

4 Myths About the Christmas Story (Youth)

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Christmas is one of the best times of year, what with the presents, the chocolate, the decorations... But sometimes we get caught up in all of this. Not only that, but even the Christmas story. How well do you know it? It turns out that many of our beliefs about the first Christmas are not that accurate, just like our focus during the holiday. Let's see what the Bible has to say about our modern Christmas story.

Myth #1 There were three wise men

We don't really know how many wise men there were because the Bible doesn't tell us. Three, however, seems like a very small number considering how far the wise men had to travel. It would have been very unsafe and unwise to make the journey with such a small group. Most likely, there were many wise men. The idea of three wise men comes from the number of gifts they brought to Jesus: three.

***Matthew 2:11** They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

Myth #2 The wise men were at the stable

Although nativity scenes include Jesus, Mary, Joseph, some animals, and the wise men, the truth is that wise men probably didn't show up until Jesus was one or two years old. We can figure this out because the wise men tell Herod about the first appearance of the star, which happened around the birth of Jesus. After the wise men leave town without meeting with Herod again, Herod gives his terrible decree to kill all Jewish males age two and younger. Herod was attempting to kill the Messiah, who he thought might be as old as two. Fortunately, God warned Joseph who took Mary and Jesus to Egypt.

***Matthew 2:16** Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance.*

Myth #3 Jesus was born on December 25

In fact, Jesus probably wasn't born in December or winter at all. How do we know this? The Bible says that the shepherds were tending their flocks outside. They wouldn't have done this in the winter because it was too cold. Also, Joseph and Mary were going to Bethlehem for a census. Normally, a census wouldn't be held in winter when traveling was difficult and dangerous.

***Luke 2:8** That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.*

Myth #4 Jesus was white

This may be obvious, but Jesus was not white. You might think he was, however, when you look at the many

Christmas decorations that show a white baby Jesus with a white Mary and Joseph. However, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and all of Jesus' first followers were Jewish and from the Middle East.

Why bring up these myths? They should remind us that when it comes to understanding the first Christmas, the most important place to turn is the Bible. The Bible can tell us what is really important this Christmas, and where you should put your focus. Don't get your understanding of Christmas from a nativity scene, a movie, or even what your friends say. In the Bible, we find the perfect telling of God coming to earth.

Discussion Questions:

1. *Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.*
2. *What is your initial reaction to this video? Do you disagree with any of it? What jumped out at you?*
3. *What are some other myths about Christmas?*
4. *What is the strangest or most surprising part of the Christmas story to you?*
5. *Why is it important to get the facts of the Bible correct?*
6. *How much of the Christmas story do you know from reading the Bible, and how much do you know from tv, movies, or being told about it?*
7. *What is the most important part of the Christmas story? Why?*
8. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*