

Christmas Really Happened

Message 6 of 6 in the series: "Hidden Gems: Things You've Never Noticed About Christmas"

A. Matthew and Luke were inspired by God to write their accounts of Jesus' birth. The events they recorded are trustworthy and true.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right."

2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)

"Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught." Luke 1:1-4 (NLT)

B. Four reasons why it matters that Christmas really happened:

1. If the accounts of Jesus' birth are only legends or fairy tales, then the Son of God never really became human, and Christ never really died on the cross or rose from the dead. An imaginary Jesus can only help us as an example of how we should live (be kinder, more generous, more forgiving, etc.). An imaginary Jesus can't save us from sin, shame, guilt, death, or God's judgement and eternal punishment. He can only inspire us to try harder to be good, and we will fail because apart from Christ we are all filthy, rotten sinners. "And if Christ has not been raised, then **your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins**. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world."

1 Corinthians 15:17-19 (NLT)

GOOD NEWS! The Son of God really did become human so He could take our place on the cross and pay the penalty for our sins. This means we can be saved by God's grace no matter who we are or what we've done. "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. **By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.** (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) ...So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. **God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.** Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." Ephesians 2:1-9 (NLT)

GOOD NEWS! Jesus' sacrifice of His life on the cross was accepted by God as payment in full for all of our sins. "That is why, **when Christ came into the world, he said to God, 'You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer.** You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin. Then I said, "Look, I have come to do your will, O God—as is written about me in the Scriptures." ...**For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.** Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time... Then he says, '**I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.'** **And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices.**" Hebrews 10:5-7, 10-12a, & 17-18 (NLT)

2. Because Christmas really happened, Easter really happened. Christ really rose from the dead proving that He is stronger than death. "**But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.**" 1 Corinthians 15:20 (NLT)

GOOD NEWS! We no longer need to fear dying. "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But **thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" 1 Corinthians 15:54b-57 (NLT)

"Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil,

who had the power of death. **Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.**" Hebrews 2:14-15 (NLT)

3. Because Christmas really happened, we can have fellowship (a personal relationship) with God. "We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. **We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**" 1 John 1:1-3 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Moses longed to experience what you and I can experience every day. "Then Moses said, 'Now show me your glory.' And the Lord said, 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. **But, he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.'** Then the Lord said, 'There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; **but my face must not be seen.**" Exodus 33:18-23 (NIV)

GOOD NEWS! The Holy Spirit will help us understand the Bible as we read it so we can know Jesus better and better and our relationship with Him will grow. "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**" John 20:30-31 (NIV)

4. Because Christmas really happened, we can have joy regardless of our circumstances.

"Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, **I bring you good tidings of great joy** which will be to all people.'" Luke 2:10 (NKJV)

"We are writing these things **so that you may fully share our joy.**" 1 John 1:4 (NLT)

"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world **so they would be filled with my joy.**" John 17:13 (NLT)

GOOD NEWS! The Holy Spirit will give us increasing joy in our hearts as we walk with the Lord and grow closer to Him. "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)

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Quotes Worth Considering:

"You may believe that you can earn your right to heaven with God, or you may reject religion altogether and believe you simply have the moral resources within yourself to live the life a human being ought to live. If you hold either position, however, your life will be characterized by fear and insecurity, because you will never feel like you are being quite good enough; or it will be marked by pride and disdain for other people if you feel like you actually have been good enough; or it will be marked by self-loathing if you feel you have failed. You may find yourself whiplashed back and forth between two or more of these ways of life. There is another possibility, however. You can believe in the truth of Christmas, that you are saved by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. Then you can get an identity that is humbled out of your pride but affirmed and loved out of your insecurity, and one that offers you forgiveness and restoration when you fail." Tim Keller

"Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail the incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel." Charles Wesley (1739)

Great Resource: *Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ* by Tim Keller, Penguin Books, 2018.