

“Now The Birth Of Jesus Christ Was As Follows...”

Matthew 1:18

Or

The Gospel Of Jesus According To Hallmark

(This is the abridged Christmas Test.. For the original, full test, please go to www.gciweb.org and follow the links. [English Resources](#) to [Keeping Christ In The Holidays / Holiday Resources](#) to [Christmas](#))

How much of what you believe about the scripture is based on truth and how much is based on Hallmark greeting cards? You might be surprised to find out the answers. Take a trivia test on the birth of the Savior. Match wits with your friends, family and coworkers. Better have a Bible with you to prove you're right. Some beliefs about Christ's birth are so strong, yet so wrong that you will become an instant expert when you point them out. Good luck, have fun and remember, before Christmas pageants, before mini-series, before Hollywood, before Hallmark Cards... there was the Bible.

A Word From The Author: Before you begin the exciting journey of learning once and for all what God the Holy Spirit has revealed to man concerning the event surrounding the birth of Christ please allow me as the author to suggest some creative uses for this tool.

The Advent Calendar: You will notice that there are thirty questions on the “Christmas Test”. This is to allow you to use it as an Advent Calendar. By taking one question each day you can meditate on the truths of the Incarnation for the month before Christmas.

Family Devotionals: You will find your children (of all ages) intrigued by what the Bible actually says concerning the birth of Christ. They will be fascinated to discover that they believe many erroneous facts. They will be excited to learn new and eternal truths. By taking a question each evening at the evening meal you will find a lively discussion often ensues. I would strongly suggest that the father read the questions and master the answers as your children will more and more desire the deep spiritual truths of the Incarnation of Christ rather than the stories and fables which are so often fed to them. This is an excellent tool to begin your family in daily evening devotionals. Having finished the Christmas Test you will want to continue reading the Bible each evening at the dinner table and discussing the content of what is read with your children.

Bible Studies and Sunday School Classes: Many Bible studies and Sunday School classes function on a semester basis. The month of December is often considered a dead month because of sporadic attendance. This is an excellent tool to maintain an interest in Bible study during this time. You will find, especially among adults, many wrong convictions which are strongly and emotionally held. The Christmas Test will keep your class awake amid the lively discussion and provide a motivation for faithful attendance during the hectic days of the Christmas holidays.

Personal Edification: Last but not least the test with the answers and Scripture are presented for your personal edification. Many immerse themselves in the questions and Scripture simply for their personal spiritual benefit that they may speak confidently and truthfully concerning the Incarnation of Christ – both the Historical Revelation and the Doctrinal Truths.

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How much of what you believe about the scripture is based on truth and how much is based on Hallmark greeting cards? You might be surprised to find out the answers. Take a trivia test on the birth of the Savior. Match wits with your friends, family and coworkers. Better have a Bible with you to prove you're right. Some beliefs about Christ's birth are so strong, yet so wrong that you will become an instant expert when you point them out. Good luck, have fun and remember, before Christmas pageants, before mini-series, before Hollywood, before Hallmark Cards... there was the Bible.

(T = True; F = False)

According to the Bible...

_____ 1. The Christmas story roughly spans the nine month period from Christ's conception to His Birth in the manger.

_____ 2. (There were no prophecies concerning the exact location of Jesus' birth, which is why the wise men needed the star to guide them to Bethlehem.

