



What Are You Getting For Christmas?

Luke 2:11: (NASB) *for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

Just think - in just a few days the anticipation will be over and we will get to finally open all those presents! We will finally get to see if we will get what we really wanted or if we end up with some lame gifts...wait a minute! Has it really come down to THAT? Have we taken the value of the day on which the world acknowledges the birth of its Savior and made that day so small as to be about ME? The good news is - there is still time! We can still find the real meaning! Stay with us...



We will look at this event with a “did you ever wonder” perspective:

Did you ever wonder how heroes of faith were able to overcome doubts about seemingly impossible things?

Chapter 1



This chapter is about the experiences of Zacharias and Elizabeth becoming the parents of John the Baptist. The two of them were very faithful and the Scriptures say that they were righteous in the sight of God. Zacharias served the people as a priest of God and in spite of their lifetime of faithfulness, his wife Elizabeth was childless. So, as is the course of nature they grew older and their physical vibrancy began to wane, and so their hopes and prayers for children perhaps did wane as well. Yet, they went on with their lives humbly serving their God, humbly submitting to His will. They were childless - a state that was often thought of as unblessed and incomplete. Perhaps their neighbors quietly wondered what they could have done to be bereft of such a blessing. Perhaps Zacharias and Elizabeth wondered the same thing.

Then, one day when Zacharias was serving in the Temple:

Luke 1:11-13: (NASB) ¹¹... an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹²Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. ¹³But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

Great fear and great exhilaration gripped Zacharias all at once. Just like that, there was an answer to the years of humility and prayer before God. Not only was it an answer, but it was an answer delivered by an angel...a child, and it was to be a boy! God not only heard their prayers but answered them. He even named their son before he was conceived.

Zacharias' mind must have begun to race as the initial fear subsided and the reality of the moment began to sink in. Now came the questions and the doubts. This was impossible - why me? Why here? Why now? Why the angel? Why the name? Why??



The angel continued:

Luke 1:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.

Okay, so he is going to be special, very special. He will be a great man in the site of Almighty God. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit? How is this possible?

There was more and the angel continued:

Luke 1:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The more the angel spoke, the more the questions would have burned in Zacharias' mind. My son will turn the hearts of Israel back to God? How would he do this? He is to be a forerunner to...no, this can't be, for these words are from the prophet Malachi - the last spoken words of the last prophet of God in over 400 years! They were a prophecy of the coming of...wait...my son is to be the forerunner of the Messiah?!? I just don't see how this can happen!

So, the table was set for the prophecies to come to pass. You see, a promise spoken by God is a guarantee of the future, for His word is the reality from which life's events are modeled. Zacharias was privileged to stand between the two great Testaments of God: He would literally be the father to the final prophet of the Old Testament, the man John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for the coming of Jesus the Messiah, and the coming of the New Testament - the new promise of God!

The doubt was too much for Zacharias. After all, none of this made any logical sense. He faced the angel, for he needed answers. He asked more of the angel, for he needed to be sure. His question, though a bold one in his mind, somehow didn't present such authority once spoken, "How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years."

The angel was quick to respond:

Luke 1:19: (NASB) ¹⁹...I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

I AM GABRIEL! The angels words echoed in Zacharias' mind...I AM GABRIEL! This surely was one of those most high in all of the Almighty's spiritual creation! Gabriel - who stands in the presence of God - Gabriel himself sent to deliver me this miraculous news! I am speaking to Gabriel and I am doubting...

Gabriel continued:

Luke 1:20: (NASB) ²⁰And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.

Unable to speak? Even at that very moment, Zacharias felt his speech leave him. Unable to speak! I have been visited by a holy angel of the Almighty and can tell no one about it?! Zacharias thought a moment. Doubt in the face of God's power and mercy does bring consequence, but it does not cancel His



power and mercy! What a glorious God we have! Praise be unto God! Praise be unto His name! I praise Him for His plan and His creation! I praise Him for my silence for it is in this quietness that I am strengthened.

Luke 1:23-25: (NASB) ²³When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home. ²⁴After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, ²⁵This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men.

