

FREDERICK WILLIAM DAME

## CHRISTMAS



*Adoration of the Shepherds* (c. 1500–10)  
by the Italian painter Giorgio da Castelfranco (1477/78-1510)

[HTTP://UPLOAD.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKIPEDIA/COMMONS/THUMB/E/E2/GIORGIONE\\_014.JPG/741PX-GIORGIONE\\_014.JPG](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/E/E2/Giorgione_014.jpg/741px-Giorgione_014.jpg)

### The Etymologies

Linguists and etymologists can place the origin of the word *Christmas* at approximately 1100 AD when it was written *Cristesmesse*, the literal meaning of which is *Christ's festival*, or *Christmas Day*, which is found in Old English *Cristes mæsse*.

*Cristes* is the genitive form of *Crist* (Christ) and *mæsse* means *festival, or feast day*. A *mæsse* was the central service in the Roman Catholic Church and it is known to historians as the church mass service. The origin of this terminology is most likely the concluding words of the church service, the dismissal: *Ite, missa est.* meaning *Go, it (the prayer) has been sent*.

The word **Christ** derives from the Indo-European word root **ghrēi-**, meaning **to rub**. As such we have the extended form *\*ghris-* in Greek *khrein*, meaning *to anoint*.<sup>1</sup>

The word **mass**, the celebration of the Eucharist that is also called Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Blessed Sacrament, as well as the Lord's Supper, derives from the Indo-European word root **smeit-**, meaning **to throw, to let go, to send off, to dismiss**.<sup>2</sup>

The name **Jesus** comes from the Hebrew *yēshūa*, from *Yehoshua* (*Joshua*), which means *Yahweh is salvation*.<sup>3</sup>

The nomenclature **God**, which came into the Old English language during the first part of the eighth century, has its origin in the Indo-European word root **gheu-**, meaning **to call, to invoke**. The suffixed zero-grade form *\*gh-to-* means *the invoked, the invoked one, or God*, the highest power who is called upon for assistance.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, A. Francke Verlag, Tübingen und Basel: 2005, *ghrēi-*, entry 457.

<sup>2</sup> Pokorny, *smeit-*, entry 968.

<sup>3</sup> <http://answering-islam.org/Responses/Menj/yeshua.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Pokorny, *ghau-* entry 413.

The name **Emmanuel** has its origin in the Hebrew word *El*, meaning *God* and *Immānū*, meaning *with us*, in other words, *God is with us*.

### **The True Meaning of *God Is With Us***

All Christians and those of other religions know the story of Christ's birth in the stable in Bethlehem that is presented in *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Chapters 1 and 2, and *The Gospel According to Saint Luke*, Chapters 1 and 2. Christians regard the divine birth of Jesus as a beautiful wonder from God. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Yet, what is there about Christmas that makes the occasion so meaningful? The Holy Bible renditions of the nativity story do not tell us the true meaning of Christmas. In *Was ist die wahre Bedeutung von Weihnachten*, D .R. Reid presents the Bethlehem Nativity as the logical consequence of God and the Word.<sup>5</sup> The result is the birth of Jesus Christ. We must consult important verses in the Holy Bible other than the story of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. This author believes there are four central Holy Bible verses that tell the true meaning of the birth of Jesus Emmanuel.

1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God."<sup>6</sup> This first quoted verse clears our doubts concerning who is the real Jesus. His everlasting existence from the beginning is explained to us: Jesus was with us from the

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.soundwords.de/artikel.asp?id=5557>.

<sup>6</sup> *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 1:1.

beginning, for in the beginning was the Word. We celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. However, this was not the beginning. Jesus, the Son of God, was always with us in the form of the Word, which is the true divinity of Jesus, for the Word is God. Jesus is not a descendant of God. He is God in His nature. As the everlasting Son, Jesus is the core of God's being. This applies to Jesus only. This core of God does not take place in any other religion! "The Word was with God." This Word is the individual person of the divinity. We celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem because it was there that the Word, the everlasting Son of God, was born into this world, and became a real person.

2. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father,) full of grace and truth."<sup>7</sup> This second quoted verse solidifies the true meaning of Christmas. The Word was made flesh." Jesus was the Word and Jesus became human.
  
3. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."<sup>8</sup> The third quoted verse tells us that just because we have never seen God, everything that we must know about God is revealed in Jesus. The Son of God embodies all of the virtues in humankind, such as prudence, justice, temperance, courage, diligence, kindness, humility, faith, mercy, truth, hope, and the greatest of them all

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<sup>7</sup> *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 1:14.

<sup>8</sup> *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 1:18.

charity, which is love in its finest form. These reveal the depth of God's heart.

4. "God, who at sundry times and divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom he also made the worlds."<sup>9</sup> The fourth quoted verse tells us that the soul of God is expressed completely. God always speaks to us in various forms: through angels, in dreams, with visions, and through the presence of Jesus His Son who is the everlasting revelation to humankind. Jesus Christ is the final Word of God.

These Holy Bible verses tell us the true meaning of Christmas!

There are many serious statements and questions that arise during the Christmas celebration. They range from *There is really no proof that there is a God!* through *How can God allow people to kill each other in wars?* to *How can we know that there is a God when there is a breakdown of honesty and morality in society and in elected politicians?* God does not allow these events to happen. Human beings allow them to occur. At the same time, God gives humankind the everlasting gift of Love so that humankind can discover God and stop their evil undertakings.

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<sup>9</sup> *The Epistle of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, 1:1,2.*

The Baby Jesus born in Bethlehem was and is a historical person. Concurrently, Jesus is the everlasting Word of God. Jesus lived amongst us. Jesus loved us. Jesus voluntarily went to the cross and gave His life for us. He arose from the dead. Jesus lives. Jesus, the everlasting Son of God, became human and lives. Jesus did not end with the resurrection. Jesus lives in heaven and in our hearts and souls, and this will give us victory over the evilness of the many satans that exist in the world. One day we will see Jesus. With Jesus Christ, God became human forever. This is the true meaning of Christmas. This is the holiest of holies and the truth of truths. This does not happen in any other religion.

Of course, children see Christmas as the time to receive toys. For high schoolers and university students, it is time off from their learning, it is time to go skiing, or surfing. For some adults it is time to play golf in Hawaii. For entrepreneurs, it is time to make money. For atheists, who cannot conceive of a true meaning for Christmas, it is time to jeer at those who believe in Jesus Christ Emmanuel, in the Word, and in God. For Muslims, it is a repeated time when they claim that Christianity discriminates against them and insults them. For this author it is the time to think of the true meaning of Christmas. Ring the bells and rejoice ... for Jesus Christ Emmanuel is born.



[www.christmasgifts.com/christmasclipart08v.html](http://www.christmasgifts.com/christmasclipart08v.html)

When I was a youngster, my Grandmother told me many stories about Uncle Ceylon, who was married to Grandmother's sister. My mother and my father called him Uncle Ceylon. That is the reason I called Grandmother's brother-in-law Uncle Ceylon. Grandmother told beautiful stories. Every one of them had a meaning that went directly to the heart. As a child, I would sit by her chair and be ever attentive. When I would ask her if the story was really true, she would answer that all of what she described in her stories really happened. Of course, she wanted me to learn the moral of the story and the accompanying behavior.

The following is one of Grandmother's stories. In hindsight, I can imagine that it is full of poetic license. Surely, not every word is as Grandmother told it. There are similarities to an anonymous story dated 1881.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps Grandmother had read the story of Christmas Eve somewhere and she thought that it would be a good learning experience for me if she told me the story and applied it to Uncle Ceylon. Using the basic framework, I have included Grandmother's embellishments as I remember them. Regardless of how my Grandmother knew the story, whether from reading it or hearing it somewhere, or whether or not it really happened to Uncle Ceylon, the story is as true as the fact that you are reading it.

Uncle Ceylon, who lived to be ninety-five years old, and his family lived at the top of Shores' Hill in Granby, Vermont. Even today, the older villagers of Granby remember Uncle Ceylon, his independence, and his concern for his neighbors. All Granby inhabitants are neighbors and all of them have a particular independence. The villagers always

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.thestreamtv.citymax.com/board/board\\_topic/4160401/832412.htm](http://www.thestreamtv.citymax.com/board/board_topic/4160401/832412.htm). There is another date of 1921 <http://www.inspire21.com/stories/holidaystories/ChristmasEve1921>.

have both of their feet on the ground and they will tell you to your face what they think. That is politics and behavior at its best!



