



# incarnation

*Reflections  
On  
Christmas*



ROBERT H. FLORES



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*“How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? For the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.” — Jeremiah 31:22*

- Journey to Bethlehem

Rome wanted a census and it didn't matter if you were crippled, blind, lame, young or old. Rome didn't care who it inconvenienced, pregnant women, notwithstanding. The hundreds of miles alone on a donkey, for a pregnant woman could have resulted in a premature birth or a miscarriage. How could God have allowed something so dangerous to Mary and her baby? Mary was an incredibly brave woman to undertake such an arduous journey. She wanted to be there for her man, Joseph. The journey wasn't just dangerous to a baby in the womb but it was dangerous to Mary and Joseph as the route was littered with thieves, robbers and vagabonds who would do anyone harm. God allowed it to happen and it is kind of a little miracle that they even made it to Bethlehem in one piece.

- A Man's Man

Joseph was a man's man, caring for his wife and a baby that wasn't even his. He had the heart of Jesus and he didn't even know it. His actions pleased the Lord and his example should inspire us to do the same.

- Fully Human

Neither Adam nor Eve were formed from a sperm or egg and yet they were fully human. Critics argue that because Jesus wasn't formed from a sperm or an egg (as He was virgin-conceived) that that is evidence of Him not being fully human. But, actually, “human” is more than just being formed from a sperm or an egg. Being human is beyond the physical. God is more human than we are. “Human” existed before the physical universe. To be “human” is to truly live as you were created: as the Imago Dei—the image of God. Jesus is the Second Adam, specially created for a new race.

- Even With No Room, God Provides

Personally, I think some of the innkeepers did have room, but

for whatever reason (i.e. selfishness, tribal discrimination, uncompassionate, etc.) they just said that they had no room. But God always provides, even if it's a warm stable filled with animals.

- First Witnesses

Angels, demons, Satan, God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus' earthly parents and shepherds and animals were the first witnesses of Jesus' birth story.

- The Bread of Life was born in a feeding trough for animals.

- The Shepherds at Jesus' Birth

God showed His Good News to the lowest of people: shepherds. Therefore, we should also share the Good News to the outcast, the poor, the needy and those segregated by society. God sent His best messengers (angels) to tell lonely shepherds, who in the eyes of the world were not worth much, the Best News. God cares about those whom the world has rejected (namely shepherds). I wonder if any one else saw and heard the angels. I mean, that's a lot of angels to not see or hear! Either the shepherds were really outside of the town, or the angels were specially given them the message and no one else. It took faith for the shepherds to leave their sheep and go and try to find the Newborn King. It took faith to knock on doors, wandering aimlessly in the night until they found Him. Seeing shepherds come out of nowhere probably didn't startle Joseph and Mary. I mean, they had already seen angels separately and knew this baby was special. For shepherds to arrive, was just a precursor to all the people in history to be seeking the King of Israel. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising

God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. 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. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.” (Luke 2:8-18)

- Protecting the Wisemen

“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. (Matthew 2:1-2) The Wisemen, Gentile Babylonian astronomers, had great faith to embark on a great journey to try



and find the new King. God protected them from thieves, disease, hunger, getting lost, etc. for their great faith. There could have been anywhere from 50 to 3,000 people involved in the travel (servants, families, scribes, etc.) God revealed to all of them, through an angel, to return home another way (which means that God can foil the plans of any government). The Wisemen are a great example to us, even if we are far from God, we should go seeking after Him.

- Herod the Madman

Herod believed in the killing of the innocent for his own political gains. He sent his soldiers to murder baby boys in Bethlehem. He actually had more faith in his evil actions than in the plan of God. He thought that he could foil God's sending of a baby. What kind of madman thinks that his puny plans will upset God's plans? "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." (Mt 2:16)

- Hating Christmas

Those who hate the One who came down from heaven are the ones who hate Christmas. Have you ever met someone who hated the day of someone's birth? Or, have you ever hated someone's birthday? No. So why is it different with Jesus' birthday? There is more hatred for Jesus' birthday than for any other Man who was ever born.

- Bigots Oppose Christmas

The biblical concept of Christmas, over the last century, has been under attack. It has been attacked by bigots who hate Jesus birth. They use the Law (a concept from God) to attack public displays of His birth, nativities, caroling, Bible verses, etc. This kind of hatred could only be fueled by Satan. Satan initially tried to replace Jesus' birth with every kind of mythos imaginable (Santa Claus, Rudolph, Frosty) and with movies ("A Christmas Story", "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation", "Elf", etc.) and with

traditions (Ugly Sweater Parties, Office parties, Winter Carnivals, etc.) When those didn't work, he sought to erase it completely. And the immoral elected judges constantly side with the ungodly. Who knew that a celebration of the Messiah would produce such hatred?

