

Christmas Has Come and Gone
Sunday December 27th 2015

1). Ga 4:4 *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

a). Regardless of the day or the month of the Lord's birth what we know for certain is that it happened 'when the fullness of the time had come'.

b). This was not an arbitrary event but a specific and exact moment within the course of human history that had been predetermined in the eternal council chambers of God before time began.

c). Nor was it a secretive event done in the shadow of obscurity, but an event that God had revealed to man from the very beginning - Ge 3:15 *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

d). Man was created for the purpose of having dominion over the earth picturing the rule of the Lord Jesus in the 7th Day and as the Woman was built from a part of Adam's body to rule with him so the Bride of Christ is being fashioned by a work of the Holy Spirit even as we speak to ascend the throne with the Lord in that coming day.

e). And despite the efforts of our enemy, that which God has set in motion will come to pass - Isa 46:9 *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*

2). This is a glorious promise in itself. Yet God does not leave it there. He makes clear for all with eyes to see the lineage of this 'Seed', the regality of this 'Seed' and the Deity of this 'Seed' - 2Sa 7:12 *"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My*

name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.

From the lineage of David the king would come the 'Seed' who would be born as a man, but would be the literal Son of God, to establish the throne of David with regards to the rulership of the earth and His kingdom, when established, would last forever - *Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

a). The manner of the birth of God's Son was also made clear - *Isa 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*

Which means - God with us.

b). The One born as a 'sign' would be the Seed of the Woman promised in Genesis Chapter 3, who would be born of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit - *Lu 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*

c). The place of His birth is also not left to speculation, but was clearly stated in the scriptures - *Mic 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."*

d). And even the time is given - *Da 9:25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;*

e). And to leave no doubt about the identity of this 'Seed' the scriptures also speak of His person, His character and His purpose - *Isa 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,*

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

3). All that we have seen here, and there is much more that we could have looked at, is recorded in the scriptures – in Moses, the prophets and the Psalms, just as the Lord has said – Lu 24:27 *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

These of course are very scriptures possessed by the nation of Israel; the Word of God that was taught over and over throughout the centuries - From the first generation to leave Egypt through to those who were alive at the time of the Lord's birth – a continuous revelation. Now we know from – Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

And God had spoken about the birth of His Son throughout the OT scriptures, scriptures that should have been heard and believed.

a). And as we put this together we will realize that throughout the whole of human history there has always been the choice to believe that which God has said and act upon it or not - From Adam and the Woman in the Garden, to Abraham, to Israel at Kadesh Barnea, to those alive at Christ's birth, to the present day it has remained the same choice.

4). The pronouncement of the coming of Israel's Messiah had been loud and clear in the scriptures in Israel's possession, so let's look at the reactions of those caught up in this incredible event, beginning with Mary – Lu 1:26 ¶ *Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" 29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will*

give Him the throne of His father David. 33 "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." 34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" 35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 "Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 "For with God nothing will be impossible." 38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

a). Notice that which the angel draws attention to as he tells Mary of this incredible event in v32-33 – He takes her to the promise found in 2 Samuel 7, to the scriptures she would have known and would have heard – ‘faith comes by hearing’.

b). Gabriel also gives her a sign, through Elizabeth, of the barren womb made fertile, which is exactly Mary’s own situation, with the inevitable echoes of the barren womb of Sarah producing Isaac, the son of promise, by the power of God, ‘for with God nothing will be impossible’.

c). And v38 records Mary’s response to Gabriel’s declaration – ‘Let it be to me according to your word’. This is faith in action, a faith in this context equal to that of Abraham on Mount Moriah.

5). Let’s also look at the faith of a man called Simeon - Lu 2:25 ¶ *And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 "(yes, a*

sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

a). As we look at the event taking place in these verses let's remember that to the casual observer this is just another young couple, probably amongst many others, who have come for the circumcision of their newborn baby. Yet with the eyes of faith through the inspiration given to him by the Holy Spirit Simeon sees beyond the natural into the purpose of God.

b). Likewise with the woman called Anna - Lu 2:36 *Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

c). Notice that both Simeon and Anna possess a single-minded devotion to that which God has said. Simeon is waiting for the consolation of Israel so that he could depart this world 'in peace'. And Anna, after the death of her husband, choosing not to marry again but rather to serve God 'with fastings and prayers' looked for and waited for the One who would provide redemption in Jerusalem. Something it appears that others were also looking for.

d). These 2 particular individuals singled out by God to be recorded in the scriptures had believed that which God had said and organized their lives accordingly, being aware of both the time and the season.

