

Sunday, December 25, 2022 am

## WHY DID JESUS COME TO THIS EARTH

Today, much of the world pauses to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The fact that Jesus was born is certainly some to be remembered and perhaps even celebrated. But how should we do that? To many in the world, Jesus was born on December 25, 0000. There will be special religious services reenacting the “nativity scene”, plays and special performances and services wholly dedicated to remembering that day. Many churches will decorate for the occasion and do other things to celebrate His birth. This year, because Christmas is on a Sunday, some, who normally assemble every week, will take today off for family. Some churches will cancel or abbreviate their services because of the “holiday”.

What we are doing, is what we do each Lord’s day assembling to worship God according to the pattern He has given us. This is no different from any other Sunday. Having said that, because the birth of Jesus is on the minds of so many, I see this as a good opportunity to examine what scripture actually says about His birth and the events surrounding it. So that will be our lesson today.

NOTE: Please understand what I we are about to study is not intended to be mean-spirited, but it is presented with a desire to share the truth of God’s word. As always, I encourage you to have an open mind.

### I. Some observations about “Christmas” and the birth of Jesus

- a. His birth, and surrounding events, is recorded in 2 gospels – Matthew and Luke.
  - i. **Matthew 1:18- 2:23** records the angel appearing to Mary, Joseph being instructed by an angel that she is brining Jesus, Immanuel (“God with us”) into the world. Joseph marries and does not know her until Jesus is born. 2:1-12 records wisemen coming to Jesus and worshipping Him. 2:13-18 records Joseph fleeing to Egypt and Herod murdering all male children in Bethlehem who are under 2 years of age. Then Joseph returns after the death of Herod and moves to Nazareth in Galilee.
  - ii. **Luke 1:26-2:40** records the angelic announcement to Mary (we lean his name is Gabriel – 1:26) and miraculous conception. 1:39-56 records a visit to Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist, and relative of Mary) where she prophecies about who Jesus is. 2:1-7 records the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem where he is born, likely in an animal stall. 2:8-14 records shepherds in the field see an angel of the Lord who pronounced Jesus coming into the world. This is where we read *Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* They are told they would find the babe lying in a manger in Bethlehem. They see angels singing, *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”* The shepherds visit and worship Jesus there (2:15-20). The rest of Luke 2 records events related to His being presented at the temple, according to Jewish law. There are various witnesses and prophecies about Him recorded (2:21-38). The Luke moves ahead to Jesus living in Nazareth (Luke 2:39-40).
  - iii. The only other NT text that addresses the birth of Jesus is **Galatians 4:4**, *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.* There are verses that address His incarnation (that He did come to this earth – Romans 8:3, Philippians 2:7-8, 1 Timothy 3:16, etc.), but nothing that directly addresses His birth and its events.
- b. Concerning the observance of Christmas. Many details of the modern celebration of Christmas are not found in scripture. Examples include:
  - i. We do NOT know the “birthday” of Jesus. The Bible is silent about this. He was likely NOT born on December 25, as we find shepherds in the fields, and it was likely 4-7 years earlier than the calendar established by a monk named Dionysius Exiguus.

- ii. Celebrating the birth of Jesus. There is evidence that around 200 AD, some Christians were celebrating various events in the life of Jesus, including His resurrection (Easter) and His baptism (Epiphany). But it was in the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century (~336 AD), that a festival celebrating the birth of Jesus began. It was at that time that December 25 was also officially recognized as the day. This also corresponded with the pagan observance of the Mithraic sun god and the winter solstice (the beginning of winter). Pagans observed that day as the beginning of the harvest cycle (the supposed “birth” of a new sun, hence the shortest daylight of the year). The precursors to Catholicism spiritualized the pagan festival as “the Feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness.” In Rome. It was around a century later that it became popularized.<sup>1</sup>
- iii. The word “Christmas” – which literally means the “mass of Christ” (a Catholic term), is not found until the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is NOT found anywhere in scripture. NOTE: The word has been secularized to recognize a national holiday, with national traditions and encouragement to show goodwill to all men.
- iv. The manger scene often depicted shows 3 wise men along with shepherds, animals, Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus. The Bible indicates that the wise men were not there at His birth. See Matthew 2:1-12. After finding Herod they go to Bethlehem where they find the “young Child” with Mary (2:11). We do NOT know how many there were, but they brought 3 gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (likely the source of confusion). NOR do we know their names.
- c. Nowhere are we told to celebrate His birth. There is NO Biblical authority for churches to set aside a special day and create special observances or a festival to commemorate His birth.
  - i. It is simply not there. What is observed in churches today is the traditions of men. And that is a concern, especially when it becomes engrained to the point that most assume it is a part of God’s word, and what He expects.
    - 1. Galatians 4:9-10 says, *But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.*
    - 2. Matthew 15:3, 8-9 Jesus noted, that we should not transgress God’s commandments with our traditions. To do such is vain worship.
  - ii. God has given us a pattern for the church. (Ephesians 3:10-11) It was part of His eternal plan and a manifestation of His wisdom. Because of this, we need to respect His pattern and boundaries in everything we do together (work, worship, organization, teachings, etc.). As we have shown, New Testament churches did NOT celebrate the birth of Jesus with any special services. We have seen that historically and scripturally. Let us respect God’s pattern.
  - iii. One might say, but isn’t it good to remember His birth? The answer is YES! I 100% agree. But HOW should we do that? Through worship and study of His word. We may sing songs about His birth, pray, thank God for sending Jesus, and study what scripture teaches about it. All this can be done while still following God’s pattern of worship.
  - iv. We ARE told to remember His death and resurrection. Each Sunday we partake of the Lord’s Supper following the authorized command of scripture. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26ff.
  - v. Consider: Having the example of what we ARE to observe, the silence of scripture (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6) ought to be respected as to what we should NOT do as the Lord’s church.
  - vi. Therefore, what you are observing here today is no different that what we do every Sunday.

