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2 **Importance of Christmas**

- God created man to be perfect so that man could fellowship with God
- But man sinned by violating God's commandments and evil entered the world
- This separated man from fellowship with God
- But God loved the world and so He planned for man's redemption.

3 **Importance of Christmas (2)**

- God is a Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is one God but in 3 persons (similar to how H₂O is one substance but has 3 forms)
- God the Son took on human flesh at the first Christmas when Jesus was born in Bethlehem
- Because man needed to be reconciled to God, we needed a mediator who was both God and man to bridge the gap.

4 **Importance of Christmas (3)**

- Jesus is the only man to have ever lived a life free from sin, precisely because He was both God and man. As God, He was incapable of sin, but as man, He could experience temptation and suffering.
- Jesus died on the cross in a criminal's death to take the punishment for our sins
- He rose again the third day and was seen by over 500 people at one time before He returned to heaven.

5 **Importance of Christmas (4)**

- God wanted mankind to that Jesus is our Savior, so He:
 - Highlighted His birth by fulfilling precise prophecies that the Jewish people should have known
 - Resurrected Jesus to prove that His sacrifice was complete and that He reconciled man to God
- But we must receive that reconciliation.

6 **John 1:12**

- *But as many as received him [Jesus Christ]—to those who believe in his name—he gave to them authority to become children of God (John 1:12, LEB)*
- The best you can do will never impress a perfectly holy God
- There is only one way to heaven

7 **How to spend eternity with God**

- Admit that you are a sinner
- Believe
 - Jesus is the Son of God
 - He died to pay the penalty for your sins
 - He rose again
- Ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins
- Receive Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior
 - Be willing to profess your belief in Jesus

8 **What do we know about Christmas?**

9 **The Typical Nativity Story**

- 1 • Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem
 - Mary rides a donkey
 - There is no room in any of the inns
 - Finally some innkeeper offers them a stable in which Jesus is born
 - Wise men come to manger
- 2 • True.
 - No mention is made in Scripture of Mary riding a donkey. She may have had to walk.
 - No mention of an innkeeper offering a stable in Scripture
 - Wrong – Wise men came to a house!

10 **So much of what we know...**

"It isn't so much that liberals are ignorant. It's just that they know so many things that aren't so."

-- Ronald Reagan

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The Wonder of the Manger

12 **Luke 2:7**

- *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*
 - So Christ was born in a manger.
 - But why must we assume the manger was in the city? Or why do we assume the innkeeper offered them room?
 - Tradition.

13 **Travel back to Genesis 35**

- *And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel. 16 ¶ And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. 17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. 18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. 19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. 20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. 21 ¶ And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder.*

14 **The names of Benjamin**

- 1 • Child was given two names
 - Ben-oni = *son of my sorrow* or *son of sorrows*
 - Benjamin = *son of my right hand* (at the right hand was a position of power)
- 2 • Isaiah 53 – Christ called *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*
 - Jesus pictured at the right hand of God
 - Acts 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3,13; Hebrews 8:1, 10:12, 12:2

15 **The place of Benjamin's birth**

- 1 • *And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: ...*
 - Ephrath = “fruitfulness”
 - Changed later to “Ephrathah” = “The Lord’s Fruitfulness”
- 2 • Bethlehem = “house of bread”
 - 2 Bethlehems near Jerusalem, but only 1 Bethlehem-Ephrathah
 - *The Bread from the Lord’s Fruitfulness*
 - “I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:33,35,48)

16 **Events during Benjamin's birth**

- 1 • Rachel died and was buried near Bethlehem
 - Israel mourned her one mile away near the tower of Eder (literally “Migdal-Edar”) after burying Rachel
 - Rachel means “little (ewe) lamb”
- 2 • Jews regarded Bethlehem as a holy place linked with death
 - Jesus “born to die”
 - Proverbs 18:10 -- *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*
 - Jesus was the lamb of God

17 **Bethlehem Ephrathah**

- A branch of Caleb’s family settled there, and Caleb’s son Salma was known as “the father of Bethlehem” (1 Chronicles 2:51).
- Bethlehem was the home of a young Levite who served as priest to Micah (Judges 17:8), and of Boaz, Ruth, Obed, and Jesse, the Bethlehemite, David’s father (Ruth 4:11, 17; 1 Samuel 16:1, 4).

