

# BIBLE ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

*And Interesting Facts About the Holy Word of God*

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE, INC.

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ISSUE 8

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### *From the President's Desk,*

By the time you read this BABQ, Thanksgiving will be in the rearview mirror and Christmas will be just around the corner. While I am not overly keen on the upcoming snow we will no doubt be getting sooner than later, I do enjoy the time we have to celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus. The very idea that the Lord Jesus would leave the majesty of heaven and purposefully be born into humanity would be hard to fathom were it not for the Word of God clearly declaring God's plan of redemption. Simply put, we have no plan of redemption outside of the person of the Lord Jesus, who conquered death and brought life and victory through His resurrection. What a joy it is to know the real "Reason for the season"!

I am always amazed as I look back to see how God has been working in and through the ministry of *Berean Bible Institute* by way of leading us to our new facilities and providing the funds necessary for the purchase and move. I also praise the Lord as we see our student numbers increase both in the states and abroad. While the last few months have been a whirlwind, we continue to be blessed by the prayer and support from those who are standing with us to promote the ministry and mission of the *Berean Bible Institute*.

Another blessing on the horizon for the ministry of *Berean Bible Institute* is that we will be working on publishing a new book by Dr. W. Edward Bedore. This book will be a theology book based on his class notes while teaching at *Berean Bible Institute*. We are looking forward to getting this valuable tool in the hands of Bible students and anyone interested in growing deeper in their understanding of the

Scriptures from a Pauline perspective. This is a large undertaking and will take some time to produce as well as the resources to complete the editing, proofing, publishing, and printing of this book. If you have been blessed by Dr. Bedore's writings and would like to partner with us to see this project through to completion, please designate your gift to "The Bedore Book Project."

With all that is happening at BBI, we want to assure you that our focus is clear and our mission is on target. We exist to train pastors, missionaries, and Christian workers for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel of the Grace of God given to and through the Apostle Paul. With that in mind, I want to thank all of you who believe in that mission and are making it possible for the faculty and staff to accomplish what God has called us to do for His glory.

Because He Lives,

Dr. Robert E. Nix,

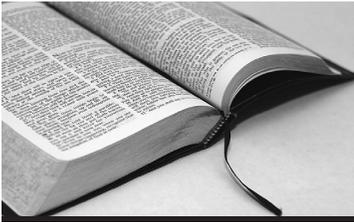
President, *Berean Bible Institute*

### **QUESTION: Was Jesus really born on December 25th?**

**ANSWER:** The short answer is that we really don't know the exact date of Jesus' birth, and if God wanted us to know, He would have recorded the date. Even Luke, a first-class historian was not inspired to record the date for us.

The December 25th date does have its proponents. Hypolytus (AD 170-236) is usually mentioned

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Timothy 3:16*



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as the first one to set this date. The Chronograph of 354 (a.k.a. the Philocalus calendar, which was a compilation of dates for Roman Christians) is the first known mention of celebrating Christmas as a holiday. Others who defended this date were John Chrysostom (AD 347-407), archbishop of Constantinople, and Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 348-386), who was said to find documentation of the Roman birth census listing Jesus' birth as December 25th. However, most information points to this date seemingly being a "Christian" alternative to counter the pagan celebrations during the winter solstice.

There are others who lay out Jesus' birth occurring during the fall. The reasons for a date in the fall include: the shepherds mentioned in Luke 2:8 were not usually in the field in December; the unlikelihood of Rome requiring a census that would require people to travel during the cold, wet season; and using the birth of John the Baptist to come to a possible date for the birth of Jesus. While the arguments for a fall birth are strong, the fact is that we just don't know.

While it may be fun to discuss matters such as the exact date of Christ's birth, we need to be willing to admit when we don't know for certain. Remember, God always tells us what we need to know. Here are some facts that we do know, and cannot compromise on regarding the birth of Jesus Christ.

It happened when it was supposed to happen. Luke 2:6-7—*"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger...."*

It happened in God's perfect timing. Galatians 4:4-5—*"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."*

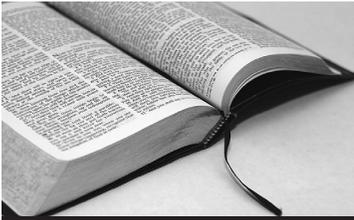
The reason He came and died and was buried and rose again is what is important. We can confidently share this with everyone and invite them to put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. I Timothy 1:15—*"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...."*

**QUESTION: Christians who celebrate Christmas state that they are celebrating the birth of Christ. Paul spends very little time on Christ's birth. As Pauline dispensationalists, should we be putting so much focus on the birth of Jesus Christ?**

**ANSWER:** First, let us acknowledge that Christmas is not a day that we are Scripturally obligated to observe. It is also true that Paul spends very little time detailing the birth of Jesus Christ. You won't read of angels, shepherds, or wise men in his epistles. It is also true that Paul spends most of the time in his letters focusing on the redemption work of Jesus Christ (death, burial, and resurrection). Yet, this does not make the birth of Christ any less important, for there is no Savior without God the Son becoming flesh through the virgin birth. Much like he does for many Scriptural truths (creation, Israel's prophecies, etc.), Paul acknowledges the virgin birth of Jesus Christ in a way that assumes his readers are familiar with it.

For example, Galatians 4:4-5 states, *"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* In order to have righteousness apart from the law and possess the position as full-grown heirs, it took Christ being *"made of a woman."* This unique phrase says that Christ was caused to be of a woman, a reference to the virgin birth of Christ with no male involvement. This was important so that Christ would be separate from the sin and death the entire human race has inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:12, 16-19) so that He could satisfy God's wrath toward our sins (Rom. 3:25). Remaining sinless Himself through the virgin birth, Christ provided the way for us to be the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21).

