called communion.*
- *Paul even reiterated the importance of the ordinance of communion beginning with the fact that he received it directly from the Lord, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread." (1 Corinthians 11:23).*
- *The very act of communion is tactile when we actually handle the bread and the cup and eat and drink the elements. "and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).*
- *By physically experiencing the bread and the cup it reminds us that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and His birth, His suffering, and His death were both real and physical. Communion is the way we remember and celebrate that Jesus Christ came in human form to redeem us by His own sacrifice. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26).*

- *As we study Jesus' birth there are many important details that unlock wonderful revelations of God's plan of salvation. Also as we study the events surrounding Jesus' birth there may be some misconceptions that will be exposed that are merely manmade traditions. Today we are going to explore just a few details regarding Jesus' birth.*

Matthew 1:20–25 (NKJV)

²⁰But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

²¹And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

- *It is very evident that Jesus' purpose in being born as a man was to save us through His own sacrifice. “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” In fact, the very name given to the Son of God incarnate, Jesus, means “salvation”, “the Lord saves”, “the Lord is salvation.”*
- *The salvation that Jesus was to bring was a complete salvation that would not only save us from the penalty of sin which is eternal damnation, but He came to bring us freedom, deliverance, and liberty from every aspect of sin so we could experience the full abundant life that God always intended for us. “for He will save His people from their sins.”*

²²So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:

²³“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

- *The virgin birth separated Jesus' birth from all other human births because it was a declaration that He was more than a mere man but He was actually God incarnate as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14. “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”*

²⁴Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife,

²⁵and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

- *Matthew, Chapter one, concludes with the birth of Jesus and the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding His miraculous birth.*

Matthew 2:1–18 (NKJV)

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

- *Between the birth of Jesus described in the last verse of Matthew, Chapter one and the arrival of the Magi or the wise men in Jerusalem in the first verse of Matthew, Chapter two, a span of almost two years had passed! Therefore it is evident that Jesus was no longer a baby in a manger but a toddler and they were no longer holed up in a barn but lived in a proper home.*
- *Matthew 2:7-8 tells us that Herod called the wise men to ask what time the star had appeared to them. On hearing their answer, he said “Go and search carefully for the young Child.” (verse 8). We will see later that their answer provoked Herod to have all the male children under the age of two years to be killed.*
- *There are a few striking points that stand out regarding the arrival of the wise men from the East.*
- *Although the wise men, who were not only Gentiles, but were probably ignorant of the Mosaic Laws, the prophetic writing, and the true way to worship and serve God, received a revelation from God as they studied the heavens and the stars. One of the purposes why God created the heavenly bodies was to be a sign. “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.” (Genesis 1:14).*
- *God used the heavens as a sign to the wise men that His Son, the King of Israel, the Saviour of the World had been born and God’s plan of salvation was not only for the Jews, but was extended to all peoples and nations, whoever would choose to put their faith in Him. “By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.” (Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:15-17).*
- *The wise men were drawn to the light and revelation given to them by God. They left their own homeland and began the long trek to a distant and foreign land to find the King of the Jews so they could worship Him. “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”*
- *The wise men left their pagan gods to follow the revelation from the true and only God, the God of Israel. Their response demonstrated that these Gentiles had become men of faith exhibiting the same pattern of faith that enabled Abraham to be counted righteous. Abraham followed the leading of the Holy*

Spirit and went out not knowing where he was going or what to expect but simply trusted God, and these wise men did the same!

- *At Jesus' birth, unlike the wise men from the east, the Jewish religious leaders and most of the population of the city of Jerusalem were totally ignorant that their King, Saviour, and Messiah had been born. In a parallel way, at the end of Jesus' ministry as He prepared to enter Jerusalem for the very last time they also failed to recognize the time of their visitation and chose to reject the salvation that Jesus was preparing for them with tragic consequences.*
- *The heart of God was not indifferent to the suffering that would befall Jerusalem and all of Israel because of their hardness of heart and unbelief. "Now as He drew near, **He saw the city and wept over it**, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'" (Luke 19:41-44).*
- *God chose and sent the Magi, the wise men from the East, first to Jerusalem as both a rebuke and as an announcement to the leaders and the entire city. It was a rebuke because the Lord had to send Gentiles to announce to the Jewish religious leaders that their Messiah, Saviour, and King had been born and God's plan of salvation was being unveiled. The Jewish leaders who prided themselves on being God's chosen people were totally oblivious to what God was doing!*
- *God revealed the birth of His Son almost two years previously to some lowly shepherds tending sheep. "Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12).*
- *In His remarkable grace and mercy, God did not reveal the wonderful event of the birth of His Son to those in high positions and who appeared important in the eyes of men but to the humble and lowly!*
- *The shepherds' response to the words of the angels was immediate. They made haste and went to worship the newborn King, their Messiah. "So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." (Luke 2:15-16).*

