

22T22z Christmas Story Retold

Hello my friends. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table for the Christmas Story Retold.

Let's Pray...

I love the Christmas season with all the traditions and gatherings of family and friends. It is truly a beautiful time of year. I love to see all the lights and decorations. But often we forget there is a reason for the season. That reason is Jesus. The birth of Jesus to be exact. For Christians we have lots of traditions about Christmas; the Nativity, the Star, the Wisemen but did you know that many parts of our traditional Nativity story are not actually in the Bible or least not part of the night Jesus was born. These are the Christmas Myths.

If you attend church or have ever watched a Christmas special about the birth of Jesus on television, then I bet you have a timeline in your mind about the Christmas Story.

It might go something like this. Mary is dragged to Bethlehem by Joseph for this bad census thing the mean emperor was doing. Mary is about to have a baby as they travel. After many stops trying to find a room at an inn, they end up in the barn or stable with the animals and here comes baby Jesus. Then these shepherds come to see Jesus along with these 3 Kings or wisemen all in the stable with baby Jesus. And later that same night Joseph gets a dream to flee to Egypt and they are off again. Go, Go, Go baby and all. Everything taking place at the American-style blazing fast pace.

But the Bible tells a very different story, not quite so frantic, not quite so rushed. We have to remember there are two accounts of events around Jesus' birth in the Bible; in the gospel of Matthew and in the gospel of Luke. I think it is a good idea to look at them together as one cohesive story. If we look at them separately, we might make some bad assumptions

So, before we get started today, let's look at the parallel timeline from Mathew 1 & 2 and Luke 1 & 2 side by side again.



We also know from the Bible it was probably not an inn or a stable. Bethlehem was a very small town near Jerusalem, It is not very likely there was more than one inn if there was any inn at all. And this is Joseph's hometown, he would have had relatives, maybe even his parents, but aunts and uncles, cousins, Family.

I would like to tell the Christmas story using some of the things we have learned that are not in line with our traditional Christmas rush, rush story. Our traditional Christmas story in fact covers several years of time from before Mary was pregnant until the family returns from Egypt.

I hope you enjoy the Christmas Story Retold, using both Matthew and Luke together. One more thing before we get started, I want to highlight something. There are some pretty amazing things told about Jesus in the extended Christmas Story. Jesus is King, Jesus is Christ the Lord, Jesus is our Savior, Jesus will save us from our sins, Jesus is son of God. Watch for these announcements as we read the Christmas Story from the Bible.

There was a radio show I really liked when I was a child. The broadcaster's name was Paul Harvey. He would tell a story, then he would say, "Now for the rest of the story". So, now for the rest of the story of Christmas. The full Christmas story retold according to the Bible.

I want to pick up the Christmas story as Mary and Joseph are traveling to Bethlehem from Nazareth. This is from Luke 2:1-7. Now, Mary was pregnant when they began this very long trip. A 90 plus mile walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph were traveling with a large group heading toward Jerusalem along the Jordan river valley.

During the many days of walking and nights of sleeping under the stars, I imagine Mary and Joseph talking about the baby Mary was carrying. How an angel appeared to her and told her she would give birth to the Son of God, the messiah, Jesus. Joseph told her about his encounter with an angel in a dream telling him how God was the father of this child and he should call him Savior or Jesus. With great anticipation, they talk about how Jesus will change the world. Then after several long days of walking and nights along the roadside, they arrive in Bethlehem.

When they arrive at the house, the upper room is already full. No room for them in the upper room of the house. Most likely the upper room was already filled with other relatives. So, Mary and Joseph stayed in the less appealing lower room of the house where in the winter animals are kept. It is possible other relatives were also staying in the lower room with them. Then, after some time, hours or days, it was time for Mary to give birth to Jesus. Then surrounded by their loving family and friends, the King of kings and Lord of lords was born humbly in Bethlehem fulfilling the prophecy from Micah 5:2 *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”* (Micah 5:2 NKJV)

The newborn baby Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger to sleep. Swaddling clothes were strips of cloth used to wrap babies, no diapers in 1st century Judea.

(Let's continue our story from Luke 2:8-20) *“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.”* (Luke 2:8-20 NKJV)

I cannot even imagine the excitement of the shepherds. A visit from angels, then they visited the new baby Messiah. And think about how gracious and kind Mary and Joseph must have been to allow shepherds from the countryside to share their special moment.

The next verse in Luke is Jesus being circumcised according to Jewish law, in Luke 2:21. *And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb (Luke 2:21 NKJV)*

Then the next 3 verses are after Mary had completed her required purification according to Jewish law of about 40 days, Mary and Joseph take baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to present him and give the required sacrifice of redemption for the first born son. *Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”. (Luke 2:22-24 NKJV)*

They meet Simeon and Anna at the Temple in the next few verses in Luke 2:25-38. I’m going to skip these amazing prophecies for the sake of time today. Please read them. So, Mary and Joseph hear these amazing prophecies about baby Jesus. Then we pick up the story in verse 39-40, *So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:39-40 NKJV)*

Now Magi from the east, see a star in the sky. They determine this is the sign foretold in scriptures. So sometime later, they travel to Judea to pay their respects to the newborn King. When they arrived in Judea after their long journey, they stopped to gain permission to travel in Judea from the reigning king Herod the Great. Now let’s pick up the story in Matthew 2:1-18 *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, (magi or) wisemen from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’ (From Micah 5:2)” (Matthew 2:1-6 NKJV)*

So, after hearing the Magi, all of Jerusalem was in turmoil. Herod consults the religious leaders to determine where the messiah would be born based on the scriptures, including Micah 5:2.

Then Herod, when he had secretly called the magi, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.” (Matthew 2:7-8 NKJV)

When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen 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 exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. (Matthew 2:9-12 NKJV)

I hope you caught the details, the magi visited young child Jesus in a house. Where was young Jesus and Mary and Joseph living, not Bethlehem but in Nazareth. No where in the story does it say the Magi went to Bethlehem. The rest of the Christmas narrative in Matthew is clear what happens next in Matthew 2:13-15 Joseph is warned by God to flee to Egypt and Joseph just obeys. Later Joseph has another message from God to return home to Galilee. He just obeys and they return from Egypt to Nazareth in Matthew 2:19-23. There is also one last short story of young Jesus at age 12 in Luke 2:41-52.

Let's Pray...

What an amazing story. I love the details in this story as the Bible places them. I pray you take time to celebrate with your family that Jesus is King. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is our Savior, and He has forgiven us. Now as we spend time remembering His birth and celebrating the greatest gift ever given. Remember we are part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus' kingdom. Jesus is our King. As we celebrate this Christmas, let's celebrate our King and our roles in His kingdom, the Kingdom of God right now on earth as it is in heaven.

Thank you for joining us. Merry Christmas Everyone

Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God Bless