

Dear Christian friends:

Do you remember all the hype about 15 years back, about something called “Ginger?” People couldn’t stop talking about what it might be. It was a new invention, a mystery, really, that no one knew much about, but what they heard had the nation buzzing. The inventor was a guy by the name of Dean Kamen, and he’s known as one of the great inventors of our day. He made his name by inventing the first insulin pump and the first portable dialysis machines. So people knew he had the goods. Then very famous people began to talk about how revolutionary, how innovative this new machine would be. Steve Jobs, the guy who created Apple Computers, said at the time that this new invention could be as significant as the invention of the personal computer. That’s big press, isn’t it?

Rumors were all over the place. Some people thought it would be a hovercraft. Others a helicopter backpack, or some kind of teleportation device. Whatever it was, everyone agreed, it was going to be big.

Millions tuned in to the *Good Morning America* news show on the day the mystery would be revealed, the day of “Ginger’s” unveiling. And then, after all the hype, Dean Kamen brought out this two-wheeled scooter, called the Segway. And all across America, millions of people collectively said, “*That’s it?*”

For months it was this hyped up mystery. But when it was revealed it was just a two-wheeled scooter with some neat gyroscopes that could go about 10 mph and cost \$4000, in the eyes of the world, the Segway scooter didn’t live up to its hype.

Well, two thousand years ago, there was another long awaited mystery that was finally unveiled. You see, for thousands of years, God had been sending prophets, telling the people that one day a Savior would come. A very special Savior. They called him the Messiah, that means, the

Anointed One. And this Messiah would be powerful, and mighty, and God himself. And this Messiah would come to save all people from their sins.

I mean, this wasn’t just a couple of months worth of hype like the Segway. We’re talking thousands of years of hype. Thousands of years of God’s people waiting for the Messiah and wondering what God had in store for them. The Messiah who would defeat their enemies and usher in the Kingdom of God...what would he be like? When would he come?

If great crowds of those people had been at the Messiah’s unveiling, what would they have said? This was no *Good Morning America* unveiling. It happened in a backyard stable, amid straw and livestock. And if those crowds had been there, they would have looked down into that manger and seen a little baby, an infant, crying and squirming and wrapped in strips of cloth—and they would have all collectively said, “*That’s it? All that hype for this? We expected the Messiah, and what we have here is a baby. That’s it?*”

Yes, if there had been crowds at the manger that night, they would have thought that baby Jesus had failed to live up to the hype. But there were no crowds that night. At the unveiling of God’s Messiah, there were only Mary, Joseph, and a few shepherds. So what did they think? Did *they* think he lived up to the hype?

Luke tells us that Mary ***treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart***. When you ponder something, you are thinking deeply, weighing and considering things. Mary had a lot on her mind. You see, Mary knew the answer to this MYSTERY IN THE MANGER, to this baby that seemed like it couldn’t possibly live up to the hype. God had told her exactly who it was that she held in her arms. Just nine months earlier the angel Gabriel had said: ***The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.***

This wasn’t just a couple of fancy gyroscopes and a high price tag! Mary

knew the mystery, that the baby she held in her arms was the Son of God himself. No wonder Mary *treasured up all these things and pondered them*. She was holding the Son of God, the Messiah, the Prince of Peace in her arms...he just didn't look like it lying there in the straw.

Is that surprising? God himself was born as a baby that night. God himself was mysteriously wrapped in human flesh, born of a virgin. Is that surprising? Not really. He had to be.

There was a once psychiatrist at a mental ward who wanted to try out a new way of helping his patients. His idea was to live for a while among those mental patients in the hospital where he served, to be with them day and night for an extended period of time. And so he moved in behind the locked door, set up his bed in the ward, and lived the routine of the mental patients day after day. Their schedule became his schedule. Their environment became his environment. He experienced the food and the noise and the smells and everything else that they experienced all the time. He was there to help them with their medicine. He would always be around in the midst of their confusion to give a reassuring smile, to place an arm on the shoulder of even the most unattractive and repulsive person in the ward. And in many cases he literally loved those mental patients back into reality and helped them to find meaning for their life. Down on their level, he was able to raise them up to wholeness and give them a new start.

Isn't that exactly what God did for us? He "moved in with us," so to speak, at Christmas and lived with us day in and day out. Our corrupted existence became his corrupted existence. Our fallen environment became his environment. He experienced the ups and downs of life that we go through, including the pain and the troubles. He knows what it's like, because he's been there, down on our level. This little baby Jesus, the One who is truly God, had to come and get down on our level so that he could offer perfect obedience to his Father in place of the perfect obedience we could

not offer. This little baby Jesus, the One who is fully human, had to come and get down on our level so that he could carry our load of sin and die the death we deserve. This little baby Jesus, the Anointed One, had to come, had to get down on our level and make his dwelling among us so we might dwell with him forever. And now because he did come and get down on our level, we not only have meaning for life, we have sins forgiven, we have heaven reserved.

Dean Kamen thought that the Segway scooter would make changes as vast as when cars replaced horse and buggy. But now, the only people really using them are a tourists here and there, and probably a handful of people California. In any case, it didn't really live up to its hype.

But the other mystery...the MYSTERY IN THE MANGER ...That baby lived up to everything. To you a child is born, to you a Son is given and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Glory to God in the highest! Amen.