

**WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT CHRISTMAS**  
**Christmas 2000**  
**Rick Warren**

**I. THE RELEVANCE:** \_\_\_\_\_.

*“Jesus Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and in fact, Christ Himself is the Creator who made everything...”  
Col. 1:15-16 (LB)*

*“He became like men and was born a human being.” Phil. 2:7 (Amp)*

**II. THE REASON:** \_\_\_\_\_.

*“He became a man so that He could take away our sins...” 1 John 3:5 (LB)*

*“Though He was God... He laid aside His mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. And He humbled Himself even further, going so far as actually to die a criminal’s death on a cross.” Phil. 2:6-8 (LB)*

**Why did He do it?**

*“God showed how much He loved us by sending His only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love... that God sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.” 1 John 4:9-10 (NLT)*

**III. THE RESULT:** \_\_\_\_\_.

*“We were restored to friendship with God by the death of His Son while we were still His enemies, and we will be delivered from eternal punishment by His life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God – all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us...” Rom. 5:10-11 (NLT)*

*“Let those who love your salvation exclaim, “What a wonderful God He is!” Ps. 70:4 (LB)*

*“For this reason God gave Jesus the name that is greater than any other name... (One day) all beings in heaven, and on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees, and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God.” Phil. 2:9-11 (GN)*



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This weekend the whole world will shut down for Christmas. Stores will close, offices will close, there will be very few people on the freeway tomorrow. It is amazing to me that an event that happened 2000 years ago can have that profound an impact on us today here on the other side of the world. We even date our calendar by this event, the reference point is this event, the birth of Jesus Christ.

What's so special about Christmas? What's the big deal about it? Today we're going to look at three things. First, the relevance of Christmas. Why is it so important? The reason for Christmas. Why did God do it? Then the result of Christmas. What difference does it make to me?

### I. FIRST THE RELEVANCE OF CHRISTMAS.

I can sum up the relevance of Christmas in one phrase – God came to earth.

During World War II it was big news when the allies invaded Normandy on D-Day. But it was bigger news when God invaded earth 2000 years ago. It was big news when man walked on the moon. But it was bigger news when God walked on the earth. And not only did God come to earth but most shocking of all He came in the form of a human being.

Notice what the Bible says, *“Jesus Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all. In fact, Christ Himself is the creator who made everything.”*

Jesus didn't start in the stable. His beginning was not that little manger scene. He existed before creation. In fact the Bible says He is the creator because He is God. He made you. Jesus Christ made you. He is God. We have a phrase that says, “Like father, like son.” It's true with God. If you've seen the Son, if you've seen Jesus Christ you've seen God.

The Bible says, *“He became like men and was born a human being.”*

If I was God I wouldn't have done it this way. I would have come to earth in a much more spectacular way. I would have added a little more pizzazz and flash – I would have planned my coming at half time during the superbowl, when the whole world is watching with lots of fireworks and thunder and lightning cosmic sounds. I would have had all the leaders of the world lined up on the 50-yard line waiting to give me billions of dollars worth of gifts if I was God.

But God had another idea. He would come into this world the same way that everybody in this world came into this world – by being born into it. That shocked the angels. That God who created the universe would so humble and limit Himself and come down to earth in human form. And not only that but be born of peasant parents in a stable in a little tiny village was unthinkable. All of God's plan for the world was wrapped up in that fragile little infant. Why did He do it? Of all the ways God could have come to earth why did He come as a baby? I'll tell you why. Because He came to save us not to scare us and nobody's afraid of a baby. God could have come to earth in a lot of ways that would have freaked us all out and scared us to death and made us run in terror. But He didn't do that. He came in a way that we could all

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relate to because we all had that experience ourselves. We've all been born. He came in a way that we could relate to Him.

