



Do Christian celebrations and traditions help Christians understand who Jesus was and why he was born?

Christmas Customs

There are lots of different ways that people celebrate Christmas and Advent:

- Christmas trees **symbolise** the everlasting life of God;
- Mistletoe is a **symbol** of peace and joy and is used to show friendship and goodwill;
- **Advent** calendars, wreaths and candles are different ways of counting down to Jesus' birthday;
- Christmas **gospels** symbolise the importance of Jesus and the **gospel**.

'The Nativity' Story

The Christmas Story is also called 'The **Nativity**'. In this story, an angel appeared to Mary and told her that she was going to have a baby and that he would be the Son of God and he would be called Jesus. While Mary was pregnant, a census took place and she and Joseph (her husband) had to travel to Bethlehem - their town of birth.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, there was no room at any inns for them to stay in but they were allowed to stay in a stable. This is where Jesus was born. Angels told shepherds on a hillside that the Son of God had been born so they went to visit him in Bethlehem. Wise men spotted a bright star in the sky and knew this meant a king had been born so they went to visit with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. King Herod heard that a new king had been born from the wise men and ordered that all the baby boys in the area be killed. An angel appeared in a dream to Joseph and Mary and warned them so they travelled to Egypt with baby Jesus and were safe.



meaningful	Having meaning behind it - serious, important, or worthwhile
traditions	A system of beliefs or behaviours passed down within a group of people with special significance with origins in the past
incarnation	Christian belief in Jesus being God becoming a human; God is fully human and fully divine
symbols	A mark, sign or word that represents an object or idea e.g. a dove represents the Holy Spirit
significant	having much importance
New Testament	Part of the Bible that was written after Jesus lived on Earth and introduces us to him, his birth, life and how he died to save humans on earth from their sins. It tells stories about all the miracles that Jesus performed, the people he helped and what he taught everyone about God.
Gospels	the record of Christ's life and teachings in the first four books of the New Testament (part of the Bible).
Disciples	Ordinary men, who followed God and who Jesus chose as his followers or disciples: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Bethlehem	an ancient town in the Middle East. It is important to Christians, who believe it is where Jesus Christ was born.
consubstantial	made of the same substance – like the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
nativity	the story of the birth of Jesus Christ

Incarnation and Paradoxes

Incarnation is an important idea in Christianity. It is all about how God became human in the form of Jesus and suffered as a human can do. Christians believe that God is an all-powerful creator and a pain bearer and that through his **incarnation** as Jesus, he was not a 'big giant in the sky', but a regular human with qualities found in all of us. God being an all-powerful creator and a vulnerable human is a **paradox**.

The 'True Meaning of Christmas'

Christians celebrate **Christmas** each year. They believe that the 'True Meaning of **Christmas**' involves showing **gratitude** to God for what he did and remembering the birth of Jesus Christ, by worshipping him, giving gifts and thinking of the poor and less fortunate.

Christmas cards can be **secular** or Christian. Christian cards show the true meaning of **Christmas** by displaying important images from the **Christmas** story to remind Christians about why they celebrate **Christmas**.

Christmas carols often celebrate different parts of the birth story of Jesus. However, some are more focused on traditions associated with **Christmas** and are sung as general celebrations of the **Christmas** festival.