

12 SIGNS OF CHRISTMAS

Perhaps you've attended a Sunday School program about the symbols of Christmas. Many everyday items are great object lessons. Over time, Christian observance of Christmas has come to include several common elements. Let's explore how they can teach deep truths about the coming Christ.

1- EVERGREEN. Conifers work well at Christmas because they are always green. Evergreens do not become dormant in the winter like other trees. Evergreen needles point up, heavenward. The green color represents new life. An evergreen tree, bough or decoration symbolizes everlasting life with Jesus Christ. Believers are given the new eternal spiritual life of Christ. We reach up in worship, receiving life from Him, and then living out His life by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Because *"God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"* John 3:16.

2- LIGHTS. Candles and lights transform darkness with warmth and cheer. In John 1:4, Jesus is the light of life and truth who has come into the world. In Luke 2:32 Jesus is the light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to the people of Israel. In John 8:12 Jesus said *"I am the light of the world"* and in Matthew 5:14 He told His disciples *"you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house."* Even if you are the only Christian in your home or workplace, Jesus says, *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

3- ORNAMENTS. Some people search for the perfect decoration each year, while others treasure those from years past. You can consider ornaments as symbols of God's blessings in your life. Just as His blessings decorate your life, they remind you to thank Him. Blessings can be people or answers to prayer or examples of God's providence. Like blessings, each one comes in different shapes and sizes and colors. "Count your many blessings" as you place each ornament on the tree can be a rewarding family activity. You likely have more blessings than ornaments! As Deuteronomy 16:17 says, *"Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that He has given you."*

4- BELLS. The sound of a bell pierces normal noise. You can't help but hear it. Shepherds use bells to guide sheep back to their fold. In John 10:11 Jesus said *"I am the good shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep."* Do you hear Him? In John 10:27 He said *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life."* In Mark 9:7, God spoke from heaven, *"This is My beloved Son, listen to Him."* As you hear Christmas bells, give your attention to God's Word, to trust and obey Jesus. And you can take every opportunity to sound the good news about Jesus to all the people around you - especially at Christmas, but also every day of the year.

5- ANGELS. God used His heavenly messengers to announce the Good News about Jesus, as recorded in Luke 2 to Mary and in Matthew 1 to Joseph. People place angels on their trees, windows, shelves and nativity sets. Angels proclaimed a wonder to the shepherds of Bethlehem, *"Fear not, for I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all of the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."* And suddenly there appeared a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased."* Hearing the heavenly heralds, the lowly shepherds hurried to the baby in the manger. And they became God's earthly messengers, *"glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen."*

6- STARS. The Bible often uses stars as heavenly signs of prophecy to point people to God's promises. Genesis 15 tells Abraham that through God's miracle offspring, his descendants would be innumerable as the stars. A heavenly star sign led the wisemen of Matthew 2 on a journey to worship Jesus who was born as king of the Jews and Savior of the world. *"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."* Then they worshiped Him. Be like the wisemen. Follow the light God gives in Scripture to guide you to personal faith in the Lord Jesus. He came to save people from every nation and language from their sins. And Revelation 7 pictures this as fulfilled in our Savior, the Christ of Christmas. Next time, we'll consider the symbols of candy canes, cookies, holly, wreaths, ribbons, and presents.