18 **Bethlehem Ephrathah**

- Bethlehem was the birthplace of David (1 Samuel 17:12) and the home of one of David’s mighty men, Elhanan (2 Samuel 23:24; 1 Chronicles 11:26).
- It was the scene of a daring exploit by three of David’s warriors; they broke through the cordon of Philistine marauders occupying Bethlehem to bring David water from the well (or cistern) “near the city gate” of his hometown (2 Samuel 23:14–17)

19 **Micah 5:2**

- *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you one will go out for me, to be ruler in Israel; and his origins are from of old, from ancient days.* (Micah 5:2, LEB)
- *But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* (Micah 5:2, KJV 1900)
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20 **No room in the inn**

Leviticus 15:19-23 *And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall*

be put apart seven days: and whosoever touches her shall be unclean until the even. And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sits upon shall be unclean. And whosoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. And whosoever touches any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. And if it be on her bed, or on any thing whereon she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until the even.

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21 **No room in the inn (2)**

- A woman who had a child automatically became ceremonially unclean.
 - If a woman had a child in a common living area, anyone who shared that area was also ceremonially unclean and would have to be set apart for 7 days and then be ritually washed before they could worship again.
- For this reason, no one wanted an about-to-give-birth woman as a visitor. A woman like this knew she couldn't get a hotel room!

22 **Migdal-Eder**

- Migdal = "tower" Eder="flock"
 - A "tower" was a high hill that gave a good view of surrounding territory
 - Often, someone later built a fortress or lookout tower on top of the hill.

23 **Significance of Migdal-Edar**

- Means *tower of the flock*
 - Large hill there used by shepherds to watch the sheep
 - Only Passover lambs raised here (like Rachel, they were to die; had to be perfect)
 - Passover lambs
 - Came through the sheep gate into Jerusalem – same gate through which Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey just before His death
 - Grazed on special land on which NO unclean animals were allowed

24 **Proverbs 18:10**

- *The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*
- Jesus is the tower (our Migdal) for all of us in the flock (Eder). Only in Him are we safe!

25 **Migdal-Eder**

- 720 sacrificial lambs were required every year (2/day for 360 days)
- Raised in Bethlehem
 - So if you said "Bethlehem" and "lamb," everyone knew you were talking about sacrificial lambs.
- Lambs raised 1000+ paces outside of town; those destined for sacrifice kept closer.

26 **The manger at Migdal-Edar**

- Ceremonially clean used only for Passover lambs
- No other animals allowed
- Kept clean at all times
- Anointed with oil by priests on regular basis
- Stable used only during inclement weather, or when ewes were giving birth; almost always

empty and clean

27 **Jewish Targum**

- Jews have the right location; wrong timing.
- Targum Yonatan, cited by Rabbi Munk, paraphrases Genesis 35:23 and Micah 4:8, *He spread his tent beyond Migdal Eder, the place where King Messiah will reveal Himself at the end of days.*
 - The *targumim* were spoken paraphrases, explanations, and expansions of the Jewish scriptures that a Rabbi would give in the common language of the listener.
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28 **Swaddling cloths**

- Sacrificial lambs had to be spotless, without blemish and without scars.
- Once Passover lambs were birthed:
 - the priestly shepherds would routinely place the lambs in the hewn depression of a limestone rock known as a "manger"

29 **Swaddling cloths (2)**

- The shepherds would then wrap the newborn lambs in swaddling clothes, preventing them from thrashing about and harming themselves "until they had calmed down" so they could be inspected for the quality of being "without spot or blemish"
 - Source: *Mishnah*. the Jewish oral tradition & Alfred Edersheim, the Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah

30 **Micah 4:8**

And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

- "Tower of the flock" = Migdal-Edar
- "strong hold of the daughter of Zion" = high hill outside Bethlehem at Migdal-Edar
- "first dominion" = first rule and dominion of God; accompanied by the coming of God's kingdom

31 **The real nativity story**

- Caesar Augustus (literally *the supreme one*) decrees a census and tax
 - Joseph is forced to return to his hometown of Bethlehem; Mary is not required to go but accompanies him so she can be with him during the birth of the child.
 - There is no room in the inn – especially since one about to give birth would make everyone nearby ceremonially unclean.
 - Joseph has been told by an angel that this child is the Son of God (Matthew 1:20-23).

