

1. THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

The birth of Jesus Christ as a human baby, changed the course of human and world history. The birth of a Son was prophesied since Gen.3:15. Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would become pregnant and give birth to a Son, who was to be called Immanuel, God with us (Isa.7:14). He also prophesied that a Child would be born who would govern the whole earth. He would be called the Prince of Peace, and He would inherit the throne of David (Isa.9:5,6). Daniel saw a vision of a Son of Man (Adam) receiving the government of all nations from God (Dan.7:13).

Then the prophecy came true. A virgin became pregnant and gave birth to a Son. God's signature was all over it! The angel Gabriel said to Mary that He would be called the Son of the Most High God and was to be called Jesus. At his birth, a star appeared to wise men in the East (Iran). They remembered a prophecy of Balaam that a star and a sceptre would arise among Jacob's descendants (Num.24:17). An Imperial order caused Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem. Soon after their arrival, Jesus was born. A multitude of angels appeared to shepherds in the field outside Bethlehem, announcing the birth of their Messiah. Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to God. While they were in the temple, the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon and Anna the identity of Jesus as Messiah. Two years later the wise men from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked to see the king of the Jews that was born. King Herod was frightened. The chief priests directed the wise men to Bethlehem and the star lead them directly to where Jesus was. They worshipped Him and gave Him gold, incense, and myrrh. An angel warned Joseph in a dream and the little family fled to Egypt. Herod murdered all the boys aged two years and under in Bethlehem and district. Herod died. An angel directed Joseph to return to Israel. They settled in Nazareth.

Mary did not tell anyone about the circumstances of Jesus' birth. It was only after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the disciples connected the prophetic words of the Old Testament with the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and that her testimony was heard.

2. A NEW COVENANT FEAST

Most of the early followers of Jesus were of the Jewish faith. The disciples were the first to believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Along with them there were other believers who experienced the resurrection. However, it was only after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost that the disciples and other believers openly recognized and preached Jesus as Messiah (Acts 2:36).

The Messianic Jews were used to the Jewish feasts that were celebrated three times a year in Jerusalem. The main element of these feasts were the sacrifices that had to be offered and eaten. Jews had to take their tithes and first fruits of all their cattle and livestock, and their crops, to Jerusalem, to offer it and eat it there. Most of the feasts had joint festive meals. Only Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, was a day of fasting. The disciples participated in the feasts with Jesus, especially the last feast, the Passover, which they celebrated with Him in the upper room in Jerusalem.

That night changed everything for them. After the meal, which included the Passover lamb, Jesus took bread and said: This is My Body, take it and eat it in remembrance of Me (Luke 22:19). He also took a cup of wine and said: Drink from it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament (New

Covenant) in My blood which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sin (Luke 22:20; Matt. 26:28).

This action and words of Jesus announced a new era. It heralded the transition from the Old Covenant, and the old way of keeping the feasts, to the New Covenant. Jesus instituted a New Feast. Not only was there a New Covenant, but there was also a New High Priest, according to another order. No longer according to the order of Aaron, but now of the order of Melchizedek. The New Covenant was based on better promises (Heb.7:22; 8:6). There was a better sacrifice that testified of better things (Heb.7:27; Heb.9:11-14; 24-28; Heb.10:5-14). The sacrifice of Jesus did away with all other sacrifices that were offered during the festivals and daily in the temple. The sin was forgiven, and no other sacrifice for sin was needed anymore (Heb.10:18).

We read in Acts 2:46 how the first church in Jerusalem celebrated Jesus' institution of the New Covenant meal. It did not have a name. It was simply called the Breaking of the Bread (Acts 2:46; Acts 2:7), the Cup of the Lord (1Cor.11:27), the Lord's Supper (1Cor.11:20), the Common Meal (Acts 2:42,26; Acts 20:7; 1Cor.11:21), and the Table of the Lord (1Cor.10:21). Jesus said that they should eat it as often as possible (1Cor.11:25,26). The first church in Acts did this daily (Acts 2:46). Some gatherings were on the first day of the week, Sunday (Acts 20:7). The New Covenant fellowship meal was not intended for the Sabbath only nor for specific feasts only a few times per year. The use of the Bread and Wine was accompanied by a delicious meal, and it was focused on the fellowship of the believers with each other, with Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit and with God the Father. During these gatherings they prayed together, sang, taught, and encouraged each other.

