

## RESCUE MISSION

I have to confess Christmas is a bit of a mixed bag for me: the commercial invasion into our homes and lives, mixed with the most momentous occasion in history – the birth of Jesus. The

latter announces the most incredible rescue mission every launched. Why?

Well in Matthew 1:18-25 the birth of Jesus was announced as well as the purpose of His coming. I have borrowed John MacArthur's alliterated outline to share with you the importance of this occasion.



Eveleen Buckton (1872-1962)  
Woodcut Nativity Scene c1930

### **PRAISE** the Lord for:

- ★ The interest and response from churches wanting to use our Christmas edition of Challenge
- ★ His care, protection and provision for our global reps and their families around the world throughout 2018 (Ananda & Grace Pula **Malawi**, Andrew & Karen Trezona **USA**, Cobus & Christa Blitz **South Africa + World Hope Prison Ministry**, Jabulani & Zondiwe Mudenda **Zimbabwe**, Andrew & Mandy Halloway **UK**)
- ★ The ongoing interest plus growth and development of our ministry both in Australia and around the world
- ★ The ongoing flow of commitments coming into our office
- ★ The provision of Bibles from Bible Society for distribution to all first time commitments received via the paper into our office
- ★ For a fruitful trip to South Africa for Carl and Cobus (South Africa Director) as they travelled far and wide to promote and develop the African edition of Challenge

① **Jesus was conceived.** Right from the beginning Jesus Christ was immersed in the miraculous. This birth was announced well in advance – in fact 700 years prior to it happening in Isaiah 7v14. Jesus was to be born of a virgin. Why? If He was born of human means, He would have been no different to you and me. He would have been born in sin. Thus God solved that problem by having Mary miraculously conceive Jesus by the Holy Spirit v18, thus maintaining His sinlessness.

Note, however, that being used of God can be costly. Mary had to withstand the cloud of being seen as having been unfaithful to Joseph. Also, Joseph no doubt felt that he had lost the one he loved.

② You can also see how **Jesus' birth was confronted.** Joseph felt that he had no option but to quietly put Mary away. His response highlights his gracious spirit and godly character.

Confronting the birth of Jesus Christ is nothing new. Literal scholars, denominations and religious leaders have been doing it for years. *Continued over*

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Satan obviously sees it as a vital part of his strategy, because to deny the virgin birth is to deny the gospel – to render it ineffective. Joseph and Mary accepted the announcement by faith, no questioning God, but simply trusting God. Therefore, those who endeavour to undermine this vital truth would do well to do likewise.

③ **Jesus birth is clarified.** Mary was to have a son; His name was to be Jesus. A name which introduced His purpose in being sent of His heavenly Father – Jesus was to be the Saviour. Saviour from what? He was to save His people from their sins. The gospel story has a number of paradoxes. Jesus was born to die. In His death and miraculous resurrection many would live; that is brought back from spiritual deadness, separation from God to being made alive in Christ, and brought back into union with God.

**PRAYER** needed for:

- ★ The Christmas edition as it is used in all sorts of ways such as Carol services etc
- ★ Our Military edition of the paper. This edition goes into 12 African countries. Pray for its continued growth and fruitfulness and a good bank of military stories for use in the paper
- ★ The ongoing funding for the running of the Perth office, for personal support, for the supply of the Challenge paper globally and for project funding in these countries
- ★ God's leading and direction for the Challenge Board as they prayerfully consider the vision for 2019
- ★ The Challenge team as we take a couple of weeks off to refresh and regroup for 2019.
- ★ The Trezona family as they head home to Australia for a couple of weeks to catch up with family and friends. Pray they may be able to relax and refresh before returning to the USA

④ **Jesus Christ's virgin birth was connected.** His coming was the fulfilment of many Old Testament prophecies going right back to Genesis 3v15. Why is the connection so important? Well it underlines that the Word of God is a sure Word. It is a Word that can be trusted, relied upon and we can have confidence in, because when God says it will happen it will happen according to His time schedule. This was brought home to me recently with a weather forecast for Perth. Even with all the high-tech equipment, the weather bureau got it hopelessly wrong. However, the Word of God is a sure Word, free of all the vagaries of human prediction, and absolutely accurate.

⑤ Finally **the marriage of Joseph and Mary is consummated**, but not before the arrival of the Saviour. Joseph and Mary picture for us obedience to God regardless of how things look from a human perspective. That obedience involved sacrifice, for Joseph did not know his wife until Jesus was born.

Friends may you truly know the message of Christmas that Jesus came to set the captives free – to set us free from the bondage of sin and death. Jesus came because only He could do that. He did for us what we could never do for ourselves.

{ CARL CARMODY }  
EDITOR CHALLENGE



**MY RESPONSE**

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