

## Come, Follow Me: December 21 – 27

### Christmas

#### “He Shall Come into the World to Redeem His People”

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We turn to the Bible at Christmas for the story of Christ’s birth, especially to Luke 2, which is the basis for our home-acted nativity plays. But the Book of Mormon also teaches us a lot about Christmas, the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ.



*"Silent Night" by Liz Lemon Swindle via Repartee Gallery*

Obvious references to Christ are missing (removed) from the Old Testament we have today, but Lehi’s family, who left Jerusalem around 600 B.C., were immediately taught by God that salvation comes through Christ. Christ is everywhere in the Book of Mormon Old Testament era, and the entire record pivots upon His birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and visit to the Book of Mormon peoples. This Christmas, as you enact Luke 2 in your family room, try enacting the Book of Mormon account alongside it. Jesus loves His children, and although half a world away, these children of Israel were included in Christ’s mortal and immortal story.

**Christ’s birth was foretold by Book of Mormon prophets:**

Read [1 Nephi 11:13–23](#). What did Nephi see? How does this vision support the biblical story? What are the things that Nephi needed to learn about Christ's coming? What did he need to teach his people? Look at verse 17. How much did Nephi know about Christ's mission before he saw this vision? What is the condescension of God? How does it benefit us?

Read [Helaman 14:1–13](#). While Nephi lived 600 years before Christ was born, Samuel the Lamanite prophesied to the wicked Nephites just 5 years before Christ's birth. What did Samuel say would be the signs of Christ's birth? Why was light the sign of Jesus' birth?

Read [3 Nephi 1:4–22](#). In verse 4, we see that there were many signs and wonders among the people to prepare them for the birth of Christ. In verse 6, we see that unbelievers thought the time had come and gone without the miracles the faithful had expected. How did they act? Look at verse 7. They evilly rejoiced over the failure of people's faith, so much so, that there was a great uproar throughout the land. Does that remind you of anything today in your own culture? Do people rejoice when religious belief seems to fail believers?

In these verses we see Christ's visit to console Nephi and then the coming of the promised signs. At that moment, EVERYONE became a believer! But then look at verse 22. What did Satan try to do?

From this point, the Nephites began to reckon their time from the birth of Christ. They established a new calendar. This year on our calendar is 2020. It may not be exactly correct, but when was year 0? Why is our calendar based on the year of Christ's birth? What does B.C. mean? What does A.D. mean? Why were the terms and [initials B.C.E. and C.E. invented?](#)

In the ensuing years, the Nephites became more and more wicked. In 3 Nephi 2, we see that they discounted the miracles and signs they had seen:

1 And it came to pass that thus passed away the ninety and fifth year also, and the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven, insomuch that they began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen—

2 Imagining up some vain thing in their hearts, that it was wrought by men and by the power of the devil, to lead away and deceive the hearts of the people; and thus did Satan get possession of the hearts of the people again, insomuch that he did blind their eyes and lead them away to believe that the doctrine of Christ was a foolish and a vain thing.

3 And it came to pass that the people began to wax strong in wickedness and abominations; and they did not believe that there should be any more signs or wonders given; and Satan

did go about, leading away the hearts of the people, tempting them and causing them that they should do great wickedness in the land.

Many people today who lose their testimonies and leave the Church have had remarkable spiritual experiences and have witnessed miracles in their lives. How do they lay those aside? Why does the Lord keep telling us to remember Him?

Before the signs of Christ's crucifixion were given, the government fell and the people had separated into tribes. The wicked secret combinations of the Gadianton robbers were shared among them. Many of the people were extremely wicked.

How can remembering Christ at Christmas help us to keep our testimonies and thrive in our faith?

### The real gifts of Christmas:

Go back to last week's lesson where we discussed spiritual gifts, the gifts we bring with us into mortality, and the gifts we receive if we turn to God during times of trial. Then read the following from President Thomas S. Monson:

"I reflect on the contrasts of Christmas. The extravagant gifts, expensively packaged and professionally wrapped, reach their zenith in the famed commercial catalogs carrying the headline 'For the person who has everything.' In one such reading I observed a four-thousand-square-foot home wrapped with a gigantic ribbon and comparable greeting card which said, 'Merry Christmas.' Other items included diamond-studded clubs for the golfer, a Caribbean cruise for the traveler, and a luxury trip to the Swiss Alps for the adventurer. Such seemed to fit the theme of a Christmas cartoon which showed the Three Wise Men traveling to Bethlehem with gift boxes on their camels. One says, 'Mark my words, Balthazar, we're starting something with these gifts that's going to get way out of hand!' ...

"For a few moments, may we set aside the catalogs of Christmas, with their gifts of exotic description. Let's even turn from the flowers for Mother, the special tie for Father, the cute doll, the train that whistles, the long-awaited bicycle ... and direct our thoughts to those God-given gifts that endure. I have chosen from a long list just four: ...

"First, **the gift of birth**. It has been universally bestowed on each of us. Ours was the divine privilege to depart our heavenly home to tabernacle in the flesh and to demonstrate by our lives our worthiness and qualifications to one day return to Him, precious loved ones, and a kingdom called *celestial*. ... Ours is the responsibility to show our gratitude by the actions of our lives. ...

“Second, **the gift of peace**. In the raucous world in which we live, the din of traffic, the blaring commercials of the media, and the sheer demands placed on our time—to say nothing of the problems of the world—cause headache, inflict pain, and sap our strength to cope. ... “He who was burdened with sorrow and acquainted with grief speaks to every troubled heart and bestows the gift of peace. ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid’ ([John 14:27](#)). ...

“Third, **the gift of love**. ‘Master, which is the great commandment in the law?’ queried the lawyer who spoke to Jesus. Came the prompt reply: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ ([Matthew 22:36–39](#)). ...

“Fourth, **the gift of life**—even immortality. Our Heavenly Father’s plan contains the ultimate expressions of true love. All that we hold dear, even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies, would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the most cherished thoughts and writings in this world is the divine statement of truth: ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ ([John 3:16](#))” (“[Gifts](#),” *Ensign*, May 1993, 59–62).

A BYU professor years ago was taking a brisk walk in the snowy weather just before Christmas. He had a spring in his step and joy in his heart as he remembered these gifts and rejoiced over them. He saw a woman walking toward him and he cheerfully said to her, “Isn’t this wonderful? The season of love and gratitude for our Savior, Jesus Christ!” The woman looked at him with scorn. She was obviously in no mood to rejoice. Coldly, she replied. “Why? What has He ever done for me?” Then she walked on in despair.

These are hard times, but not the hardest of times. How can we find joy in the refrain—PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN?