

The Christmas Story: Does It Still Matter?

What does Christmas mean to you? Times with family and friends? Perhaps carols, cards, television specials. Maybe hectic shopping, parties, and eating too much.

All these and more are part of North American Christmas. But what about the first Christmas? Why is the original story—the baby in a manger, shepherds, wise men, angels—important, if at all?

May I invite you to consider eight reasons why the original Christmas story matters, even to you? You may not agree with all of them, but perhaps they will stimulate your thinking and maybe even kindle some feelings that resonate with that famous story.

First, the Christmas story is important because it is. . .

A Story that Has *Endured*

For two millennia, people have told of the child in a Bethlehem manger; of angels who announced his birth to shepherds; of learned men who traveled a great distance to view him.[\[1\]](#)

That a story persists for many years does not prove its truthfulness. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy survive in the popular imagination. But a twenty-century tenure at least merits our consideration. What deep human longings does the Christmas story portray? Why has it connected so profoundly with millions of people? Is the story factual? Curiosity prompts further investigation.

Second, the Christmas story is also . . .

A Story of *Hope and Survival*

Jesus' society knew great pain and oppression. Rome ruled. Corrupt tax collectors burdened the people. Some religious leaders even sanctioned physical beating of Jewish citizens participating in compulsory religious duties.[{2}](#)

Joseph and his pregnant wife Mary traveled a long distance to Bethlehem to register for a census but could not obtain proper lodging. Mary bore her baby and laid him in a manger, a feeding trough for animals. Eventually, King Herod sought to kill the baby. Warned of impending risk, Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, then returned home after Herod's death.

Imagine how Mary felt. Traveling while pregnant would be challenging. Fleeing to another nation lest some king slay your son would not be pleasant. Yet she, Joseph, and Jesus survived the ordeal.

In the midst of social and cultural challenges, the Christmas story offers hope and encouragement toward survival, hope of new life linked to something—someone—greater than oneself. One of Jesus' followers said Jesus' "name . . . [would] be the hope of all the world."[{3}](#)

So, the Christmas story is important because it has endured and because it speaks of hope and survival.

Reason number three: the Christmas story is . . .

A Story of *Peace and Goodwill*

Christmas carolers sing of "peace on earth." Greeting cards extol peace, families desire it, and the news reminds us of its fleeting nature.

I encountered ten-year-old Matt from Nebraska in a southern California restaurant men's room one afternoon. Alone and

forlorn looking, he stood outside the lone stall.

“Could I ask a favor?” inquired the sandy haired youth. “The door to this stall has no lock. Would you watch and be sure that no one comes in on me?” “Sure,” I replied, happy to guard his privacy. Matt noted, “In a lot of nice restaurants the stall doors don’t have locks.” “I know,” I agreed. “You’d think they would.”

After a pause, his high-pitched voice said, “You know what I wish? I wish there could be peace in all the earth and no more arguments or fighting so no one would have to die except by heart attacks.” “That would be great,” I agreed. “How do you think that could happen?” Matt didn’t know.

“It seems that the Prince of Peace could help,” I suggested. “Do you know who that is?” He didn’t. “Well, at Christmas, we talk a lot about Jesus as the Prince of Peace,” I explained.

“Oh, I see,” conceded Matt. “I don’t know about those things because I don’t go to church. Do you know what it’s like to be the only boy in your town who doesn’t go to church? I do.”

“Well, I’m a church member,” I replied, “but really the most important thing is knowing Jesus Christ as your personal friend. When I was eighteen, some friends explained to me that He died and rose again for me and that I could begin a relationship with Him. It made a big difference and gave me a real peace inside. He can also bring peace between people.”

By now, Matt was out washing his hands as his father stuck his head in the door to hurry him along. I gave him a small booklet that explained more. “Thanks,” smiled Matt as he walked out to join his family for lunch.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman in his bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence* tells of boarding a New York City bus to find a driver whose friendly greeting and positive disposition spread contagious warmth among the initially cold and indifferent

passengers. Goleman envisioned a “virus of good feeling” spreading through the city from this “urban peacemaker” whose good will had softened hearts.{4}

The Christmas angel announced to some shepherds, “‘Don’t be afraid! . . . I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David!”{5} A crowd of angels then appeared praising God and proclaiming peace among people of good will.{6}

The Christmas story brings a message of peace that can soothe anxious hearts and calm interpersonal strife.

Reason number four: the Christmas story is . . .

A Story of *Family*

Christmas is a time for family gatherings. This interaction can bring great joy or great stress. Estrangement or ill will from past conflicts can explode.

Joseph and Mary had their share of family challenges. Consider their circumstances. The historical accounts indicate that Joseph’s fiancée became pregnant though she was a virgin. Mary believed an angel told her she was pregnant by God. Now, how would you feel if your fiancé/fiancée exhibited apparent evidence of sexual activity with someone else during your engagement? Suppose your intended said that God had sanctioned the whole thing. Would your trust and self-esteem take a nosedive? Would you cancel the wedding?

Joseph, described as “a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace . . . [Mary] publicly.”{7} But an angel appeared to him in a dream, explaining that the child was conceived in her by God, and told him to “name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”{8} Joseph followed instructions and cared for his

family. His continuing commitment to Mary and Jesus played a significant part in the boy's birth and early childhood. With God's help, the family overcame major obstacles. And so can your family.

Fifth, the story is Christmas is also . . .

A story of *Humility*

When kings, presidents, and other rulers appear in public, great pomp often ensues. From a biblical perspective, God came first not as a ruling king but as a servant, a baby born in humble circumstances. His becoming human helps humans identify with Him.

Imagine that you and your child are walking in a field and encounter an ant pile with hundreds of ants scurrying about. In the distance, you see a construction bulldozer approaching. Suppose your child asks how to warn the ants of impending danger. You discuss various possibilities: shouting, holding up signs, etc. But the best solution would be if somehow your child could become an ant and warn them personally. Some ants might not believe the danger. But some might believe and take steps to ensure their safety.

Paul, an early follower of Jesus, wrote of the humility Jesus displayed by becoming human:

Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven.[{9}](#)

The Christmas story speaks of family and humility. But is it true?[{10}](#)

Reason number six why the Christmas story matters: it is . . .

A Story that Was *Foretold*

Jesus' followers noted numerous clues to his identity, prophecies written many years before His birth.[{11}](#)

The Hebrew writer Micah told around 700 BC of deliverance through a coming Messiah or "Anointed One" from Bethlehem.[{12}](#) We know that ". . . Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. . . ." [{13}](#)

Isaiah, writing around 700 BC, foretold that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. He wrote, "The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." [{14}](#) The name "Immanuel" means "God is with us." Biblical accounts claim Jesus' mother was a virgin when she bore Him. [{15}](#)

Additional prophecies concern the Messiah's lineage, betrayal, suffering, execution, and resurrection. Peter Stoner, a California mathematician, once calculated the probability of just eight of the 300 prophecies Jesus fulfilled coming true in one person due to chance alone. Using estimates that both he and classes of college students considered reasonable and conservative, Stoner concluded there was one chance in 10^{17} that those eight were fulfilled by fluke.

He says 10^{17} silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Mark one coin with red fingernail polish. Stir the whole batch thoroughly. What chance would a blindfolded person have of picking the marked coin on the first try? One in 10^{17} , the same chance that just eight of the 300 prophecies "just happened" to come true in this man, Jesus. [{16}](#)

In a similar vein, consider reason number seven why the original Christmas story matters. It is . . .

A Story that Has *Substantial Support*

Can we trust the biblical accounts of the Christmas story?
Three important points:

- *Eyewitness Testimony*. The Gospels—presentations of Jesus' life—claim to be, or bear evidence of containing, eyewitness accounts. In a courtroom, eyewitness testimony is among the most reliable evidence.
- *Early Date*. Dr. William F. Albright, one of the world's leading archaeologists, dated every book of the New Testament (NT) before about AD 80.[\[17\]](#) There is no known record of NT factual authenticity ever being successfully challenged by a contemporary.
- *Manuscript Evidence*. Over 24,000 early manuscript copies of portions of the NT exist today. Concerning manuscript attestation, Sir Frederic Kenyon, director and principle librarian of the British Museum, concluded, "Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."[\[18\]](#)

The Christmas story is notable for its enduring messages of hope, peace, goodwill, family and humility. It was foretold by prophets and has substantial manuscript support. But there is another reason for considering the story of Jesus' birth, perhaps the most important.

Reason number eight: the Christmas story is . . .

A Story of Love

Jesus' followers taught that His conception and birth were part of a divine plan to bring us genuine peace, inner freedom, and self-respect. They believed the biblical God wants us to enjoy friendship with Him, and meaning and purpose. Alas, our own self-centeredness separates us from

Him. Left to our own, we would spend both time and eternity in this spiritually unplugged state.

Jesus came to help plug us into God. Mary's baby was born to die, paying the penalty for our self-centeredness, which the biblical documents call "sin." If I had a traffic fine I could not pay, you could offer to pay it for me. When the adult Jesus died on the cross, He carried the penalty due all our sins then rose from the dead to give new life.

Jesus explained, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." [{19}](#) God can become your friend if you believe in Him, that is, if you trust Him to forgive you. He will never let you down.

Perhaps you are becoming aware of the importance of the Christmas story in your own life. Might you like to receive Jesus' free gift of forgiveness and place your faith in Him? You can celebrate this Christmas knowing that you are a member of His family. Perhaps you'd like to talk to Him right now. You might want to tell Him something like this:

Jesus Christ, thanks for loving me, for dying for my sins and rising again. Please apply your death as the means of my forgiveness. I accept your pardon. Come and live in me and help me to become your close friend.

If you made that decision to place your trust in Jesus, He has entered your life, forgiven you and given you eternal life. I encourage you to tell another of His followers about your decision and ask them to help you grow in faith. Call this radio station or visit the Web site probe.org to learn more. Read the Bible to discover more about God. Begin with the Gospel of John, the fourth book in the New Testament, which is one of the easier ones to understand. Tell God what is on your heart, and tell others about the discovery you've made so they can know Him too.

Christmas is meant to celebrate peace and joy. Amidst the busyness of shopping, parties, presents, and fun, remember that the Prince of Peace came to spread peace and joy to all who believe in Him.

Notes


1. Details of the Christmas story are in Luke 1-2 and Matthew 1:18-2:23.
2. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 printing of the 1883 original), i:372.
3. Matthew 12:21 NLT.
4. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), ix-x.
5. Luke 2:10-11 NLT.
6. Luke 2:13-14 NASB.
7. Matthew 1:19 NLT.
8. Matthew 1:21 NLT.
9. Philippians 2:6-9 NLT.
10. For more on evidence for Jesus, see www.WhoIsJesus-Really.com and www.probe.org.
11. For a summary of prophecies Jesus fulfilled, see Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), 141-177.
12. Micah 5:2.
13. Matthew 2:1 NASB.
14. Isaiah 7:14 NIV.
15. Matthew 1:18, 22-25; Luke 1:27, 34.
16. Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 99-112.
17. McDowell, op. cit., 62-63.
18. Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1940), 288; in McDowell, op. cit., 41. McDowell develops these points in pp. 39-41 ff.
19. John 3:16 NLT.