Uncle Ceylon making tallow candles for the winter.

Granby, Vermont did not have electricity until 1963. The inhabitants of Granby saved money for six years to have an electricity line come to Granby, the last village in Vermont to receive electricity. They raised money with cake baking, annual raffles, dances, auctions for box lunches (so that the younger girls and boys could get to know each other), and an autumn festival known far and wide as *Holidays in the Hills*, which year-after-year over the two-day weekend had up to 8,000 visitors year. Before electricity arrived, the villagers burned kerosene lamps, oil lamps, and homemade candles.



## **Uncle Ceylon's Meaning of Christmas**

Uncle Ceylon had a son named Guy, who passed away two years ago at the age of eighty-seven. Uncle Ceylon never had much compassion for the lazy or those who squandered their means and then never had enough for the necessities. Nevertheless, for those who were genuinely in need, his heart was as big as Nature. Uncle Ceylon passed on this attitude to all of his six wonderful children and the whole lot of his grandchildren. It was from Uncle Ceylon that his son Guy learned that the greatest joy in life comes from giving, not from receiving.

It was Christmas Eve. Guy was fifteen years old and feeling like the world had caved in on him because there just hadn't been enough money to buy the shotgun that Guy had wanted for Christmas. Uncle Ceylon had a hunting rifle and allowed Guy to use it. Guy wanted a double-barrel shotgun so that he could hunt wild geese, ducks, and turkeys in their respective hunting seasons. Hunting was and is important for the villagers because it provides meat for the winter. Guy thought that if he had the shotgun, he would be able to add more variety to the family meals. For some reason, Uncle Ceylon and Guy did the chores very early that night. Guy just figured out that Uncle Ceylon wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible.

After supper was finished, Guy took off his house slippers and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Uncle Ceylon to get down the old Bible. Guy was still feeling sorry for himself and, to be honest, Guy wasn't in much of a mood to read the Scriptures. However, Uncle Ceylon didn't get the Bible.

Instead, he bundled up again and went outside. Guy couldn't figure it out because they had already done all the chores. Guy didn't worry about it long though; he was too busy wallowing in self-pity. Soon Uncle Ceylon came back inside the house. It was a cold, clear night outside and there was ice in his beard.

"Come on, Guy," Uncle Ceylon said. "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight." Guy was really upset then. Not only wasn't he getting the shotgun for Christmas, now Uncle Ceylon was dragging him out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that he could see. They had already done all the chores, and Guy couldn't think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this. Yet, Guy knew that Uncle Ceylon was not very patient when anyone was dragging their feet when he'd told them to do something, so Guy got up and put on his winter boots again and got his cap, coat, and mittens. Guy's mother, Sallie, gave him a mysterious smile as he opened the door to leave the house. Something was up, but Guy didn't know what. Outside, Guy became even more dismayed. In front of the house was the work team, already hitched to the big, double runner sled. Whatever it was they were going to do wasn't going to be a short, quick, little job. Guy could tell. They never hitched up the sled unless they were going to haul a big load.

Uncle Ceylon was already up on the seat, reins in his hands. Reluctantly, Guy climbed up beside him. The cold was already biting at him. He wasn't happy. When Guy was on, Uncle Ceylon pulled the sled around the house and stopped in front of the woodshed. He got off and Guy followed. "I think we'll put on

tha 'igh sideboards," Uncle Ceylon said. "Here, 'elp me." The high sideboards! The job was bigger than Guy wanted to do with just the low sideboards on, but whatever it was, they were going to do would be a lot bigger with the high sideboards.

After they had changed the sideboards, Uncle Ceylon went into the woodshed and came out with an armload of wood – the wood Guy had spent all summer hauling down from the mountain, and then all autumn sawing into blocks and splitting. What was he doing? Finally, Guy said something. "Pa," he asked, "Whatcha doin'?"

