

CHRISTMAS 2019
MATTHEW 1:18-25
EVIDENCE FOR THE MESSIAH!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Matthew chapter 1 as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

And I do realize that many don't like to celebrate Christmas because they don't believe that Jesus was born on December 25th, and that is probably true.

But does it really matter what day we remember our Lord's birth? I don't think so. And the reason being is that if it was that important, then the Lord would have specifically told us. He told us dates of many other things, and if He wanted us to know this, like I have said, He would have told us.

Then why do we celebrate the Lord's birth on December 25th? The reason is simple, Jesus was born, God became flesh and dwelt among us and we should rejoice in that fact. And for us, what a joy it is to remember what God has done for us.

But in the days we are living in, there are many who deny this fact, they don't believe this story of God becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us. They think it is made up to get people to believe in God!

In an essay that he wrote, "Why I Am Not a Christian," Bertrand Russell made these remarks about Jesus, "Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did, we do not know anything about Him."

Those are pretty bold statements but is there evidence for the birth of the Messiah? Do we have evidence to support what the Bible is telling us?

That is what we will be looking at this morning, the ***EVIDENCE FOR THE MESSIAH!***

And my prayer as we go through this evidence is that you would clearly see that not only was Jesus born, but He is exactly what the Old Testament Scriptures said about the Messiah. And we can spend years examining this, we don't have that much time, but hopefully you will be encouraged to dig deeper to see that Jesus is real.

Let me share this report with you from the Pew Research Center that deals with the fact that there is a shrinking majority who believe the biblical account of the birth of Jesus, that it depicts actual events.

This report is from December 12, 2017, so just two years old and I think the numbers are even lower today as many in this nation, and in the church, are denying what the Bible teaches.

Listen to what they found out in their survey. We are told,

As long-simmering debates continue over how American society should commemorate the Christmas holiday, a new Pew Research Center survey finds that most U.S. adults believe the religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized less now than in the past – even as relatively few Americans are bothered by this trend. . . .

Not only are some of the more religious aspects of Christmas less prominent in the public sphere, but there are signs that they are on the wane in Americans' private lives and personal beliefs as well. For instance, there has been a noticeable decline in the percentage of U.S. adults who say they believe that biblical elements of the Christmas story – that Jesus was born to a virgin, for example – reflect historical events that actually occurred. And although most Americans still say they mark the occasion as a religious holiday, there has been a slight drop in recent years in the share who say they do this.

Currently, 55% of U.S. adults say they celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday, including 46% who see it as more of a religious holiday than a cultural holiday and 9% who celebrate Christmas as both a religious and a cultural occasion. In 2013, 59% of Americans said they celebrated Christmas as a religious holiday, including 51% who saw it as more religious than cultural and 7% who marked the day as both a religious and a cultural holiday. . . .

When asked directly, most respondents in the new poll say they think religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized less in American society today than in the past. But relatively few Americans both perceive this trend and are bothered by it. Overall, 31% of adults say they are bothered at least “some” by the declining emphasis on religion in the way the U.S. commemorates Christmas, including 18% who say they are bothered “a lot” by this. But the remaining two-thirds of the U.S. public either is not bothered by a perceived decline in religion in Christmas or does not believe that the emphasis on the religious elements of Christmas is waning. . . .

At the same time, the new study finds a small but significant decline in the share of *Christians* who believe in the Christmas narrative contained in the Bible. To be sure, large majorities of Christians still believe in key elements of the nativity story as described in the Bible. But the shares of Christians who believe in the virgin birth, the visit of the Magi, the announcement of Jesus’ birth by an angel and the baby Jesus lying in the manger all have ticked downward in recent years. Overall, the share of Christians who believe in all four of these elements of the Christmas story has dipped from 81% in 2014 to 76% today. . . .

