



**Answer: A, Christmas trees are a good source of vitamin C, the holly berries are poisonous**

Roundup- Say that this quiz was to highlight a few unknown facts that we may or may not have known about Christmas. In this session we hope to look to the reason behind Christmas and beyond the familiar nativity story and see the deeper meaning.

## Activity 1

*Need: One flipchart pad, or A3 page stuck onto a wall  
Marker pen*

*(Write the title 'What is Christmas all about?' at the top of the page. Divide the page into two columns with the title 'What the world thinks' and the second column – 'what the Bible says')*

Get the young people to either shout out answers or to come up and write them up one at time to what the world thinks Christmas is all about. Keep the answers to one or two words (e.g. Turkey, presents, Christmas tree). Then do the same for the second column (e.g. Stable, Bethlehem, shepherds).

Once finished both columns, compare the two. Are they similar? If not, why? Talk of how Christmas has become so caught up in the commercial money side of things, people have forgot the true meaning of Christmas. Even we as Christians can sometimes look over the true meaning and get too caught up on 'just getting Christmas by' we lose its true impact.

### Bible Bit 1 – Jesus the Promised One

Now we're going to look at how Luke records the Christmas story and Jesus' life.  
Read Luke 2v1-7 (preferably have the words on a Powerpoint or in front of the audience).

Ask the following questions

Q. Why was it important that Jesus was born in Bethlehem?  
To fulfil what was said in the Old Testament prophesies – Micah 5v2.

Bethlehem was only a small village, not the place you would expect a new King, the Promised Messiah, the *“One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old”* .

- This new King would be born not in the capital Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem a small village.
- This King would not be born in a palace, but in an cave cut out of rock where animals were kept
- This King would not be born in luxury but in a dirty, cold, damp stable with a feeding trough for a bed.

In the midst of all the glamour, expense and luxury of our Christmases we can forget how that first Christmas was far, far from this. Yet this is what the Son of God came into, He gave up the riches of Heaven so that He could walk amongst us. (Philippians 2:7)

The people of Israel, the Jews had been waiting on this Promised Messiah. They had read about Him in their Scriptures, they had heard so much about Him, He would be born in their country, John the Baptist prepared the way for Him– you would think these people would be the people who would be the most likely to recognise Jesus as the Promised One.

But as we hear in Luke 4:16-30 (if time allows you can read this passage or quickly summarise it), the people of his own home town rejected Him, even to the point of wanting to kill Him. It was the shepherds on the hills outside Bethlehem who seen for themselves the new-born King. Try to get rid of the image most people have of shepherds as tea-towel wearing nice people. These people were the lowest of the low, rough and ready, fighting wild animals to protect their flock. They were so unreliable and untrustworthy, they were not allowed to speak in court as their word could not be trusted. Yet it to these people the angels announced that Good News and they visited the baby King.

It was the wise-men who studied the stars in a distant country who came to worship Him. They weren't particularly as knowledgeable about the promised Messiah as the Jews would be, they studied the stars. They weren't local, in fact they weren't even from Israel, they came from a country in the East. Yet they recognised Jesus as the One who would be the King of Kings.

Even demons recognised Him (Luke 4:34) calling Him the Holy One sent from God.

(If possible play the first two verses of the Casting Crowns song – 'While You Were Sleeping')

To think on that night that Jesus was born, many carried on as usual in Bethlehem, not realising just what had just happened in their town.

To think how many people let Christmas go by and yet not even think of the first Christmas.

To think how many Christians celebrate Christmas without taking time to think of why we celebrate it and why we there was a first Christmas. Are we like the Jews, who read and heard all about Jesus yet didn't recognise Him when He came? Do we who read and hear all about Christmas forget to reflect on why it all happened in first place? Are we like those in Bethlehem who just let that first Christmas pass them by without having any impact on their lives?

## Activity 2 - Gifts

Ask the group what the strangest Christmas present is that they have ever received?

*(Could do it as a game like 'Empires' or 'Clumps' where get each person to write their gift on a piece of paper secretly. Collect them all in and read them aloud to the group who should be seated in a circle. No one can let anyone else know what they have written. Then choosing someone at random to start, they guess a gift and a person who they think got it (e.g. toilet brush, Pete) If they are correct, Pete then joins their team, and they work together as an empire, and try to guess another person and their gift. If the guess is wrong, Pete in our original scenario would then guess somebody different and a gift in the hope to get them for their empire. If a leader of an empire's gift is guessed, then that whole empire becomes part of the person who guessed's empire. The winner is when one person 'owns' all the other people in the circle.)*

### Bible Bit 2 – Jesus as Saviour

The first gifts Jesus received were rather strange for a baby...

Frankincense – An incense used in temple worship

Gold – Precious metal used by rich and royal people

Myrrh – Spices used to cover the body after death

Why would Jesus be given these gifts?

Frankincense – To symbolise that Jesus had come to be the new High Priest, offering Himself as the supreme sacrifice to pay the debt for all our sins. (John 3:16)

Gold – That Jesus is the King of Kings and would have the victory and power over death by defeating it on the cross and opening the kingdom of Heaven to those on earth

Myrrh – That Jesus lived on earth, to die, so that we may go to Heaven. (1 John 4:7-14)

The wise men recognised why Jesus came, they seen He had a greater purpose. He came to save, to save us by paying the ultimate price and dying for us. Jesus came to be our Saviour. (Luke 4:18-21) (May be useful to explain Saviour as the One who saves, as this term is alien to many young people)

*Divide everyone into groups of 2/3 and ask the following question – How can Jesus be our Saviour? (e.g. saves us from the punishment of our sins, saves us from the total grasp of sin)*

To conclude, either get yourself or another leader to talk about how Jesus became their Saviour, and what it means to them now to have Jesus as their Saviour.

## Conclusion

Could sing **My Jesus, My Saviour** or **You Are Holy (Prince of Peace)**

And/or

Could put up posters around the room with different names given to Jesus on each, such as Immanuel, Prince of Peace, Saviour, Shepherd and get the young people to walk round with a pen each and reflect on each poster and write on the poster what image of Jesus do these titles create for them (e.g. Shepherd – Jesus cares for me)