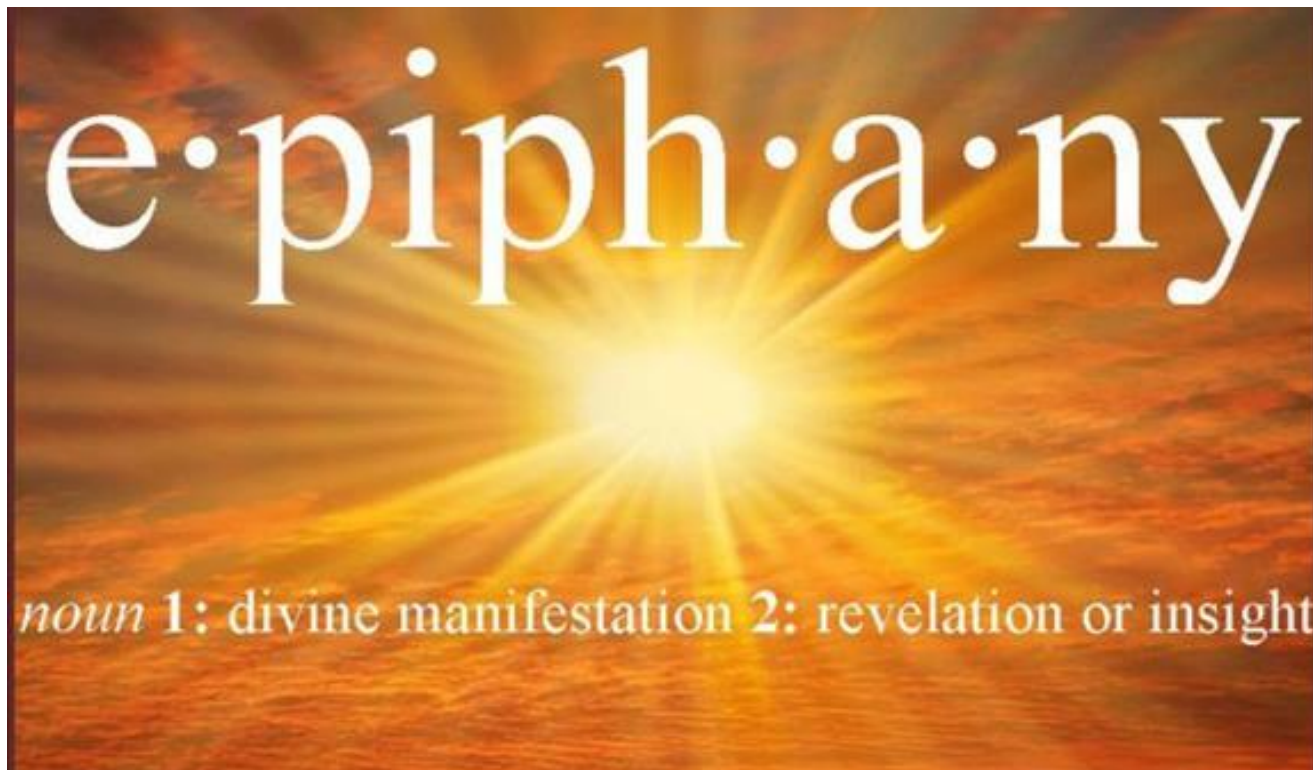


O' What an Epiphany



Text

...and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22)

The trick question:



What separates
Christianity from all other
religions?





Answer:

Christianity is the only religion in which God became fully human & dwelt among humans.



Why do I bring all of
this up today?