_____ 3. If a person knew the prophecies concerning Jesus, he could find the city of His birth unaided by the star.

_____ 4. The Christmas story relates the birth of two babies.

_____ 5.)In the Christmas story, the angel first appears to Mary.

_____ 6. The Angel appeared to Mary at the time of the Immaculate Conception by the Holy Spirit.

_____ 7. The angel appeared to Mary and Joseph at roughly the same time.

_____ 8. At no point did Mary hear directly from God concerning the birth of Jesus.

_____ 9. There was a lot of gossip concerning the legitimacy of Jesus both before and after His birth.

_____ 10. No one believed Mary's revelation that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

_____ 11. Joseph's initial decision to break off the engagement and marriage was carried about in a righteous manner.

_____ 12. The birth of John the Baptist holds a central position in the Christmas story.

_____ 13. Mary rode on a donkey to Bethlehem.

_____ 14. At Jesus birth a star shown over the manger.

_____ 15. At the time of Jesus birth, Mary and Joseph were married.

- _____ 16. The angels who appeared to the shepherds had white robes, wings and halos.
- _____ 17. The shepherds found the manger unaided by the star.
- _____ 18. The wise men consulted the scriptures which led them to recognize the meaning of the star.
- _____ 19. The star led the wise men directly to Bethlehem.
- _____ 20. The chief priests and scribes consulted the Scriptures which isolated Bethlehem as Jesus' birthplace.
- _____ 21. The wise men came to visit the baby Jesus in the manger.
- _____ 22. The three wise men came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- _____ 23. The shepherds and the wise men all converged upon the baby Jesus in the manger.
- _____ 24. In finding Jesus, the wise men followed the star from the south, the star leading their way southward to Jesus.
- _____ 25. The star lead the wise men directly to Jesus.
- _____ 26. After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem and set up house keeping.
- _____ 27. Shortly after Jesus birth they were married and at the ceremony the prophetic Ramona prophesied concerning the death of the baby Jesus.
- _____ 28. The pagan Magi were the only people in the Christmas revelation to hear directly from God.
- _____ 29. Jesus was a beautiful baby who grew into a handsome man with long flowing hair.
- _____ 30. The Christmas story ends with the arrival of the wise men.

1. **T - Luke 1:1-2:38; Matthew 1:18- 2:23 (Contrary to conventional wisdom, the Christmas Revelation actually spans a period of several years.)**

The Christmas Revelation as described in the Holy Scriptures, spans a time period of several years. The actual time frame work extended from the announcement of the impending pregnancy of Elizabeth and subsequent birth of John the Baptist to the return of Jesus from exile in Egypt.

2. **F - Matthew 2:1 – 6; Acts 13:6 – 8; Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; James 2:19 (At the time of Christ's birth many Gentiles were also waiting expectantly for a Messiah. Among these were Wise Men, righteous god seekers , skilled in the interpretation of God's working through the stars and signs. These were the Wise Men who came to Jesus bearing gifts.)**

The origin of these men is not known. The Greek word for these men is MAGOS and in all other Scriptural passages it is translated "Magician" or "Sorcerer". If this class of men were indeed considered "wise" (thus the sometimes used transliteration "Wise Men") their wisdom was in the magical arts and not in academic studies. The Greek word for "wise men" – PHRONIMOS ((I Corinthians 10:15) is not used in this passage, rather the word MAGOS meaning Sorcerer. These men should not be confused with the classical Greek and Roman philosophers and scholars of the day. These men were not from the West, rather they were Sorcerers from the East. It is a great leap from Greco/Roman Mathematical Astronomy to Eastern Occult Astrology. These men were of the latter class, they were pagan sorcerers. In every other passage of Scripture where the word MAGOS is used it is in the context of spiritual conflict (Example Acts 13:6 – 8) and should not be romanticized. The fact that they did homage to Christ is no indication of their righteous character nor that they somehow had special insight into God's plan hidden from His elect, unrevealed in His holy Word, yet revealed to these sorcerers through their incantations or profane writings. Throughout the Word of God both demons and those demon possessed fear Christ and pay him homage. This began here at His birth and continues throughout His earthly ministry (Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; James 2:19). The actions of these Magi, these Sorcerers should be neither embellished nor romanticized at the expense of holy Scripture.

3. **T - Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:2-6 (Even if you had known the prophecies concerning Jesus, you would not have been able to join the shepherds in worshiping the baby Jesus as He lay in the manger.)**

Even though you were versed in the Holy Scriptures, expecting the Messiah, had decided to live in Bethlehem in order to be there for the Messiah's birth, you would not, from Holy Scriptures, be found to be waiting with shepherds in the open air, associate Jesus and the manger nor have any idea of the exact day of His birth. To find Jesus you would need assistance either from the angels or the shepherds. Since there is no mention of a "star" in any of the prophecies concerning the birth of Christ you would not be looking for it's appearance nor associate it with the birth of Christ.

4. **T - Luke 1:5 - 17, 26 -38 (The Christmas Revelation relates the birth of two babies.)**

The birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus Christ.

5. **F - Luke 1:8 - 14 (In the Christmas Revelation, the first appearance of an angel is to Mary.)**

The Angel Gabriel first appears to Zacharias in the temple.

6. **F - Luke 1:34 & 35 (The Angel appeared to Mary at the time of the Immaculate Conception by the Holy Spirit.)**

The Angel appeared to Mary and it was only later that she actually conceived of the Holy Spirit. ("*the Holy Spirit will come upon you*") There is no record of how this (the conception) happened or if Mary was even aware of its occurrence at the time. The popular media depictions of a light or other visible presence at the time of the Immaculate Conception are pure fabrication. Although not simultaneous with the visitation by the Angel, Mary's immaculate conception was evidently a short time after the Angel appeared because the pregnancy had time to become noticeable before Mary's wedding to Joseph..

