

The Heart of Christmas

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Thousands and thousands of souls are in hell today who exchanged gifts at Christmas and celebrated the day with parties and folly, but who never recognized that Jesus was born on this day into the world to be a Savior. On the other hand, thousands of well-intentioned people observe Christmas by just attending religious ceremonies, but while they follow to the letter their obligations, so many miss the heart of Christmas.

The Word of God says in Galatians 5:4, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." In 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, the cross of Jesus Christ is of none effect to those who do not love it. People despise the Cross when they do not bring it into a ministry of reconciliation for their marriages and in their families. The Resurrection is of no effect to those who live in carnality. The Word of God is of no effect to peo-

ple who do not understand the Holy Spirit's power and life.

As you read this booklet, begin by carefully reading Matthew 2:1-25 and Luke 2:1-20, considering even the historical details. God wants to impress upon us that He is a God of great detail—that the things and people we tend to “hurry by” are portions that reveal a masterpiece from a heavenly perspective. Let Christ fill your heart with the true meaning of Christmas.

Chapter One

KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT: THE PERFECTION OF GOD'S PLAN

Octavius, the ruler of the Roman Empire at the time of Christ's birth did not want to be called a king. In his mind, to be a king was not high enough. He also did not want to be called a dictator, because dictators were only temporary. So the Roman Senate consulted, and they decided to give him a title that implied deity: Caesar Augustus.

There was no war during the reign of Caesar Augustus, and for one reason: Everyone subject to him was in unbelievable bondage. When he put out an edict for the entire empire to register for taxation, there was no appeal, because no one *dared* to appeal.

Many miles away from Rome in a little place called Nazareth, in the midst of all the people in

Galilee and Judea, lived a unique couple—Mary and Joseph. In Mary’s womb was the Son of God.

Joseph carefully guarded Mary as they went to enroll in the city of Bethlehem. But when they finally arrived, there was no hotel, no caravan-sary, no place at all. Even the *kataluma* (translated in the King James version of the Bible as “inn”), a place for cattle to stay during the night, was filled with livestock. There was no room for this apparently insignificant family to stay.

That left one other possibility. There were several sheds, and Joseph took Mary into one of these tiny shelters. There, Mary delivered the baby Jesus.

Imagine the scene. They could not stay where people were, because there was no room—no palace for the King of kings, no hotel. They could not stay where cattle were, because there was no room. So Mary went into a shed, and gave birth to the Son of God.

Mary was a virgin. She conceived by the Holy Spirit. But on the day that would change eternal destinies, there were no midwives or ladies-in-waiting attending to this holy birth. She had no one to help her deliver the baby. *She* wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes. Mary,

Jesus' mother, had absolutely no help.

If you can, fathom this: From all parts of the world people came to honor Caesar's command. Patricians dressed in purple and splendor, the plebeians dressed in rags—such a diversity of people coming from every walk of life to enroll for the census. And from heaven, God's eyes were upon a little peasant girl and her husband, Joseph.

The Fulfillment of a Promise

Seven hundred and fifty-four years before Christ was born, the Holy Spirit told Isaiah in 7:14-15, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

Butter and honey speaks of poverty. It meant that Mary and Joseph would have no measure of food to give this child, as poor people who for days and weeks only had milk and honey and gathered a little bread.

And this is why I'm so excited about the Bible—why I love the Word of God, to preach the Bible, to be in a Bible-believing ministry that goes into all the world. We declare a Savior who

identifies with the poor and the weak. And in Micah 5:2, the Word of God says, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting."

Seven hundred and fifty-four years before, as Isaiah had predicted, when King Ahaz did not believe and did not want a sign, Isaiah said that a sign would be given to the dynasty of David.

Jesus Christ's birth was prophesied; His poverty, His priesthood, and His righteous government were prophesied. Along with His Kingdom, His suffering, rejection, and death were prophesied. But Jesus Christ's victorious resurrection and His ascension were also foretold.

The Veracity of His Word

Only in the Word of God do we have a book so absolutely accurate that every detail is prophesied. We have sure words that have been proven again and again. And because Jesus was prophesied to be born of a virgin in a poor family, He came not as a speculator, nor as a president of a country, nor as an engineer, nor as a

financier. He came as the Savior.

The Word of God says that Jesus was Mary's firstborn. He came to a depraved society, where a man who considered himself to be Deity was ruling the Roman Empire. But Jesus Christ was the firstborn in creation, the firstborn among the brethren (Romans 8:29), the firstborn from the dead.