- **Overshadow and Overcome**

There are two related words in the Bible: "overshadow" and "overcome". Romans 12:21 says, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." John 16:33 says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Luke 1:35 says, "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Paul says in Romans 12:21, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." How do you overcome evil with good? Well, overcoming evil is only made possible by the overshadowing of Mary's womb. Overcoming in our lives is because Jesus became flesh (by Mary's overshadowing of the Holy Spirit).

- It is Christmas every day because every person receives gifts every day from God (i.e. life, nature, family, friends, etc.)

- **Beauty Without Focus**

Christmas bows. They're nice, right? They're festive. But, what do they mean? It could mean anything at the Christmas season. It's the search for an answer. Red bows are so generic, just like everything else at Christmas. What are people celebrating at the end of December? A red bow really won't hold the answer. It is simply symbolic of trying to find an answer. But a bow is still beautiful right? Yes, but it is beauty without focus. It reminds me of the Athenians worshiping an unknown god. It is our responsibility, as Christians, to let the true God be known at Christmas time. "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

(Acts 17:23)

- Happy Holidays?

“Happy Holidays” is a generic phrase that doesn’t really mean anything. Why is it “happy”? Why is it a “holiday”? What purpose is there to celebrating December 25 every year to the secular world? If you take Jesus out of the equation you are just left with generic gift-giving, a generic feeling of happiness and a generic holiday. Jesus’ birth solidifies the day and grounds it in reality. There is a purpose to His birth and a joyous response that elicits from us. But He has to be a part of that Day for it to actually make a difference in your heart.

- False Narratives

The world creates false narratives and in doing so, have to make them sound more palatable than the truth. One example is during Christmas time. Rather than celebrating the truth that a Jewish baby boy was born in a stable, Americans celebrate the Great Elf giving presents. It’s like humanity doesn’t want to look at its own sin. It’s as if people have to ignore the truth so they don’t have to recognize it. For example, let’s deceive our children into some fictitious old man swooping down the chimney rather than looking at our dark hearts and deeds (the reason why Jesus came). It’s easier to become an evangelist to a lie (i.e. secretly wrapping presents) than to just tell the truth, it seems. If the world had its way it would rather have Jesus never existed. How sad, because He is our only hope and salvation. It is only because of Him that we have eternal life. Yes, it’s painful to watch him kicked out of Bethlehem inns or being birthed in a disgusting stable or having his life be in danger by a mad king, but it is truth. That is the truth that can never be erased by distractions like Christmas trees, lights and presents.

- Christmas is about One Gift– the Greatest Gift– ever given by God or man.

- Christmas is the day that deity took on flesh. It is the day of the beginning of the end (of sin and death).

- What Does God Think About It?

There's a problem when Christians are asked "Well, what does Christmas mean to you?" This question seemingly divorces the fact of history that God became man and reduces the incarnation (or the celebration of the day) to something that is based on mere personal opinion. Who cares what Christmas means to "me"? What the question should be is, "What does Christmas mean to God?" That question takes the real issue out of the theoretical/ever-changing flood of man's opinion and roots it back to God's unchangeable nature.

- All That is Real

The incarnation of Christ is an incarnation of reality. All that is real or ever will be real came into a Jewish maiden's womb supernaturally. Existence, life, truth, all that is worth living for, was born in Bethlehem. To deny that is to deny what reality is. To deny that is to live in a false reality that only you enjoy in your head. Christ is all in all; he is the everlasting from everlasting. The Ancient One. The One whose days can't be numbered. He entered our world. Deity made flesh. That's what we celebrate at



## Christmastime.

- Host of Angels

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:13-14) When has there ever been a heavenly host that appeared to men in all of history, singing? Other than the angels Elijah saw (2Kings 6:15), I would venture to say that this was the most angels that have ever appeared at one time in mankind’s history. It for sure, was the largest gathering of angels singing.