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Bible Literacy Quiz: A Test of Scripture Knowledge

This article is also available in [Spanish](#). 

Take this test of basic Bible knowledge to help assess your biblical literacy. This simple quiz examines some of the key doctrines and events of the Bible. It will give you a good feel for your breadth and depth of Scriptural knowledge.

It's alarming to us at Probe Ministries to see the drop in biblical literacy among Americans. Growing numbers of people don't know what the Bible says, even the most basic foundational truths and people and facts.

Evangelical pollster George Barna says,

Over the past 20 years we have seen the nation's theological views slowly become less aligned with the Bible. Americans still revere the Bible and like to think of themselves as Bible-believing people, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Christians have increasingly been adopting spiritual views that come from Islam, Wicca, secular humanism, the eastern religions and other sources.[{1}](#)

That's because we're not reading and studying the Bible. If we don't know what God says is truth, it makes us vulnerable to believing a lie.

Take the quiz yourself: click [here](#) for a format with the questions and answers separated.

1. Who wrote the first four books of the New Testament?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

2. Who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament?

Most conservative scholars hold that the Pentateuch was written by Moses.

3. What two Old Testament books are named for women?

Esther and Ruth.

4. What are the Ten Commandments?

- 1. I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before Me.*
- 2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.*
- 3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.*
- 4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*
- 5. Honor your father and your mother.*
- 6. You shall not murder.*
- 7. You shall not commit adultery.*
- 8. You shall not steal.*
- 9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*
- 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife—or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:2-17)*

5. What is the Greatest Commandment?

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your

soul and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37,38)

6. What is the second Greatest Commandment?

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

7. What is the Golden Rule?

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” (Matthew 7:12)

8. What is the Great Commission?

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19,20)

9. What was the test of a prophet, to know that he was truly from God?

He had to be 100% accurate in his prophecies. The penalty for a false prophet was death by stoning. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

10. To whom did God give the 10 Commandments?

Moses. (Exodus 20)

11. Which two people did not die?

Genesis 5:24 says that Enoch, who was Noah’s great-grandfather, “walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” The other was the Old Testament prophet Elijah, who was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind with a chariot and horses of fire. (2 Kings 2:11)

12. What is the root of all kinds of evil?

The love of money. (1 Timothy 6:10)

13. What is the beginning of wisdom?

The fear of the Lord. (Psalm 111:10)

14. Who delivered the Sermon on the Mount?

The Lord Jesus. (Matthew 5-7)

15. How did sickness and death enter the world?

Romans 5:12 says that sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. The fall of man is recorded in Genesis 3, where God's perfect creation was spoiled by Adam's sin.

16. Who was the Roman governor who sentenced Christ to death?

Pontius Pilate. (Matthew 27:26)

17. Who are the major prophets?

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

18. What people group is the Old Testament about?

The Hebrews, who became the nation of Israel. They were descendants of Abraham through Isaac.

19. What happened while the Lord Jesus was in the desert for 40 days?

He was tempted by the devil. (Matthew 4:1) Hebrews 4:15 tells us that He was tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

20. How many people were on Noah's ark?

Eight: Noah and his wife, his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. (Genesis 7:13, 1 Peter 2:5)

21. Who was the first murderer?

Cain, who killed his brother Abel. (Genesis 4:8)

22. Which person was afflicted with terrible trials but trusted God through it all?

Job. (See book of Job)

23. Who was Israel's most well-known and well-loved king?

David. (1 Chronicles 29:28)

24. Who was "the weeping prophet?"

Jeremiah.

25. Who was thrown into the lion's den?

Daniel. (Daniel 6)

26. Who were the two people in the famous fight with a stone and a sling?

David and Goliath. (1 Samuel 17)

27. What is the book of Acts about?

The early years of the church, as the gospel begins to spread throughout the world.

28. What are epistles?

Letters.

29. On what occasion was the Holy Spirit given to the church?

Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4)

30. Whom did God command to sacrifice his only son?

Abraham. (Genesis 22:2)

31. What was the Old Testament feast that celebrated God's saving the firstborn of Israel the night they left Egypt?

Passover. (Exodus 12:27)

32. Who was the Hebrew who became prime minister of Egypt?

Joseph. (Genesis 41:41)

33. Who was the Hebrew woman who became Queen of Persia?

Esther. (Esther 2:17)

34. Who was the pagan woman who became David's great-grandmother?

Ruth. (Ruth 4:17)

35. Which angel appeared to Mary?

Gabriel. (Luke 1:26)

36. How did the Lord Jesus die?

He gave up His life while being crucified. (John 19:18)

37. What happened to Him three days after He died?

He was raised from the dead. (John 20)

38. What happened to the Lord Jesus 40 days after His resurrection?

He ascended bodily into heaven. (Acts 1:9-11)

39. What should we do when we sin, in order to restore our fellowship with God?

1 John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

40. How did the universe and world get here?

Genesis 1:1 tells us, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." We are told further in Colossians 1:16 and 17 that the Lord Jesus Christ was the one who did the creating.

41. Where did Satan and the demons come from?

Satan was originally the best and the brightest angel, but he sinned in his pride, wanting to be God. Some of the angels followed him, and these "fallen angels" were cast out of heaven. (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28)

42. Who directed the writing of the Bible?

The Holy Spirit. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21)

43. Where was the Lord Jesus before He was conceived in Mary?

In heaven. (Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Corinthians 15:49)

44. Who taught in parables?

The Lord Jesus. (Matthew 13:3)

45. What are parables?

A short, simple story with a spiritual point.

46. Which two animals talked with human speech?

The serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:3) and Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:28).

47. With which woman did David commit adultery?

Bathsheba. (2 Samuel 11)

48. Which one of their sons succeeded David as king?

Solomon. (2 Samuel 12:24)

49. Who was the female judge of Israel?

Deborah. (Judges 4:4)

50. Who was the wisest man in the world?

Solomon. (1 Kings 3:12)

51. Who was the first man?

Adam. (Genesis 2:20)

52. Who was the most humble man on earth?

Moses. (Numbers 12:3)

53. Who was the strongest man on earth?

Samson. (Judges 13-16)

54. Where were the two nations of God's people taken into captivity?

Israel was taken into Assyria (2 Kings 17:23), and Judah into Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:20).

55. Which cupbearer to a foreign king rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem?

Nehemiah. (Nehemiah 2:5)

56. Who were the two Old Testament prophets who worked miracles?

Elijah and Elisha. (1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 6)

57. Which Old Testament prophet spent three days in the belly of a great fish?

Jonah. (Jonah 1:17)

58. What is the last book of the Old Testament?

Malachi.

59. For which Israelite commander did the sun stand still?

Joshua. (Joshua 10)

60. Who was the first king of Israel?

Saul. (1 Samuel 13:1)

61. Who built the temple in Israel?

Solomon. (1 Kings 6)

62. Which of the twelve tribes of Israel served as priests?

Levites. (Deuteronomy 10:8)

63. Which city fell after the Israelites marched around it daily for seven days?

Jericho. (Joshua 6:20)

64. What did God give the Israelites to eat in the wilderness?

Manna and quail. (Exodus 16)

65. Which two people walked on water?

Jesus and Peter. (Matthew 14:29)

66. Who was the first martyr?

Stephen. (Acts 7)

67. Who betrayed Jesus to the priests, and for how much?

Judas betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. (Matthew 26:14-15)

68. What is the Lord's Prayer?

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For

*thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13)*

69. Who was the first person to see the risen Lord?

Mary Magdalene. (John 20:16)

70. Which prophet and cousin of the Lord was beheaded?

John the Baptist. (John 14:10)

71. To what country did the young Jesus and His parents escape when Herod was threatening His life?

Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-15)

72. What was Christ's first miracle?

He turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana. (John 2:11)

73. Which one of the Lord's personal friends did He raise from the dead?

Lazarus. (John 11)

74. Who was the greatest missionary of the New Testament?

Paul. (see book of Acts)

75. Who was Paul's first partner?

Barnabas. (Acts 13:2)

76. Whom did an angel release from prison?

Peter. (Acts 12)

77. Which event caused God to splinter human language into many tongues?

The building of the Tower of Babel. (Genesis 11)

78. Which chapter of an Old Testament prophet's book gives a detailed prophecy of the Messiah's death by crucifixion?

Isaiah 53.

79. Who wrestled all night with the Lord and was left with a permanent limp?

Jacob. (Genesis 32:22-32)

80. Which two pastors did Paul write letters to?

Timothy and Titus.

81. Who was hailed as a god when he was bitten by a snake but nothing bad happened?

Paul. (Acts 28:5-6)

82. Which two New Testament writers were brothers of the Lord Jesus?

James and Jude. (Matthew 13:55)

83. Which two New Testament books were written by a doctor?

Luke and Acts. (2 Timothy 4:11)

84. Who had a coat of many colors?

Joseph. (Genesis 37:3)

85. In what sin did Aaron lead the Israelites while his brother Moses was up on the mountain talking to God?

They made an idol in the form of a golden calf. (Exodus 32)

86. How many books are there in the entire Bible?

66: 39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament.

87. What's the difference between John the Baptist and the John who wrote several New Testament books?

John the Baptist was a prophet who proclaimed the kingdom of God was near in preparation for his cousin Jesus' ministry. The John who wrote the gospel of John, the epistles—1, 2 and 3 John—and Revelation, was one of the twelve apostles and one of those closest to the Lord, along with Peter and James. He called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

88. Who saw the Lord appear to him in a burning bush?

Moses. (Exodus 3)

89. How many sons did Jacob have?

Twelve. They were the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Genesis 35:22)

90. Who gave up his birthright for a bowl of stew?

Esau. (Genesis 25:33)

91. Which Psalm starts out, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?"

Psalm 23.

92. Who disowned the Lord Jesus three times before a cock crowed?

Peter. (Matthew 26:69-75)

93. What did the Lord do just after the Last Supper to demonstrate His love and humility?

He washed the disciples' feet. (John 13:5)

94. Where is the New Testament "Hall of Faith?"

Hebrews 11.

95. Who appeared with the Lord Jesus in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration?

Elijah and Moses. (Mark 9:4)

96. Who is the second Adam?

The Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:45-49)

97. Which Old Testament prophet married a prostitute because God told him to?

Hosea. (Hosea 1:2)

98. What are the two sacred ordinances that the Lord commanded us to observe?

Baptism (Matthew 28:19,20) and Communion, or the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

99. What are supernatural enablings that allow a believer to serve the Body of Christ with ease and effectiveness?

Spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:8-13, 1 Peter 4:10-11)

100. Whose tomb was Christ buried in?

Joseph of Arimathea. (Matthew 27:57-60)

101. Who wrote the book of Hebrews?

Nobody knows.