Romans 1:3-5, speaking of the gospel of God, explains, *"Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made 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: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name."*



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Paul starts the good news here by acknowledging Jesus as God's Son, referring to the decision for Christ to subject Himself to the Father and take on flesh as a human. Paul also points to the Lord being born a descendent of David, which made Him the promised "seed" through whom the world would be blessed (Gal. 3:16). It is the unique birth of Jesus Christ that made Him qualified to be the sacrifice for the sin of humanity. Because Christ fulfilled those requirements, paid for sins, and resurrected from the dead with power, Paul was given an apostleship to declare redemption to the nations.

Another verse in Romans takes us back to the incarnation of Christ: *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh"* (Rom. 8:3). Once again, we are told that God sent His Son to take on flesh and do what the Mosaic law could not do, deal with the issue of sin once and for all. It is this eighth chapter of Romans that instructs us that we can live righteous lives because we have been liberated from sin in Christ and have the indwelling Holy Spirit.

One last Pauline Scripture that deals with the birth of Christ is Philippians 2:6-11. This passage, urging the Philippians to have the same mindset as Christ, focuses on the deity and humanity of Christ:

*"[Christ Jesus], being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

We read here of Christ Jesus' existence before taking on flesh; a time when He was worthy of full honor as a member of the Godhead. Then, we read of His decision to humble Himself and embody

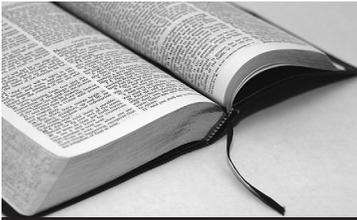
Himself in flesh, becoming human. This fact is important to our discussion regarding His virgin birth. No man brought forth Jesus; He took upon **Himself** the likeness of humanity. We know this was accomplished through being made of a virgin woman whom we know to be Mary, and I'm sure that Paul's original readers knew this same information (Luke 1:26-27).

God the Son set aside the authority and honor that rightly belonged to Him to be the virgin-born Son of Man and Savior of the world. Because He voluntarily subjected Himself to the will of God the Father, He willingly took the punishment we deserved for our sins as He died on the cross at Calvary. For His obedience, God has exalted Him to the rightful, honored position that He earned and deserves. One day, everyone will bow in recognition of the position and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. They can do it in this life through faith in what He accomplished on the cross (I Cor. 1:18-21; 15:3-4), or they can do it when they stand before the Great White Throne and are judged for their sins (Rev. 20:11-15). Whoever they are, they will bow to Him!

While it is no secret that Paul focuses the vast majority of His attention on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (e.g., I Cor. 15:3-4), we should not dismiss the importance of the Son of God taking on flesh to be born of a virgin. In fact, we can be reminded that Christmas gives us an opportunity to tell the full story of the baby in a manger. Jesus Christ grew and remained sinless, and we need to tell the people the accomplishments of the cross, the burial, and resurrection. Through the willingness of Jesus Christ to take on humanity and shed His blood on the cross and gain victory over death through His resurrection, whoever places their faith in His work will be saved for all eternity. What a wonderful story to tell!

**QUESTION:** In the Christmas hymn "Angels We Have Heard On High," what does "in excelsis deo" mean?

**ANSWER:** The hymn with which we are familiar was loosely translated from a French song ("The



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"Angels in our Countryside" by an unknown author and composer) by Bishop James Chadwick of northeast England. It is a song based on the Scriptural account of the angels announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. The song, as many hymns do, takes various liberties from the recorded account in Luke 2:8-19. The English version of the song first appeared in a Catholic songbook in 1862. A version of the song has been found in a Methodist hymnbook as early as 1935. The words of the song and number of verses have gone through many changes throughout the years.

The phrase "Gloria in excelsis deo" is a Latin term. It translates to "Glory in the highest to God," or, as the angels declared in Luke 2:14, "Glory to God in the highest."

The pronunciation is a little more difficult. In Latin, it is pronounced "ihn ehk-CHELL-seez DAY-oh." In English, people phonate it all kinds of ways but "in ek-sel-sis day-oh" is the most widely accepted.

So now, when you are trying to find the breath to hold out the "o" in Gloria, you can sing "Angels We Have Heard On High" with a little more confidence in what you are declaring: Glory to God in the highest!

## QUESTION: Was Adam righteous when God created him?

**ANSWER:** It is wrong to say that man was originally created righteous. Righteousness is an attribute that belongs to God, and God alone. It speaks of His absolute moral perfection, which means He is not only totally sinless, but it is also impossible for Him to sin (James 1:17; cf. Num. 23:19, Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Man was created

in innocence, without a practical knowledge of sin, but with the ability of choice. He was not created in the simple innocence of a newborn child. From the beginning Adam and Eve were given knowledge and understanding that afforded them the aptitude of logic and abstract thought along with the power of willful decision and actions that very young children do not have. Adam was created with a positive moral innocence that enabled him to choose to either obey or disobey God as he willed. He was in fellowship with God until he chose to disobey Him and fell into sin. The redemption of sinners does not simply restore them to the state of moral innocence that Adam was created with, but takes them to the higher plane of God's righteousness, which is imputed to them through faith in Jesus Christ, who alone among men can claim God's righteousness as His own (Rom. 3:21-26; II Cor. 5:21). In regeneration (Titus 3:5) the believer becomes part of the "new man," or a new humanity, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (See Eph. 4:20-24, cf. Col. 3:10).

A MAN'S HEART PLANS HIS WAY, BUT  
*the Lord directs*  
HIS STEPS.  
Proverbs 16:9

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