**The birth of Jesus Christ is a prophecy of His death and resurrection**

**(Similarities between the birth and death of Jesus Christ)**

Christmas is one of the most accepted religious holidays for the average person, because instead of God as a judge for sins, people see a helpless, poor child born in a stable.

In the West, even atheists exchange gifts, and Christmas is a source of great income for many.

However, a lesser known aspect of Christmas is that the circumstances under which Jesus was born, represent a prophecy for His death and resurrection 33 years after His birth.

The birth of the Messiah describes the future fulfilment of the most important details from the plan God made to save people.

There is a symmetry between Christ's birth and His death and resurrection. A series of parallel events indicates that Jesus' birth was carefully designed by God to describe His mission to save people who had distanced themselves from God.

These parallels are not seen on Christmas postcards, but it is necessary to read the Bible texts carefully and compare the beginning and the end of Christ's life on Earth.

Have you noticed that angels appear both at birth and at Christ's resurrection?

Troubles and pain exist during both childbirth and crucifixion, and in both events they turn into joy: once because of the birth of a child, and the second time because of the resurrection of the Messiah.

Jesus' body was wrapped in a cloth both at birth and when he died; and someone outside the family brought scents as a gift. These are just some of the parallels between the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and now let's take a closer look.

 **Mary and Joseph**

Both the conception of Jesus and His resurrection were supernatural events. Since these are extraordinary and unusual events, the probability that the miracles at the beginning and at the end of someone's life will coincide - is very small.

At the beginning, it should be noted that we learned the details of the birth of Jesus through Mary and Joseph of Nazareth, who are direct witnesses to the event.

Similarly, Mary (but from Magdalene) and Joseph (from Arimathea) also witnessed the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection.

Thus, two persons of the same name appear at both the beginning and the end of the Gospel.

Mary of Nazareth was so pious that she risked her reputation to do what God required of her.

Although she was a person of high moral purity and loyal to God, people considered her immoral because they did not believe she was bearing a child which is a miracle of the Holy Spirit, and not by her still unmarried fiancé and later husband Joseph.

On the other hand, Mary Magdalene lost her reputation by living an immoral life, but by recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, she received forgiveness of sins and began a new, spiritually pure life (Luke 8:2).

One Mary was declared by people to be immoral in spite of her moral purity, and the other Mary was restored by God from immoral life to moral purity.

Also, Joseph of Nazareth took care of the newborn Jesus by taking Him to Egypt, and Joseph of Arimathea took care of the newborn Jesus by preparing his body for burial.

**Sorrow and pain that become great joy**

Let us look at further similarities between Mary of Nazareth and Mary of Magdalene.

Mary of Nazareth had to go through labor pains in difficult circumstances, outside her house and in the stable, due to lack of accommodation at the time of the census.

Similarly, on the morning of the resurrection, Mary Magdalene was devastated by the death of the Messiah, who forgave her sins and restored her dignity as a human being (Luke 23:55).

Jesus even said that because of His death, the apostles and disciples, including Mary, would experience great sorrow, which He compared to the pain of a woman giving birth:

“Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but **your sorrow will be turned into joy**. **A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow** because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. **Therefore you now have sorrow**; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”(John 16:20-22).

So, Jesus compared the pain of Mary Magdalene and the apostles because of His death, with the pain of a woman giving birth.

In this way, Jesus personally made the connection between His birth and His death, through the pain that people will experience in both cases.

Notice that Jesus said the joy comes after the pain. (Do not read: “but as soon as she has **given** **birth** to the child, she no longer remembers the **anguish**, for **joy** that a human being has been born into the world. **Therefore you now have sorrow**; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.” (John 16: 21,22).

Mary from Nazareth had the sorrow and pain of the childbirth, which turned into great joy when Jesus was born.

Likewise, the sorrow of Mary Magdalene turned into great joy when she saw Jesus alive on the morning of the resurrection! (John 16:20-22 and John 20:15-16,18)

Mary of Nazareth experienced twice this extreme pain that turned into joy.

On the day Mary first brought Jesus to the temple, the prophet Simeon prophesied that the sword would pierce her heart (Luke 2:35) and this happened when Jesus was condemned to the cross and died.

The pain because of the death of her child turned into great joy at the moment when Jesus was resurrected, as well as when he was born.

**Miracle: Getting out of a place where no one has been placed before**

When we read the Bible, we should notice the details that are highlighted, because there is a purpose why an event was emphasized.

For example, the Bible says Jesus was buried in a new tomb, in which no one had been buried before ("Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before.") Luke 23:53.

At first, it seems this detail was not important for the very death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

However, it is emphasized that Jesus was buried in the tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, where no one had been buried before, cutted out of the rock, not in a regular tomb as expected (“and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock” Matthew 27:60)

It is also emphasized that at birth, Jesus was placed in an unusual place - in the manger, instead of in the crib as would be usual.