Epiphany

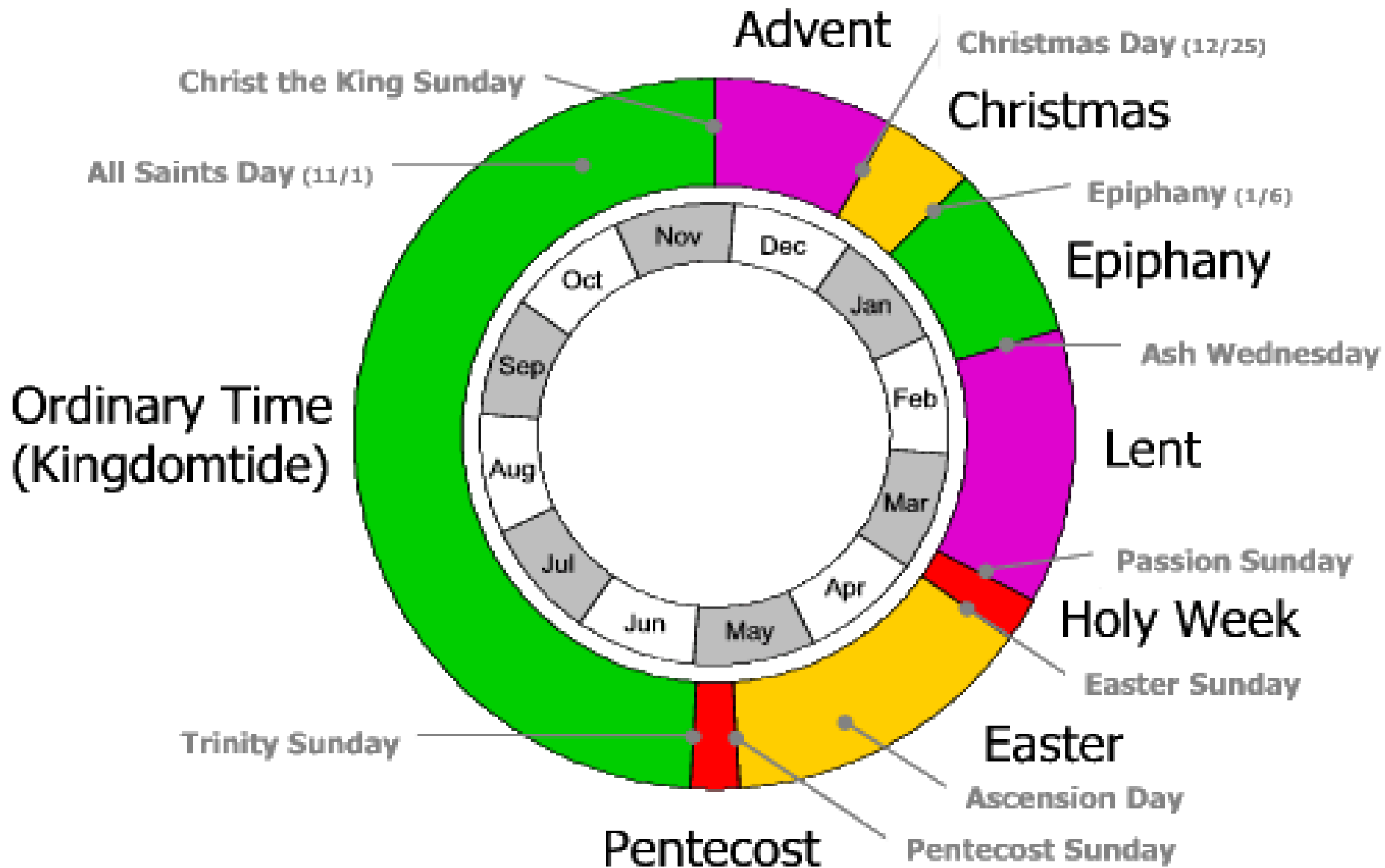
shock oracle rarity wonder unforeseen sign inspiration announcement attack godsend display astonishment publication whammy eureka thunderbolt marvel awe proclamation unexpected uncovering foreshadowing wonderment vision revelation discovery phenomenon news manifestation unearthing astoundment start unveiling flash divination suddenness amazement miracle jolt divulgement fortune exhibition exposure curiosity astoundment start unveiling flash divination

A season of four to nine weeks (in ordinary time), from the Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6) through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The length of the season varies according to the date of Easter.

The gospel stories of this season describe various events that manifest the divinity of Jesus. The coming of the Magi is celebrated on the Epiphany. The Baptism of our Lord is observed on the Sunday after Epiphany (see our gospel reading today).

The gospels for the other Sundays of the Epiphany season describe the wedding at Cana, the calling of the disciples, and various miracles and teachings of Jesus. The Last Sunday of this season is always devoted to the Transfiguration.

Jesus' identity as the Son of God is dramatically revealed in the Transfiguration gospel, as well as the gospel of the baptism of Christ.



Indeed the divinity of Jesus was foretold in Matthew's Nativity narrative.



All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).- Matthew 1: 22&23

Why should the
divinity of Jesus be
important to you?

I hope to answer that question by looking at the following:

(1) **Immanuel**, God with us.

(2) Immanuel, **God** with us.

(3) Immanuel, God **with us**

Immanuel, God with us.