The declines in belief in the Christmas narrative are sharpest among religious “nones.” For instance, belief in the virgin birth has declined from 30% in 2014 to 17% today among religious “nones.” [NONES - The religiously unaffiliated] But even among some Christian groups, there are signs of growing doubts about the Christmas story as relayed in the Bible. The share of white mainline Protestants who believe in the virgin birth, for instance, has declined from 83% to 71% . . .

Among religious “nones,” just 11% believe in all four of these parts of the Christmas story (down from 21%), while fully half believe in *none* of them (53%, up from 42%).

- <https://pewrsr.ch/2CdMlyT>

So if any of you are unsure about the birth of the Messiah, we will examine that here this morning. And for all of us, I think it is important to understand that our faith in the Messiah is not a blind faith. The evidence is overwhelming, it is just that many don’t want to know or don’t want to hear because then they are accountable to the Living God!

We are going to look at four main points and then I will sum things up with a conclusion. The four points are as follows:

THE REASON FOR THE MESSIAH’S BIRTH

THE PROPHECIES RELATED TO THE MESSIAH

THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH

JESUS THE MESSIAH – A MAN OF HISTORY

So with that as our background, let’s read through the Christmas story, what that is all about as we look at Matthew chapter 1, beginning in verse 18.

MATTHEW 1**VERSES 18-25**

Did you notice that this did not start out with, “*Once upon a time the birth of Jesus Christ*”?

No, it started out, “**Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows . . .**” And the reason being is that this was a true story and not a fairy tale. In fact, if this never took place, we are all in trouble because then there is no payment for our sins, and thus, we are still dead in our trespasses and sins!

Thus, the attack against it is strong because if the enemy can get us to deny the birth of Christ, then we will have to deny His death and resurrection for our sins. So you can see how important this is for us. And on this day we remember what the Lord has done for us, what a joy it is!

So let’s look at our first point – ***THE REASON FOR THE MESSIAH’S BIRTH!***

To understand the reason for the Messiah’s birth, why He had to come to save us, we have to go all the way back to the beginning, to the book of Genesis.

When God created the heavens and the earth and all life it was very good. And every tree in the Garden of Eden was there for Adam and Eve to partake of, except for one. And that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord told them not to partake of this tree to give them a choice, to obey the Lord or not to obey the Lord. And it was only one thing and yet, Adam ate from the tree and by his actions sin entered the world.

Now we might not think much of that, it was just one sin, but look at what sin does in our lives. We are told in Isaiah 59:1-2, **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

That is the problem, sin separates us from God just as it did with Adam!

But in Genesis 3:15 I think the Lord shows us the solution to the problem of sin. You see, Adam had sin in his life and thus, he could do nothing to reconcile that on his own. In fact, he tried sewing fig leaves together to cover himself. You might say that this was the first man-made religion. Man trying to appease God.

And God does nothing with those fig leaves, He does not even acknowledge them. What He does do is He made tunics from an animal; I believe a lamb. In other words, it was the death of the innocent to cover the sins of the guilty.

And this is what the Lord said in Genesis 3:15, **“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”**

In this verse I see a hint of the coming Messiah, the seed of the woman.

You see, it is the man that has the seed and thus, I see here the virgin birth.

Also, Satan will bruise the heel of the Messiah, not a mortal wound. Yes, Jesus was crucified but He rose the third day from the grave conquering death!

And I think Paul expounds on this when he says in Galatians chapter 3, **“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ . . . What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.”** Galatians 3:16, 19.

And this seed is the Messiah, Jesus, who will bring a mortal wound upon Satan; he will ultimately be cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity!

But in this Seed, in the Messiah, He will come to pay in full the penalty for our sins!

Is there evidence in the Old Testament to show us that was what the Messiah was to do?

You bet there is, and I will give you just one example and that is from Isaiah 53:1-12,

“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the

living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked - But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.”

Did you notice how we keep hearing that the Messiah was going to bear our sins, that the Lord had laid on Him the iniquity of all of mankind, His soul was made an offering for sin, that He bore the sins of many and interceded for our transgressions!

