

When Jesus died on the cross, he was paying the price to set us free – but from what? The Bible explains that we have all pushed God out of his rightful place as the King of our lives. We have ruined our relationship with God, and in doing so have ruined ourselves, and the world God made. This is the real meaning of what the Bible calls “sin”. And sin brings with it death and judgment.

None of us deserves eternal life. Each of us should be judged and condemned for how we have lived. But in his great love, Jesus Christ died in our place, so that we can be forgiven and enter into friendship with the Living God – a friendship that will last for eternity.

Verdant green: new life to bring

Jesus came at Christmas to die at Easter. The Bible explains why:

“Christ died for sins once and for all time. The One who did what is right [Jesus] died for those who don’t do right [you]. He died to bring you to God.” 1 Peter 3 verse 18

God raised Jesus to life on the first Easter day to show that Jesus is Lord over life and death and everyone. Jesus is alive today and longs to give the gift of forgiveness and new life to anyone who comes to him.

Whoever you are, whatever you have done, you are not beyond the love and forgiveness of God. Christmas is all about celebrating the joy, freedom and colour he wants to pour into our lives through his Son.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Dear God,

*Thank you that you sent Jesus into the world on that first
Christmas day. Thank you that I can know who you are
and what you are like.*

*And thank you that Jesus died on the cross to forgive my sin.
Thank you that he rose again to give me new life.*

*Please help me this Christmas to live with Jesus as my King, and
to receive his gift of new life . Amen*

If you would like to find out more about what it means to be a Christian, please contact the church or person who gave you this leaflet, or visit:

www.christianityexplored.org

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Bible references taken from the NIV reader’s version.

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The Colours of Christmas

Christmas is a colourful time of year. There are sparkling lights and rainbow wrapping. Green trees, red ribbon and shimmering decorations. And let's not forget those dreadful novelty ties and sweaters...

Colours communicate – we give them meanings. When we're sad, we feel blue. We can be green with envy. We call cowards yellow, and get browned off when we don't get what we want on Christmas morning.

The first Christmas had all the makings of being grey and dreary. A young couple with a mysterious unplanned pregnancy are ordered to travel back to their home town of Bethlehem for a census. They are forced into makeshift accommodation and the child enters the world with parents who are in poverty, in a land occupied by invaders.

So far so bad.

But into such an unlikely, drab scene comes a vibrant palette of rich colour and light.

Golden bright: angels sang

Up in the hills above sleeping Bethlehem the night sky is suddenly lit up. Not a comet or supernova, but a radiant, dazzling choir of angelic beings. The terrified shepherds working on the hills are told:

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord." Luke 2 verses 10-11

The angels say that the first Christmas is about God entering his own world to walk among us. And this is glorious, golden good news.

Because if you are someone who finds God hard to understand, or wonder what he is really like, then Christmas is the answer. To know what God is like, we need only look at Jesus. Because Jesus is not just a man. He is "Christ the Lord". He is God made flesh.

And what we see in Jesus may come as a surprise. We see someone who is enormously powerful, but also gentle and kind. He was a man filled with compassion and love towards us. Jesus has absolute power – but he uses it to help others. Not to please himself.

So the good news is that God is not hard to find. He has taken the initiative, and been born as a man. He invites us to examine him and make our minds up about who he really is.

Royal purple: born a king

The name "Christ" means "God's chosen King". Jesus was born a royal. The wise men who arrive with gifts fit for a king underline this truth.

But Jesus never lived in a palace. He worked as a carpenter, and then as a preacher, wandering the countryside. The only time he wore royal robes was when he was arrested, given a false trial, and then handed over to be executed. The Bible tell us that the Roman soldiers mocked him by dressing him in a purple robe and putting a crown of thorns on his head.

Blood red: came to die

But the Bible says that Jesus came as a king, not so that people would serve him, but that *he would serve us*, by dying in our place. Jesus said:

"Even the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served. Instead, he came to serve others. He came to give his life as the price for *setting many people free*." Mark 10 verse 45