

## SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS

How do the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas bring joy to your wintry world? Last time we explored six signs of observing Christmas that so powerfully point us to deeper meaning in our worldwide holiday. Yes, Jesus is the reason for this season of celebration. Here are six more special symbols.

**7- CANDY CANES.** This sugary treat holds multiple meanings. It's like a shepherd's crook, the first people invited to welcome the newborn Savior into the world. Upside down, it forms the letter J for the name Jesus, which means "*Jehovah saves*" just as God promised so often in the Old Testament. And as the angel said in Matthew 1:21, "*She will bring forth a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*" Red swirls represent His blood, which washes away our sins and makes us white as snow like the white background. Three green twirls symbolize the Trinity, as salvation is arranged by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit. Candy canes make great treats to share with others - along with the great good news they so profoundly represent.

**8- COOKIES.** Do you enjoy eating or receiving these edible masterpieces? Someone has to make them! Cookie cutters turn ordinary dough into delightful treats. But God makes each person special, unique - yet in His own image so that we can know and love Him with all our heart and mind and will. As Jeremiah 18:6 says, "*Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand.*" When you are re-born by trusting in Christ, God begins molding you into a masterpiece, transformed in the image of Christ. So as you make, bake, take, or munch, cookies this Christmas, yield to the Potter's hand in your life.

**9- HOLLY.** This Christmas plant also points us toward Easter. Known as "*Christ thorn*" in Scandinavia, the prickly leaves symbolize the crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head when He was crucified. The red berries represent the blood that He shed for the sins of the world. Matthew 27:29 records, "*And twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'*" At Christmas, it's a joyful emblem that reminds us of the joy of salvation - for which Christ endured the shame of crucifixion and the excruciating pain of death on the cross, to pay for sins - so that you can have forgiveness, and live out His eternal life.

**10- WREATHS.** People place them on doors, walls, and tables. Like the Advent wreath, the evergreen boughs wrap around in a circle, just as there is no beginning or end of Jesus' eternal love for His people. Hebrews 13:8 says "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*" And Jeremiah 31:3 echoes many passages of Scripture, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love.*" The Christ of Christmas was promised from the beginning of Scripture. He came to save us, and He is coming again in glory!

**11- BOWS.** The wrappings and ribbons of our gifts may have more meaning than the objects inside. They beautifully represent how the garlands of grace, truth and love in Jesus binds believers together as the adopted children of God. In Him, we are the family of God, and Christ's life ties us together. Colossians 3:14 says, "*and above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*"

**12- GIFTS.** It's not just children who seem to regard presents as the greatest thing about Christmas. But Scripture says its really the presence of Jesus, who is Emmanuel, "*God with us.*" We give gifts because God gave us His only Son to save us. And because of the wisemen, as Matthew 2:11 says, "*they saw the child with His mother Mary. They bowed down and worshipped Him. Opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts.*" Jesus fulfills three Old Testament offices. They gave gold, paying tribute to the promised King. They offered frankincense, used in the temple worship of God. Jesus is the ultimate Prophet who was prophesied to speak the very words of God to the people. They honored Jesus with myrrh, used in preparing the dead for burial. Because He is not only our Great High Priest, but also the perfect sacrifice, offering His own body, blood and perfectly lived life to pay the penalty we could not pay for our sins.

As the wise men worshiped Jesus, they proclaimed His ultimate purpose: the Creator come in the Cradle to go to the Cross to gain the Crown of life. Even giving Him our selves reflects our complete dependence upon the Savior. Receive His gift - believe in Him, trust and obey Him alone - and live for Him!