

Christmas: Moving From Religion To Relationship

December 20, 2020

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“¹⁸This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. ²⁰As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet. ²³“Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” ²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.” Matthew 1:18-25

“¹At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ²(This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. ⁸That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹²And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.” ¹³Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.” ¹⁵When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” ¹⁶They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, ¹⁹but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.” Luke 2:1-20

I. HOW DID CHRISTMAS CHANGE EVERYTHING?

1. GOD

“¹³Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! Isn’t it enough to exhaust human patience? Must you exhaust the patience of my God as well? ¹⁴All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).” Isaiah 7:13-14

“¹⁰He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him.” John 1:10

2. GOD

“¹⁴So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.” John 1:14

“¹⁴So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.” Hebrews 4:14-15

“¹Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. ²The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, “Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?” ³Then they scoffed, “He’s just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of

James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.” Mark 6:1-3

⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰ Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. ¹¹ But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with such scum?’ ¹² When Jesus heard this, he said, ‘Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.’” Matthew 9:9-12

3. GOD TAUGHT US _____

⁶ “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.” John 17:6-8

¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³ You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.” John 13:12-15

4. GOD MADE A WAY FOR US TO _____

²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God’s promise to Abraham belongs to you.” Galatians 3:26-29

¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” Hebrews 4:16

5. GOD MOVED FROM _____

¹⁹ Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? “1 Corinthians 6:19

¹⁶ Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in^[u] you? ¹⁷ God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.” 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

II. HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS?

1. _____

¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

⁷ “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” Matthew 7:7-8

2. _____

¹⁸ Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 3:18

³ And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.” John 17:3

3. _____

¹⁴ When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,^[u] ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love

and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God." Ephesians 3:14-19

4. _____

³ And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. ⁴ If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. ⁵ But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. ⁶ Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did." 1 John 2:3-6

² Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. ³ Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. ⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name." Psalm 100:2-4

¹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him." Romans 12:1

5. _____

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Luke 19:10