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OTHER VIEWS

Good tidings,
great joy

The following month God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin, Mary, engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Congratulations, favored lady! The Lord is with you!”

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean.

“Don’t be frightened, Mary,” the angel told her, “for God has decided to wonderfully bless you! Very soon now, you will become pregnant and have a baby boy, and you are to name him ‘Jesus.’ He shall be very great and shall be called the Son of God. And the Lord God shall give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he shall reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom shall never end!”

Mary asked the angel, “But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin.”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of God shall overshadow you; so the baby born to you will be utterly holy — the Son of God. Furthermore, six months ago your Aunt Elizabeth — ‘the barren one,’ they called her — became pregnant in her old age! For every promise from God shall surely come true.”

Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant, and I am willing to do whatever he wants. May everything you said come true.” And then the angel disappeared. (Luke 1:26-38)

And look! The star appeared to them again, standing over Bethlehem. Their joy knew no bounds!

About this time Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the nation. (This census was taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

Everyone was required to return to his ancestral home for this registration. And because Joseph was a member of the royal line, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, King David’s ancient home — journeying there from the Galilean village of Nazareth. He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was obviously pregnant by this time.

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born; and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.

That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly an angel appeared among them, and the landscape shone bright with the glory of the Lord. They were badly frightened, but the angel reassured them.

“Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Savior — yes, the Messiah, the Lord — has been born tonight in Bethlehem! How will you recognize him? You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger!”

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others — the armies of heaven — praising God:

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,” they sang, “and peace on earth for all those pleasing him.”

When this great army of angels had returned again to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Come on! Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

They ran to the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. The shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds’ story expressed astonishment, but Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and often thought about them.

Then the shepherds went back again to their fields and flocks, praising God for the visit of the angels, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had told them. (Luke 2:1-20)

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. At about that time some astrologers from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the newborn King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in far-off eastern lands and have come to worship him.”

King Herod was deeply disturbed by their question, and all Jerusalem was filled with rumors. He called a meeting of the Jewish religious leaders.

“Did the prophets tell us where the Messiah would be born?” he asked.

“Yes, in Bethlehem,” they said, “for this is what the prophet Micah wrote: ‘O little town of Bethlehem, you are not just an unimportant Judean village, for a Governor shall rise from you to rule my people Israel.’”

Then Herod sent a private message to the astrologers, asking them to come to see him; at this meeting he found out from them the exact time when they first saw the star. Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him too!”

After this interview the astrologers started out again. And look! The star appeared to them again, standing over Bethlehem. Their joy knew no bounds!

Entering the house where the baby and Mary, his mother, were, they threw themselves down before him, worshipping. Then they opened their presents and gave him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But when they returned to their own land, they didn’t go through Jerusalem to report to Herod, for God had warned them in a dream to go home another way. (Matthew 2:1-12)

— Bible, New Living Translation

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

YOUR VIEWS

Blessings for Christmas

There were things I thought important, and times when I thought I knew

As I thought that it should matter to be parked on some church pew.

Times when I thought my opinion would brighten some purpose of life;

For to walk that walk and talk that talk would relieve some of their strife.

Then one day I was asked by a stranger, “Do you know where you’ll go when you die?”

“Well I guess I do as well as you” was my blatant, pompous reply.

He said, “Lie and vent if you want to, but you should know The Father’s plan

Was to send His Son (His Precious Son) to redeem the mortal man.

You see it’s not your works, it’s not your deeds, eternal life’s a gift,

It can’t be earned, it’s paid in full and no way can we assist.

Understand when the time has come and we stand before His throne,

It’s not our walk, it’s not our deeds, but what The Son has done.

Should The Father ask, “Did you go My Way? Child, do you know my Son?” (Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 10:9-10)

Have a blessed Christmas, all.

Frank Vincent
Hermiston

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

Rubio, Cruz and immigration

Republican presidential rivals Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz have been in a fight over immigration recently. At the center of that conflict is the Gang of Eight comprehensive immigration reform bill, which divided the Senate — and the Republican party — over one of the current campaign’s most contentious issues. Here is a look at who did what, and when.

The bill passed the Senate after a series of votes in June, 2013. Democrats, who controlled the Senate at the time, unanimously supported the bill, while most Republicans opposed it. The four Republicans on the Gang — Rubio, John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and Jeff Flake — of course voted for it, and also agreed with Democrats on a plan to kill almost all GOP amendments.

