



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## What Really Happened in Bethlehem?

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JOHN 1:14

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**One of the foundational principles of our government is representation. We elect leaders who represent us – who lead and act on our behalf. As we contemplate the coming holiday, we should realize that the real meaning of Christmas, indeed one of the foundational principles of the Christian faith is also representation. It will help us to grasp what really happened in Bethlehem when we understand that Jesus, the baby in the manger, was God come in human flesh to be a representative.**

We are familiar with the Christmas story recorded for us in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. They share with us the events that took place. When we turn to the Gospel of John, we get a different view of the Christmas story. As with many of John's accounts of the details of Jesus' life and death, we get the meaning behind those events. It is in John 1 that he gives us the meaning of what really happened in Bethlehem:

**And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14**

When we go to the beginning of the chapter we see that "Word" is another name and description for Jesus, pointing out that He is divine – that He is God: ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1:1-4).*** This makes verse 14 simply incredible. God the Son, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity, took on human flesh and became a man. Jesus, the baby in the manger, was God come to earth in a human body.<sup>1</sup> Paul says that ***"in Him (Christ) all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form..."*** (Colossians 2:9)

One statement of faith described this amazing truth this way:

*...The eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took to himself, through the working of the Holy Spirit, from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, a truly human nature so that he might also become David's true descendant, like his brothers and sisters in every way except for sin.<sup>2</sup>*

Both believers and skeptics have spent years and written volumes

debating this doctrine. For the purpose of this study I ask that you join me in the presupposition of this teaching taught in the Bible and held by the historic Christian faith. What really happened in Bethlehem is that God the Son became a man. Jesus, the baby born in Bethlehem, had both natures, divine and human. Can we explain it? Can we fully understand it? Certainly not! We are quickly overwhelmed when we contemplate this, the real miracle of Christmas.

### WHY?

Even a brief consideration of this truth will quickly lead us to the question, "why?" Why would Jesus take on human flesh and become a man? God the Son came and took on a human body – became God in the flesh – so that He might be a representative.

### JESUS CAME TO BE A REPRESENTATIVE FOR GOD

John continues to describe what took place in Bethlehem: ***No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known (John 1:19 ESV).*** John says no one has seen God (the Father), but God (the Son) has made Him known. John writes more about this in 5:36-38 and 14:7-11 as he describes how Jesus came to represent to us the glory and character of the Father. In Jesus we see the holiness and purity of God. In Jesus we get glimpse of the power and glory of God. In Jesus we see the greatest expression of the love, grace, and mercy of God. And yes, in Jesus we even see the justice and judgment of God. This in itself is amazing – that God the Son would humble Himself to take on the form of a servant and be made in the likeness of man (Philippians 2:7) in order to represent the Father to us. However the real truth of what happened in Bethlehem is even more glorious.

### JESUS CAME TO BE A REPRESENTATIVE FOR US.

Jesus, God the Son, came and took on a human body so that He could be our representative both in His life and in His death.

### **IN HIS DEATH**

We recognize the message of Christmas goes far beyond a baby born in a manger. Jesus came so that He could suffer and die for our sin. God is a just and holy God, and as such He must punish all sin. God sent His own Son to take that punishment for our sin upon Himself.

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## BIBLE STUDIES

INTERIM BIBLE STUDY: **TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2013** TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM

(EB 54 LOCATED IN THE BASEMENT OF THE EAST WING)

# West Virginia

## What Really Happened in Bethlehem?

Jesus came “*to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:45). “*Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God...*” (1 Peter 3:18). “*God sent His Son to be the savior of the world*” (1 John 4:14). “*God made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*”. (2 Corinthians 5:21). He also shared how “*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). All these verses describe how Jesus was our representative as He took the punishment for our sin upon Himself as He suffered and died on the cross.

### IN HIS LIFE

We rightfully focus much of our attention on the fact that Jesus represented us in His death. However we see another great truth when we consider that Jesus also represented us in His life. Why did Jesus come as a baby? Why did He spend 33 years on this earth growing up and living among men? The Bible teaches us it was so that He could live a perfect life, perfectly obeying the Father, perfectly and completely fulfilling the law.

He did all this not only so that He could die as sinless sacrifice. He did all this as our representative – so that His perfect obedience (righteousness) could be credited to us. Paul wrote that “*...through the one man’s disobedience (Adam) the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One (Jesus) the many will be made righteous*” (Romans 5:19).

He did all that which we could not do. We cannot live a perfect life – we have all sinned. Jesus lived a perfect life on our behalf. We do not love God with all hearts – Jesus loved His Father constantly and perfectly. We do not love others as we should, yet Jesus loved others perfectly, even those who abused Him.

Jesus also lived as a man so that He could be our perfect representative before the Father. Hebrews 4:15-16 encourages us, “*We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*”<sup>16</sup> *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” We find still greater encouragement in the fact the Jesus is still representing His followers before the Father today! (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25)

What really happened in Bethlehem is that God the Son came to earth and became a man so that He could be our great representative. We can have all our sins forgiven because Jesus was our representative as took our punishment when He suffered and died on the cross. We can have Jesus’ perfect obedience and righteousness credited to us since He lived a perfect life on our behalf. We can also have Jesus as our representative before the Father today.

Spurgeon explained it this way:

*See what Christ has done in his living and in his dying, his acts becoming our acts and his righteousness being credited to us, so that we are rewarded as if we were righteous, while he was punished as though he had been guilty.*<sup>3</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The most important part of this message is that Jesus only becomes our representative when we repent and put our faith in Him. Otherwise we must suffer the punishment for our own sin, and stand before God with our own imperfect lives. As the old saying goes, “A man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client”. It would certainly be foolish for us to try to represent ourselves before a holy God, when we can have His Son as our great and perfect representative.

**AS BELIEVERS LET US AGAIN BE OVERWHELMED AND FIND JOY AND ASSURANCE IN THE TRUTH OF WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM.**

**IF YOU HAVE NOT TRUSTED CHRIST, WILL YOU CONSIDER MAKING HIM YOUR REPRESENTATIVE THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FAITH TODAY?**

<sup>1</sup> In the study of theology this truth is called the *incarnation*, from the Latin, “to make flesh”.

<sup>2</sup> Heidelberg Catechism. <http://www.ccel.org/creeds/heidelberg-cat.html>. If you look up this document you will find scripture passages to support each of the statement.

<sup>3</sup> C.H. Spurgeon. Sermon *Justification and Glory*.