



Christmas



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Part 1

Christmas—Truth or Error?

The Universal Festival

In the light of God's eternal Word, we want to look at the season called the Christmas season and see what attitude we, as people of God, should take toward it.

Before the Lord ever began to open up these things to me, I was made to wonder. I knew that Christmas was held in as high esteem as any holiday season we go through. Yet, I watched the thing as people go through it and got into the pressure of it. It was not long before I began to notice that right up to the last couple of days I could hear more and more people on the streets and in the stores saying, "I will be glad when this thing is over." I wondered why, if it were as wonderful, religious, and Christian as man claimed it to be, should people be glad when it was over? The more I studied, the more I saw that the spirit, which was engulfing people, was a spirit that was putting them under bondage. I observed that it was merely a customary thing, and they were bound by that custom.

The first chapter of Matthew states that a virgin was with child of the Holy Ghost, and that child was given to "save his people from their sins."

This Gift was not only to forgive us of our sins, but to give us power to live above sin. The devil, or great enemy, has worked hard since the birth of Christ to annihilate this Gift that God sent to save mankind. One of his greatest ways of doing that is by amplifying falsehoods that they might glare in a greater way and take the place of truth, which he cannot kill. We are living in a world that is full of things the devil has amplified and is amplifying to take our minds from the vital things that we really need to know and to replace them with falsehoods.

We are living in a day and age when men and women are deceived. They have been led far away from Christ and His principles; yet they testify that they are still worshipping Christ. The scribes, Pharisees, and other religious people of His day were charged as hypocrites by Christ because they made the commandments of God of none effect by their traditions. Tradition will do nothing for your heart whatsoever. If you ever get anything that will work a change in your heart and bring real salvation, you will have to become free of the traditions of man.

Lip worship lets people draw near God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. We need to see that this thing is still in operation yet today in a greater and more amplified way. The enemy of souls has taken the commandments of God, removed them far from the minds of men, and placed commandments of men in their stead. This leaves people in the same shape as those Jesus met—they drew near Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him (Matthew 15:6-9). The commandments of men cannot change the heart and make new creatures out of us. Thank God, the commandments of God can!

There is nothing so sad as seeing a Christless world trying to rejoice in Christ. To me it is just as sad to see a Christless world trying to rejoice in Christ as it would be to see a prisoner trying to rejoice in freedom while he is yet bound and under a sentence of certain death. He cannot rejoice in freedom because he has no freedom. This is the condition that is exhibited so much in the day and age in which we are living. When the world does try to put on a season of thankfulness and praise, it has to be a sham and a form, because there is no reality from the heart. Rejoicing and praising God has to begin down in the heart, and then work out from there.

The words of Jeremiah, the prophet, are being fulfilled over and over. False prophets have cried, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Millions have tried to believe it and to practice something that they do not have really. Because of this, much of religion has become a big sham.

If it were not for all the substitutes in religion, honest-hearted people would find the truth more readily. There are so many stumbling blocks and substitutes, and there are so many ways for man to ease his

conscience that he fails to come to the place of finding real redemption at the feet of Jesus Christ and knowing the freedom that only He can bring.

In Luke 16:15, Jesus said, ". . . Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for THAT WHICH IS HIGHLY ESTEEMED AMONG MAN IS ABOMINATION IN THE SIGHT OF GOD." This Scripture is still a good balance with which to weigh things. If the millions who are living in the sin and corruption of this world without a real experience of God can find a level to rejoice in, the Scripture lets us know that it is not of God.

People have been sold on the thought that the Christmas season is a Christian festival. The devil deceived people when he wrapped Christmas in a Christian garb. He is using that very thing to kill the effectiveness of salvation because people think that when they enter into that season, they are entering into a Christian season. Since it is so far from what real Christianity is, the devil has used it to sour millions on real Christianity. THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS JUST A FESTIVAL. There is nothing Christian about it? If the Christmas festival turned people to Christ, our world would be Christian by now. The word *Christmas* is not mentioned or even hinted at in the Bible.

Jeremiah 10:3 states that the customs of the people are vain. Train means "empty, unreal, deceitful, producing no good results."

Try the Spirit

I agree wholeheartedly that there is a Christmas spirit, and the Christmas spirit is one that has to be worked up. On the other hand, the real Spirit of God will flow out of the heart.

The Christmas festival is not Christian because of the spirit of it. Let us go right to the heart of it. John warned us in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Jesus Christ said that you "shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." You will not have to be bound by the customs of men.

The whole world partakes of Christmas—those who despise the Gospel and fight holiness and sinners with characters as black as midnight join hands together to promote Christmas programs, plays, Santa Claus, and adorn their dwellings. They will go to any length to celebrate a tradition about the birth of the Son of God, while, at the same time, they do not love Him and do not live according to His Word.

