

Bite Size Bible Study

Jesus' Birth pt 2 #244

By Lee Logue

We have everything ready for Jesus to be born, a home with extended family, we are in the prophesied location of Bethlehem, and we are living in the fall holy days.

Mary and Joseph are probably living in the main part of the home with the family. When it comes time for the birth the men and children are sent out from the presence of Mary and the women in the house are all ready to help in the delivery.

After Jesus is born, the umbilical cord is cut and tied. He is cleaned and probably rubbed down with salt and olive oil and wrapped in swaddling cloth.

Swaddling involves snugly wrapping a baby in a thin cloth tied together by bandage-like strips. This was to mimic the womb's warmth and security, helping them feel calm and sleep better by deterring the startle reflex and preventing self-scratching.

Swaddling was a typical and standard practice in the first century CE. There is evidence in biblical accounts as well as archaeological findings of swaddling bands in Judea. The practice was widespread and served to protect and provide stability for newborns, helping their limbs grow straight and keeping them warm and secure.

It is interesting that Jesus was swaddled because Ezekiel 16:4 describes Israel as unswaddled, which was a metaphor for abandonment.

The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices and say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised.

Ezekiel 16:1-5 NIV

Jesus was abandoned and despised by men but never by the Father in heaven who declared that He was well pleased with His Son. To make another metaphor, Jesus was swaddled by His Father throughout His human life.

Day of Jesus' Birth?

It would be interesting if we were to discover that Jesus was born on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This is the holiest day of the year for Jews. It is the day when they most earnestly desired to be right with God. To that end they fasted, made blood sacrifices and forgave debts and made restitution for their sins against others.

Jesus is our atonement. He provided the blood sacrifice, paid the penalty for all our sins – against others and against God. He makes us clean and pure in the sight of the Father. He provided all that is required to be right with God. He did this, not out of obligation but out of His *hesed* (loving kindness) and not just for some but for every individual who has ever (or will ever) live(d). His desire and actions show that He is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Circumcision

On the eighth day, when it was time for his b'rit-milah (circumcision), he was given the name Yeshua (Jesus), which is what the angel had called him before his conception. Luke 2:21 (CJB)

At 8 days old Jesus was circumcised. The ritual for Jewish boys identifies them with Israel. The ritual for the Israelites likely began with Abraham, although it was practiced in Egypt long before. It was to confirm the covenant with God and outwardly identify each male as a member of that covenant. As the ritual matured it became important that one should become circumcised both physically as well as having a circumcised heart. (Jeremiah 4:4).

"People of Y'hudah and inhabitants of Yerushalayim, circumcise yourselves for Adonai, remove the foreskins of your heart! Otherwise my fury will lash out like fire, burning so hot that no one can quench it, because of how evil your actions are.

The traditional practice is that the child is welcomed by the congregation with *Barukh ha-Ba* ("Blessed be he that comes"). The child is then taken from the mother by the godmother and handed over at the door of the room to the godfather. The godfather then hands the child to the *moheh* (a man trained in the art of circumcision). The *moheh* places the baby for a moment on the Chair of Elijah, after which he is placed on a pillow on the knees of the *sandak* ("holder").

At the end of the ceremony Joseph names Him Yeshua (Jesus) and thereby adopts Him as his own. For all intents and purposes the community is to accept Jesus as Joseph's firstborn son, with all the rights and privileges of a natural born son.

Redemption of a Firstborn Son

Pidyon-haben (redemption of a firstborn son) takes place when Jesus is thirty days old, meaning that He is at least one month old.

When the time came for their purification according to the Torah of Moshe, they took him up to Yerushalayim to present him to Adonai (as it is written in the Torah of Adonai, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to Adonai") and also to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves

or two young pigeons, as required by the Torah of Adonai.

Luke 2:22-24 CJB

The ceremony of *pidyon-haben* reminds the Jewish people of their redemption from slavery in Egypt where the last plague to afflict the Egyptians was the death of their firstborn. God commanded the Israelites to kill a lamb and place its blood on the doorposts; then the death angel would pass over their home saving their firstborn. (see Exodus chapters 12-14)

In this remembrance Joseph and Mary dedicate Jesus as their firstborn son to God's service. Traditionally the family would redeem the son for a payment of five shekels of silver. It is not clear, in Jesus' case, whether they needed to redeem Him or not, because it was clear to them that He was God's Son and would naturally be in God's service. However, they probably did for the sake of those in attendance of the ceremony.

Originally, the Jewish firstborn sons were the priestly class, but later God accepted the Levites, in place of the firstborn sons, for service in the Tabernacle or Temple. This is another point that shows that Jesus is not only of the kingly line of David but is also, because of his being first born, of the original Priestly line, in the service of God.

Three important things have occurred here that are often overlooked. 1) He was circumcised, 2) He was named, and 3) He is presented to God as the firstborn son.

Privileges and responsibilities of the First Born

The firstborn son had many privileges but also many responsibilities, both of which caused tension and animosity in some families.

As the firstborn son he was to take charge of the family when the father was unable to continue that responsibility.

From that point onward he is the new family leader and assumes the responsibility of leading and superintending the well-being of the extended family (clan or tribe).

To do that he inherited a double portion of the family wealth. With that double portion he was responsible to see that everyone in the family was cared for. As he is now the kinsman redeemer, he is to see that each family member is cared for. If some family member goes into debt, he is to redeem that debt and set the person free.

Jesus is called the firstborn over all creation.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Colossians 1:15 NIV

He is also called the firstborn of the dead, because He was the first one to ever be raised from the dead and never die again.

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. Revelation 1:4b-6 NIV

As the firstborn and kinsman redeemer, Jesus is responsible for every human being. He is our kinsman redeemer and as such will redeem everyone – some in this lifetime and others in the ages to come. He has already paid the price for our redemption and through the Holy Spirit is working through the issues that are keeping us from being complete. He is in the process of making a kingdom composed of priests. Where that leads after it is completely accomplished has not been revealed yet.

If Jesus was born in the fall, as most scholars believe, then count back 9 months and you will be in December for His conception. Truly, conception can be considered the beginning of human life.

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