

# STRAIGHTWAY

*And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].*

## CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Witness Outreach of Foundations Bible College  
P.O. Box 1166 · Dunn, North Carolina 28335

VOLUME 44

DECEMBER 2016

NUMBER 6

### **And the Virgin's Name Was Mary**

Dr. H. T. Spence  
(Reprint)

The revival of Romanism in our times initially can be attributed to the modernistic changes that took place in Vatican II in the early 1960s and to the medium of the Charismatic movement in the early 1970s. One of the side effects of Romanism's revival is the popularizing of their subtle, anti-biblical presentation of the virgin Mary. This Romanist picture of the virgin Mary is fast becoming a prominent belief among Protestants.

This issue of *Straightway* will deal with the traditions that have accumulated around Mary's personage in contradistinction to

her biblical role as the "mother of our Lord" (Luke 1:43).

#### **The Legends of Rome Concerning the Virgin Mary**

Traveling throughout Europe as well as Central and South America, one discovers the true powers of Rome and the overwhelming influence of Rome's Virgin Mary upon the people. Out of 433 Roman Catholic churches and chapels in the city of Rome today, 121 are dedicated to Mary while only 15 are dedicated to Christ. Already this season a number of priests have pressed for a prominent use of

*This edition includes two more articles*

**Christ's Birth in an Outhouse of a Kataluma  
The Star at Christ's First Coming . . . Second Coming**

the phrase “Mary Christmas.”

The following list includes a few titles bestowed upon Mary by the Romanists:

1. Most Holy Mary
2. Virgin, Mother of God
3. Mother of the Word Incarnate
4. Mother of Mercy
5. Queen of Heaven
6. Advocate of Sinners
7. Dispenser of Divine Grace
8. Queen of the Angels
9. Queen of the Apostles
10. Door of Heaven and Intercessor
11. Mary, Mother of America
12. Mother of the United Nations
13. Mother of the Atomic Age
14. Our Lady of Television

Throughout the centuries the Roman Catholic Church has declared several dogmas about Mary

based upon “tradition” and has believed each to be co-equal with the Scriptures. The “Dogma of the Perpetual Virginity” holds that Mary had no other children after the birth of Jesus. This dogma asserts that the virginity of Mary was never destroyed during or after the birth of Jesus, so that she remained a virgin till she died. The “Dogma of the Immaculate Conception” of Mary asserts that she was spared from all stain of original sin. The basis of this dogma is taken from another gospel of Matthew (a pseudo gospel different from the one in the New Testament) and another book of James (again, different from the one in the New Testament). These books were supposedly written in the second and third centuries. In these books the reputed parents Joakim and Anna supposedly conceived Mary during a time of embrace at the Golden Gate in Jerusalem.

In 1950 Pope Pius XII declared that Mary, rather than experiencing permanent death, bodily ascended into heaven as disciples gathered around her and Jesus and Gabriel met her in the air. In 1954 Pope Pius declared her the “Queen of Heaven.” Pope John Paul II has declared her to be the Co-Mediatrix with Christ and the Co-Redemptrix.

Mary has been given special veneration by the Romanist system. In their writings God is to be given *latría*, or full adoration; saints are to be given *dulia*, or veneration; but

## STRAIGHTWAY

O. Talmadge Spence, Founder

H. T. Spence, Editor  
President

Foundations Bible College

P. O. Box 1166  
Dunn, NC 28335-1166  
800-849-8761

[www.straightwayonline.org](http://www.straightwayonline.org)

---

Provided free of charge but  
contributions are welcome to assist  
with postage and printing.

Mary is to be given *hyperdulia*, being declared next to God in adoration. It is clearly evident in other writings of Rome that Mary is as great as Jesus Christ; certain writings even glorify her more than Christ. One of the most influential books written for Romanism is *The Glories of Mary* by Cardinal Alphonse de Liqouri, a celebrated, devotional writer of the Roman Catholic Church. This book is a clear declaration of Rome's view of Mary:

1. Mary is the Mediatrix of peace between sinners and God, sinners receiving pardon by Mary alone.
2. She is acknowledged as not only the Queen of Heaven but also the Queen of Hell, and Sovereign Mistress of the Devils.
3. She is called the Gate of Heaven because no man can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through Her.
4. All power is given to her in Heaven and on earth; God has placed the whole Church under the domination of Mary.
5. The book implies that mankind often more quickly obtains what it asks by calling on the name of Mary, than by invoking that of Jesus.
6. The following is stated in this work: "The whole Trinity, O Mary, gave thee a name . . . above every other name, that at

Thy name, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (p. 260).