Then-Majority Leader Harry Reid allowed just a handful of amendments to reach the Senate floor. One, from Republican Sen. Charles Grassley, would have prohibited the legalization of illegal immigrants in the United States until after the administration could prove it had maintained “effective control” of the borders for six months.

Rubio voted against the Grassley amendment. Cruz voted for it.

Another Republican amendment, from Sen. John Thune, would have required the completion of 350 miles of fencing along the U.S. border that Congress had ordered in 1996 but had never been completed. Thune specified that the fencing had to be in place before legalization could commence. Thune also would have required the completion of 700 miles of such fencing before illegal immigrants’ legal status could be made permanent.

Rubio voted against the Thune amendment. Cruz voted for it.

The other substantive GOP amendment allowed by Reid was from Sen. David Vitter. It would have delayed the granting of legal status until a biometric visa identity system first ordered by Congress in 1996 had been “fully implemented at every land, sea, and airport of entry” into the United States.

Rubio voted against the Vitter amendment. Cruz voted for it.

Earlier, Republicans offered dozens of amendments to the Gang of Eight bill when it was making its way through the Senate Judiciary Committee. Under a pre-arranged plan, the Gang, including Rubio, agreed to kill any amendments they felt would threaten their legislation.

“The eight met in private before each committee hearing, hashing out which amendments they would support and which oppose as a united coalition,” the *Washington Post* reported in May, 2013. “Senate aides said amendments were rejected if either side felt they would shatter the deal.”

For example, the *Post* reported, “GOP members of the group opposed several tough border-control amendments from Sen. Ted Cruz.”

The public discovered the secret Rubio-Democratic agreement when the Judiciary Committee was considering an amendment which involved giving government payments to former illegal immigrants through the Earned Income Tax Credit program. Sen.



BYRON YORK
Comment

Charles Schumer, the leading Democrat on the Gang of Eight, was caught on an open microphone turning to an aide and saying, “Do our Republicans have a pass on this one, if they want?” It turned out they did, meaning Schumer would allow Gang Republicans to vote against the measure.

Rubio was not on the Judiciary Committee, so he did not vote on the committee amendments. But he was part of the Gang agreement to kill GOP amendments, several of which were from Cruz, who was on the committee.

The Gang of Eight bill came up for a final Senate vote on June 27, 2013. Rubio, as a key author of the legislation, voted for its passage. Cruz voted against it.

Rubio, now locked in a tough presidential primary race, has argued that his position on immigration is similar to Cruz’s.

It’s worth going through history because Rubio, now locked in a tough presidential primary race, has argued that his position on immigration is similar to Cruz’s.

“The bottom line is there isn’t that big a difference between (Cruz) and I on how to approach immigration,” Rubio told CBS News recently.

Certainly in 2013, Rubio and Cruz could hardly have been more different in how they approached immigration. Rubio has since distanced

himself from the Gang bill — his signature achievement in his nearly five years in the Senate — saying that immigration reform cannot be accomplished by one giant bill and instead should be enacted piecemeal. Rubio also says — reminiscent of the Grassley amendment he helped kill — that security and enforcement must be in place before illegal immigrants can be legalized and placed on a path to citizenship.

It remains unclear where Rubio stands on the thousands of other provisions in his 1,197-page Gang of Eight bill. In five Republican presidential debates, he has been asked exactly one question about the substance of the bill. (The question was whether Rubio still supports a path to citizenship; he does, while Cruz doesn’t.)

There’s a chance Rubio will be asked more questions about the specifics of the Gang bill in the weeks before Republicans begin voting in primaries and caucuses. It’s not clear what he will say, although after the recent Las Vegas debate, a spokesman offered a preview of Rubio’s answer.

“The provisions in the 2013 bill were the product of compromise and not what we would have done if we’d written the bill on our own,” Rubio aide Alex Conant said. If a President Rubio undertook immigration reform, Conant added, the results “would not be the same as what the Senate passed in 2013.”

That reasoning gives Rubio a rationale to abandon any part of the Gang of Eight that he chooses. But what happened in 2013 still matters. For one thing, it’s not that long ago. And for another, Rubio himself believes the past is important. “If you’re going to attack someone on a policy issue,” Rubio said on CBS Sunday, “you need to be clear about where you stand on the issue and where you’ve stood in the past.”

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