I think that is pretty clear, that *the reason for the birth of the Messiah*, the reason He has come was to take away our sins by paying the penalty for our sins. He took our sins and nailed them to the cross of Calvary, and He gave to us His righteousness so that our relationship with the Father could be restored, but only through Jesus!

And yet, there are many who feel that this Jesus, this Messiah was something that the New Testament writers made up. He was never spoken of like the way the New Testament writers have said.

Let me show you what I mean by this and you will see that many may try to deny the existence of Jesus, that He is not the Messiah, but the evidence says otherwise. And this is dealing with Isaiah 53 and the suffering servant, again, clearly Jesus, unless you don't want to believe, and you will see what I mean and the foolish conclusions you have to come to if you reject this description of the Messiah here in Isaiah chapter 53!

From His 1980 book "You Take Jesus, I'll Take God" Samuel Levine, a Jewish scholar, wrote, "As you know, the Jews were in Israel for around 1000 years before Jesus appeared. They had a definite concept of what the Messiah would be like-there was a status quo regarding the nature of the Messiah. The Christians appeared and introduced an entirely different picture of what the Messiah would be like (Son of God, God incarnate, born of a virgin, two comings, etc.). Thus, the Christians changed the status quo concept of the Messiah, and so the full burden of proof rests upon them."

Actually, the Scriptures speak very clearly on these issues and even on what this verse is all about. And yet Samuel Levine says "Many Jewish commentators feel that it [Isaiah 53] refers to the Jewish people on the whole. . . . Thus, Isaiah 53 could very well be describing the history of the Jewish people-despised by the world, persecuted by the Crusaders and the Spanish Inquisition and the Nazis, while the world silently watched. . . . The verses do not point exclusively to Jesus, or to a Messiah. . . ."

That is an interesting statement because a 16th century Rabbi, Moshe el Sheikh said of Isaiah 53, "Our Rabbis with one voice accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet is speaking of the King Messiah, and we shall ourselves also adhere to the same view."

Not only that but in the 14th century Rabbi Moshe Cohen Crispin said this in regards to applying the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 to the nation of Israel, that it “Distort[s] the verses of their natural meaning. . . . As then it seemed to me that the doors of literal interpretation [of Isaiah 53] were shut in their face, and that they wearied themselves to find the entrance’, having forsaken the knowledge of our teachers, and inclined after the ‘stubbornness of their own hearts’ and of their own opinion, I am pleased to interpret it, in accordance with the teaching of our Rabbis, of the King Messiah. . . . This prophecy was delivered by Isaiah at the divine command for the purpose of making known to us something about the nature of the future Messiah, who is to come and deliver Israel.”

And lastly, one writer put it like this. He wrote,

Isaiah’s prophecy is the clearest description that the Hebrew Scriptures offer concerning the identity of the Messiah. The rabbis, since the middle of the 11th century have claimed this passage is referring to the Jewish people as a whole, but the dominant rabbinical position for centuries was that it spoke of the Messiah. Why the shift? Because the man Isaiah describes fits Yeshua completely. . . .

If it were not for the fact that Yeshua looks so much like this man, would any scholar not immediately conclude that this passage refers to the Messiah? Of course not. Isaiah, 700 years before Yeshua, described in detail that Jewish man portrayed in the New Covenant, Yeshua.

- <http://bit.ly/32f9xqZ>

And that does bring us to our second point, ***THE PROPHECIES RELATED TO THE MESSIAH***. And again, there is no way we are going to be able to cover the over 300 prophecies related to the first coming of Jesus Christ. But I hope to show you that just a few prophecies that relate to the coming of the Messiah is beyond any mathematical probability!

Now I am not saying that they didn't happen, but what I am saying is that no man could make these kinds of predictions, and not just one man but many men made these predictions and have them come to pass. Thus, these words regarding the coming of the Messiah did not come from man but from God and when God speaks, He is 100% correct and what is impossible for man, is very possible for God! Man was just the instrument that God used to write these words down for us!