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). People feel that they have a certain love for Christ because they are honoring His birth when they have no love for Him whatsoever.

Isaiah 53:3 says, prophesying of Jesus, "He is despised and rejected of men. . . ." Let us face it—if we could find in God's Word (no man will find it) where God ordained that one must keep the 25th day of December to remember Christ's birth and told how to commemorate it, you would see a rising up and the world refusing to obey. Because this thing is a tradition, a custom, and contrary to God's Word, the world is ready to take hold of it. When it comes to the truth and commandments of Christ, the world does not want to obey.

The morning-time church did not keep Christmas. The colonists that came here from Europe were Christian people and did not believe in pagan festivals and holidays. Do you realize that in Russia, a godless nation, they keep the winter festival, and they all have Christmas trees and exchange gifts just as Americans do?

The Origin of Christmas

Where did the thought of Christmas come from? It cannot be a celebration of Christ's birthday because this celebration on December 25th was inaugurated and in practice for hundreds of years before Christ ever came. Any encyclopedia you wish to look into says that December 25th was a festival, the Saturnalia. This festival, in honor of the birthday of the sun god, Saturn, was the celebration of a new day and a new sun following the shortest day in the year. Roman Catholicism got it from the pagans and changed its name. However, they went right on with their pagan festivities just as they did when they worshiped the

sun god. They worshiped Saturn by cutting down fir trees and bringing them into their houses and decorating them with silver and gold, as well as exchanging gifts and getting drunk.

When the people of God fell away from truth, they whitewashed an old pagan custom and gave it a Christian name; but the truth of the matter is, they have you following the same old practices the pagans followed. Most every part of what is called the Christmas celebration is pagan in its origin and form. The church in the falling away mixed Christian names into pagan practices, but the morning church did not celebrate Christ's birthday.

Christ's Birthday?

We do not know the date when Christ was born. I have read after different commentators. They tell about those who have studied and tried to put all history together to try to even get somewhere in the right month and week when He was born; but they cannot do it. When God hides something, it is hid! Why does God not want us to know when His Son was born? It is because He lived before He was born. John 1:1 and 14 says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word was made flesh. . . ." Furthermore, God does not want us to celebrate Jesus' birth because His birth means nothing whatsoever without His death, burial, and resurrection.

If God had wanted us to celebrate Jesus' birth, He would have given us an ordinance. Then the customs would have all been excluded. He wanted us to keep His death, so He gave us an ordinance. If we are going to try to celebrate Christ's birth some way, we would have to choose a custom because there is no God-given way to celebrate it.

Let me repeat that He gave us an ordinance to keep in remembrance of His death. Why did He put so much emphasis on His death and very little on His birth? Why at His death did the heavens turn dark? It was because His death is what the gift was really wrapped up in. His birth means nothing without His death. We find nothing in the Book of Acts putting emphasis on the birth of Christ, but the apostles continually preached about His death, burial, and resurrection. Why? Paul declared that if Christ be not raised from the dead, you are yet in your sins.

I want to show you how unfair the religious world is. They will acknowledge that many of the festivities of the holidays are mere customs, but insist that we all ought to do them anyway. On the other hand, they claim that feet washing, which is an ordinance (read John 13:15-16), is just a custom, and they are not going to do it. Why? They love the reveling, but do not like to put forth a sincere effort to worship according to God's truth. Jesus said they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

Birthday celebrations were considered by the Jews in Christ's day as an idolatrous worship, according to the *People's Encyclopedia*, although any encyclopedia will give the same information. Ecclesiastes 7:1 states that the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. Therefore, why would God want us to worship His Son's birthday?

There are two birthday celebrations mentioned in the Bible. (In fact, the word *birthday* is only mentioned three places in the Word of God, and two of the times it is recorded on the same occasion.) In both cases, the men were heathens. Pharaoh, on his birthday, hung his baker. Herod, on his birthday, cut off John's head for telling the truth. You can read for yourself about these birthday celebrations in Genesis, Chapter 40, and Matthew, Chapter 14.

Anywhere you look into the Scripture you will see that God was more interested in the death of Christ than He was His birth. Consider the Transfiguration. When God sent Moses and Elijah down from the courts of Heaven to talk with Jesus, what did they talk about? His birth? No, they talked about His death.

We need to realize we are in a falling-away time, spiritually speaking. We look at the folly of it: A world in darkness claims to have a festival to commemorate the birth of the Light of the world. They love the festival, but they do not want anything to do with the King.

Jeremiah said that the customs of the people are vain. I would like to bring this to your memory just as food for thought: It was a custom that released Jesus Christ to the cross. Read John 18:39.

The Christmas Tree

What about the Christmas tree? We are just prone to accept things and to never look into them to see why we are doing them.

