

## Pastor's Pen: That First Christmas Morn

Roughly 2,000 years ago, a birth took place.

It was in a remote region of the Roman Empire. For the Roman world it was strange place full of strange people. The population of this backwater didn't worship Roman gods or have Roman culture. In fact, they seemed antagonistic to it. They were a people oft conquered: by Egypt, by Assyria, by Babylon, by Persia, by Macedonia, and now by Rome. Yet they kept looking for Anointed One to free them.

In this provincial backwater, the birth took place in a small town. The child was born in a stable to poor parents. He was born into the home of a man who worked with his hands; something ungainly to proper Romans. His birth went largely unnoticed that night, save a group of shepherds who came bearing the story of angelic visions and good news. The first to come to the child were unkempt ruffians; hardly the sort proper moms and dads allow into their home. Yet, they would be the first to see the Anointed One who would set them free.

Yet no birth has so changed the course of human history. For this birth marked a new dawn and a new promise. As the first streaks of sunlight cut through the darkness of the night, so the first streaks of the Son started to break through the intense darkness that had engulfed humanity. The Anointed One had come.

This newborn child was a king. He was no ordinary king, despite his meager birth; He would establish a Kingdom that would have no end.

This newborn king was born in Bethlehem, which means 'house of bread.' This is no accident. He was born in a dirty stable among beasts. This was no accident, for those who would be the king's subjects had lost the dignity of their humanity by embracing sin; reducing to them beasts. But this child would restore that dignity. He was laid in a trough. That is what a manger is. It is a place where beasts feed. This was no accident. This child would be consumed and through being consumed, a dignity is restored.

The king born that morning never donned royal robes nor lived in a castle. He had no servants to fulfill his every want. No, He wore common clothes, lived simply, and was a servant to all. This would be how He lived and how He now rules.

His name tells us what we need to know: Jesus...meaning, "God saves." It is the name given to Him by the angel, both to Mary and Joseph. This newborn king would be able to accomplish this task because He alone could bridge the gap between God and man, only He could make recompense for the division brought by humanity's rebellion. His obedience would open a new possibility. His being fully God and fully man (a mystery we call the Incarnation), born into this tiny body in a backwater of the Empire, would change the course of human history and destiny.

So, on this coming Christmas morn, let us give Him the only gift He wants from us: our obedient love. Let us commit ourselves to serving Him as He served us. For what transpired 2,000 years ago in silence will come again in glory and power. To keep Christmas is not a matter of wrapped presents and bows, to keep Christmas is to recognize the gift given on the first Christmas and to use this great gift for the reason for which it is given.



Merry Christmas

**M**ay the Infant Jesus bless you  
on Christmas Day and  
throughout the New Year.