Peter Stoner, in his book *Science Speaks* took just eight prophecies related to Jesus to see what the mathematical probability of these eight prophecies coming to pass in one man would be.

Again, keep in mind that there are over 300 prophecies related to the first coming of Jesus Christ, but we will start out small and see what the mathematical possibility of eight of them coming to pass in one man is just to start with.

Now here are just eight of them that Jesus had no control over and yet fulfilled them all down to the tiniest detail:

1. Place of birth (Micah 5:2)
2. Time of birth (Daniel 9:25, Genesis 49:10)
3. Manner of birth (Isaiah 7:14)
4. Betrayal (Psalm 41:9)
5. Manner of death (Psalm 22:16)

6. People's reactions (mocking, spitting, staring, etc.) (Isaiah 50:6)
7. Piercing (Zechariah 12:10, Psalm 22:16)
8. Burial (Isaiah 53:9)

Now before I speak of the probability of these eight coming to pass, let me just speak of the first one because Jesus could not have any control over where he was going to be born if He was just a man.

And if He was not born in Bethlehem of Judah the religious leaders would have Him because that is where the Messiah was to come from!

But if He is God then He knew exactly where He was to be born, the Incarnation and He told us long before it ever happened!

In Micah 5:2 we are told, "**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.**"

We don't have to guess what this prophecy is about; it is about the birth of the Christ, the Messiah.

Also, we don't have to guess the location because God is very specific about where He is to be born. He is to be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah or the Bethlehem that is in Judah, as I have said already. Again, God is very specific here.

And, one more point here. When it says that His "**goings forth are from of old, from everlasting**" it is speaking that the Messiah who was to be born in Bethlehem was not just to be a man but God for only God is eternal!

Now, in knowing that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, our question is, "One man in how many, the world over, has been born in Bethlehem?"

That is what we are trying to determine here.

What we need to do first is determine the average population of Bethlehem from Micah's day to today and then divide it by the average population of the earth during that same period of time.

Dr. Peter Stoner figured out that the *average population of the earth is less than 2 billion* and the *average population of Bethlehem is less than 7,150*.

Thus, for this first prophecy to be fulfilled in one man is one in 2.8 times 10^5 . (Another way to look at this is that one man in 7,150/2,000,000,000 [2 billion] would be born in Bethlehem).

And keep in mind that this is just one prophecy that was fulfilled.

We see the New Testament fulfillment of this prophecy made by Micah in Matthew 2:1 where we are told, "**Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem.**"

So here is the first prediction that any one man could fulfill this prophecy of being born in Bethlehem, one in 2.8 times 10^5 .

Now if we were to evaluate all of these prophecies and look at the probability of them occurring, as Peter Stoner did, we would come up with the odds of this occurring all in one man.

And I realize that some may doubt his work or say that it is one-sided in favor of Christianity, but his probability studies have been evaluated and proven to be very good.

In the forward of Peter Stoner's book H. Harold Hartzler of the American Scientific Affiliation at Goshen College wrote, "The manuscript for *Science Speaks* has been carefully reviewed by a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation members and by the Executive Council of the same group and has been found, in general, to be dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. The mathematical analysis included is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound and Professor Stoner has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way."

Now there may be some out there this morning in church or listening on the radio or Internet that are thinking, "Hey, you can find some of these prophecies in various people who have died like Kennedy or Kings or others. So what is the big deal?"

I don't think any of them were born in Bethlehem but just think about what they are saying. You see, it is a big deal because we are not just talking about one or two or even eight but over 300 of them and as you will see, there is no possible way that this could happen in any one man!

So let's look at this probability from Peter Stoner's book, *Science Speaks*. He tells us, We find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} [(10 to the 17th power). That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 [I believe this is one hundred quintillions] (17 zeros after the one).