I liked the Christmas tree. I thought with all the lights off except the tree lights that it was about the prettiest thing I had ever seen. I was sitting and looking at a Christmas tree one night when I first started in the ministry. I had the feeling everybody has at that time of the year. All at once, God began to talk to me and said, "What is there about the tree that reminds you of Me?" I answered, "Why, it is a . . ." He said, "What kind of a preacher are you going to be: likening Me unto trees? All through the Old Testament, I would not allow them to build anything to liken Me unto." That thing began to lose all of the beauty that it had. The Christmas tree was just carried over from the pagans. It is just as much a heathen custom today as it was back then. Bringing an evergreen tree into the house and decorating it is following pagan customs, and we never will show Christ to the world by following pagan, godless, Christless customs.

Jeremiah 10:1-4 and 6 reads: "Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. . . . Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord"

In the beginning, God made man in His likeness. When man fell, there was nothing that man could make or take that could be made unto the likeness of God until Jesus Christ came along. After He brought redemption and lifted us back to a perfect plain of holiness, then we represent God again. Nothing can be made like God but a new creature in Christ Jesus. We are the living trees, the planting of the Lord, adorned with the light of the Word as we put on the Gospel. Christians are the most beautiful Christmas trees ever looked at'

We will take Bible and history both. There is a book called *The Gathering* compiled from different encyclopedia writers. It condenses the Christmas customs. I want to quote from it for your benefit:

"Even many centuries before Christ, evergreens were an emblem of eternal life. The cold winter killed most plants, but the evergreen remained a tree of life that did not die. Many pre-Christian people worshipped nature. They revered trees and brought them into their homes as symbols of the gods. In winter, just after the shortest day of the year, they celebrated the birthday of the sun with evergreen—a proof that life continued and did not die. From the fifteenth century in Germany comes the story of the great reformer, Martin Luther. He brought home a small fir and placed many lighted candles upon it to illustrate for his children the glory of the starry heaven above the stable in Bethlehem the night that Christ was born. The first written chronicle that we have of the Christmas tree is an old volume of 1605 when many German people in Strasbourgh decorated and adorned firs in their homes. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, all Germany had adopted the Christmas tree as a Yuletide tradition. They bedecked it with stars, angels, sweetmeats, tinsel, gilded nuts, and glowing candles. The delightful custom spread to Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, most of Europe, and then to the United States."

What happened? People took a pagan custom and gave it a meaning. God, under His law to His people in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, does not want us to take any kind of an image and liken it unto Him or make it as a representation of Him.

God would not have us take a fir tree to be the symbol of something that Christ did, for He wants us to be fir trees—ever green. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). We do not have to take a tree as a symbol of what Christ did, for we are trees that are symbols of what Christ did—trees of righteousness. Read Isaiah 61:1-3. He would have us to be evergreen, just as trees planted by the water. When the heat is put on, no matter what happens, that tree is evergreen. See Jeremiah 17:7-8.

Because our roots go to the river, we are not held up or kept alive by circumstances. Our roots are in Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Thank God, we can stay evergreen?

If the evergreen tree is a symbol of everlasting life (actually, you kill life when you cut down the tree), what about the aluminum trees? What are they a sign of?

Friend, we are not going to exemplify God, we will not better our world one bit, and we are not going to shed a bit of light in our darkened world by following these pagan practices that have been handed down over the years.

The Giving of Gifts

Now, let me say something about the giving of gifts. *People's Encyclopedia* says that it is not a Christian, but a Roman custom. Bright boxes beneath the tree, little gifts upon the tree, packages buried in stockings—no other season is filled with the spirit of giving as is the Yuletide. People like to hide behind the fact that the wise men brought gifts to Jesus and say that is the reason they are giving.

The *People's Encyclopedia* says, "The earliest gifts of the winter season were pagan gifts of greenery, boughs of laurel, olive, myrtle, and mistletoe which were meant to bring health and long life to the receiver [a superstition]. With the Romans, these gifts became sweets, precious stones, and coins given at the winter festival of the sun." Every one of these points back to the worship of the sun god.

We give as the wise men gave, so they say; but let us see if that is true. The wise men brought gifts to Jesus, but they were not Christmas gifts because they did not come to see Jesus in the manger. Jesus was a young child living in a house when the wise men came (Matthew 2:11). The wise men followed a custom of their day. No one approached a king, a magistrate, or anyone in high authority without bringing a gift. The Queen of Sheba brought gifts to Solomon. Why? Because she was coming before a king.

That custom is carried on in our society today. Before a man will make an appointment with the President, he will send turn a gift. When our President goes to a foreign land, he takes a gift. The wise men bringing gifts to Jesus was just a custom, my friend, and has nothing to do with us giving to one another in any way.

The Scripture says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." That means God wants us to freely give that which we have received from Him—not something of our own. We say that it is Christ's birthday, but everyone gets a present except Him.