- *The shepherds not only had the joy of beholding the Christ child but they were faithful to proclaim this wonderful news to all those around them who were willing to listen. “Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.” (Luke 2:17-18).*
- *As we turn our attention back to Matthew, Chapter two, we see a stark contrast between the joyful response of the wise men and the shepherds with that of Herod, the Jewish religious leaders, and the general population of Jerusalem. “When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” (Matthew 2:3) Herod became very agitated, suffering perplexity of mind, even dread.*
- *It is understandable that Herod would have reacted badly to the news of God’s Redeemer, Messiah, and the rightful King of Israel being born. However, it is surprising that the Jewish leaders and the inhabitants of Jerusalem should have so sympathetically aligned themselves with Herod’s response. Instead of rejoicing at the news of God’s promised and long awaited Messiah having being born and the promise of redemption from all their enemies, they were deeply troubled and agitated.*
- *Possibly the troubled response of the Jewish leaders and the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the news of the birth of their Messiah could have been two fold. They may have grown accustomed to the false peace and temporary prosperity they were experiencing under Herod. However, secondly and maybe even more compelling was their fear of Herod’s fierce cruelty, his irrational paranoia, and his outbursts of extreme violence.*
- *However, whatever the reason for their allegiance to Herod it came at a high personal price for the Jewish religious leaders, the people, and the nation of Israel. They no longer sought to please God but instead sought to appease Herod. They feared Herod more than they feared God! Their concerns were only for themselves and their immediate comfort and safety. They lost sight of the primary reason God created Israel as a nation—to be a light to the nations and to bring forth the Messiah to redeem mankind.*

Matthew 2:4-7

⁴And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

⁶‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’ ”

- *Herod’s response to the news from the wise men revealed something paradoxical about his beliefs. He inquired from the chief priests and scribes the*

exact location the Messiah was to be born according to the prophecies recorded hundreds of years previously. “he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.” However, he then immediately plotted how he was going to kill the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

- *Herod acknowledged the reality of God and His plans but then he deluded himself by thinking that he could outwit God and foil His plans!*
- *Even though the Jewish religious leaders knew exactly what was written in God’s Word, they were totally oblivious to what God was doing and how to align themselves with His will. Although the Bible is God’s Word, without the Holy Spirit we cannot benefit from its revelations or properly apply the truths it contains.*
- *The miraculous virgin birth of Jesus was not just something that happened on the stage of history but its time, place, and every detail was predestined and carefully orchestrated by God the Father and clearly revealed through the many prophecies found in the Old Testament.*

⁷Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared.

⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.”

⁹When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.

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

- *Once the wise men had made God’s planned detour in order to inform all of Jerusalem of the birth of their King and Messiah, the star once again became clearly visible to them and led them straight to Jesus.*

¹¹And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- *These wise men who a short time earlier had been pagan worshippers now became worshippers of the true God “and fell down and worshiped Him.” Their faith had fully blossomed as they beheld Jesus. Jesus was no longer only the King of the Jews but He had become their King, their Messiah, and their Saviour.*
- *“And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” These gifts were prophetic and significant. The gift of gold speaks of divinity and befitting for a King. Frankincense was used in temple worship and speaks of Christ’s priestly role. (Exodus 30:34).*

Myrrh was offered to Jesus while on the cross and represents suffering. (Mark 15:23). They provide the full spectrum of Jesus' ministry: as the King of Kings, as our High Priest and as our suffering Saviour.

- *Their worship was comprised of more than just their words and form, but the giving of their substance. Worship is a place of surrender and giving of oneself. As well, the treasures they had given were not a mere token but something that God the Father had provided for them to give, so that Jesus and his family would have provision as they journeyed to Egypt.*
- *Jesus, like every other human being, required material things such as food and clothing. He was dependent on His Father to provide for all His needs. Sometimes the Father would stir the hearts of people to provide as He did with the wise men. Other times His Father provided Him employment as a carpenter. However, Jesus always knew "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" "For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." (Matthew 6:31, 32b).*

¹²Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

- *Herod in his utter foolishness thought he could slip one past God by feigning to want to worship this King of the Jews. "bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." The only person Herod was successful in fooling was himself. God who inhabits eternity laughs at the plans of the wicked. "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision." (Psalm 2:4) God is neither fooled by the deception of the wicked, surprised at their scheming, nor confounded by their strategies.*

¹³Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

¹⁴When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt,

¹⁵and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

- *God the Father dealt with the threat of Herod plotting to kill Jesus by warning Joseph in a dream and instructing him to "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word."*
- *Jesus' incarnation was real in every sense. The danger and threat to Jesus' life was also real and it was essential for Jesus to be protected. God didn't make Jesus become invisible to hide Him from Herod, but instead God warned Joseph in a dream to flee with the young Child to Egypt. Joseph didn't remain*

in Bethlehem naively thinking Herod wouldn't try to kill Jesus. He obeyed the leading of the angel in his dream and fled to Egypt.