"Ya wer' by tha Widow Carper's lately?" Uncle Ceylon asked. The Widow Carper lived about two miles down the road. Her husband had died a year or so before and had left her with three children, the oldest being eight. (Sure, I'd been by, thought Guy, but so what?) "Yeah," Guy said, "Why?"

"I rode by just today," Uncle Ceylon said. "L'I George was out diggin' around in the wood pile tryin' ta find a few chips. They ain't got no wood, Guy." That was all Uncle Ceylon said and then he turned and went back into the woodshed for another armload of wood. Guy followed him. They loaded the sled so high that Guy began to wonder if the horses would be able to pull it.

Finally, after Uncle Ceylon had said that they had loaded enough, they went to the smoke house, and Uncle Ceylon took down a big ham, a side of bacon, some bear steaks, and a few cuts of venison. He handed them to Guy and told him to put them in the sled and wait.

When Uncle Ceylon returned he was carrying a sack of flour over his right shoulder and a smaller sack of something in his left hand. "What's in tha l'l sack?" Guy asked.

"Shoes. They ain't got no shoes. L'l George just had gunnysacks 'rapped 'round 'is feet when 'e was out in tha woodpile this morning. I gotha children a l'l candy too. It just wouldn't be Christmas withouta l'l candy."

Uncle Ceylon and his son Guy rode the two miles to Widow Carper's pretty much in silence. Guy tried to think through what his father was doing. They didn't have much by worldly standards. Of course, they did have a big woodpile, though most of what was left now was still in the form of logs that Guy and Uncle Ceylon would have to saw into blocks and split before they could use the wood. They also had meat and flour, so they could spare that, but Guy knew that they did not have any money, so why was his father buying those shoes and candy?

Really, why was he doing any of this? Widow Carper had closer neighbors than Guy's family. Guy thought it shouldn't have been their concern.

They came in from the forest trail at the blind side of the Carper house and unloaded the wood as quietly as possible. Then they took the meat, flour, and shoes to the door. They knocked. The door opened a crack and a timid voice said, "Who is it?"

"Ceylon, Ma'am, and ma son, Guy. Ken we come in fora bit?"

Widow Carper opened the door and let them in. She had a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. The children were wrapped in another blanket and were sitting in front of the fireplace by a very small fire that although burning, wasn't giving off any heat. Widow Carper fumbled with a match and finally lit the lamp. "We broughtcha a few things, Ma'am," Uncle Ceylon said and set down the sack of flour. Guy put the meat on the table. Then Uncle Ceylon handed her the sack that had the shoes in it. She opened it hesitantly and took the shoes out one pair at a time.

There was a pair for her and one for each of the children – sturdy shoes, the best, ... shoes that would last. Guy watched her carefully. Widow Carper bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling and then tears filled her eyes and started running down her cheeks. She looked up at Uncle Ceylon as if she wanted to say something, but it wouldn't come out.

"We broughtcha loada wood too, Ma'am," Uncle Ceylon said. He turned and said, "Guy, go bring in enough ta last awhile. Let's get that there fire up ta size and heat this place up."

Guy wasn't the same person when he went back out to bring in the wood. He had a big lump in his throat and as much as he hated to admit it, there were tears in his eyes, too. In Guy's mind, he kept seeing those three children huddled around the fireplace and their mother standing there with tears running down her cheeks with so much gratitude in her heart that she couldn't speak.

Guy's heart swelled within him and a joy that he had never known before filled his soul. Guy had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it had made so much difference. Guy could see that he and his father were literally saving the lives of these people.

Guy soon had the fire blazing and everyone's spirits soared. The kids started giggling when Uncle Ceylon handed them each a piece of candy and Widow Carper looked on with a smile that probably hadn't crossed her face for a longtime. She finally turned. "God bless you," she said. "I know the Lord has sent you. The children and I have been praying that He would send one of his angels to spare us."

In spite of himself, the lump returned to Guy's throat and the tears welled up in his eyes again. He had never thought of his father in those exact terms before, but after Widow Carper mentioned it, Guy could see that it was probably true that his father, my Uncle Ceylon, was a kind of angel.

Guy was sure that a better man than his father had never walked the earth. Guy started remembering all the times his father had gone out of his way for mother, Guy, and Guy's sisters. The list seemed endless as Guy thought about it.

