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## **Our Saviour's Birth**

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.*

*Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.*

*But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*

*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

*Matthew 1:18-21*

## The Many Names of Jesus

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)*

We see that God, through Isaiah, gave notice of the Saviour's coming. And this notice was given hundreds of years prior to the actual event. But no wonder, because God has foreseen and foreknown all things. He is omniscient.

We see in this prophecy that this child would be called several names, one of them being The Mighty God. Oh, that we could fully comprehend that Jesus on earth was very God.

Another name applied to him in that verse is The Everlasting Father. And we can see confirmation of that when Jesus said, *I and my Father are one. (John 10:30)* We see, then, that there are not many Gods, but only one God in three persons.

As we read in that verse in Isaiah, He was also to be the Prince of Peace. How contrary peace is to conditions here upon this sin-infected earth. Animosity and wars exist between nations and between groups of people. There is enmity between individuals, and this is manifested even in families. In the present time, this often leads to severing of marriages, which is so terribly tragic. It is not only damaging to the immediate twosome, but also to the children, to other family members, and to friends. Seeing, then, that He is called The Prince of Peace, does it not behoove us, as his present-day representatives, to ask Him to use us, his present day peacemakers, to try to help mend severing relationships, as He leads us?

Very importantly, He was born onto this earth to die for us. The Passover Lamb was used by the children of Israel as the means of protection from death of their firstborn, as God instituted it. This was a picture of what He would do hundreds of years later for you and for me. He would be the Passover Lamb to shield us from eternal death. His blood was shed to perform this for us.

Let us read again the words of the Jewish prophet, Isaiah. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

*Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:10-12)*

Pastor Richard Sakrisson  
Vancouver, Washington

## **The Festival of Christ's Birth**

The festival of the birth of our dear Lord Jesus Christ is instituted among Christians, especially so that we may preach this history and learn it well, that it may be kept in remembrance by the young and the common people, that it may be impressed upon their hearts, and that they may rightly learn to know their Saviour. For, although we tell it yearly, we cannot sufficiently preach nor learn it.

The first point in the history is this: That Christ was born just at that time when the Jews and their property were, for the first time, taxed under the Emperor Augustus. That was when our dear Lord Jesus began to reign in the world, though secretly, and the great Emperor Augustus, with his empire, must serve Him, although unwittingly. By his command, he furnished the occasion for the Virgin Mary, with her espoused husband, to go to Bethlehem, and there, as the prophets had written, give birth to the Saviour of the world.

But since Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, the Emperor had to furnish the occasion thereto, and thus serve the Lord Jesus at his birth -- although neither the Emperor nor the world knew anything about it. For the world is so wicked and unfaithful that she would otherwise rather have hindered than furthered. But God so conducts his government that often she must do unwittingly what no one could induce her to do knowingly.

Now it was very inconvenient and hard for this virgin, so near the time of her delivery in the midst of winter, to undertake this long journey to a strange place. She was not acquainted with it, and knew no certain place to which they could go.

When they got to Bethlehem and the time arrived that she should bring forth her child, everything was unprepared. She found no one among the people in Bethlehem who wanted to know her, or would give her a chamber for the birth, or show willingness to be with her at her time, when one woman is generally willing to help another all she can. But Mary must, together with Joseph, stay in a stable.

And for, as the mother, this was the hardest thing: that this baby, of whom, by faith, she knew to be the Son of God, and by descent the true Lord and King of the Jewish people, did not in his own fatherland, and the City of David, meet with even so much favor that He might have a borrowed cradle or little bed, aside from his mother's bosom and the manger, where she wrapped him in such poor swaddling clothes as she could procure.

To this place, the angels directed the shepherds, where no one would look for the child. In the stable, Mary had to warm her baby, perhaps at a little fire, bathe him, and when He would sleep and she could not hold Him in her arms or fold Him to her bosom, she had to lay Him on hay and cover Him with her veil or cloak, or whatever she may have had.

This is, in brief, the history, which, no doubt, the Evangelist wished thus to present to us, who are generally so cold that our hearts might, if possible, be warmed a little by contemplating the humble birth of Christ into the world. Bethlehem would, indeed, have been worthy to be sunken to the depth of hell since she did not even honor her Saviour so much as to lend Him the most humble cradle and pillow.

So much concerning the first part of the history, which is written for us that we might learn to take to heart his picture, how our dear Lord Jesus was born on earth in such poverty, and that we might never forget it, especially since we learn from the sermon of the angel that it was for our good. For here we see the great and wonderful work of God, that, for the sake of poor, wretched humanity, He let his only begotten Son take upon human nature and become true man. As such, He endured all weakness and misery; nay, took upon Himself even our sins, though without sin in Himself, and became a sacrifice for them.

For the very eternal Son of the eternal Father, through whom Heaven and earth were created out of nothing, He, as we hear, became man, was born into the world like us, except that in Him there never was any sin. Therefore, we may now boast that God has become our brother, nay, our flesh and blood.

This great honor was conferred, not upon the angels, but upon men. And although the angels are more glorious creatures than we are, God has honored us more highly and come nearer to us than to the angels since He became, not an angel, but a man. Now if we would properly think of this and heartily believe it, this inexpressible grace and benefit from our Heavenly Father would cause us great joy, and impel us to thank Him from our hearts, to love Him, and willingly submit to his will.

Adam and Eve were not born, but created. God made Adam out of the dust of the earth and the woman from his rib. How much nearer is Christ to us than Eve to her husband, Adam, since Christ is truly our flesh and blood? Such honor we should highly esteem and well take to heart, that the Son of God became flesh, and that there is

no difference at all between his and our flesh, only that his flesh was without sin.

For He was so conceived of the Holy Ghost and God poured out so richly his Holy Spirit into the soul and body of the Virgin Mary that, without any sin, she conceived and bore our Lord Jesus. Aside from this, in all other respects, He was like other men; He ate, drank, and was hungry, thirsty, and cold like other men. Such and similar natural infirmities, which have descended upon us by reason of sin, He, who was without sin, bore and had like unto us, as Paul wrote, *He was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man. (Philippians 2:7-8)*

Thus the high, eternal, glorious Majesty deeply humbled Himself, coming down to us. For He might well have become a man such as He is now in Heaven, where He has flesh and blood like unto us, but does not live this poor, weak, infirm life which we live on earth. This He might have done from the beginning, and still it would have been great humility and a great honor to the human race. But He did not wish to do it in order that He might show how great and sincere a love He has for us, so great that He took upon Himself our infirm nature in order that He might take away our sin, **by** which our nature is depraved. And death, which reigns over us through sin he overcame in order to make us like unto his own glorious body, which He now has, so that we can rejoice in this, comfort ourselves, and boast that we have a Brother in Heaven who is the Son of God Himself, whom we may approach as our own flesh and blood. He is a wretched man who does not come unto this Saviour nor permit his joy to come into his heart.

This, now, is the reason why this history is preached every year, that every young heart may form this image within itself, praise God for it, and say, "Now, thank God! I am in no danger, for I have a Brother, the Son of God, who became such as I am."

Again, this very noble example serves this purpose: Since Christ, the Son of God, so deeply humbled Himself and bestowed all his honor on our poor flesh, and the Divine Majesty, before whom angels tremble, condescended so far and went about as a poor beggar; up in Heaven, the angels worship Him. Here on earth, He serves us and lies down in our miry clay. Since the Son of God has done this, as an offering of praise, honor, and thankfulness to Him, we will also be truly humble, and, according to his Word, bear the cross which He lays upon us, suffer all manner of tribulation, and follow Him.

For what can it harm us, or why should we be ashamed of suffering? Our Lord himself suffered cold, hunger, and sorrow, and

all kinds of wretchedness and want. Especially, as already said, was his advent and birth into this world characterized by the greatest poverty. There were neither pillow nor bedclothes; He had to lie in a manger before the animals.

