

# **The Awe and Wonder of Christmas: Rediscovering the Greatest Gift**

Christmas has a way of sweeping us into its current. The shopping lists, the decorations, the parties, the traditions—they all compete for our attention during this season. Yet beneath the cultural celebration lies something far more profound, something that should leave us breathless with wonder: the God of all creation chose to enter His own creation as a helpless infant.

This is not merely a heartwarming story. It is the most significant moment in human history.

## **The Eternal Word Made Flesh**

John, who walked closest to Jesus during His earthly ministry, chose to tell the story of Christmas differently than Matthew or Luke. He began not with a manger scene, but with eternity itself:

"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through Him, and nothing was created except through Him."

This perspective matters deeply. Before we see the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, we must grasp who this baby truly is. This is not just another prophet or religious teacher. This is the One through whom everything—galaxies, mountains, oceans, every living creature—came into being. Nothing exists apart from Him.

When we reduce Christmas to sentimental feelings or family traditions, we miss the magnitude of what actually happened. The light that cannot be extinguished by darkness, the Creator of time itself, stepped into

time. The One who spoke worlds into existence chose to enter the world as the most vulnerable of all creatures: a newborn child.

## **Love Before Time Began**

God's decision to come to earth wasn't a last-minute rescue plan. He didn't look down at humanity's fall into sin and scramble for a solution. He is God—He knows the beginning from the end. He created us knowing we would rebel, knowing we would sin, knowing the price He would have to pay to redeem us.

This truth should overwhelm us: God loved us before we existed. He knit us together in our mothers' wombs, fully aware of every mistake we would make, every time we would push against Him, every moment we would choose ourselves over Him. And still He created us. Still He loved us. Still He planned to save us.

As John wrote: "For this is how God loved the world. He gave His one and only Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world but to save the world through Him."

God's motive wasn't to create religion or churches. His motive wasn't to prove who loved Him or to send people to hell. His motive was love—pure, undeserved, overwhelming love for a creation that could never earn reconciliation on its own.

## **The Scandal of the Manger**

We've romanticized the nativity scene. We place it on mantels, create beautiful pageants, and sing gentle lullabies about the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay. But the reality was far more shocking than our sanitized versions suggest.

A manger was a feeding trough for animals. It sat in a stable—not a quaint barn with friendly creatures looking on, but a place filled with the

smell of dung, the sounds of livestock, the grime of everyday animal husbandry. This is where the King of Kings was born.

To the religious culture of that time, the very idea was scandalous, even disgusting. How could the Messiah, the promised deliverer, the Son of God, be placed in something pigs ate from? Why would God choose such a lowly entrance?

Because it was part of His plan. The manger declared something revolutionary: the King of creation doesn't need earthly crowns or palaces. He came to the lowest place to reach the lowest people. He came to prove that no one—no matter how poor, how abandoned, how cast out, how broken—is beyond His reach.

God could have arranged for Jesus to be born in a mansion. He could have ensured a relative provided proper lodging. But the manger was intentional. It was God's way of saying, "I am here to save everyone."

## **The Shepherds' Response**

The first announcement of Christ's birth didn't go to kings or religious leaders. It went to shepherds—people considered among the lowest in society, excluded from temple worship, looked down upon by the Romans and even their own people.

An angel appeared to these simple men watching their flocks by night: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For this day in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior who is the Christ, the Lord." For all people. Even for shepherds. Even for the outcasts. Even for you and me.

Then the sky erupted with an angelic army, singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is well pleased." Imagine the sound—hundreds, perhaps thousands of angelic voices filling the night sky, overwhelming these simple shepherds with the magnitude of what had just occurred.

Their response reveals what ours should be: "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see this wonderful thing that has happened." Not tomorrow. Not when convenient. Immediately. They went in a hurry, found the baby in the manger exactly as described, and then couldn't stop telling everyone what they had witnessed.

They returned home "glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen." Imagine their excitement as they told their families, their neighbors, anyone who would listen: "This is what happened! We saw Him! The Messiah has come!"

## **Reclaiming the Wonder**

In our consumer-driven culture, Christmas has become something quite different than it was meant to be. We fight over gifts, stress over preparations, and sometimes measure the season's success by what's under the tree. The gratitude this season should inspire has been stolen from us.

But what if we, as people who claim to follow Christ, reclaimed the wonder? What if we became the most grateful people on earth during this season—not because we received what we wanted, but because we have Him?

The greatest gift isn't wrapped in paper. It's wrapped in flesh. The God who created everything chose to become one of us, to walk among us, to show us how to live, and ultimately to die so we could be reconciled to Him. That's the gift worth celebrating.

This Christmas, let the awe and wonder captivate you again. Don't let it be reduced to one day or confined to religious occasions. Let it transform how you wake up each morning, knowing the God of creation chooses to give you one more day out of His mercy. Let it overflow into how you speak about Him to others—not religiously or forcefully, but with humble gratitude for what He's done.

The shepherds couldn't keep quiet about what they'd seen. Neither should we. The living God came for you and me. He's no longer in a manger—He's the risen Savior, waiting to meet with anyone who will come to Him.

That's worth celebrating every single day!