There is nothing wrong in giving a gift of appreciation. However, the custom of giving Christmas presents has so gripped the people that they feel duty-bound to do it. Loan companies get rich from many people who go beyond their means and borrow money to buy them. They feel that they have to do it because it is the custom of the people. It is nothing more than commercialism.

Christ's work suffers during this season. Some even lose their experience with Christ because of the strain they are put under. Christmas is becoming a longer season all the time. It begins before Thanksgiving now. Almost every clerk who works in a store would like to have a vacation from Christmas to New Year's Day because they do not want that mad job of exchanging the gifts that did not suit the recipients.

When we go into history, we find that gift giving was unheard of as a Christmas custom until the latter part of the third century.

Someone may say, "We just do it to give the children a good time." Well, that is all right if you want to do it, but don't do it under the cloak of honoring Christ's birthday.

To know how to give good gifts to our children almost takes divine wisdom.

Let us look at what often happens when Christmas time comes. The parents go to the bank and borrow all the money they can, or run up their charge accounts, to get their child a sled, a bicycle, and ice skates. There is no snow, so he cannot use the sled. There is no ice, so he cannot ice-skate. It is raining, so he cannot ride the bicycle. He is all befuddled. He becomes angry and throws the skates through the window, kicks the spokes out of the bicycle, and wishes he had not received anything.

How do you give good gifts to your child? When it is ice-skating season and he needs ice skates, get him some. Let him use them when it is in season. When it comes time to slide with a sled and he can use

one, get him a sled. When the season is appropriate for riding a bicycle and he needs one, get him a bicycle. (When it comes time to discipline him, give him that, too.) He will appreciate the gifts a lot more and get a lot more good out of them.

Many people give large gifts at Christmas time, thinking there will be some peace of soul to be found. However, peace is not the outgrowth of goodwill. Goodwill is the outgrowth of peace. When you find peace from God, you will have goodwill toward all men.

The Santa Claus Myth

Now, let us consider Santa Claus—Santa Claus with the accompanying white lies and deception.

Santa Claus is the symbol of a Roman Catholic bishop who was wealthy and got enjoyment out of putting on clothes of poverty, going through the streets, and giving great gifts to the people. My friend, there was One richer than he. There was One who had a richer Father than Saint Nicholas had. Jesus came down in poverty, and He not only gave us gifts, but He gave Himself. He gave His life upon the cross.

Statistics show us that many, many little children even in the United States know nothing about Jesus Christ but are well aware of Santa Claus.

People feel it is a thrill to tell their children there is a Santa Claus. It may be a thrill, but you are doing something to your little children that they may never get over. The devil will work there right when the little child's character is being formed. He is building up faith in humanity and in his father and mother—faith that he will need to guide him when he gets into his teen-age years. So many get away from you in their teen-age years because you killed your influence the only time you could build it. Right at that time, the enemy of your soul will cause you to build up Santa Claus. When you tell one lie, you have to tell some more to keep it going. Many parents think it is a great thing to see how old a child can get without finding out there is no Santa Claus; but little do they realize that they have let those children get up to maybe eight years old without knowing the truth—then it about breaks their hearts. You have killed confidence and put a question in their minds of anything you tell them after that.

Arise and Shine!

Exodus 23:2 says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Another applicable Scripture is 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing [Christmas has the highest place on the calendar] that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

God says, "Come out of her, my people." The cry is to come out of godless Christendom, out of Babylonian confusion, out of the burlesque of religion that masquerades under the name of Christ. We need to be awakened from our sleep of complacency and be different along these lines!

We have all seen the sign, "Put Christ Back in Christmas." However, Christ never was in Christmas, and He never will be in it. You cannot put Him in it. Christmas is merely a custom.

The Prophet Isaiah gave two commands to the church: arise and shine. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Friend, it is one thing to receive light. It is another thing to arise and let it shine. It is a third thing to arise and let it shine in such a way that people will see God in us. It is going to mean something if you take hold of light that God gives you and, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, let it shine in such a way that you can get light to others. If you are not careful, you can grab the understanding you have, take a sharp axe, cut yourself off from everybody all around you, and not do anything but make a mess. One of the things

of walking in the light is laying aside the works of darkness. Have no fellowship with the works of darkness, that which is against the Bible, against God, and against Christ, that which points to false gods and to paganism.

Have no fellowship with the works of darkness in your individual lives, the part you have a governing factor over. The Bible does not say do not have fellowship with people, but do not have fellowship with the works of darkness. Do not look down on your neighbors, your relatives, your co-workers, or people at school because they do not understand what you understand. Go cautiously and let them have a chance to see. Remember, there was a time that you and I did not recognize the error of the Christmas season. We had a chance to see. Give others a chance to see. Let the Spirit of God direct you in every move you make. He will guide aright.

Part 2

How to Keep Christmas

Luke 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 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.

