

*"An Old Testament Christmas"*

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

Great to have you with us for another celebration of God's grace in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! I would especially like to welcome any visitors with us for the first time and other family members who have been here before but are only able to join us at Christmas time. A Merry Christmas to you and all our folks here tonight. It seems that Merry Christmas is once again gaining popularity in the nation. That's a good thing. But we all know that Christmas is more than a cheerful greeting; it's more than cards and gifts, gatherings and get-togethers. Christmas is about One Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we gather tonight, that's why we sing, that's why we give gifts – because of the greatest gift – God gave – His Son.

And when we celebrate Christmas, it is important to realize that Christmas didn't just pop out of nowhere. It wasn't something that was made up overnight or even in a generation. It was not something borrowed from the pagans or put together from a variety of sources. No, the plan of Christmas was set into motion right after Adam and Eve rebelled against God. It came about as soon as God pronounced the curse of suffering, pain, and death upon mankind. For we read in **Genesis 3:15**: *"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."*

Not the man, not the woman, but the seed. And it is the seed of the woman – normally you have the seed of the man – but there is no man here. In other words, it will be a descendant of a female with no biological male present. Can you say virgin birth? Hold that thought for a moment.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS IN ANY LANGUAGE**

Now if you were like me, you had to take English class in school, not all that enjoyable at times but necessary – if we are going to be able to communicate. And while not a whole lot stands out from my time in that class, there is one thing I will never forget and it is this. If you are going to gather information or solve a problem – there are six basic questions that always must be answered. Do you remember what they are? The Who, What, Why, Where, When, and the How. In other words, Who is involved? What happened? Why did it happen? How did it happen? Where did it happen? And When did it happen? If you are going to be a good journalist, you have to answer all six when it comes to your report; and they all should be in the first paragraph. If you are going to conduct research on a topic or a police investigation, all have to be answered.

Now we need to understand that such questions come from God Himself. They are found in any language. And when it comes to life, to the creation, to God Himself and the things of God, only He can give us the answers. Did you know that? Man will try to answer those questions pertaining to life, both the physical and the spiritual, but only God can answer them fully. We know some things but only God knows it all.

Realize also that God has designed life to be first expressed in the invisible reality of the mind, and then this reality is given life through words and through decisions to go forward with the ideas that are first thought and reflected upon in the mind. And then once they are thought and decided upon, they are fleshed out; they are put into action by the body. So too, we see the same pattern with creation – What was in the mind of the Father was spoken by the Son and enacted by the Spirit.

And we see it in the coming of the Son. What was in the mind of the Godhead was communicated to us in His Word and then brought to life in the appearance of Christ on earth – not just an appearance – but a living breathing fleshly being, conceived in his mother's womb - born of flesh and blood, but fully God – a spirit being. The Incarnation – God becoming flesh. It is why it is called the miracle of the Incarnation – such an act

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is not fully comprehensible in this life. But then again think of the human body, how it is so complicated and yet it functions as one body. That is the miracle of creation!

But now back to Christmas. Jesus may have come 2000 years ago, but God had already given His people the answers to the six basic questions when it came to the coming of His Son. In fact, we find them recorded in our Old Testament – hence the title. God spoke His Word through His prophets; these words were recorded to encourage us and to stimulate faith in our hearts to believe. It’s why the Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 15:4** *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”*

“The Scriptures” was the term for the written Word of God. So let’s look at how God answered the Who, the What, the Why, the How, the Where and the When of Christmas in the Holy Scriptures. In answering these questions far in advance, He gives us a blueprint for how we are to live right now and prepares us for the Second Coming of Christ – Jesus’ Return. In fact, what we are going to be talking about tonight is how I would let a Jewish person know that Jesus is their Messiah.

### **THE WHO OF CHRISTMAS**

Please turn with me now to **Isaiah 7:10-14**: *“Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, **11**“Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” **12**But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!” **13**Then he said, “Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? **14**“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”*

Here God is speaking through the prophet Isaiah to King Ahaz. The year is about 730 BC. King Ahaz, king of Judah, has received reports that the northern kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Syria are making plans to come against his kingdom. He is afraid and wants to seek the protection of the evil empire of Assyria – a totally pagan people. God speaks through the prophet Isaiah to assure him that, if he trusts in the Lord, all will be well (cf. **Is. 7:1-9**). God then even tells him to ask for a sign. King Ahaz decides that he doesn’t need a sign from God nor does he need to trust him. And he says so! So God replies and says that He will give a sign not just for Ahaz but for the entire line of David to demonstrate God’s faithfulness to His promises even when they are rejected. For even though the kingdom that Ahaz represents will fall, God will send His people a son. This child will be born of a virgin and he will be called Immanuel. As the Apostle Matthew notes in his gospel, the Hebrew “Immanuel” in Hebrew means “God with us.” So God answered the first question. He gave the WHO of Christmas over 700 years before the birth of Jesus!

