12 Questions & Answers From the Author

Born to Die

(Chuck Bagby)

1. What is your background?

I worked fulltime as an evangelist for ten years, completing foreign assignments in both Honduras and Argentina. Following that, I worked as an international business executive. I dedicated two decades to the business world, during which I always continued to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5 NASB).

I continue to teach today through Burning Heart Bible Studies seminars and books. I conduct *The Jesus Story: What I Wish I Had Known* seminars and write books along that theme and others. I also serve as a Consulting Professor of Biblical Studies for NationsUniversity ([www.nationsu.edu](http://www.nationsu.edu)).

1. What Does Burning Heart Bible Studies do?
   * Burning Heart Bible Studies equips Christians to read God’s Scriptures with confident understanding.
   * We do this through the production of inspirational, fact-based literature and seminars.
2. What kind of people does Burning Heart Bible Studies hope to reach?
   * Burning Heart Bible Studies produces material for Christians who desire to increase their faith by gaining a functional understanding of the Scriptures through inspirational, fact-based literature and seminars.
3. What is your book, *Born to Die,* about?
   * *Born to Die*, the first book of *The Jesus Story: What I Wish I Had Known* series, explores the first 30 years of Jesus’ life on Earth.
   * *Born to Die* reveals the story of Jesus more authentically than ever disclosed since Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It includes little-known facts, as well as details hinted at by Jesus’ original biographers, but never addressed by later writers.
   * Sifting out unverifiable legend and myth, drawing solely on the Scriptures and other ancient historical sources, *The Jesus Story: What I Wish I Had Known* series sets the reader free to explore the genuine history of Jesus’ life and teachings.
4. What motivated you to write this book?
   * After completing three years of research for my seminar series, *The Jesus Story: What I Wish I Had Known*, I decided to put the information in writing for my grandchildren.
   * Anyone having read Burning Heart Bible Studies material has the opportunity to search for truth with a head start, becoming aware of truths I wish I had known earlier in my life.
5. Why did you title the book *Born to Die*?

The title comes from the first chapter of the book. This excerpt from pages 2-3, explains,

“Only the compelling blood of an innocent man’s voluntary self-sacrifice could bridge the chasm separating us from God’s favor.[[1]](#footnote-1) Hence, our dilemma – none of us could make amends for our own misconduct, much less for the wrongdoings of all humanity, because we all have disobeyed God.[[2]](#footnote-2)

To our rescue came Jesus, the Word of God.[[3]](#footnote-3) While maintaining His godhood, the Word emptied Himself of the power and privileges of God to appear as a common human infant when born on Earth.[[4]](#footnote-4) Born to die,[[5]](#footnote-5) He made our reconciliation with God possible by offering *His* blameless blood as an acceptable sacrifice on our behalf.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

1. What differentiates *Born to Die* from other books written about Jesus’ life?
   * Conventional writings either employ a style too academic for mainstream Christians to digest or present material too shallow to nourish their faith.
     + In contrast, *Born to Die* digs deeply enough to cultivate a believer’s faith, yet speaks clearly enough for a novice to understand.
   * Burning Heart Bible Studies draws information solely from the Scriptures and other ancient historical sources.
     + Those who attend our seminars and read our books experience a rational study of the Scriptures, untainted by man-made theologies, unverifiable religious legends, or superstitious myths.
   * Burning Heart Bible Studies promotes a critical-thinking approach to reading the Scriptures.
2. What do you mean by *critical thinking*?
   * Critical thinking requires three elements; reasoning, evidence, and integrity.
   * Critical thinking means to base one’s beliefs and behavior on the exercise of careful reasoning founded on
     + Sound evidence and
     + Intellectual integrity.
3. In *Born to Die*, what are some of the myths, legends, and erroneous religious traditions you sift out of the story of Jesus’ first 30 years on Earth?
   * *Myth/Legend*: Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem alone.
     + Joseph and Mary did not travel to Bethlehem alone, but in a well-equipped caravan of extended family. (See *Born to Die*, subheading “The Caravan,” pages 94-95.)
   * *Myth/Legend*: Joseph and Mary lodged in the stable of the Bethlehem inn.
     + Upon finding no vacancy at the Bethlehem inn, Joseph, Mary, and their extended family would have lodged in the familiar comfort of their caravan tent(s). (See *Born to Die*, subheading “The Caravan,” pages 94-95, and subheading “What About the Stable,” pages 98-99.)
   * *Myth/Legend*: The Magi who visited the child Jesus ruled in their homeland as kings.
     + The Magi who visited the child Jesus in Bethlehem served as statesmen within the Parthian Empire, but not as kings. (See *Born to Die*, subheading “Parthian Empire and the Magi,” page 78.)
   * *Myth/Legend*: The Magi who visited the child Jesus arrived in Bethlehem shortly after His birth.
     + The Magi arrived in Bethlehem six weeks or more after Jesus’ birth. (See *Born to Die*, subheading “When Did the Magi Arrive in Bethlehem?,” pages 104-107.)
   * *Myth/Legend*: Herod’s men killed hundreds of infant boys in Bethlehem.
     + Herod’s men would have killed fewer than 30 boys in Bethlehem. (See *Born to Die*, subheading “Number of Boys Killed,” pages 122-123.)
   * *Myth/Legend*: John the Baptist wore camel hair clothing and ate locusts because he lived as an eccentric.
     + The country folk among whom John the Baptist lived wore camel hair clothing and ate locusts as part of their normal diet, as did John. (See *Born to Die*, subheading “Camel Hair Clothing with a Skin Belt,” pages 153-154, and subheading “Locusts and Wild Honey,” pages 154-156.)
4. Why does sifting out superstitious myths, unverifiable legends, and erroneous religious traditions from the story of Jesus matter?
   * If someone changes the story of Jesus by adding superstitious myths, unverifiable legends, and erroneous religious traditions, how can one trust that person not to alter the teachings of Jesus as well?
   * Corruption of the teachings of Jesus contaminates Christian thought.
5. What translation of the Scriptures do you use?
   * For our studies we typically use the NASU (The New American Standard Bible Update) translation.
     + I have found the NASU to provide the most clear-cut translation offered by traditional publishers.
     + The Lockman Foundation ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)) publishes it.
   * I translate a passage myself when traditional translations fall short.
     + At times, conventional translations fail to render a passage correctly or outright alter it to conform to man-made theologies.
     + In such cases, Burning Heart Bible Studies material translates the passage precisely as indicated by the original text and context.
6. What examples can you give of passages rendered incorrectly or outright altered by conventional translations?

