



Notes for Adult discussion groups at
On-Line@9 Worship Service
28th December 2008

The Christmas Star

The Christmas Story in the Gospels

Census	Luke 2:1	
Joseph	Luke 2:4	Matt 1:18
Bethlehem	Luke 2:4	Matt 2:1
Mary	Luke 2:5	Matt 1:18
'Swaddling' Cloths	Luke 2:7	
Manger	Luke 2:7	
Inn	Luke 2:7	
Shepherds	Luke 2:8	
Angel	Luke 2:9	Matt 1:20
Two Turtle Doves	Luke 2:24	
Herod		Matt 2:1
Wise Men (Magi)		Matt 2:1
Star		Matt 2:2
Gold, (Frank)incense & Myrrh		Matt 2:11

<p><i>Strictly speaking, some time after the birth</i></p>
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Not Mentioned in the Gospel Story

Innkeeper	Camels
Lamb	Donkey
Stable	Ox & Ass
Three Kings	Casper, Melkior & Balthazaar
Midwinter	Straw
Three Ships	

We need to understand the significance of the real Christmas story. Both Matthew and Luke write their Gospels to show who Jesus is: all of the components they include are significant. Why are they included?

Today's Bible reading is about two more people who recognised the significance of the birth of Jesus (the real Star of Christmas).

Jesus is Presented in the Temple (Luke 2, 22-40)

22 The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification, as the Law of Moses commanded. So they took the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, **23** as it is written in the law of the Lord: "Every firstborn male is to be dedicated to the Lord." **24** They also went to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two young pigeons, as required by the law of the Lord.

25 At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him **26** and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah. **27** Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the Temple. When the parents brought the child Jesus into the Temple to do for him what the Law required, **28** Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God: **29** "Now, Lord, you have kept your promise, and you may let your servant go in peace. **30** With my own eyes I have seen your salvation, **31** which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: **32** A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles and bring glory to your people Israel."

33 The child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon said about him. **34** Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, "This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against **35** and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart."

36-37 There was a very old prophet, a widow named Anna, daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She had been married for only seven years and was now 84 years old. She never left the Temple; day and night she worshipped God, fasting and praying. **38** That very same hour she arrived and gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were waiting for God to set Jerusalem free.

39 When Joseph and Mary had finished doing all that was required by the law of the Lord, they returned to their home town of Nazareth in Galilee. **40** The child grew and became strong; he was full of wisdom, and God's blessings were upon him.

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Simeon and Anna were devout and faithful Jews who were waiting for the coming of the promised Messiah. What type of Messiah were most Jews at the time expecting? How did Simeon and Anna recognise that Jesus was the Messiah? It is easy to look back and regard the Christmas story as a tale that is complete in itself. But Simeon saw that it was merely the prologue to even more significant events. We have to link the baby in the manger with the man dying on a cross: God's gift to the world was only made complete at Easter. What is the significance of the real Christmas story for you?