102. Which is the “epistle of joy?”

Philippians.

103. What is the book of Revelation about?

The end of the world.

104. Who is the bride of Christ?

*The church—that is, all who have trusted Him for salvation.
(Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7-8)*

Note

1. bit.ly/fr8BuA

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32. Who was the Hebrew who became prime minister of Egypt?

[Answer](#)

33. Who was the Hebrew woman who became Queen of Persia?

[Answer](#)

34. Who was the pagan woman who became David's great-grandmother?

[Answer](#)

35. Which angel appeared to Mary?

[Answer](#)

36. How did the Lord Jesus die?

[Answer](#)

37. What happened to Him three days after He died?

[Answer](#)

38. What happened to the Lord Jesus 40 days after His resurrection?

[Answer](#)

39. What should we do when we sin, in order to restore our fellowship with God?

[Answer](#)

40. How did the universe and world get here?

[Answer](#)

41. Where did Satan and the demons come from?

[Answer](#)

42. Who directed the writing of the Bible?

[Answer](#)

43. Where was the Lord Jesus before He was conceived in Mary?

[Answer](#)

44. Who taught in parables?

[Answer](#)

45. What are parables?

[Answer](#)

46. Which two animals talked with human speech?

[Answer](#)

47. With which woman did David commit adultery?

[Answer](#)

48. Which one of their sons succeeded David as king?

[Answer](#)

49. Who was the female judge of Israel?

[Answer](#)

50. Who was the wisest man in the world?

[Answer](#)

51. Who was the first man?

[Answer](#)

52. Who was the most humble man on earth?

[Answer](#)

53. Who was the strongest man on earth?

[Answer](#)

54. Where were the two nations of God's people taken into captivity?

[Answer](#)

55. Which cupbearer to a foreign king rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem?

[Answer](#)

56. Who were the two Old Testament prophets who worked miracles?

[Answer](#)

57. Which Old Testament prophet spent three days in the belly of a great fish?

[Answer](#)

58. What is the last book of the Old Testament?

[Answer](#)

59. For which Israelite commander did the sun stand still?

[Answer](#)

60. Who was the first king of Israel?

[Answer](#)

61. Who built the temple in Israel?

[Answer](#)

62. Which of the twelve tribes of Israel served as priests?

[Answer](#)

63. Which city fell after the Israelites marched around it daily for seven days?

[Answer](#)

64. What did God give the Israelites to eat in the wilderness?

[Answer](#)

65. Which two people walked on water?

[Answer](#)

66. Who was the first martyr?

[Answer](#)

67. Who betrayed Jesus to the priests, and for how much?

[Answer](#)

68. What is the Lord's Prayer?

[Answer](#)

69. Who was the first person to see the risen Lord?

[Answer](#)

70. Which prophet and cousin of the Lord was beheaded?

[Answer](#)

71. To what country did the young Jesus and His parents escape when Herod was threatening His life?

[Answer](#)

72. What was Christ's first miracle?

[Answer](#)

73. Which one of the Lord's personal friends did He raise from the dead?

[Answer](#)

74. Who was the greatest missionary of the New Testament?

[Answer](#)

75. Who was Paul's first partner?

[Answer](#)

76. Whom did an angel release from prison?

[Answer](#)

77. Which event caused God to splinter human language into many tongues?

[Answer](#)

78. Which chapter of an Old Testament prophet's book gives a detailed prophecy of the Messiah's death by crucifixion?

[Answer](#)

79. Who wrestled all night with the Lord and was left with a permanent limp?

[Answer](#)

80. Which two pastors did Paul write letters to?

[Answer](#)

81. Who was hailed as a god when he was bitten by a snake but nothing bad happened?

[Answer](#)

82. Which two New Testament writers were brothers of the Lord Jesus?

[Answer](#)

83. Which two New Testament books were written by a doctor?

[Answer](#)

84. Who had a coat of many colors?

[Answer](#)

85. In what sin did Aaron lead the Israelites while his brother Moses was up on the mountain talking to God?

[Answer](#)

86. How many books are there in the entire Bible?

[Answer](#)

87. What's the difference between John the Baptist and the John who wrote several New Testament books?

[Answer](#)

88. Who saw the Lord appear to him in a burning bush?

[Answer](#)

89. How many sons did Jacob have?

[Answer](#)

90. Who gave up his birthright for a bowl of stew?

[Answer](#)

91. Which Psalm starts out, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?"

[Answer](#)

92. Who disowned the Lord Jesus three times before a cock crowed?

[Answer](#)

93. What did the Lord do just before the Last Supper to demonstrate His love and humility?

[Answer](#)

94. Where is the New Testament "Hall of Faith?"

[Answer](#)

95. Who appeared with the Lord in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration?

[Answer](#)

96. Who is the second Adam?

[Answer](#)

97. Which Old Testament prophet married a prostitute because God told him to?

[Answer](#)

98. What are the two sacred ordinances that the Lord commanded us to observe?

[Answer](#)

99. What are supernatural enablings that allow a believer to

serve the Body of Christ with ease and effectiveness?

[Answer](#)

100. Whose tomb was Christ buried in?

[Answer](#)

101. Who wrote the book of Hebrews?

[Answer](#)

102. Which is the “epistle of joy?”

[Answer](#)

103. What is the book of Revelation about?

[Answer](#)

104. Who is the bride of Christ?

[Answer](#)

Answers

1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. [Back](#)

2. Most conservative scholars hold that the Pentateuch was written by Moses. [Back](#)

3. Esther and Ruth. [Back](#)

4. 1. I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before Me.

2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother.

6. You shall not murder.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You shall not steal.

9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not

covet your neighbor's wife—or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:2-17) [Back](#)

5. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37,38) [Back](#)

6. "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) [Back](#)

7. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Matthew 7:12) [Back](#)

8. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19,20) [Back](#)

9. He had to be 100% accurate in his prophecies. The penalty for a false prophet was death by stoning. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22) [Back](#)

10. Moses. (Exodus 20) [Back](#)

11. Genesis 5:24 says that Enoch, who was Noah's great-grandfather, "walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away." The other was the Old Testament prophet Elijah, who was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind with a chariot and horses of fire. (2 Kings 2:11) [Back](#)

12. The love of money. (1 Timothy 6:10) [Back](#)

13. The fear of the Lord. (Psalm 111:10) [Back](#)

14. The Lord Jesus. (Matthew 5-7) [Back](#)

15. Romans 5:12 says that sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. The fall of man is recorded in Genesis 3, where God's perfect creation was spoiled by Adam's sin. [Back](#)

16. Pontius Pilate. (Matthew 27:26) [Back](#)

17. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. [Back](#)
18. The Hebrews, who became the nation of Israel. They were descendants of Abraham through Isaac. [Back](#)
19. He was tempted by the devil. (Matthew 4:1) Hebrews 4:15 tells us that He was tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. [Back](#)
20. Eight: Noah and his wife, his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. (Genesis 7:13, 1 Peter 2:5) [Back](#)
21. Cain, who killed his brother Abel. (Genesis 4:8) [Back](#)
22. Job. (See book of Job) [Back](#)
23. David. (1 Chronicles 29:28) [Back](#)
24. Jeremiah. [Back](#)
25. Daniel. (Daniel 6) [Back](#)
26. David and Goliath. (1 Samuel 17) [Back](#)
27. The early years of the church, as the gospel begins to spread throughout the world. [Back](#)
28. Letters. [Back](#)
29. Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4) [Back](#)
30. Abraham. (Genesis 22:2) [Back](#)
31. Passover. (Exodus 12:27) [Back](#)
32. Joseph. (Genesis 41:41) [Back](#)
33. Esther. (Esther 2:17) [Back](#)
34. Ruth. (Ruth 4:17) [Back](#)
35. Gabriel. (Luke 1:26) [Back](#)

36. He gave up His life while being crucified. (John 19:18) [Back](#)
37. He was raised from the dead. (John 20) [Back](#)
38. He ascended bodily into heaven. (Acts 1:9-11) [Back](#)
39. 1 John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [Back](#)
40. Genesis 1:1 tells us, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." We are told further in Colossians 1:16 and 17 that the Lord Jesus Christ was the one who did the creating. [Back](#)
41. Satan was originally the best and the brightest angel, but he sinned in his pride, wanting to be God. Some of the angels followed him, and these "fallen angels" were cast out of heaven. (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28) [Back](#)
42. The Holy Spirit. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21) [Back](#)
43. In heaven. (Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Corinthians 15:49) [Back](#)
44. The Lord Jesus. (Matthew 13:3) [Back](#)
45. A short, simple story with a spiritual point. [Back](#)
46. The serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:3) and Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:28) [Back](#)
47. Bathsheba. (2 Samuel 11) [Back](#)
48. Solomon. (2 Samuel 12:24) [Back](#)
49. Deborah. (Judges 4:4) [Back](#)
50. Solomon. (1 Kings 3:12) [Back](#)
51. Adam. (Genesis 2:20) [Back](#)

52. Moses. (Numbers 12:3) [Back](#)
53. Samson. (Judges 13-16) [Back](#)
54. Israel was taken into Assyria (2 Kings 17:23), and Judah into Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:20). [Back](#)
55. Nehemiah. (Nehemiah 2:5) [Back](#)
56. Elijah and Elisha. (1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 6) [Back](#)
57. Jonah. (Jonah 1:17) [Back](#)
58. Malachi. [Back](#)
59. Joshua. (Joshua 10) [Back](#)
60. Saul. (1 Samuel 13:1) [Back](#)
61. Solomon. (1 Kings 6) [Back](#)
62. Levites. (Deuteronomy 10:8) [Back](#)
63. Jericho. (Joshua 6:20) [Back](#)
64. Manna and quail. (Exodus 16) [Back](#)
65. Jesus and Peter. (Matthew 14:29) [Back](#)
66. Stephen. (Acts 7) [Back](#)
67. Judas betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. (Matthew 26:14-15) [Back](#)
68. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13) [Back](#)

69. Mary Magdalene. (John 20:16) [Back](#)
70. John the Baptist. (John 14:10) [Back](#)
71. Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-15) [Back](#)
72. He turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana. (John 2:11) [Back](#)
73. Lazarus. (John 11) [Back](#)
74. Paul. (see book of Acts) [Back](#)
75. Barnabas. (Acts 13:2) [Back](#)
76. Peter. (Acts 12) [Back](#)
77. The building of the Tower of Babel. (Genesis 11) [Back](#)
78. Isaiah 53. [Back](#)
79. Jacob. (Genesis 32:22-32) [Back](#)
80. Timothy and Titus. [Back](#)
81. Paul. (Acts 28:5-6) [Back](#)
82. James and Jude. (Matthew 13:55) [Back](#)
83. Luke and Acts. (2 Timothy 4:11) [Back](#)
84. Joseph. (Genesis 37:3) [Back](#)
85. They made an idol in the form of a golden calf. (Exodus 32) [Back](#)
86. 66: 39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament. [Back](#)
87. John the Baptist was a prophet who proclaimed the kingdom of God was near in preparation for his cousin Jesus' ministry. The John who wrote the gospel of John, the epistles—1, 2 and 3 John—and Revelation, was one of the twelve apostles and one of

those closest to the Lord, along with Peter and James. He called himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” [Back](#)

88. Moses. (Exodus 3) [Back](#)

89. Twelve. They were the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Genesis 35:22) [Back](#)

90. Esau. (Genesis 25:33) [Back](#)

91. Psalm 23. [Back](#)

92. Peter. (Matthew 26:69-75) [Back](#)

93. He washed the disciples’ feet. (John 13:5) [Back](#)

94. Hebrews 11. [Back](#)

95. Elijah and Moses. (Mark 9:4) [Back](#)

96. The Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:45-49) [Back](#)

97 Hosea. (Hosea 1:2) [Back](#)

98. Baptism (Matthew 28:19,20) and Communion, or the Lord’s Table (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). [Back](#)

99. Spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:8-13, 1 Peter 4:10-11) [Back](#)

100. Joseph of Arimathea. (Matthew 27:57-60) [Back](#)

101. Nobody knows. [Back](#)

109. Philippians. [Back](#)

103. The end of the world. [Back](#)

104. The church—that is, all who have trusted Him for salvation. (Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7-8) [Back](#)

Thanksgiving Roots

We live in an uncertain moment in history when everyone is looking for “Roots.” November, especially, is a time to reflect upon family and traditions. Curiously, we Christians tend to be strangers to what is best in our own tradition. I refer to the Puritans, the historic source of our Thanksgiving heritage and much of what is still good about America.

We can still feel today the impact and the echoes of this robust community upon our own lives—in family, in work, in education, in economics, in worship, and in national destiny. But let them speak for themselves:

On the God-Centered Life: “I was now grown familiar with the Lord Jesus Christ; he would oft tell me he loved me. I did not doubt to believe him; if I went abroad, he went with me, when I returned he came home with me. I talked with him upon my way, he lay down with me, and usually I did awake with him: and so sweet was his love to me, as I desired nothing but him in heaven or earth.” –John Winthrop.

On the Sacred and the Secular: “Not only my spiritual life, but even my civil life in this world, all the life I live, is by the faith of the Son of God: he exempts no life from the agency of faith.” –John Cotton.

On God and the Commonplace: “Have you forgot. . .the milkhouse, the stable, the barn and the like, where God did visit your soul?” –John Bunyan.

On Spiritual Vitality: “Therefore the temper of the true

professor is. . . to advance his religion. . . In the cause of Christ, in the course of religion, he must be fiery and fervent.” –Richard Sibbes.

On the Centrality of the Bible: “The word of God must be our rule and square whereby we are to frame and fashion all our actions; and according to the direction received thence, we must do the things we do, or leave them undone.” –William Perkins.

On the Family: “The great care of my godly parents was to bring me up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord: whence I was kept from many visible outbreakings of sin which else I had been guilty of: and whence it was that I had many good impressions of the Spirit of God upon me, even from my infancy.” –Cotton Mather.

The Puritans viewed themselves as pilgrims on a journey to God and heaven. That journey led through this world and was not an escape from it. The Puritans saw themselves as participants in a great spiritual battle between good and evil, God and Satan. As warfaring and wayfaring Christians, they were assured of victory because they were on God’s side.

Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, Princeton and many other colonial universities were originally founded for the express purpose of propagating these principles. Perhaps these universities would still be for us objects of thanksgiving rather than uneasiness if the substance of Christian thought which characterized their historic beginnings was still primary in their philosophies and curricula.

But there are still glimmers here and there. And herein is our great task and challenge for the new century: to rekindle the fires and recapture the spirit of the Puritan lifestyle which was fed by the spiritual springs of new life in Christ. These are roots worth searching for this Thanksgiving. May the Lord find each of us diligently seeking to find and emulate them.

Christmas Film Favorites

Todd Kappelman highlights some favorite films of the Christmas season, encouraging Christians to enjoy the films while separating the sacred from the secular.

A Christmas Carol

In this article we will examine several classics of film and television that have become perennial favorites during the Christmas season. We'll start with a review of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. The 1938 Metro Goldwin Mayer version is our primary reference, although there are several remakes and versions that would be worthy of our attention. Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* remains one of the all-time favorite seasonal films and is worthy of an annual viewing for a number of reasons.

The primary reason that the *Carol* is still important is that Christmas has become a commercial disaster that tends to focus our attention on the material aspects of the season and neglect the spiritual and humanitarian dimensions. *A Christmas Carol* must be understood as the loud cry of a Victorian prophet sounding the warning of the evils of poverty. The settings in Dickens' stories, illustrating the abysmal conditions in nineteenth century England, have long been understood to be a valuable reminder of the social inequities during the industrial revolution. This is the background of the famous Christmas tale.



The film opens with Ebenezer Scrooge's nephew Fred playing in the snow with several young boys. One of the boys is Tiny Tim, the handicapped son of one of Scrooge's employees, Bob Cratchet. The story develops quickly as the merry and cheerful lives of every man, woman, and child in England are contrasted with the disgruntled and miserable life of Scrooge (Reginald Owen). Scrooge is a rich business man with want of nothing, and yet he cannot, or will not, find it in his heart to enter into the spirit of the season. At midnight on Christmas Eve all of this will change as he is visited by the three ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future.

The ghost of Christmas past shows Scrooge his childhood school and friends. He remembers the time as mixed with joy and confusion. Joy because of his friends, and confusion because his father does not participate in the season in the same manner as other families. It is at this point that he becomes hardened as a young man and turns to a life of greed.

When the ghost of Christmas present comes, Scrooge is shown how other people are spending the evening. This is where he learns that Christmas may be enjoyed in spite of being poor and that it is a time of opportunity for those who have material blessings to share with those who do not.

Finally, when the ghost of Christmas future comes, Scrooge is shown the grave that awaits him. He inquires whether one may not change his ways and thus alter his destiny. Although the ghost, who is actually the Grim Reaper, does not respond Scrooge surmises that this must be possible or the ghosts would not be visiting him in the first place. Scrooge learns his lesson in the end and has what amounts to a "conversion" for Dickens. The film and story conversion amount to a humanitarian change of heart and are thin on the Christian emphasis in spite of the presence of worship services and praying families. What we should take with us from the film is the fact that we can learn from the past and appropriate it in the present for a better future. Likewise we can use the

Christmas season as an opportunity to focus on that which really matters, which for Christians is the birth Jesus Christ.

Miracle on 34th Street

Miracle on 34th Street, much like *A Christmas Carol*, is an example of the humanitarian variety of Christmas films.

Miracle on 34th Street opens during the Macy's Annual Thanksgiving Day Parade. The man who has been hired to play Santa is drunk, and the organizer, a Mrs. Doris Walker (Maureen O'Hara), is desperate to find a suitable stand-in. Fortunately the real Santa, a.k.a. Kriss Kringle (Edmund Gwenn), has been wandering the streets of New York and reluctantly agrees to help out. After the parade is over he begins to work at Macy's as the store's Santa Claus and causes quite a commotion.

Being the real Santa Claus, Kringle puts the children first and the commercialism last among his job concerns. He has been instructed by the store manager to influence the children to ask their parents for toys that are in abundant supply and thus help to sell the store's surplus merchandise. Kringle laments the request and will have nothing to do with further commercializing the season.

Kringle elects instead to listen seriously to the children's requests and send their parents to rival department stores if necessary to secure the desired presents. This causes the store's manager and Mrs. Walker great concern about what Mr. Macy, the owner, will do when he finds out. The customers could not be happier with the store and it is considered a great humanitarian gesture on the part of Macy to put the children ahead of the profits. Other stores follow suit, and there is a citywide, then nationwide, movement to assist

customers and children ahead of the store's interests.

There is a major plot twist when Santa is brought to a competency hearing in the New York County Court because he claims to be Santa Claus. His trial is front-page news, and everyone anxiously follows the story to see if the court will find in favor of the existence of Santa Claus or rule that it has all been a commercial hoax of the tallest order.

Mrs. Walker's daughter, Susan (Natalie Wood), has been watching the story unfold and serves as a prop for those who posture themselves more realistically to the Christmas myth of Santa Claus and reindeer. The little girl has been raised by her divorced mother to accept nothing but the sober truth about life; there are no fairy tales, myths, or Santa for this young girl.

However, when Santa is found to exist in actuality by the court there is a new opportunity for both the girl and her mother to reconsider their skepticism. The mother willingly concedes the existence of Santa Claus, but the daughter is much more demanding concerning what is necessary for her to believe. The emphasis of the story is not Christian specifically, but rather humanitarian. The lesson is that if one will turn from one's crass commercialism and embrace one's fellow man the true spirit of the season can be enjoyed. As Christians we should be happy that a classic such as this warns us against the pitfalls of materialism, yet cautious about adding too much by way of Christianizing the story.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas

As we continue in our survey of Christmas films you will notice the difference between films such as Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, which have a more humanitarian emphasis, and films like *It's A Wonderful Life*, with a stronger Christian emphasis. The film we now turn to consider, Dr. Seuss' *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, conveys more of the humanitarian

message. This is the first of two animated classics to be reviewed.

The tale is set in Whoville where the inhabitants are preparing for their Yuletide celebration. The Whovillians enjoy a classic Christmas similar to that of most middle-class suburbanites. There are plenty of presents for the children, snacks and food of every conceivable kind, trees, fireplaces and even "roast beast."

The Grinch (Boris Karloff, voice), a villainous creature with a twisted and defective spirit due to his tiny heart, lives in the mountains of Whoville. He is devising a scheme to steal Christmas from the townspeople below by taking the trees and gifts and food. The Grinch's rationale is that Christmas is somehow dependent on these things. If he steals them it will cause the Whos to wake up on Christmas morning and "find out that there is no Christmas."

The Grinch pulls off the heist and returns to his mountain hideout with every tree, gift, and crumb of food from all the Who houses only to discover a most startling surprise on Christmas morning. The Whos in Whoville awaken and begin to sing songs in spite of having no presents or food. The Grinch cannot understand how Christmas can come "without ribbons and packages, boxes and bows." He had expected the Whos to "all cry boo-hoo." Instead, he finds that Christmas does not come from a store. At this discovery the Grinch's heart grows three sizes. He has seen the true meaning of Christmas.

There is an extremely important message in Dr. Seuss' cartoon classic. Christmas does not come from a store and we should not participate in the commercial trappings of the season to the detriment of the real reason we have cause to celebrate. The season is about Christ, the Savior of the world, and it should be used as an occasion to celebrate this fact with fellow Christians and witness to those who are lost. We can learn from the Whovillians that Christmas can come without all

of the whistles and bells that have become so much of the emphasis in our contemporary celebrations.

