

Facebook Live
Preparing Our Hearts for Christmas
Lesson 1 – December 4, 2019

How much time and money do you spend getting ready for Christmas? Does it include preparing your heart from Christmas? That's what these three studies are about.

Why do we celebrate Christmas?

Since there is no indication in Scripture that we are to celebrate the birth of Jesus, why has it become by-far the most celebrated day in our calendar?

Why do people who have no regard for Jesus as Savior still celebrate Christmas?

Please think of these questions in advance and email me your answers, which I will share on the program. Email: tcww@christianworkingwoman.org

Why is the Virgin Birth of Jesus essential to our faith?

- It is fulfillment of prophecy and a validation that Jesus was Messiah.

Isaiah 7:14: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

- In order to redeem us from our sins, a perfect sacrifice was required. Jesus was not born of man, but of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he was born without a sin nature.

Romans 5: 12: Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.

Romans 5:17: For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Romans 5:19: For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Why do we celebrate Christmas on December 25?

- Probably because it was already popular in pagan religious celebrations as the birthday of the sun.

What clues do we have in Scripture to tell us when Jesus was born?

- Shepherds were watching their flocks in the fields.
- A census was being taken.

These events would not take place during rainy cold weather, such as is found in Judea during December.

Looking at the Christmas story through Middle Eastern Culture

In such a culture that was and still is all about hospitality, is it likely that Joseph and Mary would have been shown to a totally inappropriate place for the birth of the child?

The reference to being denied a room in the "inn" could have a very different meaning.

The Shepherds

Shepherds in first century Palestine were poor, and rabbinic traditions label them as unclean. If this baby is the Messiah, would his mother and father allow shepherds, of all people, to visit him?

What did the angels tell the shepherds they would find?

- The baby wrapped in cloths
- The baby lying in a manger

Why does Luke give us this detail? What would this say to the shepherds?

The Wise Men

Matthew 2:1 – 12

Jesus was born for the likes of the shepherds—the poor, the lowly, the rejected. But he was also born for the rich and the wise, who later appear with gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Consider the condition of the people of Israel at the time of Jesus' birth:

- They were occupied and oppressed by the Romans
- Before the Romans, the country had been ruled by the Greeks
- Before the Greeks, it had been ruled by the Persians

If you were living in an occupied country for all these years and you had been treated badly and your people had been abused and misused, your idea of sin would be what the oppressors had done to you.

So, when Matthew records that “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins,” it was not a message well-received. This is no doubt an important part of why “he came unto his own and his own received him not.”

These wise men were Gentiles and we are never told how many there were. Probably they traveled in a much larger company than three. The wise men were quite likely from Arabia.

What motivated those wise men to seek this Jewish king? And what must they have thought when they found this baby in a very humble Jewish home, without any trappings of royalty or wealth? Yet they worshiped him; somehow they knew he was to be worshiped.

Looking at the story of Jesus' birth through Middle Eastern culture does challenge some of the things we have sung in Christmas carols and seen in manger scenes all our lives. But it doesn't change the wonderful good news that Jesus was born to save us from our sins.

Celebrating Christmas should always include the good news of Easter, because Jesus came to die, and then to conquer death as he rose from the grave, and now to intercede for us in Heaven on the Father's right hand. That's what is really important about the birthday of Jesus.

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