32 **Matthew 1:20-23**

- *But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*

33 **The real nativity story (2)**

- Joseph's family was from Bethlehem, so he would have known the prophetic significance of Micah 4:8 – that the Messiah would be proclaimed from Migdal-Edar.
- He knew there was a sheltered, clean, seldom-used manger there which could afford some privacy.

34 **The real nativity story (3)**

- Finding it empty, Mary gives birth to the ultimate Passover Lamb
 - The manger was dedicated for use in raising Passover lambs which were killed as a sign or type of the true Lamb of God.
 - Jesus--the Passover Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world--was born in a ceremonially clean stable as God sovereignly directed a perfectly executed plan to bring about our salvation.

35 **Christ the Passover Lamb**

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: (1 Corinthians 5:7, KJV 1900)

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36 **What was Passover?**

- In Exodus, we read how the Jews were slaves to the Egyptians
- The Egyptian Pharaoh – who wore the image of a serpent on his crown – would not let Israel be free.
 - The serpent is a picture of the devil
- God sent plagues upon the Egyptian people but Pharaoh refused to let the Jewish people leave

37 **What was Passover? (2)**

- The last plague sent from God upon the Egyptians was the death of the firstborn
- God told the Jews that if they wanted to be free from Pharaoh and avoid the death of their firstborn, they needed to kill a perfect lamb and spread its blood over the doorposts of their house.
- People inside the house were to eat the cooked lamb and be ready to leave Egypt

38 **What was Passover? (3)**

- The Jews obeyed God.
 - They found a lamb without blemish
 - They killed the perfect lamb and shed its blood and put the blood on the doorposts of their house
 - They ate the lamb
 - When they left Egypt that night, the lamb was inside of them
 - If they could not eat the whole lamb, they were to invite others to join them in the meal.

39 **What was Passover? (4)**

- The Jews were commanded to annually celebrate this meal of Passover to remember the night that the angel of death "passed over" their house and did not touch their firstborn.

40 **What was Passover? (5)**

- All of that was a picture pointing to Christ.
- Jesus was a perfect sacrificial lamb for us.
 - No one could find fault in Him, so His accusers had to make up lies about Him in order to convict Him.
 - He died for us.
 - His blood covers our sins.
 - We receive Him into ourselves and this is how we leave slavery to the serpent Satan.
 - We are to share Christ with others.

41 **Luke 2:8-20**

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

42 **Luke 2:8-20 (continued)**

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, Good will toward men.

43 **Luke 2:8-20 (continued)**

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger....

44 **The real nativity story (4)**

- An angelic host proclaims to shepherds in the same country (Luke 2:8-20) the birth of the Christ child.
 - These shepherds tended the Passover lambs.
- They came with haste (Luke 2:16) to see the child in a manger.
 - They did not hunt from inn to inn.
 - They went straight to the only manger in the same country they knew which was holy and set apart to God.

45 **Mangers made of stone**

- Israelis made mangers out of stone instead of wood
 - Wood too precious; stone plenteous
 - Wood would decay too quickly; stone endures
 - Wood could not be cleansed easily; stone washes better
- Jesus is our Rock, our Fortress, our High Tower (all built from rock)

46 **The manger -- recap**

- Jesus
 - The Bread of Life (John 6:35) born in the "House of Bread of the Lord's Fruitfulness"

- Our Passover Lamb born in:
 - Manger dedicated to Passover lambs and kept ceremonially clean
 - A place associated with death because He was born to die
- Shepherds tending Passover lambs rush to manger at Migdal-Edar (there was no star to guide them)