

The Birth of Jesus—What Difference Has It Made?

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Introduction

What importance should we attach to the Christmas holiday? The New Testament does not command us to celebrate the birth of Christ (though it does not forbid such celebration). In all likelihood, Jesus was not born on December 25. The Christmas holiday had its origin as a Christian alternative to a pagan holiday. In our day Christmas has been commercialized and trivialized.

What importance should we attach to the Christmas holiday? Its value resides in the fact that the birth of Jesus Christ has made a tremendous difference.

In the 1946 classic *It's a Wonderful Life*, the angel Clarence gave George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) a chance to see the impact he had made on the town of Bedford Falls. In this message we'll try to take a step back and look at the impact that Jesus' coming has made.

Body

1. A historical difference

2 recommended books:

D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe's *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*

The Positive Impact of Christianity in History

Alvin J. Schmidt's *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed*

Civilization

An impact on virtually every aspect of human society:

Education/libraries

Nursing/medicine

Scientific endeavor

Politics/government

Economics/capitalism

Social justice/abolition of slavery

2. A spiritual difference

To fulfill the Old Testament—not to destroy it

Matt. 5:17

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: *I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*

To speak truth on God the Father's behalf

John 5:43

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

“Human noteworthies are esteemed . . . , but the Son who bears divine credentials is rejected” (Burge 854).

John 7:28

Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and *I am not come of myself*, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

John 18:37

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and *for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

To bring light into the world

John 12:46

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

“Jesus is light; he reveals God and disperses the darkness . . . Above all he has not spoken on his own authority; he is God’s agent in the world” (Burge 866).

“Jesus came to lead people out of Satan’s kingdom of darkness into God’s kingdom of love and light” (Blum 319).

To destroy the devil’s works

1 John 3:8

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

“The Son of God . . . became incarnate to destroy Satan’s works in every realm, including men’s sins” (De Young 1182).

To save mankind by giving his life as a ransom for sin

Matt. 9:13

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for *I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Mark 2:17

When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Luke 5:32

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

“[T]he truly healthy are sick persons whom God has healed; and the really righteous are those whose unrighteousness God has forgiven and who remain aware of their spiritual poverty” (Chamblin 733).

“Jesus . . . has come to call not the righteous (or those who think they are) but sinners. By his acted and spoken proclamation Jesus announces that the healing physician has come, inaugurating the new age of salvation . . .” (Gruenler 770).

“The story does not teach that the Pharisees were actually righteous, only that they presumed they were righteous. Jesus came to call those who were aware of their spiritual need” (Schreiner 812).

Matt. 18:11 [text in question]

For *the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

Luke 19:10

For *the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

“Salvation is a major Lucan theme, perhaps the central one in the book. . . . The salvation of the rich is possible with God, for ‘the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost’ (v. 10), both the rich and the poor, the clean and the unclean, the despised and the respectable” (Schreiner 831).

Matt. 20:28

Even as *the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Mark 10:45

For even *the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

“His death would be to provide a ‘ransom’ (*lytron*, ‘payment’) ‘for’ (*anti*, ‘in place of’) ‘many’ . . . His death would take the place of many deaths, for only His death could truly atone for sin . . .” (Barbieri 67).

Luke 9:56 [text in question]

For *the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.* And they went to another village.

John 12:27

Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but *for this cause came I unto this hour.*

John 12:47

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for *I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.*

“The purpose of God’s revelation in Jesus is positive: He came to save, not to judge . . . But rejection of God’s revelation inevitably brings a hardening in sin and ultimately God’s judgment” (Blum 319).

1 Tim. 1:15

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*; of whom I am chief.

“The form and style of these [trustworthy sayings] seem to mark them as brief ‘creeds,’ ‘hymns,’ or ‘statements’ used in worship services which had become well known to Paul and his readers” (Knight 1103).

“The saying itself, ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ is a compact statement of the gospel” (Knight 1103).

1 John 3:5

And ye know that *he was manifested to take away our sins*; and in him is no sin.

“The Incarnation brought into the world the One who is totally sinless and who had as an objective the removal of sin from the lives of His own” (Hodges 894).

To judge between believers and unbelievers

Matt. 10:34-35

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: *I came not to send peace, but a sword.* For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

Luke 12:49

I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?
“The arrival of Jesus did bring peace on earth (Luke 2:14), but the fire of judgment also means the separation and division of families. That division stems from one’s stance toward Jesus” (Schreiner 824).

John 9:39

And Jesus said, *For judgment I am come into this world,* that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.
“Jesus . . . came to pronounce decisions on the ungodly, like a judge” (Blum 309).

John 15:22

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.
“The world’s guilt is based on its accountability before divine revelation. God in Christ has come, spoken, and acted on our behalf . . . and our response forms the basis of our judgment” (Burge 870).
“If Jesus had not come, their sin would not be so great. The statement . . . must not be taken absolutely” (Blum 327).

To give abundant life

John 10:10

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

3. A personal difference
 - Morals
 - Relationships
 - Adversity
 - Profession
 - Life goals
 - Eternal destiny

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