- The Eternal Birth Story

I think I learn something new about the Christmas story every year. Christ’s birth in a manger is a story that transcends time and space and the meaning of it is infinite. It is a story that can never have its depths combed. The moment you think you understand this simple story, there is another layer to peel back. Each year is a beautiful gift to us that we can celebrate and study this historical time/space event. It is an event that will continue to be celebrated throughout eternity. Christmas is so much more than gifts to our fellow men. It is about the one, everlasting Present to mankind. It is a gift of atonement wrapped in swaddling clothes. It is grace given, freely, to those who don’t deserve it. It is the story of humble holiness birthed in a lowly stable. There are millions of lessons in this story for us. If we could study this story for eternity, we could never comprehend what the Lord did for us on this day. I think of the characters, the real historical people in this story, too. Mary didn’t understand fully, but she responded in faith. Joseph didn’t understand, but He chose to believe God. The Wisemen didn’t fully understand, but they believed the Scriptures. The shepherds saw a miraculous host of angels and ran into town in faith. Simeon and Anna both responded in faith when they saw the baby. Herod also responded in a sort of anti-faith, in a murderous rage upon the town of Bethlehem. The birth of Christ divided people, just as his crucifixion did. Whether law-abiding citizens or thieves, whether kings or peasants, whether male or female or just the typical person off the street, Jesus’ birth

must be answered. Was it a normal birth or a virgin birth? Do the Scriptures tell the truth or do they lie? Everyone must answer this question whether or not God became a man 2,000 years ago. You can't ignore the eyewitnesses or the historical narrative or the billions of touched lives throughout history. This event in Bethlehem must be answered by every skeptic. But, for me, I have had my question answered from Scripture. And, I tell you, this event is so majestic and holy. The beauty of this birth is beyond words. It is an event that has changed my life forever.

- Virgins Don't Give Birth

Christians are considered crazy because they believe a virgin gave birth on December 25. A virgin cannot get pregnant, let alone give birth. That is impossible by human and sexual facts. However, if God were to sidestep the natural and do something supernatural, wouldn't that be something to be amazed by? That is exactly what happened. Don't think that impregnating a virgin is too hard for the God who made the world. Don't think that the Holy One of Israel cannot break into his own creation on his own terms. God is God by definition. To say that "he can't" is to place nature above God, thus making an idol. Nature is not all-knowing or all-powerful. But the One who is, made all things and a virgin birth is a reality, yes, an historical fact.

- Titles of the Messiah

I think when the angels declared Peace on Earth (Luke 2:13-14) that that phrase could be considered a title for Jesus. He is peace. He is the epitome and personification of peace. If peace were a person (and He is) He would be Jesus. In addition, Good Will Towards Men could also be considered a title of the Messiah. Good Will (i.e. Grace) is a Person. His name is Jesus. Peace and Grace are on the Earth and He is born in a manger. There is no peace or grace where Jesus is not found. There was more peace and grace in that manger than there was in all of Bethlehem. Peace and Grace originates in Heaven and came down to Earth. What a beautiful, priceless gift that men and women didn't deserve. Why would God give of Himself so freely a gift such as this? His nature of Peace and Grace must be shared with others.

- Justice in Bethlehem

Jesus' justice was shown in Bethlehem. His justice flow to men because Christ came to die. Our sinful depravity is also what brought Jesus down. A penalty must be paid for the sins of men and women. Bethlehem was ground zero of the beginning of sin and death.

- Peace in the Stable

Those who don't see the Gift in the manger are incapable of receiving peace or giving it. Those who hate Christmas don't see the Holy One in the manger, who was sent from the Father. The Gift of Jesus is what brings peace. He is our example. Those who fight against Jesus fight against their own peace.

- Why Did He Come?

Christmas is about Jesus. Oh, I don't mean acknowledging His existence. I mean asking and answering these questions, "Why did He come?", "What was His purpose?", "What did His coming mean for your salvation?" These are all answered in God's Word. These questions many people don't want to answer but they must be answered. Every soul must grapple with why Jesus was sent to Bethlehem in 4BC. To escape that question or ignore that question is damning to your own soul.

- If the Babe wrapped in a manger doesn't inspire you, nothing will. All other inspirations flow from this Baby, this God-Man.

- His Birthday is to Be Celebrated

You can't take a materialistic Christmas with you. Material things break down, decompose, get lost, stolen, outdated, bored with over time. On the other hand, relationships with those you love can grow over Christmas time. But don't miss the most important relationship: God. He is truly the Reason for the Season, the Giver of All Good Things, The First Cause, the Gift Giver, the Miracle Maker, the Mender of Relationships, The Liberator of Broken Hearts, the Forgiver of Sins, The Justifier of Those Who Do Good, the Feeder of the Homeless, the Healer, the Mender, the Lover.

That is who's birthday we celebrate at Christmas time.