Uncle Ceylon insisted that everyone try on the shoes before they left. Guy was amazed when they all fit and wondered how his father had known what sizes to get. Then Guy guessed that if his father was on an errand for the God, then God would make sure his father got the right sizes.

Tears were running down Widow Carper's face again when they stood up to leave. Uncle Ceylon took each of the kids in his big arms and gave them a hug. They clung to him and didn't want to let go of Uncle Ceylon and Guy. Guy could see that the children missed their own father, and Guy was glad that he still had his.

At the door Uncle Ceylon turned to Widow Carper and said, "Ma wife Sallie wants me ta invitcha'll over far Christmas dinner tomorra. The turkey'll be more than we ken eat, anda man can get cantankerous if 'e 'as ta eat turkey far too many meals. We'll be by to getcha about eleven. It'll be nice to have the 'l ones 'round. Guy, and my daughters Leah, Ruth, Beverly, and Edith haven't been 'l for quita spell. But, your 'l ones can play withar 'l Sandra."

Widow Carper nodded and said, "Thank you, Ceylon. I don't have to say, 'May God bless you,' I know for certain that He will."

Out on the sled Guy felt warmth that came from deep within and he didn't even notice the cold. When they had gone a short ways, Uncle Ceylon turned to Guy and said, "Guy, I wantcha ta know something. Yar ma and me 'ave been tuckin' a 'l money away 'ere and there all year so we could buya that shotgun. But we din't 'ave quitanough. Yesterday, Josh Gates came by an' paid us back 'r portion of tha loan we an tha neighbors 'ad given 'im in the spring, ya know, the money we all gave 'im ta buy a bull because 'is 'ad drowned in the spring flood of Mooselook River. Yar ma and me were real excited, thinkin' that now we could

getcha that shotgun, and I started into Concord this morning to do just that. But, on the way I saw 'l' George out scratching in the woodpile with 'is feet 'rapped in those gunnysacks and I knew what I had ta do. Son, I spent tha money fer shoes an' a 'l' candy for those children. I 'ope ya unnerstand."

Guy understood, and his eyes became wet with tears again. Guy understood very well, and Guy was so glad that his father Ceylon had done it. Now the shotgun seemed very low on his list of priorities. Uncle Ceylon had given him a lot more. Uncle Ceylon had given him the look on Widow Carper's face and the radiant smiles of her three children. For the rest of his life, whenever Guy saw any of the Carpers, or split a block of wood, he remembered, ... and remembering brought back that same joy he felt riding home beside his father that night. Uncle Ceylon had given him much more than a double-barrel shotgun that night. Uncle Ceylon had given Guy the best Christmas ever.



Ride the horse-drawn sleigh ...



## **Over the River and Through the Woods<sup>11</sup>**

Over the River and Through the Woods,  
To Uncle Ceylon's house we go.  
The horse knows the way to carry the sleigh  
Through white and drifted snow.

Over the River and Through the Woods,  
Oh, how the wind does blow.  
It stings the toes and bites the nose  
As over the ground we go.

Over the River and Through the Woods,  
To have a full day of play.  
Oh, hear the bells ringing ting-a-ling-ling,  
For it is Christmas Day.

Over the River and Through the Woods,  
Trot fast my dapple gray;  
Spring o'er the ground just like a hound,  
For this is Christmas Day.

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<sup>11</sup> Written in 1844 by Lydia Maria Child, author of *American Frugal Housewife*, *The Family Nurse*, and others.

Over the River and Through the Woods,  
And straight through the barnyard gate.  
It seems that we go so dreadfully slow;  
It is so hard to wait.

Over the River and Through the Woods,  
Now Ceylon's cap I spy.  
Hurrah for fun, the pudding's done;  
Hurrah for the mincemeat pie.



[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_8384606\\_patriotic-christmas-garland-with-balls-and-golden-stars.html](http://www.123rf.com/photo_8384606_patriotic-christmas-garland-with-balls-and-golden-stars.html)

To all American patriots! The undersigned wishes you a meaningful Christmas, a healthy New Year, and the restoration of the American Republic.

*Frederick William Dame*

Patriotic, Steadfast, and True

December 22, 2011