7. F - Matthew 1:18-24 (The Angel appeared to Mary and Joseph on the same evening.)

The Angel appeared to Mary before her conception. It was after this that she conceived of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18 *“the Holy Spirit will come upon you”*). Enough time then passed for her pregnancy to become known to Joseph (Matthew 1:19) and the families. It was at this time that Joseph determined to put her away. Then and only then, did the Angel appear to Joseph.

8. T – At no point did Mary hear directly from God concerning the birth of Jesus.

- ✠ Mary first hears from Gabriel in Luke 1:26 – 33;
- ✠ from her cousin Elizabeth in Luke 1:41 – 45, who confirms her baby as the promised Messiah;
- ✠ from Joseph in Matthew 1:18 – 25, when the message is also confirmed as a result of the revelation to Joseph by an Angel in a dream;
- ✠ from shepherds in Luke 2:8 – 20, who bring word of the divine nature of Jesus;
- ✠ from the Magi in Matthew 2:10 & 11, who attest to His Deity;
- ✠ finally from both Simeon (:25) and the prophetess Anna (:36) in Luke 2:21 – 38 who attest to His being the Messiah.

At no time did God directly speak to Mary as He had done in the past on momentous occasions such as Noah and the building of the Ark in Genesis 6:13 or Moses and the burning bush in Exodus 3:4.

9. F - Matthew 1:18-23 (There was a lot of gossip concerning the legitimacy of Jesus both before and immediately after His birth.)

The only record of anyone questioning Jesus’ legitimacy before his birth is that of Joseph’s reaction. The Bible is careful to point out that this was carried out in a righteous manner and kept private, Matthew 1:19 *“And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly.”* During His ministry Jesus’ deity was often questioned as a result of His being the son of Joseph and Mary (John 6:42) but never His supposed illegitimacy. No doubt, if the Pharisees had this card to play they would not hesitate to do so as it would also allow them to get at Jesus through attacks on Mary as well. (John 8:3 – 11 clearly indicates the Pharisees zeal in making adultery a public issue.) Evidently Joseph did an outstanding and admirable job of protecting Mary’s reputation both before and after the revelation of the divine nature of her conception. The revelation of the immaculate conception is not the story of an unwed mother but rather that of a virgin mother. These are two completely different things and must not be confused.

10. F - Matthew 1:18-25: Luke 1:39-45: Luke 2:22 -38 (No one believed Mary’s claim that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.)

There is no evidence that Mary ever argued for the divine nature of her conception. God however, was not silent on this issue and did bring others to her side. First Gabriel, then other angels, next Joseph, then Elizabeth, this being followed by the shepherds, the Magi and lastly Simeon and Anna at the temple. All these attested to the divine nature of her child. In all these events though Mary remained silent. There is not a single instance in Scripture of anyone questioning the legitimacy of Jesus birth during His earthly ministry nor of Mary as having to defend her virtue.

11. T - Matthew 1:19 (Joseph’s initial intention was to break off the engagement and marriage, but quietly and in a righteous manner.)

This is in stark contrast to what could have taken place. The public humiliation of the adulterous woman in John 8:1 -6 could have been called for - including her subsequent stoning, which was entirely consistent with the Law of Moses. (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22)

12. T - Luke 1:57 - 80 (The birth of John the Baptist holds a central position in the Christmas Revelation)

The Christmas Revelation begins, not as is commonly presented on stage with the Angel’s appearance to Mary, but rather with Gabriel’s appearance to Zacharias in the temple (Luke 1:5 - 17). The birth of John the Baptist and subsequent Messianic prophecies hold a central position in the Christmas Revelation.

13. (31) F - Luke 2:4 & 5 (Mary rode on a donkey to Bethlehem.)

In the historical revelation of Jesus' birth, no mode of transportation is given in terms of Joseph and Mary's trip to Bethlehem to register for taxes. It only states that they traveled to the city and that she gave birth there. *"And Joseph also went up from Galilee... along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child."* If you have ever seen someone trying to ride a donkey, you would be very skeptical of a woman in the last days of pregnancy choosing this as a mode of transportation. The Bible does not say, but if we were to speculate, given Joseph's profession as a carpenter, it is more plausible that he built a cart, filled it with hay and then either pulled it himself or used an ox or a donkey. This is far more believable than a woman, just days before giving birth, clip clopping along on the back of a donkey – especially given what we know about Joseph's righteous character and sensitivity to Mary.