3. A NEW CULTURE

The focus of the gospel in the Book of Acts was on the death and resurrection of Jesus, His ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. However, the gospel about Jesus as Messiah, was not only intended for the Jews. Very quickly people from heathen nations heard the message that God sent His Son to die also for their sins, and they accepted it with joy. Something greater than the expansion of Judaism was going on here. Devoted religious Jews were extremely upset that the Messianic Jews fellowshiped with Gentiles and ate with them. When Gentiles became followers of Jesus, the Jews wanted the new believers from the Gentile nations to observe all the Jewish customs. However, the Holy Spirit decided otherwise (Acts 15:28), and through His guidance there was a big change in the way of thinking about cultural traditions. The Gentiles had to be delivered from their pagan cultural background and they had to cease worshiping their pagan gods. The Messianic Jews had to make a transition from the Old Covenant that YHVH had with them as the people of Israel, to a New Covenant, where the followers of Jesus were no longer identified by their ethnicity and cultural background. The New Covenant required undivided loyalty to Jesus as Lord, as well as a unity and brotherhood between all believers from both the pagan nations and the Jews. The brotherhood was elevated above Jewish ethnicity and culture. It was difficult for both groups. It is still difficult today.

The decision to follow Jesus as their Messiah, exposed the first believers to persecution, loss of income, theft of possessions, and loss of life. Discipleship had a cost to pay. Many believers could not do it. But there were those who were sold out to Jesus Christ as their Lord. They believed that He was their Guide and Saviour, and that cost was worth it to obtain the promise of eternal life. The persecution was initially from within the Jewish ranks, by dedicated, law-abiding Jews who

believed that they were doing God a favour by eradicating the new Messianic sect. Paul was one of the devout Pharisees who believed this.

Paul's conversion ushered in another new era. The Church expanded to Europe, North Africa, Syria, Asia (Turkey) and Assyria (Iraq and Iran). Luke told the story of the Church in Europe (Greece, Rome and Turkey) in the Book of Acts. Paul wrote letters to the Gentile Jesus followers and encouraged them to faithfully hold on to their confession of Jesus as their Saviour, until the end. The end, according to Peter, James, John, Judas, and Paul, was the second coming of Christ, and finally, a new heaven and earth for all who have partaken of eternal life.

There were still many Jews who came to faith in Jesus, but the focus of Acts shifted to the conversion of people from paganism (Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and other religions, and cultures). Slowly the persecution of the Church changed. Now it was no longer so much the Jews who persecuted and hated the Christians, but the Gentiles of these nations persecuted Christians. Why was that? Because the Christians of the first three centuries believed that they could no longer participate in any idolatrous service. They no longer ate the sacrificial meat in the idol temples. They no longer visited the temple prostitutes. They no longer bought idols and placed them as altars in their homes. They refused to honour the emperor as the representative of the Roman sun god. This greatly affected the economy of these nations. Pagan temples and priests lost income. The idols began to lose their appeal. The emperor lost his influence over his followers. For Christians, Jesus was now their Head. He was their King. They refused to bow the knee to any other god or man. They had to pay a heavy price for that. Some were burned alive, others were torn apart on torture benches, still others were sentenced to prison. Many were beheaded. Even more died in the arenas, eaten by wild animals or victims of the cruel blood sports of those days.

Despite all this opposition, the Church grew tremendously. The Church's moral and ethical standards, their love for one another, and their fearless loyalty to Jesus Christ, resulted in the downfall of Roman Empire and the Roman pagan pantheon by the 3rd century AD.

4. GENTILES AT THE LORD'S TABLE

The Feast of the Lord's Supper was so popular among Christians that the Gentiles noticed that something exceptional was going on here. Christians were accused of being cannibals, because they said that they ate the Body of Jesus Christ and drank His blood, and this became one of the reasons for persecution.

From Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost to Paul's proclamation of the gospel and his letters to the congregations, the Apostles taught new believers that Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of the Old Covenant and of all the promises of God. He was the Lamb of God. His blood was the atonement. He was the High Priest of the New Covenant. There was a new temple. The Church was the temple, not a Church building, but the bodies of Christians who were members of Christ's Body. And this Body was the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor.3:6, 6:19; 2Cor.6:16; Eph.2:21,22; 1Pet.2:5). The New Covenant meal was celebrated as a fulfilment of the Passover. It was celebrated as a new First Fruits festival, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was also celebrated on Pentecost to commemorate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Even the Sabbath rest took on a new meaning. Every day was Sabbath. The Book of Hebrews called it TODAY (Heb.4).

