



# CHRISTMAS – CULTURE & JESUS

It seems that the most awesome event of human history, the coming of God to earth as a babe in a manger, has been forever obscured by Santa, shopping, and merrymaking. So, is it really “the most wonderful time of the year”? Only in relatively recent times, the past 200 years, has Christmas even been celebrated by most Christians. Up until the 1800’s, the day recognized as Christ’s birthday was largely a pagan celebration. In most of the world, especially in England and America, Christmas was not a time of worship, prayer, and reflection; rather, it was a day set aside to sing bawdy songs, drink rum, and riot in the streets. In this study, we will consider Christmas and Culture in how we came to celebrate the birth of Jesus as we do today. The hope is that we will find ourselves in awe of Emmanuel – God with us!

## Christmas – Culture & Jesus

# BIRTH OF JESUS - What Is the Incarnation? – John 1:12-14

1. **THE WORD BECAME FLESH** → The *incarnation* refers literally to the *in-fleshing* of the eternal Son of God — Jesus “putting on our flesh and blood” and becoming fully human. The doctrine of the incarnation claims that the eternal second person of the Trinity took on humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The incarnation is not only the way in which Jesus became Immanuel — God *with us* — but it’s an eternal testimony that he and his Father are unswervingly *for us*.
2. **THE WORD** → *The Word* refers to the eternal divine Son who was “in the beginning with God” and who himself is God (John 1:1). From eternity past until he took on humanity, the Son of God existed in perfect love, joy, and harmony in the fellowship of the Trinity. Like the Father and the Spirit, he was spirit and had no material substance. But at the incarnation, the eternal Word entered into creation as human. He became a first-century Jew.
3. **BECAME** → *Became* does not mean that he ceased to be God. In becoming man, he did not forsake his divine nature, as if that were even an option. Rather, he became man by taking on human nature in addition to his divine nature. It is essential to the incarnation — and very helpful throughout all theology — to recognize that divinity and humanity are not mutually exclusive. The Son of God didn’t have to pick between being God and being man. He could be both at the same time. The eternal Word became human.
4. **FLESH** → *Flesh* isn’t merely a reference to the human body but the entirety of what makes up humanity — body, mind, emotions, and will. Hebrews 2:17 and 4:15 teach that to save human beings Jesus had to be made like us “in every respect” except our sin. In the incarnation, everything proper to humanity was united to the Son of God. The Son of God did not only become like man; he actually

# THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

1. **TEACHING TOOL** → “The Twelve Days of Christmas” is more than a novelty song. It was once one of the most important teaching tools of the Catholic church. Beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, British Catholics were forbidden by law to practice their faith. The only legal Christian denomination in the British Empire was the Church of England. Those Catholics who spoke or wrote of their faith were arrested and tried under the laws of the time. If their violation was considered severe enough, they were hung.
2. **TEACH CHILDREN** → In the face of persecution and death, millions refused to abandon the religion of their ancestors. So, much like the early Christians in Rome, Catholics in England went underground. They held secret masses, studied their doctrine behind closed doors, and hid all signs of their faith at home. They were an almost secret society. One of the most severe problems the Catholic underground faced was in teaching their children the doctrine of the church.

# THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

1. \_\_\_\_\_ → A Partridge in a Pear Tree.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ → Two Turtle Doves.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ → Three French Hens.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ → Four Calling Birds.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ → Five Gold Rings.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ → Six Geese a-laying.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ → Seven Swans a-swimming.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ → Eight Maids a-milking.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ → Nine Ladies Dancing.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ → Ten Lords a-leaping.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ → Eleven Pipers Piping.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ → Twelve Drummers Drumming.

# **ACTION: Journal This!**

1. What is meaning of each of the “Twelve Days of Christmas” images?
2. What is the true meaning of Christmas?
3. What is the Gospel?