

“Why Most People Miss Christmas?”

One week from today, most, if not all of you, will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. He is the Reason for Christmas; an yet, most of the world's 7,900,000,000 people will not celebrate the birth of God's Son this year, just as the majority of people didn't celebrate His birth, when He was born to Mary, in Bethlehem, over 2,000 years ago.

The majority of the world's people today reject or neglect God's greatest gift of love to us, His own Son.

The shepherds, on the night of Christ's birth, were given a marvelous message (**Luke 2:11**), "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord." (**14**), "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to [all people] on whom His favor rests."

The first time Jesus came, He arrived in the flesh of a baby, born to a virgin, and only a few shepherds came to witness the Savior's birth. After seeing the baby, we are told (**Luke 2:17-18**), the shepherds went out telling everyone they met about what had happened, just as God's angel had told them.

How about you? Have you taken time to share the good news of Jesus Christ? Or perhaps have you been stressed out because of personal or family problems, health issues, worries about the economy, or maybe you've just been too busy enjoying the season but haven't taken the time or opportunity to tell someone the true meaning of Christmas [**Christ**, Holy One; **Mass**, a religious observance], i.e., Christmas is in honor of Jesus Christ, God's Son, Lord and Savior.

Scripture tells us that when Jesus returns, everyone in the world will see and worship Him (**Revelation 1:7**), "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will worship Him, and will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen."

Jesus came the first time as a helpless baby boy; but He will return (**Revelation 19:16**), as the "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS," (**Philippians 2:10-11**) "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

The Christ child was called Immanuel [God with us], and given the name Jesus [God's salvation]; He is the only means of forgiveness and eternal life, for all people, for all time. In the body of Jesus, God lived among us, died for our sins, was buried, and then rose from the grave, just like He said that He would (cf. **John 10:17-18; Luke 24:45-48**).

The majority of people in the world today will miss Christmas this year, next year, and forever. How can that be? How can anyone miss Christmas, given the history, the amount of publicity, and the commercial promotions that this holiday receives every year?

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For those of us who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, Christmas is a time to focus on His birth. But even we can get caught up in all the activity of Christmastime, forgetting to worship the Savior who has come.

Was He really born in December? Probably not, as most biblical scholars do not consider December 25th to be the date of Christ's birth, and there is absolutely no biblical support for that date. So where did that date come from?

Actually, it was decided upon by the church Bishops in Rome (4th century A.D.). At that time, a majority of the earth's inhabitants were sun worshipers who praised the sun god for our seasons and our crops. They held feasts at the time of the winter solstice (a time when the days are shortest); they built large bonfires in order to implore the sun god to initiate longer days, and as the days grew longer, there was much rejoicing and celebration.

For the Romans, the month of December marked the Festival of Saturnalia, as John MacArthur writes in his book (GOD WITH US: The Miracle of Christmas, pg. 50), “Our focus On December 25 came from the Roman holiday called Saturnalia. This was a pagan observance of the birthday of the unconquered sun. Saturnalia began December 19 each year, which, in the northern hemisphere, is when the days start getting longer, [the celebration] continued with seven days of wild revelry. Many of our Christmas customs have their origin in Saturnalia, which was marked by feasting, parades, special music, gift giving, lighted candles, and green trees. As Christianity spread through the Roman Empire, the pagan holiday was given Christian connotations. In 336 A.D., Emperor Constantine declared Christ’s birthday an official Roman Holiday. Some church leaders, such as Chrysostom, rebuked Christians fore adopting a pagan holiday, but December 25 has endured as the date we celebrate Christ’s birth.”

It is believed by historians that the first Christmas tree was instituted by Boniface, an English missionary to Germany in the 8th century, who supposedly sought to replace the practice of sacrifices being made to the god Odin's sacred oak, with a fir tree that was decorated in honor of Christ. There are also credible accounts claiming that Martin Luther was the first to introduce a Christmas tree lighted with candles.

The name "Santa Claus" is a contraction of St. Nicholas, an actual Christian bishop in Asia Minor during the 4th century, who was known for his extraordinary generosity, and was later associated with the giving of presents at the end of the year. It is said that St. Nicholas was adopted in the Netherlands as the patron saint of children, and on St. Nicholas eve, the children would put out their wooded shoes filled with hay for the saint's white horse, only to find them filled with small toys and candy the next morning.

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With all these historical renditions (whether true or not) of what goes on during Christmastime, is it any wonder that so many people are confused and miss Christmas? The biblical story of the birth of Christ is overshadowed by a multitude of traditions and celebrations today; but the reality is, most of the people who were there when Christ was born in Bethlehem, missed it. The Scriptures record several reasons why the people in and around Jerusalem 2000 years ago missed Christmas, as well as why most of those living today miss it.

Self-importance...

In **Matthew 2:1-3, 7-8**, we meet Herod, the so-called king of the Jews (by his own proclamation); he was fearful of the One born in Bethlehem, who was the true King of the Jews. The Greek word translated "troubled" (**Matthew 2:3**) means, "to be agitated" or "stirred up," "panicked". Herod was afraid of baby Jesus-.

Herod was cruel and merciless. He was incredibly jealous, suspicious, and afraid of losing his position and power. Fearing a potential threat, he had the high priest Aristobulus (his wife's brother) drowned, after which he provided a magnificent funeral where he pretended to weep. He then had his wife killed, then her mother, and then two of his own sons. Five days before his death (about a year after Jesus was born) he had a third son executed.

But his most barbaric act (cf. **Matthew 2:16**) was the slaughter of "all the male children who were in Bethlehem and the surrounding areas, from two years old and under." By doing this, he hoped to kill Jesus, who was the major threat to his throne; the One who the magi said had been born the King of the Jews.

