

CHRISTMAS

Lesson

Christmas: Facts vs. Traditions

This week we pause our current study as we prepare for the advent of Christ's birth and the Christmas celebration. At various times during my teaching ministry, I have taught the lesson below. In this version, I will focus on separating the Biblical facts from the historical traditions that surround Christmas.

We will look at such questions as:

- How many wise men actually visited Jesus at the manger?
- Where did the Christmas Tree come from?
- Was December 25th actually Christ's birthday?
- Where did the "hot cross bun" come from? and others...

I think that it's important to our faith, and to our witness to others, for us to know the real story behind Christmas and the real reason we celebrate.

Now don't get me wrong: I don't have it in for Santa, and I particularly like the flying reindeer, but this time of year I'd rather have you appreciate the real Christmas story. So for this particular Christmas lesson, let's examine the traditions and see if we can separate fact from fiction. Some of our findings may really surprise you.

Read the scripture passages cited below and answer the associated questions.

1. Read Matthew 2:2, Luke 2:21-22 and Leviticus 12:2-8 and answer the following questions about Christ and the wise men.
 - a. How old was Christ when he was visited by the wise men?
 - b. Where did the wise men visit Christ?
 - c. How many wise men were there?
2. Read Mark 6:3 and Matthew 12:46-47. How many brothers and sisters did Christ have?
3. Read Luke 2:8 and Luke 3:23. When was Christ actually born? Do you know why we celebrate his birthday on the 25th of December?
4. Read Jeremiah 10:3-4. Where did the Christmas tree come from?
5. Read Ezekiel 16:4. What does "swaddled" or wrapped in "swaddling" mean?
6. Read the passages below and highlight what the each one says about the reason that Christ was born into the world?
 - a. Romans 15:8-13
 - b. Hebrews 2:10 and 2:17
 - c. John 14:9
 - d. Hebrews 9:26
 - e. Mark 10:45
 - f. 1 John 3:5
 - g. 1 John 3:8
 - h. 1 Peter 2:21

7. There are many verses of prophecy in the Bible about Christ. See if you can list what each of these Old and New Testament verses about Christ and his birth have in common. Compare each Old Testament verse with its New Testament counterpart.
 - a. Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 1:32-33
 - b. Micah 5:2 and Luke 2:4-7
 - c. Daniel 9:25 and Luke 2:1-2
 - d. Isaiah 7:14 and Luke 1:26-31
 - e. Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 2:16-18
 8. See if you can find out where the name "Kris Kringle" came from.
 9. Where did the tradition of "Hot Cross Buns" come from?
 10. Why do some folks refer to Christmas by spelling it "XMAS"? Is there any significance to this spelling?
 11. What does the word "Christmas" actually mean?
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In summary, God, creator of all and sovereign ruler of the universe, knew before he created anything that a sacrifice would be needed if man was to have the hope of salvation. He also knew that only one perfect sacrifice would accomplish this, and that only His Son could be that sacrifice.

And so He chose to send Jesus to earth, as the son of a simple Jewish carpenter, born in a barn, in a stable; and this baby would ultimately bear the sins of the world on a cross. All of this so that, today, you and I can have the hope of heaven – the hope of eternal life through Jesus. His birth meant that that hope was now here among us, and because he came, suffered, died, and rose again, we have the gift of eternal life.

Happy Birthday Jesus, and Glory and Peace and multiplied blessings to all of you who have him as your Savior! If you study with us online and haven't yet accepted Christ into hear, I urge you to make that decision today. He is calling to you as he has called to us. There is room at the cross for who takes this step on faith and believes that He is the only Son of God who died for us, and rose again. What greater Christmas present could anyone receive!?

Thanks for studying this important lesson with us. All of us should know the real truth behind our Christmas celebration.

Merry Christmas everyone, and may God richly bless you during this holiday season!

In Christ,

Wes