8 And there was in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, to, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Be Willing to Investigate

We should be ready, as Paul said, in season and out of season. If the world wants to set a day aside and, supposedly, celebrate Christ's birth, let us rejoice that the Savior was born, since they brought it up.

The text gives us understanding of what our attitude should be. Notice the first part of verse 17, "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad. . . ." Of all the good tidings that were ever given to mortal ears, there has never been a tidings to surpass this that God has given us to take to the world: Unto you a Savior is born, which is Christ the Lord.

There is much talk about the Baby, but let us go out to the Judean hills where the shepherds were when the glory of God settled down on the hillside and the angels proclaimed the Gospel message for the first time to mankind: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Verse 15 reads, "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them unto heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass"

Oh, if people were more willing to investigate! The truth is not marching on today in the hearts and minds of people as it ought. I think of the great truth God has given us on the one cleansing that exemplifies the blood of Jesus Christ; but how many who claim to be Christians will not even look into it,

will not even go to the Book and see if there is any truth in it! Friend, TRADITION WILL KEEP YOU FROM LOOKING INTO SOMETHING TO SEE IF IT IS TRUTH!

When the angels heralded the message, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass." They did not see it when the angels spoke to them. It is one thing to hear the Gospel, but it takes investigation to know it. There would be millions saved today that are not saved because the enemy has kept them from investigating.

Those shepherds, so history tells us, were unlearned men, but the Gospel is too wonderful for man to comprehend in himself, anyway. It takes faith in God and God's Word to get an experience and see the truth of the matter. When those angels said there was a Savior born in Bethlehem, the shepherds could have been like people today, "That is too good to be true. Even if the Savior was born, He would not be born in a little, unknown place like Bethlehem." Human reasoning goes right to work against the truth.

The shepherds did not waste time. The Bible says they left their flocks. There is something about truth when it strikes your heart, and if there is any faith there, you will forget what others are doing and about the many things that would hinder you. You will walk free from every one of them and go to see if the thing is true. If you are not a Christian, if you have not found out that God's Word is true, there is only one way to find out: Look into it yourself and see for yourself if it is true.

You See More Than a Baby in a Manger

When we investigate truth, we will see more than the natural eye can see. This thing of truth, this thing of salvation is beyond the human. Everything about God's plan of salvation is mysterious, powerful, heavenly, divine, and above what the natural man can comprehend or see with the natural eye. However, thank God, if you will obey the message, you will see something that man cannot see with the natural eye.

Verse 17 of the text tells us, "And when they had seen it. . . ." What did they see? Certainly, they saw the baby, but that is not anything to get excited over. There are millions of them born every day. You can see something beyond the natural understanding if you will take God at His Word and do what He tells you. Furthermore, you will be moved, even as the shepherds were, to go tell it. Those shepherds not only published it abroad, but they praised God and shouted on the way home.

Thank God for the line of vision the Shepherds had! God revealed something to them, and they saw something more than a little baby in a manger, and every one who knows God in real salvation sees something more than a baby in a manger. If we could not see more than a baby, there would be no rejoicing. As we, with them, look into that manger, we see One who was to bring hope to a hopeless world.

We see those tender, little feet that were not even able to stand up and support the frame of that little body and we see feet that could walk on water as securely as if they were walking on the earth. We see feet that could travel through the rough lands and hard places of this world to bring the Gospel news.

We look at those little, feeble hands, so tiny, and realize these would be the hands that would touch the blind eyes, touch the deaf ears, touch the diseased and crippled bodies, and touch the one who is bound in sin and set him completely free in a second of time.

When we are supposedly rejoicing because the Savior is born, we can become so tied up with trees and presents and vain customs that we do not see; and because we do not see, we cannot tell somebody else, and our world continues in darkness.

I am glad I do not have to go back to Capernaum or Galilee to see Jesus open the blind eyes. He opened my wife's blind eye in November 1976.

When we look in the manger at those beautiful little hands, we can see those hands with spikes driven through them, nailed in the most cruel manner to a cross. We see the Deliverer who loved you and me so much that He laid down His life on a cross, to die in our stead, that we could truly enjoy life as God ordained man to enjoy it right here on the Earth.

That beautiful brow so fair would soon wear the crown of thorns. That soft, weak voice with its gentle whimpers as a day-old baby would make would soon speak with power, and twenty-foot-high waves would settle down and be still. No disease, no sin, no power can withstand that Voice. When the shepherds looked and saw that little fellow in the cradle, they saw One whose little, whimpering voice would have such

power He could walk up to graves where people had been dead for days and say, "Come out," and they would come out and walk again.

You Herald Jesus and His Salvation

If we have seen all this, why would we want to play around with customs and vain things? We have seen the most wonderful thing there is-and the world has never seen. There is no greater news to herald? There is nothing greater to talk about. I know the big end of the world does not want it. They never did. However, there is no greater message to fall on mortal ear.