A couple of excerpts from my book *Born to Die* provide examples.

* *Born to Die*, subheading “Joseph the Craftsman,” pages 36-38

“The majority of translators utilize the word “carpenter” to convey the occupation of Joseph. *Xulourgós* (zü-lŏür-gŏ́s),[[7]](#footnote-7) the Greek word properly translated carpenter, literally means “wood worker.” Yet, no writer used *xulourgós* anywhere in the New Testament.

Matthew employed the Greek word *téktonos* (tĕ́k-tŏn-ŏs)[[8]](#footnote-8) to describe Joseph’s trade. *Téktonos* forms the genitive[[9]](#footnote-9) case of the Greek noun *tékton* (tĕ́k-tōn),[[10]](#footnote-10) which means “craftsman.” Bystanders in Nazareth identified Jesus as a *tékton* (craftsman),[[11]](#footnote-11) not a *xulourgós* (wood worker).

The work performed by a *tékton* (craftsman) could involve stone, wood, metal, or any combination of those materials, depending on the context in which a writer employed the word. Luke referred to the silversmiths in Ephesus as craftsmen,[[12]](#footnote-12) calling them *teknítais* (tĕk-nĭ́-täĭs),[[13]](#footnote-13) the plural of *teknítas* (tĕk-nĭ́-tās),[[14]](#footnote-14) a close synonym of *tékton*. Since no biblical text mentions the exact material with which Joseph or Jesus worked, anyone who identifies them as carpenters has done so based on legend. Instead, consider the environmental and cultural contexts of their day.

In ancient Judea, a *tékton* (craftsman) utilized stone to fabricate buildings,[[15]](#footnote-15) city walls,[[16]](#footnote-16) houses,[[17]](#footnote-17) animal troughs,[[18]](#footnote-18) water pots,[[19]](#footnote-19) millstones,[[20]](#footnote-20) and numerous other commodities.[[21]](#footnote-21) They found stone readily available and inexpensive, while craft-quality wood remained a rare and expensive material. Considering these facts, Joseph and Jesus probably worked as common stone craftsmen, not as prosperous wood craftsmen skilled in fine artistic design.[[22]](#footnote-22)”

* *Born to Die*, subheading “The Animal Lot,” page 96

“Stone, abundant and inexpensive, served as the primary construction material in the region. Forests did not grow in the Bethlehem area. Thickets thrived far away along the Jordan River but did not supply material for production of goods. Only the wealthy could afford craft-quality lumber, an expensive luxury imported from distant lands such as the hills of Lebanon.[[23]](#footnote-23) Hence, craftsmen[[24]](#footnote-24) utilized stone to make everything from buildings,[[25]](#footnote-25) city walls,[[26]](#footnote-26) and houses,[[27]](#footnote-27) to water pots,[[28]](#footnote-28) millstones,[[29]](#footnote-29) and animal troughs.[[30]](#footnote-30)”

1. Hebrews 9:22; Leviticus 17:11 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Romans 5:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Revelation 19:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Philippians 2:5-7; John 1:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 10:17-18 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 1 Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 9:26-28; Hebrews 10:12; Isaiah 53:10; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 1:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Xulourgós* (zü-lŏür-gŏ́s), cu/luorgov$ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Téktonos* (tĕ́k-tŏn-ŏs), te/ktono$; Matthew 13:55 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Greek genitive grammatical case denotes possession or a relation similar to possession as in “the son ***of***the craftsman” (Matthew 13:55 BT). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Tékton* (tĕ́k-tōn), te/ktwn [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “Is this not the *craftsman*” (Mark 6:3 BT). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Acts 19:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Teknítais* (tĕk-nĭ́-täĭs), texni/tai$ [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Teknítes* (tĕk-nĭ́-tās), texni/th$ [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Luke 19:43-44 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 1 Peter 2:4-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Luke 2:7,12,16; Ancient writers of English, 14th century A.D. and later, referred to an animal trough as a manger. For additional information regarding the animal troughs of ancient Israel, see *Chapter 5 – The Magi Meet Jesus, King of the Jews*, heading *The Star Stood above Where the Child Was (Matthew 2:9)*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. John 2:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Matthew 27:60 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Joseph did not make a living as a wealthy craftsman. For more information regarding his financial resources, see *Chapter 4 – The Magi Meet Herod, King of Judea*, heading *His Star (Matthew 2:2)*, subheading *When Did the Magi Arrive in Bethlehem?*, subheading *Six-Week Time-Period*. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 1 Kings 5:6; 2 Chronicles 2:9-11 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. For additional information about the craftsmen of that day, see *Chapter 3 – Birth of Jesus, Rescuer of His People*, heading *Joseph (Matthew 1:18)*, subheading *Joseph the Craftsman*. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Revelation 21:14,19; Luke 19:43-44 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. 1 Peter 2:4-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. John 2:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Luke 2:7,12,16 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)