- The Desperation of the Birth of Jesus

To say December 25 is Jesus' birthday is fine, but it does conjure up images of a celebration filled with presents and cake. That picture, unfortunately, isn't accurate. Yes, the Wisemen from the East brought presents(Matthew 2:11), probably two years later. It wasn't really a celebration either as Mary and Joseph were poor, destitute and had nowhere to birth Him. A stinky,



stable was provided for them in the end but that is a far cry from a celebration. Birthing a baby is never a joyous process. It is the face of death and to say that a stable was ideal is really undermining the tragedy and desperation of the story. The joy of the Birth Story, does in fact, come to lonely shepherds that were out in the fields. These shepherds, I have heard, were shepherds who raised the lambs that were to be used in sacrificial offerings to God thorough the year. A host of angels visits this group of shepherds with the greatest of all announcements—the gospel itself: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ( Luke 2:11) Similarly, their declaration of “peace, good will towards men”(Luke 2:14) is the gospel. Jesus, the God-Man coming to earth was an unexpected and needed gift to mankind. A gift that no man could buy, steal or borrow. It was truly a gift undeserved and freely given, even in the midst of dire circumstances.

- Conception of Jesus

To truly be the Son of David (Mathew 1:1) I might assume that Mary’s egg had to be fertilized. She would have had to have contributed her genes (from David) to Jesus, and once pregnant, her period would have stopped for the next 10 months. The phrase, “her seed” (Genesis 3:15) also may assume such a role of Mary’s egg. Obviously, there was no sperm from Joseph or any other man. God had to fertilize it. The other possibility is that he could have just placed a new creation inside of Mary’s womb (i.e. no egg). Jeremiah says, “How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man (Jeremiah 31:22 ). In other words, He could have just “made” Jesus have David’s genes. But, I think this explanation takes away the humanness from Jesus slightly. He is in the line of David, from naturally born men and women. To sidestep that line is possible but it kind of sidesteps Jesus’ humanness. Now all humanness is derived from Jesus so that is not a big deal. He made humanness. Jesus is more human than we are (as He invented the term). He is even called the “son of man” (Matthew 9:16). However, I think that God used Mary’s humanness (via King David’s genes) to make the

miracle conception happen. Luke says, “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35) The Holy Spirit was to “overshadow” Mary. What does that mean? Perhaps it means that something she had (i.e. the egg) was overshadowed by God Himself (i.e. fertilized). However, one might say that the use of Mary and Joseph just for their “Davidic” titles is kind of just using them if he truly wasn’t in David’s genetic/human line, especially if Jesus’ genes really aren’t from David. Mary allowed the Holy Spirit to overshadow her. This wasn’t without permission. God had full permission to perform His miracle. I guess it comes down to the term “seed” in Genesis 3:15 and “overshadow” (Luke 1:35). God didn’t say He would “place” a baby in her womb. Overshadow is taking something that was already there and God using it. The conception of Jesus isn’t any less of a miracle for God to take an egg that was already there and fertilize it. And also, it doesn’t mean that Jesus inherited a sin-nature either. Some people want a “placed” baby in Mary’s womb because they uphold Jesus’ sinless nature. Correct, Jesus doesn’t have a sin-nature, but not just because He may not have been from one of Mary’s egg. He is sinless regardless if He was placed or fertilized in Mary’s womb. He is our Savior regardless.

- What Kind of Baby Warrants Such Hatred?

What kind of baby ever warranted such hatred as Baby Jesus has? No baby. I’m talking about during His birth (Herod tried to kill Him) and today (as liberals try to erase His birthday). This isn’t a normal response to a baby. So, what is it in Him that brings out such hatred in people’s hearts? Is it because He is holy and we aren’t? Is it because His coming to earth is a conviction of our sinful nature? People don’t want to believe they are sinners and that they even warrant a Savior. They don’t want what that Baby offers, so they attempt to kill Him or kill his followers or erase His memory or burn his churches down. Nevertheless, His birthday is still being celebrated 2,000 years later. “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

- The Shepherd Has Come

The host of angels that declared the Good News of Jesus being born was also declaring that the Good Shepherd was here to lead His sheep. No longer would shepherds, or anyone else for that matter, be lost, for the LORD had come to shepherd His people Israel. Another interesting thought is that the angels' declaration was a declaration of no more sacrificing of the shepherd's sheep. The Messiah had come. His atonement would suffice for all time. The shepherds wouldn't have to raise sheep under the thought of their sheep being sacrificed for someone's sins. "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." (Mark 6:34)

- Drunk Christmas

Getting drunk is a Christmas tradition for families all across the world. It has become a tradition to turn Jesus' birthday into a time of debauchery and sin. These carnal traditions are not warranted in any Christian's home who seeks to honor their Savior's birth.

- Christmas is a time of giving to others with what God has given to us. It is a time of showing grace to others, mirroring in some small way, the grace God has shown to us by sending His Son.

