

The Birth of Jesus Explained Through Symbols and Signs

Every December in many cities around the world you are likely to see bright lights and hear happy music. It's Christmas time. People of many ethnic backgrounds and beliefs like to celebrate this holiday. Bright lights and shiny ornaments on trees along with the fun of giving and receiving gifts add to the festivity.

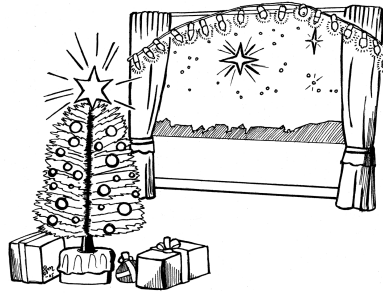
But what is the true meaning of Christmas? Some children think it is all about flying reindeer, gifts under a tree, and a Santa Clause that seems to know every good and naughty thing they have ever done. Other people claim that December 25 is the day Jesus was born. Still others do not believe in any of these stories and just enjoy the time off with family. Some spend their holidays drinking and partying. Where did Christmas come from?

Over the last 2000 years many different traditions have been added. Santa Clause and flying reindeer are not part of the original story. December 25 and Christmas trees cannot historically be tied to Jesus' birth. The true story can be found in what some call the Honorable Injil and others call the Gospels. The story of the signs and symbols of this birth were written down close to 2000 years ago in the Gospel according to Matthew and Luke. You can find them on the internet at places like biblegateway.com or wordproject.org. The following story shows the connections between the true story of the birth of Jesus, also known as Isa Al Masih, and the many things we see at

Christmas time. Explore and enjoy learning the truth.

The Sign of an Angel

On Christmas cards and on Christmas trees you will often see angels. The Gospels (Injil) tell that months before the birth of Jesus, Mary had become engaged to a carpenter named Joseph. Something very unusual



happened. An angel appeared to Mary. She was very frightened. The angel reassured her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)

Mary wondered what the angel could possibly mean. The religion and morals of her country was very strict. "How can this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "Nothing is impossible with God. The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35, 37).

Mary, remembered the prophecies in the ancient scriptures that promised the Rescuer would be born miraculously to a virgin. Could God have chosen her? Was God finally fulfilling His promise to send light from heaven and to clean away sin in a suffering world?

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her (Luke 1:38).

That night, an angel appeared to her fiancé in a dream saying, "Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. This baby is truly conceived by the holy Spirit. She will have a son. Name Him Jesus, because this name means the One who saves people from their sins."

Amazed at God's special plan, Joseph was humbled. He was amazed to see that God had chosen his family for a special task and did not refuse to do as the Lord had said. He chose to protect Mary's good name and remained with her. They eagerly waited for this special baby.

The Sign of a Child

The king of the land, named King Herod, demanded that everyone return to the place of their ancestors' birth for a census. Mary and Joseph made the difficult trip of 140 kilometers to the town of Bethlehem. The trip on the back of a donkey was very difficult because Mary was pregnant and about to deliver.

When they arrived, they searched everywhere for a place to stay. One man welcomed them and allowed them to use his animal stable. Mary lay down on the straw exhausted. There was no midwife, no doctor or family to help her. Instead, smelly animals surrounded her. She gave birth to a son, wrapped him tenderly in strips of cloth, and soothed him to sleep in a feeding trough! It was such a strange place for such an important baby. God was teaching the

people that He loves all people, including the very poor.

Hardly anyone noticed the birth, yet today, in many nations around the world, this story is acted out in plays and the story is told over and over. This is the reason that at Christmas time you see pictures of angels and a mother holding a baby along with many animals.

The Sign of Singing

During this time of year, you can hear many unique songs on the radio and in shopping malls. Many of them are just about happy family traditions. However there are also hundreds of special Christmas carols that people sing to celebrate God's mercy by sending us Jesus, Isa Al Masih. The singing goes back in history to the night of Jesus' birth.



