

It is Christmas Eve in 160 countries. Even now, in this increasingly humanistic 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are still a great many people who celebrate tomorrow as Jesus' birthday. There are special services and memorials to this miraculous event. So, here is what I know about that. 1) December 25<sup>th</sup> is not Jesus' actual birthday. None know for sure but historical evidence leads far away from December. 2) Jesus never asked for or established a special memorial or event concerning His birth (unlike His Death).

However, the IDEA of remembering Jesus' birth, and really attaching a celebratory tone, if you are willing to do so at random times and all throughout the year: I can get behind that. The angels rejoiced at Jesus' birth and said, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men*" **Luke 2:14**. But if we do that, we need to understand something: the miraculous birth of Jesus is just a piece of a powerful picture. In fact, even when we look at the Gospel writers, as they begin their stories about Jesus, the birth is not the centerpiece, it is a proof piece, a fact of action by God that serves in the narrative to drive home to us all some greater, more impactful truths.

*To set the stage for this, let's look at a brief timeline of human life – starting with the CROSS, then the BIRTH, then the beginning of man (ADAM), the Hebrews (ABRAHAM), the Old Law (MOSES), up to Jesus. Then the MINISTRY and ASCENSION after death and eventual RETURN. Let's see how the Gospel origin stories of Jesus tie together these greater elements of human existence to build our faith.*

**Matthew Begins ....** With the Birth Story (**1:18-25**) But Matthew's greater purpose is to show:

The Prophecies of Jesus – and His connection to the Jewish History

**1:1-2 – Abraham / Prophecy: 1:23; 2:6; 2:15; 2:18**

His birth is powerful proof that God has built toward something special for ages!

**Mark Begins...** with the Ministry of Jesus (**1:1-11**) Mark doesn't mention the birth.

Mark is adding a layer to Jesus story – the Kingdom emphasis and proofs of Jesus Ministry!

**1:14-15 – the Kingdom! / 1:21-25, 29-31, 40-41 – Miracles!**

His birth is important, but so is the beginning of His ministry, message/miracles!

**Luke Begins...** with the Birth story in great depth (**1:13, 26-31, 2:6-7**). An in depth story, but why?

The Glories of Jesus to come! – Luke uses the prophetic utterance of that time to announce Jesus

**1:31-33; 1:67-79; 2:28-32 – The Glory of His Rule, His Gifts for men – established later.**

His birth is important, but it only started what would be His Glorious rule!

**John Begins...** in Eternity before Mankind! (**1:1-5, 14-18**) – His goes back to before beginnings.

The Deity of Jesus is John's work! – The birth is not a proof of that. But Jesus as Creator is!

**1:29-34 – "This is the Son of God" John 20:30-31 – "The Christ, the Son of God"**

His birth is important, but His Deity is Crucial, the fact above all facts.

Here's why I share this today: it is great to believe in Jesus' existence and believe in his virgin birth, and talk about Him and identify with Him. But stories like the birth, or any other fact or idea of Jesus we cling to... is only as valuable as WHAT IT IS DESIGNED TO PROVE. All four Gospels work together to prove THESE 4 THINGS about Jesus. So that (**Matthew 28:18-20**) when we get here, we're all in! He is not just a twice a year celebration, with occasional stints of worship on Sunday mornings and someone to turn to when we are sick... He is ALL AUTHORITY, ALL THINGS, ALWAYS!

Want to see how this all came together: let's look at ONE MORE BEGINNING – the Beginning of the Church in Acts 2! Peter's sermon (**2:22-36** – guess what elements it includes?! Not the birth, though it is not unimportant, but the Big Proofs – PROPHECY, MINISTRY, GLORY, DEITY!!!

And... **Acts 2:36-38,42** – The people didn't make some casual twice a year celebration or go to church a few times... THEY CHANGED THEIR LIVES. They obeyed IMMEDIATELY and LIVED FOR HIM.