

Maximising Redemption: Overcoming Divisions

'For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.

Ezekiel 34:11

Overcoming Divide and Conquer

The deceiver enjoys "dividing and conquering" God's peoples because where there is disagreement there is the potential to inject poison and stir up trouble. There are many occasions that I've witnessed a long term argument and realized that the people have become so absorbed on winning a particular point that they've lost sight of the bigger picture.

The following is a practical example of where the deceiver had put up rifts to keep an enmity between peoples that should be allies, but can be resolved with a slight shift in perspective. The evolution of the two branches also demonstrates how "evolution" happens in culture once two groups start to diverge. There was an early branching in the Christian churches: the Coptic branches who claimed that Jesus was born in a cave on the way to Bethlehem; whilst the Catholic derivatives claim that Jesus was born in the stable of an inn.

In [Matthew 2:1-11](#) we see that Herod and Jerusalem were concerned about Jesus' birth and that they sent Magi to find Jesus and report back once they had found him. However, the magi were told in a dream not to report back to Herod. One implication is that the infant child's life was at risk, and that God took steps to protect the infant boy. Thus it is not surprising to get conflicting details about the exact location of Jesus' birth. This would have been done by godly people to protect the infant and allow him a chance to grow to fulfill the biblical prophecies. In fact that there are two such robust stories is a compliment to those souls who sought to protect the infant Jesus.

The issue of whether it was the stable or cave is moot. It's a bit like having an argument over whether one should use beta or VHS video. Both systems are functional and the dominance of one over the other is to do with market penetration rather than the viability of either technology.

Further, there is a very good book called "The Jesus Sutras" by Martin Palmer, which shows that some early Coptic Christians laid profound foundations into a welcoming Taoist China as early as 635AD, foundations that are still remembered with affection by the local population when the Dao temple was rediscovered by Christian archeologists last century.

What is important to note is that both branches are hermeneutically consistent. Both versions have Jesus' family being sheltered with sheep, the boy being wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger, and being visited by shepherds and magi. In both models, Jesus is not welcomed by the rich and powerful, but by the humble and contrite. The issue of shepherds is redolent from the Old Testament: [Jeremiah 23:1-6](#) ; [Ezekiel 34:1-31](#); [Zechariah 10:3-4](#).