

But Mary Pondered Them in Her Heart

by Timothy Tow

Timothy Tow's sermon reflects on Mary's contemplation of Jesus' birth and its profound significance, emphasizing both joy and the inevitability of His sacrifice for humanity's salvation.

Scripture: Acts 2:23

Topics: "Virgin Birth", "Salvation"

Description

Timothy Tow reflects on the significance of the Christmas story, particularly focusing on the Virgin Birth of Jesus and the purpose of His coming to die for our sins. He emphasizes the importance of believing in the Virgin Birth as a foundational truth of Christianity, contrasting those who deny it with the joy and awe of those who accept it. Tow highlights the journey of Jesus from His humble birth in a stable to His sacrificial death on the cross, urging listeners to receive Him into their hearts for salvation.

Transcript

When I was a boy, I sometimes wondered at the thrill that came on the shepherds when the angel of the Lord appeared to them and announced to them the Birth of the Saviour. My boyish wish seemed to come true when Ivy, little Jemima and I spent six months in the Holy Land, staying in Bethlehem , 1969-70.

Now as it neared Christmas, the Holy Land Mission of the Independent Board for Foreign Presbyterian Missions planned a Christmas Eve Service to be held at the Shepherd's Field. As I was short-term missionary of the Independent Board, they invited me to speak on this most precious occasion. Since I came from the Far East , I qualified myself as the fourth Wise Man!

To get the feel of the venue, I visited a portion of the ancient Shepherd's Field at the approximate spot where the Angel appeared to the Shepherds. It was a cold wintry night with an almost full moon in a blue sky, but the wind brought me shudders. This led me to think of the sufferings the Baby Jesus went through, for He was born in an open stable, exposed to the wintry blast. And as I thought of the Virgin Mother caressing her Precious One as He cried in the cold, the Lord gave me these words, titled "Winter Moon" (sung to the tune of White Christmas).

Now as the winter moon sinks low,

And the poor shepherds all are gone,

There remains in the Manger stable

The Virgin Mother seated all alone.
Now as she caresses her Child
Under the flickering candle light,
O the thought that God's Son is born!
Sweeps o'er her soul this first Christmas night.
Thus Mary ponders in her heart,
While the winds howl over the sky,
And the cows low and asses bray,
And Baby Jesus wakes and starts to cry.
Again she caresses her Child
Under the flickering candle light,
O the thought that He's born to die!
Sweeps o'er her soul this first Christmas night.

These lines reflect Luke 2:19 , "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." While the Shepherds found their Child-Saviour as told by the Angel and praised God exuberantly to the people they met, Mary pondered alone in the stable over the deep thoughts that flooded her soul.

First is the Virgin Birth of our Lord. This was announced to her by the Angel Gabriel, and now it has come to pass. The Son of God has become the Son of Man. Jesus, who is the Immaculate Son of God must live a perfect sinless life in active obedience to the Father - to save us by His life. For, none of us can do one bit of it. He is able because He is born of the Virgin.

But, the highest of the Anglican clergy, almost all of them, deny our Lord's Virgin Birth. The Bishop of Durham denied this very thing over the BBC not too long ago. But he was not alone in this. At a congress of the 50 English Bishops, 45 of them supported the apostate Bishop. If you reject Christ's Virgin Birth, you will die in your sins. But we who are saved and bow our knees to the New Born King, receive the mystery of the Virgin Birth in awe and in joy. We sing the age-old Gospel-saturated carols, and how it blesses our hearts at this sacred season. We bring our gifts with the Wisemen as a practical expression of our devotion and how they are used mightily for the extension of the Gospel in His Name. But there are those who do not celebrate the Birth of Christ and how they miss the joy of salvation that blesses this Happy Season.

O the thought that God's Son is born leads Mary to the second, which is, O the thought that He's born to die! Christmas is joy unspeakable of His Birth, but it must lead us finally to His death. For that is the very purpose of God becoming man, in order that He may pay the penalty of our sins by His death. Did the Holy Spirit reveal this to Mary?

Thirty-three days after His Birth, Mary and Joseph brought the Babe to Jerusalem for her purification ceremony. There came Simeon a devout worshipper to whom the Holy Spirit revealed this was the Christ. And when he prophesied that this Child was set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, he said to the Virgin Mother, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." This confirms the thought that her Child was born to die.

The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ leading to His death, began when He was born. The first was facing the cold wintry wind that night while He laid in the crude manger cradle. (We had a taste of the Manger when we travelled in China after the Lord called me into the ministry. We came to an inn. For our comfort the inn-keeper gave us straw as mattress. For bedsheet, old newspapers.)

When Jesus was hounded by Herod, He had to escape in Mary's arms with Joseph's help to Egypt. From Egypt they went to Nazareth. Jesus grew up as a Carpenter learning hard, honest work. It was not a bed of roses, but he submitted to the dictates of God His Father. Finally, the Jews who could not stomach the Truth He had preached against them nailed Him to the Cross. But in so doing they fulfilled God's Redemption Plan. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

Do you believe that He was born to die - for you and for me? Do you humbly and gratefully come to the Saviour and receive Him into your heart? This is the last Christmas of the old millennium and we know not what is in store in the new millennium. Receive Him who died to save you from sin and death while there is yet day. He saves us not only by His sinless life of active obedience but also by His passive obedience, in death. O the thought that He's born to die!

Now, Lord, as I think of Thy Birth,

How I thank Thee that Thou hast come!

Thou dost not spurn the Manger stable,

Nor David's daughter, Virgin Mary's womb.

Mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation

As one born blind now sees the Light.

O the joy that Messiah has come!

Sweeps o'er my soul this first Christmas night.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/timothy-tow/but-mary-pondered-them-in-her-heart/>

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