

## What's Special about Christmas?

All over the world, Christmas is regarded as a holiday of peace, joy, and hope. It is a time when families come together in good spirits; children anticipate receiving special gifts which they are not able to procure for themselves; and the cold deadness of winter (especially in Buffalo!) is interjected by a time of almost magical warmth and vibrance. Meanwhile, seasonal decorations and music bear witness of an old, old story which is sometimes forgotten...

*“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:10-14)*

Christmas has come to represent peace and joy because of its association with the birth of Jesus Christ—one of the most important events to ever happen in the history of the world. Even our calendars are dated by the birth of Christ, as in B.C. (“before Christ”) and A.D. (*anno domini*, or, “the year of our Lord”). When we cite the current year as 2017, we are saying it has been 2,017 years since the birth of Jesus. But why is the birth of Jesus Christ so significant?

Let's go back to the very beginning. God made Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden. He gave man only one rule: don't eat THIS particular fruit! But deeper than the commandment itself was the decision man had to make: “Will I obey God, who has always been good and kind to me, and seeks my good? Or will I sin against him and do whatever I want, no matter the consequences?” Adam made the wrong choice in the garden: he sinned, and his sin separated him from the presence of God.

Adam and Eve had children, and their children had more children. As generations have come and gone, all of mankind has followed in the footsteps of our father, Adam. We have all gone astray from God in our hearts, and have all committed our own sins against our righteous Maker. Even good men, like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, who loved God, sometimes had moments where they ignored God or didn't trust him, and fell into sin. Solomon, the wisest man on earth, said, *“For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”* (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

Being separated by sin from the God of light and life, mankind became cursed with darkness and death. The life of man is fleeting—a few short years on earth; meanwhile, he is beset by sorrows of pain, stress, sickness, bloodshed, and death. But some men remembered God, and they knew that he had a solution to this problem. Over a period of several thousand years, God spoke to these men (the prophets) and revealed to them that he would one day send a *Messiah*, or *Christ*. The Christ would bring salvation and light to the world, and restore the peace and joy that had been lost to sin.

Those who believed God and his prophets looked forward to the coming of Christ (John 4:25; John 7:31; John 8:56; Luke 2:26), waiting and searching for the salvation that he would bring (Isaiah 25:9; 1 Peter 1:9-12). When the tidings of Christ's birth were heard, it was a time of great peace and joy because they knew God had remembered them, and was keeping his promise to send them a Saviour! This is something that was awaited for thousands of years of real history, making it the MOST ANTICIPATED EVENT OF ALL TIME!!!

God never told us to celebrate any particular day as “Christmas”; but he DID give us a very special gift that is worth celebrating year after year, century after century, with a message that still brings joy and hope for sinners who seek to be reconciled to God. Seek him, and ye shall find him. I wish you all a Merry Christmas, my friends! 😊

*“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)*