14. (34) F - Luke 2:1 – 20; Matthew 2:1,9-12 (At Jesus' birth a star shown over the manger.)

At Jesus' birth there was no star. The shepherds followed the instructions they were given by the angels (see question 11) in order to ultimately find their way to where Jesus was lying in the manger. The star did not appear until later, most likely more than a year later, guiding the Magi. The common manger scenes sold in stores with the star attached to the pitched roof of stall is fabrication for the sake of convenience.

Authors Note: To ask the rhetorical questions "What is the big deal?" strikes at the heart of reformation Christianity. The "big deal" is that the Bible is God's Word, it is the Revelation of God the Holy Spirit (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20 & 21) and should be represented to the world in its pure form and truth. The stories of Santa Clause, Ebenezer Scrooge, Father Christmas, Father Frost, Frosty the Snowman, The Snow Queen and others are merely children's stories – how they are recounted and the liberty taken with the details are of little or no consequence. The Revelation of God the Holy Spirit is another matter. Misrepresenting the Word of God which is the direct Revelation of God the Holy Spirit is of great consequence. Christians everywhere need to return to the truth of Revelation 22:18 and heed it's admonition, *"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book;"* Now think a moment about your own life. Supposing you had gone to great lengths to put together a resume. This resume would impact how others viewed you and in many ways determine if they accepted you. What would your reaction be if those representing you began to embellish, change, rearrange and distort the exact factual data you had taken great pains to record? The application being – "Don't mess with God's resume!"

15. F - Luke 2:4 & 5; Matthew 1:18 & 25 (At the time of Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph were married.)

At the time of Mary's Immaculate Conception Joseph and Mary were engaged, or betrothed to one another. Matthew 1:18 *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit."* Although stronger and more binding than the engagements of our culture, never-the-less it was not marriage. Joseph had not yet finalized the engagement or betrothal. (Matthew 1:20 *"But when he had considered this, behold, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."*) As such, in terms of marriage, both in the eyes of the law and of the Jews, Mary was a single mother.

It must be emphasized, though, that she was not an unwed mother. She was a virgin mother, which is completely different from an unwed mother. A virgin mother is a state of special grace, while an unwed mother carries the stigma of the sin. In the of adultery or fornication both the mother and the father carry this stigma. In the case of rape, the mother is free from any guilt or stigma, yet sin is still present - though not associated with the mother but rather the male rapist. No sin was involved in Mary's pregnancy, neither on the part of Mary nor on the part of Joseph, nor on the part of any other male.

- Matthew 1:18 states clearly that Mary became pregnant during the betrothal period, e.g., their engagement before any sexual activity had taken place between Joseph and Mary.
- Luke 2:4 & 5 states that at the time that Joseph and Mary went to be registered they were still engaged.
- Matthew 1:24 & 25 clearly states that Joseph took Mary as his wife. This reading does not necessitate that the wedding was immediately after he arose. Rather, he made his intentions clear to all and did indeed follow through and at some point married Mary. She was to be made his wife and Joseph did

fulfill his word and take her as his wife. He may have wakened the family and made his honorable intentions immediately known but the actual wedding did not take place till after the birth of Jesus.

- Luke 2:4 & 5 places the date of the official marriage after the birth. (Luke 2:4-6 ***“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.”***)
- It is important that Mary was a virgin at the birth of Jesus and not just His conception because of prophetic Scripture. Isaiah 7:14 clearly states, ***“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”***
- Joseph did indeed marry Mary at some point for in the lineage of Matthew 1:16 he is referred to as ***“Joseph the husband of Mary”*** but he kept Mary as a virgin until after the birth of Christ and then at some point after the birth of Jesus they were married.

16. F – Luke 2:8-15; Hebrews 13:2 (The angels who appeared to the shepherds had white robes, wings and halos.)

There is no scriptural basis for the current fashion of depicting angels with white robes, wings, long flowing hair, halos and who speak in a special mystical language. In fact, the Angel who spoke to the shepherds stood before them, (Luke 2:9), and made his proclamation in their language (as do all Biblical accounts of angels). There is no specific mention of the heavenly host being in the air or flying when they were praising God and giving their revelation, nor is there any indication that, using wings, they flew away afterward. Nowhere is there depicted in the Bible angels, in human form having white robes, wings, long hair and halos. Nowhere in the Bible are angels depicted as beautiful young women or as babies. The only depiction of feminine angles in the Bible are of fallen angels, demons. These indeed were women with beautiful long wings, as in Zechariah 5:9, ***“Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens.”*** As for babies with wings, this is a purely pagan depiction taken right out of Roman and Greek pagan ritual. Upon visiting Roman ruins in England I was amazed to see the commonly depicted Renaissance baby angles adorning the pagan grave stones and temples for Roman pagans.

