

What do we add to Christmas?

What isn't in the story.

Drummer boys, Santa, Reindeer, stale (Manger is mentioned but perhaps not a stable) silent night (Since when has child birth been silent?) Christmas trees. Turkeys

Christmas was about remembering Jesus

Christ mass – it was / is supposed to be a communion service (Eucharist = thanks meal) to remember Jesus.

Story is that the Christians in a place, reportedly Myra (Where St Nicolas came from) decided that on the celebration of the Winter Solstice, which was a public holiday that they would go to the pagan celebration and that they would have a MASS or communion service to commemorate Jesus rather than pagan gods. Sounds a good idea and that was what other Christian communities thought so the concept of Christ – MASS spread. It was initially remembering Jesus death and resurrection but somewhere along the line became associated with His birth. (But that's another story)

It developed from there to be an event.

St Nicolas had something to do with that.

What really is in the Christmas bible story?

Baby born supernaturally. Over the years the virgin birth has been one of the most discussed issues of Christmas. In the last 10 years it has ceased. The documented reason for this is that people just don't believe it. So they don't think about it.

Luke 1:28-38 (NIV2011)

²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.

³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.

³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Notice:

You will conceive –

Mary questions how.

The Holy Spirit.

Not natural!!! – Supernatural!!

Imagine trying to explain this to mum and dad.

No wonder it is questioned and not believed – it is unbelievable. Literally. Yet, we have faith, we accept it. We know that people could ridicule us. Maybe that’s why we back off from telling people about Jesus at Christmas time. It’s too hard to explain. Yep. But hey – that’s faith. Is it logical, no, is it plausible – no do I believe it – Yes.

Even that isn’t logical – Why believe it.

The same Holy Spirit that communicated this to Mary communicates to us on faith issues.

What else is in the story?

No Stable. Yes a Manger BUT many of the towns in those days didn’t have stables but a central set of stalls for animals. In the town square. It is probably the northern European concept of stables, and feed troughs that brings this concept out.

⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,

⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Shepherds LIVING in the fields.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

This was no case of the occasional night duty, this was the shepherd’s life. They lived in the fields. Shepherds were a very lower class bunch. They had the job of looking after animals. Really bottom of the rung stuff. They lived rough. These guys did not own the sheep, they worked for the owner.

Shepherds were tough dudes. Not scared of much, this must have been terrifying to scare them.

⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

Notice though the angels seems to go into pastoral care mode. They say don't be afraid straight off.

After that there is this announcement of Jesus birth.;

¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Ok what's this about.

1. Saviour
2. Messiah
3. The Lord
4. Wrapped up in the feed trough.

Each phrase has significance.

Saviour - - Saviour, deliverer, this was a title given to ancient deity's. Kind of inference is one who has the power to save.

Messiah – The anointed one. The one who Israel was waiting for to free them.

The Lord – The person to whom things belong. Another word for the owner.

Wrapped up in the feed trough. – Infant wrappings. Nappies and little onesy suits in today's idea. IN other words – this Lord, this messiah, this saviour is a baby.

Do we actually get that. I mean really. God in a baby. How does God organise that?

God is bigger than we can imagine but He confines Himself to being a baby. This is huge, well, this is small at the same time.

The next few verses have a bit of a bizarre turn out for us.

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Not only is it not natural for a bunch of angels to be out singing to shepherds. Notice v14.

We cope with the glory to God in the highest heaven bit

BUT

and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Notice. Peace on whom His favour rests.

We think it says peace on earth – but it doesn't. It's actually quite discriminant.

Peace to those who God favours. Who is that? Am I in on this?

From what I can gather – it infers peace to His people. So yes if we are His people – Christians He is blessing us with peace.

But what about everyone else?

Well that's up to God.

Sorry if this isn't what we thought it was. But remember we are talking about what we add to the Christmas story. Universal blessing is not part of the Christmas Story – Sorry. The story is, as we saw in the animated video clip last Sunday Night.

This baby – Born in a feed trough, worshiped by shepherds grew up to be the man Jesus who taught about God's kingdom, died on a cross and rose again three days later.

The story doesn't have Santa, stables, drummer boys, silent nights and for many people – no peace.

Let allow the Story of Jesus the integrity with which it was written.

The question is how do we respond to the story?

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,

¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

They hurried to see Jesus and they talked about Him.

So how should we respond.

We should want to see more Jesus and we should talk about Him.