The focus of the New Covenant believers, the followers of Jesus, was on Jesus Christ. Any gathering was a feast at which the New Covenant meal was enjoyed. Every meeting was a festive

gathering with praise and fellowship. This strengthened their unity. This made them brothers and sisters from each other, all children of God. There were no ethnic distinctions, no more Jew or Greek. There were no class distinctions, no more slave or freeman, even no more male or female. All were one, all were united with Christ.

5. ASCENSION AND THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

The church instituted new feasts that were not the fulfilment of Jewish Feasts. The first of these feasts was Ascension Day. The Ascension of Jesus Christ, His sitting at the right hand of the Father, and the expectation of His second coming, was a tremendous focus of the early church. So was the celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The early church did not celebrate the birth of Jesus or Christmas. They celebrated the Incarnation of Jesus. The conception in Mary by the Holy Spirit. No one knew on which day Jesus was born, and no one thought of celebrating a birthday of Jesus. Birthdays were not celebrated that much in the Bible. The two birthdays that are mentioned in the Bible did not have positive connotations: The birthday of King Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther which ended with the dethronement of Queen Vashti, and birthday of King Herod that led to the beheading of John the Baptist.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ was a major focus in the early church. Jesus was the Word that became flesh (John 1:14). He was Emmanuel, God with us (Matt.1:23, Isa.7:14). He was the Son of God (Luk.3:22; Luk.1:32,35; Jn.3:18; Rom.1:4; Heb.1:4,6). He was the Son of Man, a descendant of Adam. He was the Son of David, with the right to be a Successor to the Throne. He was also the Seed of the Woman (Gen.3:15). He was the Messiah. No one knew exactly when the conception of Jesus took place. The only indication of the timing was that the angel Gabriel visited the virgin Mary approximately six months after Zechariah served in the temple, and that Jesus was born in the year when Emperor Augustus issued an order. The conception and birth of Jesus was at a divine time called THE FULLNESS OF TIME (Gal.4:4). It was at exactly the right time, the right place, and the right day. It's just that the real day never came up in the early church. Even the historian Luke, and the gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and John, did not record the specific day of His birth.

6. 25 DECEMBER AND CHRISTMAS

By the 2nd century AD, the Incarnation of Jesus was celebrated in the spring of the northern hemisphere, in March, just before Easter. A Christian historian of the 2nd century AD calculated that if the conception of Jesus took place in March (as the Church celebrated it), then His birth must have been in December. However, this view was not generally accepted in the Church of those centuries. In the 3rd century after Christ, when the Church was at its strongest, the pagan Roman Empire, as always, celebrated the annual re-birth of the invincible sun god (Sol Invictus), on the 25th of December. This was followed by a festival called Saturnalia, which commemorated the return of longer days after the cold winter (winter solstice). It was also the birthday of an Indo-European god, Mithras, the god of light who was worshiped in India and brought to Europe by Roman soldiers. It was believed that Mithras' birth was next to a sacred river, under a sacred tree.

In the year 336 AD, Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. It was thought that Christianity would become a more acceptable religion for the people, if they would celebrate Jesus' birth on the same date as was already a Roman holy day on their calendar, December 25. Thus Christmas was born.

The anniversary of the birth of Jesus was not a teaching of the Apostles and the early church, and it was therefore not a decision based on the Bible. Nor was it a fulfilment of an Old Covenant festival. It was not until the 9th century after Christ that the celebration of Christmas (Christ-mass – the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communion) was generally accepted by the Church and celebrated annually by Christians. The first celebrations of Christmas were a service in the Church with communion, the singing of songs about Christ's birth and the reading of the gospel of Luke about the events before, during and after the birth of Jesus.

7. CHRISTMAS TREES

Where does the use of a Christmas tree come from?

A Christmas tree is a tree that is decorated with lights (originally candles), and gold and silver ornaments. There is one biblical reference to such a tree, and it has nothing to do with Jesus' birth, but everything to do with the worship of idols which were widely worshiped in almost all early civilizations of the Middle East and which also became popular in Israel at the time of the prophet Jeremiah. This practice of decorating trees and making idols out of wood, stone and gold is specifically mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah, with the dire warning that it makes YHVH, the God of Israel, the King of the nations, furiously angry!

Jeremiah 10:1-10 (NKJV) Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. [2] Thus says the LORD: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them. [3] For the customs of the peoples are futile; For one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. [4] They decorate it with silver and gold; They fasten it with nails and hammers So that it will not topple. [5] They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; They must be carried, because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good." [6] Inasmuch as there is none like You, O LORD (You are great, and Your name is great in might), [7] Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. [8] But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine. [9] Silver is beaten into plates; It is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the craftsman And of the hands of the metalsmith; Blue and purple are their clothing; They are all the work of skilful men. [10] But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.

