

## WHAT DID CHRISTMAS MEAN TO JESUS?

Philippians 2:6-7, Luke 2:7-12

By Raymond White

I know what Christmas means to me: the dawn of redeeming grace, God and sinners reconciled, peace to men on earth. But what does Christmas mean to him, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, who stepped down from his throne on high to become flesh in Mary's womb?

### [1] HIS MOTIVE

For starters, he didn't come because we were seeking him.

**Romans 3:11** *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

And he didn't come because we loved him.

**1 John 4:11** *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son.*

He came because he sought us.

**Luke 19:10** *For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

And because he loved us.

**John 3:16** *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...*

That's why he came: to find and save us. And why did he do that? Because he loved us.

### [2] HIS STATION

How much did he love us? Certainly in the atonement we see his infinite love revealed by his infinite sacrifice. But his great love was shown long before then. It was revealed to us on that first Christmas Day when the Son of God came to earth. To see that love, we must see just what he gave up to get here. Then we can see what Christmas really meant, not to us, but to him.

**John 1:1** *...the word was with God and the word was God. :14* *...the word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*

**John 17:5** *O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

These two verses show us who he was and what he had, and therefore what he had to give up. He was with God, he was God, and he had all of God's glory. He had a lot to lose.

There's the story of a billionaire who gave away all of his money and purposely made himself poor, just to be kind I don't know if that ever really happened, but that would be a very generous thing to do. However, it would be a small thing compared to what Jesus did.

**Philippians 2:6** *Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God. :7* *But made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant*

*and was made in the likeness of men. :8 And being found in the fashion as man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

This verse is badly translated but it is the crux of the matter. Here is what it really says.

1. *Being in the form of God* means “having God’s nature.”
2. *Thought it not robbery* [awful translation] means “thought it not worth clutching.”
3. *But made himself of no reputation* means “he emptied himself.”

Putting it all together, read it this way: Jesus, having God’s nature, thought it not worth remaining equal with God. But instead, he emptied himself — he let go of all his divine privilege — and became a servant, a man, and submitted himself to dying on the cross.

This is not a translation, it is merely my paraphrase, but it is what the text means. Let me try one more time: Jesus decided that it was not worth remaining God, but he walked away from that high station and privilege to become just a man in order to save us.

In addition, there are these verses.

*Acts 8:33 In his humiliation judgment was taken...*

*2 Corinthians 8:9 Though he were rich yet for your sakes he became poor that ye...might be rich.*

And, for our Mormon readers, there is this:

*2 Nephi 4:26 In his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy.*

But that’s only half the story. Jesus left home, he walked away from his high station and privilege, and arrived somewhere he had never been before.

### [3] HIS BIRTH

The story of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem is the most beloved story ever told. There is likely no one on the planet, Christian or not, who does not have some knowledge of the Christ child and his virgin mother, and the inn, and the manger, and the shepherds, and the Magi. But yet in spite of our familiarity with the story, there are some details that just get routinely overlooked.

*Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

*Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them [the shepherds], Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. :11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. :12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

“And this shall be a sign...” That means *unique*. If the swaddling and the manger did not uniquely identify that one specific baby, it wouldn’t be a sign. There might be dozens of babies

down there in Bethlehem, but there is only *one* baby dressed in swaddling and lying in an animal's feeding trough. You'll have no trouble, shepherds, picking him out of that crowd.

*First:* Look only in the City of David, Bethlehem, not in any surrounding suburb. After all, he is the *Son of David* (**Matthew 1:1**) born to receive the Davidic Covenant.

*Second:* The baby you will be looking for is a newborn, born today.

*Third:* You won't find him in a baby blanket, he's dressed in swaddling.

*Fourth:* You won't find him in a bassinet, he's in an animal's feeding trough,

*Fifth:* And you won't find him in a comfortable warm house because people don't keep feeding troughs in their homes so you needn't bother knocking on doors.

*Sixth:* Where you *will* find him is in some kind of animal shelter where animals are kept and fed. But you're shepherds, you know that. And there is only one baby that matches those bizarre circumstances. Now, shepherds, go find him. All of that was the sign.

"Manger" we understand, "city of David" we understand. But what is "swaddling"?

Today, all newbie's are wrapped in "swaddling," or so the hospitals say. But that's a misnomer. Our baby people plagiarized that word from Luke and gave it a general meaning far different than what it meant 2,000 years ago.

Back in those days traveling was at best risky. And on any long journey there was the possibility that someone might die. Today when we travel we might take a first aid kit, or band aids, or maybe road flares, or in any case a spare tire. Back then they carried gauze, just in case (God forbid) that someone might die and they had to wrap the corpse of a loved one.

How did they carry this gauze? They wrapped it around their bodies under their clothes. Convenient enough. And besides, it might be useful for other things.

That gauze was called swaddling, and it came in very handy for Joseph and Mary.

Mary was almost certainly alone when she delivered her baby Jesus. Does the text say that? The text says this: *she* wrapped him in swaddling and *she* laid him in a manger. Had anyone else been there — a midwife, an inn keeper, a rabbi, a concerned neighbor — any person present would certainly have dressed and tended to the baby and let the young new mother rest.

Where was Joseph? Probably scrambling to find a midwife. But wherever he was, he left something with Mary that was important and useful. The swaddling.

And that is how the shepherds found them — a baby dressed in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

But why? Why did God insist on such poor circumstances for his only begotten son? Couldn't the shepherds have found him just as well if he had been born in warm house, wrapped in a snuggly blue blankie, and lying in a comfortable bassinet? Well, they might have found him, but God's point would not have been made. To save us, Jesus had to descend below us. It's like frying an egg, if you'll pardon my ridiculous parable. When it's time to flip the egg, you have to get the spatula *under* the egg. That is sometimes a challenge. For Jesus to save the human race, he had to wedge himself beneath us — from his birth, through his life, and finally on the cross.

When Jesus came, he came to save, to be poor (the manger), and to die (the swaddling).

All that was the sign. The sign wasn't only for the shepherds so they could find him, it was for everyone, for us, so that *we* could find him. Jesus offered himself to the world as a Christmas wrapped present. He gave so much so we could receive so much.

And that is what Christmas meant to Jesus.