In stark contrast to the current fad of feminizing angels, all angelic descriptions in the Bible are decidedly masculine in nature (and often fearful, violent and bloody). All named angels had male names. The fearful response given to the appearance of angels surely brings into question the wimpy, effeminate angels which are sold in most Christian book stores and appear on greeting cards. A careful study of history will reveal that these depictions are pagan in nature, harking back to the sculptures found in ancient Rome and Greece rather than the Bible. I doubt seriously the Death Angel or the angels whose appearance struck such fear into men that they fell on their faces unable to speak, appeared in long effeminate flowing robes with sappy expressions on their faces. All of these depictions are simply artistic fabrications and fables, which pander the predominantly female clientele of modern Christian bookstores and should be avoided (I Timothy 4:7 ***“But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women...”***)

Baby angels, angels with wings and effeminate depictions of angels are simply artistic recreations of Roman and Greek pagan deities. The use of halos in depicting angels, saints or Biblical figures was begun in the middle ages by painters who wished in some way to indicate the individual when he was painted in a group setting. Although in some early paintings arrows with annotations are used, slowly this was replaced by the use of halos. These were considered more esthetically appealing and carried with them the growing superstition, that like Moses when he came down from the mount, so surely all great saints, glow with the glory of God. Hebrews 13:2 makes it clear that angels are so human like in their appearance, speech and actions that we can entertain them in their earthly duties without ever even knowing it. (Authors Note: It is true, the Seraphim and Cherubim of Ezekiel 1 & 10 had wings but these were not in human form and are a form of angelic life known as “living being”.)

17. F – Luke 2:13 & 14 (The angels came proclaiming, “Peace on earth and good will towards men”)

Although the quote “Peace on earth and good will towards men” appears almost universally on Christmas cards and in Christmas pageants the actual quotation is found in Luke 2:14; ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on***

earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." Two key elements are almost always left out when the angels are quoted.

First: *"Glory to God in the highest..."* – the birth of the Messiah has to do with the glory of God. It is not man-centered but God-centered. God, not man, is the center of the universe. The center of the Christmas Revelation is God, what God is doing and the glory due Him, not man, nor what man is getting.

Secondly: *"with whom He is pleased"*. The peace which Christ brings is not a universal peace. It is a peace extended to those to whom God, through His good pleasure is pleased to reveal Himself (Galatians 1:15). It is only a peace, a hope, for those who acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior of mankind, who submit to Him and put their trust in Him as their personal Lord and Savior. For the rest of mankind there is no peace, (Isaiah 48:22; 57:20 & 21); there is the turmoil of sin followed by the eternal judgment and agony of Hell (Revelation 20:10 – 15).

The message of peace in the Christmas revelation is a message of peace to those who put their trust and faith in Christ. The reality of the incarnation brought with it no end to wars, no end to poverty, no end to crime, no end to man's cruelty to man, no end to despotic rule and unjust governments. It brought with it no universal peace on earth. These acts continued unabated. Rather, it brought peace on earth to those *"with whom He is pleased"*, those who place their faith in Christ. True, the possibility of peace is presented to the world, but the reality of peace is for those with whom God is pleased and this is limited to those who trust Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. The rest of mankind experiences the displeasure of God, the turmoil of sin in this life and the prospect of the eternal judgment of God in Hell in the next. Just as in Satan's dialogue with Eve where the Words of God are misquoted and distorted, so here the angelic message is so often misquoted and distorted to bring a generic message of "peace" and "goodwill" where the call for repentance in the face of judgment should instead be given.

(Authors Note: The phrase, "peace on earth goodwill toward men" is not taken from Scripture but rather from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem/carol – "I Heard The Bell's On Christmas Day", which was written in 1864, during the American Civil War. Longfellow was in despair at the time having been recently widowed and now learning of the wounding of his son in battle. It was on Christmas day that he penned the words to this poem which was latter set to music. The phrase "peace on earth goodwill toward men" is repeated at the end of each stanza.)