But is not this a deplorable thing? We see how humble and poor Jesus is for our sakes, and we would be fine fellows, escape free and suffer nothing; nay, in our pride and impatience, we are even angry and complain if we are to suffer a little. But this does not agree well together, that our Lord and Saviour was born in such want for our sake, and dies for us on the cross, and we lazy fellows would always enjoy the greatest ease and peace. No, this will not do. *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord*, says the Saviour. (*Matthew 10:24*)

Therefore, we should well learn and earnestly consider, first, what honor was conferred upon us in that Christ, the Son of God, became man. For it is such honor that, if one were an angel, he might wish he were a man in order that he might boast: my flesh and blood are exalted above all angels. Wherefore we ought truly to count ourselves blessed. God grant that we may understand it, take it to heart, and thank Him for it.

In the second place, we should diligently look upon the example of Christ, what He, who is Lord of all lords, in his first advent to us poor men, did and suffered for our sake. This would induce and impel us from our hearts also willingly to help and serve other people, even though it required great self-denial and we should, on their account, have to suffer. To this may God help us by his Holy Spirit, through our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Martin Luther*

## Blessed Assurance

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)*

Writing tongue-in-cheek, the early 18th century poet, Alexander Pope, wrote: “Blessed is the man who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.” As humans, we can very easily identify with his cynical statement. Our fleshly nature tells us, “If you hope for nothing, there is no disappointment in receiving nothing.” From a totally human standpoint, we understand that promises made are not always promises kept. We can very easily become disillusioned and disappointed in this life.

As Christians, however, we are able to thank God for having given us a hope that is anchored in faith. His promises are sure. We will not be disappointed. A glorious eternity awaits us as we walk in confident expectation under showers of blessing. Faith brings with it the certainty of salvation and the assurance of everlasting life. There is no disappointment in Heaven!

During this season of Christmas, we once again consider the wonders of that time so long ago when Christ stepped down from the glories of Heaven and took upon himself the form of man. Truly, Heaven came down, and its glory has filled the hearts of Christians from that time on. Mary, the mother of Jesus, said, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (Luke 1:46-47)*

Mary was moved to rejoice because she believed the message given to her by Gabriel. *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. (Luke 1:38)* Her kinswoman, Elisabeth, moved by the Holy Ghost, provided assurance to Mary when she told her, *Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. (Luke 1: 45)*

Dear Friend, the miracle of Christmas does not need to be only a yearly observance, or just a lovely story that has been told and retold throughout the ages. The voice of the One who came into this world so that none should perish, but that all might have eternal life, continues to call, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)*

What a blessed Christmas it is when we can sing forth from the heart, *For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. (Luke 1:49)*

*In Christ,  
Pastor Earl Kaurala  
Alston Apostolic Lutheran Church*

## Good Tidings of Great Joy

In the Garden of Eden, God first told of the one He would send into the world to be our Saviour. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)* From that time forward, God spoke through the prophets about the coming Messiah, our Saviour.

The fulfillment of his promise came when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It was on that night that God sent his angel to bring this wonderful news to the shepherds who were tending their flocks by night. Beholding the angel and the radiance of God's glory around him, they were stricken with fear. It was then that the angel spoke, both to quell their fears and to announce the most glorious news that man has ever received. He said, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11)*

Today, these good tidings continue to bring great joy to every believer. Our hearts rejoice to know that we, poor sinners though we are, have been invited to receive these good tidings, the Gospel of Christ. The very essence of this Gospel is the forgiveness of our sins in the name and blood of Jesus, our Saviour. He came into this world to take away our sin so that we, who were alienated by sin, could be reconciled, through faith in Him, unto our righteous Heavenly Father. Cleansed from sin, we, with a living faith, cling to his sure promises of eternal life with Him in Heaven's glory.

Jesus said, *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)* Herein lies the hope for all who repent and believe the Gospel.

Dear friend, have you come to the intimate knowledge of Jesus as your Saviour? We pray that all who hear the loving invitation of the Gospel would be humbled in heart to find that God still loves sinners, and wants to draw near unto them. May many an unbeliever today hearken to his call, and, with broken and contrite hearts seek his grace and forgiveness while the day of grace is still with us. It is God, through his servants on earth, who declares forgiveness to the repentant sinner in Jesus' name. Jesus said to his disciples, *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:23)*

When the peace of God overflows the joy-filled heart of the forgiven, the vigil begins with great expectancy for the glad tidings of

our Lord's Second Coming. *Come, ye blessed of my Father (Matthew 25:34)* will be Jesus' welcome invitation to his believers. Then the beautiful, eternal Christmas will begin. O, wonderful day, that soon may be here!

