Don’t Miss Christmas
By Chip Lusko

When the Wright brothers made their historic first flight in 1903, they sent a telegram to their sister announcing the 852-foot flight and added, “We’ll be home for Christmas.” She quickly took the message to the local newspaper who ran the story with the headline: “Wright Brothers are coming home!”

The editor received the news but buried the monumental impact of the full story under a trivial banner headline.

The same can be true when we hear the Gospel message of Christmas but emphasize the cultural aspects of the holiday. We can actually miss Christmas!

Today, we are going to look at three screen shots of those who missed Christmas in the Bible, and we’ll answer the question, “What does it mean to remember Christmas the right way?”

As we launch into our message, let’s remember that Christmas is:

• The greatest moment in all history because all time is measured by His birth
• The most powerful moment in history because God became a man

In his book, Hidden Christmas, Timothy Keller wrote, “God became man; the divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child … the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation.”

The Most Neglected Moment Ever

Another Bible teacher said, “What a mess Christmas is! We have compounded the holiday with so many traditions and so much hype and hysteria that we miss the utter simplicity of Christ’s birth. It is ironic that of all holidays, this one has become the most complex. It is no wonder so many people miss Christmas.”

There is a story of a man whose close friend served as a judge. The man had received a traffic ticket, and he asked the judge for a personal favor: “Please take care of this for me,” he said.

A few weeks later he asked the judge if the charges had been dismissed.

The judge replied, “It is taken care of but not dismissed; I paid the fine.”

Surprised, the man asked why.

The judge said, “Were you guilty?”

“Yes,” the man said.

“Well, someone had to pay,” the judge told him.

That’s the principle behind the incarnation of Jesus. Do not think that forgiveness of your sins means God simply waved a wand over your life to “take care” of your charges. No, He paid the price because the wages of sin is death. Someone had to pay and Jesus did.
No Room at the Inn

No room. Those words describe more than the inn on the first Christmas in ancient Bethlehem. They apply in the same way to our world today. In the manic, frantic celebration of Christmas, people still make no room for Jesus. Without even realizing it, they miss Christmas, just as we read in the Gospel story.

“And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” —Luke 2:7 (NKJV)

Bethlehem 2,000 years ago

Joseph and Mary arrived at this sleepy town to comply with a Roman tax edict. Myth and holiday plays have dramatized this story, but the Bible simply says, “There was no room at the inn.” We do know that the young couple ended up in a stable and the child King in an animal’s feed trough. Bethlehem could have done better!

Imagine the contradiction! God Himself comes to earth on the ultimate rescue mission only to be left out in the cold, dark night.

G. Campbell Morgan calls this moment, “The glory and the pity.” Glory because God humbled Himself magnificently, and pity because those who needed Him so were consumed with activity, there was not even a small space for Him. They were preoccupied not necessarily with sinful activity, but there simply was no room for Jesus.

Sound familiar?

In our modern Christmas, we can let ourselves become abnormally busy. Shopping, parties and holiday events create a clutter of activity leaving preoccupied, exhausted people who have missed the Son of God.

Before we end our time together today, I am going to ask you to consider this question, “How should we respond when there is a human crisis and clear need?” In some way, every day we have the opportunity to “make room for Jesus” in our lives.

I wanted to put that thought in this discussion because we need to have more than biblical information; we must have personal application. We are going to look for ways to have that take place.

Now let’s turn to the second event where Christmas was missed.

Wise Men and an Unwise King

In Matthew’s Gospel, the Bible records the palace uproar that arose when Herod felt threatened by the arrival of Jesus, King of the Jews.

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard [this], he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” —Matthew 2:1–3 (NKJV)

How did Herod miss Christmas? It is a familiar story: preoccupation with the loss of leading his own life.
Many people today may be willing to make God “their co-pilot,” but making Him Lord is another matter entirely. Herod feared the loss of his tin crown if he vacated his earthly throne to make room for Jesus.

In the same way, many today refuse to let the Christ Child interfere with their ambition, career, position and power. They are not about to let anyone else be king of their lives; they have grown comfortable on the throne. No matter that their decisions and decrees have often meant disaster for them and their “kingdom.”

As the maxim goes, better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. That is a very bad philosophy; but it is a common and spiritually fatal mistake.

What a terrifying picture Herod represents. There is little doubt that he is symbolic of many who would come after him, pretending to worship Jesus with their lips but with hearts that are far from Him. Herod’s dark heart was manifested soon enough, which is even more incriminating because, as we see here in Matthew’s record, he consulted with Scripture to get advice and direction. His response was false worship and eventually, a deadly decision.

It has been observed that Charles Spurgeon had a love-hate relationship with Christmas because of the traditions that had come to encompass the holiday. But there is no doubt that Spurgeon recognized that Christmas presents an opportunity to explain what the actual events of this celebration can mean to anyone who will open their life to Jesus.