The message that we should be careful of is the simple humanitarian turn that is so frequently substituted for the real message. The Grinch has a change of heart, much like the change of heart experienced by Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, and Mrs. Walker in *Miracle on 34th Street*. It should not be inferred that this is a complaint against Dr. Seuss for not rendering a Christian message; that was certainly not his intent. It is, however, a reminder that the Christmas season is not a success just because we use it as an occasion for good will to our fellow men. It is true that the world needs more good will between men, from the nuclear family to international affairs. But Christ said that "I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly." True abundant life and good will which will last for eternity are found in a personal relationship with Christ. Keep this in mind and have a truly merry Christmas.

It's A Wonderful Life

We are offering a list of suggestions for films which may be enjoyed by the whole family as both a point of fellowship and an opportunity for reflection during the Christmas season. The film we'll now consider is Frank Capra's 1946 classic *It's A Wonderful Life*. This film has achieved a cult status as the embodiment of why we should be thankful as well as a reflection on the dignity and value of every individual regardless of one's perceived worth.

The film is the story about a young man named George Bailey (James Stewart) who is saved from suicide by a guardian angel named Clarence (Henry Travers). In the opening sequence the people in Bedford Falls are giving thanks to God for what George has meant to them. The scene of the action then changes to the celestial heavens where Joseph, Clarence, and God are discussing the need to intervene in George's life.

George's father, the owner and executive officer of Bailey Building and Loan, suffers a stroke at the beginning of the film and George, the eldest of two children, must assume his father's position. George foregoes his desires to travel and go to college. Instead he remains in Bedford Falls and marries a childhood acquaintance named Mary Hatch (Donna Reed). He and Mary are poor but extremely happy during the early years of their marriage. The events in George's life will become unbearable when the Building and Loan is in danger of a scandal and foreclosure through no fault on his part. Considering his life insurance policy, he concludes that he would be better off dead than alive.

The dramatic action of the film shifts when Clarence, George's guardian angel, rescues him from his suicide attempt. In response to George's statement that everyone would be better off if he were dead, Clarence offers George a guided tour of what Bedford Falls would be like if he had never been born. One of the first and most startling discoveries George makes concerns Mr. Gower, a druggist whom he worked for when he was a young boy. George had prevented Gower from making a deadly mistake in filling a prescription that would have killed a patient. However, on this occasion George was not there to prevent the accident. Without George Bailey, Gower spent twenty years in prison and became an alcoholic.

The events continue to unfold as George learns that the men saved by his brother Harry in World War II were killed because George had not saved his brother from drowning when they were young. George's wife, Mary, has become an old maid and his children Zu Zu, Tommy, and Janie were never born. The town is no longer called Bedford Falls, but Pottersville, after George's arch rival and evil banker Mr. Potter (Lionel Barrymore). The entire town—from the druggist, to the girl next door, from the saloon owners to the librarian—is different as a result of George's having never been born. There is an oppressive cloud over the town as it mourns the

loss of a citizen it never knew.

The idea that all men have a purpose can only be understood in light of a world created by a God who designed that purpose and gives all men a chance to fulfill their end. Frank Capra's classic *It's A Wonderful Life* can serve as a reminder to all this Christmas season that God puts each and every individual here for a specific purpose. It truly is a wonderful life!

A Charlie Brown Christmas

We conclude our series on films and television specials of the Christmas season with what many believe to be one of the most overtly Christian programs in the genre, Charles Schultz's *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Thus far we have looked at *A Christmas Carol*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and *It's a Wonderful Life*. The major division between these films and specials is that some have a merely humanitarian theme, and others have a more or less classic Christian interpretation of Christmas. We have mentioned that there is nothing wrong with the humanitarian emphasis as far as it goes, but Christians should understand the finer distinctions between the two renderings of the meaning of Christmas.

A Charlie Brown Christmas opens with Charlie Brown in his usual state of mild depression, searching for the meaning of something. This time it is the true meaning of Christmas. He proclaims to Lucy that it just does not feel like Christmas and that his problem is that he just doesn't understand it. Lucy charges Charlie Brown five cents and tells him nothing of any value; her solution is a naturalistic approach with a focus on monetary gain.

Charlie Brown's little sister, Sally, is a prototypical adolescent. She proclaims that all she wants for Christmas is everything that is coming to her; she wants her fair share. She represents the voice of all who equate Christmas primarily

with a time of getting presents. It is sad when a child believes this about Christmas; it is tragic when an adult holds the same view. Lucy interrupts the exchange between Charlie Brown and his sister Sally to announce that we all know that Christmas is a big commercial racket. The truth here is that we all know that Christmas has become a big commercial racket; the tragedy is that we do so little about it.

The scene changes again when Charlie Brown is put in charge of the Christmas play and must find an appropriate Christmas tree. In true Charlie Brown fashion he selects a pitiful specimen that is losing all of its nettles and cannot support itself. The tree becomes a symbol for Charlie Brown and the limp and pathetic status of our contemporary celebration of Christmas; something has gone terribly wrong. Lucy's jaded expectations and Sally's crass materialism have only led Charlie Brown to a deeper state of depression. The answers have failed to comfort him, thus the season looks bleak and hopeless. This leads to his final cry for someone who knows the true meaning of Christmas to come forward.

Linus, the blanket introvert virtuoso, enters and assumes center stage. As the existential hero of the story, the true meaning of Christmas has not eluded him. He tells Charlie Brown that he will now give an account of what Christmas means. In a direct quotation from Luke 2:10-11, Linus tells them of the annunciation by the angel concerning the birth of the baby Jesus.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. (KJV)

In this, the most overtly Christian of the Christmas specials we have discussed, there is a clear and unmistakable account of the true meaning of the Christmas season. Have a merry

Christmas and a happy New Year!

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The Angel Quiz

Origin and Background of the Angels and Demons

The subject of this essay is angels. The material is presented in a quiz format because we have learned that many people enjoy testing their biblical knowledge in this way. Before going to the quiz, however, a few introductory observations about angels are in order.

Angels are referred to in 34 of the 66 books of the Bible. They are mentioned 108 times in the Old Testament and 165 times in the New Testament.[{1}](#)

The presence of good angels, and evil ones (demons), are recognized in most of the world's religions. Angels are important figures in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, many Christian cults, and in the occult. "The history of various religions from the earliest times shows belief in Satan and demons to be universal...The great ethnic faiths of India, China, and Japan major in demonism, as well as the animistic religions of Africa, South America, and some islands...To an amazing degree, the history of religion is an account of demon-controlled religion, particularly in its clash with the Hebrew faith and later with Christianity."[{2}](#)

Currently interest in [angels](#) is very high in the United States, and many books and seminars are being offered on the

subject in an attempt to meet this heightened curiosity about angels.

Unfortunately most of these books and seminars are naive, at best, and more often than not, occultic in orientation. Now let's turn to the quiz.

1. What does the word angel mean?

The basic meaning of the word angel is "messenger." This is significant because a messenger is given a message by a higher person. Much of the contemporary romance with angels sees them as somewhat independent, if not totally autonomous, but a messenger is on a mission from someone higher, in this case from God...or Satan.

2. What are some of the other names used of angels?

Other terms used to describe angels are: ministers, hosts (the armies of God), chariots, watchers, sons of the mighty, sons of God, elohim (or sons of Elohim), holy ones, and stars.[\[3\]](#)

3. Are angels created or have they always been with God?

They were created by Christ (Col. 1:15-17; John 1:3).

4. When were they created?

They were created some time prior to the creation of the earth because Job 38:4-7 says that the sons of God (angels) sang with joy when the earth was created.

5. What about their appearance? How do angels look?

When angels appear on earth, they usually have the appearance of adult human males and are often described in the same passage both as men and as angels (Genesis 18:1-2). In Mark 16:5 an angel is described as a young man.

6. What do angels wear?

They are often reported to wear white (Acts 1:10), white robes (Mark 16:15), garments white as snow (Matt. 28:3), dazzling apparel (Luke 24:4), and shining garments (Acts 10:30).

7. Is it possible to encounter angels and not recognize them as angels?

Yes, in Hebrews 13:2 we are warned to show hospitality to strangers because “some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

8. Do angels really have wings?

Some angels don't have wings, or, at least, they don't manifest wings. Some clearly do. Cherubim are pictured as having four wings in Ezek. 1:5-12; 10:15; 11:22) and seraphim, as having six wings in Isaiah 6:2.

9. How do people react upon encountering angels?

The reaction varies. Sometimes the people are calm, but usually they experience fear, anxiety, emotional upheaval, terror, or the desire to worship the angels. Mary was greatly troubled at first (Luke 1:28-29); armed soldiers at the tomb shook with fear and became like dead men (Matt. 28:4); John, the author of Revelation, fell at the feet of the angel to worship (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9).

Angels in the Old Testament

10. What caused the fall of the angels?

Satan, the leader of the fallen angels, was before his fall the highest of all created beings, but he was consumed with pride and rebelled against God (Ezek. 28:12-19; Isa. 14:12-14). He seduced a third of the angels to follow him in his rebellion (Rev. 12:4). These treacheries brought about his condemnation by God (1 Tim. 3:6) and the condemnation of the other rebelling angels.

11. When did they fall?

They fell some time after their own creation and before the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3).

12. Does Satan make his first appearance in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3?

No, a close reading of the account of man's fall in Genesis 3 reveals that Satan doesn't appear in the Garden of Eden though his influence is felt. Though his name isn't mentioned in the passage, he clearly inspired the actions of the serpent. Later, when God curses the serpent in verse 15, the last part of the curse is directed at Satan.

13. What do the opening verses of Genesis 6 have to do with angels?

There the sons of God took wives from among the daughters of men. One interpretation of the passage takes the sons of God to mean "angels" as the term is normally used. If this is so, then these angels are the evil angels who, in a very unique occurrence, cohabited with human females and produced unusual offspring. For this heinous sin these angels are kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day (Jude 6). See also 2 Peter 2:4-12.

14. How would evil angels profit by these actions?

Aside from sensual pleasure, the purpose seems to be that they intended to pollute and pervert the human line. Since Christ needed to be born into the human family and be fully human as well as fully God, a degenerate hybrid-humanity would have prevented Him from being our authentic representative on the cross. This is the reason, some hold, for God's sending the world-wide flood: to wipe out the polluted line and start over with Noah's family.

15. Do angels marry?

No, this is clearly stated in Mark 12:25. It is commonly believed that angels do not procreate and are not a race.[{4}](#) (See also Matt. 22:30.) Generally they are portrayed as sexless apart from the difficulties mentioned in question 13.

They are probably sexless in their basic nature but possibly able to assume a variety of forms, just as they are normally invisible but able to manifest themselves when they desire. (See also 2 Cor. 11:14-15.)

Angels are referred to in the Scriptures by masculine word forms though neuter forms were available. They appear on earth as human males, but there is the possibility of a female angel in Zechariah 5:9.