- Celebrating the Eternal One

Christmas is about celebrating the birth of Jesus. It is a time of joy and thanksgiving for the Eternal One coming to earth 2,000 years ago. That babe in the manger eternally existed before Bethlehem. And he will exist far after the earth is no more. He came to us so that we could know Him. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1-3)

- The Gift of Less Perfection

Christmas would be a much better season if there was less

“perfection” on the outside and more perfection in people’s hearts. God doesn’t care about the lights and ornaments and trees and music. He wants people to sacrifice their hearts to Him and to others.

- **Wrapped in Flesh**

What does it mean for God to be wrapped in flesh? It means that Our Creator came down to join us in this life. He didn’t want to



remain aloof from our lives, our struggles and joys. He wanted to be a part of them. He came as a man. I've heard it said that the Old Testament believers could have never thought of God coming down as a human. I don't know if I agree with that statement for I see God coming down several times in a man-like form. The voice of God "walked" with Adam in the garden (Genesis 3:8). Also, Abraham tithed to a man named Melchizedech who had no father or mother (Genesis 14:17-24, Hebrews 7:2-4)). The Angel of the LORD was a mysterious figure that would show up at different times (Ge 16:7, Ge 22:11, Ex 3:2, Nu 22:22, Jg 6:11, Jg 13:3, 2Sa 24:16, etc.). To think that God "couldn't" or "wouldn't", I think is a mistake. The God who made all things is certainly capable of coming to earth in human form. And I think the people of the Old Testament had reason to believe that would and could happen. They had several examples of theophanies to refer to. They also had many prophetic passages pointing towards a physical Messiah. Maybe people were thinking Messiah could be a baby and grow to be a man and then a Messiah. But they may not have considered it would have been God Himself. They may have thought Immanuel's meaning "God with us" was just "symbolic", like a Samson or a Jephthah. Now, did they think the Messiah would be God Himself? Maybe. Maybe not, but I don't think it was outside the scope of their belief system or what was already revealed to them by God. God prepared a body for Jesus in the womb of Mary. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. 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." (Isaiah 7:14-16)

- What Was Israel to Expect?

Isaiah's prophecy certainly had unusual elements, "Therefore the LORD himself shall give you sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) Virgins don't conceive. That must have been a confusing prophecy to ancient Israel, and yet, if Isaiah was a true prophet of God, they would have to decide to believe him or not. I'm sure there were

questions like, “How will the Lord make this happen?” Those are good questions, questions that should be asked, for it wouldn’t be a sign from the LORD if it happened everyday. A virgin conceiving (and giving birth) is a sign from the Lord, yes, the sign of history. Those who believed the prophecy then (and now) have been blessed by God.

- Immediate Fulfillment Versus Future Fulfillment

People were looking forward to a Messiah. When Isaiah gave his prophecy (Isaiah 7:14-16) about a virgin conceiving, the immediate prophecy that came true for Mrs. Isaiah may have caused more questions than what was meant. For example, Mrs. Isaiah wasn’t a virgin, so how would her giving birth to a son be a miracle? Another example, Isaiah’s son, Mahershalalhashbaz, (Isaiah 8:3) probably wasn’t exemplified as eating butter and honey (symbolic of wealth). Maybe the fall of Jerusalem was fulfilled before Mahershalalhashbaz knew good and evil but he wasn’t named Immanuel. The true fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy had to be about someone else. That someone else had to be born before a destruction of Jerusalem (later known as AD70) and be born of a virgin and eat butter and honey. The only one who fulfills that is Jesus, 700 years later.

- No Competing Narrative

If the world had a perfect time of the year to create a competing gospel it would be Christmastime. The month of December would be the perfect time for the world to say that they don’t need a Jewish boy born in a manger. The world has all “this”. “This”, meaning the best the world has to offer in terms of lights and entertainment and music and movies. The world has the traditions and the mythology and the symbols to go along with a Christ-less Christmas. They have the best time of year, where people are happy in their hearts. They have the legitimacy to be kind to their neighbor and give to those less fortunate. The world has every materialistic thing, on a silver platter, to formulate an alternative to the Nativity story. So, my question is, why doesn’t the world just obliterate the gospel narrative? No one “needs” a carpenter and his pregnant wife traveling to Bethlehem. No one

needs a son of David being born in a stable. No one “needs” angels singing to God. No one “needs” shepherds or wise men. And yet the story persists. It persists because it is real. Billions of dollars have been spent and much ink has been spilled in trying to topple the Nativity story. It all has failed. It is more real than all the manufactured joy the world can muster. The Savior of the World supersedes any fictional TV characters and LED lights. That is something that the world just cannot comprehend. And they can’t get rid of. People do need the Virgin to conceive. They do need God to overshadow her. They do need God to become man. They do need a Savior. Nothing competes with this humble, historic, revolutionary narrative. The Messiah has come as a baby. He has come to save the world. And He has come to destroy all idols and sins and gods and fictions that seek to dethrone Him. Christmas is His birthday and His conquest has begun.