There is no other message that could reach the demand of the soul. Your soul demands salvation. The whole world could be rolled at the soles of your feet, and after you have vanity and vexation. "It does not satisfy. Give me Jesus " is what the soul is crying out.

If we really believe that the soul of every man and woman around us is demanding Jesus, we ought to be more free in offering Him to the souls of men everywhere. Do not be afraid! The devil will put up a fight. He will speak through the individual and have you feel he is not interested, but mark it down that THE SOUL OF EVERY MAN AND WOMAN DEMANDS SALVATION. God fashioned our hearts all alike (Psalm 33:15). Just as the stomach was created for food, the soul was created for the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, and you can have the whole world, but your soul will never be satisfied without salvation.

NO GREATER MESSAGE CAN BE HERALDED, NO GREATER NEWS, NO BETTER TIDINGS EVER FELL ON MORTAL EARS THAN "A SAVIOUR IS BORN." The verb tense of the Greek does not say "A Saviour was born," or "A Saviour will be born," but "A Saviour is born." The present tense verb means it is just as real today. This was to be told to all people, and you were not there that day, but it is to be just as fresh to you today as it was to them.

When we boil it down, saint, what is there left in this world that is really wonderful after you have seen Jesus? The prophet said His name would be called Wonderful, so wonderful that after you see Him, nothing else compares. Because man has had time and God has mercifully blessed his mind, man can excell and outdo, with machinery and modern technology, the seven wonders of the world. However, Jesus is not a wonder of Earth only, but a wonder of Heaven also. He is not a wonder for a time, but a wonder of all times, and He will be a wonder throughout eternity.

Those shepherds were on Judean hills in the middle of the night, and the hillside was illuminated. The song the angels sang is a song to sing in the darkness. Thank God for the promise of His Word: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Thank God for the glory of God, the very presence of God that can come on the scene in the darkest times.

What was the great message? God has come into our world as a babe. The Infinite has become an infant. What a message! God has visited us, and the angel said to call His name Emmanuel because He is God with us. The Ancient of Days, One who has no beginning and no end, One who existed from eternity to eternity, has been born of a woman.

Many people deny the virgin birth, but Scripture after Scripture stand up firmly and prove the virgin birth. In Genesis, Chapter 3, after He passed out the curses because of sin, God said the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent. Anywhere else where genealogies are run, it is always the seed of the man, but this was to be the woman's seed. The angel told Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

What man needs is not some new theory to believe in, not some ceremony he can go through, not some religious ideology he can line up with, but man needs God in the flesh. So, since man needed God in the flesh, God moved into the flesh. He came down on our level and was born of a woman, as other babies are born.

A child is an ordinary sight, but something else happened when that Baby was born. The Bible says that the Word, which was from the beginning and which was with God, became flesh. In other words, God through that Babe is taking action to save man. The Word has been prophesied, but a Word that does not take action is powerless. The prophets had told about it, but when that Babe was born, the Word was

coming to life. It was taking action. God was definitely moving to fulfill the mission that needed to be fulfilled for man to be saved.

Peter said that angels desire to look into it, but although it is that high, it is so low and simple that little children stood in the streets of Jerusalem (when hypocrites and professors did not see anything whatsoever) and saw the King and cried out "Hosanna" to the King. When we know the ultimateness of this great salvation and how wonderful God has made it, oh, how we need to make known this saving truth'.

Millions do not know they can be saved. Furthermore, many hundreds of thousands of those millions are going through forms of religion, but they do not know they can be saved NOW. I am preaching on a "this day" salvation. There is no postponement in it.

BY THE WAY YOU ARE LIVING RIGHT NOW, YOU ARE MAKING A RESERVATION IN ETERNITY. You do not have to worry about having a place to go to when you die. It is already reserved for you. Read 2 Peter 2:9, 17 and Jude 13.

In 2 Timothy 4:8 Paul said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

First Peter 1:3-4 reads: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." This is one place you are not going to get in if you wait and try to buy a ticket at the gate. Everyone who gets there has a reserved place. There is no general admission. An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled is reserved in Heaven for you who are kept by the power of God.

If you fail to come to the Light, Jesus Christ, and gain a real experience, your reservation is also already made. You are in darkness now, and you will go under everlasting chains of darkness forever.

Luke 2:17 reads, "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child." Remember, they heard from Heaven but they saw from below. The Gospel is a heavenly message, just as the angels bore the message there. The Bible says in Peter's writing that we can only preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. When you hear the Gospel from a man who is anointed to preach the Gospel, you are hearing a heavenly message. No man can speak of the things of God with any success until the doctrine that he finds in the Book is also found in his heart. The shepherds heard the message, but they went and saw something, and they published the things they saw. Those shepherds, the Bible lets us know, were poor, unlettered men, but they had something to say.