Isaiah 53:9 says, "he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." Matthew 27:38 reveals that while He hung on the cross, a thief was on His left side and a thief was on His right. Verses 57-60 prove He was buried in a borrowed tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man who was Jesus' disciple.

Jesus Christ our Savior came to us in the most unusual conditions. Acts 8:32-33 says, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."

Chapter Two

HE CAME IN MEEKNESS

When we consider the announcement of Jesus' birth, it is important to understand that the angels appeared to the *shepherds*, as they praised God with glorious, overwhelming praise. The sky lit up as the angels began to praise this Christ—this Man whose meekness and humility were predicted. This Man “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men....he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Savior. He came into the world with a gentle and meek kind of spirit that was willing to be born in a shed. There was not even room for Him to share with the cattle overnight. He couldn't be born in any other room but a

shed.

And this Man, brought up in the poverty-stricken city of Nazareth, showed us what it means to be a servant, what it means to have a meek spirit. He could have complained about His Father's plan. "Why can't I be born somewhere else but a shed?" He could have complained, "Why couldn't I at least be born where the cattle are? Why can't there be someone to help Mary?" He could have asked for so many things. "Why did Herod have to kill all the first-born so he could try to kill Me?" He could have asked about that. But He did not.

Open Our Eyes, We Want to See Jesus

Most people do not understand how fortunate they are. Most have a home. At the least, we have shelter, food, and clothing. Many have insurance programs, and most of us have decent health. We have jobs, security, and money, or some provision to meet basic needs. Yet in our comfort, often striving and struggling goes on in families because many will not accept the humble birth of Jesus Christ into their heart. They will accept neither the Pentecost of the Holy Spirit nor the reality of the living God. People murmur and complain because there is no

meekness.

This world is full of problems, but thanks be to God for the amazing grace that has been given to us. We should be singing praises to God and giving Him glory in the highest! We should be worshipping Him, because He has told us everything that would happen. Everything about Him was prophesied.

And this One who cared for the little children said, "Let them come to Me, for such is the Kingdom of God." This One who visited common people like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus because He lived as a common person; this One of whom it is said, "there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2); this One who now condescends to come to live inside of our hearts—*this* One indwells our lives with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He is the One who inspired common men to write the sixty-six books in the Bible, the complete canon of Scriptures. It is the written Word of God that reveals we don't have to live in these problems. Instead, we can be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through the living Word, Jesus Christ. He says we can reckon that we are indeed dead unto sin (Romans 6:11). Then He tells us not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies

(Romans 6:12).

Present Yourself

Every child of God needs to present himself to this One who is God. His Holy Spirit comes into our life and reveals the truth about Jesus Christ and the validity of every single word of God. He reveals the reality of the coming Rapture, the truth about the Bema Seat evaluation for believers in heaven and the Second Advent of Christ, when we come back with Him riding white horses.

The Holy Spirit reveals the power of Christ's life to Church Age believers. We live in a time when each one has access to God directly through Jesus Christ. We are members of the royal family, kings and priests unto God (1 Peter 2:9). We were made that way by Christ, washed from our sins by His own precious blood. We live in an age with the work so finished that *every* Christian is complete in the sight of God the Father (Colossians 2:10).

Philippians 3:15 says that as many who are perfect *in their position in Christ*, should forget the past and press forward for the prize of the high calling. If you are not experiencing your position because of something wrong in your

life, God will reveal it unto you.

Privileged People

We have such a privilege now because of the birth of Christ and because of His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. We are members of His body, flesh, and bones, joined to Him as one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). Jesus Christ is closer to us than anything we can see with our eyes because He is living inside of us. We have a privilege of fellowshiping with Christ as we redeem the time because the days are evil.

We have such a privilege to present the Gospel, through which we can pull men and women out of hell's flames into heaven's glow, into heaven's journey. We have the privilege to offer people God's forgiveness for their sins.

We have a privilege to live clean, pure, holy lives, and to have a single-eye toward God, receiving His love that casts out fear. It is our privilege to be close to this One who created us, this One that was so humble that He left the splendor of heaven and came to a shed for His birth.

We have such a privilege to pray to God and to see God change this nation, our families, and unsaved loved ones. We have such a privilege to talk with God and see our businesses prosper,

our families prosper, and our Christian life excel beyond our expectations.

We have such a privilege to see God move, bringing what heaven desires to give us: the Savior, our Lord, and the joy of His Holy Spirit, with praise and worship.