16. What news did the Lord and two angels give Abraham?

The Lord and two angels (also described as three men and the Lord and two men) announced that Sarah would have a son and that Sodom would be destroyed.

17. What happened when the two angels left and went to Sodom?

The men of that city, not knowing that they were angels, asked Lot to send them outside so they could have sexual relations with them. The angels blinded the men and warned Lot and his family to leave the city because Sodom was about to be destroyed (Gen. 19:1-29).

18. What famous incident involved Jacob and many angels?

In Genesis 28 Jacob had a dream of a ladder stretching from earth into heaven, and he saw angels ascending and descending on the ladder. In the dream God gave the land around Jacob to him and to his descendants and proclaimed "in you and in your descendants shall all the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:10-22).

19. What is the meaning of this dream and promise?

It was a reconfirmation of the Abrahamic covenant and

indicated that the covenant would go through Jacob's line (not Esau's), that his descendants would be innumerable, and that wherever Jacob went God would be with him. It also looked forward to the coming of Christ through Jacob (Matt. 1:2).

20. What famous event involved Jacob and one angel? What happened?

Jacob, while fleeing from his brother Esau, wrestled all one night with an angel and persisted until the angel blessed him. The angel blessed him by changing his name from Jacob, meaning "trickster," to Israel, which means "he who persists with God." The angel also crippled one of Jacob's legs as evidence that the struggle had really occurred and was not merely a dream. The wrestling figure is described as a man and as God in Genesis 32:24-30 and as an angel in Hosea 12:4. So, the angel was probably the preincarnate Christ.

21. What Old Testament character was greeted by the angel of the Lord by this statement, "The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior"?

Gideon (Judges 6:11-12).

Angels in the Earthly Life of Christ

22. Angels were involved in Jesus birth in several ways. Can you identify all these events?

The angel Gabriel (Luke 1:19) announced the coming birth of John the Baptist who would prepare the way for Jesus (Luke 1:5-25). Gabriel also announced to Mary, who was a virgin, the miraculous coming birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him not to put Mary away but to marry her because the child she was carrying was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was also told to name the child Jesus. When he woke up he did as the angel commanded him (Matt. 1:18-25). On the night of Jesus' birth, an angel announced the good news to shepherds keeping watch over their

flocks. Then “suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God” (Luke 1:8-15).

23. Name the ways angels were involved in Jesus’ life and teachings?

After the coming of the magi, an angel warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt to avoid Herod’s search for the child. After Herod’s death an angel again appeared to Joseph. He told Joseph to return to Israel (Matt. 2:19-20). When Christ was in the wilderness for 40 days, Satan was tempting Him and the angels were ministering to Him (Luke 4:1-2; Mark 1:13). Jesus taught about angels (Luke 16:22) and about Satan and his demons (Luke 10:17-20). He cast out demons, and He gave the disciples power over demons (Luke 9:1, 37-42). Christ was strengthened by an angel in Gethsemane the night He was taken prisoner (Luke 22:43).

24. Immediately after He stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Christ was met at the shore by a man who claimed to be demon possessed. What evidence was there that the man was demon- possessed?

He had been bound, but had superhuman strength and had broken away from all human restraints, even chains; he was naked and lived among the tombs, constantly gashing himself with stones while screaming and crying (Mark 5).

25. How many demons did he have? What happened to the demons?

He said he had a legion, meaning literally several thousand. This was probably a figure of speech, but he doubtless had many demons. The demons begged not to be sent out of the country; Christ then sent them into some pigs grazing on a nearby mountainside, and the pigs ran over the cliff into the sea. This is one more evidence of Christ’s total control over the demonic world (Mark 5).

26. How were angels involved after Christ’s death?

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to visit the grave. Before they got there, “a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven and rolled away the stone and sat upon it” (Matt. 28:2). Angels at the tomb announced that Christ was risen (Luke 24:4). Immediately after He ascended, two angels appeared and told the disciples that Jesus would return in the same manner that He had departed (Acts 1:10).

Angels in the Rest of the New Testament

27. What person was described as having the face of an angel?

Stephen, a young man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, was taken before the Sanhedrin and charged with blasphemy. He began to preach. Then “fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). His sermon, however, so angered the Council that they stoned him (Acts 7:1-60).

28. Who was taken by an angel on a missionary journey? What happened?

Philip was preaching in the villages of Samaria on his way to Jerusalem when an angel spoke to him and told him to go south on a road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. When he arrived the angel told him to approach an Ethiopian eunuch sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. Philip explained the passage to the eunuch and baptized him upon hearing his statement of faith in Christ. After they come out of the water, the angel snatched Philip away and set him down in another city where he continued preaching the gospel (Acts 8:25-40).

29. What is the attitude of the heavenly angels toward God's plan of salvation?

There is great joy in heaven among the angels of God when a sinner repents and accepts Christ as Savior (Luke 15:10). They

are clearly intrigued by what God is doing and long to know more (1 Pet. 1:10- 12). They observe with great interest the behavior of the church. In fact in a passage about orderliness in the worship (Christ submitting to God, men submitting to Christ, and wives submitting to their husbands), Paul concludes by writing that women in church should have a symbol of authority on their heads because of the angels (1 Cor. 11:1-10). There are different theories about what all this means, but it seems clear that our behavior is to be respectful to the angels present and perhaps even instructive to them. Remember that the sin of the fallen angels began with Satan's pride, his unwillingness to submit and his desire for prominence.

30. What individual was freed from prison by an angel?

Simon Peter (Acts 12:3-10).

31. What did the angel do to free Peter?

He appeared in the cell, struck Peter's side to wake him, caused his chains to fall off his hands, then told him to get up and get dressed, and to follow him. They passed several guards without being seen, then they came to the gate of the city, and it opened by itself. Then the angel vanished.

32. Is it possible for an angel to say or teach things contrary to the Scriptures or to God's will?

Yes, in Galatians 1:8 Paul writes "Even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed."

33. Can angels be deceptive in other ways as well?

Yes, 1 Timothy 4:1 states: "in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (fallen angels)."

34. What Gentile man was told by an angel to send for Simon

Peter?

Cornelius, a righteous, god-fearing Centurion who gave alms to the Jews (Acts 10).

35. Why did the angel direct Cornelius to send for Simon Peter come to Cornelius?

So Peter could tell Cornelius and his relatives and friends about salvation through Christ. And, so Simon Peter could see further evidence of how God was beginning a great wave of conversions among the Gentiles (Acts 9:32-11:30).

36. What happened?

The Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and all those listening to Simon Peter's sermon. They began speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter had them all baptized.

Future State of the Angels and Demons

37. What future roles will the good angels have?

They are sometimes involved in punishing unbelievers (Acts 12:23). They will act as reapers toward the end of the age (Matt. 13:39), be involved in the judgments of the Tribulation (Rev. 8, 9, 16), and live forever with the believers of all ages in the New Jerusalem. [\[5\]](#)

38. Will the good angels judge the actions of their former comrades, the fallen angels?

No, believers in their glorified state will judge the fallen angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). Christ will rule and the believers will rule under Him. Hebrews 2:5 states, "For He did not subject to angels the world to come."

39. What happens to the evil angels and Satan?

The evil angels and Satan will finally be judged by God who

will cast them into the lake of fire that burns forever (Luke 20:36; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

Notes

1. C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect and Evil* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), p. 13.
2. Merrill F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1971), p. 10.
3. Dickason, pp. 58-61.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

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An Easter Quiz

Written by Dale Taliaferro

1. What emotional state were the disciples in when they left the upper room to go to the garden?

Anxious, fearful, troubled (John 14:1, 27).

2. What is John 13-17 called?

The Upper Room Discourse.

3. Why were the disciples so troubled?

a. They had probably been excommunicated by this time for professing Jesus as Christ (John 9:22).

b. The religious leaders had determined to kill Jesus and His followers (John 11:16).

c. One of the inner core was going to betray Him (John 13:20-30).

d. Peter was going to deny Him three times (John 13:38).

e. Jesus was going to leave them in the lurch (John 13:33).

- 4. For what did Jesus pray before they arrived at the garden?**
Eternal security and temporal protection of the disciples (John 17:1-26).
- 5. What is the name of the garden?**
Gethsemane.
- 6. Where is it located?**
At the base of the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39).
- 7. What was the subject matter of Jesus' great discourse upon this mountain?**
Prophecy (Matt. 24-25).
- 8. What ravine did they have to cross to get to the garden?**
The Kidron Valley (John 18:1).
- 9. What did they do just before going out to the Mount of Olives?**
Sang a hymn (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26).
- 10. Who accompanied Jesus the furthest into the garden?**
Peter, James, and John (Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33).
- 11. What command did Jesus give His disciples at this time?**
"Remain here and keep watch with me" (Matt. 26:38).
- 12. How far did Jesus remove Himself to pray?**
A stone's throw (Luke 22:41).
- 13. What posture was Jesus in when He prayed?**
On His knees, face down on the ground (Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:35).
- 14. What was Jesus' emotional state at this time?**
Deeply grieved to the point of death (Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34).
- 15. How did Jesus address His prayer?**

To the Father (Matt. 26:39).

16. What petition did Jesus make?

“Let this cup pass from Me” (Matt. 26:39).

17. With what concession did Jesus close His prayer?

“Yet not as I but as Thou will” (Matt. 26:39).

18. How long did Jesus pray this time?

One hour (Matt. 26:40).

19. Upon finding the disciples sleeping, what warning did He give them?

Once again, “Watch and pray” (Matt. 26:41).

20. What rationale does Jesus use to strengthen His warning?

“For the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41).

21. What did Jesus pray the second time?

The same words (Mark 14:39).

22. When Jesus found the disciples asleep the second time, what excuse did they offer?

None (Mark 14:40).

23. What did Jesus pray the third time?

The same thing (Matt. 26:44).

24. How many people did Judas bring with him to arrest Jesus?

A multitude (Mark 14:33).

25. From whom was the crowd sent?

From the religious leaders (Matt. 26:47).

26. What happened to this multitude when Jesus identified Himself?

They fell backward upon the ground (John 18:4-6).

27. What did this signify?

As He had prophesied, none would take His life; He would give

it up voluntarily (John 10:16-18).

28. What sign did Judas use to designate whom the crowd should arrest?

A kiss (Matt. 26:48).

29. How did Jesus convict Judas of his sin?

Confronted him *before* the kiss, stating, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48).

30. Which disciple drew his sword to protect Jesus?

Simon Peter (John 18:10).

31. What part of the body did Peter slice off when he attacked the servant of the high priest?

The ear (John 18:10).

32. What was the servant's name?

Malchus (John 18:10).

33. What did Jesus say to Peter in rebuke?

- a. "Live by the sword, die by the sword."
- b. "My Father could send 12 legions of angels."

34. How did Jesus heal the servant's ear?

By touching it (Luke 22:51).

35. Name two evidences that Jesus was in control during His arrest and that His arrest was moving along as it had been divinely appointed.