When the lame man had been healed, the apostles were told not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus. However, Peter said in Acts 4:20, "For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard," and that is all you can speak. The reason for much confusion is people trying to teach things they never saw, but they just heard somebody else preach. Do not measure yourselves by yourselves. You are responsible to live and to witness to that which you have seen and heard, that which God has revealed to you.

Do not allow the enemy of your soul to get you out into the field and attempt to explain something you do not see and understand. It will make a fool out of you and it will hurt the cause of God. Stay within the realms of what you see and what you understand.

I think we have a good example of that in John 9 where it tells of Jesus healing the blind man who had been blind from birth. Those religious folks brought the father and mother in and asked them about him, and they said, "You ask him," because they were afraid they would be thrown out of the synagogue. So the Pharisees brought the man in, and he did just what I am preaching. They asked him, "Who was this fellow? Where did he come from?" The former blind man said, "I do not know. But one thing I know: I was blind, but now I see." We can only speak the things we have seen and we have heard.

There are parts of the Bible none of us can explain, but **SPEAK WHAT GOD HAS DEFINITELY SHOWN YOU AND YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED IN YOUR HEART.** You know what God has done for you. Stand for that truth. Be a witness to that truth. We are all preachers in one sense. You may never be a minister standing in the pulpit, but what about your children? One of the best pulpits there ever was is the

fireside pulpit. I am afraid that many parents cannot really talk to their children about Christ because the children do not see Him, and they do not see Him because "What you are speaks so loud I cannot hear what you say." Another good pulpit is on the job, right among the people we work with. What about your neighbors?

You Glorify God

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God . . ." (Luke 2:20). The shepherds returned to where they had been before they left, but they went back different men than they had been when they left. They left as seekers and came back praisers. If we all had to be foreign missionaries or ministers, how we would be shut out of opportunity to glorify the Most High! GOD WANTS YOU TO RETURN TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM, BUT AS A DIFFERENT PERSON. The shepherds went back to their flocks. We go back to our homes and back to our employment.

We need to be cheered in the thought that it is not in position or office but in earnestness that God is glorified. The janitor can glorify God more than the superintendent, sometimes. The enemy would have us feel incapable of glorifying God because of our position, because of our lack of education, or because of our understanding, but the message said the shepherds returned. They were still shepherds, but they went back. Do not allow your lack of scholarship, your ability to speak, or your knowledge of words to hinder you. If your heart is right, you can glorify God!

Certainly, we have to use what ability we have, but God works with ALL people. The text says it was good tidings to ALL people. Simple minds, many times, find the glorified Christ while learned heads are puzzled and are missing the mark. I read one time of a group of learned doctors who attended a revival meeting in which God was moving in a great way. One learned doctor was stirred when he saw hundreds weeping and rejoicing as they found an experience with God. Finally, he humbled himself and got a wonderful experience. He stood up and testified to that large group of maybe fifty thousand people. He said, "These simpletons, as we called them, have been entering the kingdom and getting blessed, and us learned men have just been fumbling with the latch." There is a lot of fumbling with the latch today, but the deep sinners, those men and women whom we would think do not know enough to understand the message of the Gospel, are walking into great and full experiences with Christ and are enjoying salvation.

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them." The shepherds were so happy because they found the Babe, just as they were told. What a wonderful thing to be happy over, that you have found the Bible will do just what God said, that you have found it to be just like the message was declared unto you! They returned glorifying and praising God, for what they had heard agreed altogether with what they had seen. You have something to rejoice about if, while the world is raising up in unbelief and revising the Bible, you can go on your way, rejoicing that you have found everything the Bible has said to be true through experience.

Psalms 103:12 states that God would remove your sins as far as the east is from the west. Has He done it for you? Then rejoice. The Word of God has promised you rest from a guilty conscience and the burden of sin. It says you would have peace and joy. Do you? Every one of us, as Christians, ought to be able to say with the Queen of Sheba, "The half has never been told."

The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God. How are we going to keep Christmas so a world can see what really is happening? Go home glorifying and praising God. Make sure you see it and have it, then when you drive fifty miles to a Christmas dinner with your relatives and you go through the door, holler, "Glory to God! Hallelujah!" What is wrong with shouting about it? Uncle Ben can bring in his quart and gurgle it down, and nothing is considered wrong with that. (The pagan Druids started the custom of getting drunk on December 24th as they worshiped the sun god.)

A multitude of heavenly host sang, praising God. Let us sing, saint. If the angels could sing over it and could not even look into it, don't you think we ought to sing a little? God ordained singing. I have found that a song helps lots of times when the heart is so heavy you cannot do anything but weep. Sing a song of praise unto God, and it will lift the heart. If you sing more, you will murmur less. If you sing more, you will slander less. If you sing more, you will find fault less. If you sing more, you will mourn less.