- Unattainable Gift

If people only love Christmas based on materialistic grounds, then it is no wonder why some people hate Christmas. Christmas isn’t about getting; it’s about giving. But even more than that, it is about what God gave to us—His precious begotten Son. Jesus is a Gift that God didn’t have to give to people (especially since they truly wouldn’t appreciate it anyway). In that sense, Christmas is about getting, but getting the unattainable, the holy, the perfect, sinless, majestic Son of God. Discontentment and/or the hatred of Christmas is a gross ignorance of that fact. He came to destroy materialism and all idols that set themselves against His Kingdom. Christmas is a celebration of His Kingdom coming to earth.

- Celebration of Shallowness

The shallowness of children’s Christmas programs. Take, for example, a song from the My Lil’ Pony Christmas, “Nothing says Christmas like fuzzy socks”. This is as shallow as it gets. Christmas is so much more than “fuzzy socks” but this is the result of a culture bent on erasing Christ from His own birthday. (Now, some would say the shallowness of this song is because it is based on a children’s show. I don’t think it is unique to children’s shows.

I think the shallowness is all across the board). The frustrations that people feel during Christmas is a result of the shallowness of songs like “fuzzy socks”. People don’t need materialistic things to feel the joy of Christmas. It is a lie from Satan that the latest gadgets and gizmos is your ticket to happiness, or that Christmas is about receiving things (that will eventually rot, rust and break). What a joke. A human heart is in need of so much more than that. Humans are made in God’s image. They are starving for truth. Fuzzy socks don’t cut it, but the Baby born to a virgin does cut it. That historical narrative satisfies any longing heart.

- Praise for His Birth

If anyone knows who Jesus is, it is His earthly mother. She knows Jesus and describes him like this in her Magnificat. “His mercy is on those who fear Him (Luke 1:50). He has shown strength with His arm (v.51). He scatters the proud in the imagination of



their hearts (v.51) He puts down the mighty from their thrones (v.52). He has exalted the lowly (v.52). He has filled the hungry with good things (v.53). He sends away the rich empty (v.53). He helped His servant Israel (v.54). That is who Jesus is. Jesus' birth story is surrounded by people praising God. Angels ( Luke 2:13), shepherds (Luke 2:20), Zechariah (Luke 1:67), Mary (Luke 1:46), Elizabeth (Lk1:42), Simeon (Luke 2:28) and Anna (Luke 2:38). Jesus' birth cannot but be praised by those who fear the LORD.

- Solution to Christmas Depression

Our hearts long for joy and peace and good news. We long for it and yet can never find it. The month of December, though, seems to be a good time to find those things. And yet anxiety, depression and loneliness are felt more this time of year than any other.

Why? Because the world's solutions to problems like depression and sadness rest in materialistic solutions. People's deepest longings cannot be healed by a bow on a new car, the latest digital device or something wrapped under the tree. (I even saw on a homebuilder website, "Buy yourself the best gift this holiday", referring to a new home.) The world's solutions fail epicly. Being surrounded by family and friends—as good as that is—also fails big-time. There is something deeper and more fulfilling than that and it is found in a stable in Bethlehem.

- Worshiping Gifts from God

All the gifts of creation are from the Gift-Giver. Unfortunately, most people (those in the broad way) love the gifts and not the Giver. The gifts of family, Christmas trees, cookies, food, lights, music, all the arts are, unfortunately, enjoyed more than the Originator of those things. The festivities of Christmas fall far short of satisfying people because the glamour was never meant to satisfy. Only the Giver was meant to satisfy. To turn Christmas into "lets worship the gifts" or "worship man who invents the glamour" or "worship creation and nature" miss the whole point. And, it's easy to miss the point when all of creation is calling out for worship of itself. Men are calling for worship of themselves. Men and the works of their hands have hijacked Jesus' birth. No wonder Christmas isn't enjoyed by people. It's been edited by

thieves, thugs and liars. Their version is a materialistic, unrealistic high view of themselves. This is a far cry from the God-Man born in a stable in Bethlehem. Too simple, perhaps, for some, but just perfect for God.

- No Addition Necessary

Man proves his insatiable appetite for idols when he pushes Jesus' birth story to the side in exchange for lesser things. The nativity story doesn't need to be added to, because there is so much there. Why the world would think that adding Santa, elves, presents, reindeer and snowmen to this story is beyond me. God's story doesn't need man's glitz and glamour. It doesn't need its facade of happiness. It needs the humble story of the Eternal God born in a manger.