The acclaimed power of Mary has been increasing over the centuries by constant propaganda of the Romanist Church to its people. She has become the greatest figure of history. Her Romanist myth is instilled early among children. On February 6th the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of Purification, in which each young girl is asked to lay a lily at the feet of the Virgin Mary's statue and say, "Mary I give you the lily of my heart; be thou its guardian forever." They also wear blue ribbons as a sign that they are of Mary and have dedicated themselves to the Virgin (who is the culmination of womanhood). The blue ribbon associates these girls with the color of the virgin Mary. Even the poet Dante spoke of Mary as one "who turns all of heaven blue."

A title that originated in the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) was *theotokos*; the term eventually came to indicate the "Mother of God." Amidst the controversy during those years of whether Jesus was very God of very God and very man of very man, the term *theotokos* was after some time placed with emphasis upon Mary herself. She was believed to be the Mother of our Lord's deity; because she brought Him into existence, she was therefore greater than He. The Roman Catholic Church believes

Christ “comes to us through Mary, and we must go to Him through her.”

### **The Virgin Mary of the Scriptures**

Although the only title given to Mary in Scripture is the “mother of Jesus,” Jesus never called Mary “mother”; He chose to use the term *woman* instead. Mary is mentioned five times in the Gospel of Matthew: three times in the context with Joseph, one time as “Mary and the child” as the wise men came to visit, and one time in Matthew 13: “Is not his mother called Mary?” In the Gospel of Mark she is mentioned twice (3:32 and 6:3). The Gospel of Luke mentions her twelve times by name, all in the first two chapters in the context of Christ’s birth. John’s Gospel, which is the last Gospel to have been written, acknowledges two appearances of Mary (at the marriage of Cana and at the Cross) but never by name. In Acts 1:14 Mary is mentioned as being in the upper room. After this acknowledgment she is never mentioned again in the New Testament.

Almost every mentioning of Mary in the New Testament is in a subordinate position. In John 2 Christ responded to His mother, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” Although His answer was neither harsh nor disrespectful, He maintained some reserve and distance in addressing her. Mark 3

states, “Thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.” Luke 11:27, 28 state, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.” Christ’s response to such praise of His mother was “Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” When Christ was in agony on the Cross He showed His filial respect by providing a home for her with John (“Behold, thy mother”). There was no special honor given to her, but simple, earthly duty.

It is a tragedy that the Roman Catholic Church symbolizes John at the Cross as humanity and Mary as the mother of humanity, the second Eve. It is clearly evident in the Gospels that when the lame, blind, and deaf wanted healing, they always asked Jesus, never His mother. The dying thief requested forgiveness of Jesus, not of His mother who was at the foot of the Cross. After the resurrection, as far as the Bible is concerned, Jesus never appeared to His mother during those forty days; there were other Marys to which He did appear during those days, but His mother is never mentioned. The final view of Mary in the Bible is in Acts 1 when she is in the upper room; the disciples are not praying to her, but to God.

The biblicist must be strong against the deification of such a mortal. By the time of Revelation 5, when John is looking throughout heaven for one who is “worthy” to

open the book found in the hand of God the Father, Mary is there, Paul is there, Peter is there, and a multitude of others are there. However, John wept much because no one was found worthy to take the book sealed with seven seals. Yes, not even Mary was worthy. Nonetheless, within the Throne there was One Who was worthy: it was the Lamb, Christ Jesus Himself! This scene in the heaven of heavens sealed the testimony once and for all who was truly the One of Worth in Heaven!

### **“Hail, Thou That Art Highly Favoured”**

Amidst our strong stand against the Roman Catholic Church’s presentation of an unbiblical view of the Virgin Mary, we as true Christians must render to her the appropriate honor which the Scriptures do give her. “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28); “And she [Elisabeth] spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (1:42); and, “For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed” (1:48).