We have such a privilege to be changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of God instead of staying in the same old ways. Instead, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” and we are changed. We come before God in meekness and in humility, and we understand that whatever our lot is in life, there isn’t a single thing that can compare to the lowliness of His birth. And nothing can compare with the way Mary and Joseph were treated when there was no room in the *kataluma*.

Receive the Gifts of His Promises

“This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our [personal] faith.” (1 John 5:4). “God always causes us to triumph” (2 Corinthians 2:14). “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37).

“God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”

(2 Timothy 1:7). The spirit of fear comes from the devil. The spirit of depression, anxiety, and sadness comes from the devil. God has given me a sound mind and power in my thinking. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. *In* everything give thanks. *For* everything give thanks" (Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20).

We are members of God's royal family, royal priests, seated above. We are not second-rate citizens. We have an inheritance, and we have access to the Father for all things. All I have to do is believe, receive, and draw near to the throne of grace and mercy.

We have a birthright, and it is revealed in the promises of God. All of His promises are yea (2 Corinthians 1:20). Not one of them has fallen to the ground (1 Kings 8:56). Marry those promises; kiss those promises; court those promises. Go out with those promises, and go to bed with those promises! They are ours!

Chapter Three

CHRIST'S PURPOSE: OUR PERFECTION

We who have received Jesus Christ as our Savior understand that He came to earth as a man—flesh and blood—to purchase our salvation and to deliver us from the penalty and the power of sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ was born in a lowly manger in a tiny shed in Bethlehem of Judea for one reason: to perfect every single Christian and to bring us into the perfect environment of heaven.

Everyone desires to be in a land where there is no sickness or death, where there will never be another act of violence. In heaven, there will never be another divorce or a person leaving the cemetery in tears because they have lost a loved one. There will never be the sound of sirens coming to rescue victims of an accident.

The Lord Jesus Christ limited Himself to our free volition. But for those who are willing, He

is perfecting His people, conforming us to His image. Only when we have our new glorified bodies will we be perfected. In the meanwhile, He came to make us positionally acceptable. By adjusting to the grace of God, it is possible for our position in Christ to become our experience. But only after we have been perfected, will we begin to realize the glorious work of Calvary and the glorious purpose of His birth in a manger.

Chosen by the Father

When Christ was born, it was a very dark time in history. The country was overwhelmed with taxation, immorality, and trouble. The Father chose that time for this baby to be born in a manger to a poor young girl from Nazareth and a carpenter.

Then God chose shepherds to be the first to hear the angels announce Christ's birth. History describes the shepherds as people who were rejected—wounded, hurting, and in pain. Many became shepherds *because* they were outcasts. Rejected by leaders in religion and society, they preferred to be alone with the sheep.

Jesus came to these wounded people who were considered “damaged goods.” Religious

leaders thought the shepherds were thieves. And yet, the birth of the Savior was not announced to the noble people in the palaces, nor to the politicians on the hill, nor to the wealthy. The angels appeared to the shepherds. They were so thankful, and they came to Him singing praises.

It was Mary who was chosen. It was Joseph, a carpenter. It was a manger, the feed crib of an animal. It was a shed. That is how Jesus *chose* to be born. It was to a group of lowly shepherds that the angel of the Lord appeared and said, “Fear not.” The angels sang and the sky was brightened as the glory of God shone around them.

Jesus Christ is always appearing to those who think they have no value, who think they have nothing to offer. Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds—what a story!

Who Is on the Throne?

But there was a king named Herod who took the throne in Israel after his father was murdered. He acquired great power, and his plan was to control the country and to keep his power. So, he invited all of his enemies to a banquet, and had every one of them killed. He

killed his wife's grandfather, her brother, and three of his sons in the last few days of his life when he suspected that one of them was after his throne. Therefore, when he heard that wise men were seeking a king who was born in the city of David, Herod was deeply troubled.

Afraid he was dying, Herod invited the well-respected and the common people to a banquet in honor of himself. But when nobody wept or expressed the respect he hungered for, he planned to have them all killed. He even tried to gain the respect of the Jews by purchasing goods to build the temple, but he was not motivated by respect or love for them.

Though he possessed great power, Herod was a lonely man who was deeply troubled. He lied when he said to the wise men, "Tell me where He is so I can go and worship Him." Herod lived in the deception that he knew so well. He was vexed by the thought that a King was born in a manger, because that King would confront the terrible power he possessed.