- a. It was prophesied (Matt. 26:54; Mark 14:49; John 18:8-9).
- b. Jesus' comment, "The cup the Father gave me, I must fulfill," reflects His earlier prayer to the Father.

36. What three things did Jesus say to rebuke the multitudes, including chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders?

- a. "Have you come out to arrest Me as you would a robber with swords and sticks?"
- b. "You did not try to arrest Me when I *daily* sat teaching in the temple."

c. "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53).

37. Who was the young man who fled Gethsemane naked?

Tradition identifies him as John Mark (Mark 14:51-52).

38. To whom was Jesus presented first?

Annas the high priest (John 18:24).

39. To whom did Annas send Jesus?

Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57).

40. Which two disciples followed?

Peter and John (Matt. 26:58; John 18:15).

41. Where did Jesus meet with Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin?

Caiaphas's house (Luke 22:54).

42. How did they attempt to convict Jesus?

By bringing in false witnesses (Matt. 26:59-60; Mark 14:55-56).

43. Of what did two false witnesses accuse Jesus?

The claim to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days (Matt. 26:61; Mark 14:57-59).

44. How did Jesus respond to all of the charges?

He remained silent (Matt. 26:63; Mark 14:61).

45. What question did Caiaphas then ask Jesus?

Was He the Christ, the Son of God? (Matt. 26:63; Mark 14:61).

46. How did Jesus answer the question?

He said "*Egoeimi*," "I am" (Mark 14:62).

47. What did those who heard Him take His response to mean?

That He was the Messiah and also the Son of God, making Himself equal in person with God the Father (Matt. 26:65-66; Mark 14:63-64; John 5:18).

48. Had Jesus ever clearly claimed His deity before?

Yes (Mark 2:1-12; John 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9).

49. How did those with the priest respond to Jesus after Caiaphas sentenced Him to death?

- a. They spit in His face.
- b. They blindfolded Him and beat Him.
- c. They asked Him to prophesy who hit Him.
- d. Many other things that Scripture does not specify (Matt. 26:67-68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-65).

50. What dilemma do Peter's denials present to the reader?

The need to harmonize them. One can apparently list ten different denials by Peter.

51. How many denials did Jesus clearly prophesy that Peter would give?

Three.

52. What was the purpose of the regathering of the Sanhedrin at dawn?

Jesus was formally condemned by the Sanhedrin at that time. This action by the council was an effort to make the proceedings and the passing of judgment upon Jesus legal. But, as Greek expert A. T. Robertson writes, "No ratification of a wrong can make it right" (*A Harmony of the Gospels*, 215).

53. What did Judas feel when he realized he had helped condemn Jesus to death?

Remorse (Matt. 27:3).

54. How much did the chief priests and elders give Judas to betray Jesus?

Thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 27:3; 26:15).

55. How much would that be worth today?

The exact amount is unknown; it was the redemption price for a slave (Exod. 21:32).

56. What did Judas do with the money after he realized what he had done?

He tried to give it back. When they wouldn't accept it, he

threw it into the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies (Matt. 27:3-5).

57. What did Judas do next?

Hanged himself (Matt. 27:6).

58. What did the religious leaders do with the returned money?

Bought a field in which to bury foreigners— Potters Field or Field of Blood (Matt. 27:6-7; Acts 1:18-19).

59. What is significant about this action?

It fulfilled prophecy of both the price and the consequence (Matt. 27:7-10).

60. To whom did the council now take Jesus?

To Pilate (Matt. 27:2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28-29).

61. What principle can we learn from the Jews' legalism or "works" mentality at this point?

Legalism—actually any system of works—blinds one to his own sinfulness (John 18:28). They didn't want to defile themselves by going into the palace, but they were willing to kill an innocent man.

62. What accusations did the religious leaders bring against Jesus?

- a. He perverted the nation (Luke 23:2).
- b. He prohibited the giving of tribute to Caesar (Luke 23:2).
- c. He said He is Christ, a king (Luke 23:2).
- d. He stirred up the people (Luke 23:5).

63. What conclusion did Pilate come to after questioning Jesus?

- a. "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).
- b. "I find no crime in Him" (John 18:38).

64. To whom did Pilate send Jesus?

Herod Antipas the Tetrarch (Luke 23:7).

65. What was the stated reason Pilate sent Jesus to Herod

Antipas?

Jesus was a Galilean and under Herod's jurisdiction (Luke 23:6-7).

66. How did Herod Antipas receive Jesus?

Gladly (Luke 23:8).

67. Why did he receive Jesus this way?

He wanted to see a miracle (Luke 23:8).

68. How did Jesus respond to Herod's interrogation?

With silence (Luke 23:9).

69. How did Herod respond to this silent treatment?

He mocked Jesus (Luke 23:11).

70. What custom did Pilate attempt to use to keep from condemning Jesus?

The custom of freeing a prisoner during the feast (Matt. 27:15, 17; Luke 15:6, 9; John 18:39).

71. After Jesus' interrogation by both Herod and Pilate, what was the governor's verdict?

Neither he nor Herod had found Jesus worthy of death (Luke 23:15). In fact, Luke 23:14b says, "[I] have found no basis for your charges against Him."

72. What was the name of the other man Pilate offered to release?

Barabbas (Matt. 27:16; Mark 15:7; Luke 23:18; John 18:40).

73. What motive did Pilate detect which propelled the chief priests to demand Jesus death?

Envy (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).

74. Why was Barabbas imprisoned?

Insurrection and murder (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19).

75. From whom did Pilate receive a warning to have nothing to do with Jesus?

His wife (Matt. 27:19).

76. What motivated her to warn Pilate?

She had suffered many things that day in a dream because of Jesus (Matt. 27:19).

77. How did Pilate respond to Jesus before he again told the crowd he could “find no crime in Him?”

a. Pilate scourged Him (John 19:1).

b. He allowed the soldiers to (1) plait a crown of thorns and place it on His head; (2) array Him in a purple garment; (3) while mockingly hailing Him as the King of the Jews, beat Him with their fists (John 19:2-3).

78. How many times did Pilate confess he could find no cause for putting Jesus to death?

Three (Luke 23:22).

79. At this point, what accusations do the Jews make to claims that Jesus is worthy of death?

“He made Himself [out to be] the Son of God” (John 19:7).

80. After Pilate again tried to release Jesus, what threat did the Jews use to obtain Jesus’ condemnation?

“If you release Him, you are no friend of Caesar’s. Everyone who makes a king speaks against Caesar” (John 19:12).

81. What symbolic gesture did Pilate make to declare himself innocent of condemning a righteous man?

He washed his hands before the multitude and said, “I am innocent of the blood of the righteous man (Matt. 27:24).

82. When, exactly, did this happen?

This is the subject of a huge debate, but it was probably just before dawn on Friday.

83. What did Pilate do to Jesus before he handed Him over to be crucified?

a. He had Jesus scourged a second time! (Matt. 27:26; Mark

15:15).

b. He delivered Jesus over to his guards, who first mocked and beat Him, then crucified Him (Matt. 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19).

84. Who was enlisted to carry Jesus' cross for Him?

Simon of Cyrene (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26).

85. What is the name of the way that Jesus walked to His crucifixion?

The Via Dolorosa, "Way of Suffering."

86. Who accompanied Jesus along the path?

The two thieves (Luke 23:32).

87. What is the name of the place where Jesus was crucified?

In Hebrew, Golgotha (Matt. 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17).

88. What is this place called in Greek?

The cranium, the skull (Luke 23:33).

89. What is this place called in Latin?

Calvary.

90. Of what significance were the inscriptions on the crosses at crucifixions?

They identified the crime for which the person was being executed.

91. What were Jesus's first words from the cross?

"Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

92. What is the first fulfillment of prophecy by those who crucified Jesus after He was nailed to the cross?

They cast lots over Jesus' garments (John 19:24).

93. What inscription did Pilate place on Jesus' cross?

"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19).

94. In what languages was it written?

Aramaic, Latin, and Greek (John 19:20).

95. Who are the three women named in scripture who stood by the cross (John 19:25)?

- a. Mary, mother of Jesus
- b. Mary's sister—the wife of Cleopas
- c. Mary Magdalene

96. What was the second thing Jesus said from the cross and to whom was it addressed (John 19:27)?

To Mary: "Woman, behold, your son"; to John, "Behold your mother!"

97. At what hour was Jesus actually crucified?

The third hour—nine a.m. (Mark 15:25).

98. At what hour did darkness enshroud the earth?

The sixth hour (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44).

99. How long did the darkness last?

Three hours (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44).

100. Around the ninth hour, what did Jesus cry out?

"My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken me?" (Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani).

101. What was Jesus' next-to-last utterance from the cross and to what did it refer?

"It is finished." It referred to the penalty He paid on the cross (John 19:30).

102. At the death of Jesus, what physical phenomena occurred?

- a. The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 21:45).
- b. There was an earthquake (Matt. 27:51).
- c. Rocks were split apart (Matt. 27:51).
- d. Tombs were opened (Matt. 27:52).
- e. There were many resuscitations of the dead. They entered into the city, appeared to many, and stayed alive until after

Jesus' resurrection (Matt. 27:52-53).

103. The fear occasioned by these awesome phenomena moved the centurion at the foot of the cross to make what profession?

That Jesus was a righteous man and truly the Son of God (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47).

104. How did the multitudes respond to these awesome displays?

They returned to the city beating their breasts (Luke 23:48).

105. What reason did the Jews give to have Pilate break the legs of those crucified?

So as not to defile the sabbath-day Passover (John 19:31).

106. Instead of breaking Jesus' legs, they did something else to Him, since He was already dead. What?

They pierced His side (John 19:33-34).

107. What resulted from the piercing, signifying that death had occurred?

Blood and water flowed out (John 19:34).

108. What two prophecies relate to Jesus' legs not being broken?

a. No bone shall be broken (Exod. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Ps. 34:20).

b. They will look on me, the one they have pierced (Zach. 12:10).

109. Who asked Pilate for the body of Jesus for burial?

Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50; John 19:38).

110. How did Pilate confirm that Jesus had in fact died?

He called in the centurion in charge of the crucifixion (Mark 15:44-45).

111. Who helped Joseph prepare the body for burial?

Nicodemus (John 19:39).

112. What two spices were used in the burial preparation?

Myrrh and aloes (John 19:39).

113. How much was used?

One hundred pounds (John 19:39).

114. Who were the two women who watched where Joseph and Nicodemus buried Jesus?

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus (Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47).

115. What reason did the chief priests and Pharisees give for sealing and guarding the sepulchre?

They secured the tomb for three days because they feared Jesus' disciples would steal the body and tell the people He had risen (Matt. 27:62-66).

116. What supernatural event accompanied the great earthquake early on Sunday morning?

An angel of the Lord rolled back the tombstone and sat on it (Matt. 28:2-4).

117. What is curious about the angel and this appearance?

The angel came and went. Some saw the angel and some didn't (John 28:2-10).