- Questions for a Pregnant Woman

The following questions are for any pregnant woman who thinks she has it difficult. (These questions aren't meant to minimize difficult circumstances in pregnant situations, but to just contrast the most difficult circumstances with Jesus birth story.) Did you have a horrible time in giving birth? Did you have a worse time than Mary did giving birth to Jesus? Did you have your own people's culture against you (and ready to stone you)? Did you have your local representatives out to kill your newborn son? Did you have a world ruler forcing your travel of 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem just so he could tax you more? No, you didn't. The world was against Jesus even before He was born and immediately after. No baby or mother ever had to endure such persecution. To save their lives, they had to flee to Egypt (again, uprooting your family after giving birth). But God got the Holy Family through out of these dire and deadly circumstances. If He can do that for them, He can do that for us in lesser circumstances.

- Contrasted Birth

"When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." (Matthew 2:3) All of Jerusalem was "troubled" along with Herod. Herod's response to a newly born,

future King made him slaughter a whole town of boys. Contrast this reaction to the Wisemen from the East who risked their lives to come visit this baby King. Hatred versus Joy. Murder versus life. No other birth has had such a spectrum of emotions as Jesus' birth.

**A**nd there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. — Luke 2:8-14

**F**or 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, Counsellor, 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



# THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST



## What is the Gospel?

The gospel is the undeserved salvation of all mankind from sin and eternal death, accomplished only by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These facts are made real to an individual's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the gospel is God's plan to rescue us, sustain us and grow us up in Him for all eternity. The famous passage, John 3:16, explains the gospel:

*"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."*

# THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

The gospel's foundation is only based upon what Jesus has done; not what we have done. It is God's free gift to us. Heaven is for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior. People think that getting to heaven is some long, drawn-out process in which you have to try and follow the Ten Commandments or be a do-gooder or go to church or something. But it's really not complicated at all. Salvation isn't about getting to God on our own terms or pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps; it's about God reaching down to us and offering us salvation free of charge.

Paul says in Ephesians 2:4-5, *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."*

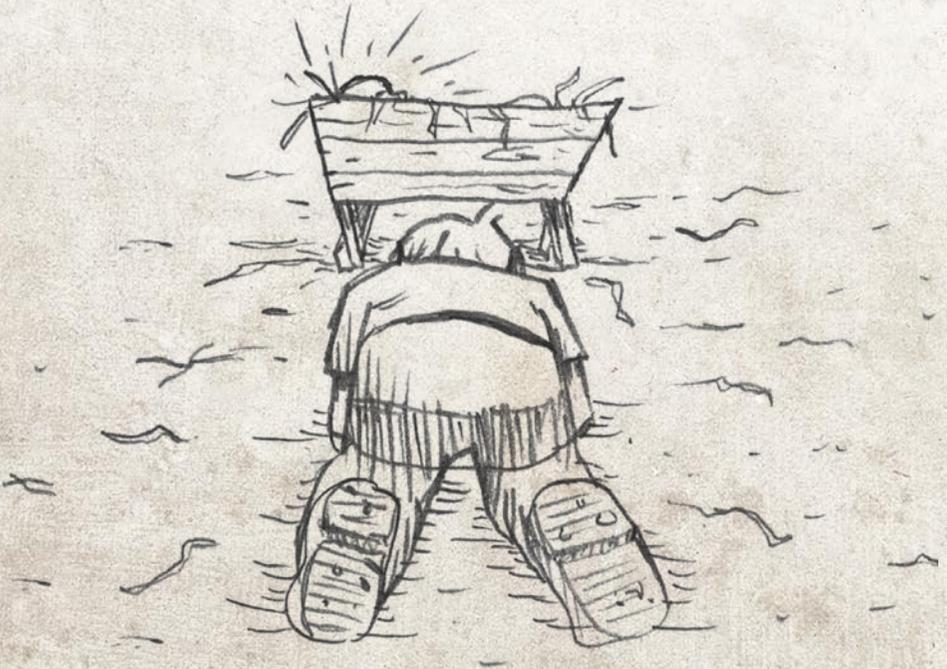
Our sins won't allow us to get to heaven on our own terms; it is only God's rich mercy that He has made a way for us. God demands no less than perfection, and only perfect people get to go to heaven. Based on works, none of us would make it; only Jesus would. But, God has provided a way to give perfection to us through Jesus. Jesus is the exclusive, one-way to the Father.

Jesus says this in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

Either that statement is true or it is not. Every Christian knows that it is absolutely and irrevocably true. Ask Christ to reveal Himself to you today. It's your choice.