The phrase “highly favoured” in Luke 1:28 has been used by Romanists to support their doctrine which speaks of Mary as being “full of Grace.” This phrase in the Greek

is *charitoo*, meaning endowed with grace (*charis*). Although endowed with grace, Mary is not the fountain of grace that flows to humanity. To the contrary, the Greek word is a perfect, passive participle, revealing that Mary was given grace by God. The passive voice proclaims Mary is only the recipient of grace, not its origin. The perfect tense informs us that not only was there a beginning to her receiving this grace in her heart, but also it had continued until the time the angel spoke to her.

Mary must be viewed with deep respect. Christians should acknowledge her unique character not only for her generation but also for any generation. Let us note these characteristics.

(1) She was a *chaste* girl. Often occupied by licentious Roman soldiers, Nazareth at that time was known for its immorality. Nathanael stated in John 1:46, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Even in our times fornication has become a master sin; the pure are in the minority. It is rare to find a young lady who does not have loose behavior before and even after marriage. Mary is truly an example of purity for us all.

(2) She was a *submissive* girl. After the most unusual announcement from the angel, Mary simply responded, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). Unlike Moses

she did not respond "I cannot." She did not bring up any inadequacies of training or experience. She did not even bring up the potential loss of Joseph as her husband. The Lord was truly first in her life!

(3) The Scripture *saturated* her soul. It is evident from her words beginning in Luke 1:46 that she was thoroughly acquainted with the Old Testament. She quotes from I Samuel, Psalms, Isaiah, Micah, and Exodus. She concluded with the words, "As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever" (verse 55). God could have given immediate inspiration for these passages, but it is more probable that the Holy Spirit inspired her heart with words she had meditated upon since the annunciation.

(4) She was a *keeper of secrets*. We read of this in Luke 2:19 and 51. We do not read of her bragging or boasting about her appointment in the plan of God. People tend to talk, gossip, and brag. But Mary possessed rare grace which enabled her to control her tongue.

(5) She was a *sufferer for righteousness' sake*. Her reputation was at stake; questions of wondering, no doubt, entered the minds of Joseph, her parents, brethren, and even later, the Jews. Perhaps this is part of what Simeon meant in Luke 2:35, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." In John 8:41, the leaders cried, "We be not born

of fornication." Was the rumor still circulating when Jesus was in His prime ministry? Only eternity can reveal what she went through in suffering for righteousness' sake.

(6) She *sacrificed* her Son. Mary was there at the Cross the day the people crucified her Son. We read of no cry in His defense; she was willing to let Him die. What a great example to other mothers: to be willing to sacrifice their children to God and His will! Her sacrifice reminds us of the story that took place at the turn of the twentieth century when three young men went to the mission field and established the Sudan Interior Mission. After two of the men died of disease in inland Africa, Roland Bingham, the surviving founder, brought the remains of one of the young men home. When Roland gave the remains to the mother, she responded, "Well, Mr. Bingham, I would rather have had Walter go out to the Sudan and die there, all alone, than have him home today disobeying his Lord." That was Mary's heart for her Son.

## Conclusion

Mary was a sinner and she needed a Saviour! The question may be asked if she knew who her child really was. The answer may be found in three passages of Scripture. Luke 1:31 states, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS ['Jehovah is salvation']";

Luke 1:32 states, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David"; Luke 1:35 states, "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Mary acknowledged in Luke 1:47, that God was her Saviour. She

gloried more in that happiness which she had in common with all believers than in being Jesus' mother.

Mary was chosen by God as a vessel to be used. But her Son obscures her in praise. Let us find ourselves so yielded to the Spirit of God that we will be used, yet with all the glory and honor being rendered to our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

§

## **THE RISE AND FALL OF HISTORIC CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM**

**BY DR. H. T. SPENCE**

God has profoundly used the Christian Fundamentalist Movement for nearly 150 years as "Valiant for the Truth" in the end-time battle against the final apostasy of the Church on earth. This God-ordained movement has been the war horse that carried God's remnant into battle; it has been the instrument in God's hand to confront the apostasy of the 19th and 20th centuries; it has been the soldier that stood without apology for the infallibility of the Bible; and it has been the voice for Truth that echoed around the world against the encroachment of Neo-Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and ecumenicity.

In recent decades, however, we have been witnessing the decline of Christian Fundamentalism, its flirtatious manner with the Neo-Evangelicals, and now its leadership's hope to be assimilated into the vortex of the Neo crowd. Its fall has become evident in its music, which has crossed over into the contemporary; it has boldly made the changes in its colleges and universities to accommodate its acceptability by the secular world; and it is now redefining the Scripture and its interpretation in order to permit these changes.

