

# The Greatest Gift

## Introduction

<sup>1</sup>At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. <sup>2</sup>(This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup>All returned to their own towns to register for this census. <sup>4</sup>And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. <sup>5</sup>He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was obviously pregnant by this time.

<sup>6</sup>And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. <sup>7</sup>She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.

<sup>8</sup>That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep.

<sup>9</sup>Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, <sup>10</sup>but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! <sup>11</sup>The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! <sup>12</sup>And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!"

<sup>13</sup>Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God:

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to all whom God favors."

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on, let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

<sup>16</sup>They ran to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>Then the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. <sup>18</sup>All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, <sup>19</sup>but Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and thought about them often. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds went back to their fields and flocks, glorifying and praising God for what the angels had told them, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had said. **Luke 2:1-20 (NLT)**

## The day Jesus died?

As Christians we know that Christmas is the day that we remember and celebrate the birth of our lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Sadly, in our secular western society, one couldn't be blamed for thinking that Christmas was nothing more than a sales ploy getting mileage from a Children's fairy tale about a man in a red suit.

*A television interviewer was walking streets of Tokyo at Christmas time. Christmas shopping is a very big commercial success in Japan. The interviewer stopped one young woman on the sidewalk, and asked, "What is the meaning of Christmas?"*

*Laughing, she responded, "I don't know. Is that the day that Jesus died?"  
There was some truth in her answer.<sup>1</sup>*

Take a walk downtown in the days before Christmas. Is there anything to remind us about the reason for the season? Does the television give us even the slightest hint that Jesus, is in fact the point of it all, and not Santa or gifts? Not this year. Once again the annual screening of "Rudolf The Red Nose Reindeer" (which the kids are watching as I type) is on just to prove my point, and before that, Frosty the Snowman!

## Gifts

Ah, the gifts. All of us love to receive gifts, and Christmas is the ultimate day to give and receive wonderful surprises wrapped in shiny paper.

The dictionary defines a gift as:

- Simply a thing given.
- Something acquired without compensation
- To give something as a present

The one thing that I do not look forward to about Christmas is the shopping. The closer one leaves the Christmas shopping to Christmas day, the crazier, and busier it is. As I guy, I think it is engrained into us to leave the shopping to the last minute. We would probably do our shopping on Christmas day itself, if the shops weren't closed!

*It was Christmas and the judge was in a merry mood as he asked the prisoner, "What are you charged with?" "Doing my Christmas shopping early," replied the defendant. "That's no offence," said the judge. "How early were you doing this shopping?" "Before the store opened," countered the prisoner.<sup>2</sup>*

*A small boy was writing a letter to God about the Christmas presents he badly wanted. "I've been good for six months now," he wrote. But after a moment's reflection he crossed out "six months" and wrote "three". After a pause that was crossed out and he put "two weeks". There was another pause and that was crossed out too. He got up from the table and went over to the little crib scene that had the figures of Mary and Joseph. He picked up the figure of Mary and went back to his writing and started again: "Dear God, if you ever want to see your mother again...!"<sup>2</sup>*

## Some great gifts we could receive

What would be some great gifts we would love to receive this Christmas?

- For men, a great gift would be a brand new V8 Holden.
- For ladies, expensive jewellery would be a great gift.
- For the perfectionist, a monetary gift would be a great gift.
- For the children, the latest gaming console would be a great gift.
- For the romantics, and perhaps the more mature, a world cruise would make a great gift.

There are some gifts far greater, and more valuable than the examples given above that millions of people world-wide would dream of receiving this Christmas, but unfortunately these are gifts that money simply cannot buy.

- For the seriously sick, healing from their sickness.
- For the spouse of an unsaved partner, the salvation of their husband or wife.
- For the lonely, finding a wife or a husband...
- For the parent of a wayward child, the returning home of their prodigal son or daughter.
- For the child caught up in the cruelty of divorce, their Mum and Dad's marriage being reconciled.
- For the couple who are unable to have children, find they have conceived.

## What is THE greatest gift?

Yes, the examples given above are indeed very great gifts, but what is the greatest gift?

<sup>15</sup>*Thank God for his Son—a gift too wonderful for words! 2 Corinthians 9:15 (NLT)*

<sup>15</sup>*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15 (NIV)*

<sup>15</sup>*Thank God for this gift, his gift. No language can praise it enough!  
2 Corinthians 9:15 (TMB)*

## Jesus is THE greatest gift!

*Long ago, there ruled in Persia a wise and good king. He loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived. He wanted to know about their hardships. Often he dressed in the clothes of a working man or a beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one whom he visited thought that he was their ruler. One time he visited a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the coarse food the poor man ate. He spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, "I am your king!" The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the coarse food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!"<sup>3</sup>*

## Why is Jesus The Greatest Gift?

### 1. Because Jesus is what everyone needs!

*If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator; If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist; If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist; If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer; But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Saviour.<sup>3</sup>*

### 2. We desperately need a saviour!

We can have everything in the world, but if we don't have Jesus, we have absolutely nothing.

<sup>25</sup>*And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose or forfeit your own soul in the process? **Matthew 16:25 (NLT)***

### Whether this world realises it or not, the one thing say so desperately need in life is The Saviour!

<sup>6</sup>*Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. **John 14:6 (NLT)***

<sup>12</sup>*There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them." **Acts 4:12 (NLT)***

### 3. God gave his most valuable possession... His Son

<sup>16</sup>*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. **John 3:16-17 (NLT)***

One pastor once said...

*"We assign different value to the people in our lives. I have to be honest, my children and grandchildren will receive the most valuable of my Christmas gifts and from there we use an imaginary sliding scale of lesser and lesser value."*

### The fact that God gave His most valuable gift to us all shows that how valuable we are to Him!

## What are some great gifts you could give this Christmas?

Some of the greatest gifts you can give this Christmas are beyond monetary value. Below are some suggestions that won't cost you a dollar but could be worth more than money can buy.

- Phoning up your dad, or giving him a big hug and saying "I Love You."
- Saying "Sorry, will you please forgive me..."
- Inviting someone home for Christmas dinner...
- Forgiving someone who has treated you wrong.
- Visiting someone who is lonely

## What is the greatest gift you could give this Christmas?

The greatest gift you could give this Christmas is this:

### Giving Your life to Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup>*He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent. **2 Peter 3:9b (NLT)***

God does not want anyone to perish and it must break His heart when another soul is lost.

<sup>23</sup>*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NLT)*

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we have learned that despite the crazy consumer-driven holiday that Christmas has become to so many, Jesus is still the Reason for the Season. We have enjoyed imagining receiving some great gifts this Christmas, and we have learned what the Greatest Gift we can receive is... Jesus. We have also learned that God the Father gave His most precious and greatest Gift to us so we could have salvation. We have learned that some great gifts we could give this Christmas, are precious beyond words and don't cost a cent.

**But most importantly, we now know that that greatest gift we could ever give this Christmas, is our life to Jesus.**

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### References:

1. Donald Deffner, Seasonal Illustrations, San Jose: Resource, 1992. Page 16.
2. Source unknown
3. [www.sermons.org/xmasillus.html](http://www.sermons.org/xmasillus.html)

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