

THE GENESIS CLASS

Christmas:

How (and why) did God plan for Christmas?

1. Celebrate Christmas!

- Esther 9:22 - Celebrating a God-honoring deliverance is Biblical!
- Christmas, at its core (Luke 2:11), celebrates our rescue from sin.
- Christmas, at its core (Luke 2:11), celebrates the First Coming of Christ.
- If a celebration dishonors God, that's not good (Revelation 11:10).

2. Christmas is all about Christ.

- Luke 2:11 - The reason for the season is JESUS the CHRIST!
- 1 John 5:20 - Christ has come, providing saving truth and eternal life.
- Genesis 3:15 - Christmas helped fulfill the oldest Messianic prophecy.
- The Holy Bible is the only book we have that gives us God's perfect truth.¹

3. Christ is the Prince of Peace.

- Isaiah 9:6-7 - The "Prince of Peace" must be both 100% God and 100% human.
- It is possible to be 100% spouse and 100% parent simultaneously.
- God is able to permanently *incarnate* one of His three Persons, and He chose to do so.
- Romans 5:1 - Jesus provides—and is Himself—our peace with God.

4. Peace = Rightness, Wholeness

- The Hebrew word for "peace" is *shalôm*, from the Hebrew root-verb *shalam*.
- Exodus 21:36 illustrates how *shalam* means rightness/wholeness.
- The English phrase "make whole" still means "to repay that which is owed."
- John 19:30 - Christ announced: "It is finished" (*tetelestai*).
 - As Prince of Peace, Christ provides the redemptive grace for **restoring rightness** to our own relationship with God, at the individual (believer) level, plus He will one day restore rightness to all things, as the Prince Who defeats world sin and provides true peace.²

¹ Everything we know about the First Coming of Christ (or His Second Coming, for that matter) is from the Holy Bible, so that is our authority for learning anything about Christ coming to Earth. Some things we know about Christ due to His work as the Creator: we all have many trillions of evidences of that.

² "Christmas" is thus all about the First Coming of Christ, the Prince of Peace (*Sar Shalom*). In Christ's First Coming He came to provide personal peace—peace with God (Romans 5:1), without which there cannot be a real and complete "peace" (in the sense of *shalôm*) with anyone else. But when rightness is broken, true peace requires a "restoration to rightness," similar to paying an unpaid debt (see double form of the root-verb *shalam* in Exodus 21:36). Accordingly, in

THE GENESIS CLASS

5. God Foresaw Ruptured Rightness.

- 1 John 3:8b - The evil ruin and waste caused by sin was foreknown by God.
- Luke 2:7d - God foreknew that Messiah would not be welcome.
- John 1:10-12 - However, God deemed it worth it, to send Messiah, to save some.³

6. God Forechose to Restore Believers by Redemption.

- God's plan for redemption was to provide redemptive grace that is received via "faith" (i.e., "belief"—same word in Greek, *pistis*, based on Greek root-verb for "believe," *pisteuō*).
- Numbers 21:4-9 & John 3:14-16 - (Jesus's O.T. object-lesson on what real saving faith is)
- 1 Peter 1:18-20 - (our redemption by Christ's blood was fore-ordained even before creation)
- "Faith" is believing what Jesus says is true (because Jesus is both authoritative and truthful), as is illustrated by the outstanding role-model of "faith," the Roman centurion (of Matthew 8:5-10 & Luke 7:2-9). Thus, believing what Jesus authoritatively said about salvation is saving belief.

7. Personal Redemptions were Pre-Calculated.

- Ephesians 1:4 - God orchestrates providential history to fit His redemptive plan.
- Personal redemptions are not left unplanned.
 - Contrast Luke 10:20 with Revelation 13:8 & 17:8
 - Consider www.icr.org/article/3910 (reflections on Luke 10:20)

8. Christ Restores Rightness: Personal & Cosmic.

- 1 John 4:9-10 - Christ's redemptive rescue (of us, sinners) proves God's love.

