

# Jesus is Who We Celebrate at Christmas

Today we finish up our discussion on celebrating Christmas. We are talking about the reason we celebrate Christmas, Jesus.

Over the past few weeks, we have been talking about different aspects of Christmas. We started out talking about Christmas being an altar of remembrance for us. This gives us the opportunity to share God's plan for mankind with people. We then moved on to the symbols and traditions of Christmas and how they have changed over the years and what they look like around the world. Last week we talked about the music of Christmas and how music used in Christmas carols tells the story of Jesus, God's redemption for mankind, in a way that is easy to understand and remember.

## Introduction

Today we complete the topic with the reason why we celebrate Christmas and who we are celebrating. Of course, the name Christmas gives away the center of the celebration, Christ. Jesus is who we celebrate at Christmas. Today we are going to look at the prophecies of Jesus' birth and how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies foretelling his birth. Finally, we will talk about how we can keep our focus on Jesus in this world that is making Christmas more and more commercial and less and less spiritual.

## Prophecies of Jesus' Birth

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament that foretell the birth of the Christ child or Messiah. We are going to look at a few of those today. First, we need to understand the state in which Israel found itself. At the time of Jesus' birth, Israel was an occupied territory in the Roman Empire. This was not the first time Israel had been occupied by a foreign force, nor would it be the last.

From the time God passed down the law to the Israelites through Moses, all of Israel knew they needed a savior. They knew they could not measure up to God's standards. They knew as we all know now, that it is impossible to not sin and therefore they were constantly making sacrifices. They also knew they needed a leader to lead them back to God. God gave Israel hope through the prophets.

One such prophet was Isaiah and he was with Israel during the Assyrian captivity. God spoke great truths to Israel through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah shared the Lord's message with Israel as they longed for their freedom once again. Let's read Isaiah 9:6.

### Isaiah 9:6

(6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

In this verse, we see a promise of God. God is going to cause a child to be born. Not just any child, but His Son. This points to the first advent of Christ, the birth of Jesus. The second part of the verse points to Christ's second advent when He returns. This is when the government will be upon his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

People knew this prophecy. They watched for it. They waited patiently.

Isaiah gives us another prophecy about the birth of Christ in Isaiah 7:14.



Isaiah 7:14

(14) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

This points directly to Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was of the line of David, as was her betrothed husband, Joseph. This was necessary for Jesus to be king. She was also a virgin. We read in the first chapter of Luke that the angel Gabriel came and visited Mary and told her that God favored her and was going to honor her with being the mother of His Son.

The prophet Micah foretells the location of the birth of Christ, Bethlehem, in Micah 5:2.

Micah 5:2

(2) "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

God is speaking through Micah to tell Israel that a ruler who will preside over all of Israel will come out of Bethlehem, the city of David, and he traces his roots back to before time. This is where the magi from the east visited Jesus and bestowed gifts on him. This is also where Joseph headed the warning in a dream and gathered up Mary and Jesus and fled to Egypt before Herod could kill the baby. This leads to another prophecy found in Hosea 11:1.

Hosea 11:1

(1) "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

This prophecy speaks to the memory of calling Israel out of Egypt after their captivity by Pharaoh and speaks forward to this time when God would call Jesus out of Egypt to return to Israel after the death of Herod.

There are many more prophecies about the birth of Jesus. We may put together a series about these at a later time. It is commonly accepted among Bible scholars that there are over 350 messianic prophecies and Jesus fulfills every one of them. Jesus' birth is truly a miracle of God.

### Keeping Focus on Jesus as We Celebrate Christmas

Bringing this back to our topic of celebrating Christmas, we must remember to focus on Jesus as we celebrate. As we meditate on the ways that Christmas is an altar of remembrance, as we consider all the symbols and traditions of Christmas, and as we enjoy the music of Christmas we must remember to keep our focus on Jesus, not the activities, not the commercialization, not all the worldly hubbub.

Jesus was born into this world for a reason. As we celebrate His birth we must remember why God sent Him and the reason He was born. This is put very simply in John 3:16-17.

John 3:16-17

(16) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.



God loves mankind so much he provided a once and for all sacrifice to fulfill the law. Our sins must be atoned for. We cannot do that ourselves. This is why we read in the old testament that the Israelites had to make sacrifices over and over because there was sin in their life over and over. But God decided it was time. He knew the time was right to put the next step of his plan into motion. That step was to provide a once and for all sacrifice to redeem all of mankind. He did this because he loves us. He loves us so much He sacrificed His own Son so that we could be called sons and daughters of God.

This was not out of condemnation. We were already condemned. We did that ourselves with Adam and Eve's rebellion in the garden. That rebelliousness is ingrained in us. It is the sinful nature. God knows that. It is part of the free will He gave us. God did not send Jesus to condemn us. He sent Him to save us, from death, Hell, and the grave. He saved us from ourselves.

### Jesus is What We Celebrate

This is what we celebrate at Christmas. This is what we think of and tell the story of when asked why we celebrate Christmas. This is what all the symbols and traditions point to. This is what all the music is about. Everything about Christmas is centered on Jesus, God's Son, who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, and willfully gave up that life on a Roman cross paying and paving the way for you and me to return to God.

There is nothing wrong with celebrating Christmas when we keep our focus on Jesus. There is nothing wrong with recreating the first Christmas or setting up Christmas trees and hanging Christmas stars. There is nothing wrong with giving gifts to others at Christmas or singing songs about Christmas. The key is to be sure why you are celebrating and who you are focusing on as you celebrate.

It is said that America will spend 1 trillion (1,000,000,000) dollars on Christmas gifts this year. When your focus is on getting the perfect gift or giving the perfect gift instead of glorifying Jesus with a gift, something is wrong. When the symbols of Christmas start to cause Jesus to fade away out of view and take center stage something is wrong. When your Christmas songs are more about presents, bells, and sleigh rides than about Jesus, something is wrong.

### Conclusion

I encourage you to celebrate Christmas this year for the right reasons. Celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and the reason that He came to earth more than 2000 years ago. Keep your focus on Jesus in all you say, do, and celebrate this Christmas season.

