



# Child in the Manger

*Sinclair B. Ferguson*

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What is Christmas? For many it is a time for holidays, parties, family gatherings, gifts, meals together, music, and special events. For others it can mean unwanted pressure, an increased sense of loneliness, family squabbles, and crowded shops. For those living in the Northern Hemisphere, Christmas takes place at the onset of winter with its cold weather and short days. There are more incidents of depression at Christmas time than at any other time of the year. It is the best of times for some, but the worst of times for others to borrow a phrase from Charles Dickens.

But Christmas is a very elusive thing, isn't it? We may look forward to it. But what exactly is 'it'? 'A time for children'; 'It's about peace'; 'It's about family'; 'It's about gifts, but it's a pity it has become so commercialised' these are a few of the popular answers to the question, 'What does Christmas mean to you?'

But what is Christmas really all about? Does it actually have any 'meaning'? *Child in the Manger The True Meaning of Christmas*, sets out to explore that question. When we find the answer we realise that it isn't only for Christmas time. So these pages are an invitation to explore what that meaning is. And if this book has come into your hands around Christmas time, may it help you to enjoy it in a new way!

The birth of Jesus divided history into two major epochs. Until the dawn of our hyper-sensitive age, even the way we dated events underscored this. From time immemorial every day, every week, every month, every year has been described as either 'B.C.' ('Before Christ') or 'A.D.' (Anno Domini, 'in the year of our Lord'). Even the modern, pluralistic style abbreviations, B.C.E. ('Before the Common Era') and C.E. ('Common Era'), cannot obliterate the indelible impress of Jesus' birth. For what makes the 'Common Era' so 'common'? And what explains the dividing line date? The answer is the same: the birth of Jesus. At the very centre of history stands the person of Jesus Christ. And he does so because he is at the centre of God's story. The birth of Jesus divided history into two major epochs. Until the dawn of our hyper-sensitive age, even the way we dated events underscored this. From time immemorial every day, every week, every month, every year has been described as either 'B.C.' ('Before Christ') or 'A.D.' (Anno Domini, 'in the year of our Lord'). Even the modern, pluralistic style abbreviations, B.C.E. ('Before the Common Era') and C.E. ('Common Era'), cannot obliterate the indelible impress of Jesus' birth. For what makes the 'Common Era' so 'common'? And what explains the dividing line date? The answer is the same: the birth of Jesus. At the very centre of history stands the person of Jesus Christ. And he does so because he is at the centre of God's story.

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