So, even in the face of a long forgotten hope and under the circumstances of unlikely events, God's blessing would take root and grow. Elizabeth took this news with great humility and once pregnant, she kept herself in seclusion - perhaps as a precaution due to her age, perhaps as a special time for prayer and meditation, perhaps as a time to marvel at the mercy of God.

For the will of God is sure and the plan of God is complete. All we need do is wait for His timing...



Did you ever wonder how Mary was able to not only accept the unlikely proclamation by the angel, but how she could live with all of the baggage that came with it?



After all, what Mary was told was IMPOSSIBLE!

How do we respond to that which IS impossible?

We have seen the results of doubt - perhaps justifiable doubt based upon our own human imperfection - and we have seen how the mercy and compassion of our God understands that doubt and can bless us anyway.

But what about the experience of impossibility? What about the experience of being faced with something so contrary to reason that it resides not even in our imagination, but beyond it?

Mary was faced with such a reality:

Luke 1:26-29: (NASB) ²⁶Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city...called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And coming in, he said to her, Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. ²⁹But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

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? What has happened that there is such favor and blessing upon me?

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 begun to swirl in Mary's head.

Me? Have a son? And his name is to be Jesus - his name will be "Deliverer!" How can it be that he is to be called the Son of the MOST HIGH? And how is it that he will be a king? We have no king under this harsh Roman rule! And not only a king, but a king with an everlasting reign...? His Kingdom will have NO END? What manner of blessing is this? Why should such privilege come upon me?

Then barreling into her mind came 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: (NASB) ³⁵...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child shall be called the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.

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.*

Mary would be able to respond to that which is not possible in the strength of her faith:

Luke 1:38: (NASB) *And Mary said, Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.*

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. He determined to send her away privately, as was his right for he respected Mary. He would sleep on the decision, and as he slept, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream.

The angel said:

Matthew 1:20-21: (NASB) ²⁰...Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Well, this certainly was an explanation and though it seemed far-fetched, it did carry with it clear direction and a Godly purpose.



The angel continued:

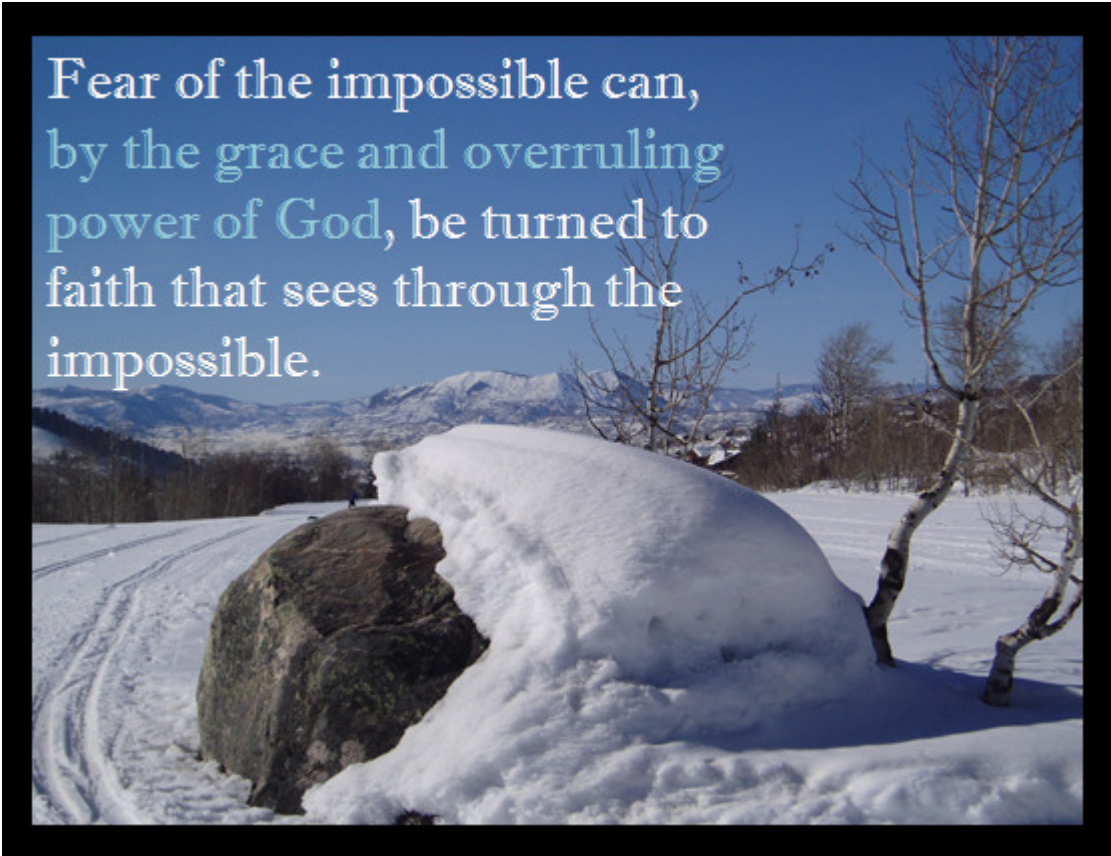
Matthew 1:22-23: (NASB) ²²Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means, God with us.