What has brought this about? What are the symptoms of this movement's demise? This book gives candidly the journey of the movement's rise and fall and what will be its future.

**\$13.95 + \$5.00 s&h**

1-800-849-8761  
[www.FOUNDATIONS.EDU](http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.EDU)

**AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH**  
NC residents, please add sales tax to your order total.



# Christ's Birth in an Outhouse of a *Kataluma*

Dr. H. T. Spence  
(Reprint)

Luke 2:7 states, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Ancient tradition places the birthplace of our Lord in a cave, for caves were used as stables in most countries with rocky terrain. The Greek word for *inn* is *kataluma*, denoting the simplest of inns. It is similar to a Syrian *khan*—a refuge from thieves, a shelter from the heat and dust, a place where a man and his beasts may lodge, where a trader may sell his wares, and a pilgrim may slake his thirst. However, in such inns the visitor had to do everything for himself.

At the time of this momentous event, the census for the taxation, people had filled the little town of Bethlehem occupying even the most inexpensive of inns. Thus a cave, a stable, an outhouse where waste was disposed of became the divinely appointed place for the Christ Child to be born on earth.

The Holy Spirit led the physician Luke to use this word *kataluma*, a lowly place that aptly depicts the humble life and death of Christ. The Gospel is heavily freighted with the truth of this word. Why did God pick a *kataluma*-type birth for His Son? If one reads the Bible with a prayerful heart, he will see that God

has been working in the *kataluma* fashion since the foundation of the world.

## ***Kataluma* Types in the Old Testament**

In Genesis 3:15, God could have immediately destroyed the Devil after the fall of man. Instead, He chose the plain, ordinary seed of the woman, the weaker of the vessels, to take care of the sin problem as well as the Devil.

God could have supernaturally made a luxurious cruise liner to carry Noah, but He chose for Noah to build the ark with no fancy fringes on it. It certainly was a *kataluma* boat.

God could have created a place of giant redwoods or a place equivalent to Cyprus Gardens in Florida in order to call Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Instead, God used a *kataluma* calling, a burning bush on the backside of the wilderness.

God could have chosen an animal with a higher intelligence like a monkey to speak to Balaam, the apostate prophet, when he was to curse Israel. Instead, He chose a *kataluma* animal, an ass.

God could have supernaturally made a machine gun ahead in history as David's weapon to kill Goliath. Instead, God provided *kataluma*



weapons, a slingshot and a smooth stone, to bring down the giant.

When Elijah announced a severe drought and famine, God could have used a variety of ways to provide for the prophet food and a hiding place from King Ahab. But God chose a *kataluma*-type stream of water for Elijah as well as unclean grocery boys, ravens, to feed the prophet.

God has used broken pitchers and trumpets to kill an army, and a muddy river to cure a leader from leprosy. Yes, God has used a multitude of things that men would view as nothing, but in His hand and plan they became the ideal means for the moment.

### **The Coming of Messiah**

What about the Messiah? How would he come? Isaiah 53:1 declared, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.” It seemed God bypassed the great palaces of the leaders in Rome and the luxurious homes of the rich. He bypassed it all and chose for His precious Son to be born in the stables of a *kataluma*. The Lord chose Mary, a young girl in her mid-teens, to be the mother of Christ rather than one of the more mature, seasoned women such as Elizabeth or Anna the prophetess. “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28).

“For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden” (1:48); “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree” (1:52).

According to Leviticus 12, the sacrifice of dedication for a child was to be a lamb; but if the family was too poor, two turtledoves or pigeons were acceptable. Mary and Joseph brought the latter (Luke 2:24), a *kataluma* sacrifice. Over his many years, the priest Simeon must have seen thousands of parents coming in with their babies and accompanied by a sacrificial lamb. But when Simeon saw this child, when he took him up in his arms, he declared, “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people” (2:30, 31). The Holy Spirit revealed to this priest, in spite of their *kataluma* sacrifice, that this child was the Messiah.

When Jesus grew up to manhood He still lived that *kataluma* life. “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20).

When the hour came for His sacrificial death He had a *kataluma* death. The Jewish means of execution was stoning; the Roman way was beheading. Yet, Christ was given the barbarous death of crucifixion on a cross. Heaven was shut up to Him because He was made sin for us. Hell was shut up to Him as well as the

earth. His friends forsook Him. The *kataluma*-type baby was born to die a *kataluma*-type death.

