

What's In a Name?

Matthew 1:17- 23: *So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until **the Christ** are fourteen generations.*

¹⁸ *Now the birth of Jesus[the]Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name **Jesus**, for He will save His people from their sins."*

²² *So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name **Immanuel** which is translated, "God with us." (Isaiah 7:14)*

The Christ – Greek for the Hebrew term *Messiah* which means "Anointed One"

The term Messiah is derived from the Hebrew "*Mashiach*", which means "*the anointed one*," and refers to the ancient practice of anointing kings with oil when they took the throne. The Messiah is the one who will be anointed as king at the end of days.

Jesus – Greek for the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which means "the Lord saves" (Yahweh delivers)

"Jesus" is a transliteration, occurring in a number of languages and based on the Latin *Iesus*, of the Greek (*Iēsoûs*), itself a Hellenisation of the Hebrew (*Yěhōšuaʿ*, Joshua) or Hebrew-Aramaic (*Yēšūʿā*), meaning "Yahweh delivers (or rescues)"

Immanuel – "God with us" - *Immanu* (with us), *El* (God)

God...the Anointed One...Who saves...is with us!

Reactions to Jesus' Birth

The news that a baby is going to be born brings all sorts of reactions – joy, relief, confusion, happiness, worry, excitement, surprise and, in some circumstances, sadness or fear. No other human event causes as much emotion and impact on others' lives as the birth of a baby. As Faith Hill's Christmas song says, "a baby changes everything".

The birth of Jesus was no different, in fact it was earth-shattering and history-changing and eternity- altering. Let's take a look at the responses and reactions to Jesus' birth:

Fear

Joseph – according to Matthew 1:19-21, the angel told Joseph to not be afraid. Not only would Joseph have been afraid, he was probably confused and angry.

Mary – Luke 1:30, the angel told Mary, "*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*"

What's in a Name? *and* Reactions to Jesus' Birth

Of course there would be fear. Mary was pregnant and unmarried. Joseph's trust in his fiancée' had been shaken and his reputation in the community was in jeopardy. They were scared to death!

Troubled

Herod and Jerusalem - According to Matthew 2:1-4, when the news of Jesus birth was communicated by the wise men, "*Herod was troubled and all of Jerusalem with him*" (NKJ). Wow, that's a lot of troubled people.

Mary – Luke 1:29

Curiosity

Shepherds - Luke 2:15 tells us that when the shepherds were told about the birth of this unusual baby they decided to go check it out for themselves.

Mary – "...*and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.*" (Luke 1:29)

Joy and Praise

Elizabeth (John the Baptizer in her womb) – Luke 1:39-45 (41-44)

Wise men – Matthew 2:10 says that the wise men rejoiced when they saw that the star had finally stopped over the place where Jesus was.

Mary – Luke 1:46-55(46-49) relates Mary ultimate joy at being chosen to be the mother of the Savior of the world and Son of God.

Simeon – a little known character in the story of Jesus' birth, Simeon had been told by the Lord that he would see the Messiah before he died. Luke 2:25-35 relates the fulfillment of that promise and Simeon's joy at seeing (and holding) the Messiah.

Anna – a widow who served in the Temple also recognized the Messiah and praised the Lord (Luke 2:36-38)

Worship

Wise men – Matthew 2:11

Marvel, wonder, amazement

The people to whom the shepherds told their story - Luke 2:17-18

Mary and Joseph – Luke 2:33

What is your reaction and response to the birth of Jesus Christ? The world's response seems to range from irritation to apathy to downright hostility.

May this Christmas season find us responding to the birth of Jesus with wonder, joy, love, gratefulness and praise – "*I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord. Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests!*"