His Second Coming, in power and glory, Christ will restore rightness and wholeness to the entire world, but this renovating rectification will necessarily involved purging (judging) the preexisting world of sin.

³ The First Coming of Christ was decided upon before God created anything. The First Coming of Christ was all about solving the sin problem that God knew would infect the entire human race (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8 & 17:8; see also John 17:24). God foreknew that His top creature, mankind (made in His image) would sin, so redemption would be needed (or else ALL of mankind would be doomed to Hell). Yet without a truly real choice, humans could not truly **love** God, or willingly **thank** Him for being created, or **fellowship** voluntarily with Him. In other words, to avoid making mere "robots" God needed to make humans who could choose to reject Him. Though God is truly honored by snowflakes and pine needles and frog eggs and pinyon jays, only humans have a true **choice** of whether to honor God or not (much less truly **love** Him). God decided, despite His foreknowledge of the future (and other options), that it would be worth it, for Christ Himself to serve as the undeserving and universal Sin-Bearer to redeem Adam's race.

THE GENESIS CLASS

9. Redemption is Provided through Saving Belief.

- As noted above, “faith” is simply believing what God says (in the Bible) is true, because He is both authoritative and truthful—as is illustrated by the outstanding role-model of “faith,” the Roman centurion (of Matthew 8:5-10 & Luke 7:2-9).
- John 1:10-12 - Salvation is graciously offered to all, yet it must be received on person at a time.
- Acts 28:23-24 - Some believe the salvation message; others don’t.

10. Redemption Required a Recognizable Messiah

- Matthew 2:2-4 & Micah 5:2 - Salvation-needy sinners need to recognize Messiah.
- Jesus’ Messianic credentials include His genealogy credentials (Matthew 1 & Luke 3).
- God provided mankind with many Messianic prophecies so He could be properly recognized:

Genesis 3:15 (Seed of Woman)	Jesus fulfilled (Galatians 3:8)
Genesis 12:3 (Seed of Abraham)	Jesus fulfilled (Galatians 3:8; Acts 3:25-26; Luke 3:34)
Genesis 26:4 (Seed of Isaac)	Jesus fulfilled (Galatians 4:8; Hebrews 11:18; Luke 3:34)
Genesis 28:13-14 (Seed of Jacob)	Jesus fulfilled (Matt. 1:2; Luke 3:34)
Genesis 49:10 (of Judah’s tribe)	Jesus fulfilled (Luke 3:33; Heb. 7:14)
2 Samuel 7:12-16 (of David’s line)	Jesus fulfilled (Acts 2:29-32; Luke 3:31)
Isaiah 9:6-7 (both God and human)	Jesus fulfilled (John 1:1-14 & 8:56-58; Hebrews 1)
Micah 5:2 (born in Bethlehem)	Jesus fulfilled (Matthew chapter 2, esp. 2:1-6)
Daniel 9:24-26 (arrive 1 st century A.D.)	Jesus fulfilled (Luke 2:1-4 & Luke 19:42 with Neh. 2)
Numbers 24:17 (birth heralded by star)	Jesus fulfilled (Matthew 2:1-10) ⁴
Isaiah 7:14 (born to a virgin)	Jesus fulfilled (Matthew 1:22-25)
Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (#1 Prophet)	Jesus fulfilled (Acts 3:22-23)
Zechariah 9:9 (rides colt to announce)	Jesus fulfilled (Matthew 21:2-9)
Psalms 118:22-24 & 22:1-18; as well as Isaiah 52:14-53:12 (rejected by the Jews & willingly suffers for our sins)	Jesus fulfilled (Matthew 21:9, 42 & 27:46; as well as John 20:20-25 & Mark chapters 14-15)
Psalms 16:8-11 (Messiah resurrects!)	Jesus fulfilled (Acts 2:22-23)
Psalms 110:1 (Messiah sits on high)	Jesus fulfilled (Acts 2:32-36)

1st CONCLUSION: Jesus Himself claimed that He fulfilled the O.T. Messianic prophecies, regarding His redemptive ministry, during His First Coming (Luke 24:17-48, esp. 25-47).