Some of the poorest people in the country of Israel were shepherds. They often slept outside to protect their sheep. On the night of Jesus' birth, a group of shepherds suddenly came running through the streets from outside the town where they'd been watching the sheep. They shouted to everyone they met along the road, "An important baby has been born tonight! We were startled by a bright light and suddenly saw an angel appear. He said to us, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of

David (Bethlehem), a Rescuer has been born to you. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger'" (Luke 2:10, 12).

The shepherds said that after this amazing announcement, many angels appeared in the sky singing incredibly beautiful songs. Today, no one knows the tune, but the words have been recorded: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill to men" (Luke 2:14). When we sing Christmas songs we do so in imitation of the angels' song. We also want to celebrate that peace between humans is possible because of what God has done by sending Jesus, Isa Al Masih.

The shepherds found baby Jesus wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a manger, just as the angel had said. They bowed to show Him honor, in awe that this special child would be born to a poor family. They were sure now that God loved poor people too because the news had been told to poor people such as themselves.

The Gospels (Injil) say that this was the very reason that Jesus, Al Masih, Isa, was born in such a humble way. He had come to share their suffering and provide a way of escape. If He had been born in a palace, the poor might have feared to approach Him. He wanted everyone to come near and learn of God's compassion. He was like a king, who had chosen to go among his peasants, to understand their difficulties and to help them improve their lives.

The Signs of Stars and Prophecies

At Christmas time you can see many beautiful lights strung all around houses and a star on the top of a Christmas tree. Stars have long been studied both by people who saw them as signs pointing to the Creator God and those who falsely tried to use stars to predict the future.

Approximately two thousand years ago, a group of righteous men from the East, called wise men, knew the predictions about God's Messiah. They read in scriptures called the Honorable Tawrat, or the Torah, these words, "The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

One night they saw a huge bright star. This was the sign given to them to lead them to the Messiah. They could not sit still waiting and wondering. They prepared some costly gifts, mounted camels, and followed the star expecting to find a new baby that would be God's Messiah.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, the wise men were surprised to find that the religious leaders were ignorant about the birth of the one who had been predicted. In fact, the present ruler, King Herod, was really troubled at the thought that maybe this baby would be a rival to his throne.

The religious leaders should have known that it was time for their scriptures to be fulfilled. They had become careless. However, they did know where the scriptures predicted where the

Messiah would be born. They told the wise men this special birth would take place in the small village called Bethlehem. King Herod told them, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and honor Him also.” His words disguised his evil intent to protect his kingdom by murdering the child.

At night, the wise men from the East saw the star and followed it all the way to the small town of Bethlehem and found the baby, Messiah whose name was Jesus, Al Masih Isa. In the ancient language the name Jesus means “God saves and rescues.”

The Christmas lights are visual reminders that in the darkness, God sent signs, a star, a light from above, to show He sent us the Messiah.

The Sign of Gifts

The many gifts people give at Christmas are connected to the three special gifts that the wise men gave Jesus, Isa Al



Masih. They gave gold, frankincense and myrrh to honor Him. Jesus was God’s gift to humans. When we give gifts at Christmas it shows that we are grateful to God and want to pass on the love. Parents feel honored when their children show gratitude with a gift. A wife feels very pleased when her husband takes

time to choose something special to demonstrate his affection. Coworkers and their bosses enjoy the exchange of little gifts at Christmas to break up the monotony of work.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, gifts such as gold, frankincense, and myrrh were only given to a king. These wise men were truly convinced that this little baby was someone very special. They showed their respect and honor in the best way they could.

When the wise men brought their expensive gifts to honor baby Jesus, the villagers stared in surprise. All they could see was a very poor family. They didn’t know that the predicted compassionate Rescuer had been born. That was why the wise men treated Jesus like royalty! It is part of the reason people give gifts at Christmas time.

The Sign of Dreams

King Herod was anxiously waiting to hear back from the wise men. However, as the wise men slept, an angel also appeared to them and told them to go back to their country using a different route. They were not to tell King Herod about seeing Jesus.