18. F - Matthew 2:1 - 6 (The Magi consulted the Holy Scriptures which led them to Bethlehem and the baby Jesus.)

There are no prophetic Scripture which speak of a star. There is no indication that the magi were relying on any special ancient writings and certainly not the holy Scripture. An indication of this is that King Herod had to have the Holy Scriptures consulted for them. The Magi were simply responding to the appearance of a miraculous star, why they responded in this way, we do not know. (See question nine)

19. F - Matthew 2:1 & 2, 9 - 11 (The Magi, upon seeing the star in the east, followed it directly to Bethlehem.)

The answer to this question requires one to erase virtually all he has learned from Christmas cards, movies, TV and church Christmas pageants and to start over with the Word of God. It also requires of us a rudimentary knowledge of geography. Last but not least it requires of us a willingness to subject ourselves to the Word of God.

Preface: A short lesson in geography. If you had a map of the middle east before you, you would first locate Jerusalem. To the west would be the Mediterranean Sea but the Magi are from the east so you would look to the east of Jerusalem to determine where the Magi resided. Looking east you would see Assyria, Babylon, Persia, India, China and any number of other great eastern city states and domains. Having done this you would place the star in the eastern sky. Since we do not know which of these cities the Magi were from, but we do know that the star was in the east, then any city will suffice, given the fact that know city chosen will change the spatial orientation of the star. As you draw a line from one of these eastern cities to Jerusalem you would find yourself moving westward, the star being to your back. Having moved your Magi to Jerusalem, your next city of interest

is Bethlehem. You will notice on the map that Bethlehem resides south of Jerusalem. Thus after leaving Jerusalem the Magi did not continue westward but rather traveled in a southerly direction. According to the Biblical account the star was now leading them to Bethlehem and the residence of Christ. This is a radical change for rather than being in the east it is now in the south leading them onward. Having touched lightly on the geography involved lets look at the Biblical Revelation of the movements of the Magi and the star.

First: The Word of God says that the Magi, who were themselves from the East, saw the star in the **East**, then traveled to Jerusalem which would have been to the **West** placing the star at their back as they traveled. At that point the star was not providing specific aide in locating Jesus but rather was a sign which for some unknown reason caused the Magi to travel to Jerusalem. This is the first myth that must be overcome, that of the Magi were following a star to Jerusalem. Think now for a moment. Where were the Magi – “*in the East*”. Where did they see the star – “*in the East*”. Thus the Magi, east of Jerusalem, saw a star to their East, of both Jerusalem and the Magi. As a result of seeing this star which way did they have to travel – the answer being West. The Magi of the East, seeing a star in the East, traveled Westward to Jerusalem, the star at their back. We do not know why these Magi from the East, upon seeing a star in the East, would then choose to travel West. We do not know why they associated the star with the birth of a king. We do not know why they chose Jerusalem out of all the great cities to their west. We do not know why they unquestionably believed the scribes when they searched the Scriptures. There is no Biblical answer for any of these questions.

Second: We do not know why they came to Jerusalem. A star such as the North Star may lead us in a general direction but certainly not to a specific city. If you were in Chicago, Illinois you could locate the North Star and by keeping it to your back travel in a southerly direction. You could not however use the North Star to guide you to Houston, Texas. The Magi were not following a star Westward to Jerusalem. The star remained in the East as they traveled from the East westward to Jerusalem, keeping the star to their back. Using this type of celestial orientation it would have been impossible for them to have guided themselves to a specific city. Why they chose Jerusalem as opposed to one of the great western capitals of Egypt, Rome or Greece (or one of the other great city states of the middle east) is not known. What is known is that there were Magi east of Jerusalem. These Magi saw a star in the East. For some reason they associated this star with the birth of an Israeli king and set out for Jerusalem. The Bible does not say why they chose to go to Jerusalem. Many plausible explanations abound, but since the Bible is silent, so we must also be silent. It should be noted though that no prophecy of scripture foretells a star, no precedence in scripture sets the scene for the star. No one who was looking for the Messiah, as a result of studying the Holy Scriptures, would associate the star with His birth. For a reason, apart from the Word of God, the Magi saw the star and traveled to Jerusalem. The why of it remains a complete mystery.

Third: After Herod consulted the scribes and priests on behalf of the Magi, the star led them **South**, directly to Bethlehem and the residence of Jesus. Thus the star took them on an indirect route, first, prompting them, (for some reason unknown to us) westward to Jerusalem and then, contrastingly guiding them southward directly to Bethlehem and then finally bringing them to the exact house where Jesus was living.

The first star could have been a standard star created by God for this purpose or a comet or some other phenomenon put in place by God. This could have been created miraculously on the spot or something set in motion in the past and by the plan of God making it's appearance at Jesus' birth. Since it was a sign in the east it could have been any number of natural phenomenon miraculously put in place or motion by God.

