



In many parts of the world, Christmas is the greatest celebration of them all. You simply can't miss it, it's everywhere! Weeks of preparation and shopping, well-known songs on the radio and maybe even those traditional Christmas Markets.

When you think of Christmas, you might think about your family, (lots of!) good food, or about great presents. Or you might be dreading the hectic and stressful shopping trips. Or maybe you're just thinking about how lonely you'll be at this time of year.

But what is this emotionally intense time really about?



Just a marketing idea?

The question of what Christmas is all about is something that a number of T.V. stations have picked up on in recent years, and several conduct annual surveys to find out what people actually think. The results are astounding and certainly worth a more detailed look:

One man argued that Coca Cola had invented Christmas as a marketing gimmick. Another person thought it might be a celebration of Santa Claus' birthday. Quite creative stuff, isn't it? But what is Christmas really about?

You might find it hard to believe, but the reason we celebrate Christmas is because of the birth of a small boy 2,000 years ago. His birth was, in fact, so significant that our whole calendar is based upon it. Even your own birthday is counted from His birthday.

he night Jesus was born seemed to be just another night, but since the day He was born, the world has not been the same



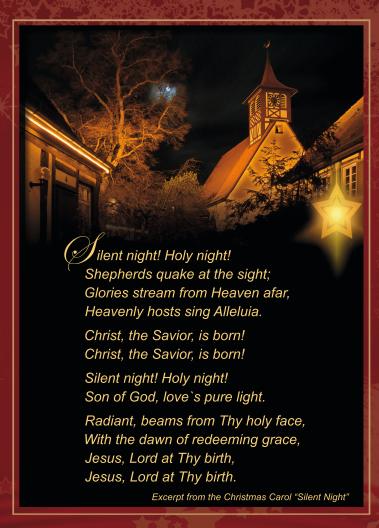
The miracle of Christmas

December 24th, 1914: In the middle of World War I a true miracle took place. French, British, and German troops had been fighting to the bone for months. The men were exhausted, and all they wished for was peace. And on that Christmas Eve, they would experience this miracle of Christmas. Seemingly out of nowhere, the tenor singer Nikolaus Sprink from Berlin suddenly began to sing Silent Night in the middle of his trench. Soon the sound of many male voices carried through the night as they joined him in this song: Silent night, holy night.

The weapons remained silent nearly all over the Western Front that Christmas Eve. First one by one, then in groups, German soldiers climbed out of their trenches. After some initial hesitation, the British then proceeded to do the same. No Man's Land between the lines of fire became their meeting place where they talked to each other, exchanged gifts, and mutually agreed on a ceasefire for the next day.

A true miracle had taken place. The very same men who had, just a few days earlier, tried everything in their power to kill each other were now standing side by side; laughing, drinking and socializing with each other. One German officer wrote: "We were so happy! We felt like children!" The next day, Christmas Day, thousands of Germans, British, and French were anything but enemies.

What amazing power does this evening hold!



Jod's big surprise

Just imagine what it would be like if God came to visit the Earth. What would His arrival look like? Would He come to Washington, London, or Berlin?

Of course, His arrival would be well prepared: Roll out the red carpet, get the big black stretch limo, and book the most luxurious 5 Star Hotel. The eyes of the world would be on His visit. CNN, ABC, Fox News, the BBC - You name them, they would all be there, set up and ready to report live from the event. I mean, we are talking about the creator of the universe here!

But with Jesus' birth, things were radically different. He entered the world in a stable in a small, insignificant village called Bethlehem.

His arrival – so unspectacular, and yet so important



No red carpet for the most important birth of all time



Jesus' birth was anything but glamorous as He lay in a manger that night. A small village, a humble stable: and this is the most important person in the world! Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

His arrival was powerfully announced, though. On the night of His birth there were some shepherds out tending their flock. All of a sudden, an angel of God appeared to them, and the bright light of Heaven surrounded them.



To not be afraid. I bring to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord.

Luke's Gospel, 2:10-11

Presents – just make sure they're expensive!