It should be noted that Isaiah the prophet served during the reigns of kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah – a span of some 50 years (740-690 BC). His prophecies were recorded during his life and shortly after his death. The reliability of Isaiah is attested to by the fact that a virtually complete scroll of Isaiah among several less complete copies was found in a cave near the Dead Sea in 1947. Known as the Great Scroll of Isaiah, it has been dated to about 150 BC. Before this and the other scrolls were found, the earliest Hebrew Scriptures that we had were dated about 1000 AD. When they were compared to the older scrolls, scholars found that they were virtually identical with minor grammatical differences but none that affected the meaning of the text. This means that what we read today was actually written centuries before Christ was even born and it has been preserved accurately for over 2500 years!

### **THE WHAT OF CHRISTMAS**

We find the WHAT of Christmas in **Isaiah 9:6-7**, a passage made famous by Handel’s musical masterpiece, “*The Messiah*.”

*“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;  
And the government will rest on His shoulders;*

***And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.***

***7There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,  
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness  
From then on and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.”***

Here is the WHATat of Christmas – not only will a son be born and given to the people, but the government will rest on His shoulders. Do you remember what Jesus came preaching ***“Repent for the Kingdom of God is near.”*** What did He teach the people in parables? The Kingdom of God. He told everyone not to worry or be anxious but to seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness. That is what following Jesus is all about – getting to know the King and being a part of His kingdom and reflecting his kingdom – its power its righteousness, its love. Jesus not only came to teach us about the Kingdom, but He came to show us God in the flesh. Hence His name is Wonderful Counselor – Jesus said in **Jn. 14:16-17** and **Jn. 16:13-16** to His disciples on the night before He died, ***“I will give you another Counselor, the Holy Spirit, and He will be with you forever. He will take from Me and disclose it to you,”***

Jesus accepted worship from His followers and He forgave sins; He walked on water, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and Himself rose from the dead. He is the Mighty God. Jesus said, IF you have seen Me, you have seen the Father; from now on You have seen Him and know him.

Jesus said in **Jn. 14:27**, ***“Peace I give to you My peace I give with you, not as the world gives do I give to you.”***

What is life about? Who you know and what you know? Do you know the Lord Christ? Do you seek first His kingdom and His righteousness? You can do that no matter what field of work you are in.

But now let’s look at the How of Christmas.

### **THE HOW OF CHRISTMAS**

How was it done? **Isaiah 11:1-3** tells us: ***1Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.***

Jesse was King David’s father. Even though the Davidic Monarchy ended with the fall of Zedekiah in 586 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar, a shoot will spring from the stem or stump. This points to the fact that a descendant of David will arise who will not only bear fruit but the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him.

***2The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and strength,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.***

***3And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,  
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,  
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;***

Christ’s coming was through and by the Spirit of God. In **Mt. 1:20**, ***The angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”***

The Spirit came upon Christ at His baptism. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus said I will give you another Comforter to be with you forever, the Holy Spirit. Jesus said you shall receive power when the Spirit comes upon you. The way we grow in the Lord, the way we live the Christian life is through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Christ inside you. It is your connection to the supernatural realm that transcends the natural world. Jesus while He was in the flesh was guided by the Spirit. The Spirit is the presence and power source of God in us. It is how we receive counsel and guidance, how we perceive spiritual truths, how we are agents of God’s miracle-working power. Paul wrote in that the spirit gives life, the flesh does not profit”. It is why Zechariah said to Zerubbabel before building the Temple in **Zech. 4:6**, not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord. Jesus said, **“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest parts of the earth.”** (Acts 1:8)

What is the key to having the Spirit fill, direct, and empower you? The fear of the Lord. Christ walked in the fear of His Father – not an unhealthy or cowering fear. The fear of the Lord is having an awe-inspired respect and reverence for God. Unlike the rebellion of the world against God, Christ walked in the joy of submitting to His Father and teaching others of the blessing of doing so as well. When we walk in such fear, the Spirit will fill us!

That this descendant of David is no ordinary man is highlighted by the fact that He will not judge by what He sees or hears, but He will judge the heart. Only God can judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

To further show that this is no mere mortal, we read in **Is. 11:4-5**: **“But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. 5Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.”** Unlike human rulers, Christ does not operate from ego or self-promotion. His clothing is not that of the fanciness and of the world. Rather He is clothed with righteousness and faithfulness, the qualities of the Spirit rather than of the flesh.

