

I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Luke 2:8-11. We will focus primarily on verses 9-11 as I speak to you about “Good Tidings of Great Joy.” Let me read the text. “And in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. And the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”

Sadly, the glorious truth about Christ’s birth in Bethlehem has been so misrepresented and corrupted by paganism and materialism that today, especially in our culture, it bears virtually no resemblance to what we just read. Christmas today is shrouded in superstition. As we look briefly at the history of Christmas, we see that the old English word for Christmas was first found in 1038, *Cristes Maese*, the Mass of Christ. The Latin was *Dies Natalis*, from which we get the French *Noel*. We don’t even know the date when Christ was born, not the month or the date, not even really the year. We’re not sure. But in the middle of the fourth century, during the great world empire of Rome under Constantine, the Bishop of Jerusalem wrote to the Bishop of Rome and asked him to determine the date of Christ’s birth. He didn’t know, but he thought that maybe it was December 25. By the end of the fourth century, this was the accepted date of Christ’s birth by the Church. No doubt the Bishop chose that date because it fit well within the festivities of the pagans during that time of the year. December was the time of the winter solstice and it was the time when everything was a bit cold and dark and they were looking forward to the spring coming when they would once again grow the fruit of the harvest. So this was a time of celebration, feasting and partying.

They would, even in those days, adorn their houses with evergreen, since the leaves of the deciduous trees were gone. So perhaps the Bishop thought it would be nice to insert the birth of Christ during this time of festivity, and hopefully cause people to think a bit about spiritual things. It’s interesting that the Romans also included during this celebration time in December various orgies and feasting. It was a time called *Saturnalia*, named after Saturn, the god of agriculture. It was a time when they would thank him for the crops and anticipate the crops of the next year. This was a time in which they would give gifts to each other, usually small pagan idols of their deities, along with the giving of evergreen branches to hang around their homes. They would also use candles and various kinds of ornaments placed on these evergreens, and of course you can see the beginnings of our Christmas decorations even back then.

The Barbaric Norsemen called this time *Yule*, which was a Scandinavian term that described the winter solstice. Later on when they had a nativity scene, they thought not so much of Mary, Joseph and Jesus as they did of Mother Nature, Father Time and the Baby Sun-god. Of course all of that was rooted in Nordic divination and Celtic fertility rites, as well as what was called Roman Mithraism, which was an ancient mystery religion of the Romans. Mithras was the Persian god of light and wisdom. They even believed he was born with a sword in his hand and the soldiers especially worshiped him.

The Druids in England venerated mistletoe. In fact history tells us that the chief priest of the Druids would go with a large group of fellow worshipers and he would climb a sacred oak tree and cut down some mistletoe with a golden sickle. This was to be caught by a cloth on the ground to avoid defilement by the earth. Two white oxen were sacrificed during this time. Mistletoe was given to folks to be hung in their homes. This mistletoe symbolized peace and reconciliation. When an enemy in particular would cross under one of these pieces of mistletoe, they were required to embrace that

enemy, and of course you can see how that gradually morphed into our kissing our sweetheart when they walk under the mistletoe. Of course none of this is even remotely biblical, but I want you to see where some of it comes from.

Many years later, Martin Luther brought a tree into his house and placed candles upon it. He thought that symbolized the starry night of Christ's birth. There are legends that abound about St. Nicholas, Santa Claus. Some say that he was born on the southern coast of Turkey, a devout Christian who loved the poor. He believed Jesus' words to be literal that you need to sell all that you have and give to the poor, and so this saint was venerated by a lot of people in that day and he eventually became St. Nicholas. Another legend from Holland says there was a favorite saint they had called St. Nicholas, he was a white-bearded bishop of Asia Minor who was believed to have appeared around December 6, riding a white horse and leaving gifts for good children on the porch of a home. For bad children he would leave switches for the parents to use on the seat of learning. They also believed that he would drop coins down the chimney, and in order to catch these coins before they went into the fire they would hang some stockings to try to catch some of the loot that this good saint would bring.

