

A BABY CHANGES OUR WORLD

Part 4

A baby is born and the sky lights up

As I sleep, a dream appears where I am traveling all around Israel— I can go everywhere. But now, something seems to be stopping me. Someone is pulling on my arm.

Startled, I awaken and jump up. Since Dad was killed I have been a light sleeper – perhaps afraid of a surprise night attack like the one that took his life.

I open my eyes to see Sarah laughing and shaking my arm.

“Matthias, Matthias! Wake up. Shh... Listen! The new baby has arrived and is crying! Isn’t that wonderful? Mom is there helping Mary deliver her baby!”

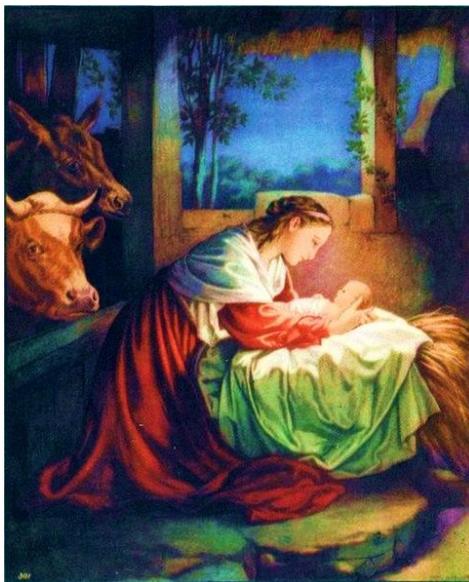


Fig. 1. Art – Baby Jesus held by Mary.

Yes, I hear the sounds of the baby's first cries! And I can hear the voices of Joseph and Mom excitedly talking as well—but I can't make out what they are saying. We can't see into their cave next door, but we can see the flickering light of their oil lamp through the entrance and on the ground.

I'm happy for them, but I want to get back to sleep.

Sarah steps outside our cave. She enthusiastically points above her: "Look at the sky! All those stars—isn't it beautiful? See, one star appears brighter than the others. Its light shines on the top of the cave of Joseph and Mary."

"Huh?" I am amazed. As a shepherd boy with Dad in the fields, I had seen stars, shooting stars, moving stars, and the moon. During those long nights, Dad taught me what to look for on starry nights – how to tell the star clusters apart from each other. It was fun to draw imaginary lines between certain stars and envision a hunter, a dipper, a fish, or some familiar figure.

I get up and join her outside to look up and reply, "I've not seen that star before. It's very bright."

Finally, the baby stops crying and gets its first nap. It becomes a silent night, again.

In the quiet of the night now, Sarah hears something. She points towards the Shepherd's Field, "Over there, Matthias. Do you hear that? Listen! There's the sound of singing."

I perk my head up and yes, I do hear something, but not singing. "No Sarah. That's probably just thunder and lightning from a distant rain storm. The pitch of sound is too low to be singing."

"I don't know about that—I don't see any clouds around us, just stars and the moon," she argues.

Maybe she's right.

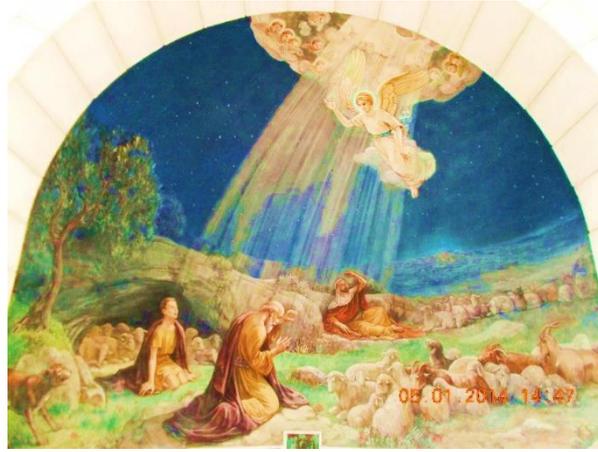


Fig. 2. Art – Angels appear to Shepherds in the Shepherds Field (Photo of painting in Shepherds’ Chapel – just outside Bethlehem).

Sarah goes on, “The night sky always seems so fascinating with its uncountable pinpoints of light. On moonless nights, you can see hundreds more in the clear sky. I feel so overwhelmed by it all as they seem to move so slowly from east to west. Every season we see different stars.”

“Yes,” I reply. “Dad told me once he had met some caravan traders from Babylon. During their conversations, they decided to buy one of our sheep. They confided to him that in their country they have a book describing the locations of stars and planets observed for hundreds of years. Sarah, they claim that by using those observations and secret mathematics they can navigate on land as well as at sea!”