Joseph awoke with a start 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 and privilege to raise him to manhood. Glory be to God!

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

Let us listen to what Mary said when she visited Elizabeth upon being given this most precious gift of mothering the son of God, the Savior of all men:

Luke 1:46-55: (NASB) ⁴⁶And Mary said: My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. ⁴⁹For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. ⁵⁰and His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him. ⁵¹He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. ⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. ⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed. ⁵⁴He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, ⁵⁵as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever.



Fear of the impossible can,
by the grace and overruling
power of God, be turned to
faith that sees through the
impossible.



"Come Thou Long Expected Jesus," Christy Nockles

Come, thou long expected Jesus
born to set thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
let us find our rest in thee
Israel's strength and consolation
hope of all the earth thou art
Dear desire of every nation
joy of every longing heart
Born thy people to deliver
born a child and yet a king
Born to reign in us forever
now thy gracious kingdom bring
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone
By thine all sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne
By thine all sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.



Did you ever wonder what it would have been like to be a part of the whole Bethlehem experience - to have seen the star or heard the angels sing or to have seen the baby Jesus?

Chapter 3



What a gift!

How do we not only grasp, but always remember the miracle of new life? There was a newness of life for the entire world that had its small earthly beginnings on that special day in Bethlehem.

Think of the greatest joys of life that you have ever heard of or experienced and inevitably, you will think about the birth of a child. This is an event that marks an end *and* a beginning. It is the end of a nine-month pregnancy that literally has a physical attachment needing to be cut, and it marks the beginning of a new, viable human life, whose attachments can now grow exponentially and in all directions. Any birth is a miracle, but the birth of Jesus...now that was a miracle of biblical proportions! His life was the most anticipated life in all of Jewish history. His life was, over thousands of years, the subject of hundreds of prophecies. A star would mark the location and the heavens would be alive with joy and celebration as he entered the world. Miracle of miracles!

Luke 2:1-5: (KJV) ¹And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ... ³And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;...⁵To be taxed with Mary his



espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.



"Silent Night," Celtic Woman

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin mother and child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

The experience of Mary and Joseph was one of complete normality. There were no special provisions, no special exemptions, no special circumstances. Mary and Joseph were required to do what everyone else did, travel where everyone else traveled and pay what everyone else paid. And they did. Quietly and without fuss or fanfare, they made the inconvenient and uncomfortable trip to Bethlehem. Think how often along the way Joseph would have looked upon his beloved wife to be and asked:

Mary, are you alright?

Yes, Joseph, I am okay. Thank you.

Do we need to stop?

No, no, I want to get there as soon as we can, so let's keep going. I'll be all right.

Is there something I can do to help you be more comfortable?

No, your concern for us is already making me more comfortable - it gives me strength. Thank you!