- *Sometimes Christians in a hyper spiritual zeal, forsake sanctified common sense, ignore clear biblical principles, and make decisions that are irresponsible and foolish. Then later they are puzzled why God didn't protect them or provide for them.*
- *Jesus and His family continued to live in Egypt until the threat against Him ended with the death of Herod. "He was there until the death of Herod."*
- *Matthew quotes from a passage in Hosea 11:1, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son.'" What is interesting about Hosea 11:1 is that the original context is not a prophecy about a future event but it describes a past event when Jacob and his family fled to Egypt to escape a deadly famine during the time of Joseph. God later sent Moses to deliver Israel and Joshua to lead them into the Promised Land.*
- *The historic event of how God dealt with Israel becomes a prophetic picture of how God would deal with His only begotten Son, Jesus when His life was also in danger. This emphasizes the fact that Jesus' incarnation was a reality in every way. In the same way God protected Israel, He protected Jesus. If Jacob and his sons had not gone to Egypt they would have perished in the famine, and if Joseph hadn't taken Jesus to Egypt, then Jesus could have perished at the hand of Herod.*
- *Because Jesus' incarnation was real, He experienced life the exact same way we do including the dangers, the heartbreak, and the pain. Jesus even knew what it meant to be driven from His homeland. "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." (Hebrews 2:17-18).*

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."

- *The full viciousness, cruelty, and evil of Herod was revealed with the slaughter of all the innocent male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding area. The*

actually number of male children that were killed may well have numbered less than fifty, but still, the devastation of their slaughter is heartbreaking.

- *The cost to God to redeem mankind through the incarnation of His Son Jesus is seen on many different levels and in many different ways. One of the costs was the death of those children at the hands of Herod. Just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they failed to recognize Him as their Messiah, the heart of God was deeply grieved over the slaughter of those children.*
- *All Israel had to be informed that the promised Messiah had been born and that God was preparing to redeem His people and everyone who would be willing to believe. As with all of the things that God does, people respond in different ways. Some respond with joyful faith, others mock, others ignore God, while others do all they can to oppose Him in the most evil and vicious ways.*
- *Of course God could have stopped Herod, in fact He could have stopped all of the evil, suffering, pain, and death that has occurred since the fall of man, but it would have been necessary to destroy all sinners which would have meant all of mankind!*
- *Skeptics point to all the suffering and death around the world as evidence that either God does not exist or He does not care. However, they fail to recognize that God's true motivation in allowing this is to give an opportunity for as many as possible to repent and be saved. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).*
- *God is not indifferent to all the suffering that is and has taken place in the world. His heart grieves and is moved with compassion and that is why He sent His Son Jesus. (John 3:16)*
- *Most of the suffering in the world results from choices made by men and is not God's doing, although He uses suffering for His redemptive purposes.*
- *God is not indifferent toward all the suffering, pain, and death that is occurring around the world, but He looks past the terrible temporal suffering to the eternal redemption He is bringing forth in the midst of it.*
- *It was not God's will for man to have chosen sin but it was God's will to send His Son Jesus to be incarnate and partake of this suffering so He could redeem mankind from sin and suffering.*
- *In respect to the death of the children Herod murdered, the gospel writer cites a prophecy found in Jeremiah 31:15, "Thus says the LORD: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.'"*

Ramah is a region close to Bethlehem where the descendants of Benjamin lived. This prophecy does not imply that it was God's will for Herod to murder the children, only that He foresaw that this event would happen.

- *This prophecy found in Jeremiah 31, like many Bible prophecies, have more than one fulfillment. There is a near fulfillment which dealt with Israel being led into captivity by the Babylonians. It was in Ramah where the people of Israel were gathered together before they were deported into captivity for seventy years.*
- *However, the more distant fulfillment of this prophecy refers to the slaughter of the children by Herod some five hundred years later.*
- *The reason Rachel is depicted as weeping is because she was the mother of Benjamin whose descendants were killed by Herod. However, instead of this prophecy in Jeremiah ending on a sad note it concludes with hope and expectation. "Thus says the LORD: "Refrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, And they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the LORD, That your children shall come back to their own border." (Jeremiah 31:16–17).*
- *The prophecy concludes with a word of comfort for Rachel because her children would return. For those who were carried away captive God would restore them to the land of Israel after seventy years to rebuild the nation in godliness.*
- *However, in the context of those children who were killed by Herod the hope of their return is found in the resurrection and the eternal life they will receive through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death and glorious resurrection.*
- *When we see the death of those innocent children, at the hands of Herod, from the view point of the future resurrection of those children, then we can conclude that they were the first martyrs recorded in the New Testament, because they died for the sake of Jesus.*
- *For us to make sense of all the suffering and death that is in the world we must see it in the light of Jesus Christ's incarnation. Through His virgin birth, His sinless life, His suffering, and sacrificial death at Calvary, and His glorious resurrection God has opened the door for salvation and redemption.*
- *Salvation saves us from all the destruction that sin has wrought in our lives.*
- *Redemption makes sense of our suffering as we surrender our lives to Christ to use our lives for His glory so many can find Christ and we can grow in the grace and love of God.*

- ***If we see our lives in the light of eternity we will find strength, purpose, and joy, even when we experience times of sorrow and hardship. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).***