

Faith Surrounding the Birth of Christ: 4 Examples

If someone told you that they had no human biological father, would you believe them?

The Bible makes exactly that claim for Jesus of Nazareth. The Bible prophecies that Jesus would be born of a virgin.

We read in Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Matthew agrees with Isaiah in Matthew 1:23, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

We read in Luke the emphasis on Mary being a virgin at the time of Christ’s conception, Luke 1:26-27, “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.”

If Christ had no biological father, then how did Mary conceive a child?

We read in Luke 1:35, “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.”

The virgin Mary conceived a son because the Holy Spirit worked in her. This was a biological impossibility. True enough. This was a miracle; a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Although Mary and Joseph did not understand all that God was doing regarding the birth of Christ, they did believe in the Lord. They exercised great faith in God’s Word and in His promises. We see that Mary and Joseph were not the only ones that exercised great faith in the Lord at this time. There were others who believed in God. I actually was struck with how faith was so important in leading up to and surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ. Faith is one of the great themes that surrounds the birth of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the title of my message is, *Faith surrounding the Birth of Christ: Four examples of Faith.* Let us consider the faith of a young Jewish girl (Mary), the faith of a carpenter (Joseph), the faith of an old man (Simeon), and the faith of the Wise Men (the Magi). My hope is that the faith we will see in these people will inspire our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Faith of Mary

Read Luke 1:28-38

Verse 38, “And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”

Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Mary is saying, “ I fully credit what you say, and am perfectly ready to obey your commands, and to accomplish all the purposes of your grace concerning me.”

It appears that at the instant of this act of faith, and purposed obedience, the conception of the immaculate humanity of Jesus took place; and it was DONE unto her according to his word.

Albert Barnes writes, “This was an expression of resignation to the will of God, and of faith in the promise. To be the hand-maid of the Lord is to be submissive and obedient, and is the same as saying, "I fully credit all that is said, and am perfectly ready to obey all the commands of the Lord."

Behold, the handmaid of the Lord literally means "slave" or "bondservant." It is the feminine form of the word which Paul so often applies to himself (Ro 1:1; Tit 1:1). Mary uses it to indicate her submissive and obedient spirit.

Mary declares, “Be it unto me according to thy word.” In great faith she not only believes the promise, but prays for its fulfillment. She bowed to the will of God like Eli in 1Sa 3:18, “And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.”

Mary became the mother of Him who prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Lu 22:42).

Mary displays marvelous faith in such circumstances!

This faith follows Mary later in her life.

We read in John 2 during The Wedding at Cana, when the discovery was made of no more wine, word spread quickly. There was alarm and stress at the marriage. Word of the problem reached Mary, the mother of Jesus. How did she respond?

Mary's response is recorded for us in John 2:3, "And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine." Mary went to Christ for help. She trusted that her Son would do what was best and right at the wedding banquet.

Mary exercised faith. The crisis at Cana didn't blind her, overwhelm her, and leave her paralyzed to do nothing. She acted, and she acted in faith.

Mary was a blessed woman. She was chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus Christ. However, Mary was a descendent of Adam and therefore a sinner. She needed a Savior from her sins.

Mary sings a beautiful song in Luke 1:46-48 known as the *Magnificate*, “And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

Is Jesus Christ your Savior? Mary needed a Savior and so do we? Confess your sins and come to Christ by faith. Mary’s faith surrounded the birth of Christ.

II. The Faith of Joseph

We know that Joseph was a carpenter because of what we read in Matthew 13:55, “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?”

Although Joseph was a carpenter by trade, he was chosen by God for a very important calling: to care and provide for Mary and Jesus.

Read Matthew 1:18-25

Verse 24, “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.

Joseph was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. He did not delay, but as soon as he rose he “did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him.” Without delay, demur, or reservation, he obeyed. What holy awe filled his heart as he welcomed the favored virgin to his home, to be respectfully and affectionately screened from all evil!

What must he have thought when he saw the Son of the Highest lying on the bosom of her whom he had espoused! He was happy to render any service to the newborn King. Since he accepted Mary as his espoused wife, her child was the heir of Joseph, and so of David; and thus was by right the King of the Jews.

What deep and reverential joy must have flown into the heart of Joseph, and what comfort would this minister to his betrothed one, who had till now lain under suspicions of all others the most trying to a chaste and holy woman--suspicions, too, arising from what, though to her an honor unparalleled, was to all around her wholly unknown!

Joseph obeyed at once, a fitting example for all men. When the Lord's will is spoken there should be no delay in obedience.

The angel had told Joseph not to be afraid to "take to his side" Mary his wife (Mt 1:20). So when he awoke from his sleep he promptly obeyed the angel and "took his wife home". One can only imagine the relief and joy of Mary when Joseph nobly rose to his high duty toward her.

And took unto him his wife. Thus becoming the legally recognized father of Jesus, and though he bestowed upon Jesus but a humble name, he nevertheless rescued him from the reproach of an illegitimate birth.

Joseph's faith is put to the test after the birth of Jesus.

Read Matthew 2:13-21

Verse 14, "When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt."

Doubtless the same night!