Their conversation with one another may have been sporadic and even disjointed at times as they would have each drifted back to the conversation in their own hearts that weighed the significance of what the angel Gabriel had told them individually. Gabriel's words must have echoed in their minds. Perhaps Joseph recounted the dream and silently repeated the words of God's own messenger:

Matthew 1:20-23: (NASB) ²⁰...Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. ...²³Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means, God with us.

I am responsible for them? God give me strength!

Mary as well may have silently repeated the holy message that God's messenger had personally delivered:

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.



I am surely blessed to carry and nurture the deliverer. God, help me to dwell in the strength and courage of this favor and not in the unsure dwelling place of my own fears!

They arrived in Bethlehem and it was night:

Luke 2:7: (KJV) *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*



"What Child is This?" Sarah McLachlan

What child is this who laid to rest
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with voices sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King
whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring him praise
the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh
come peasant king to praise him,
the King of kings the glory brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
that's singing through the earth and sky:
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The babe, the son of Mary!

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. Yes, a stable, a manger and farm animals were there to accompany Mary and Joseph as they welcomed Jesus to the world of men.



Luke 2:8-12: (KJV) ⁸And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

So, the beginning of the fulfillment of the greatest prophecies of the Old Testament was in the solitude of night and in a stable. For a select few, there rang out an angelic announcement. It came to a most humble audience of shepherds - fitting! The baby Jesus would grow to assume the throne of David, once a shepherd himself. And the baby Jesus would himself grow to become the great shepherd.



Luke 2:13-14: (KJV) ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Humility does not preclude heavenly celebration, rather it provokes it! It was in this manner that Jesus our Lord was born.



Did you ever wonder what it would be like to have been a part of the beginning stages of the life of Jesus?

How do you express gratitude for the gift that redeems all mankind?



We have been given a great gift. It is actually more than a gift, for without it we as a race would live without hope, for this gift is the gift of a ransomed life. It is the gift of redemption, freely given to every man, woman and child who has ever breathed. It is a gift of such magnitude that it will take an eternity to say thank you.

There is little written about the life of Jesus as a baby and as a boy. We know the following: The wise men sought Jesus out and found him so as to pay homage to the baby who would be King. They followed the star, avoided conflict and brought Jesus gifts.

The gifts of the three wise men were significant:

- *Gold* represented obedience and consecration;
- *Frankincense* represented praise, devotion, heart adoration, appreciation and gratitude;
- *Myrrh* represented submission, a willingness for service to the extent of bitterness and suffering.



While we don't really know much about Jesus and his relationship with Joseph, we can be sure that Joseph was a man of great faith and integrity. Such a man would most certainly care for and raise Jesus to manhood through the eyes of responsibility and fidelity to God. Such a man as Joseph would also love the baby Jesus and protect him and perhaps even sing to him.



"Joseph's Lullaby," Mercy Me

Go to sleep my son
this manger for your bed
you have a long road before you
rest Your little head
Can you feel the weight of your glory?
Do you understand the price?
or does the Father guard your heart for now
so you can sleep tonight?
Go to sleep my son
go and chase your dreams
this world can wait for one more moment
go and sleep in peace
I believe the glory of heaven
is lying in my arms tonight
but Lord, I ask that he for just this moment
simply be my child
Go to sleep my son
Baby, close your eyes
Soon enough you'll save the day
but for now, dear child of mine
Oh my Jesus, sleep tight

Sometimes the greatest thank you we can give is the gift of recognition: Looking behind us and recognizing that the plan of God *has* unfolded, looking around us and recognizing that the plan of God *is* unfolding and looking before us to anticipate the plan of God *continuing* to unfold.

Recognition of a gift - that's what Simeon did just eight days after Jesus' birth:

Luke 2:21-24: (NASB) ²¹And when eight days had passed, before his circumcision, his name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²²And when the days for their purification...were completed, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord...

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: (NASB) ²⁵And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

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: (NASB) ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for him the custom of the Law, ²⁸then he took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹Now Lord, You are releasing Your bondservant to depart in peace, according to Your word;



Being aged, the only thing Simeon looked forward to in his life was 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: (NASB) ³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹Which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²A light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel. ³³And his father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about him.

