

CHRISTMAS 1994

Issued 11th October 1994

(Extracted from Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 4 of 1994)²

Christmas, the English name for the feast of the Nativity of Christ is celebrated by western Churches on the 25th day of December. The earliest mention of the observance of this day in history is the Philocalian calendar drawn up in Rome in the year 336. The Christmas mass, celebrated in churches both in the East and the West, was included in the Latin service book by the middle of the 6th century AD.

Although the estimated date of Christ's birth is thought by some experts to be in September, the traditional date for celebration coincides with the winter solstice when the Pagan festival of the nativity of "sol invictus" - the birth of the sun - is celebrated. As Christianity spread northwards it was found that the great yule feast of the Norsemen and the day of St. Nicholas also coincided. Through the centuries various traditions have been included: the visits by Santa Claus and the giving of presents; the eating of turkey appeared in 1573. Christmas pudding and cake, mince pies, Yule log, the Christmas tree with its decorations and the holly and the ivy appeared from about the 1780's. The church later introduced 'manger songs', nativity plays and carols, Pantomimes and the giving of cards are also special. Christmas is kept as a special holiday throughout the English speaking world: business ceases, presents are exchanged and families unite. Countries at war usually declare a temporary truce on Christmas Day and it is a time for universal peace.

This special issue of stamps depicts the story of the conception, birth and adoration of the baby called Jesus. The religious text is taken from the King James version of the Holy Bible. The history of Christmas is abbreviated from the Chambers Encyclopaedia. The borders have been decorated with popular symbols used at this festive season of the year.



35c

Archangel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that "God the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit", has chosen her to bear a son and He will be named Jesus.



80c

Joseph takes Mary on a donkey to Bethlehem for the Census decreed by the Roman Emperor. This is also in accordance with God's will.



\$1.15

The Inns in Bethlehem are crowded and the only room is in a stable. Here Jesus is born, wrapped in swathing bands, and placed in a manger.



\$1.75

An angel of God tells the shepherds in the field to go to Bethlehem where a baby, who is Christ the Saviour, has been born in a stable.



\$1.95

The Magi, wise men from the East, follow the new star in the sky to Bethlehem. They bring precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.



\$2.30

Unto us a child is born "... and his name shall be called Wonderful. Counsellor. The mighty God. The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Catalogue listings

SG	ZSC ¹	Value	Description
882	309	35c	Mary & Gabriel
883	310	80c	Joseph & Mary
884	311	\$1.15	Manger
885	312	\$1.75	Shepherds
886	313	\$1.95	Three Kings
887	314	\$2.30	Madonna & Child

Technical details

Stamp size:	All values	28 x 42 mm
Sheet Size:	50 stamps (5 rows of 10 stamps), two panes per printed sheet	
Artist:	Paula Ware	
Paper:	ZSC paper type D – HS8, fluorescent front and back, with cream PVA gum.	
Print colours:	Black, magenta, cyan & yellow	
Perforations:	SG 14½, ZSC 14¼	
	Right margin:	Perforated through.
	Other margins:	Imperforate
Printer:	NatPrint, Harare, Zimbabwe	
Printer's Imprint:	Bottom Margin, below Row 5 Columns 5 & 6. Imprint printed in black	

Cylinder numbers: Bottom margin below R5/1. Colours from left – cyan, magenta, yellow, black

Colour register: Type TL 4– round boxed – left margin opposite R5/1. Colours reading down – cyan, magenta, yellow, black

Sheet Value: Top margin, below R5/10, printed in black.

Sheet Number: Type SN 4a with ‘PTC’ prefix, right margin opposite R5/10, reading down

Print numbers:	35c	1,500,000	80c	150,000
	\$1.15	150,000	\$1.75	180,000
	\$1.95	150,000	\$2.30	180,000

Issue date: 11th October, 1994

Withdrawal from sale:

Demonetisation: 13th July 1998

Listed varieties

No listed varieties have been noted

Unlisted Varieties

There are numerous small dots and specks in the printing of these stamps, particularly in the backgrounds. Some dots and specks shown below are a bit more distinctive, some may be constant.



First Day Cover

The cover numbering comes from the catalogue produced by Geoff Brakspear.

A pictorial first day of issue canceller was produced for this issued and was used by the Philatelic Bureau. Other first day cover cancellers continued to be used at main post offices.



Bibliography:

1. "The Zimbabwean Concise Postage Stamp Catalogue", published by Harare Stamp Company, edited by Ken Allanson, Mike Amos and Geoff Brakspear. The catalogue continues to be updated and expanded by Geoff Brakspear
2. PTC Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 4 of 1994.