The first Christmas card was designed by a British narrative painter and a Royal Academician named John Horsley. It was first printed in London in 1843 at the request of Sir Henry Cole, who was the owner of an art shop. If you look at that original card you will see some very merry drinking scenes upon it. As Christians, we are sickened by the sacrilege and superstition now associated with our Savior's birth. We especially disdain the association with the Roman Catholic mass. Indeed, the entire Roman Catholic system is leprous with idolatry. It is rotten to the core. We see that especially in mass—which is a blasphemous and abhorrent ritual that perpetually sacrifices Christ as if His atoning work remains unfinished, as if we remain in our sin—we remain in our guilt and we remain in perpetual condemnation and therefore we need to sacrifice Christ week after week after week. This holiday is contaminated by all manner of wickedness. Some Christians are so offended with it they choose not to do anything at all, they ignore it completely. They refuse to have anything to do with Christmas.

But I think differently. My thinking is, let's use the season and the day to exalt the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a most worthy celebration on any day. We do not want to allow, in my mind, the superstitions of sinful men to rob us of that joy. Let us, like Judo, take the momentum and weight of men's sinful idolatry and use it to our advantage to point them to Jesus. In my discourse this morning, by God's grace, I will endeavor to help you grasp the glorious meaning of the angelic announcement and specifically focus on the three titles given to Jesus: *Savior*, *Christ* and *Lord*. We will look at first *the terror of divine glory*, secondly *the tidings of great joy*, and thirdly *the titles of Jesus Christ*.

So let's turn our attention to the inspired words of this first evangelist as we notice *the terror of divine glory* in verse 9. "And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened." We know in many passages of Scripture that the angels worship the Lord in great glory. In fact, Nehemiah tells us in 9:6, "The host of heaven worships" the Lord. Of course they were created by God to worship Him, to do His bidding as ministering spirits, but also to communicate His will and even to execute His judgments. But here, an angel suddenly appears and he is enveloped in the brilliant light of the Shekinah glory of God, which always symbolized in the Bible the presence of God. The angel announces that God has come to earth. God is coming to you. Immanuel, "God is with us." This was a very important Old Testament concept. We know that God repeatedly promised that His presence would guarantee the fulfillment of His

covenantal blessings to His people. His presence was often manifested in the light of His Shekinah, the presence of His glory, this brilliant radiant light.

The presence of God was housed within the tabernacle and later the temple. We know in fact that the Hebrew term for tabernacle, *mishkan*, is derived from the root word *shakan*, which means to dwell or to rest or to abide. So from *shakan* came the term Shekinah, denoting the glorious presence of God. You can look back in the Bible and see the presence of God, this glorious Shekinah, in Exodus 13 when it was a pillar of cloud by day and a fire by night to lead the children of Israel. We can look at Exodus 33 when Moses needed assurance on the mount. He said, "God, show me Your glory," and God showed him His glorious light, the Shekinah. In Exodus 40 we can see the cloud descending and filling up the tabernacle. Later on in 1 Kings 8 it did the same thing when it came into the holy of holies in Solomon's temple. So throughout the Old Testament the mysterious light of God's presence, His glorious Shekinah, was often housed in the tabernacle and later on the temple.

But now you must understand that the Shekinah of His presence is going to be housed among men. It is coming to earth. It is *Immanuel, God with us*. In fact, in John 1:14 we read, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Is it any wonder that the angelic announcement would include a dazzling display of the ineffable glory of the living God who came to tabernacle amongst us to be our Savior and our Lord? I might also add that in Ezekiel 8-10 we have a description of the hideous corruption of the Israelites' idolatry that characterized the people. There you can read how the Shekinah leaves the temple and it gradually departs. It rises from between the Cherub over the mercy seat in the holy of holies and it hovers over the threshold of the temple court. Then as you read the text it gradually moves again and pauses over the east gate of Jerusalem, of the Lord's house. That, by the way, was the same gate from which the Savior was rejected and will someday be the gate through which He will return when He comes again. In Ezekiel 11:23 we read, "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood over the mountain which is east of the city." This was the Mount of Olives. It's fascinating to note that the precise sequence of the departure of the glorious presence will be reversed when the Lord Jesus Christ returns once again in power and in great glory.