### **THE WHY OF CHRISTMAS**

What about the WHY of Christmas? Why did Christ come? He certainly came to show us the Father and to teach us about the Kingdom of God, but the main mission was to correct that which we could not correct on our own - to solve a problem that man could not rectify on his own.

**Isaiah 53:1-6:** gives us the reason – ***1Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?***

***2For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,  
And like a root out of parched ground;  
He has no stately form or majesty  
That we should look upon Him,  
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.***

***3He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.***

***4Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.***

***5But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.***

Christ reversed the curse. He took our sin, our guilt, our punishment on Himself so that forgiveness could be freely bestowed upon mankind. We all know there is no greater love than to give your life up for another human being. But Jesus took it even further – He died not only for us, He died in our place by taking the death penalty for us. Think about that for a moment. It is like you are on death row. You are guilty, you have been sentenced, condemned to die, and someone else says, “Judge, I want you to release them, and I will take the punishment.” It is why we read in **Romans 5:8**: “***God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.***”

You see, we can’t remove our sin nature simply by following the law or by doing good. The only way your sin nature can be addressed is at the foot of the cross. It only can be dealt with by humbling ourselves before the Lord, admitting our guilt, and asking for His forgiveness and His help to do better and to change the way we think. And then we need to show mercy to others just as we have been shown mercy. The WHY of Christmas is Christ reconciling us to His Father through the cross. As the famous Christmas hymn “*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*” says, “

### **THE WHERE OF CHRISTMAS**

Where would the first Christmas take place? Again the Scriptures of our Old Testament tell us. The Spirit of the Lord spoke through the prophet Micah and declared in **Micah 5:2-3a**, “***But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.***” **3***Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child.*”

But the WHERE of Christmas went beyond Bethlehem to Nazareth in Galilee and to Samaria and Judea and Jerusalem and eventually throughout the entire Roman Empire and then the world. How so? Christ rules in our hearts through His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The First Coming of Christ is about the coming of the Kingdom in our hearts. The Second Coming of Christ will be the establishment of the Kingdom in the entire visible universe.

### **THE WHEN OF CHRISTMAS**

But what about the WHEN? Did God tell His people the Jews when? No. Why? So they would not become complacent or discouraged but so that they would be ready and remain vigilant. God gives us all we need in this life to rise above and be His light in the darkness. He gives us the Who – a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives us the What – it is about seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. He gives us the How. How do we follow the Lord, how do we live for the Kingdom? Through walking in and by His Spirit. Why all of this? He loves us so much that He is willing to forgive us and change us to be better people, people after His own heart so that we can take the message of reconciliation to others that they might be reconciled to God and to each other.

Where? Everywhere. When? Again, we don’t know because we are not to know the future. We don’t know when God will call us home and we don’t know when Christ is returning.

## **CHRISTMAS POINTS US TO CHRIST’S RETURN**

In closing, Christmas is a special time – it reminds us of the plan of salvation God had before the ages of time. It reminds us of His miraculous creative power. It reminds us of His grace and love in the baby in the manger but also of whom the God-man that baby really was – Jesus Christ. And that Christmas is only part 1. Christ is coming back a second time and just as God answered all the questions of Christmas in the Old Testament, He answers all the questions of His Second Coming – and we’ll do this a lot faster – **The Who?** The same Lord and God – Jesus Christ. **The What?** – Christ is coming back to establish God’s Kingdom on Earth and then forever with the new heavens and new earth. **The How?** – He will return on the clouds with great power so that every eye will see Him. **The Why?** To judge the living and the dead and hold accountable the nations of the world and mankind that has rebelled against Him. **The Where?** Christ is returning to Jerusalem, the city where He was rejected. **The When?** For reasons mentioned above, we don’t know when.

You see Christ came the first time to address the issues of the heart – our spirit man. He will come a second time to judge the actions of the heart.

Brothers and sisters, the same God who foretold centuries earlier the coming of His Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ. The same God who as the Son of God took on flesh and became man. This same God who answered virtually all the questions about His coming, He is speaking to us tonight and His Spirit is telling us to look beyond this Holy Day, this Holy Season, and look into the eyes of Christ Himself, look into His heart and know that He can be known, His Kingdom can be entered into, His power and presence can be experienced, we can be forgiven and have the assurance of eternal life, we can know and love the One True God! He has given us all that we need to know. He has given us the ultimate sign – His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. *“O come let us adore Him!”*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!