



12/19/2021

Dear Students,

What are some things you wish you would get for Christmas? What would you **not** like to get for Christmas?

How would you feel about getting a baby for Christmas? What are the pros and cons? What are the pros and cons of getting baby Jesus for your year-end gift?

Sometimes we connect Christmas with the Wise Men bringing presents to baby Jesus, so we follow their example by giving presents to each other. But the real present at Christmas *is* Jesus. Why do we celebrate that baby being born? What's the point?

The apostle Paul sums it up in this week's Bible verse:

This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" - and I am the worst of them all. (1 Timothy 1:15)

If you are perfect and never make mistakes, never use bad judgment, never do anything wrong, never lie, never cheat, never hold onto something that wasn't yours, never for a second wish something bad would happen to someone, never say the thing you know will sting the other person, never lose your patience, never find yourself longing for something you know you shouldn't have... then maybe Jesus is not that exciting for you.

But to me, to Paul, to most of us, the idea of Jesus - knowing that God came as a person, into our real world, to forgive us for every sin we ever did and to take away that guilt or shame feeling - is really good news! It's hopeful. And not just being free from the knot in the stomach that sin creates, but also free from fear, even fear of dying, because we know if our sins have been forgiven we can go to heaven with Jesus. That's what being saved means. That's really good news!

Here's a 2000 year old news report of when and where and how Jesus broke into our world to begin his salvation revolution:

Luke 2:1-20 (Video: https://youtu.be/_OLezoUvOEQ)

¹ At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was

governor of Syria.) ³ All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

⁸ That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them.

They were terrified, ¹⁰ but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹ The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹² And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

¹⁵ When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶ They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, ¹⁹ but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

²⁰ The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

God will never forget where you are or what you need. He is always ready to love you and save you. Your challenge this week is to push yourself to find time to talk to Jesus. Just privately, by yourself, to tell him whatever you've been thinking about, even if it's nothing religious. Talk to Jesus like a person you know.

Jesus was born for me. Jesus was born for you. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Merry Christmas!

In Christ, Sharon Rauen Zahn (sharon@shroop.net)