Now, after roughly 500 years with no sign of the presence of God, no glory and no angels because of the sin of the people, suddenly the celestial brilliance of the divine presence returns to the shepherds that we believe were caring for the sacrificial sheep on a hillside in Bethlehem. In verse 11 we have an amazing illustration of the grace of God. The good news of a Savior that has been born is first announced to the lowliest of that culture. And notice he says that He has been born for you. Some might hear that and say, "Ah, but I am just a nobody. I am worthless. I am sinful. My life is filled with all manner of wickedness. I have nothing to offer God. I am undeserving of His mercy and His grace." Dear friend, if that is your heart, you must know that God does know you and God does love you. Your attitude of being spiritually destitute and broken betrays it. The Lord said in Matthew 5, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." Never is a man closer to grace than when he is quite certain he does not deserve it. Yes, God knows you. Christ was born for you. In His infinite love He knew you before time began. You were "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" we are told in 1 Peter 1-2. So therefore you have a Savior, you personally have a Savior who is Christ the Lord. So He has come to exalt the lowly.

The long-awaited Savior prophesied and prefigured in the Old Testament has now come. The One that was pictured by millions of animals that were sacrificed that could never ultimately forgive sin. Now

Jesus has come, the Light of the World, the Lamb of God, coming to deliver men from darkness and put them into the light. In 2 Corinthians 4:6 the apostle Paul tells us that, “Christ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” Yes, sin had separated man from the holy presence of God, but God in His infinite love and mercy continued to seek and to save and He comes once again in His unfailing love to save sinners. In Him there is forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of God.

Naturally the shepherds’ response was one of sheer terror. I can understand that a little bit. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen the northern lights, but I have seen them in the middle of the night in Alaska and the Arctic Circle and in other places where I’ve been. Just seeing the northern lights are enough to raise the hair on your back and cause goose bumps to come up all over your body. It’s an amazing thing. Now, can you imagine that multiplied a million-fold? Suddenly you’re enveloped with the glory of God. Naturally they were terribly frightened. That is the proper response of anyone who stands in the presence of divine glory.

I think of Isaiah 6 when Isaiah saw the glory of God. He said, “Woe is me, I am disintegrating!” You will remember that Ezekiel in chapter 1 saw the brightness of His glory and he was so overwhelmed that he fell on his face in utter horror. You will remember that Peter, James and John saw the glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration when the Lord peeled back His skin and allowed them to see the Shekinah blaze forth from His body and emanate around them and they were likewise terrified. You know what happened when Saul saw it on the road to Damascus and was blinded. We know also in Revelation 1:17 in John’s vision he sees the glory of God and he falls on his face as a dead man.

The glorious Shekinah of His presence now awaits revealing in His second coming, but there are no angelic manifestations nor are there any divine revelations in this dispensation. I might, as a footnote, add that there are no dreams and visions of Jesus now coming and personally appearing to people, as you hear so often on certain news stations and “Christian” television. There is no Holy Spirit speaking directly to people and giving them new revelation. The cannon is closed. It is sufficient as it is. Nevertheless, you must understand that the glory of God is still being revealed in His Word, and should continue to cause us to tremble. In fact, in Isaiah 66:2 God says, “But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.” Later in verse 5 he says, “Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word.” God is constantly looking for those who will take His Word seriously and see the glory of Christ revealed in His Word. Because indeed the Lord Jesus, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory,” the glory of that Word that now we can see and hear as we read it.

