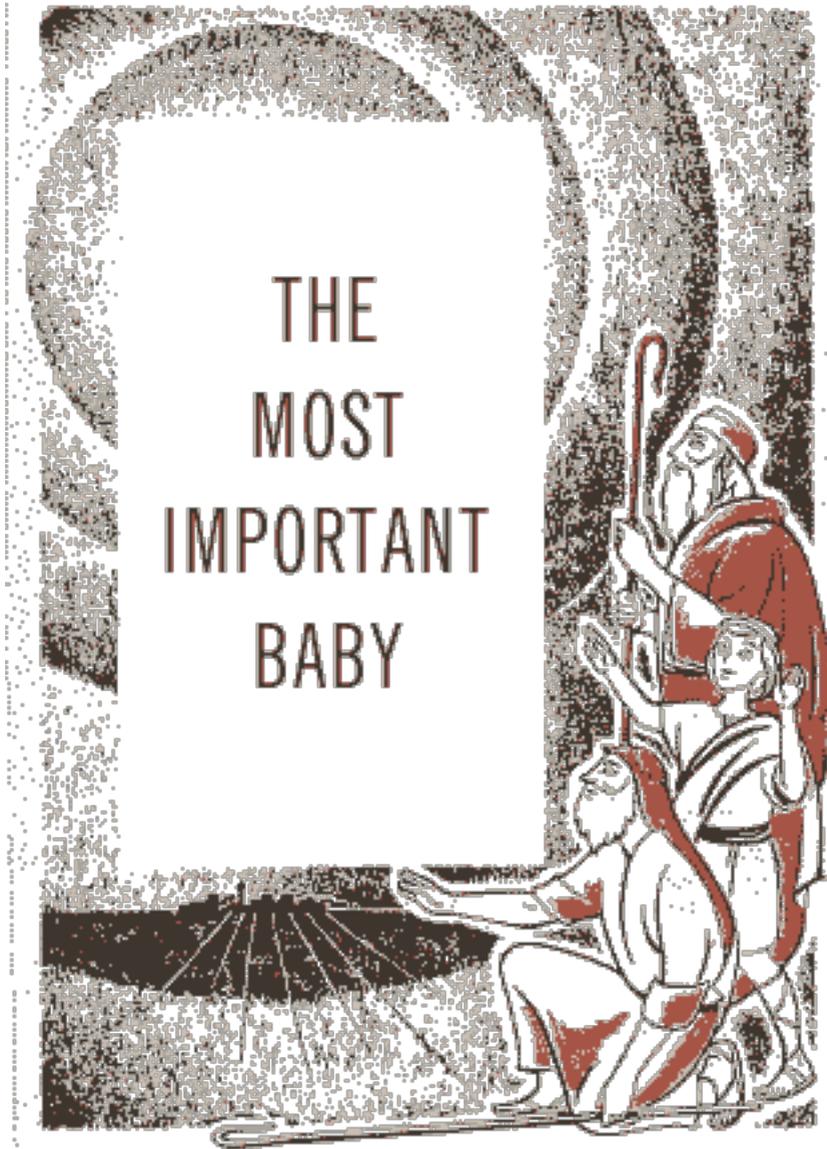


THE MOST IMPORTANT BABY



SOME people think that when George Washington was born he was the world's most important baby, but anyone who thinks that would be wrong, because when Jesus was born he was the most important baby. No baby ever born before Jesus was nearly so

important, and no baby born since has been as important as Jesus. When Jesus was born it meant that many, many of the wonderful promises of God had come true, and that all the rest of his promises were sure to come true later. That is what made him important.

Jesus was born in a manger where cattle are fed. I'll tell you why that was so. His mother and foster father lived in a town called Nazareth. The people of Israel no longer had a king of their own, but were being ruled by the Romans. The Roman government was getting ready to tax all the people, so Jesus' parents had to go to Bethlehem to sign their names on the Roman tax books.

A great many other people were visiting in Bethlehem at that time, and when Jesus' parents arrived, there just wasn't any room for them. All the hotels were filled, and a barn was the only place they could find in which to stay overnight.

And there it was that Jesus was born.

But that didn't really make any difference. It is what people are and not where they are born that really counts, isn't it? And the most important thing of all is what God thinks about us. Jesus was God's own Son, and God loved him and had a wonderful work for him to do—the work of making everybody in the world happy by giving them health so they will live without dying.

A very wonderful thing occurred on the night Jesus was born.

There was a group of shepherds out in the fields near Bethlehem, caring for their sheep. Suddenly they heard the most beautiful music, and it seemed to be in the sky above them. They looked up and saw that the sky was very bright. No doubt they were frightened, because this was unusual. Then they heard an angel telling them not to be afraid. The angel told the shepherds that he had good news for them and then joyfully told them that Christ was born that night, and that he would save the people of Israel from their sins. Wasn't that wonderful?

