

A CHILD IS BORN

&

A SON IS GIVEN

Merry Christmas

The Gospel Network

A Child Is Born
&
A Son Is Given

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A Child Is Born...A Son Is Given

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Contact: Truth Publication, P.O Box CT842, Cantonments, Accra, Ghana. Tel: (+233) 246 514 929, (+233) 206 025 118

Blog: www.truthpublicationsgh.wordpress.com

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INTRODUCTION

Christmas is a period Christians commemorate the birth of Christ universally. Despite its universality, there are Christians who abhor the celebration of Christmas calling it a sin and paganism

The argument for and against are numerous. But one thing we all agree on is the *historicity* of the birth of Christ. He once lived as a human being in the history of human kind.

The articles which follow are blog posts from www.thegospelnetworkgh.com compiled for the purpose of the season. We will not enter the debate on Christmas in these articles. Rather, we seek to present articles which will point to the person of the season— Jesus Christ. If our articles engender further debate on Christmas, then we have failed. However, if we are able to point even one person to Christ through this work, then we would have succeeded and all glory will be given to God alone.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Kwesi Sena

The Gospel Network

ONE

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT CHRISTMAS?

Christmas is here with us again. It is a period of excitement and celebrations. Families are getting ready, setting up trees, decorating their homes and buying gifts just in time for the celebrations. There are those, who though, will not describe themselves as Christians, yet, are equally engaged in a feverish preparation towards the season. In a materialistic and consumption-driven society, it is possible to see Christmas as an end of year party; a time to indulge and be merry. It is therefore important to pause and reflect on the significance of Christmas.

Rather than taking our knowledge of Christmas from the “retail outlets”, “Hollywood” and “merry making”, we turn to the Bible in search of understanding what Christmas is about. Paul, one of the prominent authors in the Bible gives us a clue on what Christmas is about. In his letter to the Galatians, he writes:

But when the fullness of time had come God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5).

These verses point us to three important truths about Christmas. Christ's birth, His Mission and its implications for humanity.

The Birth of Christ

Christmas is the day Christians celebrate the birth of Christ. This does not mean Jesus was born on the 25th of December. In fact, the Bible doesn't tell us the exact date Jesus was born, however early Christians adopted this date to celebrate the birth of Christ. Regardless of whether it is the exact date or not; what matters is that Jesus was a historic figure. He was born and once lived here on earth. Prophet after prophet had prophesied about his coming long before his arrival. Seven centuries before his arrival, the prophet Isaiah had this to say:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David

and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this (Isaiah 9:2-7).

The same anticipation and longing is reflected in some of the most popular advent songs like these two:

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel¹

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in Thee
Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear Desire of every nation
Joy of every longing hear²

The question is; why was the birth of Christ such an anticipated event? To be able to answer this question rightly, one must go back in time to the creation of the world. The Bible tells us God created

¹ Words from the hymn O come, O come Emmanuel

² Come, Thou long expected Jesus by Charles Wesley

the entire universe with all its beauty. Then He said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (Gen. 1:26). With authority and dominion, also came responsibility and obedience towards God. “the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen. 2:16-17). The penalty of death spoken of wasn’t just physical death. It was and is a separation from God the source of life for all eternity.

We read that the devil came to man questioning the intentions of God for instructing him not to eat from that particular tree. He rebutted, “For God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God”. The thought of becoming like God appealed to man and man rebelled against God. That’s how sin entered the world. Sin is rebellion against a holy God. It is treason and a rejection of God’s rightful rule. Ever since then, all of us who have descended from Adam and Eve have inherited an innate predisposition to reject God’s rightful rule over us. From the one day old baby to the 120 year old adult, we have all gone astray and chosen a position that is against God.

God’s words were very clear, “for in the day that

you eat of it you shall surely die”. From that time onward Adam and Eve were separated from God both physically and spiritually. God’s justice demanded that man be condemned. Just as all who have descended from Adam inherited his sin, so have we all earned that condemnation from God. But God put up Christ as a propitiation for our sins to reconcile humankind to Himself (1 John 2:2).

In the fullness of time, God through the Holy Spirit over-shadowed a virgin betrothed to be married to Joseph. When the circumstances were right, God sent his Son to be born of woman, born under the law. He took on the form of a man to identify with humanity, and was born under the same law that condemned man. He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17)

The Mission of Christ

The second thing we note about Christmas relates to the mission of Christ. Paul writes in Galatians 4:5, the reason Jesus was born was *“to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”* Jesus was born with a mission and that is why we can never talk about his birth without mentioning his mission. It wasn’t the case that Jesus was born and later discovered that he was the Messiah. No! Right from the beginning he was born to redeem his people

from the judgement of God, which we had justly incurred upon ourselves.