May you have a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

*Pastor Ken Storm  
Tapiola, Michigan*

*Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:*

*And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

*I John 4:2-3*

## A Cradle Hymn

Hush! my dear, lie still and slumber,  
Holy angels guard thy bed!  
Heavenly blessings without number  
Gently falling on thy head.

Sleep, my babe, thy food and raiment,  
House and home thy friends provide,  
All without thy care or payment,  
All thy wants are well supplied.

How much better thou'rt attended  
Than the Son of God could be,  
When from Heaven He descended,  
And became a child like thee.

Soft and easy is thy cradle,  
Coarse and hard thy Saviour lay;  
When his birthplace was a stable,  
And his softest bed was hay.

Blessed Babe! what glorious features,  
Spotless fair, divinely bright!  
Must He dwell with brutal creatures?  
How could angels bear the sight?

Was there nothing but a manger,  
Cursed sinners could afford,  
To receive the heavenly stranger?  
Did they thus affront their Lord?

Soft, my child; I did not chide thee,  
Though' my song might sound too hard;  
'Tis thy mother sits beside thee,  
And her arms shall be thy guard.

Yet to read the shameful story,  
How the Jews abused their King,  
How they served the Lord of Glory,  
Makes me angry while I sing.

See the kinder shepherds round Him,  
Telling wonders from the sky:  
There thy sought Him, there they found Him,  
With his virgin mother by.

See the lovely Babe a dressing,  
Lovely infant how He smiled!  
When He wept the mother's blessing  
Soothed and hushed the Holy Child.

Lo, He slumbers in his manger,  
Where the horned oxen fed;  
Peace, my darling, here's no danger,  
Here's no ox beside thy bed.

'Twas to save thee, child, from dying,  
Save my dear from burning flame,  
Bitter groans, and endless crying,  
That thy blest Redeemer came.

May'st thou live to know and fear Him,  
Trust and love Him all thy days;  
Then go dwell forever hear Him,  
See his face, and sing his praise!

I could give thee thousand kisses,  
Hoping what I most desire;  
Not a mother's fondest wishes  
Can to greater joys aspire.

*Isaac Watts*

*Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*

*Matthew 1:22-23*

# Children's Page

Dear Children far and near,

Christmas is just around the corner, and as I once again sit down to write, I realize that the story of Jesus' birth is to be the story for this page. We will look into the Bible and read from Luke 2:1-20. This is always a beautiful story, and it never grows old.

## Keeping Christ as Our Christmas

*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.*

*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:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. (Verses 1-5)*

*While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary's child to be born. 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.*

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. They were protecting them from the harm of wild animals that could kill them.*

*And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. They had never seen anything like this before.*

*And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Verses 7-12)*

*After the angel had spoken this good news, something wonderful happened which showed the shepherds that it was no ordinary birth.*

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*

*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. (Verses 13-15)*

The shepherds were no longer afraid, but excited about the baby. God wanted them to be the first to meet his Son.

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

My, what a moment for those shepherds, to have finally found the stable, to see the little family together on that quiet night, to see the newborn who is called Christ the Lord, and to realize that everything that the angel told them was true.

Were the shepherds excited when they left? The Bible says they were. *And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. (Verses 17-18)*

The people were wondering if this could be true, as they heard it from shepherds who spent their time in the fields with animals. What could such men be talking about? They must have been making it up.

The shepherds believed it all, for they saw it with their own eyes and heard it with their ears. Mary knew how special this birth was, and I like what the Bible tells us: *But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. (Verse 19)*

The Bible tells us that the shepherds returned to the fields, glorifying God for all the things they had heard and seen as it was told to them.