### **The Message of the Messiah**

In reading the four Gospel writers and even the letters of the apostles, it is evident that Christ's message was no different.

In the Book of John, when Christ started out in His ministry, the people were lauding, "My, He has gracious words." But by John 6, when Christ stated, "I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," the same ones were then murmuring against Him, including many of His followers. "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, this is an hard saying: who can hear it?" (John 6:60).

Christ did not come preaching the gospel according to Dale Carnegie on "How to win friends and influence people." But He came preaching repentance, being born again, the call to sin no more!

To the world, Christ is a *kataluma* Saviour and His message is of the same view. He is as the Tabernacle of the Old Testament: from within the Tabernacle one could look up at its covering and see goat's hair and ram's skins dyed red; however, from without one only saw lowly badger skins. To the world this is what Christ and His message are. "For

the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). The prophet Isaiah declared,

*He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not* (Isa. 53:2, 3).

The contemporary church today is trying to change our Lord, make Him a superstar, a hippy, a revolutionist, or a leader against the establishment. He is viewed as a modern ecumenicist, enjoying the contemporary sounds of rock music integrated with the spiritual vocabulary. He is found in contemporary artwork on shirts, pants, posters, etc. He is drawn into contemporary slogans such as "Me and Jesus have got a good thing going," "Get high on Jesus," and "Honk if you know Jesus." However, His *kataluma* message is "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17, 18). The contemporary church talks much about love and peace, but the *kataluma* Saviour stated, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother,

and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34–36).

The Christ of the modern-day church is "one of the boys" and has been set forth to make the world feel at home without any conviction or need of repentance. There is no stigma or persecution identified with the contemporary Christianity of our times. In contrast, the kataluma Saviour declares,

*The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household* (Matt. 10:24, 25).

Christ made it clear in John 17:14, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Our Lord also boldly declared, "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38). The Charismatics with their emphasis upon prosperity and divine health have made Christ's kingdom an earthly kingdom of this world. Christ made it clear even to Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36); He even declared to his disciples in Acts 1:6–8 that He had not come the first time to restore the kingdom to Israel.

The Scriptures make it clear that we must accept the Christ of

Scriptures, the despised and rejected One, the One Who will be hated by this world. And if the Church is worldly, then the Church will hate Him too. We are not called upon to change the message of the Bible or the truth of the Saviour presented therein. We must accept Him the way He is presented or reject Him fully. There is no middle ground.

### **From the *Kataluma* to the *Pandocheion***

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

In Luke 10:30–37 Christ gave the story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, who "fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead." This is a type of our own life. This world has tried to destroy us, stripping us of any character, wounding our conscience and our living, and leaving us for dead. It is amazing how the religious movements have tried to help the natural-man failures but have totally ignored the spiritual needs of the people. Priests and Levites are passing wounded lives each day but are never able to give them what they need.

Jesus Christ is to be viewed as this good Samaritan, the half-breed, one who is hated by the Jews; it is He that came by us one day. Thank God,

He came by “where he [the man] was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.” Our beloved, despised, rejected Saviour did not only have compassion on him, but He also “went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast.” It is through His great merits at Calvary that He is able to come to us; He is able to bind up all the wounds from our life of sin, pouring in the oil of the Holy Spirit and wine of sanctification to bring about a full restoration of life unto Him. Oh, how the providences of God have been supporting and transporting us along.

Finally, He took us to the “inn,” a *pandocheion*, a palatial hotel, certainly the opposite of the *kataluma*. Because of His poverty for us, we will be the spiritually rich ones when His redemption is fully wrought in us.

It is our prayer that during this Christmas season God will richly bless your life and family. Let us ever be conscious of the fact that He was born to die for our sins. He was born in the outhouse stables of a *Kataluma* in order to take us to the palatial *Pandocheion*. It truly must be said, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103:10).



