

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



The Celebration of Christmas

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 4:4-5 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 59:1-2 | Matthew 1:18-23 | John 3:16; 14:9
Romans 3:23; 5:10-11; 6:23 | Ephesians 1:13-14 | Colossians 1:19-22; 2:9

SUMMARY

Most people define Christmas by what they see—the trees, lights, shopping, gifts, food, and parties.

However, that's not what Christmas is all about. It's not something we can observe, but is one of the three most important events in human history. God's plan for the salvation of mankind had to begin with the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Without this, there would have been no crucifixion, no resurrection, and no hope for humanity.

SERMON POINTS

Christmas is the celebration of that moment in history when Holy God came down to earth in the form of a virgin-born baby in order to reveal God's love for sinful mankind with His death on the cross, which paid our sin debt in full.

And every year we remember this truth and celebrate what Jesus did for us. He came to earth so that we could go to heaven.

Once we understand the true significance of Christmas, our attitude about the holiday will change. Instead of focusing on all the externals and becoming exhausted with all the preparations and activities, we'll see that Christmas is about Jesus who came to offer us forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.

What does the Bible tell us about Jesus?

The Word of God is the only true source of information about Christ. It's our guide for living and a light to

show us the way in a dark world. If we ignore it, we're like someone who smashes his compass and flashlight and then tries to find his way out of a jungle at midnight. God gave us the Scriptures to reveal Himself and His Son and to show us the way of salvation.

■ **Matthew 1:18-23.** This record of Christ's birth reveals that He was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit, thereby fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy. Joseph was told to name the child Jesus because He would save His people from their sins.

■ **Colossians 2:9.** Jesus wasn't an ordinary man. "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

■ **Isaiah 59:1-2.** The Lord is not unable to save sinners, but our sins have made a separation between Him and us. According to Romans 3:23, we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. This means we have violated His laws and are not what He intended us to be. The only one who can end our separation from God is Jesus Christ. Apart from Him, there is no way for us to come to the Father.

■ **Romans 5:10-11.** Even though we may see ourselves as fairly good in comparison to others, God doesn't see us that way. Our sins make us His enemies. Yet while we were in that state of enmity, Christ reconciled us to the Father through His death.

■ **Romans 6:23.** We also deserve to die and be eternally separated from God because the wages for sin is death. The Lord sent His Son to earth to provide a way to forgive us and rescue us from this condemnation.

■ **Colossians 1:19-22.** Christ paid the penalty for our sins by dying in our place. He made peace with God though His blood shed on the cross. Even though we were formerly alienated and hostile toward Him in

our thoughts and behaviors, Jesus reconciled us so He could present us to His Father as holy, blameless, and beyond reproach. Reconciliation is God's work—His Spirit convicts us of sin so we're aware of our need for salvation, and Jesus paid the penalty so we could be forgiven. When we believe this and accept what Christ did on our behalf, we are cleansed and reconciled to the Father.

- **Ephesians 1:13-14.** Once we have heard the message of salvation in Christ and have believed, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a promise of our eternal inheritance. This seal guarantees that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life and will never be erased. The Spirit comes to indwell us forever, giving us assistance and guidance as we live in this world.

Christmas is a serious time.

Although we usually associate Christmas with happy celebrations, it's also an appropriate time for serious reflection about our eternal destiny. When people are strong and prosperous, they don't give much thought to the day of their death because they can go where they choose and do what they want, but the day will come when we must each stand before God. The Bible clearly shows us the way to be ready for that day, and Christmas reminds us that the only person who can forgive our sins is Jesus Christ. He died in our place, and His resurrection proved that God accepted His sacrifice as full payment for our sins. Because He's alive, we can know we are forgiven. Even when our bodies are placed in the grave, we will immediately be present with the Lord in heaven. This is our living hope that can never die.

Suggestions for Christmas

Because Jesus came to earth, we can think about Christmas in an entirely new way. The trees remind us of the cross where He died, the gifts remind us of the eternal life He offers us, and the lights remind us that the Light of the world now lives in our hearts.

Considering all that Christ has done for us, we should be filled with gratitude at Christmastime.

With all the distractions and traditions of Christmas, we need to be intentional about keeping Jesus the central focus. Here are a few suggestions that may help:

- Open a Bible to the first chapter of Luke and place it beside the gifts under the tree as a reminder to read the story of Jesus' birth on Christmas morning.
- Take a few moments to recall how God saved you. Share your testimony; then thank and praise the Lord for who He is and what He's done. Remember that everything you have is from Him, even your next breath.
- Praise Christ for what He's done for you all year long. And, most of all, thank Him for saving you—not because He had to, but because He chose you.

RESPONSE

- There are two different ways to define Christmas—by the traditions associated with our celebrations today or by the history-changing event that happened nearly two thousand years ago on that first Christmas night. Based on your preoccupations and practices, which definition has the precedent in your life?
- How do all the traditions help you focus on Christ? How do they hinder you from celebrating the true meaning of Christmas?
- What changes do you need to make in your preparations and activities in order to give Christ the preeminence?
- How would taking time for serious reflection concerning your life, death, and eternity make your Christmas more meaningful?

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