The angel woke Joseph and urged him to flee with Mary and Jesus to the country of Egypt since Herod would try to kill the baby.

When King Herod realized the wise men had tricked him, his fear grew to intense anger and he ordered soldiers to search for and kill all the baby boys, age two years and younger. Death,

heartache, and deep sorrow ripped across the countryside. Herod’s selfishness and greed caused intense suffering. This is exactly what causes misery and distress today through war and family problems. Today God continues to give dreams to show people the truth about His love and His plan to save people from sin.

The baby Jesus escaped Herod’s wicked plotting. Nothing could destroy God’s plan. Jesus was safely hidden in the country of Egypt. Time passed and Herod died. An angel once again appeared to Joseph telling him to return to Israel where Jesus would grow up to live out the special purposes for which He had come to earth. But that is a story for another time.

The Sign of a Holy Life

The celebration of Christmas invites us to choose the qualities of Jesus, Isa Al Masih, and the wise men instead of King Herod. When Herod died there was no one who mourned his death except his immediate family. In fact, his subjects were happy the king had died because he was very unkind and selfish. Today, very few people know his name or his accomplishments.

On the other hand, millions know the name Jesus *Christ* from which we get the word *Christmas*. They honor Jesus whose name means “the one set apart to rescue and heal.” Jesus became known as a great teacher and prophet. His parables, stories, and sayings have been translated into hundreds of languages. His acts of compassion for the poor

and the sick have inspired millions. He lived to help others and not for His own interests.

We also must choose which way we will live. Will we seek our own pleasures and positions of power like King Herod? Or will we choose to help others and to sacrifice time and money to make our families, our villages and our countries places of peace? If we look carefully, we can see that true happiness comes to those who choose self-sacrifice and kindness instead of greed and selfishness.

Christmas can remind us of this reality. We can start on the right path by choosing to do one simple act of kindness this week. Will you try it and see what happens?

It is true that in many places the real meaning of Christmas has been forgotten. Businesses use this holiday to make money, entice people to buy all kinds of useless things, while poor people go hungry or freeze in the mountains without adequate houses and blankets.

Made-up stories about Santa Claus, elves, and flying reindeer are more frequently heard on television than the true story of Jesus' birth. We can see how easily greed and foolishness crowd out the qualities of true beauty, wisdom and nobility, but it does not need to be that way for us. Now that we understand more about Christmas, we can gain a lot from its meaning. Here is a short summary:

1. The Signs of Lights and Stars. We can be like the wise men and search the ancient

scriptures to know its prophecies and follow its words of truth.

If you would like to know more about the story of Jesus, Isa Al Masih, then you can visit the website mylanguagemylife.com, where you will find His story in over 180 languages.

2. The Sign of Songs. The song said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill to men." We can be like the shepherds, seeking peace and goodwill by sharing good news and choosing to be kind to people regardless of their ethnicity or religion. We can be like the angels by giving honor and thanks to the God who has power to help us forgive our enemies and choose kindness instead of hatred.

3. The Sign of the Child. When we hear the word Christmas we can remember the meaning of the name Jesus Christ, "the one set apart to rescue and heal." We can join millions of others in honoring His special life, studying His teachings and receiving God's power to help us with our various challenges and needs.

4. The Sign of Gifts. We can be like the wise men who gave to those in need. In the world and right around us we see that many people are suffering. Some live in fear because of war, some have no food or clean water. Some are refugees without a home. Some are even slaves with no freedom. God wants us to come close to the poor and gift gifts like the wise men did. We can live unselfishly like Jesus, Isa Al Masih. You can visit asapministries.org to learn of ways that followers of God are giving food,

clothing, education, and hope for the future to refugees in America and around the world.

Now is the time of year to say, "**Merry Christmas!**" When people ask what it means, you can share with them this beautiful story and invite them to enjoy the peace and joy of this holiday.

If you would like to learn more about this story, and seek greater peace with God and those around you, call 1-707-380-9554 or write to us at info@mylanguagemylife.com