2nd CONCLUSION: Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection were “according to the Scriptures,” thus verifying Him as the Messiah of Paul’s Gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

⁴ For a thorough analysis of the “star,” see www.bethlehemstar.net, in light of Psalm 19:1-4 & Romans 10:16-18.

THE GENESIS CLASS

11. Messiah's Identity was Uniquely Recognizable.

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - The Gospel of Christ requires that the Messiah be authenticated (verified) “according to the Scriptures”—especially His Messianic death and resurrection.
- The place (Bethlehem-Ephrathah) of Judah of Messiah's arrival was foretold.
- The time of Messiah's arrival was foretold, by a star and by Daniel's prophecy.
- The tribe and family clan of Messiah's genealogical ancestry was foretold.
- The legal status of David's nobility passed to Jesus, by Joseph's marriage to Mary.⁵
- Jesus biological ancestry from David, from Mary, avoided the cursed line of Jeconiah.
- The legal status of David's noble line, if transmitted by Mary, would have been cursed.
- All other boy babies born in Bethlehem, if born within about 2 years of the time when the magi visited Jesus, were destroyed by King Herod, so other potential Bethlehem-born “candidates” (for fulfilling the Messianic prophecy in Micah 5:2) were logically eliminated. When the Daniel prophecy (regarding the timeframe of Messiah's arrival) and the Christmas star are factored into this point, this eliminates all timely-born Bethlehem boy babies except Jesus.

12. Jots, Tittles...and the Bible's Genealogical Information

- Matthew 2:16 - As noted above, the Slaughter of the Innocents helps identify Messiah.
- Luke 2:4 - God used Joseph's Davidic ancestry, and a Roman tax, to fulfill Micah 5:2.
- Numbers 36:1-2 provides the key to understanding why Matthew gives Joseph's lineage.⁶
- Jeremiah 22:24-30 - The curse of Jeconiah bans Joseph from fathering the Messiah.

⁵ Regarding how a Jewish man, under Mosaic law, could gain legal status from his wife, see Numbers 36:1-12.

⁶ Why include both genealogies (in Matthew & Luke)? Would Jews be interested in the “Law”-defined genealogy (“legal line” of Jesus), or in the biological lineage genealogy, or both? Also, regardless of the interests of Matthew's original audience, do all Messianic prophecies address the Messiah's **biological** ancestry, or do some address his “**legal**” identity (as defined by Jewish law)?

Although many observe that (1) Matthew provides the Jewish law-based “legal (inheritance-related) lineage” of Jesus' step-father, Joseph, and (2) Luke provides the humanity-oriented “biological lineage” of Mary, Jesus' virgin mother, one might wonder how the notion of a wife's family's legal (inheritance-related) rights might transfer to her husband. The scenario that triggers this legal situation is illustrated by the scenario of a couple who parent daughters, but no sons, and then the daughters marry—either “inside” or “outside” the family tribe/clan. Consider this scenario: assume that Mary's parents have no sons, and Mary has a sister who married a man named Cleopas (see John 19:25). According to the Mosaic law, as declared in **Numbers 36:1-12** (see especially verses 3-8), there would be a legal problem if these sisters married men “outside” of their family clan (i.e., outside the tribe of Judah's “family of David”), because the sons-in-laws would inherit from their wives, by virtue of their respective marriages. (This is like levirate marriage and legal adoption; see also John 19:25-27, regarding the mother-son “adoption” directed from the cross.)

What about the impact of the “**curse of Jeconiah**”? The curse on Jeconiah, recorded in Jeremiah 22:24-30 (especially verse 30), banned any biological offspring of Israel's king Jeconiah (a descendant of David through David's son Solomon) from “prosper[ing], sitting on the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.” Since it is Joseph (who never sits on the throne of David), who is the descendant of the cursed Jeconiah (see Matthew 1:11), not Mary (who descends from King David via his son Nathan, not Solomon), the curse of Jeconiah's biological “sons” does not touch the virgin-born Lord Jesus.

