

Searching for Christmas



**by Dawn Reed
E. Ky. Columnist**

You may be excited about Christmas and that's wonderful! But Christmas is NOT the MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR for everybody. For some it is a heartbreaking time where they feel alone and forgotten or just uncared for.

Christmas can be a time of financial struggle or MORE financial struggle. "We already can't make ends meet! How can we buy everybody LIFE-CHANGING GIFTS?!"

If you have lost a loved one, Christmas can be a time of sadness. Tornadoes still hit at Christmas, floods, death and sickness still come. Instead of decorating the tree and watching a Christmas movie, maybe you'd rather hang black material in the windows and play sad country music to help you cry. You WANT to be excited. You WANT to sing Joy to the World and mean it, but life has just been hard.

If we are asking ourselves in secret, "Where are you Christmas?" God reminds us in Jeremiah 29:13 if we seek Him, we will find Him, so let's search His Word to see where He was working that first Christmas...

In Luke 1:26-38, when Gabriel told Mary she would give birth to the Son of God, she

TRULY BELIEVED and was fully surrendered. We read, "For nothing is impossible with God," but, do we really believe it? How would our lives and our Christmas be if we acted like we TRULY BELIEVED?

In Matthew 1:18-25, Joseph OBEYED GOD QUICKLY. The Bible doesn't say Joseph prayed every morning, "God, use me today as an instrument in Thy Hands." But it does say he was a righteous man, so that means he had a walk with God.

When God spoke, he didn't give it a week or two to think about it. He didn't pray for another sign. He ACTED. He OBEYED! Lives depended on it! So...these days, we pray, "O, LORD, use me as an instrument in Your Hands...lead me...use me..." but when He opens the door, what do we do? Do we put it off? Do we plan for it another time? How would our lives and our Christmas be if we OBEYED GOD QUICKLY?

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said, "Do not be afraid, I have good news!" People NEED to hear good news! Do you realize how many people suffer from anxiety these days? I recently talked to three women—all believers—who were in tears, so worried, so fearful of things going on in their lives. They all said, "I CAN'T stop worrying!" My words are no comfort to anyone. But...GOD'S WORD... CAN do it! So I gave them Bible verses. I encouraged them to write them on their mirror and to say them out loud.

The angel was not sharing his own words. He was telling what God had told him to say! The beauty is that we don't have to come up with something genius to share with others. IT'S ALREADY WRITTEN DOWN!

How would our lives and our Christmas be if we ENCOURAGED OTHERS WITH GOD'S WORD?

Last one: Luke 2:13-20: The shepherds were at work.

Nobody expects God to show up at work, but He did! Then they hurried off, found Mary, Joseph and the Baby and then told everybody they saw about it! They SPREAD THE WORD! What do we do with the life-changing story of Jesus? Do we decorate with lights and Christmas trees and then keep it to ourselves? I pray we will have the courage and excitement of the shepherds and SPREAD THE WORD to everybody we can!

This Christmas may not be our Hallmark Christmas movie. We may be without presents or people we love, may be somewhere we don't want to be or have health issues. When we look at the original Christmas story, it wasn't like the Christmas cards we see. There's no tree...no mistletoe...no stockings...or garland. The only lights were the stars and the only gift was lying in the manger...and it was enough! HE WAS THE BEST GIFT OF ALL!

The Origin Of "The Twelve Days Of Christmas"

People often think of "The Twelve Days Of Christmas" as the days preceding the festival. Actually, Christmas is the season of the Christian Year that lasts for the twelve days beginning on December 25 and lasting until January 6 - the Day of Epiphany, when the Church celebrates the revelation of Christ as the Light of the world and recalls the journey of the magi.

From 1558 Until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not allowed to practice their faith openly. During that era, someone wrote "The Twelve Days Of Christmas" as a kind of secret catechism that could be sung in public without the risk of persecution.

"The 12 Days of Christmas" is, in essence, an allegory. The song has two levels of interpretation: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of the church.

Each element in the carol is a code word for a religious reality. The "true love" represents God and the "me" who receives these presents is the Christian (a Catholic in this case).

The hidden meanings are:

- ♪ The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, a tree as a gift from God.
- ♪ The two turtle doves are the Old And New Testaments, another gift from God.
- ♪ Three French hens stand for faith, hope and love - the three gifts of the Spirit that abide (1 Corinthians 13).
- ♪ The four calling birds are the four Gospels, which sing the song of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- ♪ The five gold rings recall The Torah (Law), the first five books of the Old Testament, also called the "Books of Moses."
- ♪ The six geese a-laying stand for the six days of creation.
- ♪ Seven swans a-swimming represent the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-11, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- ♪ The eight maids a-milking are the eight beatitudes.
- ♪ Nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).
- ♪ The ten lords a-leaping are the Ten Commandments.
- ♪ Eleven pipers piping stand for the eleven faithful disciples (except Judas).
- ♪ Twelve drummers drumming symbolize the 12 points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

So, the next time you hear "The Twelve Days Of Christmas," consider how this otherwise non-religious-sounding song had its origins in the Christian faith. *submitted by Rosemary Capo, Ravenna, Kentucky St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church*

Lord, I Could Thank You Forever

CHORUS:

