



November 28, 2022

A New Insight into Jesus' Birth

We do not read the Bible like those who wrote it. For the past two hundred years, many have been reading the Bible literally. But that is not how the Hebrews wrote the scriptures. The first birth story was written by Mathew fifteen years after Mark wrote. Mark wrote after the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed in 70 C.E. When Mark wrote in 72 C.E, plus or minus a year, there is nothing about Jesus' birth. The Apostle Paul wrote in the late 40's and 50's, and there is only one reference where Paul writes that he was born of a woman. (Gal. 4:). Why did Matthew write a birth story 40 years later and Luke write another birth story fifteen years later than Mathew, which is completely different than Mathews?

During this period of time, there was a view of reality called Docetism. Docetism claimed the only real is the spiritual world. That means the physical world was not real.

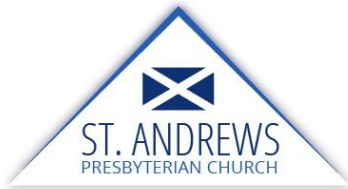
In the Gospel of Matthew, the angel said to Joseph that he was not to fear to take Mary as his wife, for that which is conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit. This birth story brings the Spiritual world into the physical world. It's is a counter story to the Docetic view of what is real. In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her not to be afraid, for she will conceive and bear a son and you will call him Jesus. Mary is still confused because she doesn't have a husband. Gabriel tells her the Holy Spirit will over shadow her and that her son will be called Holy. This story not only counters Docetism, but also answers the question as to when Jesus became divine.

The Gospel of Mark says the divinity of Jesus happened when Jesus was baptized. Mathew and Luke says it happened when Jesus was born. John says it happened before Jesus was born. "In the beginning was the Word and the word was with God and the word was God.." (John 1:1) Thus, we have three different views as to when Jesus was considered to become divine. The Christmas birth story is one of these views.

Thus the birth story which we celebrate is a story which combines the Matthew and Luke version into a literal retelling of the story, as though it actually happened this way. But the writers of Matthew and Luke never intended to

have the story read in a factual historical way. Both Gospels are a midrash from the Old Testament. Midrash is for example, where the writer of Matthew takes from the O.T. and uses the story in a new way to create meaning to their reality. For example, the O.T. Joseph has 3 aspects to the birth story. Joseph's father is Jacob. He interpreted dreams, and he saved his people from death (famine). So the story in Genesis gets connected to the story in Matthew. Joseph's father was Jacob. The angel came to him in a dream, and his son was to save his people from their sins. What we read in the N.T. is a midrash from the O.T. It's not factual history. The meaning goes much deeper.

~Written by Rev. Russ Brandt



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