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!

Luke 2:34-35: ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed ³⁵and a sword will pierce even your own soul to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

Simeon also knew that with great accomplishment comes great sacrifice - sometimes heart-breaking sacrifice.

So with all that we *don't* know about the early life of Jesus, what we *do* know is simple:

- Prophecy is recognized
- Gratitude is prevalent
- Holiness is encouraged



"O Come, O Come Emmanuel," Enya

O come, O come, Emmanuel
to free your captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel
to you shall come Emmanuel.
O veni, veni Emmanuel
Captivum solve Israel





Did you ever wonder how those who were present applied the experiences surrounding the baby Jesus to their lives? Did his mere presence change things?



What about when he was a boy?

How do we capture all of these lessons for our journey forward?

Up to this point we have seen angels, miracles and prophecy fulfilled. We have seen doubt, fear and tentativeness. We have seen the joy of life and the joy of God's gift. We have seen faith and fulfillment. We have seen all of these things, and yet we have only looked upon the circumstances surrounding the birth of the infant Jesus. His life, yet to be lived. His humility, yet to be discovered. His ransom price, yet to be paid. Why all of these magnificent events before his life's work even gets started? Because every journey of significance needs ample preparation to see it through.



"Away in a Manger," Celtic Woman

Away in a manger
No crib for his bed
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down his sweet head

The stars in the bright sky
Looked down where he lay
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay

The cattle are lowing
The baby awakes
A little Lord Jesus
No crying he makes

I love thee, Lord Jesus
Look down from the sky
And stay by my side
Until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus
I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever
and love me I pray

Bless all thy dear children
In thy tender care
And lead us to heaven
To live with thee there



Let's go back to the shepherds who were told of Jesus' birth - did something change?

Luke 2:15-20: (NASB) ¹⁵When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, *Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.* ¹⁶So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as he lay in the manger.

These shepherds knew that they were part of something much bigger than they had ever conceived to be possible. They acted in faith; they acted right away and found Mary and Joseph. The baby lay quietly in a manger. Think of the tranquility and peace of the moment as they lay their eyes on their future Savior... this was Jesus, the one who would save the world!

¹⁷When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

To go and see him was one thing. To take this miracle and publish it amongst the people - that was another! These were just shepherds!

¹⁹But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

For Mary, this was a time of awe-struck wonder. She had been living in faith for the last nine months and now that Jesus was born, her faith would begin to take on new meaning. All that she saw she treasured, for it told her what Jesus would be.



"O, Come All Ye Faithful," Faith Hill

O come all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold him
born the King of angels

O come, let us adore him
O come, let us adore him
O come, let us adore him
Christ, the Lord

Yea, Lord, we greet thee
Born this happy morning
Jesus, to thee be all glory given
Word of the Father
Now in flesh appearing

Come, let us adore him
Come, let us adore him
O come, let us adore him
Christ, the Lord



There is little written about Jesus before his 30th year and the beginning of his ministry. We can assume that his childhood experiences were filled with important lessons of faith, life and purpose.

Let's look in on the one experience we do know about when he was a very young man:

Luke 2:42-52: (NASB) ⁴²And when he became twelve, they went up according to the custom of the Feast; ⁴³and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But his parents were unaware of it, ⁴⁴but supposed him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for him among their relatives and acquaintances.

We could look at this and say, well there's a typical 12-year old boy - preoccupied and not paying attention! Ah, how far off we would be with such a judgment...

⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for him. ⁴⁶Then, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your father and I have been anxiously looking for you.

This had gotten serious! Missing for a day and then an additional three days looking throughout Jerusalem...? I imagine they would have looked in all of the typical places and I imagine that their anxiety and grief over their lost son would have been almost too much to bear. And then he was found safe!

⁴⁹And he said to them, Why is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house? ⁵⁰But they did not understand the statement which he had made to them...and his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Now here is a curious thing: Jesus is bewildered. What? Didn't you know where I would be? All of the things you have taught me about doing my Father's will...I'm doing them! I am in my Father's house learning about His business. Of course I am here; I could be in no other place.