Our predicament was twofold. We were supposed to live a perfect life, which we couldn't. As a result, there was a death penalty hanging around our necks. Just like our twofold predicament, our need is also twofold. We need someone who could live our perfect life and someone who would die our death. There was no way we could make amends by ourselves. As Christians we are realistic about this; our problem requires an external intervention. Jesus the Son of God was able to fulfill both of these needs. He was the only one born of a woman who never sinned, and unlike Adam he obeyed the Father perfectly. And not only that, he was crucified for the punishment that he never deserved. God approved of his sacrifice by raising him from the dead on the third day and has given him a name above every other name (Philippians 2:9-11).

By these two acts, Jesus fulfilled the just demands of the Law and God has said "... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" (Romans 10:9-10). Peter, echoing the same point says "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteousness, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18).

Implication For Humanity

Is this the hope fuelling your excitement about Christmas? If it is, then you can go on and set up your Christmas tree, buy your gifts and have yourself a merry Christmas. Get together with families and friends and recount the wonders of His love as you celebrate in excitement. If not, there is no reason to be excited because you are still in your sins and the judgement of God still hangs over your head. And just as in the fullness of time God was true to his promise in sending his only Son to come into the world, he has also appointed a time when Jesus will come back as a judge to execute judgement on all who have continued in their rebellion and not turned to Christ (Acts 17:31).

The message of Christmas is not just a story; it's a message that demands a response! As you read about this news of great joy, what is your decision? Today is the day of salvation, repent and trust in Jesus for the redemption of your soul.

The eternal Son of God became man that we might become children of God. Merry Christmas!

TWO

JESUS CHRIST: THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

Christmas, the story of the birth of Christ is a great reminder that “the ways of God are not the ways of man”. By human standards, Christ should have been born in a palace or into a plush prominent family and not in a manger among sheep. For Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords to come into this world the manner He did is a great lesson point for Christians as we celebrate Christmas. Luke records:

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.¹

Jesus’ birth was so ordinary it would not make the headlines today just as it didn’t then. Why didn’t it? because human as we are, we are hardly impressed by common and ordinary things. We are moved by the spectacular. But our Saviour, the King of kings and the Lord of lords came in an unassuming fashion, “*wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*”

With the knowledge of the humble conditions

¹ Luke 2:6

surrounding Jesus' birth, what would you do if Jesus came to town this Christmas? At this time of the year when preparations are at fever pitch, it is highly possible to miss the center of the season—Jesus Christ. Christmas is about Jesus and we cannot separate the celebrations from His person. That will be a contradiction. As we celebrate Christ's birth, we must not lose sight of the significance. The celebration of Christmas can often be about numerous things except for the real reason. The story of Christmas is one where the King of the universe took on the form of a humble servant to rescue people who have rebelled against Him. It is a story of unfathomable grace shown to underserving people. It is the kind of love that transforms those who have truly experienced it into agents of love.

As we keep Christ the real reason for the season in view, we will become like him in how we love the unlovable. It was while we were still sinners that Christ died for our sins. It wasn't because we deserved it, it was rather the opposite. This Christmas look out for the needy and the broken around you and lavish on them the love God showed you through Christ.

THREE

THE BABY WHO IS KING

Is there a thing as a child who was born old? That certainly is an outright biological anomaly and a sheer impossibility! But the Bible will have us know that, Jesus, whose birth we are celebrating, the helpless baby born in a manger in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago, existed before the foundation of the world!

In theology, the birth we are celebrating is called the incarnation¹.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:16 KJV).

The Bible describes the incarnation as a mystery². Rightly so, the incarnation is a mystery. The prophets who prophesied about the incarnation and the angels of heaven who dwell in God's presence could not figure out when this will be. They longed to know when this mystery will unfold (1Peter 1:10-12).

¹ The doctrine of God manifesting in the flesh. The second person of the Trinity- Jesus Christ, the Son of God took on human flesh to live among humankind

² C.I Scofield (commentary on Matthew 3:11) describes "mystery" in Scripture as a previously hidden truth, now divinely revealed; but in which a supernatural element still remains despite the revelation

But eventually, "...when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as [children]. (Galatians 4:4-5). God the Son, came down and lived among His creation. During His earthly ministry, He disciple apostles who documented His earthly ministry in the gospels and epistles (see John 1:1-14, 1John 1:1-5, 2Peter 1:16-18).

Luke in the introduction to his gospel, opens with words attesting to the life and work of Jesus.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke, like all the other writers of the New Testament, moved by the Spirit of God (2Peter 1:20-21, 2Timothy 3:16), documented the sequence of events as they had witnessed it, thereby laying all controversies to rest. It is of vital importance to us as well, during this season as we commemorate the birth of Jesus to carefully examine what we are told concerning this baby who is the reason for the season.

The Angels' Herald

Shortly after the birth of Jesus, an angel appeared to a group of Shepherds with the unusual message (Luke 2: 9-14). The message of the angels was simply, 'a baby is born who is Saviour, Christ and Lord! What does this message mean?