## **Featured Sermon Set**

**SERMONS FROM THE FOUNDATIONS PULPIT  
FOUNDATIONS BIBLE COLLEGIATE CHURCH**

**DR. H. T. SPENCE, PASTOR**

*December 2015*

*The Three Hymns of Luke at Christmas*

*Two Hearts Before God at Christmas*

*The Benedictus - 1:67-68*

*The Benedictus - 1:69-70*

*The Benedictus - 1:1-72*

*The Benedictus - To Be Saved from Our Enemies*

*The Benedictus - To Serve God Without Fear*

---

7-Sermon Set (Audio CD): \$18.00 / \$23.00 ppd  
Foundations Ministries · P. O. Box 1166 · Dunn, NC 28335

800-849-8761 · [wwwFOUNDATIONS.edu](http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.edu)

\*NC residents, please add sales tax to your order total.

# **The Star at Christ's First Coming, The Star at Christ's Second Coming**

Dr. H. T. Spence  
(Reprint)

The journey of the wise men to Bethlehem marks one of the precious events surrounding the historical story of the birth of Christ. Matthew 2:1 declares, "Behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." Who these wise men were and what they believed have been the conjecture of various writers over the past two millennia. Although difficult to accurately resolve, some information about these men and the star that guided them is more reliable than other.

## **Background to the Magi**

Herodotus, the Father of History, tells us that the magi were originally a tribe of the Medes who followed to some extent Zoroastrianism and in principle believed in a single God, rejecting polytheism and idolatry. Apart from their living in the East, very little is given about their nativity.

There may be a prophetic link to these magi, though we will not declare it to be infallible interpretation. The historical beginnings of the magi may have originated in the days of Abraham and his father Terah, who lived in Ur of the Chaldees.

It is evident that when God called Abraham to leave Ur, his father Terah left with him journeying to Haran or Padan-Aram. They both became monotheists believing in the true and living God. Genesis 11 records that Terah died after several years in Haran. After the death of his father, Abraham went on into the land God had promised him. There is biblical evidence to declare that his surviving brother Nahor, who had initially stayed in Ur, eventually made the trip himself to Haran, a part of Mesopotamia. No doubt it was his hope to meet his father and brother there. While in Haran, Nahor had a family, which included Laban and Rebekah. Later, when Abraham sent his servant to Haran to get a wife for his son Isaac (Gen. 24), it was obvious that Rebekah and her family believed in the true and living God and in Jehovah. Later, when Jacob traveled back to Haran (Gen. 29), Laban had fathered Leah and Rachel. Although they too believed in the God of their fathers, some idolatry had now been mixed into their monotheism (Gen. 31).

A number of years later, Balaam, from that same area, is recorded to have also believed in the true and living God, the God of Israel, Jehovah (Num. 22-24). Among

several prophecies he gave concerning Israel, two unique ones include prophecies of a coming king. Numbers 23:21 records,

*He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.*

Numbers 24:17 also records,

*I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.*

Such prophecies as these may have been part of a knowledge that was handed down from generation to generation in Mesopotamia among those who called themselves magi.

### **Coming to Jerusalem**

Acts 10:35 states, “But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” What little light these particular magi had they followed. They arrived later in Bethlehem, some time after the Jewish shepherds. Matthew 2:11 reveals that they came to a house (Gr. *oikos*), perhaps several months after the Christ child was born. We are introduced to them in Jerusalem when they say, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” It is clear with them that this one born was not a *king*; they knew this was to be *the King* promised. In 2:2b

they declare, “we have seen his star.” The Greek word here for “seen” is *eiden*, which suggests a full insight or discernment into the meaning of the star. They may have lost sight of this star temporarily (Matt. 2:9, 10) but then picked up the sight of it again. The star was simply a guide for them.

### **What Was This Star?**

There are several possibilities as to this star and its unusual luminary powers. Some have speculated that it was a meteor or “shooting star,” not really a star but small bits of stone or iron rushing into the earth’s atmosphere with such high speed that, heated by friction, it shone brightly but briefly. Some have speculated that it was a comet that, according to the Chinese and others in the Far East, was viewed from February to April in A.U. 750, which would be around that time period.

What seems to be most popular is the theory that the famous astronomer Johann Kepler gave. He believed that God used nature in providence to bring this star into existence. Kepler observed in the years 1603 and 1604 that there was a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, which became more luminous with the addition of Mars in March 1604. But in October of 1604, he observed near the planets of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars, a new fixed star of uncommon brilliance. In calculating when such a conjunction of planets could have previously occurred, he

concluded that it took place in A.U. 747 or 748 in the constellation Pisces. It is also interesting to note that the learned Jewish Rabbi Abarbanel, in his commentary on Daniel (50 years before Kepler), stated that such a conjunction took place three years before the birth of Moses and reappeared near or at the time that Kepler declared as the birth of Messiah.