...All of this from a 12-year old. Mary treasured these things in her heart as she watched her baby grow from the infant that angels sang about, to the boy seeking his God, to the man who would save the world.





Did you ever wonder how we got to where we are now?

How is it that the holiday which bears the name "Christ" has so completely lost its way?

Chapter 6



'Twas the Night Before Christmas (revised)

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the town
Not a sign of Baby Jesus was anywhere to be found.
The people were all busy with Christmas time chores
Like decorating, and baking, and shopping in stores.
No one sang, "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed."
Instead, they sang of Santa dressed-up in bright red.
Mama watched Martha Stewart, Papa drank beer from a tap
As hour upon hour the presents they'd wrap.
When what from the television did they suddenly hear?
A news flash, an ad, a big sale at Sears!



So away to the mall they all flew like a flash...
Buying some things on credit.. and others with cash!

And, as they made their way home from their trip to the mall,
Did they think about Jesus? Oh, no ... not at all.
Their lives were so busy with their Christmas time things
No time to remember Jesus Christ as their King.
There were presents to wrap and cookies to bake.
How could they stop and remember who died for their sake?
To pray to the Savior, they had no time to stop
Because they needed more time to "Shop 'til they'd drop!"



What we really need is a reality check - a way to get back to what is important.



"I Need a Silent Night," (Verse 1) Amy Grant

I've made the same mistake before
Too many malls, too many stores
December traffic, Christmas rush
It breaks me till I push and shove

Children are crying while mothers are trying
to photograph Santa and sleigh
the shopping and buying and standing forever in line
What can I say?

I need a silent night, a holy night
to hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise
I need a midnight clear, a little peace right here
to end this crazy day with a silent night

Here is perspective:

Isaiah 9:6-7: (KJV) *⁶For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

Just because we put things into perspective does not mean we can't have fun and enjoy the extraordinary creativity that surrounds the Christmas season.



The Grinch Song

You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch.
You really are a heel.
You're as cuddly as a cactus,
You're as charming as an eel.
Mr. Grinch.
You're a bad banana
With a greasy black peel.

We want to put the fun in the perspective of what the most important thing is.

Perspective - here is the eternal reason for the season:

Daniel 2:44: (NASB) *In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.*

Fixing the mess of this world is all part of prophecy. That is the good news about the true meaning of Christmas.



"I Need a Silent Night," (Verse 2) Amy Grant

December comes then disappears
faster and faster every year
Did my own mother keep this pace
Or was the world a different place?

Where people stayed home wishing for snow
Watching three channels on their TV
Look at us now rushing around
Trying to buy Christmas peace

I need a silent night, a holy night
to hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise
I need a midnight clear, a little peace right here
to end this crazy day with a silent night

Perspective - there was an issue of justice that needed satisfying - Jesus came to satisfy it!

1 Timothy 2:5-6: (NASB) ⁵*For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,* ⁶*who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.*



"I Need a Silent Night," (Verse 3) Amy Grant

What was it like back there in Bethlehem
with peace on earth, good will toward men?

Every shepherd's out in the field
Keeping watch over their flock by night
And the glory of the Lord shone around them
And they were so afraid

And the angels said fear not for behold
I bring you good news of a great joy that shall be for all people
For unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord
And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace

I need a silent night, a holy night
To hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise
I need a midnight clear, a little peace right here
To end this crazy day with a silent night
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Perspective - the result of Jesus satisfying justice is a pathway to perfection for all and heaven for his followers!

Isaiah 35:5-10: (KJV) ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. ⁷And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. ⁸And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. ⁹No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: ¹⁰And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

So, what are you getting for Christmas? Hopefully you are getting - and giving - the real story about the real birth of the real savior.

The six chapters presented here are meant to inspire you to a greater appreciation of Jesus and his mission as the son of God, coming to this earth to "pay a debt he didn't owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay."

Merry, merry Christmas to you all! Be sure to truly keep Christ on the day and always in your heart.

*So, what are you getting for Christmas?
(Salvation for the world!)
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