The star which led the Magi from Jerusalem southward to Bethlehem and the child Jesus is however another matter. It's characteristics were distinctly different in this appearance than in it's first. This can be no natural star, comet or celestial event. It went on before the Magi leading them directly to the house where the boy child Jesus was residing. Notice the Biblical account in Matthew 2:9-11

9 *And having heard the king, they went their way; and lo, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was.*

10 *And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*

11 *And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.*

✠ The star which appeared in the East now repapered causing them to rejoice

- ✠ This star now was geographical specific leading them to the exact location of Jesus
- ✠ Since Bethlehem is to the south of Jerusalem the star moves southward, leading them on.
- ✠ Jesus is now a child and not a baby
- ✠ Jesus is now residing in a house with Joseph and Mary and not in a manger.

An interesting footnote: The popular carol, “We saw three ships come sailing in...” (A traditional; English Christmas Carol of unknown origin and authorship. It first appeared in print in *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern*, by William Sandys London: Richard Beckley, 1833.) This Carol seeks to deal with the dilemma that if the Magi were indeed following the star in the East then they would have to come from the West, perhaps Egypt or some other north African local, thus logically putting them in the Mediterranean ocean, traveling on three ships. Since the Bible does not state the mode of their transportation this would be plausible if the geographical center of the Christmas Revelation was Europe or the Americas. An American, an Englishman or European could easily view all the major African coastal cities as “from the east”. It is important to remember that the geographical frame of reference for the Christmas Revelation is Israel and not some European or American city. Thus east refers to east of Israel or more specifically Jerusalem. We must also remember that the Word of God states they were “*from the east*”, “*saw His star in the east*” and then went to Jerusalem (west) “*to worship Him*”.

20. T - Matthew 2:4-6 (The chief priests and scribes consulted the Holy Scriptures which isolated Bethlehem as Jesus’ birthplace.)

It was the Holy Scriptures, not the star, that first isolated the city of Bethlehem as the home of Jesus, only later was the star moved to the south to guide them.

21. F – Luke 2:8 - 16; Matthew 2: 11 (The shepherds and the Magi all converged upon the baby Jesus in the manger.)

The shepherds came upon Jesus as a newborn, in the manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths. The Magi came later to Jesus’ house and found him as a young boy living in a house.

22. F – Matthew 2:1 (There were three Magi who came riding camels and bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.)

The picture of three Magi, on camels, following a star, each carrying a different gift of gold, frankincense or myrrh is a fabrication of the Christmas greeting card industry. The number of Magi is not known. Who carried what, the quantity and mode of transportation are all unknown. What is known is that they were Magi (plural form), thus there was more than one and that they bore three gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh. What are the chances though that dignitaries such as they would travel across the desert with fabulous wealth, by themselves with no armed guard and no retinue? What are the chances that three men, entering a city, would be ushered in to the presence of the king? More than likely they came up over the horizon as a large regal procession. The tower guard, seeing this, called for the captain of the guard who in turn immediately informed the commander of the garrison. Soon word made it’s way to the highest level of the court and the king prepared himself to meet these impressive visitors. What actually happened is unknown to us, but again, it is doubtful that it was three lone men traveling across the desert on camels. And they most certainly were not following a star. (see question 41)

23. F – Luke 2:8 - 16; Matthew 2: 11 (The shepherds and the Magi all converged upon the baby Jesus in the manger.)

The shepherds came upon Jesus as a newborn, in the manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths. The Magi came later to Jesus’ house and found him as a young boy living in a house.

24. T – (The Magi were from the East)

Matthew 2:1 states, “*Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem*”. The geographical orientation of “from the east” refers specifically to Jerusalem and not to the reader. This is important in understanding other references in Scripture such as the star being seen in the east by the Magi. That would be east of the Magi who were east of Jerusalem.

25. (54) F - Matthew 2:9 - 11 (From it's first appearance, the star led the Magi directly to Jesus.)

The Magi first went to Jerusalem, not being lead by the star but rather as a result of the star's appearance in the eastern sky. (See question 41) After consultation with the scribes via Herod's court the city of Bethlehem was isolated. It was only after Scriptures were consulted and they continued on their way, south, to Bethlehem that the star began giving them specific help. They were only able to find the specific house Jesus was in by following the star which went on before them and directed them ultimately to the house where Joseph, Mary and Jesus were living. Thus it was by an indirect route and they needed other aides, such as Herod, the scribes and the Word of God to find Jesus.