Other real possibilities include the appearance of a nova in the season of Christ's birth. A nova is an old star that suddenly becomes thousands of times brighter only to later gradually fade to its original intensity. It is equally possible that God simply created a new star for this particular event.

Whatever God used for this special, natural revelation, it is clear that He used what was available, which was nature, to enable the magi to find His Son. To the Jewish shepherds God sent revelation through an angel; to the Gentile magi God used the natural revelation of a star. Both guided searching souls to the Messiah's first coming.

### **The Purpose of Stars**

Genesis 1:14, 15 reveals that the stars were made on the fourth day and gives with clarity the purpose of their existence. These are heavenly bodies that become the ones to bear light in themselves. In 1:14 the "lights" are luminaries. There are five reasons for their purpose in creation:

(1) for dividing day from night, (2) for signs, (3) for seasons, (4) for days, and (5) for years. The second reason, "for signs," is one that must be viewed with greater detail. Psalms 8 and 19 point out that the stars (the heavens) were made to declare the glory of God; they also are for signs by which men get their bearings in travel in the day or night. Matthew 2:2 and Luke 21:25 indicate that they will be used for future events. Matthew 16:2, 3 notes that the stars are signs of the weather, and in Joel 2:30 and Matthew 24:29 they are used in divine judgment.

Jeremiah 10:2 warns us, however: "Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them." This bespeaks the ancient practice of astrology. We are to be careful not to gauge our life by the stars.

The stars are also used in Scripture as identification of angelic hosts, of pastors of churches, and of Abraham's seed (as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the sea). Daniel would speak of them as saints who would be wise.

We have already observed in Numbers 24:17, "a star out of Jacob." In Revelation 22:16 we read the words of Christ Himself, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright



and morning star.” Revelation 2:27, 28 also states, “And he shall rule them [the overcomers of verse 26] with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.” Second Peter 1:19 states,

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*

### **The Morning Star**

In ancient times there were two methods by which the progress of the year could be recorded through observations of the heavens. The first method concerned the place and position of the sun in relationship to the seasons. The change of seasons could be predicted by the change in the sun’s place of rising or of setting. The second method concerned an observation of the stars. Hebrew shepherds, such as Jacob, Moses, David, and Amos, kept watch over their flocks by night. They saw the silent procession of the stars through the hours of darkness, and by their movement they knew the progress of the night. They could notice what stars were rising in the east, what stars were culminating in the south, what stars were setting in the west, and how northern stars would be turning like a dial, always visible. As the eastern horizon began to brighten towards the dawn, they especially noted the last stars to rise

and shine before being eclipsed by the sun’s rays.

These last stars to arise were called “morning stars” or “the heralds of the sun.” Day by day these morning stars would appear earlier and earlier allowing them to be observed longer before dawn. Eventually other stars would take the place of one group of morning stars as the year advanced. In Job 38:7, God asks His servant Job, “[Where wast thou] when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” Job 3:9 states, “Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day.” One star would appear to herald the beginning of spring, another of winter, another a time to plow, another a time to sow, another a time of rains, successive morning stars as they appeared.

### **The Seasons of the Times**

There is a trilogy of words in Scripture involving the term *day*. The first, *daysman*, has the understanding of an umpire, or one to argue, to decide, or to convince. In the English the term declares a mediator for the trial of another. In Job 9:33 we read of Job’s concern that there was not a daysman between him and God.

There is also the beautiful word *dayspring*, found in Job 38:12, where God declared, “Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days;

and caused the dayspring to know his place?” Zacharias used the word in Luke 1:78: “through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.” *Dayspring* is a precious term for the dawning of the day. The “place” of the dayspring is the particular point of the horizon at which the sun comes up on any given day. This location slowly changes day by day through the year, moving northward from midwinter till midsummer, and back again southward from midsummer to midwinter. However, Zacharias’ words refer to an individual, for he goes on to state, “To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” This truly is speaking of the Advent of Messiah. The sunrise was a favorite subject with the prophets. We can see this principle in Isaiah 60:1-3, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, . . . Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” Also in Malachi 4:2 the prophet wrote, “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.”