The veneration of the tree has its origins in the Garden of Eden. The Serpent seduced Eve into believing that the Creator God was withholding the knowledge of good and evil from man, because this knowledge would make man just like God, and if they ate of it, then their eyes would be opened. Eve looked at the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and saw that it was beautiful and desirable, and she wanted that knowledge. She and Adam ate some of the fruit. It had exactly the opposite effect on them that the Serpent had promised. Their eyes were indeed opened, and they saw that they were naked (Gen.3). But their spiritual eyes were blinded, and they lost the knowledge of God as Creator.

Romans 1:25 (NKJV) who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NKJV) whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

The two Trees mentioned in the Garden of Eden are used in all the idolatry of Assyria and Babylonia. People longed for the Tree of Life, but they could not find it. God Himself banished the people from the Garden of Eden, and He placed cherubs (living creatures) and a flaming sword at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, precisely so that man would not manage to eat from the Tree of Life while they were still in a fallen sinful state.

Genesis 3:22 (NKJV) Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—

The Tree of Life is promised to believers who have faith in Jesus Christ, and persevere in that faith to the end, and do not leave their first love to fall back into their pagan idolatry of the past (Rev.2:7).

Where did our modern Christmas tree come from?

The custom of honouring trees spread to all nations, including Europe. In almost all European nations, from Sweden to Rome, trees were revered as sacred. Most pagan religious rituals of Europe took place in forests. In Germany the oak tree was the sacred tree of Thor, the god of war and thunder. In Rome and Greece, the oak was the sacred tree of Zeus and Jupiter. One of the remnants of tree worship is the May pole, where a tree is cut down, transported to a village, and then celebrated with dancing and debauchery around the tree. Trees were associated with death and rebirth.

In ancient pagan beliefs, non-deciduous trees were believed to have special power because they remained green throughout the year, especially in winter. Tree branches were cut and brought into homes to announce the rebirth of the sun god on the shortest day of winter (winter solstice, December 21 or 22). In winter, the sun god became sick and weak, but the green trees announced the promise of the return of the sun in summer. The green tree branches in the houses brought hope that the sun god would soon return.

The modern decorated Christmas tree has its origins in Germany. In the 16th century, German Christians brought tree branches into their homes, decorated them with ornaments and thus revived the pagan custom of bringing tree branches into the house into a new tradition. There is no biblical reason for this. German immigrants brought the Christmas tree tradition to America. The Church in America initially wanted nothing to do with this pagan custom. Oliver Cromwell, and other Puritans, preached earnestly against the pagan use of decorated trees and singing of Christmas carols. He said that these traditions make a mockery of the seriousness of the birth of Jesus. The celebration of Christmas was even banned until the German immigrants undermined the authority of the Puritans.

In the 19th century this tradition spread to almost all countries and today it is generally accepted by most Christians as belonging to Christmas. The Christmas tree has no relation to anything related to Jesus' birth, His life, death, or resurrection, and is nowhere indicated by the Apostles and Prophets in the Bible as permissible. The sad truth is that the church is the spreader of the unbiblical tradition of Christmas on December 25 and the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree is commercially marketed and used by unbelievers to celebrate Christmas Day, without Jesus Christ ever being known or mentioned by them. What actually happens is that the bright lights of the

Christmas tree blind the minds of the world so that they cannot see the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

8. SANTA CLAUS / FATHER CHRISTMAS

The modern Santa Claus (the fat old man with the beard and red clothes) is a fairy-tale character of a person who lives at the North Pole and flies through the air with his sleigh and deer and distributes gifts on Christmas Eve. It is a mixture of the tradition of St Nicholas, the Dutch character of Sinterklaas and the English character of Santa Claus.

St. Nicholas of Myra was a bishop in the 4th century AD who was known as Nicholas the Wonderworker, because of the many miracles that happened in response to his prayers. He was also known for his habit of secretly distributing gifts. Not much is known about his further life apart from stories that cannot be substantiated.

Sinterklaas: The fairy-tale character of Sinterklaas of the Netherlands, however, has little or no relation to the real person of St Nicholas. On St. Nicholas Day (December 6), children put a shoe or a pillowcase on their windowsill, hoping that St. Nicholas will put a gift in it for them. That is, if they were obedient and exemplary children. If they were naughty, then they only get a twig or a piece of coal. In the Netherlands, children put hay and a carrot in their shoe for Sinterklaas' horse. In Austria, Sinterklaas is accompanied by two assistants: a good angel who distributes gifts to obedient children and a devil who punishes naughty children.