26. T - Matthew 2:11 (After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem and set up housekeeping.)

By the time the Magi found Jesus, Mary and Joseph were no longer at the manger. They had evidently found a house to live in and had set up housekeeping. Jesus was living in a house, with His parents in Bethlehem.

27. F – Revelation 22:18 & 19 (Shortly after Jesus' birth they were married and at the ceremony the prophetess Ramona prophesied concerning the death of the baby Jesus.)

There is no historical narrative of the wedding of Joseph and Mary. We do know from the lineage of Jesus in Matthew 1:16 that Joseph and Mary were at some point married. We also know that in Matthew 1:24 God the Holy Spirit specifically tells us that Joseph *"took Mary as his wife"*. This however is all that is known. All non-biblical traditions and speculations of Joseph's and Mary's wedding, Joseph's reaction to Jesus' Deity, Joseph's and Mary's marriage, how Joseph and Mary raised Jesus during His childhood and teen years, what became of Joseph during Jesus' earthly ministry and the state of the marriage of Joseph and Mary during Jesus' earthly ministry, all these and more are purely fictitious and should be avoided as commanded by the Holy Scriptures in I Timothy 4:7.

28. T – (The pagan Magi were the only people in the Christmas revelation to hear directly from God.)

- ✠ In Luke 1:11, Zacharias hears the news from an Angel,
- ✠ in verses 26 – 28, Mary receives word via the Angel Gabriel,
- ✠ in Matthew 1:18 – 20, Joseph gets his information in a dream from an Angel,
- ✠ in Luke 2:8 & 9, the shepherds are instructed by an Angel,
- ✠ in Matthew 2:2 & 3 Herod gets clued in, not by the scribes and priests but by leaders of a pagan cult, this is only later confirmed by the scribes and priests
- ✠ it is only the leaders of this pagan cult who hear directly from God in a dream (Matthew 2:12).

29. F - Isaiah 53:1-3; Deuteronomy 22:5; Matthew 13:54 – 56; I Corinthians 6:9; 11:14 (Jesus was a beautiful baby who grew into a handsome man with long flowing hair.)

The Bible clearly says that Jesus was not of striking appearance and would not stand out in a crowd. (Isaiah 53:1 – 3) His appearance was certainly not of the nature that would strike awe into people. People tended to be impacted by what Jesus had to say. His appearance did not seem to exert any influence upon them in terms of belief in His teachings or acceptance of Him as a great man or teacher. (Matthew 13:34 – 36) The prohibition of God the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy 22:5 of dressing like a woman, the prohibition of men wearing long hair in I Corinthians 11:14 and the prohibition in I Corinthians 6:9 of being effeminate in appearance or manner, would deny Jesus the long flowing hair and effeminate dress and demure, as is so often attributed to Him in paintings. The actions of God the Son will always conform with both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit and it is unthinkable to assume that He would ever be in conflict with the standards put forth by God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. Classic sculptures of the time, which have remained intact to this day, depict men of that period and locale as clean shaven with short closely cropped hair. As a carpenter's son, Jesus was certainly not the wan, skinny figure depicted in Renaissance paintings. Rather this depiction of Christ reflects the decadence of the aristocracy of the Renaissance period, rather than historical and Scriptural accuracy. Who knows how our continued insistence to depict God in pictures and sculptures, despite the Biblical injunctions to the contrary (Exodus 20:4 & 5), will confuse and muddle the truth of Christ in future generations? Certainly it has already been a great distraction and stumbling block in the modern mission movements as these depictions create a false impression in the minds of Africans, Asians and Middle-Eastern cultures that Christianity is a Western Religion. It is not the Word of God that creates this impression but rather the

misplaced zeal of western artists.

30. F – Luke 2:21 – 40 and continued in Matthew 2:13-23 (The Christmas Revelation ends with the arrival of the Magi.)

The Christmas revelation actually ends with Jesus' family return to Nazareth from the exile in Egypt and His subsequent dedication in the temple with the accompanying prophecies. In Matthew 2:13 & 14, an Angel of the Lord warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt and then in verses 19 – 23 an Angel appeared again in a dream to Joseph and instructed him to return to Israel to reside in the city of Nazareth. The Revelation continues on in Luke 2:21 – 40 with the presentation of Jesus at the temple and the prophecies which took place at that time. The Historical Revelation of the "Christmas Story" ends with the return of the Joseph and Mary to Nazareth in Luke 2:40