### **The Day Star**

It is with this word *day star* (day-star), however, that we complete our trilogy. We notice again that 2 Peter 1:19 states,

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye*

*take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*

This “more sure word of prophecy” is the very Word of God. Peter strongly exhorts us to “take heed.” This means we are to search it, study it, subject our conscience to it, and order our manner of living by it. It is to be the light that continues (in the present tense) to shine in a dark place. This “dark place” designates a place where there is no light, where it tends to be dirty and filthy. The word in the Greek (mentioned only here in the New Testament) also has the meaning of being “dry, parched, squalid, desert-like.” The Word of God has continued to shine forth its powerful truth through all the ages of history, shining through the filth, the dirt, and the dry, parched desert of human history. There is a promise here that it will continue “until the day dawns,” until the Eternal day finally dawns that will dispel all darkness. The apostle Paul speaks of the “day of Christ” that is at hand (2 Thessalonians 2:3); this is not the Day of the Lord, but the Day of Christ, the Rapture. Peter also speaks of the “day star” arising in the heart, which is the daystar just before the day breaks.

Revelation 2:28 speaks of the “morning star.” John Wycliffe was called the “morning star of the Reformation”; the dawning of the great Reformation is often said to have commenced with him.

Revelation 22:16 declares that Christ himself is “the bright and morning star.” Therefore, in Revelation chapter two He promises to give Himself to him that overcometh. The morning star has even been the symbol for brightness and beauty; as the harbinger of the day, it is the bearer of light, life, and joy.

What will be this “day star” just before the rapture? Will it be the witness of the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, moments before the rapture, indicating that such a miracle is taking place? We read in Hebrews 11:5, that “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Is this a pattern in Scripture that a few moments before that great event, faith will lay hold of such a translation? As faith laid hold at the new birth, as faith laid hold in various workings of grace in the human heart, as faith laid hold of the promises of God for circumstances and situations of life, so at that moment of translation we will lay hold of it by faith. For the Christian, there is saving faith, living faith, dying faith, and, yes, even translation faith.

### **Conclusion**

In these days when global, Christian apostasy has taken over the public Christian testimony, a remnant of people are hearing the words of

Christ with increased anticipation, “Surely I come quickly” (Rev. 22:20). And their growing response of heart is, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” For “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). It is to this finality and fulfillment of our salvation found in Christ’s coming for His saints that we are looking.

More and more, conservative Christianity is discarding the view of the Rapture and simply believing in the open coming of Christ back to the earth. When such a belief becomes a part of the fabric of the theological system, it will profoundly affect one’s view about the Christian apostasy and the concept of the end time. It is inevitable that with an absence of the consistent preaching of Christ’s imminent coming, the burden of the Christian apostasy will no longer be an urgent cry from the pulpits. The end time will also have no meaning. When the imminency of Christ’s coming is ignored, there will be nothing to keep the heart alert to fulfill Christ’s command to constantly “watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt. 24:42). There are enough detailed prophecies concerning the open advent coming of Christ (Rev. 19) that once the Tribulation Period commences (especially Daniel’s Last Week), one can know to the very day when Christ’s open return will come. But of the Rapture we know

not the day nor hour. There is a growing segment in Christianity that believes God's saints will go through the Tribulation Period, and there is a growing segment that denounces such a period altogether. Church history bears record that the oldest belief of the coming of Christ is a rapture view, though it was discarded during the fourth century in the light of Constantine's reign and later with Augustine's writings. So many incorrectly want to make the Rapture a "Dispensational" teaching. Sometimes a truth is discarded in history because of the falling away of a generation; nevertheless, providence later revives it at a needed, appointed time.

Only a few knew of Christ's first coming and "went" to see Him; only a few will know Him at His second coming and "go" to see Him in the clouds. May we be ever following the Scriptures, day by day, anticipating His day to dawn and the "day star" to arise in our hearts. May we be wise men anticipating the star of His second coming. S

*"To give light to them  
that sit in darkness and in  
the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet  
into the way of peace."*

## **On Behalf of the Foundations Ministries**

**We Want to Wish You and  
Your Family**

**A Blessed Christmas**

**And a Christ-centered  
New Year.**



*Come, Thou long expected Jesus,  
Born to set Thy people free.  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's Strength and Consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.*

*Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever.  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.*

(Charles Wesley, 1707–1788)