Unusual details are emphasized, to make us realize this is not an accidentally fulfilled prophecy, in which the behavior of the people is typical.

The emphasis on unusual occurrences removes the possibility that it is a coincidence. Fulfillment is usually the only historical event that has taken place in such a way.

Jesus was **born in a supernatural manner** and He came out of the grave in **a supernatural manner**, by resurrection.

Not only was Jesus laid in a tomb in which no one had been buried before, but Jesus also came out of a tomb in which no one had been laid before.

If you are wondering what this parallels with the birth of Jesus, remember that Mary of Nazareth was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus. "How can this be, since I [[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-24928g)]do not know a man?" Luke 1:34

There were no children in Mary's womb before the birth of Jesus. Jesus was miraculously born from a womb in which no one had been placed before (Luke 1:34).

If this sounds like an inappropriate interpretation to you, you should look at how the Bible describes the tomb, that is, the land in which the dead person is buried.

God created the first man, Adam, "of the dust of the ground," and after falling into sin, people were told they would return to the dust of the ground, which means, they would die.

All the chemical elements of the human body are in the earth. When a man dies, the body disintegrates and returns to the dust of the ground.

That is why the writers of the Bible viewed the earth as the womb of the human race, the womb from which humans descended when God created us.

That is why Jesus described to Nicodemus the process of salvation as a new birth, because the old sinful man should die, and a new man should be born to live without sin.

God will also raise all the dead from the dust of the ground where they are laid, to receive eternal life or eternal death.

Job also spoke of the earth as the womb. When trouble befell him, he said that just as he came into this world through his mother's womb (or without property), so will he (also without property) return "there" - to the grave (Job 1:21), not to the mother's womb.

Job saw by faith that he would await the resurrection from the earth as a womb (Job 19:26).

David also spoke of his mother's womb where he was "assembled", as if it had been created in the depths of the earth!

"For You formed my inward parts; You **covered me in my mother’s womb**. I will praise You, for [g]I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully **wrought in the lowest parts of the earth**.” (Psalm 139:13-15).

When we know the biblical analogy between the womb, from which a child is born, compared to the earth from which the first man Adam was created, we can easily understand how the Old Testament reader could understand the fact that Jesus was born from a womb that did not give birth, which symbolizes Him after the resurrection coming out of the grave in which no one was laid before.

**Wrapped in cloth**

Joseph and Mary were alone when Mary was born. Since Mary has just given birth,

Joseph washed the baby's body from the blood after birth, according to the regulation that God prescribed for cleansing from blood.

Blood washing was necessary at least to prevent infection.

In a similar way, the body of the deceased is washed before burial, and in the case of Jesus, it is also washed with blood, as well as at birth.

This was done again by Joseph — but from Arimathea, who took the body from Pilate (“When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.” Matthew 27:59).

After the birth, Jesus was wrapped in a cloth as usual, in order to prevent hypothermia in the baby (Luke 2.7), that is, lowering the body temperature below normal.

After his death, the body of Jesus was also wrapped in cloth according to the custom: "Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the **custom** of the Jews is to bury." John 19:40

The custom of burial by wrapping in cloth can also be seen when Jesus resurrected Lazarus, and the first thing He asked people to do was to remove the cloth with which Lazarus was wrapped.

"And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him, and let him go.’” John 11:44

In both cases, the cloth was wrapped by Joseph, first by Joseph of Nazareth and second by Joseph of Arimathea (John 19: 38–40).

**Manger**

The wrapped child was placed in a manger.

In this unusual cradle, Jesus as a baby looked similar to the day he was buried in a stone tomb.

The wrapped child in the manger looked like a dead man wrapped in cloth in a coffin to be buried, exactly like Jesus on the day they buried him.

In both cases, someone else had to take care of Him, because He could not take care of himself. The child was alive, but looked as ready for the funeral.

When people imagine what the manger in which Jesus was placed looked like, under the influence of Christmas postcards and movies, people imagine wooden mangers.

However, in Syria and Palestine, mangers were carved out of limestone. Stone mangers lasted longer than wooden ones.

Even today, there are limestone stone mangers in Megiddo, which are as old as 3000 years, and represent a manger from the barn of King Solomon.

The stone manger depicts Jesus' burial even better, as Jesus was placed in a stone tomb carved into the rock (Luke 23:54; John 19:41).

So, the manger in which the child was wrapped in cloth looked like a tomb.

**Angels**

It is interesting that in both events, the angels announced the good news, but people were scared both times.

“And behold, an **angel of the Lord** stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were **greatly afraid**… And suddenly there was **with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host** praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill[e] toward men!’ “ Luke 2:9,13,14.

