

Christmas is a holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ who was born nearly 2000 years ago. The first observance of Christmas on December 25 was in Rome in A.D. 336. What is it that makes Jesus so unique and Christmas so special? Jesus had a miraculous birth, lived a perfect life and died a tragic death. Yet, He conquered death by rising from the grave. All these events were predicted hundreds of years before by Jewish prophets and can be read in the *Old Testament*. Following are a few of these prophecies and their fulfillment as seen in the *New Testament*.

The Christ or Messiah...

Was to be born to a virgin	<i>Isaiah 7:14, Matt. 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-20</i>
Was to be God in the flesh	<i>Isaiah 9:6, John 1:1-18</i>
Was to be born in Bethlehem	<i>Micah 5:2, Matt. 2:1-6, Luke 2:1-20</i>
Was to be rejected by His own people	<i>Isaiah 53: 1-3, Matt. 26: 3-4, John 1:10-13</i>
Was to die as a sacrifice for sin	<i>Isaiah 53:5-12, 1 Peter 2:24-25</i>
Was to be raised from the dead	<i>Ps. 16:10, Matt. 28:1-10, Luke 24:1-53</i>
Is now at God's right hand	<i>Ps. 110:1, Mark 16:19</i>

Why did Jesus have to die for our sins? What is the significance of his death and resurrection? According to the Bible we have all sinned against a holy and just God and need to be forgiven. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) See also Ecclesiastes 7:20. Because of sin we are separated from God. Although we are born physically alive, we are spiritually dead. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) See also Jeremiah 31:30-31.

Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. No one can earn God's favor by living a good life or by being religious. "We are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousness (good deeds) are as a filthy garment." (Isaiah 64:5) Because God loves all people, He desires for no one to suffer the consequences of sin, that is, spiritual separation from God and eternal punishment. (John 3:36, II Thessalonians 1:9) However, God must remain just: Sin must be punished. God requires that blood must be shed to pay for the consequences of sin. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22) This truth is demonstrated in the Jewish sacrificial system as seen in the Old Testament. A lamb was slain and its blood was placed on the altar. When the person saw the sacrifice suffering and bleeding for the sins he had committed, he was impressed with the awfulness of sin and the penalty of death the sinner deserved. The blood of the lamb, however, could only provide a temporary atonement for sin. God told the prophets that He would send a messiah (savior) who would deal with sin once and for all time. That is why John the Baptist declared, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" The sins of the world were placed on Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross. He died in our place. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21)

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man. Because He was God and sinless, He could die for an infinite number of sins. Because He was fully man, He could die in our place as our substitute. The proof that Jesus was God is evidenced by the resurrection. The graves of Buddha and Mohammed can be visited today, but the grave of Jesus Christ is empty!

Although Jesus' shed blood is sufficient to pay for the sins of all people, it is only efficient for those who personally place trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This involves repentance and faith. One must place their faith not in their own good works, but in the work of Christ on the cross. "For by grace have you been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works..." (Ephesians 2:8-10) Salvation cannot be earned but must be given. It is a free gift but is not cheap. It cost Jesus His life. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

The Bible also says that we must repent. "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to all men everywhere that they should repent." (Acts 17:30) And again, "I tell you no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3) To repent literally means to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. One must be willing to turn from sin to God. It involves a willingness to obey God. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)

If you were to die today, would you be certain that you would go to heaven? If you have repented of your sin and placed your faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin, you can be absolutely certain. "And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His son. He who has the Son has the Life; he who does not have the Son of God does

not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:11-13) If you have never placed your trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, will you do it now? The Apostle Paul writes, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13) You can express faith in Jesus through prayer. The following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I repent and turn from my sin and ask your forgiveness. I open the door of my life and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. I give you control of my life and ask that you would make me the kind of person You want me to be."

Remember, God promises eternal life and forgiveness of sin to all who repent and believe. God cannot lie. (Titus 1:2) Do not depend on your emotions but on the trustworthiness of God and His Word. This is the true meaning of Christmas. God is not so concerned with the giving of gifts as He is that we receive the greatest gift all, Jesus Christ Himself.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

(John 3:16)

Adapted from a talk by Dr. Carl Broggi.

All scripture quoted from the NASB.

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