

Christmas (2025)

Once upon a time a father asked his young daughter, **“What do you want for Christmas?”**

Following a long pause, she said, **“A baby brother.”**

As it turned out, her wish came true. On Christmas Day her mother returned from hospital with a baby boy.

The following year the little girl’s father asked her the same question. Flush with success from the previous year, she said:

“If it would not be too uncomfortable for mother, I would like a *pony*.” ///

Perhaps you remember being asked that question – What do you want for Christmas?

And if you are a parent, no doubt, you have asked it yourself to your own children. ///

Christmas brings excitement, warmth and comfort . . . at least to many.

The very word conjures up memories. If you are of my generation, these memories might include the arrival of the Sears' Wish Book.

When your parents asked you what you wanted for Christmas, you could turn to the page and show them in living color.

There are other memories as well. For example, putting up the Christmas tree and the smell of evergreens in the house.

And what about the odor of cookies and cakes coming from the kitchen?

Christmas is a season of happy memories and warm feelings.

But as we wax nostalgic, we mustn't forget the sick, the poor, the friendless, the homeless, those whose lives have and are touched with violence, poverty, drug addiction and mental illness, many of whom are on our streets tonight.

The star that began to shine at Christmas is for them as well.

God's people may not be able to solve all societal problems at a moment's notice, but we can be aware and do what we can.

Behind our effort in the present is the knowledge that the day is coming when the effect of Adam's fall on the human race and on creation itself will be canceled and new heavens and a new earth will appear, one in which all tears will be wiped away (Revelation 21).

The reason for this hope is two-fold.

First, it is because the birth of the One we celebrate tonight was real. Jesus is no mythical figure, the creation of men's imagination.

We love the personification of the Christmas spirit seen in department stores and in advertisements this time of year. He wears red.

Let me say from the outset, I believe. When I was in New York City some years ago at Christmas time, I went looking for the Man in Red at Macy's on 34th Street. Sadly, he was off that day. Of course, I was disappointed, but I am still a believer!

With that said, Jesus is the reality of which all the old myths (as touching and winsome as they may be) are imperfect shadows.

Luke's account of Jesus' birth places Him on the pages of history. It does so by naming the Roman ruler at the time of His birth:

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.”

We often pass over Augustus’ name without giving it much thought. We shouldn’t.

Augustus was the founder of the Roman Empire. He reigned from 27 B.C. until his death in A.D. 14. By naming Him, Luke is saying, **“This is real history that I am writing. This is no fable.”**

Matthew’s account likewise grounds Jesus’ birth in history. He opens his Gospel with Jesus’ human genealogy going all the way back to Abraham. The most significant person in this genealogy is David. According to prophecy, it would be from His line a Saviour would come.

Today, we don’t usually read out Matthew’s genealogy in church. It’s hard enough to keep folks awake without making them endure a long

list of names! But these names are there for a purpose.

Among other things, they remind us Jesus was a real historical figure, one who was born into a particular family at a particular time.

Love the Man in Red, but put your ultimate confidence in Jesus. He is the real deal.

But we have another reason to believe a better world is coming . . . a world free from all that is ugly and all that degrades and disfigures humans.

This belief is possible because Jesus was more than a man. He was and is Emmanuel, a name given to Him in Isaiah 7:14 where we read: **“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”**

Immanuel means “God with us.” And that is who Jesus is. He is the God-Man.

He and He alone was able to do what was necessary to break the power of sin and bring about reconciliation between God and humans.

John in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel writes: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”**

Jesus was and is a real man – yes -- but also fully God. His words, work and promises can therefore be trusted.

His gift to the human race goes beyond a bag full of toys which excites and pleases for a few minutes. Rather, His gift is new, restored life.

. . . a life in which the mistakes of the past no longer have to define and defeat.

. . . a life in which we are given power to overcome temptation, to be conquerors instead of victims.

. . . a life in which we are given a new purpose and meaning. Instead of working just to get by, we are enabled to be workers together with God.

. . . a life which begins now and extends for all eternity.

What do *you* want for Christmas?

Settle for nothing less than life, the life found in Jesus.

Turn from the mess you have made of things – that is what repentance is – and join the

shepherds in making the trip to Bethlehem.
There, give your allegiance to Him as they did.

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You won't be disappointed . . . as I was
when I went looking for the Man in Red at
Macy's Department Store.