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ was in every sense a human being. When He came to earth He limited Himself so that He could become both God and man at the same time. He was born like us. He grew up like us. I don't want to blow your stereotype but Jesus didn't walk around in spotless white robes with a halo and a glow on His face like they show in some of these movies. He was every bit a Palestinian Jew because that's what He was. He worked in a carpenter's shop so He probably had well-developed muscles. He looked just like an average guy because He was. The Bible says that while He was here on earth He was tempted just like we are. He had the same struggles that I have and you have. The same temptations, the same desires, the same drives, the same problems. The Bible says He suffered just like we do. There were times when Jesus was lonely when He was tempted to be discouraged, when He was frustrated. There were times certainly when He was fatigued, very tired.

That's good news. What it means is He understands how you feel. God says, "I've been there. I'm not some distant God who doesn't understand what you're going through. I've been there. I came to earth and experienced what it means to be a human."

The truth is during Christmas is not a happy time for a lot of people. Christmas stirs up all kinds of negative emotions for many. Sometimes grief over loved ones who aren't with us here any more. Sometimes depression over "Another year has passed and I'm no different.... I wanted to get married and I didn't... My marriage problems haven't gotten any better..." Sometimes all kinds of other difficulties and we feel sad or we feel depressed.

If you feel that way this morning Jesus Christ understands. He knows exactly what you're feeling right now. First, He made you and second, He became a human Himself. What we and billions of other people celebrate this weekend is not the birth of some average, normal baby. This baby was God in human form.

So why is Christmas a big deal? Because of its relevance. God came to earth. He came to earth as a human being and that's what split history into A.D. and B.C. – the most significant event in history. But that's not the good news.

The good news is why He came. And that's the reason for Christmas.

## **II. THE REASON FOR CHRISTMAS IS THIS: HE CAME FOR YOUR BENEFIT.**

He came because you needed Him to come. You don't even realize it but you needed Him to come.

Why did God come to earth at Christmas? The Bible tells us four reasons.

First. Jesus came to earth to show us what God is like.

Here are a lot of crazy ideas, bizarre ideas about what God is like in this world. All you have to do is get on the Internet and find them. A lot of times people will say, "I don't believe in a God that ..." and I can say, I don't either. There are a lot of stupid, crazy ideas about God that just

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aren't true. Jesus said, "I am the truth. I came to show you what God is really like so you can know what I'm like."

When you go outside, when you go out into nature, there are some things you can learn about God just by going up into the mountains. For instance, by looking at nature we can know that God is creative. By looking at nature we know God is powerful – obviously – the waves, the wind, the rotation of the earth, all the power of God that's seen in the universe. We know that God is organized because there is order to the universe. We know that God likes variety because there is a lot of variety. We know that God likes beauty. We learn these things just by looking at nature.

But some things, the most important things you would never know about God except that Jesus came to tell us. For instance, nature doesn't teach us that God is loving. We only know that because of Jesus Christ. Nature doesn't teach us that God is forgiving. We only know that because of Jesus Christ. Nature doesn't teach us that God has a plan for your life, that you're not an accident, that He put you on earth for a purpose, for a reason. Only Jesus Christ can teach us that. He is the one that lets us know what God is really like.

The second reason God came to earth is to show us what life should really be like, to show us how to really live.

The truth is most people aren't really living. They're just existing. They get up in the morning, they go to work or go to school, they come home, watch TV, go to bed, do it over and over for 60, 70, 80 years and then die. They never really are fully alive. They just exist. One of the most famous statements of Jesus is when He said, "*I have come that you might live life to the fullest.*" Jesus didn't say "I've come to give you a religion, I've come to make you religious." He said "I've come to make you fully alive, to teach you the kind of life that God put you on the earth to live." And until you get connected with your creator you're not going to live that full life. You're just going to exist.

The third reason He came to earth is to show us that we can trust God.

You don't trust somebody you don't know. You've got to get to know Him first before you can trust Him. The reason why you don't trust God more is you don't know Him. You don't know Him very well. In fact, the more you know God the more you're going to trust Him, the more you're going to know He's worthy of your trust, that you can count on Him, depend on Him. So you have to get to know Him first so you can learn to trust Him.

