

12.22.19 ~ Christmas Celebrates God Coming to Earth!

Christmas is a compound word made up of the words "Christ" [the "Anointed One"], and "Mass" [a religious service or observance]. Christmas commemorates a celebration in honor and worship of Jesus Christ, the Anointed One from God, who has already come.

The statistical probability that any one man could fulfill just 8 of the prophecies made about the birth, life, death & resurrection of Jesus, would be written as one in one quintillion (1 in 10 to the 17th power or the number one with eighteen zeros beside it: 1,000,000,000,000,000,000).

If you put 10 silver dollars into a hat, with one of them marked in a special way, the chance that you would reach in and pull one out, and that it would be the coin that is marked, would be a 1 in 10 probability.

If you covered the state of Texas with silver dollars to a depth of two feet (marking just one of the dollars in a special way), and you were allowed to randomly pick up any dollar from anywhere in the state -- the chance that you would pick up the one silver dollar that had been marked, would be 1 in 10 to the 17th power or one in one quintillion.

But you know, Jesus didn't just fulfill 8 prophecies, He fulfilled over 300 that were made concerning the Holy One of God, the Servant Savior, Messiah, and all that He would accomplish while He was on earth; all these have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ, God's Son, every one of them!

How can anyone believe that what the Bible records about Jesus Christ is just a myth or a well constructed hoax? What the Bible teaches about the birth, life, death, resurrection and return of God's Son is the absolute and sovereign truth.

Jesus Christ is God's One and Only Plan, Provision, and Promise by which we receive forgiveness for sins and eternal life, and so, His birth is critically important!

Two of God's prophets (Isaiah and Micah), some 700 years before Christ's birth, wrote about the coming Savior: **Isaiah 7:14**, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel." **Micah 5:2**, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be Ruler over Israel, Whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Matthew's account (**1:18-23**) tells us Mary was with child from the Holy Spirit, the fulfillment of **Isaiah 7:14**, *Immanuel*, which means, "God with us."

Luke's account (**2:4-10**) tells us that God's Son is to be born in Bethlehem, the fulfillment of **Micah 5:2**, this One being born has always existed and will be King over Israel.

Christmas is in celebration of God sending His Son to us in the flesh of a baby who was to be given the name Jesus --which means, "God's Salvation." He is the Savior who was been born in the town of David; He is Christ the Lord.

Jesus' birth happened just as God announced through the prophets, everything being made ready for the advent of God's Son, at just the right time (**Galatians 4:4-5**), "when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Politically – Rome as the world Ruler, had provided good roads and a time of relative peace, allowing safe travel throughout its territories. The message of Christ could now be taken to the rest of the world.

Culturally – The world's people were more educated and unified than at any other time in history, and Koine Greek (the basic dialect of the Roman Empire) was common in most of the world at that time; it also happened to be the language that the New Testament would be written in.

Spiritually – The world was more accepting of different religious beliefs, philosophies and practices; and the Jews had a renewed interest in the OT Scriptures that pointed to Immanuel, the Savior who would come to us in human flesh.

Israel had long waited for its Messiah; repeatedly God had announced His coming, giving special details about His arrival, and then delivering Him just as He had said it would happen.

See **Luke 2:1-7**. The census required all Jews to return to the town of their ancestry. Both Joseph (through Solomon, **Matthew 1:6, 16**) and Mary (through Nathan, **Luke 3:23, 31**) were in the ancestral line of David.

Poor Mary, in her ninth month of pregnancy, had to ride on a donkey for about 80 miles, that had to be rough; and then for her and Joseph to finally arrive in Bethlehem and not be able to find a decent room for Mary to give birth to her son; but instead, to end up, most likely, in a stable where animals were sheltered.

See **Luke 2:8-18**. Luke doesn't dwell on the hardship of Mary's impending delivery and the fact that there is no comfortable room for her to lie down; but instead he records that "there were shepherds out in the fields nearby (they didn't have comfortable rooms either), as they were keeping watch over their flocks at night.

And as we studied last week, it is much more likely that December was the time of Mary's conception and nine months later in September was more probable for the time of Christ's birth. Remember, the climate of Palestine in December, in Bible times, especially Jerusalem and Bethlehem (which are at 2600 ft elevation), could be very cold (dropping to well below freezing at night) and rainy; and it was not the practice of the shepherds of Judea to be out with their flocks in the open fields later than about the end of October; it was the custom then (as it is now) to withdraw the flocks from the open fields and house them (or move them to lower elevations) for the winter."

Luke tells us that an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, this angel caused them to be engulfed in bright light and they were terrified. But then the angel said (**Luke 2:10-12**), "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.

And if that wasn't enough (**Luke 22:13-14**) "Suddenly a great company of heavenly host appeared to the shepherds, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom God's pleasure rests" [or "peace among men with whom God is pleased, on whom His favor rests"]. Let me ask you this, who among men, women and children of age, has and knows God's favor, or God's pleasure? Only those who have believed in His Son!

Remember when Jesus was baptized by John, Mark tells us (**1:10-11**) that heaven opened and the Spirit like a dove descended upon Jesus, and a voice from heaven said, "You are My Son, Whom I love, with You I am well pleased."

And then, when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, in the presence of Peter, James and John (**Mark 9:7**), a cloud engulfed them and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My Son, Whom I love, listen to Him!"

Here, in Luke (**2:15**) we are told that the angels left the shepherds and went back into heaven (no doubt, the shepherds were somewhat relieved, I mean, they had never seen or heard anything like this before). Then we are told that the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So the shepherds hurried off (**2:16**), and it seems that there wasn't one bit of hesitation (they saw, heard, believed and went), and they found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger, just like the angels had said.

When they had looked upon the Savior (**2:17-18**) they went about sharing the good news that the Savior had indeed been born, and people were evidently amazed at what the shepherds told them, but according to the record we have here in Luke, it doesn't seem that anyone else cared enough to go see this glorious thing that had happened.

Luke 2:19 records, "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." No doubt, Mary thought back to the angel's announcement about her Holy conception, to how Joseph had responded to this news, and to the special names "Jesus" and "Immanuel," to be given to her baby boy!

The shepherds (**2:20**) "returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

Let's consider a few remarkable things about Christ's first advent to earth.

When Jesus came the first time, there was no acceptable room to be given to Him. The next time Jesus comes He will be the Landlord of the world.

When Jesus came the first time, only a few shepherds worshipped Him. The next time Jesus comes every eye will see Him, and knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord.

When Jesus came the first time, He came in the flesh of a helpless baby boy. The next time Jesus comes, He will be the Victorious Warrior of Heaven, the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords, and He will strike down all who oppose Him.

When Jesus came the first time, it was only a few Magi who brought Him gifts. The next time Jesus comes, He will bring gifts for all those who have believed and trusted in Him.

How about you? What is central in your celebration of Christmas? Are you praising God for His most magnificent Gift?

2Corinthians 9:15, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

Jesus Christ is the Savior who came to earth in the flesh of a baby; He grew up in obscurity, and in His early 30's was put to death on a cross, because He claimed to be God; He was then placed in a tomb, but on the third day after His death, eye witnesses said He came out of the grave alive (just like He had said that He would), victorious over sin, death and judgement, forever!

Christmas is about Jesus, because Christmas is Jesus. Christmas is a celebration that is to honor and glorify God's Son, the Holy Messenger and Savior from God, who has come.

Jesus is the Reason for the Season, and He is the only genuine hope that we have now, and forever!

Merry Christmas to all on whom God's favor rests, for you have received God's Peace and you are able to know God's Pleasure, now and forever, through Christ the Lord!

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Mike