In fact, Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:23 that His revealed Word is “the living and enduring word of God which has caused us to be born again.” The Lord Jesus Christ, the very embodiment of the Word, will someday appear again in unimaginable glory and we’re told in Revelation 19:13 that when He does, “His name (will be called) The Word of God.” So the terror of divine glory is quickly and supernaturally calmed by the angel in verses 10-11. “And the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”

And here we see the second emphasis, *the tidings of great joy*. Typically the world knows nothing of genuine, lasting joy. Most people find joy only in the fleeting pleasures of sin. Whereas the Christian is most miserable in sin and finds his joy only in living for the glory of God. In fact, finding joy in sin is

really a mark of the damned, while finding misery in sin is a mark of the redeemed. Because of sin, you must remember that man has been separated from a holy God, and therefore suffers through an existence of groaning in a fallen world. Nothing is ever quite right, and if it is, it's not right for very long. And of course the worst of which a non-believer can experience is a mere trifling of the eternal torment that awaits them should they fail to repent.

But the good news of the gospel is that in the incarnation of Christ, God has made a way of reconciliation. No longer must we be separated from the glory of God because of our sin. Christ has bridged that gap. Here, God approaches man not as Judge, but as Father. You see, this is the good news, the glad tidings. He's not coming in wrath but in mercy. As a father would stoop down and pick up a child from the flame, so too the Father in heaven descends in the majesty of His angelic messenger to snatch His children from the flames of everlasting torment. He says, "Fear not." I believe this is an indication that these shepherds were believers, they were righteous Jews. This is more than good news, *it is good news of great joy*. Naturally the ones who need not fear are those who have been reconciled to God. He says, "Behold, I bring good tidings." He's not bringing judgment. This is good news. God is merciful, He is longsuffering, He is filled with lovingkindness. In essence, what he is saying is God has come now and provided forgiveness for all who have offended the holiness of His Law. So those who place their trust in Christ now suddenly find themselves at peace with God. The war is over.

In fact, John the Baptist said in John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Certainly those who are apart from Christ never see life. What they live is a life that is woefully deficient from the joys that could be theirs if they knew Christ. They will never experience eternal life in the glorious presence of God our Savior. So Jesus has come now, to seek and to save those who are lost in their sins. He is coming to live a perfect life so that His perfect life could be credited to our account. That is the great doctrine of justification. The Redeemer has come. Our Substitute has come. This is the good news. The work of redemption, as I mentioned last time, demanded a *theanthropon*, a God-man, for He alone could atone for our sins. Atonement involves two things. It requires satisfaction for the offended holiness of God that could only be accomplished by an acceptable substitution for the guilty party. As I have said before, *Christmas is all about satisfaction and substitution*. Those two words are key to understanding Christmas. I hope they will become part of your vocabulary. Because satisfaction plus substitution equals atonement. That's what the incarnation is all about. So this is good news to all who believe.

Euangelizo, good news, we get our word evangelize from that. It's a transliteration of the Greek word. There's no English word for that, we've just taken that from the Greek. So this is "good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people." This is a reference to Israel, to all the people, the *laos*, we get the word laity from that. But it's salvation to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. You must remember that from the beginning, Israel was to be a witness nation. But forgiveness would never be theirs exclusively, but would also be made available to all who believe. So the incarnation is ultimately the fulfillment of the new covenant. The new covenant is being delivered and it's soon going to be ratified or sealed by the very blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are now in the process of being fulfilled. Therefore we can now say, "Hallelujah! God has made good on His promise! He has made good on all of His promises and indeed He will continue to do so," and in that we rejoice. So truly this is "good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people."

As I think about it, wherever the gospel is preached, sinners are going to be converted, they will be transformed and families will be changed. Communities will be changed. Whole regions and even nations will be changed. The influence of the gospel is truly salt and it is light. What does salt do? It preserves, it prevents decay. Think what this world would be like if suddenly all the Christians are removed, as they will be someday in the great snatching away of the Church in the rapture. Not only are we salt but we are light. For light exposes corruption and it also produces life.

