

Christmas

Christmas is marked on the **25 December** (**7 January** for Orthodox Christians).



The Holy Family, Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus ©

The story of Christmas

Christmas is a Christian holy day that marks the birth of Jesus, the son of God. Jesus' birth, known as the *nativity*, is described in the New Testament of the Bible.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give different accounts. It is from them that the nativity story is pieced together. Both accounts tell us that Jesus was born to a woman called Mary who was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter. The Gospels state that Mary was a virgin when she became pregnant.

In Luke's account Mary was visited by an angel who brought the message that she would give birth to God's son. According to Matthew's account, Joseph was visited by an angel who persuaded him to marry Mary rather than send her away or expose her pregnancy.

Matthew tells us about some wise men who followed a star that led them to Jesus' birthplace and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Luke tells how shepherds were led to Bethlehem by an angel.

According to tradition, Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem shortly before Jesus' birth. Joseph had been ordered to take part in a census in his home town of Bethlehem. All Jewish people had to be counted so the Roman Emperor could determine how much money to collect