

“A Biblical Record of Those Who Missed Christmas”

Jesus Christ is the Reason for Christmas; and 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, in Bethlehem, over 2,000 years ago. Most 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 about telling everyone they met what had happened and what they had seen, just as God's angel had told them.

Have you taken time yet to share the good news of Jesus Christ? Perhaps you have been stressed out because of personal or family problems, health issues, worries about the economy, the war in Israel, or maybe you've just been too busy enjoying the season 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.

The majority of people in the world will miss Christmas this year, next year, and the years that follow. 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?

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

How many of us really consider the sobering truth that Jesus, God's Son, was born for the purpose of dying for the sins of the world. That is God's greatest gift to us, forgiveness for sins and eternal life through Christ the Lord.

Was Jesus really born in December? Probably not, in fact most biblical scholars do not consider December 25th as the date of Christ's birth, and there is absolutely no biblical support for that date. So why do we celebrate Christ's birth on December 25?

Truth be told, it was decided upon by the Catholic 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 seasons and crops; they held feasts during the winter solstice (a time when the days are shortest); they built large bonfires to implore the sun god to lengthen the days, and as they grew longer, the worshippers rejoiced and celebrated.

“A Biblical Record of Those Who Missed Christmas”

For the Romans, the month of December marked the Festival of Saturnalia. 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 for adopting a pagan holiday, but December 25 has endured as the date we celebrate Christ’s birth.”

Many historians believe 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 wooden shoes filled with hay for the saint's white horse, only to find them filled with small toys and candy the next morning.

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 don't celebrate Christ's birth.

“A Biblical Record of Those Who Missed Christmas”

Self-importance...

See **Matthew 2:1-3, 7-8...** Here 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 known to be cruel and merciless; the thought of losing his position of power and prominence to some newborn child, was unthinkable! Herod was known to have had anyone put to death who rose in popularity among the people under his reign, even his own wife, sons, and other relatives; 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 King of the Jews.

Herod missed Christmas because he was a psychopathic megalomaniac: unwilling to give up his self acclaimed authority and control, like many people today who want what they want when they want it, and anyone who tries to prevent 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.

Today's psychologists, internet social platform gurus, false religious teachers, and media magnets are telling people to do their own thing, be the master of their own fate, and 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.

Indifference...

See **Matthew 2:4-6...** Once Herod learned from the magi that a child would be born King of the Jews, he gathered the religious experts [chief priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Teachers of the Law] who knew the Messiah was to be born in "Bethlehem," as per the prophecy of **Micah 5:2**.

At the time of Christ's birth, the Jewish nation had been waiting centuries for their Messiah [Redeemer, Rescuer, Deliverer] to come, they are still waiting and looking for Him to come, for these religious leaders were unwilling to travel to Bethlehem, just a few miles from Jerusalem, to find out if the Messiah had indeed been born, just like Micah had said.

“A Biblical Record of Those Who Missed Christmas”

These self-righteous overseers of religious law and practice missed Christmas because they just didn't care, their hearts full of pride had no room for the Son of God.

From the moment Jesus stepped out to begin His ministry, these religious leaders hated and despised Him, and wanted to kill Him. Jesus exposed their arrogant indifference to Him (**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.’*”

See **Luke 18:10-14....** Many people today miss Christmas because they don't have any interest in the Savior; they don't understand the depth of their own depravity and their need to be saved; and so they reject the Bible's truth that we are all sinners, the punishment for sin is eternal hell, and the only hope is to repent and believe in Jesus Christ alone for salvation and eternal life (cf. **Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 8:1;10:13; John 14:6**).

Religious Activity...

Luke 2:20 tells us that 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 and around Jerusalem, God singled out a few shepherds to receive the news and be witnesses of the birth of Christ. Shepherds in Israel were considered lower class citizens because, they couldn't maintain all the ceremonial washings and religious activities mandated in orthodox Judaism

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 apart from God will damn more people to hell than anything else, because religion gives a person a counterfeit sense of spiritual security, of being justified or made acceptable to a holy God.

People are deceived by cults and world religions that talk about God, reference the Bible, and may even teach about someone named Jesus; but He is not the historical biblical Jesus, Messiah, Christ, God's Son, Creator, Sustainer, Lord, Savior, and Judge over all, who was crucified, resurrected, and is coming back.

Most of the world's religious people are lost, separated from life with God because they don't acknowledge Christ, like the people of Jerusalem (1st century A.D.) who missed the Messiah's birth, while they were performing religious acts of piety that couldn't save them.

“A Biblical Record of Those Who Missed Christmas”

Idolatry...

Most of the Greco-Roman [Gentile] world missed Christmas because of their idolatrous worship of false gods. It is no surprise that today most people also miss Christmas because they worship a variety of idols, but mostly worship themselves.

See **Acts 17:22-29...** About 20 years after Jesus ascended into heaven, Paul is in Athens standing before the Areopagus (the council or judiciary that judged the beliefs and behaviors of men), similar to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

Paul tells them (cf. **Acts 17:23**) that he is going to introduce them to the god who was at that time unknown to them, “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, determining when, where, and how long they should live. God did this so mankind would seek Him, know Him, and become His children.

See **Acts 17:30-31...** Paul declares that until Jesus came, God overlooked the ignorance and idolatry of all who did not know God, but now God 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**).

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...

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.”

Even the people of Jesus’ home town missed Christmas.

“A Biblical Record of Those Who Missed Christmas”

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 (**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. Sadly, most of us know people who were raised in a Christian home and yet they don't believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

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

As we have studied today, there are many reasons why people miss Christmas, as I have mentioned: self-importance, indifference, religious activity, idolatry, and over-familiarity. But behind all those so-called reasons remains 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.”

December 10th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

“A Biblical Record of Those Who Missed Christmas”

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.”

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.”

Jesus is the Reason for the Season. Don't miss Christmas like most of the people in the world, for there is simply no excuse for rejecting God's Son. And therefore, I urge you to believe in and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, right here, right now, so that you will never miss another Christmas, but instead you will be able to say proclaim from your heart, “Merry Christmas,” now and forever!

Pastor Mike Hale