

“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 sixty questions on the “Christmas Test”. This is to allow you to use it as an Advent Calendar. By taking two or three questions each week 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 or two each evening in the week leading up to Christmas 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. (Let me encourage you to go on to the full Christmas Test on our website and master all 61 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. Mary rode on a donkey to Bethlehem.
- _____ 3. At Jesus birth a star shown over the manger.
- _____ 4. The angels came proclaiming, "Peace on earth and good will towards men"
- _____ 5. (The star led the wise men directly to Bethlehem.
- _____ 6. The wise men came to visit the baby Jesus in the manger.
- _____ 7. The three wise men came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- _____ 8. The shepherds and the wise men all converged upon the baby Jesus in the manger.
- _____ 9. The star lead the wise men directly to Jesus.
- _____ 10. Jesus was a beautiful baby who grew into a handsome man with long flowing hair.

1. F - 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 - 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 on 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.)

5. 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 an 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*".

6. 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.

7. 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)

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.