DIFFERENT **wk 6 – A Different Plan / The Ant Farm**

**The birth of Jesus – from Luke 2**

**Luke 2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.**

**Have you wondered when Christmas began? When did we start celebrating it? Was Jesus really born on December 25?**

**When did Christmas Holiday really begin? What we know…**

**By 200 AD – Epiphany is actively celebrated January 6 / 7th**

**Epiphany = The revelation of Jesus as God in the flesh. Remembering his birth, childhood events & Baptism.**

**324 AD – Emperor Constantine legalizes and favored Christianity**

**336 AD – “Christmas” 1st mentioned by name**

**Christmas = The Mass for Christ. A communion service that celebrated the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Some celebrated in Dec most in Jan.**

**When was Jesus actually Born?**

**The shepherds it the field suggest Passover season of Spring.**

**There is no date given in the Bible. Just a historical timeframe.**

**Why do we celebrate on Dec 25? 3 Possible Reasons**

**1. It is the actual day of Jesus birth**

**Some early Christian leaders claim Dec 25 or Jan 6 was the actual day.**

**Saying Jesus Dec birth trumps the Sun & pagan deities of Dec!**

**2. The day was picked to accommodate potential new believers**

**Dec 25 picked after Christianity was made the official religion - 380AD. To replace popular pagan Mid-winter Dec Festivals.**

**Problem - Epiphany celebrating his birth is mentioned 150 yrs before, when they strived to distant themselves from pagans.**

**Pagan festival traditions were adopted, but not the holiday.**

**3. The day is lost in calendar changes - making actual dates difficult**

**Sumerian Calendar – 1000BC+**

* **12 mths - 354 day - extra month added periodically. Based on the Moon.**

**Roman Calendar – 700BC**

* **New Year Days was April 21 - 304 days / 10 mths – 8 day week.**

**2 months Jan / Feb later added making 355 days. Based on the Moon.**

**Persian Calendar – 600BC**

* **360 days Calendar with 13 mths. Based on the Sun.**

**Greek Calendar – 400BC**

* **354 day - 12 mths - extra mth added periodically to adjust. Lunar based.**

**Roman Hellenistic Calendar – 300BC**

* **Numbered years based on the sitting ruler. 8 day week. Lunar based.**

**Jewish calendars – 200BC**

* **7-day week / 12 mths / 353-385 d / leap month / Mar 1 is new year / Lunar**

**Julian Calendar – 45BC**

* **Julius Ceasar ordered a calendar based on the sun’s rotation - 365 days. 7 day week. The Mar 1 new year was moved it to Jan 1.**

**Gregorian calendar – 1582AD**

* **Pope Gregory XIII proposed Julian calendar was 10 days off - implemented a new one. Some countries continued with the Julian for 1000 + years!**

**Some say Dec 25 date is a result of the calendar change. Switch from Julian to Gregorian lost 12 days. Moving Jan 6 to Dec 25th.**

**Dec 25 may or may not be the actual day of Christ birth, but it is a real event that happened 2000 years ago. Dec 25 is the day we celebrate it.**

**Even further back - the truth is, the 1st Christmas was long before that!**

**1 Peter 1:20 - He was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake. (Rev 13:8)**

**The entire OT points to arrival (Christmas) - The NT points to the Return. Christmas was the plan before the world began.**

**John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.**

**14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**Four Ingredients of Christmas - in that verse**

**John 1:14 The Word became flesh**

1. **The Incarnation – God the Word becomes Flesh**

**Christmas arrival began not in Bethlehem… but in a mother’s womb.**

**9 mths before Jesus was already fully alive, fully God, fully human – on the earth. \*\* Conceived by the Holy Spirit. He first arrived in Nazareth.**

**Jesus, the visible expressed word and thoughts of God in the flesh. The Word we can hold. God in the flesh. Colossian 2:9**

**The infinite of all creation took the form of an unborn baby boy. God clothed in flesh and blood. God became an embryo - deity wore diapers**

**The ant (roach) farm**

**He walked our paths, breathed our air, wore our shoes, lived our life, died our death He became one of us without ceasing or changing his attributes. 14 The Word became flesh**

1. **The Habitation – God moved into the neighborhood.**

**14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us… (dwelt, made his dwelling with us, tabernacled, pitched a tent among us, God lived as a neighbor)**

**In the Bible 3 kinds of people lived in tents: shepherds, sojourners, and soldiers. Jesus lived in the “tent” of his humanity for 33 yrs on the earth because he too was a shepherd, a sojourner, and a soldier.**

**Long before creation, Jesus was God’s rescue mission to the human race. While here, he pitched his tent – until he returned.**

**You might say “I would believe if God came down and stood in front of me and told me himself,” - “My friend, that is what he did 2,000 yrs ago!**

**“We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father…”**

1. **The Manifestation – God made himself known**

**We have seen - where we get the word theater. Gaze in amazement.**

**John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” 8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” 9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father…**

**The night of his birth - angels saw it – shepherds saw it – Mary & joseph saw it – Every miracle he did was the manifestation of his Glory. It was not obscure, hidden, secrete, or a riddle!**

**He did not sit quietly and secretly in his creation but made himself known & engaged with his power – and they saw it. It is real!!!! He does not sit quietly today – he is ready to engage in your life!**

**John 1:14 …We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

1. **Invitation – God came to save us**

**Grace – God’s unmerited favor and gift of salvation**

**Truth – We were in need of a savior, Jesus paid for our sins.**

**Do you need a trustworthy savior – Jesus is full of the truth**

**Do you need a forgiving savior – Jesus is full of grace**

**God has a gift for you – wrapped not in bright paper and fancy ribbons but wrapped in flesh and blood. God invites you to receive this gift.**

**John 1:10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.**

**Those are three ways we try to get to God or try to find peace.**

**Traditions, self-determination, and relationships – but only those who receive the gift of Jesus – will ever know God and his peace.**

**John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**

**Christmas is for kids… God’s kids. Are you one of them?**