That great preacher of yesteryear, Charles Spurgeon, offers some excellent insights in this regard. He says, "There is no land beneath the sun where there is an open Bible and a preached gospel, where a tyrant long can hold his place. It matters not who he be, whether pope or king; let the pulpit be used properly for the preaching of Christ crucified, let the Bible be opened to be read by all men, and no tyrant can long rule in peace...There is joy to all mankind where Christ comes. The religion of Jesus makes men think, and to make men think is always dangerous to a despot's power. The religion of Jesus Christ sets a man free from superstition; when he believes in Jesus, what cares he for Papal excommunications, or whether priests give or withhold their absolution? The man no longer cringes and bows down; he is no more willing, like a beast, to be led by the nose; but, learning to think for himself and becoming a man, he disdains the childish fears which once held him in slavery...If men receive Christ, there will be no more oppression...slavery must go down where Christianity rules...It is joy to all nations that Christ is born, the Prince of Peace, the King who rules in righteousness." What joy there is in Christ. Those of you who grope around in the wretchedness of the world to find your heaven, you must hear that in the gospel I bring you good news of great joy.

So we have seen the terror of divine glory and the tidings of great joy. But the reason for such joy can be found in our third focus and that is in *the titles of Jesus Christ*. Now, in verse 11, we have a threefold description of Jesus. Three titles that contain an infinite reservoir of "good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people." Notice he says, "for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior." A *Savior*. The term *Sotier* is used here, in the original language. It means to make safe, to deliver, to preserve. Jesus now as our Savior has come to do just that. Let that sink into your mind. He has come to deliver us, to save us, to preserve us. John the Baptist said of Jesus in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus came to be the final sacrifice. In Luke 19:10 Jesus described Himself as, "The Son of Man (who has) come to seek and to save that which was lost." In John 4:42, the Samaritans who believed in Him, declared Jesus to be, "The Savior of the world."

This is the long awaited Messiah. This is the Son of David. This is the Son of Abraham fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant. This is the One who will eventually bring great blessing to the nation of Israel and fulfill the Davidic covenant, in 2 Samuel 7, where there is the promise of a glorious earthly kingdom and an everlasting kingdom. But first, He has come to be a Savior and He has come to therefore atone for their sin. Now, the righteous Jews that were aware of this, and in this case particularly in this scene, the shepherds and Joseph and Mary, were all looking for the fulfillment of the new covenant promises. They were looking for a Savior who would be judged on their behalf so that they could be reconciled to God and be filled with His Spirit. They were somehow looking for a perfect Lamb that was concealed in all the mystery of the rituals and the symbolisms and the sacrifices. A Lamb that had to be slain, that would someday put an end to sacrifice. A Lamb whose blood alone could wash away their sin and make them white as snow. For He alone could be the propitiation for their sins. Now while they may not have understood all of this completely, they were about to understand it much more fully.

In fact in 1 John 4:14 John tells us, “And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” I want to digress for a moment and remind you that He has come to be a Savior, not a Santa Claus. So many people see Him as this benevolent butler that responds to our finger snaps and gives us all of the goodies that we think we deserve. Many people today know nothing of the gospel. They know nothing of what I am preaching to you. Sadly, there are many people that fill up churches that know nothing of the gospel of the good news. They think it’s all about having peace on earth. Let’s live like Jesus and all get along and sing *Kum By Ya*. For many people, they think that Jesus came to save them, not from their sins, but from life-dominating habits that destroy their health—kind of an AA philosophy. The higher power that you’ve got to depend upon to be able to conquer your addictions to alcohol or drugs or pornography or eating disorders or tobacco. People think we are to come to Jesus because when we do, He is going to fix our poor self-esteem. Come to Jesus so that He can repair your disintegrating marriage. Come to Jesus so He can revamp your failing career. Come to Jesus so that He can restore your declining bank account. The bottom line: Come to Jesus so He can put an end to your lack-luster, monotonous, boring, unfulfilling, purposeless life. Others see Jesus as this ultimate Santa Claus. Give Him your list, tell Him what you want, and He’ll give it to you as long as you’ve been nice and not naughty. Name it and claim it, blab it and grab it, etc.

