

WHY TEACH THE BIRTH OF JESUS IN DECEMBER?

It has been the long-standing practice for many churches of Christ across the country to avoid jumping on the December 25th bandwagon for Jesus' birth. Their philosophy has been: *It's better to study the birth of Jesus in July than to follow the denominational errors associated with Christmas.*

However, **21st Century Christian** has chosen to teach children the biblical account of the birth of Jesus during the month of December. Why? Because that's when the truth most needs to be taught. It makes no sense to let error rule the month of December when so many turn their thoughts to His birth and then teach the truth in July when no one seems to care much about the birth of Jesus anyway. Our children hear inaccurate statements and see inaccurate portrayals of Jesus' birth on television, from Christmas cards, from friends and relatives, and in holiday decorations. What better time to teach God's truth?

WHAT WE TEACH ABOUT THE BIRTH OF JESUS IN NEW LIFE THROUGH HIS WORD AND LIFELINKS TO GOD CURRICULUMS

1. We teach that no one knows the exact date of Jesus' birth. There is only one chance in 365 that He was actually born on December 25th.
2. We teach that God sending His Son to earth on a mission to rescue us from Satan is an event worth celebrating any day of the year.
3. We teach that the Catholic church actually set the date for Christmas in 364 AD in an attempt to encourage pagan converts to give up their sinful winter solstice celebrations and focus on Jesus instead.
4. We teach that the wise men saw a special star and went to Jerusalem in search of a king. They didn't follow a star to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:2,7).
5. We teach that the wise men (not sure how many) *did* follow the star from Jerusalem to Bethlehem (Matt. 2:9,10).
6. We teach that shepherds visited shortly after Jesus was born (Luke 2:15,16), but the wise men didn't arrive until much later when Jesus was in a house and possibly 2 years old (Matt. 2:11,16).
7. We teach that sharing the Good News of Jesus is the best gift we could give anyone during the Christmas season (or any other time of year).
8. We teach that the Christmas holiday is celebrated around the world for a number of different reasons and in a number of different ways. We don't have to agree with all of their practices, but it is helpful to understand what others are doing.
9. We teach that many of the secular Christmas traditions were developed in an attempt to teach about Jesus (lights, gifts, candy canes, evergreen trees, St. Nicholas, etc.)

HOW TEACHERS SHOULD HANDLE LESSONS ON THE BIRTH OF JESUS

While we believe that teaching the birth of Jesus in December provides an ideal "teachable moment" for students, we would *never* encourage teachers to violate their sincerely held beliefs on this topic. Any teacher who is still uncomfortable teaching the birth of Jesus in December can always simply swap units of study. Begin December with Unit 2 lessons, go on to Unit 3 in January, and then come back and teach Unit 1 in February when Christmas has passed.

Because our spring quarter materials (March, April, May) are always available for teachers in mid-January, a congregation could go ahead and teach those materials in February, saving the study of the birth of Jesus for even later in the year. Our intent is to give teachers the flexibility to teach the topic when they feel it is most appropriate.