

Christmas

First Christmas : God's Message to Joseph

Foundation

Bible passage: Luke 2.1-7 & Matthew 1.21-25

After the build-up to the birth of Jesus in Luke's gospel the birth itself is recorded very briefly and simply. The calling of the census had the effect that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the town of David. However, although he records this as a matter of fact, Luke does not explain its significance. It is only in Matthew's gospel that we discover later on that that people expected the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem, because of the prophecy in Micah 5.2

Despite being the long-awaited king, the child was born in very humble circumstances although is very much in keeping with what we often see in the Old Testament, including when David himself was chosen as King. When Jesus was born there had not been a king in the line of David for nearly 500 years and an attempt by the Maccabees to reintroduce a kingship had failed. King Herod was not even an Israelite, but an Edomite. The fact that Jesus is awaited king is inseparable from the Christian faith, it is why

"you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins"

The Census

Luke gives quite a concise but clear reason for why they went to Bethlehem. In the last century and a half many have claimed that Luke was mistaken or made this up. But to make such a claim means being clear that it could not have happened. There have been many instances where people have made such claims about things in the Bible only to be proved wrong when later evidence came to light supporting what the Bible says.



Jesus became known as Christ (anointed one) and why his followers became known as Christians.

Despite being the rightful King Jesus declared later that His kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18.36) and that he came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Mk 10.45). The humble nature of His birth shows that He is not going to be the sort of King everyone expected. Just as He was laid in a manger, so He would have nowhere to lay his head (Mtt 8.20), and He would become known as a friend of sinners (Lk 11.34) and was crucified beside robbers (cf Isa 53.9).

The baby was given the name Jesus (Mtt 1.25), as both Mary (Lk 1.31) and Joseph (Mtt 1.21) had been told. It was because He was both the Messiah, the true King and came in humility as one of us that Jesus can save us from our sins. The name reveals why it was necessary for the Messiah to come in humility, to suffer and die, because by so doing He would save His people from their sins (Mtt 1.21).



Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) born in humble circumstances to show that he also came to die for our sins.