

A close-up photograph of a snow-covered evergreen branch. A gold star ornament hangs from the branch. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white, suggesting a snowy outdoor setting.

Christmas Truths

Return Church
December 8, 2024

2 Competing Celebrations

The Birth of Christ

- Christmas
- Reality/history
- Merry Christmas
- Jesus Christ
- The Tree of Life
- The Light of the world
- God's grace
- Christian Christmas songs

The Secular Winter Holiday

- X-Mas, or CMAS
- Make believe/a fairy tale
- Happy Holidays
- Santa Claus
- The Christmas Tree
- Christmas lights
- Giving gifts for good behavior
- Secular Christmas music

Joy and Peace

This Christmas don't look for joy and peace in the lights, the gifts, the tree, the food or the family. Instead look to Jesus, the reason for the season. He brings real joy and peace.

Here are two examples of competing types of Christmas music.

You better watch out

He's making a list
And checking it twice;
Gonna find out Who's naughty and nice
Santa Claus is coming to town
He sees you when you're sleeping
He knows when you're awake

He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness sake!
O! You better watch out!
You better not cry
Better not pout
I'm telling you why
Santa Claus is coming to town
Santa Claus is coming to town

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

- Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
- Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
- Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth









Light

- To understand Christmas is to understand basic Christianity, the Gospel.
- This world is a dark place, (full of ignorance and evil), and we will never find our way or see reality unless Jesus is our Light.
- The sun gives us life. If the sun went out, we would all freeze to death. This is a picture of the Son of God. We need to orbit around Him and not try to get others to orbit around us.
- If you try to drive your car at night without any lights on, you will more than likely crash.
- Everyone in the world needs the Light, whether they realize it or not.
- Many of these thoughts are from a book: **Hidden Christmas** by *Tim Keller*

Isaiah 9

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.....For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ***Isaiah 9:2,6 NKJV***

This was written 700 years before the birth of Christ Jesus.

Light

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned. ***Matthew 4:16 NKJV***

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. ***John 8:12 NKJV***

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ***1 Peter 2:9 NKJV***

Hostility

God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ***John 3:19-20 NLT***

Traditional Christian beliefs are now becoming seen as dangerously intolerant. The Gospel message brings hostility from some. There is a huge percentage of the US population that hate what real Christians stand for and believe.

People got mad at Jesus everywhere He went. If you follow Him and identify with Him, they will get mad at you too.

A Child is born

- Wonderful Counselor
- Mighty God
- Everlasting Father
- Prince of Peace

You can't just like Jesus Christ. Either you are scared of Him, furious with Him, or you kneel down and worship Him. If the baby born at Christmas is the Mighty God, then you must serve Him completely.

A Son is given

- It is a gift of grace.
- The only way to receive it is to admit it's an underserved grace.
- You have to swallow your pride.
- You are not somebody who can pull yourself together and live a moral and good enough life to save yourself.
- You have to admit you are a sinner.
- You need to be saved by grace.
- You need to give up the control of your life.

Grace

Christmas means salvation doesn't come by your good works. Many say, doctrine doesn't matter, what matters is that I live a good life. That is your doctrine of good works. You are trying to save yourself. Christmas means that salvation comes by grace.

The foundational truth from which we can proceed to learn the many truths of Christmas is this: you must admit you cannot save yourself without the light of His unmerited grace in your life.

The genealogy of Jesus

This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).....Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab). Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth). Obed was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).....Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah. ***Matthew 1:1-3,5-6, 16 NLT***

Genealogy

- Matthew didn't begin with a "Once upon a time" story.
- No, it is not a fairy tale, legend or myth.
- He begins with a genealogy of Jesus Christ. He is grounding what Jesus is and does in history. Jesus is not a metaphor. He is real. This really happened.
- Why is that important?

The Difference in Religion and Christianity

Advice

- Religion is advice.
- Is counsel about what you must do.
- Urges you to make something happen.
- Says its all up to you to act.
- Says try to save yourself.
- Many religions say you must struggle, perform, pray and obey, conform to their standards.
- You need to come up to God; or climb the ladder to God.
- Religious leaders show you the way.

News

- Christianity is good news. The Gospel.
- Is a report about what has already been done.
- Urges you to recognize that something has already happened and to respond to it.
- Says someone else has acted.
- Says God has come to save you.
- The Gospel is not telling you what you should do, but rather what God has done.
- Jesus says, I came down to you.
- Jesus says, I am the way.