“But the **angel** answered and said to the women, ‘Do **not be afraid**, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.’” Matthew 28:5,6

"And it happened, as they were **greatly perplexed** about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were **afraid** and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!...”(Luke 24:4-7).

So, both times, at the birth and death of Jesus Christ, angels appeared to announce the good news to the people and to calm the fear people felt.

**Shepherds**

When Christ was born, the angels told the shepherds that the Messiah was born, and sent them to worship him.

On the other hand, among the talents God has given to his people is to be a "shepherd" ("And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors (??? shepherds) and teachers…" Ephesians 4:11).

With the word shepherds, God described the spiritual care for people that He expects religious people to have toward other people, as shepherds protecting the flock.

After the resurrection, Jesus says to Peter, "Feed my lamb." and "Feed my sheep." John 21:15-17

Peter invites other elders of the church: " Shepherd the flock of God which is among you…” 1 Peter 5:2

Peter and John came to the tomb to make sure that Jesus had indeed been resurrected, and later Jesus appeared before all the apostles who worshiped Him, just as the shepherds bowed before Jesus at His birth when they were convinced it was true what the angels told them.

**Sign**

Notice that the angel tells the shepherds that they will see a sign as a confirmation that the child is the newborn Messiah:

"And this will be the **sign** to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” Luke 2:12

The Greek word "sēmeion" means: "???**sign**, miracle, extraordinary event".

The question arises as to what sign it is.

The fact that a child is wrapped is not specific, because every child is wrapped after being born.

The unusual fact is that the child was placed in a manger, and not in a cradle.

This fact helped the shepherds to recognize they had found the Messiah, because this was surely the only newborn placed in a manger.

However, what does this sign indicate?

A child wrapped in cloth in a similar way as dead people are wrapped, lies in a stone manger, and looks like a person before burial.

The child was alive, and from birth it seemed to prophecy his death.

The sign given to the shepherds as good news was that this child was born to die and come back to life again!

This sign was a prophecy that the Messiah would die in the future for the sins of men, be wrapped in cloth and buried in a stone tomb from which he would be resurrected and come out alive.

The sign given by the angels to the shepherds was a prophecy of the mission that Jesus would accomplish at the end of his life on earth.

There is another deep meaning to the sign given to the shepherds.

The manger is a place where cattle are fed and from whence they drank water.

The Bible seemed to indicate that this child would provide spiritual food for spiritually hungry people.

This prophetic sign given to the shepherds at birth is also symmetrical with the Last Supper, the day before Jesus' death.

At the Last Supper, Jesus presented Himself as the bread of life. That is why the place where Jesus was born - Bethlehem, quite rightly bears the name "House of Bread!"

Notice that the shepherds hurried to see the child in the manger, "they came with haste" (Luke 2:16) and that Peter and John, as shepherds of God's flock, hurried to see Jesus' empty tomb to make sure Jesus was resurrected.” (John 20:4) They find a linen cloth in which Jesus was wrapped for burial (Luke 24:12).

**Fragrances**

The next parallel is that at the birth and death of the Messiah, someone brings fragrances.

The sages brought incense and myrrh as a gift, which was used to anoint the dead in order to neutralize the smell of decay ("…they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.") Matthew 2:11.

Nicodemus brought fragrances, myrrh and aloe for the funeral, (“And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.”) John 19:39

- just as the wise men brought myrrh and incense at birth). How strange are the ways of the Lord!

The end of Jesus’ life in these details was incredibly similar to the beginning of His life!

The linen cloth with which Jesus was wrapped was soaked in the spices ("Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.” John 19:40).

On the day of the resurrection, the women also brought incense: "Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him." Mark 16:1

The gold and incense the sages brought, are related to the other parts of Jesus' mission to save people.

**Strangers seek the Messiah**

It should be noted that just as the **wise men from the East**, which means, **foreigners, non-Jews**, sought Jesus at birth, so did the **Greeks (also foreigners, non-Jews**) seek Jesus before Christ's suffering. See how Jesus reacted when He heard that strangers came to the temple and asked to see him:

"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” John 12:23,24

The coming of strangers to see the Messiah, Jesus interpreted as a SIGN, that the time had come for him to die and to be resurrected. How did Jesus recognize this as a sign?

Because the same thing happened when He was born - strangers came to see Him.

If the circumstances of Jesus' birth were a prophecy of His death and resurrection, then the arrival of the wise men (who were strangers in Israel) indicated that before His suffering, strangers would also recognize Him as the Messiah and come to see Him.

That is why Jesus says that the time has come for him to be glorified, so that He will be buried like a grain of wheat in the ground to die, and then He will rise again and produce a lot of fruit - the resurrection of people who believe in God.

