

Cliff Notes on Christmas

Why did Jesus come as a baby born in Bethlehem?

Jesus was born in fulfillment of many promises made by God¹ to His people to deliver us and save us from our sin. We have these promises in the Bible where God explains that in humanity's rebellion against Him, we have received the penalty of our sin, which is spiritual death.²

Unable to resuscitate ourselves, we are lost and without hope unless God Himself comes to save us.³ But that is exactly what He did! Jesus, God the Son, as only He could, came to win us back to right relationship with God the Father. This role of mediator between God and human beings was long foretold as the unique work of the true King of Israel who would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, Israel's greatest king.

What are we supposed to do?

Jesus calls us to repent from our disobedience, to believe and put our trust in Him for the salvation we so desperately need, and to identify with His people as the recipients of His grace. Let's look at each one of these things.

Repent. This means to turn from all the ways we disobey God and to start obeying Him instead. God has made Himself evident to all people⁴ even though we suppress that knowledge, but if we want to know Him as He truly is, the Bible shows us how to live in obedience to His holy calling.

Believe. Jesus calls us to stop believing that we can save ourselves or that any other thing can save us. He tells us to trust that He is the only way to God the Father. To believe *in* Christ is more than just believing that He was born; it's trusting Him to the exclusion of all else. What this baby King was born to do was to live the perfect life of obedience we fail to live and then die as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. His death on the cross paid the penalty for our rebellion and His resurrection from the dead on Easter morning declared that sacrifice was accepted by God the Father. To believe in Jesus is to trust His life, death, and resurrection to the exclusion of all else.

Identify. Jesus doesn't just save us as individuals; He saves us into His family. He adopts His followers as brothers and sisters. The practice of baptism is the historic way of identifying with this family of God. If you have never been baptized then you should confirm your belief in Christ by being baptized into membership of a Bible-believing church. If you have already been baptized, then you should profess your faith in Christ and be joined officially as a member.

¹ The Bible presents itself as God's self-revelation to His people starting as they came up out of Egypt into the Promised Land. These footnotes include references to books in the Bible by listing the name of the book followed by the chapter and verse in which to find the idea summarized above.

² Romans 6:23.

³ Ephesians 2:11-22.

⁴ Romans 1:18-23.