The Mothers of Jesus Christ

- This was a way of saying to the world, “This is who I am.”
- There are 5 women in the genealogy of Jesus.
 - **Tamar**, a Gentile, tricked her father-in-law, Judah into sleeping with her.
 - **Rahab**, a Canaanite, also a prostitute.
 - **Ruth**, a Moabitess. (a racial outsider)
 - **Bathsheba**, widow of Uriah. (David committed adultery with her and murdered him.)
 - **Mary**, a poor teenage virgin.

Here you have moral outsiders, adulterers, adulteresses, incestuous relationships, prostitutes, moral failures, cultural outsiders, racial outsiders. Jesus's family tree was very dysfunctional.

The law said don't touch them you will be unclean. Grace says touch Jesus and He will make you clean.

Grace

It is not the good people who are in and the bad people who are out. Everyone can be in by the grace of Jesus Christ. It is only what Jesus has done for you that can give you right standing with God.

There is no one, then, not even the greatest human being, who does not need the grace of Jesus Christ. And there is no one, not even the worst human being, who can fail to receive the grace of Jesus Christ if there is repentance and faith.

Christianity

If you think Christianity is mainly going to church, believing a certain creed, and living a certain kind of life, then there will be no wonder about the fact that you are a believer. If someone asks you, are you a Christian, you might say, of course I am. Its hard work, but I am doing it. Christianity in this view is something done by you.

If Christianity is something done for you, and to you, and in you, then there is a constant note of surprise and wonder. So if someone ask you, are you a Christian, you should say, Yes, I am, and it's a miracle. Me! A Christian. Who would have ever thought it? Yet He did it and I am His.

The Fathers of Jesus

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.

Matthew 1:18-23 NKJV

Joseph

- Have you ever thought about what Joseph had to face. It took great courage for him to obey God.
- Their reputation was ruined. Nobody was going to believe the story that the Holy Spirit was the real Father.
 - Either they thought that Mary cheated on Joseph. Or they thought that they had sex before they were married.
- Many people have to suffer for their faith in Christ.
- In many non-Western Countries a profession of Christian faith can be dangerous to your very life.

Immanuel

- Jesus is God, He is human and He is with us.
- God is His real Father and Joseph is his Father in a secondary sense. Mary is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. God is the Father and Joseph would raise him.

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. ***Isaiah 7:14 NKJV***

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us. ***Matthew 1:23 NKJV***

Immanuel

Jesus is fully (100%) God and fully (100%) human.

Jesus was not just a prophet or teacher telling us how to find God, but rather He was God Himself who came to find us.

In Jesus the ineffable, (indescribable, unspeakable), unapproachable God becomes a human being who can be known and loved. He came as a baby, because this time He has come not to bring judgment but to bear it, to pay the penalty for our sins, to take away the barrier between humanity and God. Jesus is God with us.

Draw near to God

Christmas means that God has gone to infinite lengths that you may come near God. That you may have intimacy, communion, fellowship with God. So that you could know Him personally.

Now you need to go to lengths to get close to Him.

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. **James 4:8 NKJV***









Think about God becoming a baby

God became a man; the divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child..... The babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation. ***J.I.Packer***

Mary did you know

That your baby boy
Would one day walk on water?

That your baby boy
Would save our sons and daughters?

This Child that you delivered
Will soon deliver you.

And when you kiss your little baby
You've kissed the face of God?

Mary, did you know
That your baby boy
Is the Lord of all creation?

Did you know
That your baby boy
Was heaven's perfect Lamb?
And the sleeping Child you're holdin'
Is the Great I Am!

Christmas

- The main idea behind the meaning of Christmas is that God came to earth, by becoming a human being. Born of a virgin, God entered the earth as a baby. Immanuel, God with us.
- He then went on to live a sinless, perfect life, without blemish, without spot, for 33 ½ years. He fulfilled the law of God. He did something none of us could ever do, He lived without sin.
- He then went to Calvary's cross where He took the sins of the world upon Himself. He actually became our sin and He bore the judgment and wrath of God for us, on our behalf, as our substitute.