Christmas is also about the presents, of course. It really is hard to believe what some people would spend on things. Here are just a few examples:

- Someone paid over 217,000 U.S. dollars for a Steiff teddy bear
- The most expensive comic book cost nearly 700,000 U.S. dollars
- □ The most expensive bra cost nearly 17.5 million
 U.S. dollars
- One of Picasso's paintings was sold for 104 million U.S. dollars
- And the most valuable diamond in the world has an estimated value of 200 to 250 million U.S. dollars

You will most probably never receive such an expensive gift. But did you know that you have already been given a gift that exceeds them all in terms of both price and worth?



For God so loved the world, that
He gave His one and only Son, that
whoever believes in Him should not
perish, but have eternal life.

John's Gospel, 3:16

Christmas is a celebration of love, because it is all about the greatest love story every told. The fascinating story of Jesus Christ is what we celebrate at Christmas.

This gift is more precious than anything else in the world and it will never lose its worth. Christmas is not just for other people, it is a personal gift for you.

The greatest gift of all

Usually the one celebrating their birthday receives all the gifts. But with Christmas, things are different. God has given us the greatest gift we could ever imagine. The greatest gift of all cannot be bought, not even with all the money in the world. God Himself gave us this gift.

God loves us like children, and created man to have an ongoing relationship with Him. But then, things took a tragic turn. Man turned his back on his creator. Just as the soldiers of WWI were irreconcilable enemies in 1914, man lives his life separated from God. But God has more than just a touching song for us. He offers us the chance to come back to Him, so we can once again live in a personal relationship with Him.

Jesus offered up His life out of love in order to save us. He was brutally tortured and then nailed to the cross. There He died for our sin, which is what separates us from God. He hung between Heaven and Earth and cried out: "It is finished!" The earth shook, and for several hours everything was dark. As Jesus died, the separating wall between God and man was torn down. You see, God is a perfect God, and He cannot tolerate sin. This is why Jesus gave His life on the cross, paying the penalty for this sin. He did this out of love for you, so that you can have a relationship with Him.



his gift is incredibly precious because through
His death and resurrection, Jesus made it possible
for us to receive a new life - an eternal life

We're talking about much more than a picture-perfect Christmas setting here. White Christmases with open fires, the chance to spend time with loved ones and even to receive presents are all well and good. But we're talking about a joy that doesn't end on Boxing Day.

The manger is empty. So is the cross. And so is the grave!

For many people, Jesus is either a cute little baby in a manger, or God suffering on a cross. But Jesus did not remain in the manger, and nor did He remain on the cross. He did not even remain in the grave! What makes Jesus' grave special is not the floral arrangements or the multitudes of candles. It is the simple fact that His grave is *empty*.

I'm sure you can imagine how shocked Jesus' friends were when they went to His grave and found He was gone. Early on Sunday morning, the women went to His tomb to mourn Jesus, and instead they found a man in white robes sitting there. Obviously they were startled, but the man said to them:

On't be alarmed! You are looking for
Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.
He has risen!
He is not here!



od raised His Son from the dead on the third day, just as He had foretold it. Jesus conquered death once and for all, and He is alive today!

This is how He finally proved himself to be the Son of God. Nothing in world history comes close to the resurrection of Jesus, and through it he offers hope for eternity.

For you!

Unpacking your present

So why not receive this great gift today by accepting Jesus into your life? If you would like to do so, please pray this simple prayer:

od, I thank You for sending Jesus into the world as the greatest Christmas present of all time. I want to receive this gift of Your love in my life today. Thank You, Jesus, for dying for my sin and opening up the way to God for me. I believe that You rose from the dead. Please come into my life today, and help me to live the rest of my life with You and for You.

If you have just prayed this prayer, then this gift of God is now yours to keep, and all of Heaven is celebrating together with you. Jesus said that there is great joy in Heaven when we turn to God.



From now on, be assured that Jesus is your friend, and He will be with you forever. You can talk to Him any time (prayer) and read His love letter to you (the Bible). This book has power! You have also joined a great big family of brothers and sisters all over the world!

€ elcome!

THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL Ohvistmas

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But what is this emotionally intense time really about? In this booklet, you will find an answer that might surprise you.

Werner Nachtigal



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