Some people talk too much, and some do not talk enough. Some people say, "I just do not feel that, unless God definitely impressed me, I ought to say anything. I do not think you have any authority to say anything to someone about his soul unless God definitely gives the authority." Now, let me show you some authority. (Revelations 22:17): "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. [There is your authority. To every one who has heard, every one who sees, every one who has the experience, God has given you a command. You need to say, 'Come.'] And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

May God help us to see that men and women are waiting! Knowledge that someone needs help should be enough for us to be moved to help them. On the way home, if you see a house on fire and people alive inside, are you going to wait for some authority to go tell them their house is on fire? No! The very fact that you see the need is enough authority. The fires of hell have already been kindled on the lives of many people, but if we are not careful, we will feel we have no authority to tell them their houses are on fire.

Ponder the Word in Your Heart

Verse 18 of Luke, Chapter 2, reads, "And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds." The Gospel message is a wonderful message, and people will wonder at what you say, because it is almost too good to be true.

Many are set to wondering at the Gospel today. They wonder how unlearned and ignorant men can declare it so freely with understanding. People wondered at the Apostles because they knew they were ignorant, unlearned men but yet they could unfold the Scripture in plainness and with meaning and with the power of God. The people finally came to the conclusion that the Apostles did not get it through education, but they had been with Jesus.

People will come to a meeting and see saints rejoice in the Spirit, and it is very astonishing to them because they themselves do not feel anything and they do not see anything. The world will wonder.

Verses 18 and 19 read: "And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all of these things, and pondered them in her heart." Oh, if we can just move people from wondering to pondering! Wondering is your astonishment pondering. The word *ponder* means that you weigh it in your heart.

My, the falsity that Mary has been dragged into! God did not intend her to be worshiped in any way. It was all a mystery to her. How would you feel as a fifteen-year-old girl with arrangements made to be married to the man you loved, and a man had not touched you, but the Holy Ghost overshadowed you and gave you a message that you are going to be with child? In the eyes of the people, you would have to prove that it is all clean and upright, because many gossipers are ready to go to work, "That is no holy Babe in her! Joseph just took advantage of her ahead of the marriage."

On the other hand, there was Joseph, a thirty-five-year-old man marrying Mary because she was pure. God gave him a dream, and in the dream an angel came, "Do not be afraid to take Mary. She is going to have a baby, but no man has ever touched her. She will be a virgin when you marry her, and a virgin after she has a baby." The word virgin means "untouched by man."

"How could these things be?" Mary asked, and the angel said, "The Holy Ghost . . ." The Holy Ghost is the answer. The Bible says Mary pondered on these things and kept them in her heart. Where was the miracle here? They were in a cowshed, and it was just a little baby born-where is there any God in this? But to her surprise, here came people from afar to worship her baby. (He was not just a baby.) She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Follow her right on. When Jesus became a man, she followed Him around and listened to Him preach. She stood there that day and watched them nail her son on the Cross. She kept all of these things and pondered them in her heart. She could not understand what it was all about. However, when He arose from the dead, she was in the group. Then Mary understood that her baby was her Savior, and she claimed Him as such; but she had had to do some pondering in her heart.

The declaration of the Gospel causes men to wonder, and it is supposed to cause you to wonder. Every one of you who is not right with God and does not know you have a place reserved in Heaven do some wondering.

God has taken a hundred sinners all around you, lost. Did you ever wonder why you are still spared? He can cut your breath off right now, and age does not have a thing to do with it. Did you ever wonder why you are not already in hell? Millions are that did not have as many chances as you have had. Did you ever wonder why God's Spirit still strives with you when you cut Him off, turn your back on Him, walk out on Him? Did you ever wonder why He did not strike you dead when you did that? It is His business if He wants to. He would be just if He did it, because your last decision was that you are not going to serve Him.

Do some wondering, and then when you get through wondering, do some pondering on your sins. Weigh them in the light of the Gospel. Get rid of the false balance, "I am as good as anybody else." Do some real weighing and pondering over your sins, as the judgment that awaits you is hell.

Ponder the Savior's birth, His blood, His blessing. Ponder on God's love and His forgiveness. Ponder on Heaven.

Verse 15 tells you exactly what to do after you have pondered, "Let us now go . . . and see this thing which is come to pass. . . ." Thank God, you can step from verse 18 to verse 20, and just like the shepherds, you can go on your way glorifying and praising God.

SALVATION IS TODAY. It is not something out in the future. The text says, ". . . unto you is born this day. . . ." When Zaccheus got up in the tree and Jesus came along, Jesus said, "This day is salvation come . . ." (Luke 19:9). It is a "this day" salvation. The Savior is born. He is here for you. He has paid the price. He has finished the plan. And He is knocking. You are not traveling to Bethlehem or somewhere else to see Him, but He has come to see you.

You can go on your way glorifying and praising God because the things you have heard are true, and you have found them in a real experience of salvation.

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