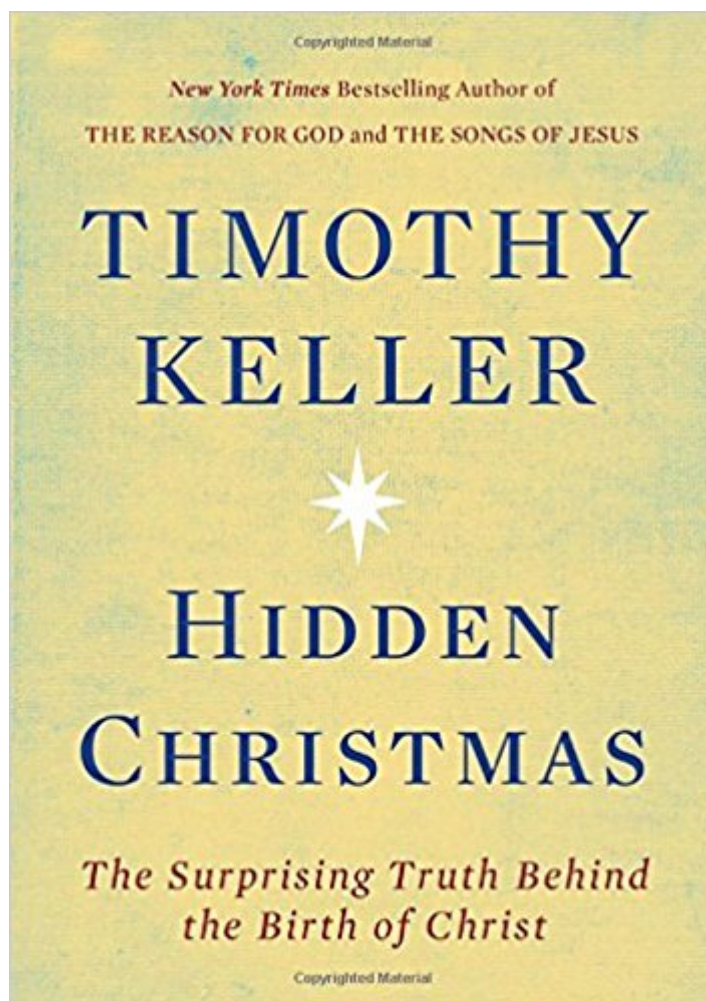


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Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind The Birth Of Christ



Synopsis

From pastor and New York Times bestselling author Timothy Keller comes the perfect gift for the Christmas holiday—a profoundly moving and intellectually provocative examination of the nativity story. Even people who are not practicing Christians think they are familiar with the story of the nativity. Every Christmas displays of Baby Jesus resting in a manger, decorate lawns and churchyards, and songs about shepherds and angels fill the air. Yet despite the abundance of these Christian references in popular culture, how many of us have examined the hard edges of this biblical story? In his new book Timothy Keller takes readers on an illuminating journey into the surprising background of the nativity. By understanding the message of hope and salvation within the Bible's account of Jesus's birth, readers will experience the redeeming power of God's grace in a deeper and more meaningful way. Look out for Timothy Keller's latest book, *À God's Wisdom for Navigating Life*, available from Viking in Fall 2017.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for *Hidden Christmas*: “[A] great gift book . . . Keller achieves his pastoral goal of teaching Christmas's most important message—God alone has the life, truth, and joy that we lack and cannot generate ourselves—and in doing so, provides solace for those who seek it.” Publishers Weekly
Praise for Timothy Keller and his other books: “Superb . . . we should be grateful to Keller . . . f

or his wisdom, scholarship, and humility. The Gospel Coalition “Tim Keller’s ministry in New York City is leading a generation of seekers and skeptics toward belief in God. I thank God for him.” Billy Graham “Unlike most suburban megachurches, much of Redeemer is remarkably traditional. What is not traditional is Dr. Keller’s skill in speaking the language of his urbane audience. . . . Observing Dr. Keller’s professorial pose on stage, it is easy to understand his appeal.” The New York Times “Fifty years from now, if evangelical Christians are widely known for their love of cities, their commitment to mercy and justice, and their love of their neighbors, Tim Keller will be remembered as a pioneer of the new urban Christians.” Christianity Today

Timothy Keller was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Bucknell University, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Westminster Theological Seminary. His first pastorate was in Hopewell, Virginia. In 1989 he started Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City with his wife, Kathy, and their three sons. Today, Redeemer has nearly six thousand regular Sunday attendees and has helped to start more than three hundred new churches around the world. He is the author of *Making Sense of God*, *The Songs of Jesus*, *Preaching*, *Prayer*, as well as *The Meaning of Marriage*, *The Prodigal God*, and *The Reason for God*, among others.