Christ is another name for Jesus. It means that Jesus is the One whom God promised to send to make everybody happy. For hundreds and hundreds of years God had been promising to send

Christ, and now the angel told the shepherds that he would be born as a little baby that night, and that they would find him in a manger in Bethlehem. My, but those shepherds must have been excited, and glad, too!

After the angel told the shepherds this good news a great many angels began to sing, and their song told the shepherds that there was to be peace on earth, and that God had sent his Son because of his good will toward all the people of the earth. Yes, God loved all the people, and now he was getting ready to make his many promises to bless them come true.

What a wonderful night that was!

The shepherds went to Bethlehem, and there found the baby, the wonderful baby whom God had sent. They worshipped the child and gave thanks to God because he was making his promises come true. God's promise was that Jesus would be a great king to rule over the whole earth. This is the King Jesus I have told you about in other stories.

In a faraway country east of Palestine there were wise men. They were probably somewhat like the holy men of India are today. They studied the stars to see if they could find out what God was doing. Well, they learned that Jesus was born, and that he was to be a great king, so they decided that they also would travel to Bethlehem to visit the newborn king.

But when these wise men arrived in the land of the Israelites, they decided that first they would visit King Herod, who was then the ruler. He was a ruler appointed by the supreme ruler of the whole Roman world. This supreme ruler was called the Caesar, after the first one, Julius Caesar, and Herod was a king under the Caesar. Herod could do only what Caesar wanted him to do.

Well, the wise men visited Herod, and told him that Jesus, a little Jewish boy, had been born and that he would grow up to be a great king. Herod didn't like this at all, and he decided he would have that baby killed.

But Herod did not tell the wise men what he planned to do. No, he deceived them. He told them to go and find the child and come

back to him and let him know where Jesus lived, as he also wanted to go and worship the new king. That was a clever lie, but God was taking care of Jesus. The wise men found the young child and the mother, who were now living in a house in Bethlehem, and they gave him the presents they had brought, and worshipped him just as they had planned.

The day had ended, so they remained overnight before starting back. That night they dreamed that it would be wrong to visit Herod on the way back to tell him where he could find Jesus as he had asked them to do. You see God gave them this dream, and from it they learned that they were to return to the East by another road so Herod wouldn't find out anything at all about Jesus. The wise men obeyed what God told them in the dream, so Herod's plan to find the child and destroy him, failed.

When Herod learned that the wise men had returned to the East by another way, he was very angry. You see, he didn't know where to find Jesus. All he knew was that a future king had been born and he wanted to kill this baby before he grew up to be a king.

Herod did a dreadful thing.

He gave orders that all the little baby boys of the Jews in Bethlehem and in the surrounding country should be killed. He thought that if all these babies were killed the baby Jesus would certainly be among them and would be killed also. Wasn't that terrible?

Of course all those babies will be brought back to life again. The Bible tells us that they shall come back from "the land of the enemy." The land of the enemy is the land of death; so we know that they are coming back from death. God told the Prophet Jeremiah to write down that promise. It is found in the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 31, verses 16 and 17.

But Jesus wasn't killed when all the other Jewish babies were killed, because God was taking care of him. If God had allowed anything to happen to the baby Jesus, then all of his wonderful promises could not have come true.

So what did God do?

Well, that same night he caused Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, to have a dream also, and Joseph dreamed that it was necessary for him and his wife, Mary, the mother of Jesus, to flee into Egypt and take Jesus with them. So they went to Egypt right away. Thus Jesus escaped being killed.

The Bible doesn't tell us any more about Jesus until he was twelve years old. By that time Herod, who tried to kill Jesus, was dead; so it was safe for Joseph and his family to return to their home in Nazareth. After they had returned to Nazareth, they visited the temple in Jerusalem and there Jesus talked with the teachers in the temple.

He was so interested that he didn't know his parents had started home without him. They thought he was with others in the company returning home with them. But when they could not find him among any of their friends and relatives, they returned to Jerusalem where they found him in the temple. His mother reproved him for causing them so much trouble and anxiety. He asked them if they didn't know it was necessary for him to be doing what his Father wanted him to do.

I don't know whether or not they understood what he meant, but you see, God was the Father of Jesus, and Jesus knew, even when he was only twelve years old, that his Father had a great work for him to do.

When God gave his Law to Moses, and Moses gave it to the people of Israel, there was one part of it which said that anyone who would go to work for God as one of his priests or prophets must be at least thirty years of age. Jesus was only twelve years old when he was in the temple asking questions, and there he learned that he would have to wait until he was thirty years old before he could start doing the work that his Father wanted him to do.

Jesus' foster father was a carpenter, so he went back home with him and worked as a carpenter for eighteen years. I think he must have been a wonderful carpenter, don't you?

QUESTIONS

- Who was the world's most important baby, and what did it mean when he was born?
- Where was Jesus born, and to whom did God announce his birth?
- Who were the wise men, and why were they warned not to return to Herod after they had seen Jesus?
- How did King Herod try to kill Jesus?
- Who was the Logos?

Dawn Bible Students Association