Sarah nods her head in agreement and adds, “Daddy told me that the Babylonians think the stars and moving stars, which they call wandering planets, can predict major events in our world. The movements of some planets and star groups are identified with the Jews of Israel. They told him the movements of certain planets are connected with our history. The Aries sign represents Israel, and a drawing of its star cluster looks like a sheep or ram in the sky. But I don’t know what that all means.”

“Sorry, Sarah. I don’t understand either. Hmm, yesterday morning I awoke before dawn and noticed the star-planets seemed to have moved closer together as they have been doing for several days. They brighten the sky and add light to our area. Dad once showed me a diagram of the background stars that resembled a ram—much like our sheep. I saw that star cluster again tonight after the sun set. The sign of the ram is next to the stars that can be drawn as a fish. I wonder if it is a prophecy of something that will happen.”

I think about it some more and recall, “Rabbi Levi told us in school: ‘To believe stars have power to control us would be wrong because you then may think their powers are greater than God’s power.’”

“He taught us that our God created all the stars and the universe to point out important events. But He gave us free will. No star controls our destiny. The scriptures begin with the story of the creation of our world—in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. He created everything.”

Sarah’s face brightens and she shares another interesting story, “Once while you were out with Daddy grazing the flock, the innkeeper showed everyone in town two shiny Roman coins. He had received them from the head of a large trade caravan as part of their payment for staying at his Inn.”



Fig. 3. Roman Coin issued for Julius Caesar with The Great Comet on the reverse side.

“One coin shows the image of the Roman Dictator Julius Caesar. On the back of the coin there is a big image of a comet with the words ‘divine Julius’ as if he were a god.”

“The innkeeper told us the Romans believe that the super bright comet which appeared years after he was murdered was really a form of Julius as a god. They say his soul now wanders the universe in a comet as depicted on their coin.”

Sarah seems excited as she describes the coins. “The other coin shows an image of the current Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar, who is the adopted son of Julius. The words meaning ‘son of god’ appear next to him. On the back of the coin ‘divine Julius’ is embossed showing his heavenly comet.”



Fig. 4. Roman Coin issued in 17 BC depicts Augustus Caesar “divine son” (left) and Julius Caesar “a god” wandering as a comet in the heavens (right).

“The innkeeper let me actually hold the coins in my hand. It was really exciting! They were beautiful and shiny.”

She becomes very serious now, “However, the townspeople became angry because the Romans claim their emperor is a god and place his graven image on coins our people must use to buy or sell food. This is an insult to our Jewish beliefs! So, the innkeeper promised he’d only use those two coins to pay his taxes to the Romans and to Herod whom they appointed as King in Jerusalem. Everyone promised not to talk about it again so that the Romans would not hear of our dissatisfaction and accuse us of treason.”

Wow! I jumped back in surprise hearing this story about those coins. “Rabbi Levi taught us that Jewish scripture predicts that a star will announce the appearance of our Messiah to be sent by God.”

“He said when Balaam, the seer, was moved by the Spirit of God he predicted:

‘A star shall advance from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel.’”

I’m inspired and tell Sarah another story about our Father, “I’m not sure I told you before, but Dad made me memorize some sayings from our scriptures about the promised Messiah.”

“His favorite was from the prophet, Isaiah:

‘The Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.’”

“But how could that possibly happen? A virgin giving birth to a son? That’s not the way nature works – not for animals nor us humans.”

“Dad also insisted that I remember one prophecy word-for-word because it concerned our town. It is from Micah the prophet:

*‘But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah
least among the clans of Judah,
From you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel;
Whose origin is from of old,
from ancient times.
Therefore the Lord will give them up,
until the time when she
who is to give birth has borne,
Then the rest of his kindred shall
return to the children of Israel.’”*

Sarah appears impressed, “You sound inspired and you really remember scripture very well. You should be a teacher, Matthias.”

I yawn again and blurt out, “Maybe, but I honestly don’t understand what those sayings mean. I understand stable animals better.”

“Well, there is nothing we can do about anything right now. Let’s silently thank God for the new life of a baby – and go back to sleep.”

Sarah laughs “Aren’t you even curious whether it’s a boy or a girl?”

“Yes, but the baby will be the same sex in the morning. Remember, Joseph and Mary insisted it would be a boy. Anyway, I’m really tired right now.”



Fig. 5. Art – Baby Jesus with Mary and Joseph.