Two things impressed me most about this book: the warmth and engaging call of the gospel in every chapter, and Keller’s skillful way of handling complex theological topics with wonderful precision. Keller’s treatment of the favorite Christmas passages is complete with God’s sovereign grace, man’s corruption and sin, the need to respond in faith, the fact that faith is something only God gives, the Lordship that salvation demands, and on and on. I’ve never seen it put so humbly, so gently, so clearly, so accurately, so concisely. But the average reader won’t even know he’s reading a theological tour de force—it’s just the Christmas story, well told, suffused with the gospel. Keller writes like a modern-day C. S. Lewis, wrapping profound theology in the language of Everyman. There is no jargon in this book. Keller manages to get beyond the matters that divide in our current social scene and strikes right to the heart of our brokenness and sin. You can hand *Hidden Christmas* to the most radical leftist, or to a Constitutional conservative, and neither will be offended by anything but the presentation of the cross itself. I’ve read a few, not all, of Keller’s books. This is the

best so far, which is saying a lot since the others have been so good. In *Hidden Christmas* the author takes the Christmas texts from Matthew and Luke and carefully unfolds their meanings. A Liberty and Westminster grad, Keller has been preaching and teaching since 1978, and in every chapter Keller is writing about things you've never noticed in these passages of Scripture, and they are powerful and profound! *Hidden Christmas* is the gospel presentation you've been waiting for. Get a copy, enjoy it yourself, and then pass it on to a loved one.

Tim Keller states that the ideas expressed in this short book were forged not in writing but in preaching. Each chapter represents at least 10 or so meditations and sermons on each biblical text that he delivered in Christmas services across the decades. He tells us that Christmas is the only Christian holy day that is also a major secular holiday, resulting in two different celebrations, each observed by millions of people, which brings some discomfort on both sides. His fear is that the true roots of Christmas will become more and more hidden to most of the population. In this book he aims to make the truths of Christmas less hidden. He looks at some passages of the Bible that are popular because they are read each Christmas. In the first chapters of the book, looking at the Gospel of Matthew, we learn about the gifts God gave us at Christmas. In the following chapters, looking at the Gospel of Luke, we consider how we can welcome and receive those gifts. Through the Christmas story, Keller tells us about the Gospel. This is a book that I recommend you read and discuss with others, which I am doing with friends in a book club at work. Keller says many things about Christmas and the Gospel that I appreciated. A few of them are:

- To accept the true Christmas gift, you have to admit you're a sinner. You need to be saved by grace.
- Christmas is not simply about a birth but about a coming.
- Christmas shows us that Christianity is not good advice. It is good news.
- Christmas means that God is working out his purposes. He will fulfill his promises.
- Christmas tells us that despite appearances to the contrary, God is in control of history, and that someday he will put everything right.
- Christmas means that for those that are believers in Christ, there is all the hope in the world.
- The doctrine of Christmas, of the incarnation, is that Jesus was truly and fully God and truly and fully human.
- No one is really neutral about whether Christmas is true. If the Son of God was really born in a manger, then we have lost the right to be in charge of our lives.
- Christmas means that the King has come into the world. But the Bible tells us that Jesus comes as King twice, not once.
- Christmas means that race, pedigree,

wealth, and status do not ultimately matter. Christmas means illumination and spiritual light from God; it means reconciliation and peace with God by grace; it means God taking on a human nature. Christmas means the increase of peace, both with God and between people. The manger at Christmas means that, if you live like Jesus, there won't be room for you in a lot of inns. Christmas means that salvation is by grace. Christmas means you can have fellowship with God. Christmas and the incarnation mean that God went to infinite lengths to make himself one whom we can know personally. The incarnation, Christmas, means that God is not content to be a concept or just someone you know from a distance. The joy that Christmas brings, the assurance of God's love and care will always reinvigorate you no matter the circumstances of your life.

Hidden Christmas has all the hallmarks we've come to expect from Keller. Keller loves to remind us of God's amazing grace and does so with well-chosen illustrations and fresh insights on old truths. Keller is irenic in his approach, but that doesn't mean he pulls his pastoral punches. He is an honest diagnostician of the soul so he reminds us in no uncertain terms that all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. With all the commercial fanfare of Christmas it is easy to forget what Christmas is all about. And the incarnation, as Keller rightly notes, is the centerpiece to everything: "But I have known many people who have discovered that once they wrestled with and understood the incarnation, it became far easier to accept the rest of the teachings of the New Testament as well." For Christians like me who have struggled with doubts, this is a wonderfully clarifying and life-giving truth. It will be the same for many who read Hidden Christmas. Hidden Christmas is a good reminder that "Jesus is not one more lovely story pointing to these underlying realities" • Jesus is the underlying reality to which all stories point.

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