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Born in a Stable - and He Saved the World!

Philippians 2:7: (NASB) *but (he) emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

Christmas is here! It is the time for celebration and food and decoration and gifts and parties and time off from work and football and TV specials and Christmas songs and holiday cheer and holly and mistletoe and shopping and spending money and Santa Claus and elves and snow!!! Whew! By the way, if you can put all of that aside, it is really the time for deep heartfelt thankfulness, for it is the time that we give honor to the birth of the most important, most courageous, most loving, most wise and most humble man to have ever lived. The man Christ Jesus - our savior and Lord! Stay with us for a VERY SPECIAL two hours of praise and thanks!

Part 1: Christmas from the Heart

Before we get into all of the carols and prophecies and spiritual gifts, let's just take a quick look at finding Christmas in our hearts.



The Christmas Guest, a reading by Johnny Cash

So Conrad (per Johnny Cash's story) was set up for a day of blessing, expecting the Lord himself to share the day with him. He had cleaned and decorated and prepared for this most honored of guests. His anticipation would have been barely containable, like that of a child on Christmas morning. Now with everything in place, all that was left to do was to wait...

This is the attitude we should have in our daily lives as well: Colossians 3:14-17

So we can have the fellowship of Christ fulfilled by doing what he did: Philippians 2:1-11

Part 2: Prophecy

As we begin to look at prophecy, a question that ought to be asked is how could Christmas have come just when it did and just how it did?

It had been a long time...a very long time. So long a time, that it had become almost hard to count the years - certainly, no one could remember that far back - not even your father's, father's father was around - it was that long ago. All we had were prophecies - old prophecies that spoke about his coming...but they were old, very old...the newest one was over 400 years old!!! And that was the newest one! What did it say? Something dramatic about the Day of the Lord...

Malachi 4:1-2: (NASB) *¹For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ²But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings;*

The sun of righteousness rising with healing - what a comforting thought in the midst of all the turmoil that the prophecy detailed...there were other prophecies as well - older - some much older but all pointing to the same thing.

Genesis 3:15: Wow, that was the oldest prophecy, kind of a veiled promise of redemption for the first sin.

Genesis 22:16-18: That is another old, old prophecy given to Abraham long before Israel was even a nation. That one gets so much more specific, detailing the blessing of all the nations of all the earth - not just one - or a few, but all!

Isaiah 9:6-7: No end of peace? Isn't that what everyone is hoping for, wishing for, working for...? Now that is a prophecy with a lot of hope!

...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.

So it's the zeal of God that gets it done! But it has still been such a long time - thousands of years. Hmm... so if God had been silent for the last 400 years, should that be such a problem? What God says, He does! What did He say at the end of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament?



Malachi 4:5-6: So the last words of the Old Testament essentially tell us how the new Testament is going to start: Before the coming of Messiah there would be the coming of one who would prepare the people for the Messiah, even though hope might be forgotten over time, it does not mean that the giver of all hope forgets!



Prophecy: Born in Bethlehem Micah 5:2: (KJV) *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 of old, from everlasting.*



Prophecy fulfilled! Matthew 2:1: (KJV) *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,*

Prophecy: Flight to Egypt Hosea 11:1: (KJV) *When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

Prophecy fulfilled! Matthew 2:14: (KJV) *When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:*

Interesting side point - the gifts of the three wise men would have been enough in value to sustain them in this time away...the Lord provides.



Prophecy: Betrayed by a friend Psalms 41:9: (KJV) *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*

Prophecy fulfilled! John 13:26-27: (NRSV) *Jesus answered, It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon.*

Even the method by which Jesus would be betrayed was revealed in prophecy!

Part 3: Faith

It's pretty easy to look at prophecy and its fulfillment and figure, "Now that's a no brainer!" After all, all of the pieces are in place, the timing is right, the right people are all present - let's get this thing fulfilled and move on!

Not so fast, because it's not so easy! Did you ever think about being one of those people whom God has chosen to use? Did you ever wonder at the extraordinary faith they would have had to exhibit to follow through on the things God was putting in front of them? We will briefly focus on Mary and Joseph and how their faith must have inspired them and inspires us today.

Luke 1:26-29: Again we see the angel Gabriel reappearing, now six months after Elizabeth conceived. This time the circumstances were near opposite. Elizabeth had been old and married. Mary was young and only engaged. Gabriel had spoken to the husband the first time, but here he spoke to the young bride to be. His greeting was one of great favor, yet Mary's reaction was confused and fearful. The angel Gabriel? Speaking to me? An angel? For what reason?

The angel continued: Luke 1:30-33: (NASB) ³⁰...*Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.*

Questions would have swirled in Mary's head. Me? Have a son? He is to be called the "Son of the Most High?" He is to be a king...FOREVER...? His kingdom will have *no end*? How? Why?