**Light and darkness**

At the birth of Christ, the wise men followed the star that led them to the place where Jesus was born.

That star was an unusual light, and the wise men noticed that it moved differently from other celestial bodies, because it could stand above a certain place and continue to move.

"…the **star** which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and **stood** over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." Matthew 2:9,10

It is logical that **supernatural light** of the star represents a group of angels who led wise men and shepherds to the place where the Messiah was born.

On the other hand, while Jesus was on the cross, **supernatural darkness** descended on Jerusalem in the middle of the day.

"Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land." Matthew 27:45

Jesus' birth was a light of the world, and His death was darkness for people who rejected God and condemned Jesus to death.

The star could have led the wise men directly to Bethlehem, but first brought them to Jerusalem.

The question is, why they had to go to Jerusalem first?

Because Jerusalem will be covered with darkness on the day they sentenced the Messiah to death.

**Contrasting feelings: joy and fear**

The opposite is the joy of all who came to see the Messiah who was born, in relation to the fear of the people under the cross when the supernatural darkness descended.

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." Matthew 2:10

"And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned." Luke 23:45,48

**King of the Jews**

Also, at the birth of Jesus, the wise men asked, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" Matthew 2:2

We find the answer to this question at the end of the Gospel, when Pilate ordered them to write above Jesus’ head:

"And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." Matthew 27:37

Jesus came to his own and they rejected him, while the wise men were strangers, but they came to worship Jesus, because they recognized Him not just as the king of Judea, but the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

The religious leaders of Israel were looking to kill Jesus, just as King Herod wanted to kill Him at the beginning, when he heard from the sages they were looking for the King of Judah.

When Herod commanded to kill Jesus, the angel asked Mary and Joseph to take the baby to Egypt, because the time had not yet come for him to die.

However, in Gethsemane, an angel encourages Jesus to surrender voluntarily and be sentenced to death, because the time has come for him to die:

“’Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” Luke 22:42,43

**The Holy Spirit**

Before the birth of Christ, an angel told Mary of Nazareth that the Holy Spirit would come upon her to give her strength from God.

He described the sinless conception of the Messiah, but look at the angel's unusual choice of words:

"The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the **power of the Highest** will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” Luke 1:35

Thus, the Holy Spirit gave Mary the power of God.

After Christ's resurrection, Jesus gave the disciples a similar instruction:

“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” Luke 24:49

They waited until Pentecost for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on them, and to give them the power to speak throughout the world about the salvation that God has provided for us through the Messiah.

"But you shall **receive power** when the **Holy Spirit** has come upon you…” Acts 1:8

So, in this case, too, the Holy Spirit descended and gave them the power of God, which is, "power from on Highest."

God works in a similar way with each individual. He gives us strength by the Holy Spirit, we go through troubles and problems that eventually turn into joy because of the resurrection and eternal life with God after the second coming of Christ.

**God is with us**

The evangelist Matthew said that the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that God would be with his people:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’” Matthew 1:23

At the end of the gospel, the last words that Jesus said to His disciples were: “…and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20

**Why is the birth of Christ important?**

The symmetry between the birth of Jesus and His death and resurrection is striking and beautiful, but the aesthetic exelence is not the main message of the text.

It is obvious that the purpose of the text about Christ's birth was to be a prophecy for Christ's death and resurrection.

People who were present in the last day of Jesus' life and His resurrection could not help but to remember the first days of His life as described to them by Mary of Nazareth, all the miracles outside the natural course of events.

A biblical text that describes the birth of Jesus looks like a mirror in which the events at the end of Christ's life and His resurrection are seen.

The birth of Christ is an echo of the events of Christ's death and resurrection. People who knew how Christ's birth took place, could see the purpose of the child that was born.

Unfortunately, only shepherds, wise men from a distant land and a small number of people paid attention to the birth of the Messiah, so most people were unprepared and disappointed when the Messiah suffered, not knowing that His resurrection would follow.

God inspired the Bible to give us significant prophecies about things we need to know in order to make important decisions for our lives.

As God planned and fulfilled the parallels between the beginning and the end of Jesus' life, so He will soon fulfill the prophecies related to the second coming of Christ.

There were many religious people who distorted God's revelation with their interpretations and traditions, so they did not recognize the Messiah, nor did they believe him.

Only a few sincere people recognized the Messiah and believed in him. In a similar way, people will decide for or against God before the second coming of Christ.

Depending on the decision of every man who has ever lived on earth, God will execute judgment for salvation or eternal death.

Each of us is faced with a choice between life and death, between living with God or without God.

God, who planned all this in the past, will surely fulfill His plan in the future, to remove sin from the universe and save people who have repented of their sin and returned to God.

God has shown that He wills and He can save us, but the choice is ours.