

## JEROME'S JOTTINGS

### THE CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING DONKEY

*'Little Donkey, little Donkey  
On the dusty road  
Got to keep on plodding onwards  
With your precious load.'*



I reckon that most of us are pretty familiar with this song, often a favourite at Nativity services. Interestingly enough, though, the Bible never makes reference to Mary riding on a donkey. Oh yes, we have seen the pictures and the plays with the donkey there (I even got to paint a wooden one at a school nativity play way back then), but this remains an assumption. There is a good argument that Mary and Joseph, being of the poorer strata of society, were unlikely to have had such a beast as one of their assets. This kind of puts a different picture of the journey to Bethlehem and how arduous it must have been for Mary in her advanced state of pregnancy.

There are quite a few assumptions that we make about the Christmas story:

- There were three Magi – we assume this because there were three gifts, but the entourage is likely to have been quite large given the distances that they travelled;
- That the Magi visited Mary and Jesus in the Stable – actually, the Bible reference is to that they entered the house where Mary and Jesus were;
- Also, from the discussions the Magi had with Herod, it is likely that Jesus would have been about 2 years old;
- The season of Jesus' birth is associated with winter, and we often sing the song 'In the Bleak Midwinter' as part of the Christmas repertoire. It is likely however, that Jesus was born around Easter time, not in the middle of winter.

Now, I don't mean to spoil anyone's Christmas (and maybe you ought to keep the news about the missing donkey quiet with the bairns for a bit), but we do tend to assume things a lot, and this may mean that we fail to see the truths of the story that unfolded those many years ago. The thing that we can be sure of is that this was no ordinary child and that His birth was foretold, steeped in wonder, of humble beginnings and surrounded by threat and danger.

We can also be sure that He did not remain in the manger, but grew to be a Man who changed the world. The truth is, He is still changing the world, even today.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas. I invite you to look anew upon the saviour of the world and allow His Spirit to touch you and draw you closer to the wondrous love of God. That's why he came; of that you can be sure.

**Jerome**

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### SOME CHRISTMAS SAYINGS AND SUPERSTITIONS

Place shoes by side on Christmas Eve to prevent a quarrelling family.

Wearing new shoes on Christmas Day brings bad luck.

You will have as many happy months in the coming year, as the number of houses you eat mince pies in during Christmastime.

A clear star-filled sky on Christmas Eve will bring good crops in the summer

Good luck will come to the home where a fire is kept burning throughout the Christmas season.