

Christmas Eve (at midnight)
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24 December 2003

Isaiah 9:2-7; Ps 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14

Stories surrounding the birth of Jesus

If you spoke to my mother, she would tell you that the Bells of St Peter's Cathedral were ringing the morning I was born.

The way she tells it, it sounds like the cathedral staff had heard I was born and rang the bells!

It is true they were ringing...

BUT NOT FOR ME!!

It was because it was Easter!

It is interesting how stories begin and turn into myths and legends.

The Santa Myth

began with a humble Christian bishop NOT at the North Pole, but on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey and with gifts of money which were thrown through a window or something similar so that the children of the family might be saved from becoming slaves (or worse) and the seeds of the Santa myth were sown and travelled through Russia and Europe being embellished on the way.

As I watched a noted scholar of Egypt investigate a tomb and unravel the mystery of myth and legend of that tomb, he said: "at the heart of every myth there is a true story."

The colourful stories of Santa and the wishful thinking of my mother's story have at their heart a true story with historical events and clear facts.

One of the dangers when we talk about myth and legend in relation to the bible is that unfortunately people jump to the conclusion that we mean it is untrue and not factual.

Just as we did with the story about my birth and the story of Santa/St Nicholas stories, we need to discover the truth under all the colourful additions.

The stories of Jesus' birth are surrounded by colourful myth and legend through which if we search, we will discover what is true! And even the colourful additions tell us what people of a later generation thought of Jesus.

Isaiah 9

May have originally celebrated the coming to power of a Judean king and it is filled with phrases referring to the monarchy of David. The King represents the best qualities of Israel's heroes...

Wonderful Counsellor—Wisdom and sound guidance

Mighty God—divine in might

Everlasting Father—continuous Fatherly love and care

Prince of Peace—King who brings peace and prosperity.

Titus:

Paul speaks about:

Ways of living—grace has appeared, but the believer waits [for] the blessed hope and manifestation of glory.

In the meantime, there is much to do about taking up the image of God.

Gospel

We are told Jesus is the descendant of David through his father Joseph!

but he is from god through his mother...

The greatness is balanced by the humble beginning in a stable.

Shepherds—lowest of the low, and yet God communicates with them and they respond.

it is a point made often in the gospels.

Jesus is described as Saviour

Messiah

Lord

The stories may be devious, But there is a truth behind each one.