Christ Comes to the Captives

Jesus Christ comes to many kinds of people this time of year. They may not be like Herod, but they are troubled. They want to control one

another. They want to be in charge of what goes on in their marriages. They don't want to lose control, so the fight goes on. And in some cases, each person is striving for the upper hand.

There may be a case where a woman will nag until she turns the household upside down. Jesus comes and confronts the controlling, driving spirits that continue year after year, but she will not let Jesus Christ be the King of her life. She will not let Him confront her weakness, so she goes on living in it, and then she feels guilty while she causes sadness in those around her because of this driving spirit. She is a captive of her own contention.

Somebody else may have a spirit of pornography or the spirits of illicit imaginations, lust, and promiscuity, but he lives in denial. Jesus comes to give him victory and to bring his life under control by the Holy Spirit. But when a man refuses to give up his control over this devastating self-destructive weakness, he limits the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41).

Yet, Jesus still comes to those who are troubled and those who will not relinquish themselves to Him.

There He was. The Savior for all men had appeared on the scene. Herod couldn't stand it,

so he had every male child two years old and younger killed. The shepherds found the Christ child and worshiped Him because God had spoken to them through the angels. The wise men who studied science, medicine, and astronomy came because they were seeking truth. By following the star as they came from the East, they found the Truth.

Chapter Four

CHRIST COMES TO
COMMON PEOPLE

The Christmas story has so many details. But the most beautiful thing is this: When the Holy Spirit moves and the Word of God becomes real, the Lord Jesus Christ especially comes to the common person. Mark 12:37*b* says, “The common people heard him gladly.” The common people were those who go through so many struggles of life, those who have not known what it means to be elevated into high positions.

The Lord came to David, the youngest of his family. He raised up David to defeat Goliath. The one who was not recognized by Samuel or anyone else was chosen. To those who are not noble, those who are abased, Jesus comes and wants to make magnificent things happen—great things—to those who are called “insignificant.”

Gideon was from the smallest tribe. This short young man felt so ashamed and so insecure, and the Lord raised him up to defeat the Midianites. God came to Gideon, who was the least of all of his tribe.

This is why the Bible says that God is *for* us. Because He is for us, no one can come against us in the end. God doesn't register our sins. He doesn't reject us when we fall. One day we will live in a perfect place in our new glorified bodies. God is for us!

Jesus went to a cursing fisherman and let him become the leader of all the disciples. Peter ministered to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles, and he had the key as an instrument of God to open all three doors. Though Peter would fail and deny Christ, Jesus Christ mightily used him. He was God's man despite the cursing and the failures of his life. God used Peter, and He will receive all the glory for it.

God could have used a tall, handsome man to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, but instead He used a very short man who had a tremendous eye problem and a squeaky voice. The apostle Paul was considered ugly in his appearance. They said, "...his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians

10:10). He was rejected in Corinth; the people preferred Cephas or Apollos because of Paul's appearance. But God used this little man with his eye problem and raised him up to reach all the Gentiles.

God is always using the little people, and He always uses people doing "little" things, like giving the cup of cold water. He uses the things that seem insignificant, like the swaddling clothes, the manger, and the animals' crib. He always uses the small things and the little things—but in His eyes, they are very big. Why? Jesus Christ is for us.

Certainly, God will bless the affluent. Certainly, He will save anyone who is wealthy if they will humble themselves and come to Him by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Of course He will prosper His people according to His will for the furtherance of His Gospel. But the Lord wants to teach us a great lesson in the Christmas story: He always uses people, and He doesn't look on the outward.

Moses could not speak well, so he used Aaron to speak for him. Because of a speech impediment, he thought he could not be used. But God used Moses to lead two and a half million people out of Egypt.

God used the quiet, silent Andrew, who was withdrawn into his own personality. He used the impulsive, boisterous Peter, who was presumptuous and always overdoing it. He used John and James, the “sons of thunder,” who, before they met Christ, were angry men with vicious tempers.

The Lord uses so many different personalities, and He doesn't care how little you are in your own sight. He doesn't care where you came from. He will go to the slums of Nazareth to be born into a family of a carpenter, unto a little peasant girl to bring forth this wonderful Savior.

The Depths of God's Love

The Lord Jesus Christ was hunted by the tyrant King Herod, but He escaped. He confronted this king who wanted to kill Him, and Herod died in defeat and frustration. But remember: The troubles that plagued Herod could have all been forgiven and relieved by Jesus Christ.

