

What Is Christmas ?

Text : Luke 1: 26-38 ; Matthew 1: 18-25 ; Luke 2: 1-14

- A. What is your favorite way to celebrate Christmas .. or do you celebrate it ?** S#1. S#2.
1. Every area and every family has different customs which they observe.
 2. Surprisingly, Christmas was not widely celebrated in America until the mid-1800s.
 - a. In the 1600s one was fined up to 5 shillings for publically celebrating Christmas.
 - b. Among the puritans merrymaking was widely considered as unchristian.
 3. Christmas began being celebrated in mid-1800s was made a national holiday in 1870
- B. Christmas was ignored for the first 300 years of the church.** S#3.
1. This was because the scriptures make no mention of celebrating the Savior's birth.
 2. When the Roman church began celebrating the birth of Christ, they sought a place to designate as the physical location where Jesus was born. (*church of the nativity*)
 3. There was a big debate about exactly when Jesus was born. (*probably March*)
 - a. Over the years, some groups have claimed that Jesus was born almost every month.
 - b. The doctrine of syncretism motivated the church to settle on the time of Saturnalia.
- C. Christians today differ on if they should or shouldn't observe Christmas.** S#4.
1. Most American Christians observe it, but celebrate it for different reasons.
 2. Some feel it is wrong to celebrate Christmas as the birth of Christ, **just cultural**.
 3. The scriptures give Christians the right to celebrate whatever special day they want.

Rom. 14: 5-9 One person regards one day above another, another regards S#5. every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.
6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. **7** For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; **8** for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

 - a. The scriptures tell us to do what we are convinced to be correct.
 - b. The scriptures also tell us to make our choice motivated by a desire to glorify God. S#6.
- D. Therefore, Christmas is not a religious test .. it's not a sin if you get it wrong !**
1. A Christian can observe it purely as a national holiday.
 2. Or, a Christian can observe it in honor of the birth of the Savior.
 3. One can even be a scrooge and not observe it at all, but he *may not belittle celebrants*

I. Our Savior's birth is part of the overarching theme of the whole bible.**S#7.****A. The birth of Jesus was planned before the creation of the world.****S#8.**

I Pet. 1: 20-21 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

S#9.**B. The good news of His birth was first proclaimed to Satan and the first couple.**

Gen. 3: 15 – And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.

S#10.**C. The birth of Jesus was one of the promises made to Abraham. (Gen 22: 18)**

Gen. 12: 15 – And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

S#11.**D. All of the prophets spoke of the coming of the Christ to earth. (cf- Acts 10:43)**

Isa. 9: 6 – For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

II. Why was Jesus born? God was born of a woman to enable Him to die.**S#12.****A. God / Jesus became flesh so He could die to pay the penalty for our sin.****S#13.**

1. God is a Spirit so He cannot die. .. **John 4: 24** – God is a Spirit ... must worship in ...
2. In order to pay the penalty for sin, blood must be shed and a death occur.
 - a. **Rom. 6: 23** – The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life ...
 - b. **Heb. 9: 22** – And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.
3. A spirit can neither shed blood nor die so God had to take on flesh so He could die.

S#14.**B. More than an animal sacrifice was required to substitute for a man or all men.**

1. **Heb. 10: 4** – For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
2. The death of one man could not pay the penalty for the sin of many men.

C. God came to earth in the form of a man to pay the penalty for man's sins.**S#15.**

1. John the baptizer identified Jesus as the one to be sacrificed to pay for sins.

John 1: 29 – The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said,
“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

2. Jesus identified Himself as one who came to die for the sins of others.

Mark 10: 45 – **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**

D. The angels identified the birth of Jesus as the arrival of the Savior.

S#16.

1. To Joseph the angel said,

Matt. 1: 21 – **“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus (Joshua, Savior), for He will save His people from their sins.”**

2. To the shepherds the angels said,

Luke 2: 10-11 But the angel said to them, " Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; **11** for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

III. God sent His Son Jesus to be an offering to pay the penalty for your sins.

S#17.

A. Jesus did not come into existence when he was born of Mary.

S#18.

John 1: 1, 14 – **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... **14** And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

B. Jesus left Heaven voluntarily to become the Savior of mankind.

S#19.

Phil. 2: 5-8 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. **8** Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

C. God sent Jesus according to a specific timetable to do a specific task.

S#20.

1. **Gal. 4: 4** – **But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,**

- a. **“born of a woman”** He had all of the frailties, weaknesses and temptations of man.
- b. **“born under the Law”** He was required to keep the whole law perfectly.

S#21.

2. What is the fullness of time .. ? **Deut 29:29** ? .. He came at a unique time in history.

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| a. Global citizenship ... safe passage | d. Global peace ... 200 yrs. |
| b. Global language ... koine Greek | e. Global decadence |
| c. Global transportation ... Roman safety | f. Global expectancy |

S#22.

IV. Even as today, received by some with joy and reverence, but rejected by others.

A. The shepherds joyfully sought Jesus and told others about Him.

Luke 2: 15-17 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. S#23.

B. Wise men came from far away in the East to worship Jesus. (Matt. 2) S#24.

1. While Daniel was a captive He told king Nebuchadnezzar about a great king to come.
 - a. **Daniel 2: 2** ... called in magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans
 - b. Dream = Statue with golden head, silver chest, bronze abdomen, iron legs, ft clay
 - c. A stone not made with hands would destroy all and reign forever.
2. Magi saw the star of this great king appear and sought him out. (*Shakina glory ??*)

* *They followed a bright light ... celestial stars don't turn or rest over a house.*
3. The magi worshipped the sovereign king. S#25.
 - a. Gold ... proper gift for a king
 - b. Frankincense ... aromatic resin used in incense
 - c. Myrrh ... Myrrh used for the embalming

S#26.

C. Herod sought to kill the child. Many don't want Christ to rule their life.

CONCLUSION :

A. Still today, all men have one of these responses to the Christ. S#27.

1. As the shepherds, we receive Him with joy and tell others about Him.
2. As the wise men, we worship Him and go out another way.
3. As did Herod, some oppose Him as a rival and try to prevent His influence in life.

S#28.

B. Today is a day when we praise God for the gift of salvation in the person of Jesus.

INVITATION :

S#29. ... Communion slide

S#30. S#31.

Lesson Text :**Luke 1: 26-38**

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, **27** to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. **28** And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." **29** But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. **30** The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. **31** "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. **32** "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; **33** and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." **34** Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" **35** The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. **36** "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. **37** "For nothing will be impossible with God." **38** And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Matthew 1: 18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. **19** And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. **20** But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. **21** "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." **22** Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: **23** "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." **24** And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, **25** but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Luke 2: 1-14

1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. **2** This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. **4** Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, **5** in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. **6** While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. **7** And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. **10** But the angel said to them, " Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; **11** for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12** "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." **13** And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."