

One Thing you Need to Know about Christmas

The Holiday

Yes, it is true. We really do not know the exact date of Jesus' birth. One writer has commented that about the only thing we know for sure is that Jesus was *not* born on December 25th.

The word 'Christmas' does not come from the Bible, but from the Catholic Church. It is a shortened form of "Christ's Mass" a celebration of Christ's birth from about the 4th century A.D.

Some people are troubled by this information. Many who do not believe in Jesus think Christians to be fools for celebrating Christmas.

Yet, in scripture, the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, brought joy to those awaiting the Messiah, and it brought praise to God for fulfilling His promise of salvation. Yet, as joyful a time as it was, first century Christians were not instructed to celebrate His birth. That said, Christians are given the liberty to celebrate as they wish, if they wish, whenever they wish, even in July.

The Wise Men

Yes, it is true. No one really knows how many wise men visited Jesus; and no one knows their names. It is somewhat unclear from scripture whether Joseph and Mary had returned to Nazareth or stayed in Bethlehem when the wise men visited. It is also unclear how old Jesus was when the wise men presented Him gifts. About the only thing we know for sure is that Jesus was not lying in a manger when the wise men visited. He was inside a house with His mother:

"After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."

—Matthew 2:11

There are things we are used to hearing and seeing at Christmastime, things we even expect: trees & stockings, fruitcakes & shopping, fa la la la laaa, la la la laaaaa.

Whether you celebrate; in whatever way you celebrate; your Christmas traditions are yours. December 25th, the wise trio, stable scenes; the jolly, rotund, chimney sweep with a big bag; it is all up to you. But there is one thing you really need to know about Christmas...

Peace on Earth

An angel announced the birth of Jesus to nearby shepherds. Then the heavenly host appeared praising God and saying:

**Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with
whom He is well pleased.**

—Luke 2:14 (NASB)

This was not a divine greeting, but a declaration. God never promised 'everybody' peace on earth. *You need to know* that the only ones who will have peace are those '**with whom He is well pleased.**' And that demands a response, not to the baby in a manger, but the Christ upon the cross.

Jesus, the adult Jesus, Messiah, Master, Son of God, said that He had come to bring a sword (Matthew 10:34). The sword is a sign of judgment. Jesus did bring peace to earth...peace between God and sinful man. Just read the first two chapters of the gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke. Zacharias, the father of John said it; Mary said it; the old man Simeon said it: Jesus came to bring peace between God and man, to those *with whom He is well pleased.*

Is God well pleased with you???

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