Think of what God said in Isaiah 5:4, “What more could I do unto you than I have done?” To us He is saying, “I took away all of your sins. I became sin. I paid the price of your judgment. I

died in your place. I have paid the price for everything you have ever done. I paid God the Father's price of holiness, justice, and righteousness with My sacrifice of love."

Now Jesus Christ is waiting to be gracious to us. If we believe, He said, "I will come into your life and give you a gift of eternal life. If you are already saved but troubled, it is only because you don't trust the power of My resurrection, My love, My forgiveness, and the renewal of your mind by My grace. If you are troubled, I will heal your troubles. I don't care what your burdens are. I understand every burden you carry."

It is said of God (Isaiah 63:9), "In all their affliction, he was afflicted." I have never been able to fully comprehend that: With *all* of our afflictions, He was afflicted. That is empathy, it is compassion, it is identification, it is oneness.

Because His love is so great, Jesus said, "If you are weary; if you are heavy laden; if you haven't been healed and your heart has been broken and hasn't been mended; if the burdens have overwhelmed you and no one seems to understand it—if you are going through these kinds of battles, *come unto Me*, and I will give you rest. I will!" (See Matthew 11:28.)

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

Confess Your Provision

All that Jesus did on the earth, He did as a common man with common people. He will bless anyone, but those who understand the nature of His commitment can trust Him in everything, whether it is a family problem, a financial need, or any other kind of problem. If He died, shed His blood, was buried, and rose again because He loves you and calls you by name—if the Father spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all—will He not freely give us *all things* (Romans 8:32)? That is what the Word of God says!

All of us need to discover this precious life of Christ in a new birth of Resurrection fellowship, in a new birth of Ascension joy, in a new birth of fervent prayer, and in a new birth of confessing our provision in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That manger scene ought to lead us to Christ. Let Him be the Lord over disease, the Lord over sin, the Lord over pain, over hurts, over mistakes, over iniquity, over passivity, over

finances. He is the Lord over all the gold and the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). He is the Lord over the universe, the One who controls history, the One who is in charge of every detail of life. And this One is waiting for us to simply come.

All He says to the believer is, "Come." *Just come*. It is only one word. If you have a driving spirit, get the victory and let a new birth of Resurrection life take over at this time. Fear and anxiety affect not only the central nervous system but the entire physical body. If you have a nagging spirit, or a spirit of fear and anxiety, will you come?

When you receive your healing for those problems, you will be healed of physical diseases and symptoms which come from nervous tension. This is the cry of the Savior: "Will you come and let Me heal your heart and your wounded relationships? Will you come just because I want you to come?"

Don't you think that if Christ died for you and calls you by name that He will also take care of anything you bring to Him? Bring it all to Jesus and lay it at His feet. Come, because He loves you with an everlasting love. He will never leave you, and He will never, no never,

forsake you. He will perfect you and bring you into a perfect place.

Christ's desire for us is this: "I want you to get to know Me, respond to Me, serve Me, be a family with Me, honor Me, and release My life while you are on the earth."

Our time is short. We have a privilege to exercise faith and trust God's Word. Express His life in the details of little things. He came to us. And now, we can come boldly to Him.

CONCLUSION

Are you thankful that Jesus Christ was humble enough to be born in a shed? Are you thankful that Mary had the strength to deliver Him without help and to wrap Him in swaddling clothes? Are you thankful that He grew up in poverty? That Joseph was a carpenter? That because of those humble beginnings, He can identify with every one of us? Jesus left heaven's best and the corridors of glory when He condescended to a position lower than the angels and became the least on this planet.

We have a Savior; He is the Lord of the universe. Make Him your Lord today. Make Him so precisely yours: He wants to be the Lord of your health, Lord of your wisdom. Make Him your sanctification, the One who fills you with His Spirit. He is the Lord who loves your soul, the Lord of all grace, the Lord of all mercy, the Lord of all forgiveness. Let Him be the Lord of new beginnings. Let Him transform your marriage.

Let him transform your mind. Crown Him Lord!

Dear Heavenly Father, You are the Light, and all that You are You offer freely to every person. You offer us an abundant life in Your Spirit. You have given us the best.

Thank You that though You were rich, You became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). We are thankful that through Your poverty, we are becoming rich in grace, and rich in forgiveness, and rich with the Holy Spirit. We can overcome everything by faith, because, "Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We love You, Father, and praise You and thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.