

## *Discovering Christmas*

Bridgeway Christmas 2022

### Introduction

- **Santa to Jesus Digging** - What does Santa Claus giving gifts to kids have to do with Jesus Christ born in a manger in Bethlehem?
  - Is “Christmas” Jesus’ Bday? – “Mass on Christ’s Day”, probably not. The Bible doesn’t say. His birth was likely in the Springtime.
  - **December 25<sup>th</sup>**? Norse, Scandinavian winter solstice called **Yule**, Roman **Saturnalia**. Celebrated the worst of winter, breaking for Spring (light/dark)
  - **Gradual Fusion** – Church didn’t celebrate birth, only resurrection (Easter). But eventually it did, and this date was chosen. Dec 25th supported as a Christian celebration by **221AD** and made official by the church **100 years later** (AD336). **Yule** = Christmas Scandinavia **800AD** King of Norway got saved made a law.
    - **We Took it FOR Jesus but...** – curve the other way today. 2019 Gallup poll = **94%** of Americans celebrate, but **35%** = ‘strongly religious’.
  - **Why Santa Claus?** – Dutch St. Nicholas.
    - **St. Nick IRL** - 3<sup>rd</sup> century Greek Christian Bishop, born **wealthy**, parents died in an epidemic. Christian, used all of his wealth to **bless the poor, needy and suffering**. That’s where the whole St. Nick and bag full of presents came from.
      - **Hardcore Nick** – **persecuted** by Diocletian. beaten, imprisoned and exiled. **Council of Nicaea** affirmed Deity of Christ. **sainted** = **gift-giver and protector of children**.
    - **Jolly Elf?** - 1822 ‘*Twas the Night Before Christmas*’.
  - **Why Presents?** – St. Nicholas’; Christian **generosity**; **Wise Men** bringing to Jesus the greatest gift; **blessed to be a blessing**; Gifts = tangible way to show love.
    - **US Cookies for Santa** – **Great Depression**
    - **America’s Love for Xmas** – end of **the Civil War** (family/home) **5 years later Congress = FIRST federal holiday**.
- **The More you Dig** – how do you want to see Xmas stuff? Negative lens or Jesus lens.
- **Bottom Line (Pure to the Pure Titus 1:15 & Taking Territory** – **secular to sacred** – Candy Canes) –
  - **Sometimes we need to dig a little to find the Gold**

## Lesson

- **That's True of God Stuff.**
- **The Christmas Story was Thousands of Years in the Making - Creation...**
  - **The Problem with Mankind –Adam & Eve = Selfishness Kills.**
    - **Sin = Selfishness –\_choosing ourselves more than God.**
      - **Are we selfish?**
      - **Selfish people can't get to Heaven – Broke ourselves, no help and separated from God.**
- **The Jewish Solution (Messiah) –** With the Bad News God launched a Good News Program. **Salvation thru a Messiah.**
  - **Messianic Prophecies –** OT filled with hints. Most over a 1000 years before it happened. Here's what God told us...
    - **God/Man –** A&E heard the Messiah would **come as a human but** revealed later to **be the Son of God**
    - **Universal Messiah -** God told Abraham that the Messiah was **for the whole world not just one select group.**
    - **Messiah = Noah's son Seth, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David's Line**
    - **1<sup>st</sup> Born Male -** God told Moses = firstborn male
    - **Birth Story -** The Messiah would be born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and even called out the time of His birth as well as the exact location.
    - **Ministry Description -** His ministry would **heal the deaf & blind, proclaim liberty. He would ride in a Triumphal Entry on a donkey, be completely obedient to the Father, be known for righteousness, speak in parables, and be called a King...but that hearts will be hardened and He would be considered controversial.**
    - **Detailed Death –** He would be the Good Shepherd who would die for His sheep and for the sins of the world. He would be rejected by His own people. He would be betrayed by a friend, sold for 30 pieces of silver which would later be used to buy a potter's field. His friends would scatter. He'd be accused by false witnesses but He would remain silent. He would be scourged and spat upon. In his killing, He would have his hands and feet pierced and be cursed by hanging on a tree but not one bone would be broken in His body. He would be killed along with bad guys, be hated without reason, be mocked and

insulted. Soldiers would cast lots for his garments. He would be offered vinegar to drink on the cross. His friends would watch Him die from afar. He would pray for His enemies, and when finally dying would commit His spirit into the Father's hands. He would be buried with the rich.

- **Resurrection, Ascension & Reign Forever** – BUT, it also said He would rise from the dead, ascend back up to heaven and rule forever. Ultimately He would create a New Heavens and a new Earth for His people to dwell in eternally
- **All of that AT LEAST 400 years before any of it happened...**
- **People Missed It & Still Miss It** - still don't believe it's Jesus, **even though He fulfilled every single line item** on that list.
- **The Point** – **God was telling us all along how it was going to go. Buried there** in the Bible in our hands had stunning details of what type of Messiah would show up and save us. **Millions missed it and are missing it.** They got lost in distraction and missed the main message.
- **If I tell you the Christmas Story of Jesus would you miss it?**
  - **[recap]** - God sent **angels to Mary (Virgin) and Joseph** and told them quite the story!
  - **[recap]** - She has the **baby in a manger in Bethlehem**, which wasn't their home town
  - **Shepherds see Angels** who have **Great News** for them **[let's read together]**
    - Lk 2:8–16 – *“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, **I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.** <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is **Christ** the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel **a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,** <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” <sup>15</sup> When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has*

made known to us.”<sup>16</sup> And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.”

- **A Few Years Later Wise Men from the East Show up with Presents and a Bizarre Story [Let's Read Together]**
  - Mt 2:1–2, 9-11 - “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,<sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”...<sup>9</sup> they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.<sup>11</sup> And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.”
- **Did You Miss It?** – Here’s a couple things you may have missed that can change your life.
  - **What the Virgin Birth showed us** – prophecy of **Isaiah (Isa 7:14) - 750 years before = a God-Man was being born from her womb.** Jesus was Fully God to take on the sin of the whole world yet also fully human to be our legitimate sacrifice and representative.
  - **What the Wise Men were about** – The Wise Men **weren’t Jews!** not just a Jewish Messiah, for us!
  - **What the Stars represented** – **Before the moving star showed up, there were constellations of stars** showing the Wise Men what was happening. Stars don’t move randomly, they move in a relatively fixed pattern. From the beginning of time,...Micah said, 700 years earlier, = born in Bethlehem.
  - **Why Angels were so excited** – the Angels knew what we didn’t. Commander of the Army of God, the Son of God, the great Logos of creation. **They knew that once He got involved like this, all Hell would break loose (literally), and it did. Someone was about to get saved!**

## Conclusion

- **We are All Lost** - I can guarantee that none of us in this room know what’s happening in either our lives or the world around us. So much seems so chaotic and random. We have big moments that seem to lead nowhere and small moments that we look back on that are pivotal.

- **But deep down in the details**, God is pursuing us (love and grace). Calling us to save us and make us His people.
- **We can get lost in all the noise and distractions** of the world around us and miss the most important meaning of it all, but we mustn't.
  - **This is our time**. This is the time to see what the true meaning of this Season is all about. This is our time to say yes to God and get our lives reoriented with Him in the center.
- **Altar Call & Rededication – Raise your hand**. There's a packet waiting for you out in the lobby under the sign that says "CONNECT" on your way out. Please take one of those. They give you some helpful and valuable info to start your new life.
- **We love you all. Merry Christmas.**