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<sup>1</sup> Jenkins, Ferrell. Many of these details borrowed from an article, “The Truth About Christmas”, found at [\(Xmas05.vp \(bibleworld.com\)\)](http://Xmas05.vp(bibleworld.com)) (12/22/2022)

- vii. What about secular and personal observances? Time will not permit a discussion of this, but suffice it to say, what you choose to do privately – e.g. observe secular customs of the holiday – is left to your discretion. Romans 14 fits into this discussion (whether or not you observe a day, observe it to the Lord). Just make sure you are fully convinced in your own mind about this (Romans 14:5, 23-24).
- d. Thought: Is God pleased when we only pause 1 or 2 days a year to think about Him? Matthew 6:33.
- e. Having said all of this, because the birth of Jesus IS on the mind of many, it IS a good time to pause and consider why Jesus came to this earth. So let us briefly consider WHY Jesus came to this earth!

## II. **Why did Jesus come to this earth?**

- a. Understand, Jesus DID come to this earth, and we firmly believe that. It is in the Bible and recorded as a historical event. We addressed this earlier in this lesson. So, because of that, let us take a few moments to consider why Jesus came to this earth.
- b. **Ultimately to save us** – 1 John 4:14 – He sent His son to be the Savior of the world. John 3:16-17 - God so loved the world. Philippians 2:5-8 notes that Jesus left heaven ultimately to die for us on the cross. Without His death AND resurrection, we would not be saved AND we would be without hope.
- c. **To reveal the Father to us** – John 1:18, *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* John 14:9, *Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* Hebrews 1:3 notes how God "in these last days" has spoken to us by His Son, *who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.* We know who God is, because Jesus came to this earth. Remember, as Mary was told she would give birth to Him, His name was to be, "*Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'*"
- d. **To give us an example of how to live -**
  - i. **We CAN overcome and resist temptation** – 1 Corinthians 10:13 gives us assurance that we can overcome temptation (to sin). We have Jesus as an example – Hebrews 4:14-15 notes that through Jesus we are to hold fast our confession, *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.* If we study how Jesus lived, we know that we can overcome whatever temptations come our way. Remember how He overcame the temptations of Satan – Matthew 4:1-11 – He knew and answered him with scripture each time.
  - ii. **We can forgive** – as we have noted on many occasions, forgiveness is crucial to our standing before God. How we forgive is how we are going to be forgiven – Matthew 6:14-15. Ephesians 4:32 - *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*
  - iii. **We can serve others** – Galatians 5:13 calls for us to through love serve one another. God is watching to see how we treat each other. John 13:12-17, after washing their feet, Jesus said, *"I have given you an example...";* Luke 22:24-27 – as Jesus dealt with disputing apostles, He noted, *"I am among you as one who serves."* Again, He is calling for them to be servants. And again, Matthew 20:25-28 on another occasion with more disputes.
  - iv. **We can endure sufferings and trials** – 1 Peter 2:21-24. We will never outdo Jesus considering the sufferings He endured for us! But we can learn from Him if we are called upon to suffer for His cause.

And thus we can WHY Jesus came to this earth. This is a basic lesson with fundamentals we need to understand and remember.

As I close, I want to make an observation. I have shown there is no authority for a holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus and as such, churches ought NOT to do anything different than what they normally do. And I

personally believe this ought to be made clear when we assemble, lest we leave confusion to some in the audience. BUT one thing I can say I appreciate about this day: It declares to the world that Jesus came to this earth. As more and more of the world tries to do everything it can to stamp out the Christian faith, every year people are still REMINDED of the reality of Jesus, even if it is NOT the way God instructed us to do so. That is a small victory for the faith. Nevertheless, let us pause OFTEN (not just once a year) to consider why Jesus came and the hope we have because of it. And let us resolve that we are going to live for Him, not just a day or two, but throughout the year. What about you? Is the Lord the priority of your life? Think about it!