Therefore, because of these misconceptions, and frankly because of these demonic lies that have filled evangelical pulpits, many times conversion experiences go something like this. “God, my life is a wreck. If You’re out there, whoever You are, I really need You now. So I’m going to ask You to come into my life and to help me with all of my hurt and my confusion. Amen.” And then people are quick to say, “Welcome to the family of God. Now you’re a Christian.” The invitation would go something like this. “Yes, come to Jesus. He loves you just the way you are. You don’t have to change a thing about yourself.” People do that and many times they will admit they know nothing about the Bible. They don’t know anything about God or the gospel. They only know they need help and God, “if you’re out there, help me, now that I’ve decided to become a Christian.” Dear friends, please hear me. That person does not know the Lord Jesus Christ, because that person does not understand the gospel. Because the gospel is at the very core of the fundamental truth that man is sinful, separated from a holy God, and he needs a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

In fact, it is hard to come to Christ. Do you realize that? Jesus said if you want to come after Me, you’ve got to deny yourself. That literally means you’ve got to renounce yourself. You’ve got to not want to have anything to do with your old self. If you want to come to Christ you’ve got to repent. You’ve got to turn and walk in a different direction because you see your hideous sin and the way that you’ve been living. In fact, the Lord Jesus said Himself in Luke 13:24, “Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” What does that mean? Strive, *agonizesthe*, we get our word agonize from that. It means to engage in a life and death struggle. It means to strain with every fiber of your being. That’s what He’s saying, you must strain to enter in by the narrow door. The narrow door of repentance, of self-denial and humility and brokenness of heart over sin.

Why such a struggle? Because we hate to do those things. That is contrary to our sinful nature. We absolutely despise self-denial. We abhor repentance. We resent being considered so sinful that we are in a desperate need for a Savior, a need we cannot do anything about save cry out for mercy. Folks, the truth is, as it says in Romans 10:10, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your

heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” Certainly the gospel will have a transforming effect on your life. We’re made new creatures in Christ, but friends, all of that is secondary. The primary theme of the gospel is salvation from the wrath of a holy God. That is a universal problem that we all have. So indeed, “He will save His people from their sins,” all of those who place their faith in Christ as Savior, not as Santa Claus.

So Jesus comes as Savior. I want to give you an insight here to perhaps underscore this theme of Jesus being our Savior. In Luke 2:8 it says, “In this same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.” So what we have here is nighttime. The fact that the shepherds are out watching the flock tells us that it was probably a full moon, otherwise they would typically house the sheep in some sort of corral to protect them from thieves and predators. We know that they are about five or six miles from Jerusalem. According to the Rabbinic rules that we can read in Mishna, which is a clarification of Jewish law—and it needed lots of clarification because they were always coming up with things—according to the Rabbinic rules, any animal found between Jerusalem and a certain spot in Bethlehem was subject to be used as a sacrificial animal. However, the Rabbis also made another rule that if they ran out of animals, especially during the time of the Passover—and you will recall that there may have been as many as 250,000 animals slain during Passover—if they ran out of any animals they could go to this particular region and take as many as they needed. So, we don’t want to start a new denomination with this, this is a bit of conjecture, but I think it has some basis in historical fact. It’s fascinating to think that this magnificent angelic creature is now dispatched from the third heaven by the living God in the brilliance of the divine Shekinah to proclaim the good news of the Lamb of God to these lowly shepherds who were probably caring for sheep that were to be sacrificed in the temple.

So Immanuel comes. He comes as God with us. He is not coming in fury as He did in the plagues of Pharaoh. He is not coming in wrath as He did with Sodom and Gomorrah. He is not coming in the unapproachable holiness of Sinai when the mountain shook by the thunder of His voice in the giving of the Law. He is not coming with nostrils flared in anger as He did when He slew the 185,000 Assyrians marching for Sennacherib on Jerusalem. But He’s coming as a gentle baby in a manger—a tender Savior to deliver men from the penalty of sin. Do you see why it’s such good news?