Even as I write, I can't help but feel thankful for this story. It is one we can all enjoy and be comforted by. This was our very own Saviour who was born. Why? To save us from our sins, and to provide a place for us in Heaven with Him. I pray that we will always keep this precious baby, Jesus, in our hearts, and keep on serving and loving Him.

Have a blessed and happy Christmas, and keep Christ as your main part of the season.

*God's peace,  
Gwen Wilson*

## **The Miracle of Christmas**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.*

*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

*In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:1-5)*

Christ left the wonders of Heaven to come to earth to live as a man so that, when we leave this earth, we can also go to Heaven. That is the miracle of Christmas. Because He was God, He could do the impossible. He was born both of a human and of God. He came as a baby, and was "Emmanuel" -- God with us.

*God humbled himself and made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:7-8)*

In the beginning, God said, *Let there be light: and there was light. (Genesis 1:3)* This same Word that came forth as the Light in the beginning had now taken on flesh and blood to bring light to mankind in this dark world; to save us from our sins.

Jesus Christ was both God and man. He was involved in the Creation. *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. (Genesis 1:26)*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)*

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)*

The birth of Jesus was a time of great joy for some. The angels rejoiced. The shepherds rejoiced. Simeon and Anna rejoiced when they saw the Christ Child. But many were oblivious to his coming. There was no room found for Him in the inn. Is there room in your heart for Him?

The heavenly angels preached the first gospel message. The shepherds were the first congregation. They were faithfully working where God had placed them. The sermon was short. *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall*

*find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:10-12)*

But the message was precious. He is a personal Saviour for you and for me. This is the Gospel -- the good news -- that we should all preach.

The choir of angels in Heaven began to praise God, saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)*

Was it not appropriate that *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, (John 1:29)* first revealed himself to shepherds? The Good Shepherd leaves the ninety and nine to seek the one who is lost.

What was the shepherds' response to the angels' message? They said, *Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. (Luke 2:15)* There was immediate obedience on the part of the shepherds. We are told that they went with haste. When God speaks to us by the power of the Holy Spirit, we need to obey his voice. Obedience brings a blessing.

Apostle Paul responded in a similar way. He wrote, *When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. (Galatians 1:15-16)*

The announcement was not made to the King or the High Priests. There was no room in their hearts for Jesus. They were filled with pride, envy, and greed. Even though the chief priests and scribes knew from the Scriptures where Jesus was to be born, they did not go to seek Him. Herod plotted to do evil because he was afraid of losing his position. We can see how the plans of man will fail and the deceiver, Satan, is no match for God. God's plan will always prevail.

To really understand the Christmas story, we need to see beyond the manger to why Jesus came to earth. He grew from infancy to manhood. At his baptism, the voice of God was heard saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:17)*

Jesus Christ served mankind and gave of Himself. He healed the sick, raised the dead, and fed the multitudes. But He did something much greater. He gave until He was crucified on the cross. He carried all our guilt and shame on his shoulders. He suffered on the cross in agony until He said, *It is finished. (John 19:30)* He completed the work He was born to do; He died for you and me.

He was born to die. *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)* Jesus had no sin, so He did not have to die, but He did it for you and me so that we will live.

But He rose from the dead on the third day in triumph and glory. He had overcome and conquered death. God so loved us that He gave us his only Son as a gift to make us each a new person. It is *not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:9)*

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)* John saw, in the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus shining as the sun. Moses and Elijah spoke with Him of his coming death in Jerusalem, and again God said, *This is my beloved Son: hear him. (Mark 9:7)*

It was not revealed just to John, but Isaiah wrote, *And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:5)* The light has come into this dark world. Let us put away the works of darkness and be children of light, cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. May we experience the nearness of Christ in such a powerful way that we will rejoice and praise Him with the angels of Heaven.

Have a blessed Christmas.

