



GOD'S SACRIFICE LAMB

Luke 2:8-20 "...For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the LORD."

Christian Life Center, A Foursquare Church | www.clcriverside.org | 951-689-6785

Christmas

Why the Incarnation (Christmas) is not just sentimental, but God's ultimate act of restoration.

1. Early Christian art from the 3rd to 5th centuries portrayed the birth of Christ in catacombs, mosaics, and reliefs, not as decoration only, *but as a bold expression of faith in a culture often hostile to Christianity*. These images reminded believers that the story of Jesus' birth was central to their hope and identity as followers of Christ.
2. **The origin of the Nativity scene** | By the Middle Ages, when most people were illiterate and Scripture was mainly communicated through the Church, Francis of Assisi in the 1200s wanted to make the Biblical story visible. His desire was not to invent a new tradition, but to help ordinary people see and understand the reality of Christ's birth. The manger scene brought together the key elements of the Christmas story so that the mystery of the Incarnation could be understood in the heart as well as the mind.
3. **Over time, the Christmas story has (for many people) become more sentimental than truth.** Tradition itself is not wrong, but it can soften the depth and weight of the truth it represents. *What began as a declaration of God's intervention in human history can become a familiar and gentle scene, detached from the reality of sin, brokenness, bondage, death, and humanity's deep need for redemption... the very reason Christ was born.*
4. **The true humility of the nativity** is not necessarily found in a manger or stable, but in the staggering truth that *God HIMSELF became one of us.*
 - John 1:1-2, 14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.*
5. **When we study Scripture**, we discover that the Christmas story unfolds with uncertainty, disruption, and Divine purpose. Here are a few examples...
 - **Angelic announcements** dramatically altered the lives of Zacheriah and Elizabeth, and Mary and Joseph, calling them to fully trust in God's plan (Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:20-25). This plan not only unfolded through Mary and Joseph but through the One who humbled Himself, became obedient to death, and offered His life as a sacrifice (Philippians 2:8).
 - **A mandatory census** from Rome caused extreme disruption of daily life by forcing a 90-mile journey to Bethlehem... all while Mary was well along in her pregnancy!
 - **The location of the manger**, near the Tower of the Flock (Migdal Eder; Micah 4:8), connects the birth of Jesus to a rich, prophetic event often overlooked.

- **Angels first announced the birth to shepherds** who belonged to the Levitical priesthood and were entrusted with sheep destined for Temple sacrifice... all pointing prophetically to Christ as the ultimate and final sacrifice for the sin of mankind (Luke 2:8–20).
- **On the eighth day** Jesus was presented and circumcised at the Temple where Simeon and Anna spoke prophetic words over His life and mission, affirming God's long-awaited promise (Luke 2:25–38).
- **The Magi were wealthy and learned scholars**, from Babylon or Persia. They were not three kings but brought three gifts of gold (King), frankincense (Priest) and myrrh (Sacrifice). They were influential men who studied the heavens, astrology, sacred texts, and prophecy, and many believe they were familiar with the Jewish Scriptures preserved in Babylon, especially the writings of the Book of Daniel (Daniel 2, 5, 6). Because of their number, status, and influence, their arrival in Jerusalem caused great unrest (Matthew 2:3).
- **This was then followed by** the prophesied slaughter by Herod's jealous reaction to preserve his power (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18). At the urging and direction of the Angel, the family fled into Egypt where they remained until Herod's death (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13-15).
- At the heart of Christmas is not simply the birth of a child who symbolizes peace, but the **Incarnation itself**, God entering human history to restore what was lost through sin.

Genesis 3:15 *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*

Three realities revealed at Christmas...

1. **The PROMISE of a coming Redeemer** | When humanity fell, God immediately spoke hope into despair. He promised that redemption would come through a child, a Deliverer who would ultimately defeat the power of sin and the adversary to restore humanity back to God.
 - Genesis 3:15 *He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*
2. **The PURPOSE for which Christ came** | Jesus' birth was the beginning of God's foretold redemptive work fully revealed at the cross.
 - 1 John 3:8 *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy (totally shattering) the devil's work.*
 - Colossians 2:15 *Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*
3. **The PROVISION (the great exchange)** | At the cross, God made the greatest exchange imaginable: Christ took our sin so that we might receive His Righteousness. This was substitution at the highest level, death exchanged for life, separation replaced with restoration.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21 *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

2 Corinthians 9:15 *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*