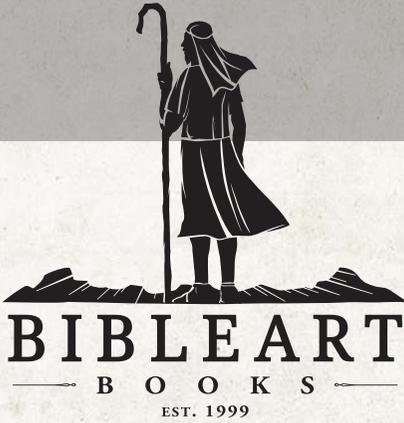
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Robert H. Flores enjoys writing, illustrating and sharing stories about God in creative ways. He is the author of several books, booklets and tracts.

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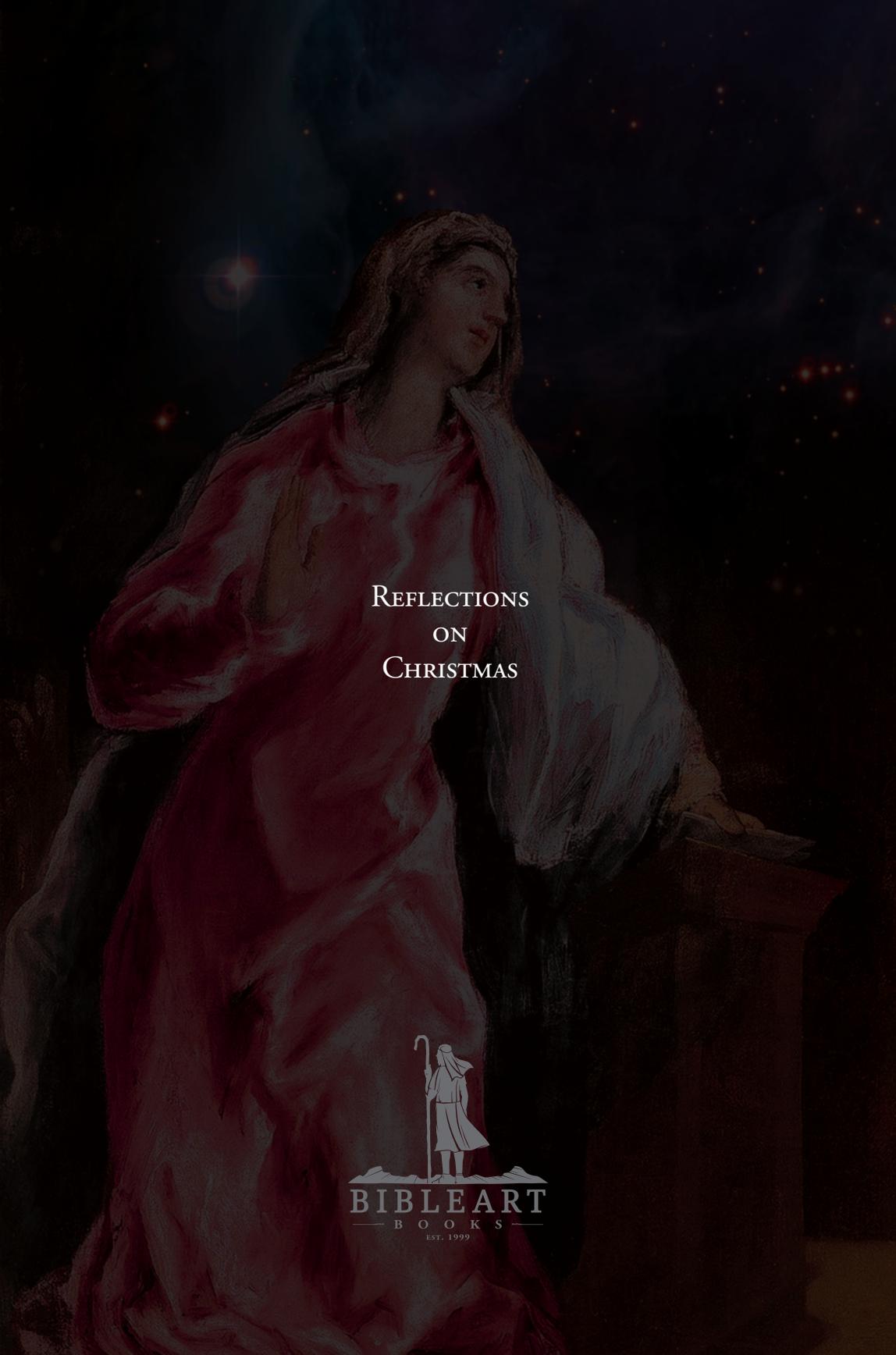
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