

Moving Away From The Manger

Many of us are well aware of the difficulties surrounding celebrating December 25th as the birth of Christ. First, the Bible never specifically mentions December 25th as the birthday of Jesus. Second, December 25th is first referenced as Jesus' birthday in the 4th century. Third, there is no consistency because Catholics celebrate December 25th, while the Orthodox Church celebrates January 7th as Christmas. Because of the absence of its mention in the New Testament, and the lack of secular evidence for December 25th as the birthday of Christ, we need to move away from the manger. When we do move away from the manger, there are a lot of good aspects about the life of Christ to which we need to move our focus toward.

Move Toward His Teachings

Jesus taught in the synagogues and was glorified because of His teaching (Luke 4:15). He amazed people because He spoke with authority and simplicity (Matthew 7:29). The officers exclaimed that a man had never spoken like Jesus (John 7:46). It is widely believed that the sermon on the mount contains the most ethically perfect instructions ever given. Jesus covered many topics as He introduced the characteristics of life in the kingdom of God. Everyone of the gospels are full of instances where Jesus taught individuals, His disciples, and large multitudes. His preaching included instruction (Luke 8:4-15), encouragement (Matthew 11:28-30), and warning (Mark 1:14-15).

Move Toward His Miracles

At His first miracle, Jesus began to manifest His glory (John 2:11). These miracles were for the purpose of getting people to believe in Him (John 20:31). We have 35 miracles of His recorded, with the mention that there were many more which could not be recorded (John 20:30; 21:25). Even with all the evidence available, not everyone believed on Him (Matthew 11:20-24; John 6:30-36; 12:37; 15:24).

Move Toward His Glorification

Between six and nine months before His crucifixion, Jesus took His disciples to a "high mountain" (probably Mt. Hermon), and was transfigured before them. Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, speaking about His decease (exodon) in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31; cp. 2 Peter 1:15). When Peter attempted to set up booths for the purpose of worshiping all of them, a voice from heaven commanded them to "hear Him" (Matthew 17:5; Luke 9:35). Therefore, everything we do must be "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17), seeing that we "refuse not him that speaketh" (Hebrews 12:25).

Move Toward His Crucifixion

All four gospel accounts include extensive treatments of the crucifixion. In fact, approximately 8 out of 89 chapters cover the last few hours of Jesus' life. "Blood" is synonymous with His death (Romans 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7; Revelation

1:5), by which we are cleansed from our evil or dead consciences (Hebrews 9:14, 22; 10:22).

Move Toward His Resurrection

Jesus was raised by the power of God (2 Corinthians 13:4). The resurrection proved Him to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4). There was no doubt that the resurrection was real. He had 12 post-resurrection appearances over the course of 40 days (Acts 1:3). These appearances were seen by anywhere from one person at a time to over 500 at a time. He was truly “received up into glory” (1 Timothy 3:16) where He is “alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:18).

After He ascended to Heaven, He sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3), thus fulfilling His own prophecy. He said to the two disciples at Emmaus: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:25-26). There is more to the life of Jesus than the manger scene. This all comes down to a matter of how God wants His Son to be remembered. The clear emphasis in the New Testament is that God does not want His Son remembered as a baby lying in a manger, but as the suffering Savior and resurrected Redeemer!

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