And before we close today, I will show you a practical and powerful way to celebrate Christmas.

Now, let’s examine our third profile: Men who missed Christmas, by five miles.

**A Five Mile Miss**

Bethlehem is really a suburb of Jerusalem; it is only five miles away. When Herod heard the shock wave of a new King of the Jews, he assembled his spiritual advisors.

> “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard [this], he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.”

— Matthew 2:1–4 (NKJV)

Herod was one sly fox. He called the wise men to his court as this story unfolds. The question is, knowing what they clearly knew, what were they doing in Jerusalem?

They had the Scriptures, they saw the star, and yet, they remained five miles from the Promise! Yes, it appears they ended up in Bethlehem, but only on a covert mission from Herod, not to welcome Jesus to the world.

> “Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.’” —Matthew 2:7–8 (NKJV)

Really? Herod wanted to worship the Prince of Peace? Not really! More likely he wanted Jesus in pieces.
Let’s be sure we thoroughly grasp the importance of what happened here. Herod had the proper information, but lacked desire for the correct application. This represents the single most common and dangerous response to biblical truth. Clearly, Herod respected the Scriptures, but he was unwilling to let their full impact guide his actions.

Plainly put: *It is not what you know, it is what you do that counts.* Obviously, Herod’s advisors understood that Bethlehem was ground zero for the appearance of Messiah, but that is insufficient. Mark this well: We all must personally respond to the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing is not enough.

**Questions for Your Christmas:**

1. **Is your Christmas Bethlehem or Bedlam?**

   In 1247, an English hospital, St. Mary Bethlehem, was established for the sick, insane and poor. Eventually, the Cockney accent contracted the name from Bethlehem to Bedlam. Have you allowed the angelic promise of ‘Good News for man,’ to become overwhelmed by the demands of an artificial Christmas? In the same way, our silent night in Bethlehem can transition year by year into a Bedlam of maddening activity and searches for parking spots at the mall. Do not let that happen. Honestly, if it already has, put the brakes on this year. Be still and enjoy the marvel of the incarnation, then determine to share what you have with others.

2. **Glitter or Gold?**

   What do you give a King who has everything? The correct answer is your heart and life. Then the question becomes, who are you Christmas shopping for? Consider this insight from Jesus:

   “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did [it] to one of the least of these My brethren, you did [it] to Me. ’ ...Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do [it] to one of the least of these, you did not do [it] to Me.’” —Matthew 25:40, 44–45 (NKJV)

   That should change your Christmas list!

3. **How does Jesus feel when Christmas gifts always go to other people who often don’t need them?**

   Let’s not miss Christmas with short-sighted thinking about our gift giving.

   Let’s not be like those at the Bethlehem inn, Herod or his advisors. Let us choose to be like the wise men who were determined to see Jesus and honor him with gifts worthy of a King.

   John MacArthur said, “If we could condense all the truths of Christmas into only three words, these would be the words, ‘God with us.’ We tend to focus our attention on the infancy of Christ. The greater truth of the holiday is His deity. More astonishing than a baby in a manger is the truth that this promised baby is the omnipotent Creator of the heavens and the earth!”

   Here’s a plan, this is a Christmas gift catalog from our friends at Gospel for Asia. What if on Christmas morning, your family could know they were helping a very poor family somewhere in Asia with a couple of chickens, a cow or a goat!
Yes, it is hard to imagine a home with no refrigerator, a village with no market and a December 25th with no feast, but that is exactly what many people face in Asia.

You, and our church family can make a difference.

Think of it: Two chickens cost $11 in this catalog. Chickens are good at multi-tasking; sure they provide eggs for meals, but some also hatch, and guess what? More chickens. Some to eat, some to sell. How good is that?

And better yet, the chickens will not be delivered by Amazon! They will be brought by a local pastor. I think you get the picture.

In these pages you will find many original and practical gift ideas, not flashy, but life changing.

Take a cow for example. In fact, take two please and send them off to Asia. And you know cows are amazing creatures in what they provide to a family both immediately and when they reproduce.

Get the idea?

This is not about shutting down your family Christmas but about expanding it. When the gifts are all given and the boxes are empty at your home, around the globe, your gift through Gospel for Asia will just be starting to give.

As the ushers are passing out the gift catalogs let’s take some time to look at them.

I suggest your family pick a variety of economical and practical gifts, some livestock but also blankets, mosquito nets or a bicycle. Some of you are more than able to spring for a water buffalo or a Jesus Well. Imagine that, you would be providing living water for a village of several hundred for years to come.

Let’s take a couple more minutes to browse the catalog, let you make your decisions, and then I will close in prayer.