The fourth reason God came to earth in the form of Jesus is to forgive everything you've ever done wrong so you can go to a perfect place called heaven when you die.

That's quite a deal. The Bible says, "*He became a man so that He could take away our sins.*" And "*Though He was God He laid aside His mighty power and glory taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. And He humbled Himself even further going so far as to actually die a criminals' death on the cross.*" Jesus Christ came to earth to die for all the things that you've done wrong, so you don't have to pay for them, so you can be forgiven, so you can go scott free. That's called grace and it's the only way you're ever going to get into heaven because none of us are perfect. What a deal.

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It cost Jesus Christ a lot. God sacrificed a lot to do this for you. He left His eternal throne, His kingdom, His home in glory. He limited Himself, became a human being. He put up with all the aches and pains and suffering that we do even though He was God. He gave His life for us, He died on the cross. Jesus Christ didn't stay in the manger. He didn't stay in the crib. He went to the cross. Why in the world would He do that? Why in the world would God come to earth in human form and die for you?

I'll tell you why. Because He loves you. He loves you more than you will ever understand. You can't fathom how much God loves you. You can't even understand it because your brain isn't big enough. You trying to understand God's love is like an ant trying to understand you. They don't have the capacity. No one will ever love you as much as God does.

How much does God love me? Jesus Christ stretches out His hands on the cross and lets them nail Him to the cross and says, "This much. I love you this much. This is how much you matter to Me. I made you, I created you and I also die for you. That's how much I love you."

The Bible tells us "*God showed how much He loves us by sending His only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love, that God sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*" The Bible says the greatest kind of love a person can have is when you give your life for somebody else. "*Greater love has no man than this than a man lay down his life for his friends.*" But Jesus Christ laid down His life for you when you weren't His friend. In fact, before you even knew Him, when you were going the opposite direction headed in a different way He gave His life for you. The reason for Christmas is for your benefit.

I know you've probably seen the bumper stickers or lapel pins at Christmas time that say "Jesus is the reason for the season" that is true – Jesus is the reason for the season. Christmas is not about a Santa. It's about a Savior. It's not about jingle bells. It's about Jesus. That's why we celebrate this. But let me teach you a deeper truth than that. Yes, Christmas is about Jesus. He is the reason for the season but let me tell you something even deeper.

You are the reason for the season. If God hadn't known that you needed Him to come to earth and die for you He wouldn't have done it. If you didn't need what Jesus Christ had to offer He wouldn't have wasted the effort. You are the reason for the season. You are the reason we celebrate Christmas. It's God's Christmas gift to you.

The relevance of Christmas is this: God came to earth as a human being. But the reason for Christmas is this: He came for your benefit.

What is the result? What is the result of Christmas?

### III. YOU CAN KNOW GOD.

You can know God personally. You can have a personal relationship with the creator of the universe. God knows everything about you. He wants you to know about Him. He wants you to be His friend. He wants to be your friend. In fact, that is the reason you were created. The reason you were put on this earth is to have a relationship with God. That's why God made you.

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If you miss that you've just blown your whole life. You've just missed the whole reason you were created by God in the first place – to get to know God on a personal basis. That is the gift of Christmas. He says, "I want you to know Me like I know you." But you have to receive the gift if it's going to make any difference in your life.

I'm embarrassed to admit this but this week, as I was cleaning out one of my drawers of my desk I found a Christmas gift unopened from a year ago. Inside was a gift certificate, given to me last Christmas. It said, "A gift for Rick Warren. This certificate entitles the bearer to the wonderful experience of a one hour therapeutic massage." That is a wonderful gift! I can't count the number of times I could have used that gift when I was tired, when I was stressed out, when a good massage would have been really great. I could have used it. But it was unopened. I was hoping this hadn't expired. I hope I can get at least a pedicure or something. A wonderful gift unopened is a worthless gift.