Lord, I could thank you forever,
you have done so much for me.
Lord, I could thank you forever,
many blessings in the future I will see.
Lord, I could thank you forever,
for suffering for me at Calvary.
Lord, I could thank you forever,
for life that will last eternally.
Thank you, thank you, thank you
-- from the bottom of my heart.
Thank you for everything,
in case I should miss some part.
Your blessings surround me,
and lift my spirits high;
I could never thank you enough,
but I would like to try.
I am thankful for the Holy Spirit, who lives within me
Throughout the trials of life, He gives me victory
He gives me comfort, so I can have a peaceful life
When troubles comes, He helps me stand the strife
Thank you for all the senses,
of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell
They give me a much full life,
and great happiness as well
Thank you for all of nature's beauty,
and splendor and awe
Thank you for the cross, that rescued me from the law
Written by Price J. Rawlins

The Word of God in Action

by **BOB CASEY, preacher**
Cornerstone Church of Christ
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In last week's article, we saw in the Bible the wonderful words of God being brought forth into this world in a most personable way; God sending his own son on the mission to save mankind from their sins. This he did by living without committing any sins at all. Then, he also, by his teaching, declared that all of mankind could be saved from their sins and be accepted into his Heaven someday. Wonderful words, you bet they are!

So today, we will examine an example of these wonderful words in action. But first, we see that Jesus chose, trained, 12 men whom he named Apostles to continue the work of saving men through their words after he had gone back to the Father. In **Acts 1**, after our Lord had remained upon the earth for forty days and showing himself to be indeed to be alive, it came time for his return to the Father in Heaven. But, in his final instructions to them he said in **verse 8**, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." So the instructions were clear, be witnesses. Now friends, to be a witness, one has to have actually seen with their own eyes the person of Jesus. 1 John 1 says the Apostles did just that! No man alive today can say that with any truth. Notice that their path of teaching was to start at home (Jerusalem); then onward to the regions 'round about. And don't forget the rejected and despised ones (the Samaritans). Then, after you have done this, then you can go further into other parts of the world. And they did!

So, in **Acts 8:4**, Phillip went down to Samaria, preaching the word, and he had great results there. He preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ. They were baptized, both men and women.

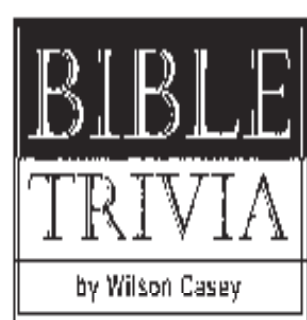
Now, sometime later in verses 26-40, the angel of the Lord, also called the Spirit of God, awakens Phillip, saying, "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert." Without doubt or question, Phillip did that very thing. Then, when he arrived at the desert void of Gaza, he saw a large convoy

of men and animals; ox carts, etc. Then, he heard a man reading from the Old Testament of Isaiah 53, the prophecy concerning the sufferings of Jesus. Again, the Spirit said, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Phillip, being energized to the prospects of this meeting, ran to him, asking him, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Sadly, many are like this even today. The man replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" He asked Phillip to join him as they traveled on. Notice that Phillip took the same scripture that he was reading (Isaiah 53), and Phillip "opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

Then, we can clearly assume that after a short time of travel had been spent, they came to a water hole in the desert. Seeing the water, the eunuch said, "here is water." Friends, he did not say, a glass of water or a sprinkling fountain, for this they already had with them. He asked "what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Now, Friends, with soundness of reason, consider what he preached. Was it not Jesus he preached? Yes, so we can rightly assume to preach Jesus is to preach baptism. Now, there are some who believe that baptism has no part in the salvation of one's soul. I say, would you like to argue that with the angel of the Lord? Then, after challenging his faith, he asked him is he believed that Jesus is the Christ, to which he responded with "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." No other confession is needed. We read this they did, "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Phillip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" in Jesus' name for the remission of his sins. How do I know this? Because the same Spirit of God told Peter in Acts 2:38 to preach it, and he did. Having come up out of the water, Phillip left and went on his way, and the Eunuch went on his way, a changed man. Why, because he had heard, believed, and obeyed the wonderful words of life. Being previously confused, but now rejoicing, because God through his spokesman taught him the truth. In closing, I mention John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

I ask, have you believed all that Jesus says that you need to know to be saved? If not, John 3:18 says you are in a state of condemnation. Read it for yourself. Call 1-859-369-4165 anytime. We want you to be saved before it's too late.

Sincerely, Bob Casey, (1-859-369-4165), local



- 1) The main Christmas story is paraphrased from what two New Testament books? Mark/John, Acts/Romans, Matthew/Luke, Jude/Revelation
- 2) Who visited Jesus on the night of his birth and found Mary, Joseph and the babe lying in a manger? Innkeeper, Shepherds, Herod, Magi
- 3) Where was the young child when the Magi came

to visit Him to present gifts? Manger, Under the stars, House, Temple

4) How many times does the word "Christmas" appear in the Bible (KJV)? Zero, 1, 2, 7

5) Who was King of Judaea at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem? Solomon, Herod, Balak, Belshazzar

6) What animals were present at Jesus' birth? Lions and bears, Sheep and goats, Cows and donkeys, No mention of animals

Answers on bottom of Page 12
Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in stores and online.

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seeds of Hope

The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.

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