6). We see much the same thing with the Wise Men recorded in - Mt 2:1 ¶ *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."*

Verses that echo that recorded in Moses - Nu 24:17 *"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult.*

a). The Wise Men coming to Jerusalem is not the result of necromancy, but rather believing that which God had said about 'a Star [which] shall come out of Jacob'. There is absolutely no doubt in their minds as to whom they have come to see, 'Where is He who has been born king of the Jews?' – And where else would they look for the One who has been born King, but the very place where the King of the Jews would be found – Jerusalem.

b). The Christ being born, as King is exactly what is confirmed for us through - Joh 1:11 *He came to His own*, (Gk. Neuter word, referring to 'His own things') *and His own* (Gk. Masculine word, referring to 'His own people') *did not receive Him*.

c). Christ came to His own things, having to do with His regal birth, the throne of David, the rulership of the earth, but His own people, Israel, rejected Him and that which He came to offer them.

d). And is confirmed again in - Joh 18:37 *Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."*

7). Now let's look at Herod's reaction to the Wise Men - Mt 2:3 *When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared.*

a). Herod does not dismiss the Wise Men as foolish, nor does he challenge their assertion that 'the King of the Jews' had been born. Notice that he inquires, 'where the Christ was to be born' – the Christ – the One anointed to be Prophet, Priest and King, Israel's Messiah. And where does he go for the answer? To the Word of God, so that we might conclude that he also was aware of that which God had said concerning the Messiah.

b). However, although he may have been aware of it he did not act in faith upon it. Instead he chose to act in accordance with his own agenda –

Mt 2:16 ¶ *Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.*

c). The one in regal authority on the earth sought to kill the One sent with regal authority from heaven, knowing full well that he was attempting to kill the One born the King of the Jews.

d). What he didn't realize though is that his actions were also the fulfillment of that which had been prophesied in the scriptures - Mt 2:17 *Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."*

That which had been written couldn't be erased.

8). And what we see with the actions of Herod is no different to that which we see with the religious leaders of Israel, the ones who sat in Moses' seat who were the keepers of the Law, the teachers of Israel, some 30 years on from the time of the Lord's birth.

a). Let's call to mind that which Nicodemus said about Jesus in – Joh 3:1 ¶ *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

b). And let's connect Nicodemus's assertion that Jesus is a teacher come from God with God's voice at the Jordan River and the signs pointing to the nation's healing that Jesus was performing in their midst by the power of the Holy Spirit. Compelling evidence, and yet despite what they knew, despite what they had seen with their own eyes and despite their supposed knowledge of the scriptures - Isa 35:4 *Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." 5 ¶ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.*

Despite all of this they chose to act, not in faith, but according to their own agenda - Mr 3:22 ¶ *And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."*

Mt 12:14 ¶ *Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.*

Joh 7:1 ¶ *After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.*

c). Here then we find the ones in spiritual authority on the earth seeking to kill the One sent with spiritual authority from heaven. They knew full well they were trying to kill the One whom 'God had sent', the One whom 'God was with', but they didn't realize, just as Herod didn't, that they were also fulfilling that which had been prophesied in their own scriptures – Da 9:26a *"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off,*

Ex 12:5 *'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 'Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.*

That which had been written couldn't be erased.

9). As we consider these things we would do well to realize that Herod's actions and the actions of the religious leaders of Israel did not occur in a vacuum but were rather the result of the condition of their hearts, a condition born of years of focus on themselves, years of unbelief.

a). Remember the religious leaders taught about the coming of the Messiah, they professed to be looking for His coming; outwardly they appeared to be in tune with God's plans and purpose, but in reality - Mr 7:6 *He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*

b). The actions of Herod and the religious leaders and ultimately the entire nation are in stark contrast to the faith shown by Mary, Simeon, Anna,

the Wise Men and ultimately the disciples and yet they all started from the same base – a redeemed people in possession of that which God had said in His Word; those of faith looked to the coming of the King but those of the flesh to the fulfillment of their own agenda in this world under the god of this age.

c). And for us, a redeemed people in possession of the very same word, we need to remember - Heb 1:1 ¶ *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;..... 2:1 ¶ Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

d). If we, believing that which God has said about the soon coming Kingdom of His Son, turn with our hearts after our own agenda we would be just like Herod, just like the leaders of Israel – this would not be wise on our part. And living in a world, that offers us a myriad of distractions, a plethora of allurements to draw us away what is it that will assure us of victory over this world and its ruler? – 1Jo 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

10). As we leave behind this Christmas season of 2015, let us take the lessons to be learnt from the Lord's first advent to heart as we anticipate His second coming. For the faith we have, if we will allow the Holy Spirit to work through it, will perform a deep work in our hearts - Col 3:9 *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12 ¶ Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

a). Our faith then will not just be in our words but will be evident in our lives in the course of our everyday living, as we walk out a lifestyle of faithful obedience in all things - Col 3:1 ¶ *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*

Mt 6:33a *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,*

b). Let us rejoice and give thanks for all God has made possible for us through the birth of His Son, but let us also keep in mind that the manger remains empty and it will not be a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes who we shall see next time, but One whose eyes are a flame of fire, who comes as Judge, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and so with that in mind let us hold fast to what we have - Let us be of the same mind as Paul - Php 3:12 *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*