God has a wonderful gift for you. The Bible says, "*We were restored to friendship with God by the death of His Son while we were still His enemies and we will be delivered from eternal punishment by His life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.*" Circle "wonderful". This is the most wonderful gift you will ever be given. Nothing even compares to it.

Tomorrow you're going to open up a bunch of gifts. Some of those gifts are going to be impersonal, some of them are going to be impractical, you really can't use them, some of them are going to be temporary – they're going to wear out or break before the day is over. Some of them are going to flat out be cheap.

None of those adjectives apply to God's gift to you.

In the first place God's gift is personal. It is custom made to you. "*Unto you is born a Savior,*" the angel said. It is personal.

It is practical. This is the most practical gift you'll ever get. You need this gift that God has to offer you. It's very practical.

It is priceless. Jesus Christ paid for it with His life. That's how much it cost to pay for this gift.

It is permanent. It will last forever throughout eternity.

Where are you going to get a gift like that? Nowhere, except from God. If I told you that I have a gift for you and that gift will solve all your biggest problems, heal all your deepest hurts, forgive every single mistake you've ever made, help you understand the purpose you were put on earth for, make you a better person, fill your life with confidence and joy and peace and eternally secure your future in heaven would you be interested in a gift like that? I guess so!

So let me ask you a very personal question. How many more Christmases are you going to go through before you finally accept God's gift to you? You celebrate this event year after year after year without unwrapping the biggest gift under the tree – God's gift to you – the whole

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purpose of this. How many more? An unopened wonderful gift is a worthless gift. Today, now, this time, don't let another Christmas go by without accepting and unwrapping God's gift to you.

If God loves you this much you've got to know this God. If God has a plan and purpose for your life, you'd better figure out what it is. If He wants a relationship with you, you sure should want a relationship with Him. The Bible says this in Psalm 70:4 *"Let those who love Your salvation exclaim, What a wonderful God He is!"* God has a wonderful gift for you because He is a wonderful God.

When you fully understand how wonderful this gift is, how incredible, how magnificent, how marvelous, how mind blowing God's gift of love through His Son Christ is to you. When you really understand that there is only one logical, rational, sane response.

Accept it.

To reject that kind of love would be madness. A God who loves you that much, to reject it and walk out and say, "So what?" would be madness.

How do you do that? How do you learn to love God? How do you learn to trust Him? The Bible says this *"If you will say with your mouth Jesus is my Lord and you will believe in your heart that God raised Him back from death(after the cross He died but He was God so He came back to life. Proved it). you will be saved."*

You say, "Jesus is my Lord". What does that mean? What does it mean to make Jesus the Lord of your life? ABC

A – I admit that He is God.

B – I believe that He loves me, that He's in control and He can take even the bad things in my life and turn them around and bring good out of them because He's calling the shots.

C – I commit the rest of my life to following His plan for my life, the purpose I was created for in the first place. I commit to that.

Recently I saw a store and there was a sign out in front that said "Under new management." That's what it means to be a follower of Christ. You put on a sign that says, "I'm under new management." Jesus Christ is now the manager of my life. He is the Lord. He's calling the shots. I'm not calling the shots any more. He made me, He loves me, He knows what's best so I'm going to follow the plan that I was put on this earth to follow. He's calling the shots.

Why should I do that? Two reasons. One, He made you. And two, He loved you enough to come and die for you so that all your sins could be forgiven and you'd go to heaven. That's enough. No one else is going to do that.

*"For this reason God gave Jesus the name that is greater than any other name. One day all beings in heaven and on earth and in the world below will fall on their knees and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God."*

Every once in a while you hear people say, "What is the world coming to?" I'll tell you. It's going to end one day. I don't know when but it's going to end. The Bible says that one day

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everybody that's ever lived is going to stand before God on a day of accountability, on a day of reckoning, a day of judgment. And everyone will be there. Every nation, every ethnic group, every language, every religion, every age group, every person who has ever lived will be there. And the Bible says that every knee will bow, everyone there is going to bow and openly admit what's been the truth for centuries, for eternity - Jesus is Lord.