“Well, Shalom, Matthias. I love you. Sleep well I will not bother you again tonight.”

“Shalom, Sarah. It’s OK that you woke me—so much is happening. I love you too.”

Sarah settles into her wool blankets beside my brother Isaac. He seems unaffected by all this excitement and continues sleeping through everything.

I’m filled with awe at all the things that have happened today because of this new-born baby.

Now, everything is both peaceful and quiet again, so sleep comes easily.

----- **End of Part 4**

(Continue to next page:
Multi-Dimension LINKS)

MULTI – DIMENSION LINKS

Click **Buttons/LINKS** to see and hear interesting Music Videos – Traditional, Modern-New, or Classic versions (on YouTube).



Modern Presentation: "O Holy Night" by Celtic Woman. Five beautiful women voices, choir, and orchestra with new dynamic staging of Christmas spiritual classic.



Traditional: "Silent Night, Holy Night." Hundreds sing in choir and congregation with full orchestra.



Classic: "Joy to the World." PBS production of choir and orchestra.



Traditional: "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Shows lyrics. Amy Grant sings.



Modern – Producing a High Tech Recording: "O Holy Night" Peter Hollens - sings acappella and 8 parts to accompany himself.



Classic: "It Came upon a Midnight Clear" sung by Pat Boone.



Classic: "Away in a Manger" with lyrics - Vera Lynn.



Traditional: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" Choir. Shows lyrics and beautiful stained glass windows.

(Continue to next page: **Multi-Dimensions**)

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Multi-Dimensions: Click **Buttons/LINKS** to experience Events, to see Photos, Videos, Bible References, and to view additional interesting information. Wikipedia presents various viewpoints regarding the topics.



2015 Star of Bethlehem? - CSM:

Planets Jupiter and Venus converge in night sky June 30, 2015. Christian Science Monitor article with a video of this event.



Naming and Mythology of Planets – Wikipedia: Part of article on Planets. Excellent graphics and pictures.



Jewish views on Astrology - Wikipedia: Use of the signs of the Zodiac sometimes allowed.



Zodiac - Wikipedia: Signs of the stars used by Babylonians.



Stars - Wikipedia: Scientific explanation of stars of our universe. Pictures and graphics.



Coins and Taxes of Augustus Caesar - Wikipedia: This section is contained in the profile of Augustus, Emperor of Rome.



Interactive 3D Map of the Universe: at In-The-Sky.org.



King James Version (KJV) with options for audio reading of text of the prophecies of: Isaiah, Micah, and Balaam regarding the Messiah.



New American Bible - Revised Edition: with options for commentary and notes of the Genealogy of Jesus according to Luke.



New International Version (NIV): Excellent dramatized audio Nativity of Jesus and his cousin, John the Baptist. (Click > ► to restart audio) Chapters 1 and 2 of the Gospel by Luke, continuous play.



The Star of Bethlehem –an Astronomical Perspective: Introduction to several theories by astronomer Nick Strobel. Sky Map graphics and references.



Was Jesus born on April 17 in 6 BC? Possibly yes, says Michael R. Molnar, Astronomer and Physicist. To calculate this, he uses conjunctions, occultations, historical coins and writings. Star Maps shown.



Was Jesus born in 2 BC? Possibly yes. "The Star of Bethlehem: Documentary" by Frederick A. Larson is an hour long entertaining and fact-finding presentation on YouTube. Star Maps, animations, and beautiful graphics are shown.



Was Jesus born on December 25? How this historical choice may have been made. Part of the article: "Christmas" - Wikipedia.

Figure # - Photo and Art Credits

Thankful and grateful for courtesy of:

Fig. 1. Art – Baby Jesus held by Mary.
endoftheage.blogspot.com

Fig. 2. Art – Angels appear to Shepherds in the Shepherds Field (Photo from Shepherds' Chapel – just outside Bethlehem) Photo credit: Tom Kroupa

Fig. 3. Roman Coin issued for Julius Caesar with The Great Comet on the reverse side
RomanEmperors.com
www.romanemperors.com/images/augustus/bronze-augustus.jpg

Fig. 4. Roman Coin issued in 17 BC depicts Augustus Caesar “divine son” (left) and Julius Caesar “a god” wandering as a comet in the heavens (right).
Holy Land Peace-Pilgrim
http://peace-pilgrim.com/tag/caesar-augustus/

Fig. 5. Art – Baby Jesus with Mary and Joseph.
turnbacktogo.com, Public Domain
baby-jesus-birth-free.JPG

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