Then the question that needed answering above all else, for faith could perceive of these other things, but this one question could not be fathomed: "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Gabriel answered: Luke 1:35-37: Well, the angel had answered - an answer so unexpected and so out of the ordinary that for most people it would have been overload. For Mary, Gabriel's last words must have rung true in the deepest recesses of her young heart - *for nothing will be impossible with God.* Luke 1:38: For Joseph, this would have been a unique and fearful dilemma. What should he do? He could have sent Mary away in public shame, but the scriptures



tell us that he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her, so he determined to do it privately, as was his right. He slept on the decision, and as he slept, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream...Matthew 1:20-21: Here was an explanation (though seemingly far-fetched) that carried with it clear direction and a Godly purpose.

The angel continued: Matthew 1:22-23: Joseph awoke and thought a moment... this was *not* some far-fetched explanation at all, rather it was a fulfillment of prophecy! Not just any prophecy, but THE prophecy of THE MESSIAH! Mary, my espoused, was carrying the savior of all and I, Joseph, would have the opportunity to raise him to manhood! Glory to God!

And so we can see how a fear of the unknown can, by the grace and overruling power of God, be turned to faith through the unknown. For Mary and Joseph, this would be their experience.

Part 4: Celebration!

www.soultemposingers.com Jerry Brunson, Tony Burnett, Kevin and Phillip Mitchell

The cover of their CD shows them in suits, walking away from the camera, briefcases in hand. When I first saw this cover the message was clear - it's not about them, it is about our Father's business. What better way to focus on praise than to have these four here with us to sing praises to God!

Christmas IS celebration! Psalms 66:1-4



Philippians 4:4-7: (NASB) *⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

This gives us spiritual exuberance: Philippians 4:8: (NASB) *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*

There is excellence in a lot of things, but is everything worthy of praise? We need to focus our celebration on that which has true value.

Part 5: Birth of a Savior

Luke 2:1-5: The experience of Mary and Joseph was one of complete normality. There were no special provisions, no special exemptions, no special circumstances. They were required to do what everyone else did. They had to travel where everyone else traveled and pay what everyone else paid. Luke 2:7: To be born in a stable and to be laid in a manger among the animals was the most fitting of places for the Lord of men to enter the world. After all, Jesus would live these humble beginnings each and every day for 33½ years, for it was through this humility that he would be able to pay the ransom price. Luke 2:8-12: The fulfillment of prophecy required an angelic announcement to the most humble audience of shepherds. This was fitting - the baby Jesus would grow to assume the throne of David, once a shepherd himself. Luke 2:13: Humility does not preclude heavenly celebration, rather it provokes it! In this manner was Jesus our Lord born.

There were those who stood in great anticipation of the coming of the Christ, Simeon in particular: Luke 2:21-24: Again this reminds us that Mary, Joseph and Jesus are given no special entitlement or dispensation; they are simply given opportunity to show their faith. Luke 2:25-26: Here was a man who had NOT forgotten hope, who had NOT allowed doubt or fear to rule his heart, rather he lived in anticipation and expectation of God's gift. Luke 2:27-29: Being aged, the only thing Simeon looked forward to in his life was a glimpse, just a glimpse of God's gift of redemption. He sees the baby, takes him in his arms and knows that his life is now complete, thinking, "in my arms I hold the hope of the world!" Luke 2:30-33: Simeon realizes the full import of redemption - "I have seen your salvation with my own eyes! He is a light that even reaches to all Gentiles - he is a light that is the glory of Israel! This light is now just a baby, but this baby is



the hope of the world!" What cause for prayer and gratitude! Luke 2:34-35: Simeon also knew that with great accomplishment comes great sacrifice, sometimes heart-breaking sacrifice.

Part 6: The Greatest Gift

One overriding theme for Christmas is the giving and receiving of gifts. Santa Claus has taken the spotlight in all of this. So, where do the best Christmas gifts come from?

With Santa Claus, blind belief is the only answer, but with God Almighty through his son Jesus, the answer is not only clear, just, loving and wise, it was foretold!

Micah 4:1-5: (KJV) *¹But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. (Christmas wish fulfilled! "and right would always win") ²And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, (Christmas wish fulfilled! "and time would heal all hearts") and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Christmas wish fulfilled! "No more lives torn apart") ³And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; (Christmas wish fulfilled! "that wars would never start") and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Christmas wish fulfilled! "and love would never end") ⁴But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. ⁵For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, (Christmas wish fulfilled! "every man would have a friend") and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.*

Now, instead of a Christmas wish list to Santa, let's look at this list as God's predetermined "to do" list - one that He has promised and will absolutely complete!



The Lord's Prayer," Soul Tempo

The Old Testament prophecies point to the results of Jesus' work as well as his life. These are not just poetic utterings, these are true prophecies: Isaiah 35:5-10 Revelation 21:3-4: This is what is coming! Jesus himself was the ransom for all men, to be testified in due time. Matthew 6:9-10: Jesus taught us to pray for this kingdom so that means it is coming!

Have the spirit of Christmas in your heart!

***Born in a stable and he CHANGED the world!
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***

A Merry Christmas to you from all of us here at Christian Questions!