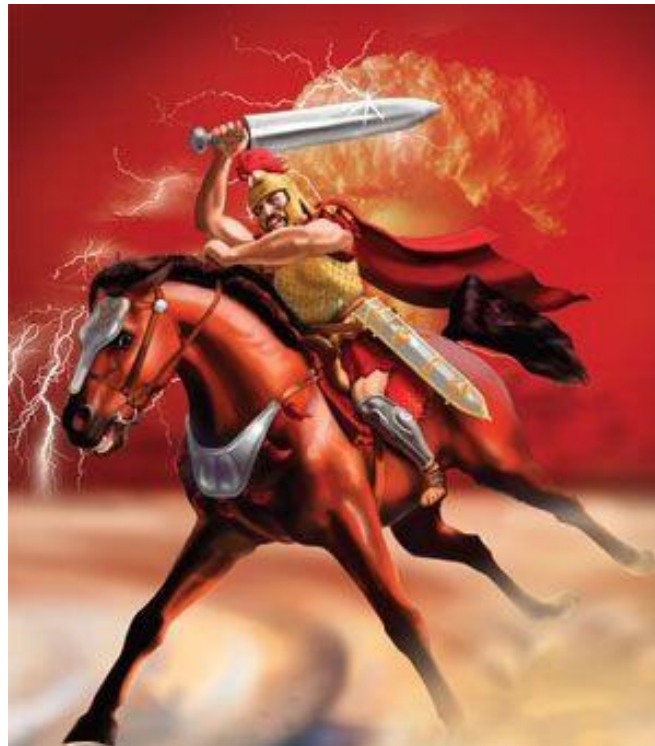


Immanuel is a Hebrew name which appears in the book of Isaiah as a sign that God will protect the house of David (also Romanised Emmanuel.) The Isaiah prophecy is later picked up in Matthew and applied to Jesus.

THEREFORE THE LORD
HIMSELF WILL GIVE
YOU A SIGN.
BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN
SHALL CONCEIVE
AND BEAR A
SON, AND SHALL
CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL.

- ISAIAH 7:14

Throughout biblical times the Israelite people look forward to a messiah that was to come to liberate them from their enemies.



They hoped that his saviour would come with military might and overthrow their oppressors.



Their vision was short-sighted when compared to God's vision. God actually realised that yes, humankind was oppressed but the root cause of that oppression was not cruel earthly rulers or leaders but rather sin, that thing that separates us from God.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."- Ephesians 6:12, NIV

In order to save humankind from sin's destructive and oppressive nature God set a great plan in motion...

That plan?

**For God to come into the
world in person...**



Immanuel, **God** with us.



Jesus is part of the Godhead or the Trinity and therefore fully God.

That means God came in person to execute God's plan for humankind's salvation.





¹In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and
the Word was God. ² He was with
God in the beginning. ³ Through him
all things were made; without him
nothing was made that has been
made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life
was the light of all mankind.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not
overcome^[a] it. ¹⁴ The Word became
flesh and made his dwelling among
us. We have seen his glory, the
glory of the one and only Son, who
came from the Father, full of grace
and truth. (John1:1-5,14)

There are other examples in the bible of Jesus' divinity including Jesus forgiving the sins of others. E.g. Jesus healing the paralysed man.



When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” Some experts in Moses’ Teachings were sitting there. They thought, “Why does he talk this way? He’s dishonoring God. Who besides God can forgive sins?”

Mark 2;5-7

This is also exemplified in our text.

...and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22)

While the Christ was fully human in all ways, Jesus was also fully God in all ways.

This is one of the great mysteries of our faith that our God laid God's heavenly kingdom aside and took on human flesh to dwell with humankind.

This means therefore that God truly experienced what it meant to be human. While we may have advanced technologically, human nature remains unchanged. So God would have faced the same trials and tribulations we face in life today.

Jesus faced the sorrow of losing a beloved friend. (See Lazarus and the shortest verse in the bible “Jesus wept”).

He experienced anger. (See the cursing of the fig tree and cleansing of the temple).

In addition Jesus experienced temptation, though He never sinned. (See the story of Jesus in the wilderness).



Jesus also experienced betrayal of a friend (see Judas). Ultimately Jesus experienced humiliation, pain and torture. (See the criminal's death He died on the cross).



Immanuel, God **with us**



It is because God fully experienced what it means to be human while on God's mission to save humankind from sin that God can empathise with us.

God knows all our pain and suffering and longs to walk with us and carry us through all that we may face on this journey called life.



Fear not,
for I am with you

Isaiah 41:10

Even today God continues to be with us.

‘Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.’ Duet 31:6

The Take Away



As we enter this period of ordinary time in which we focus on the divinity of Jesus and we come off our Christmas highs, let us remember that the gift of the Immanuel, God with us, does not disappear.

Over the next few weeks and into lent and Easter we see unfold before us our God's great plan to rescue the human race which was doomed by sin, by God taking on human flesh, dwelling with us and ultimately dying for us.

Having been afforded the ability of hindsight, we know the Immanuel story is one of a God who loved us so much that God became human and pursued us even unto to death.

As our focus changes from the shepherds, the angels and the stable to Jesus' ministry and his divinity to ultimately his death on the cross ,we take courage in the fact that our God has walked the same path we trod.

He is the same God who knows our burdens and understands our perils having been born into this world and having lived a fully human life.

So as we prepare ourselves for the mysteries of Jesus to be revealed to us let us, remember...

- **Immanuel**, God with us.
- Immanuel, **God** with us.
- Immanuel, God **with us**