THE GENESIS CLASS

- From Matthew's genealogy we learn of women *not* named in Luke's genealogy; since these women are common ancestors of both Joseph and Mary, they are also Jesus' ancestors.⁷

13. Four Wounded Women of Faith, Restored & Honored by God

- Faith heroes (whose failures are long-remembered, yet their virtues and victories are quickly by-passed), like Rahab, are often under-appreciated by "the world" (Hebrews 11:38).
- Matthew 1:3, 5, 16 - Notice that 2 of these Messianic-lineage women (Rahab & Ruth) were Gentiles who came to a saving faith in the Lord. It is likely that Tamar (probably a Canaanite) did also.⁸ It is curious that Bath-sheba (which simply means "Sheba's daughter", similar to saying "Pharaoh's daughter") is *not* named by Matthew; perhaps Sheba's daughter was not a believer.
- Tamar had remarkably tragic family relationship problems—yet she is noted in Ruth 4:12.
- Rahab had a remarkably tragic start in life, in Jericho—yet her conversion (evidenced in Joshua chapters 2 & 6) resulted in her becoming a Jewish man's wife, and ultimately an ancestor of Jesus—as well as a faith hero named in the New Testament (Hebrews 11:31 & James 2:25).
- Ruth had a remarkably tragic start in life, in Moab—yet her conversion (evidenced in Ruth chapter 1) led to her own providential entry into the Messianic lineage.

⁷ The Bible is understandable enough for a "plough-boy" to read, yet parts of it are so rich that superficial reading and less-than-truly-reverent study will result in misunderstandings and/or missing important details. Many basic truths in the Bible are so obvious and simple that a child can digest them easily. However, many not-quite-so-basic details of the Bible are so deep and rich (and require prerequisite study and understanding of other Scriptures) that microscope-like scrutiny is needed to "see" valuable details that could easily go unnoticed. Such "small" details are truly uncountable. Genealogical information (like every jot or tittle), provided in the Bible, is there because God deliberately chose to include that information in the Bible. So, whatever genealogical information God put into the Bible must be both important and true.

Genealogies often include chronology data. Some avoid the young-earth-creation teaching of Genesis by arguing that the genealogies in Genesis are "open" (missing a few generations), so that the lifespan of the named genealogy links are not the "total" timeframes needed to measure time from creation to Abraham. But the "open"-or-"closed" genealogy argument completely misses the meaning and logic of the Book of Genesis' timeframe data. (See generally www.icr.org/article/4124.)

⁸ "It is significant that four women are mentioned in this royal genealogy of Jesus—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah (Matthew 1:3, 5, 6). All four were special examples of God's grace. Tamar may have been a Canaanite who posed as a harlot to seduce Judah (Genesis 38:13-018). Rahab was also a Canaanite and had been a prostitute (Joshua 2:1). Ruth was a Moabitess (Ruth 1:4), a member of a nation committed to idolatry and opposition to the people of God. A Hittite woman, Bathsheba (Uriah's wife), committed adultery with King David (2 Samuel 11:2-5). All of these women could, by law, have been excommunicated from Israel, executed or both. God, however, not only redeemed them, bringing them to saving faith in Him, but even included (and mentioned) them in the human genealogy of the royal line leading to Jesus." – *Quoting* Dr. Henry M. Morris, *Defender's Study Bible*, note to **Matthew 1:3**.

THE GENESIS CLASS

14. God Employs Both Jews and Gentiles to Reach the “Whosoever”

- **Christmas is about Jesus**, EMMANUEL (“God with us”), God’s Missionary Savior! And He has called us to be ***His*** witnesses—at home and throughout the world (Luke 2:11; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8), to Jews (like the shepherds) and to Gentiles (like the magi).
- God’s calling for us to honor His Son is special (Acts 15:17), like the inn of Bethlehem, most of our world (and even many church people have “no room” for Him in their hearts and minds).
- Thinking through what Christmas is really about, in light of both time and eternity, should prompt us to live with Kingdom of God priorities (www.icr.org/article/3128).
- So, let’s reverently and gratefully honor God as we celebrate this CHRISTmas! ><>