118. Who was the first person at the tomb early on Sunday morning?

Mary Magdalene (John 20:1).

119. Basically, what message did the angel give the women at the tomb?

"He is not here; He has risen just as He had said He would" (Matt. 28:5-7; Mark 16:26-7; Luke 24:5-7).

120. Who were the first two apostles to go to the empty tomb?

John and Peter (John 20:2).

121. What was curious about the burial wrappings?

They were in the tomb, neatly folded (John 20:5-7).

122. What excuse did the soldiers (who were paid by the chief priests and the elders) give for the disappearance of Jesus' body?

"His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept" (Matt. 28:11-13).

123. What is so ludicrous about this excuse?

The guards who fell asleep, plus all of those in the unit, would have been executed.

124. Name some of the people to whom Jesus appeared after He arose.

Mary Magdalene, Cleopas and a friend, the eleven disciples, Thomas (Mark 16:9, 14; Luke 24:17; John 20:26).

125. How long did He appear to the disciples before He finally ascended?

Forty days (Acts 1:1-2).

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The Theology of Christmas Carols – A Godly View of This Sacred Holiday

Dr. Robert Pyne looks at the theological message found in five different popular Christmas carols. For the most part, these carols, when listened to for their content, help us remember a biblical worldview perspective of this popular holiday.

Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Most radio stations play some type of Christmas music during the holiday season, but many of the songs have become so familiar to us that we no longer consider their content. In between the secular songs like “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and “Up on a Housetop,” you may hear the strains of an old hymn by Charles Wesley called “Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus.” It was written in 1744, and it reads,

**Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in
Thee.**

**Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth
Thou art;**

dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a King,

born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;

**by Thine own sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious
throne.**

“Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus” is a little heavier than most of the music we are used to hearing today, and if we are not careful we will miss much of the meaning. The first verse focuses on the fact that the coming of Jesus Christ fulfilled Israel’s longing for the Messiah. As the one whose coming was prophesied in the Old Testament, He is the “long-expected Jesus.”

A few of the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled are Isaiah 7:14, which spoke of a virgin giving birth to a child whose name would mean “God with us;” Isaiah 9:6, which told of a child whose name would be called “Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, eternal Father, the Prince of Peace;” and Micah 5:2, which said that from Bethlehem would come a ruler whose “goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

These and many similar prophecies looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, and many devout Jews prayed earnestly for the day when He would arrive. Luke 2 tells of Simeon, a man of faith who was “looking for the consolation of Israel” (v. 25). When he saw Jesus as an infant, Simeon knew that this Child was the fulfillment of his messianic hope. Charles Wesley was borrowing from this passage when he described Jesus in this song as “Israel’s strength and consolation.”

Although He fulfilled Israel’s prophecies, Jesus came to bring salvation to the entire world, which is what Wesley was referring to when he described Christ as the “hope of all the earth” and the “dear desire of every nation.” More than that, He is the “joy of every longing heart.” He alone is the one who can satisfy every soul.

The second verse tells us why Jesus can meet our expectations: He was “born a child and yet a King.” As the One who is both God and man, Jesus was able to satisfy God’s wrath completely by dying on the cross for our sins. When Wesley wrote about Jesus’ “all sufficient merit,” he was referring to Christ’s ability to bring us to salvation.

“Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus” is a great song for Christmas, focusing on the “long-expected Jesus” who was born to set us free from sin and to bring us salvation by His death.

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley’s best-known song is probably “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing.” It has been altered slightly by editors, but most of it remains just as Wesley intended when he wrote it over 250 years ago.

As we generally hear it today, the song begins with a triumphant proclamation of Jesus’ birth, describes the fact that He is both God and man, and then praises Him for the salvation He was born to provide.

The first verse reads, in part,

**Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."**

Talking about peace on earth is popular at Christmas time, and appropriately so, for Jesus did come to bring peace. Primarily, however, He came to bring us peace with God, which is what Wesley meant when he wrote, "God and sinners reconciled." We have all sinned against God; we have broken His commandments and thus made ourselves His enemies. When people become enemies, they cannot go back to being friends until their differences are set aside. Sometimes reconciliation involves the payment of reparations, and which is essentially what Jesus did when He died on the cross. He paid the price necessary to reconcile us to God. The price was really ours to pay, not God's, but Jesus was able to pay it because, though He was God, He became also a man, being born as a baby on that first Christmas day.

Charles Wesley described Jesus' birth in the second verse of this song. He wrote,

**Late in time behold Him come, offspring of the Virgin's
womb.**

**Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.**

Though He was the everlasting Lord, the second person of the Trinity (which is described in the song as "the Godhead"), fully equal in nature with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus became the "offspring of the Virgin's womb." He was "veiled in flesh," the "incarnate Deity." He was God, having become also a man. The name Emmanuel means "God with us," which is what Wesley was referring to when he wrote that Jesus was "pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel." He became a man, but in the process did not lose His deity. He was "God with us."

The idea that Jesus would lay aside His divine privileges for any reason is nothing short of incredible, but He did so in order to provide us with salvation. Wesley focused on this amazing occurrence in the third verse, where he wrote,

**Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second
birth.**

Jesus laid aside His own rights, coming to this earth and dying for our sins, that those who trust in Him might have eternal life. He was born that we might be born again, and that is good reason to sing “glory to the newborn King.”

0 Little Town of Bethlehem

“0 Little Town of Bethlehem” was written in 1867 by Phillips Brooks, an Episcopal pastor from Philadelphia. He had been in Israel two years earlier and had celebrated Christmas in Bethlehem. This song describes the city not so much as it was when Brooks observed it, but as he thought it might have appeared on the night of Jesus’ birth.

The first verse reads,

**0 little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee
tonight.**

The streets of our own cities are quiet on Christmas day; stores are closed and most people are at home. It is possible that Bethlehem was quiet on the night that Jesus was born, but we know that the place was full of people from out of town, and chances are that there were even more people on the streets than usual. But this song does not say as much about the level of activity in Bethlehem as it does about the fact

that very few people even noticed the Baby who was born. One line from the second verse reads, "While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love"—a situation that is true even today. The world goes on about its business, working, eating, sleeping, and playing, utterly oblivious to the spiritual realities around it. As Brooks wrote in the third verse of the song,

**How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ
enters in.**

When Christ came into this world, He came quietly. The angelic announcement to the shepherds was the only publicity that accompanied Him. He was born in a stable and laid in a feeding trough; He did not arrive with the pomp that one would expect of a King. For the most part, He still does not. When people today place their faith in Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us that He comes to live inside them through the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 14:16-23; Rom. 8:9-11). There is not a lot of flash associated with an entrance like that, and some of your friends might not even notice the difference at first, but when you trust in Jesus Christ an incredibly significant event takes place. Your sins are forgiven and you are made a new person (John 5:24; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Jesus' coming means that Christmas does not have to be the lonely time that it is for so many people. We can experience His salvation and enjoy His presence as individuals, even though the world around us does not understand what is really going on. As the last verse of the song reads,

**O holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us we pray,
Cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel.**

0 Holy Night

The carol "0 Holy Night" by John Dwight begins by describing the night Jesus was born. It reads,

**0 holy night! The stars are brightly shining.
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.**

The coming of Jesus Christ should make us feel valuable, and it should make us feel loved. John 3:16 tells us that Jesus came because "God so loved the world." First Peter 1 reminds us that God has actually purchased us out of our slavery to sin, not with something perishable and comparatively worthless like silver and gold, "but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (vv. 18,19). The fact that Jesus gave Himself for us should cause our souls to feel their worth to God.

The second verse of "0 Holy Night" calls us to consider the incredible fact that the King of kings was born as a human infant and placed in a manger. Most of us cannot relate to that kind of birth—our children are usually born in hospitals and nurtured in the most sterile of environments. Jesus was not. He was born in a stable. More than that, He lived a life of poverty, experienced severe temptation and persecution, and died a brutal death, abandoned by His friends and wrongly condemned by His enemies. Thus, although we cannot always relate to His experiences, He can relate to ours. This empathy is what Dwight was describing when he wrote,

**The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our Friend.
He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger.
Behold your King, before Him lowly bend.**

It must have seemed ironic for grown men to bow down before a

baby, but no act of worship was ever more appropriate.

Considering our Lord's birth should cause us to worship Him, and it should cause us to respond to one another with humility. The third verse of "O Holy Night" reads,

**Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,
And in His name all oppression shall cease.**

We no longer have slavery in this country, but we have many other forms of oppression, and Dwight was correct in writing that the oppression of human beings is inconsistent with the worship of Christ.

The Bible tells us that we are to model the humility that Jesus demonstrated when He voluntarily laid aside His rights as God and became also a man in order to suffer for our salvation. Based on Christ's example, Paul writes,

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (Phil. 2:3-4).

Paul tells us that we are wrong when we put our own interests ahead of someone else's, whether through the slavery that John Dwight spoke against or simply through insensitivity toward others. Because He loved us, Jesus chose not to exercise all of His rights. May we follow that pattern of humility as we love one another, even after Christmas.

Joy to the World

"Joy to the World" was written by Isaac Watts and published for the first time in 1719. The song is a paraphrase of the

98th Psalm, and it has become one of the most popular Christmas carols of all time. The popularity of "Joy to the World" has resulted in a number of revisions designed to fit the theology of those singing it. For example, in 1838 the song was revised by a group of religious skeptics, who apparently liked the song but did not want to sing about the coming of the Lord. They changed the words from

"Joy to the world! The Lord is come. Let earth receive her King.

Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing,"

to

"Joy to the world! The light has come [a reference to reason], the only lawful King. Let every heart prepare it room, and moral nature sing."

Several years ago the song was used by a marching choir in a major televised parade. But the choir only sang the first four words, "Joy to the world," and then just hummed the rest of the song!

People who do not believe in Jesus often do not mind singing about a baby born in a manger, but it is a little more awkward for them to sing about Him being the Lord of heaven and earth. And this song makes it very clear that Jesus did not just come to be an inspiring infant or a gentle teacher. He came as the Lord, the King of kings, fully deserving our praise.

"Joy to the World" continues with the words,

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.

He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found.

This verse alludes to Genesis 3, where God told the first man

that the ground itself would be cursed as a consequence of his sin. Instead of abundant crops, the ground would now produce thorns and thistles—weeds that would cause humankind to labor intensively in order to survive. With this verse of the song, Watts anticipates the day when the blessings of salvation in Christ will overturn sin's consequences "as far as the curse is found."

That day has not come yet, but someday Christ will return to reign in His glory and judge the nations. As the last verse of "Joy to the World" reads,

**He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the
nations prove
The glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love.**

When Jesus came to this earth, He did not remain in the manger, where He might have been easily controlled. He did not even remain on the cross, where He might have been honored as a martyr. He rose from the dead, that He might reign over all creation. Whether people enjoy singing the words or not, Isaac Watts was right. "Joy to the world! The Lord is come."

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