Providence both watched over the safety of the Lord, and enabled Joseph to support the mother and child by the offerings of the Wise Men from the East.

The message came while Joseph was sleeping; as soon as he arose from his bed he took the Child and his mother and departed at once. There was prompt obedience, as there should always be, to the divine commands.

While in Egypt, the Angel of the Lord visited Joseph in another dream, "Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life."

Joseph and Mary had, like Abraham, to "go out, not knowing whither they went," till they should receive further direction.

Happy Joseph! His path was ordered of God. Let us also seek such ordering. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). The faith of Joseph surrounded the birth Christ.

III. The Faith of Simeon

Read Luke 2:25-33

Verses 27-32, And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child

Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,
Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God,
and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in
peace, according to thy word: **For mine eyes have
seen thy salvation**, Which thou hast prepared before
the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles,
and the glory of thy people Israel.

Then took he him up in his arms. Men wanted to
get their hands on Christ! Some to kill him. But
others to worship and adore him like Simeon! What
must the holy soul of Simeon have felt in this
moment! O inestimable privilege! And yet ours need
not be inferior: If a man love me, says Christ, he will
keep my word; and I and the Father will come in unto
him, and make our abode with him. And indeed even
Christ in the arms could not avail a man, if he were
not formed in his heart.

Immediately recognizing in the child, with
unhesitating certainty, the promised Messiah, without
needing Mary to inform him of what had happened to
her. The remarkable act of taking the babe in his arms
must not be overlooked. It was as if he said, "This is
all my salvation and all my desire."

A Bible commentator observes, “The utterances of Elizabeth, Mary and Simeon are consecutive. Each begins where the other ends. Mary sings her own born Messiah, Zacharias celebrates the triumph of Israel, and Simeon announces the hopes of the Gentiles. But, besides this holding forth the Messiah as a Savior for Gentile as well as Jew, what is remarkable is, that he announces in Jesus a suffering Messiah as well as a glorious.”

This old man shows us how we are to die and go to glory: holding on to Jesus. Is this how you want to die? Holding on to Jesus. Simeon was a man of faith who saw God’s salvation in the face of Jesus Christ. The faith of Simeon surrounded the birth of Christ.

IV. The Faith of the Magi

Read Matthew 2:1-12

Who were these wise men from the East?

Albert Barnes writes, “**Wise men.** The original word here is magoi from which comes our word magician, now used in a bad sense, but not so in the original. The persons here denoted were philosophers, priests, or astronomers. They dwelt chiefly in Persia and

Arabia. They were the learned men of the eastern nations, devoted to astronomy, to religion, and to medicine. They were held in high esteem by the Persian court, were admitted as counsellors, and followed the camps in war, to give advice.

From the east. It is unknown whether they came from Persia or Arabia. Both countries might be denoted by the word east--that is, east from Judea.

The Wise Men state in verse 2, "we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

Bible historians tells us, "What this star was, is not known. It was probably not what we commonly mean by a star. The stars are vast bodies fixed in the heavens, and it is unlikely to suppose that one of them was sent to guide the wise men. It might have been a luminous appearance, or meteor, such as we now see sometimes shoot from the sky, or such as appear stationary, which the wise men saw, and which directed them to Jerusalem.

It is possible that the same thing is meant which is mentioned by Lu 2:9--"The glory of the Lord shone round about them," i.e., a great light appeared shining around them.

That light might have been visible from afar, and have been seen by the wise men in the East.

D. James Kennedy writes, “The star of Bethlehem was a star of hope that led the wise men to the fulfillment of their expectations, the success of their expedition. Nothing in this world is more fundamental for success in life than hope, and this star pointed to our only source for true hope: Jesus Christ.”

When the Wise Men departed from King Herod we read in verses 9 and 10, “When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”

When they arrived there, it was important that they should be directed to the very place where Christ was, and the star again appeared. It was for this reason that they rejoiced. They felt assured that they were under a heavenly guidance, and would be conducted to the new-born King of the Jews.

And this shows,

(1.) that the birth of Jesus was a great event, worthy of the Divine direction of these men to find the place of his birth.

(2.) God will guide those who are disposed to find the Saviour. Even if for a time the light should be withdrawn, yet it will again appear, and direct us in the way to the Redeemer.

(3.) Direction to Christ should fill us with joy. He is the way, the truth, and the life; the Saviour, the Friend, the all in all; there is no other way of life, and there is no peace to the soul till he is found. When we are guided to him, therefore, our hearts should overflow with joy and praise; and we should humbly and thankfully follow every direction that leads to the Son of God.

We read in John 12:35-36, "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Faith in Christ is not a blind faith. The Lord guides his people with His light. When we follow Christ, the Lord enlightens our path and directs us in the way we should go. The faith of the Wise Men from the East surrounded the birth of Christ.

In closing, faith surrounded the birth of Christ. The faith of Mary, the faith of Joseph, the faith of Simeon, and the faith of the Magi should inspire our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason why Christ was born was to die for the sins of His people. Put your faith in Christ to save you from your sins. Look to Him and believe on him. He saves sinners. Let us pray!