Father Christmas had a similar development in England in the 17th century. He was a big man in green or red clothes lined with fur. He brought joy during Christmas. The Puritans once again were the ones who resisted these pagan traditions during Christmas. The supporters of King Charles I of England brought back the character of Old Father Christmas because the country lacked cheerfulness after the civil wars of 1649 – 1660. Father Christmas originally had nothing to do with children or presents, but rather with the celebrations of adults.

The modern Santa Claus is a fairy tale based on pagan mythology and the mixture of St Nicholas, Sinterklaas and Father Christmas. Chimney climbing comes from pagan Norse mythology where the god Wodan (Odin) climbs through the chimney. In other countries, it is fairies or elves who come into the homes in this way, and serve as supernatural helpers of Santa Claus.

There is nothing about Santa Claus, Sinterklaas or St. Nicholas that relates to Jesus Christ, except something that is actually very negative and rather points to idolatry and mockery. Look again at this scripture from Jeremiah that talks about worshiping the cut down tree and the idols:

Jeremiah 10:9 (NKJV) Silver is beaten into plates; It is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, The work of the craftsman And of the hands of the metalsmith; BLUE AND PURPLE are their clothing; They are all the work of skilful men.

Who else got a purple robe? The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus as the King of the Jews, hung a purple robe around Him and put a crown of thorns on His head.

Matthew 27:28-31 (NKJV) And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. [29] When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" [30] Then they spat

on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. [31] And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

John 19:2-5 (NKJV) And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. [3] Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands. [4] Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him." [5] Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!"

Santa Claus is a false father. Our God and heavenly Father gave Jesus to us as Saviour, to redeem us with His blood from the hand of Satan and from every curse, to reconcile us to Him as Father, to forgive our sin, to free us from our sin debt, to sanctify us, to adopt as His children, and to make us conform to Christ.

9. HOW TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

Christmas is on every country's calendar. We might as well use it to preach Jesus to people. Christmas gives ideal opportunities to talk about Jesus, why He was born (even though we know He was not born on December 25), why He became human, why He was crucified and died, and especially that He rose from death, sitting at the right hand of God, and that He waits to return to earth again.

Lord Jesus we honor You in our hearts. You are holy and we also want to sanctify our hearts so that You can live in us. 1 Peter 3:15 (NKJV) But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

Lord Jesus, forgive us for participating in pagan customs and allowing them in our homes. Cleanse us with Your blood. We dedicate ourselves once again to You. Make us true witnesses of Your work of salvation. Help us in this time when the whole world celebrates Christmas, to talk about You, and to spread Your Light everywhere we go.

10. GOD LOVES PEOPLE

The overriding spirit of Christmas is one of cheerful light-heartedness. The truth is that Christmas is the time of year when most suicides occur. The superficial light-heartedness of a worldly Christmas hides the deep hurt in the hearts of people, and the longing for someone to truly love them. God loves people. God wants us to love people. God wants to use you to show His love to people. God will pour His love into your heart, not only to demonstrate that He loves you, but so that you can also love other people and thus prove your love for God. Ask the Lord how you can love people this Christmas? Love someone you've never loved. People crave touch. Touch people, and if you can, give them a hug. You will be surprised how easy it is to convey God's love in this way. Tell people that God loves them, loved them so much that He gave His only begotten Son so that they will not perish but have eternal life.

11. PREPARE THE LORD'S TABLE

LENGTHEN THE TABLE OF THE LORD! There is nothing wrong with having a feast with family and friends. However, there are so many lonely people at Christmas. Widows, elderly people, outcasts,

unbelievers, beggars, people who are hurting, people who mourn loved ones who have died. SET THE LORD'S TABLE at your home, in your community, in your town, at your church, and invite people to come and have a feast with you and your family. Don't selfishly keep your Christmas dinner just for yourself.

- Tell people that the Lord is inviting them to a WEDDING MEAL. Use the parable that Jesus told (Matt.22:10-14; Luk.14:12-24). Invite them to your Christmas dinner.
- Tell people that they must open the door of their hearts to Jesus so that He can have a meal with them (Rev.3:10).
- Celebrate the New Covenant Feast, the communion fellowship meal, regularly with other believers.

Luke 14:13-14 (NKJV) But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. [14] And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the Just."

Revelation 19:7-9 (NKJV) Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." [8] And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. [9] Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

Tell people what God said about the birth of His Son: *Luke 2:9-14 (NKJV) And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. [10] Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. [11] For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. [12] And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." [13] And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: [14] "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*