Herod missed Christmas because of he was a megalomaniac: unwilling to give up his self acclaimed authority, power, prominence, and control; like many people today who want what they want when they want it, and anyone preventing them from getting or keeping it, becomes an enemy and a threat. They won't come to Christ because they think He will force them to give up or change-the way they live.

The psychologists, social gurus, and the media tell people to do their own thing, to be the master of their own fate, to determine their own destiny. The world is full of self professed kings who won't recognize, let alone kneel before, Christ, so they miss Christmas just like Herod did.

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Indifference...

Once Herod learned from the magi that a child would be born King of the Jews (see **Matthew 2:4-6**), he gathered "together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, [and] began to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet, "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Ruler, who will shepherd My people Israel.'"

The chief priests consisted of the high priest, the captain of the Temple police, and the priests-with teaching and leadership skills (Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes). They knew the Messiah was to be born in "Bethlehem," as per the prophecy of **Micah 5:2**.

The Jewish nation had been waiting for their Messiah to come, at the time of Christ's birth, they had been waiting hundreds of years for a deliverer to come, they are still looking for Him for these religious leaders were unwilling to travel to Bethlehem to find out if the Messiah had indeed been born.

They missed Christmas because they were indifferent, they just didn't care. They had all they wanted, and they didn't need a Messiah. These self-righteous overseers of the law, had hearts that were filled with pride, and there was absolutely no room for the Son of God in their religious system.

When Jesus grew up and began His ministry, they hated and despised Him, and even plotted His murder. Jesus exposed their prideful indifference in a stinging rebuke (**Matthew 9:12-13**), "*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice, ' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*"

When the Pharisees held a feast, they invited self-righteous people; but Jesus welcomed sinners who were desperately aware of their need for a Savior.

Many people today miss Christmas because they don't have any interest in the Savior; they don't understand the depth of their own sin and their need to be saved; and so they reject the truth (cf. **Romans 6:23**), that the wages of sin is death, leading to an eternal hell. They ignore God's remedy for sin, because they reject what the Bible says (**Romans 3:10-12**), that there is no one who is righteous, not one; we have all gone our own way, and we deserve the wrath of God.

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Religious Activity...

Luke 2:20 tells us the after seeing the baby Jesus, "The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them." Out of all the people in Jerusalem, God singled out shepherds to receive the great news about the birth of Christ. Shepherds were a despised group because they couldn't maintain all the ceremonial washings and religious activities.

The majority of the people in and around Jerusalem missed Christmas because they were very religious, busy with rituals and ceremonies, so they missed Christ's birth.

Religion will damn a soul to hell more than anything else, because false religion gives a person a counterfeit sense of spiritual security, or rightness with God.

People are deceived in cults and world religions that talk about God, talk about Jesus, and even reference the Bible, but they don't teach that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is Creator, Sustainer, Lord, Savior, and Judge over all. Most of the world's religious people are lost, just like the people of Jerusalem who missed the birth of their Messiah, while they were performing religious acts of piety.

Idolatry...

Most of the Greco-Roman world missed Christmas because of their idolatrous worship of a multitude of gods. It is no surprise that the midst of their pagan idolatry they missed Christmas.

Read **Acts 17:22-31**... About 20 years after Jesus ascended into heaven, Paul is in Athens standing before the Areopagus (the council or judiciary of Athens, who judged the beliefs and behaviors of men), similar to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

These men are worshippers of many gods and Paul tells them that he is going to introduce them to the god who was unknown to them.

He tells them about "The God who made the world and everything in it." The God who doesn't live in temples or need manmade things, for He is the Creator of all things; and in fact, He made from one *man* [Adam] every nation on all the face of the earth, determining when and where and how long they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him, and know Him, and become children of God.

Paul declares that until Jesus came, God overlooked the ignorance and idolatry of all who did not know God, but now He has commanded that everyone repent and believe in Christ, who died and rose from the dead, showing Himself to all who would believe in Him for salvation (cf. **Romans 10:9-10, 13**).

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The world today is still full of people who worship their own manmade gods, not statues made of gold, silver, wood, or clay, but idols still the same: money, cars, boats, houses, land, power, prominence, good looks, good health, etc., all these are equal to the idol worship of the first century A.D., leading people to miss Christmas.

Over-Familiarity...

Even the people of Jesus' home town missed Christmas. **Luke 2:39-40** says, "When they [Mary, Jesus, and Joseph] had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. And the Child continued to grow and became strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."

When Jesus returned to Nazareth, He was unnoticed, like any other Jewish child; and even though Jesus spent thirty years of His life in Nazareth, the residents failed to recognize Him as the Savior.

See **Luke 4:16-22**, "And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written (**Isaiah 61:1-2**), 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.' And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

Luke 4:28-30, "And all *the people* in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went His way."

The people of Nazareth missed the Christ of Christmas, because they knew Jesus as Joseph's son, not as their Messiah. Most of us know people who were raised in a Christian home, who don't believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Over-familiarity can blind people from the truth, i.e., when you've heard something so many times, without believing it or confirming it in your mind and heart, such over-familiarity can often breed indifference and/or contempt.

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Needless to say, there are many reasons that people miss Christmas: their misplaced self-importance, indifference, religious activity, idolatry, and over-familiarity. But truth be told, behind all those so-called reasons is the real problem: unbelief. How sad it is that most people continue to reject God’s Son, Jesus Christ, for Salvation.

Luke 2:10-11, The angel said to [the shepherds]” Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Acts 2:21, “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved,” **Acts 4:12**, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

Matthew 1:23, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.” **21**, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Please don’t miss Christmas! Believe in and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, right now, right here, and you will be a child of God forever!

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life,” (**John 1:11-12**), “He came to His own [the Jews], and [they] did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God,” (**John 10:28**), “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish.”

Pastor Mike
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