It will be too late for some people. But they're going to admit it eventually. Jesus is Lord. Every politician is going to be there. Every businessman is going to be there. Every rock star is going to be there. Every athlete is going to be there. Every homemaker is going to be there. Every entrepreneur is going to be there on their knees saying Jesus is Lord. We're all going to admit it one day. All the denial will be over, all the arrogance will be over. Adolph Hitler will be in that crowd. He will be on his knees saying, "Jesus is Lord." Karl Marx will be with all the billions of others on his knees saying, "Jesus is Lord." Howard Stern will be in that crowd. Madonna will be in that crowd, married or not, saying "Jesus is Lord." Both Al Gore and George Bush will be on their knees saying Jesus is Lord.

The issue is not whether you're ever going to admit that Jesus is Lord. You're going to. The issue is not *if*. It's just a matter of *when*. Either now or later. Either now in love and accepting His gift or later in regret. Why would you wait? Why would you not accept that kind of love, that kind of purpose that God has created you for? And say this Christmas I want to make Jesus Christ the Lord of my life.

This summer I had the privilege of speaking at Amsterdam 2000 an international conference in Amsterdam, the largest representation of nations in the history of the world were at this conference. I think 211 or 213 were at this conference, which were more than the United Nations. Never in history had that many nations gathered in one spot. Eleven thousand Christian leaders from 211 nations. One night we sang a song about Jesus is Lord and everybody sang in their own language. I thought this is a little tiny speck of what it's going to be like on that day.

When Jesus Christ is your manager, your Lord, you can handle anything so when you're feeling overwhelmed, feeling stressed out you say it "Jesus is Lord." When you feel like you can't cope any more you say, "Jesus is Lord." When you're lonely, when you're depressed, when you're uptight, when you're worried, when you're sad, when you're grieving you say it "Jesus is Lord. I know He loves me and I know He's in control and I'm going to trust Him." You say it when you're discouraged, you say it when you're defeated, you say it when you're tired, you say it when you're fearful. Jesus is Lord.

You say it at Christmas. "O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him. *Christ the Lord!*" You have sung that song many, many times over the years without thinking about the words. Sing it as a prayer of faith, a statement of faith: I want Christ to be the Lord of my life. I want Him calling the shots because of what He has done for me. He is worthy of our gratitude. He is worthy of our trust because He is Christ the Lord.

God brought you here for a reason this morning. He wants you to accept His Christmas gift, to not go another season without beginning that relationship with Him that Jesus Christ came to establish. You may have never known God personally. You've known about God. You believe He exists. You know about Him. You just don't know Him. I know *about* President Clinton. I

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don't know him personally. But I know God personally and have had a relationship with Him for many, many years. And you can too.

Maybe you've been close to God in the past and you've kind of drifted away. There's not a better time to come back to God than at Christmas. You don't need to talk to me, talk to God. Tell Him your heart. It doesn't matter what you say. What matters is the direction of your heart. say, "Yes! I want to have a relationship with You."

Let me clarify this. We're not talking about a religion. You may have a religious background or you may not have a religious background. You may be Catholic or Protestant or Jewish or Buddhist or Baptist or I don't know what. We're not talking about that. We're talking about a relationship with God that you were designed to have. And you can begin that today.

Prayer:

This is your moment to accept God's Christmas gift to you. I'm going to say a prayer and if it kind of expresses the desire of your heart why don't you follow in. Say, "Yes, God, me too."

Dear God, I don't want to let another Christmas pass without accepting Your gift to me. Thank You for coming to earth so I could know what You're like. I am amazed that You would want a relationship with me. I want to get to know You. I want to learn to trust You. Please help me to know the purpose that You put me on earth for. I know I've done a lot of things wrong and I'm especially grateful for Your forgiveness and Your gift of eternal life. From this day forward I want to be under new management. I want You to be the Lord of my life. Amen.