In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that] we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep.

Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state.

Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them according to their own wisdom.

Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets had just one chance in 10^{17} of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ.

This means that the fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness [certainty] which lacks only once chance in 10^{17} of being absolute. (Stoner, SS, 100-107).

- Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, pp. 193-194

Maybe that is not good enough for you. If you are still thinking this could just happen by random chance, then look at the probability of just forty-eight of the over 300 prophecies of Jesus's coming to pass in His first coming.

Peter Stoner tells us,

“. . . we find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157} . This is a really large number and it represents an extremely small chance. Let us try to visualize it. The silver dollar, which we have been using, is entirely too large. We must select a smaller object.

The electron is about as small an object as we know of. It is so small that it will take 2.5 times 10^{15} of them laid side by side to make a line, single file, one inch long.

If we were going to count the electrons in this line one inch long, and counted 250 each minute, and if we counted day and night, it would take us 19,000,000 years to count just the one-inch line of electrons.

If we had a cubic inch of these electrons and we tried to count them it would take us, counting steadily 250 each minute, 19,000,000 times 19,000,000, times 19,000,000 years or 6.9 times 10^{21} years.

. . . Let us suppose that we are taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one.

What chance has he of finding the right one? What kind of a pile will this number of electrons make? They make an inconceivably large volume.”

Such is the chance of any one man fulfilling 48 prophecies.

- Josh McDowell, Evidence That Demands A Verdict, p 167

So, we have seen *the reason for the Messiah's birth* – man sinned, and only God could pay the penalty for that sin!

We have seen *the prophecies related to the Messiah* – that no man could have written them or fulfilled them, only God could! The coming of the Messiah is clearly predicted in the Old Testament!

And let's look at *the birth of the Messiah!*

And here again we will read through these verses here in Matthew chapter 1, beginning in verse 18 and then I will expound on them.

We are told, **“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.”** Matthew 1:18-25.

Notice, the seed of the woman and this is important, not only because it is prophetic in nature, but also because the sin was past on through the father and thus, Jesus was not born with original sin, and He had no sin throughout His life and thus, He was able to pay for our sins!

It also speaks of the virgin birth, as Matthew tells us!

And notice, this babe in the manger was God, our Immanuel, ***GOD WITH US!***

That is what John tells us in John 1:14, **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”** And really, the whole Gospel of John shows that Jesus is Almighty God!

But, the argument goes, “There is no historical evidence for Jesus ever being born, ever living. It is just a story!”

And that will bring us to our last point, *JESUS THE MESSIAH – A MAN OF HISTORY!*

I do understand that there are those who believe that only the Bible speaks of Jesus and thus, since we don't see Jesus mentioned in history, then He probably was a made-up story!

That is the farthest thing from the truth. Let me show you what I mean because we do have secular historical evidence for Jesus.

But even though we have the evidence, there are still the skeptics, as this one person, from years ago, from the Progressive Labor Party, a Marxist group in New York, said, "Historians today have fairly well dismissed Jesus as being historical."

No evidence, just that statement. Well, I will show you that there is plenty of evidence outside of the Scriptures to show us that Jesus was real.

In fact, F. F. Bruce said, "Some writers may toy with the fancy of a 'Christ-myth,' but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is axiomatic [or obvious] for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the 'Christ-myth' theories."

So what is the evidence? The first one is Cornelius Tacitus, who lived 55 to 120 A. D. He was a Roman historian and he lived through the reigns of over a half dozen Roman emperors. In fact, he has been called one of the "greatest historians" of ancient Rome. Listen to what he said,

But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome.

Hence, to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities.

Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originate, but through the city of Rome also.

- Cornelius Tacitus, Annals XV, 44

What that document tells us is that what the Bible says is true. It speaks of Jesus and who put Him to death and whose reign this occurred in! I also think it speaks of the resurrection of Christ or as he put it, “pernicious superstition.”