It is well with my soul

*The bliss, oh the bliss of this glorious thought,
my sin not in part by the whole,
Is paid on the cross and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord Oh my Soul.*

PSA

Penal Substitutionary Atonement. In the simplest possible terms, the biblical doctrine of penal substitution holds that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross takes the place of the punishment we ought to suffer for our sins. As a result, God's justice is satisfied, and those who accept Christ can be forgiven and reconciled to God.

The word *penal* means "related to punishment for offenses," and *substitution* means "the act of a person taking the place of another." So, *penal substitution* is the act of a person taking the punishment for someone else's offenses. In Christian theology, Jesus Christ is the Substitute, and the punishment He took (at the cross) was ours, based on our sin.

Penal substitutionary atonement

Jesus had no sin of his own. It was not his own penalty that he bore, but he was a substitute for others, for those who would be joined to him by faith. This we call *penal substitutionary atonement* — Jesus reconciled sinners to God by being their substitute, He took their punishment. He absorbed in his person God's wrath against us, because of our sin, that we might be free from sin and its penalty and liberated to enjoy God forever.

*who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. **1 Peter 2:24 NKJV***

The Gospel is being attacked

Their flawed reasoning:

How could God be so angry and wrathful that He would pour out His judgment and wrath upon His innocent Son? No, God is a God of love, He is not an angry God, and He would never send someone to Hell.

They don't understand the fact that God is Holy and Just. And that a price must be paid for sin. God is a God of Justice.

The 2 equal sides of God

Love

- Lamb
- Grace
- Mercy
- Giving
- Forgiving
- Longsuffering
- God loves the sinner
- Saved people go to Heaven

Judgment

- Lion
- Truth
- Holiness
- Restraint
- Angry
- Wrath
- God hates the sin
- Lost people go to Hell

God is Holy and Just

God is not just a God of love. He won't just let you off the hook. God is not going to say, okay, you have been good, I see your heart, I know you didn't mean to do it, I will just let it go. I will forgive you.

God is a holy and a just God. He must punish sin. Someone must pay the price for sin. There is a debt that must be paid.

The exchange

Jesus came as our substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus became our sin and died, so we could become holy and live. We are now holy and blameless in His site.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ***II Corinthians 5:21 NIV***

Where is the King?

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him. When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.....Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also. ***Matthew 2:1-3,7-8***
NKJV

Where is the King?

Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him. When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt I called My Son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. ***Matthew 2:12-16 NKJV***

Where is the King?

- King Herod's reaction to Christ is, in this sense, a picture of us all.
- Only one person can sit on an absolute throne.
- Herod saw Jesus as a threat to his authority.
- The evils of the world all come from self-centeredness, self-righteousness, and self absorption of every human heart. In every heart, there is a little "King Herod" that wants to rule. Everybody wants to boss and control.
- We want everyone to orbit around us and our needs and desires. We don't want to serve God or our neighbor, we want them to serve us.
- There is a deep hostility toward God living in every human heart. (Romans 7)
- "No one is going to tell me what to do."
- Why do you find it so hard to pray? How many times have you said, I will never do that again, only two weeks later you do it again?

Herod's slaughter

Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: A cry was heard in Ramah—weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead. ***Matthew 2:17-18 NLT***

Christmas means that Jesus came to remove the sin problem from our hearts. To remove the hostility toward God that lives deep within each of our hearts.

Altar call

Reconciliation

The idea behind Christmas is that God would come to earth and become a human being so He could reconcile us back to God.

*“Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled” **Hark the Herald Angels Sing***

He reconciled us back to God by going to the cross and dying for us, on our behalf, in our place, so He could forgive and remove our sin. Then He places His righteousness upon us.

What if?

- What if Mary had said, I don't do virgin births.
- What if Noah had said, I don't build arks.
- What if Abraham had said, I don't offer sacrifices.
- What if Joseph had said, I don't lead Egyptians.
- What if Moses had said, I don't build tabernacles.
- What if Joshua had said, I don't lead people into the promise land.
- What if David had said, I don't fight giants.
- What if Gideon had said, I don't fight Midianites.
- What if Solomon had said, I don't build Temples.
- What if Daniel had said, I don't do lions dens.
- What if Jesus had said, I don't do crosses.

No room

And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. ***Luke 2:7 NKJV***

Do you have any room for Jesus?

- In your mind.
- In your heart.
- In your life.
- In your busy schedule.