Not only is He Savior, but we are also told that He is *Christ*. This is a title, it is not a name. Christ, *christos* in Greek. It means anointed. Jesus was God’s anointed One. He was commissioned by the Father to be Prophet, Priest and King. The Messianic expectations ran high in Jesus’ day. They were looking for Him to come, especially with all the oppression. In fact, we can see it in the Samaritan woman’s response to Jesus in John 4:25. She said, “I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Even the Samaritans knew. They were looking for Him. Indeed, as Messiah, Jesus is the Savior of the world in His prophetic, in His regal and even in His sacerdotal duties as Prophet, King and Priest.

Now in ancient days, prophets and priests and kings were anointed with oil when they were installed into their respective offices. In Luke 4:18 for example, Jesus quotes Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 61:1, and there He proves that He was indeed the anointed to be the Prophet of salvation. There we read that, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” During the days of the Old Testament, prophets

were anointed with oil signifying that the wisdom they had and their ability to foretell the future was indeed inspired by the Spirit of God. And priests also were anointed with oil signifying the divine appointment and qualification that they had to be able to perform the sacerdotal, or the priestly, responsibilities by the power of the Spirit of grace and holiness, to perform all of those duties that would be acceptable to God. And likewise kings were anointed with oil signifying the divine enablement that God had given them, and therefore the inspiration they had to be able to rule and to reign on behalf of God. But never has a single man held all three offices. For indeed, He alone was the anointed One. The Lord Jesus was Prophet, anointed by God to preach the gospel and instruct men in the way of truth, able to say, "Thus saith the Lord." "I say unto you." Also, as Priest who alone could offer up sacrifice and atone for sins, and also as King who alone could reign in the hearts of men and sovereignly rule over His entire universe as King of kings and Lord of lords.

That brings us to the third title. He is not only Savior who is the Christ, but He is also the *Lord. Kurios* in the Greek is translated Lord. This signifies the Hebrew word YHWH (Yahweh), often called the *tetragrammaton*, the four letters. As we trace this back in the Old Testament, even in the understanding of the Greek in the New, we see that this term refers to the pre-existent, the self-existent eternal God. Jesus, therefore, is the pre-existent, self-existent God. This is contrary to what the cults would have us believe. The Mormons do not believe this, that's why they are a cult. That's why they are not Christians. The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe this, that's why they are not Christians. Jesus is Lord literally means Jesus is God. Isaiah prophesied this in Isaiah 9:6, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." The term *kurios* in the original language also denotes superior and supreme power, absolute legitimate power over something. Indeed we know that the Lord Jesus rules supreme over His entire universe.

Let us never forget that the God whom we have offended loved us with such an infinite love that He descended to this earth to forgive us of our sins, and to pay the penalty for our sins. There can be no greater, no more joyous news, no greater tidings on earth than this. I pray that we will all adore the incarnate God and we will trust in Him alone as our personal Savior and submit to Him as the Lord of our life. For those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, the fathomless depths of spiritual joy can only be yours when you walk in faithful obedience to your Lord, Jesus.

No Christian will ever experience the fullness of joy which only Jesus can impart by the power of the Holy Spirit unless that Christian decisively commits his or her life to the Lord in such a way that the Lord Jesus is Lord of all. Lord of everything I do. Lord of my career, Lord of my family, Lord of my bank account, Lord of everything. In other words, before I make any decision to do anything in my life, I must make sure that I am doing what God would have me do so that I can experience the fullness of joy that can be mine in Christ Jesus.

Unless you make Him the wellspring of your life, unless He is the delight of your soul, unless you long for communion with Him more than any other thing, unless He is your greatest desire, your joy even as a Christian will always be incomplete. So may we see the light of the glory of Christ this season once again, in His church, in His people. Remember, it's Christ in you, the hope of glory. And also in His Word, and may we worship Him this season as Savior, as Christ and as Lord.

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