And then there is Lucian of Samosata, who was a Greek satirist of the latter half of the second century. And he was not a fan of Christ or those who followed Jesus but listen to what he wrote about Jesus and you tell me if Jesus is just a fictitious person. Lucian wrote,

The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. . . . You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.

- Lucian, The Death of Peregrine, pp. 11-13

He did not like Jesus or His followers, but he was very accurate in the way he described Jesus, what happened to Him and the beliefs of His followers!

And just one more, and there are many more we can look at, but I think you get the idea. This is from Josephus ben Mattathias who lived from around 37 to 100 A. D. We know him as Flavius Josephus, a Roman historian. Flavius was his Roman name, Josephus his Jewish name.

Listen carefully to what he wrote in his Jewish Antiquities. He wrote,

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles.

He was the Christ, [Christ means Messiah] and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.

- Flavius Josephus, Antiquities, XVIII, 33

I don't know how much clearer that could be, historically speaking that is. In fact, it tells us what happened historically just as the Bible does about Jesus!

Howard Clark Kee summed it up like this.

The result of the examination of the sources outside the New Testament that bear directly or indirectly on our knowledge of Jesus is to confirm his historical existence, his unusual powers, the devotion of his followers, the continued existence of the movement after his death at the hands of the Roman governor in Jerusalem, and the penetration of Christianity into the upper strata of society in Rome itself by the later first century . . . In spite of this range of ways in which the tradition about Jesus has been transmitted, we have available a clear and remarkably consistent array of evidence about this figure whose life, teachings, and death have continued to have such a profound impact on the subsequent history of the human race.

- Howard Clark Kee, *What Can We Know about Jesus?*, p. 114

So look at what we have seen this morning. We have seen ***THE REASON FOR THE MESSIAH*** – He came to save us from our sins!

We have seen ***THE PROPHECIES RELATED TO THE MESSIAH*** – that the over 300 prophecies related to the first coming of Jesus and they are beyond any mathematical probability of happening in one man. God spoke these words and they have come to pass!

We have seen ***THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH*** – that the Scriptures show us that God has become flesh and He has dwelt among us!

And we have seen ***JESUS THE MESSIAH – A MAN OF HISTORY*** – when you look at the historical evidence, the writings about Jesus outside of the Bible, the only conclusion you can come to is that the Bible is right, Jesus did come, He walked this earth!

The conclusion is this, from Luke 2:8-14, **“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!’”**

You see, it all boils down to this. We are sinners separated from God because of our sins. And thus, to rectify that problem God sent forth a Savior to save us from our sins. That should bring great joy to our hearts and our lives.

If you have not received this wonderful gift of life that is found in Jesus, why not?

I have shared with you enough information this morning to show you that Jesus is real, and thus, it is not an information problem, it is a heart issue.

God is calling out to you, that is why you are hear this morning. It is not by accident.

All you have to do is repent of your sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life. God finished the work; you just need to receive it by faith!

If you have more questions, see me after service this morning or e-mail me or write me a letter or you can even call me. Because there is no other gift that keeps on giving and never grows old!

For the rest of us who have come to saving faith, I pray that you have been encouraged this morning. That you are rejoicing like the angels rejoiced at the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

May we not lose sight of all that He has done in our life, is doing in our life and will do in our life!

And I will close with this. It is an article from Newsweek magazine, many years ago, not like we see today and the writer is speaking of what Jesus has done, the impact He has had and is still having on the lives of people! He wrote,

By any secular standard, Jesus is also the dominant figure of Western culture. Like the millennium itself, much of what we now think of as Western ideas, innovations, and values finds its source or inspiration in the religion that worships God in His name. Art and science, the self and society, politics and economics, marriage and family, right and wrong, body and soul – all have been touched and often radically transformed by Christian influence.

- Kenneth L. Woodward, 2000 years of Jesus, Newsweek, March 29, 1999

May the Lord richly bless you and your family as we celebrate this wonderful birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!