*Pastor and Mrs. Elmer Yliniemi  
Frazee, Minnesota*

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

*Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

*Isaiah 9:6-7*

## The Faith of the Wise Men

When the wise Men came to Jerusalem seeking Christ, they found a much different air in the city than they had expected. All was quiet. No festivities marked the birth of this King whose star they had seen in the East. It was their expectation that the King of the Jews should be born in the capitol city of Jerusalem, and lie in royal chambers. But they, strangers, apparently were the first to speak of Him in his own country and city. They asked, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. (Matthew 2:2)*

Herod, the King, greatly troubled at this word, called all the chief priests and scribes together and demanded of them where Christ should be born. They told him that it would be in Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it was written by the prophet Micah, chapter 5, verse 2. Upon learning this, the Wise Men took their journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The star they had seen in the East went before them until it stood over the place where the young child lay. *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. (Matthew 2:10)*

What enabled the Wise Men to continue their journey in search of the King? Surely not human reason. It was the light of reason that guided them to Jerusalem and caused them to lose the light of the star. It was faith in the Scriptures that enabled them to resume their journey in the right direction, and brought them to Bethlehem and to the newborn King.

Martin Luther wrote, "Reason and nature never proceed any further than they can see and feel. The light of nature and the light of grace cannot be friends. Nature wants to feel and be certain before she believes; grace believes before she perceives. For this reason, nature does not go further than her own light. Grace joyfully steps out into the darkness, follows the mere word of Scripture, no matter how it appears. Whether nature holds it true or false, she clings to the Word."

The experience of the Wise Men teaches us to adhere to the Scriptures and not depend upon our own wisdom or the teachings of any man. The Scriptures have been given to us for a purpose. Christ is to be found in them, and nowhere else. The angel gave the shepherds a sign; not to find Joseph and Mary, but to find Christ. *Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:12)* That is to say, in the writings of the Law and the prophets. In these, He is wrapped, for they contain Him, they speak

of Him, and they bear witness of Him. They are his sure sign as He himself said, *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)*

Faith brought the Wise Men to Jesus. Although they found the child in far less than royal circumstances, they did not feel that they had been led astray. But strong in living faith, having followed the word of the prophet and sign of the star, they bowed down before Him, worshipped Him, and offered their gifts. Faith taught them to cast aside that which impresses human nature as being the criteria, and to cling to the Word in spite of the surrounding circumstances that would have been less offensive to human reasoning.

The lesson of the Wise Men is the lesson of faith. Let us today remember that *we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. (II Peter 1:19)*

*Pastor Alvin Holmgren  
Seattle, Washington*

**Dear Readers in all nations,**

**Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. (Titus 1:4)**

**May we all rejoice in our gift of Christ this Christmas, and draw ever near to Him in his Word.**

**With God's peace and love,  
The Christian Monthly Staff**

**And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

**Philippians 4:7**

## **Christians, Awake!**

Christians, awake, salute the happy morn,  
Whereon the Saviour of mankind was born;  
Rise to adore the mystery of love,  
Which hosts of angels chanted from above,  
With them the joyful tidings first begun  
Of God incarnate and the virgin's Son.

Then to the watchful shepherds it was told,  
Who heard the angelic herald's voice, "Behold,  
I bring good tidings of a Saviour's birth  
To you and all the nations upon earth:  
This day hath God fulfilled his promised word,  
This day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord."

He spake, and straightway the celestial choir  
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire:  
The praises of redeeming love they sang,  
And Heaven's whole orb with hallelujahs rang;  
God's highest glory was their anthem still,  
Peace upon earth, and unto men goodwill.

O may we keep and ponder in our mind  
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind;  
Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss,  
From his poor manger to his bitter cross;  
Tread in his steps, assisted by his grace,  
Till man's first heavenly state again takes place.

Then may we hope, the angelic hosts among,  
To sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song;  
He that was born upon this joyful day  
Around us all his glory shall display;  
Saved by his love, incessant we shall sing  
Eternal praise to Heaven's almighty King.

*John Byrom, 1692-1763*

John Byrom was born near Manchester, England, in a house that is finely gabled, and calls up visions of Christmas cheer. Byrom promised to write his little daughter, Dorothy, "something nice for Christmas, and it was to be all for herself." On Christmas morning, 1745, he placed this carol on her breakfast plate. Later, in 1750, the singing men and boys of Kersall Church came and sang the carol under the author's window, to a tune composed by their leader, John Wainwright.