God, Lord and Master

The original word the angels used for 'Lord' in Luke 2:9-4 is supreme in authority, controller; by implication, God, Lord and Master. It also means He is the Messiah. At His birth, the angels' message announced the fact that this child was already Lord, and had supreme authority as God over all. The New Testament abounds with evidence to the fact that Jesus had indeed existed before He was born¹. Countless times during His life on earth He affirmed this by claiming to be one with God, to be God, and to have existed before Abraham (John 8:58; 10:30 17:5; Mark 2:10). The birth of Jesus Christ therefore was not the creation of a new person; His person and nature (as God) existed before time.

Christ the Saviour

The angels added that Jesus was the Christ! By this they implied that He was the anointed or chosen one,

¹ John 1:1

who was born to save the world. Seven hundred years before He was born, the prophet Micah said this about Him: “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” (Micah 5:2).

The question one might ask is, from what does Christ save us? The Bible tells us that when our first parents, Adam and Eve disobeyed God (see Genesis 2&3), all of Adam’s posterity inherited the results of that disobedience. All humans, who ever lived, with the exception of Christ Jesus, were rendered sinners and in bondage to sin and Satan because of Adam’s disobedience; “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”(Romans 3:23). So that inherited sin—original sin—separates us from God as the Scripture states. We cannot help ourselves, so Jesus came as a ‘second Adam’ to redeem fallen humankind from Satan’s tyranny and reconcile us to God (1Corinthians 15:21-22).

O loving wisdom of our God,
When all was sin and shame,
He, the last Adam, to the fight
And to the rescue came¹.

¹ Words from the hymn *Holiest In The Height* by John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

For Christ to be able to save sinners, He had to be holy and sinless. Prior to His birth, the angel Gabriel bringing the announcement of His birth to Mary whom God chose to be His mother, proclaimed the child who was to be born would be holy from the time of His conception (Luke 2: 30-32; 34-35). Though He took on human form at His birth, the Bible tells us He was without sin and lived a perfect life: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin”. (Hebrews 4:15).

Christ lived a perfect life and this is why He is able to save us from our sins – because He is Lord, and He is Christ; sinless and holy! It takes only the God-man to do this. And He saves all who come to Him in faith, trusting Him to be their Lord. Understand the truth about His birth and person as you celebrate Christmas.

FOUR

WHO IS THIS JESUS?

Christmas is a day Christians commemorate the birth of Jesus. Christians are divided on whether to celebrate Christmas or not. The debate ranges from whether He was born on 25th December and also of the pagan origins of Christmas. In spite of these many disagreements however, one point of agreement between believers is that Jesus did live as a historical figure—He was born. There are numerous views about who Jesus is and to put Christmas in its proper perspective, we ought to be able to know *who* we are celebrating.

R.C Sproul, in the [*The Ligonier Statement on Christology*](#)¹, opens with these words: “Nearly every adult person has formed some opinion of Jesus. These opinions may be superficial, uninformed, or downright heretical. The truth about Jesus, not mere opinion, matters...and it matters eternally”.

I will here turn to John Chapter One in an attempt to address the person of Jesus. The book of John is a gospel but in many ways unlike the other three *synoptic*

¹ The framers of The Ligonier Statement of Christology describe it as seek[ing] to encapsulate the historic, orthodox, biblical Christology of the Christian church in a form that is simple to confess.

gospels.¹ John's gospel relates to us the life, teachings and miracles of Jesus—and people's response; just as the other gospels. However, John does this with theological depths the other gospels didn't. As you read through John's gospel, you continuously see themes of Jesus' divinity all over the pages of his gospel though at the same time, He was fully human. J.C. Ryle rightly commented:

The Gospel of John... is in many respects very unlike the other three Gospels. It contains many things which they omit. It omits many things which they contain... The things which are peculiar to his Gospel are among the most precious possessions of the Church of Christ. No one of the four Gospel-writers has given us such full statements about the divinity of Christ — about justification by faith — about the offices of Christ — about the work of the Holy Spirit — and about the privileges of believers, believers, as we read in the pages of John. On none of these great subjects, undoubtedly, have Matthew, Mark, and Luke been silent. But in John's Gospel, they stand out prominently on the surface, so that he who runs may read²

The Testimony Of John About Jesus

He Is God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

¹ Synoptic gospel refers to the first three books of the New Testament namely Matthew, Mark and Luke

² J.C. Ryle's Expository Thoughts On The Gospels (Kindle Edition)

and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (vv.1-2).

Jesus didn't begin to exist at a certain period in history. Neither was He created. Christ is eternal. He transcends time and history. John designates Christ as the Word in his opening statements: "In the beginning was the Word..." (vv.1-2). This speaks of the pre-existence of Christ before Creation. "In the beginning [He] was...." Before creation, Christ existed: "...he is before all things..."(Colossians 1:17 see also John 8:56-57).

Now, John doesn't only tell us of the eternal and pre-existence of Christ. He also spoke of the divinity of Christ—Christ is God: "...the Word was God"(v.1). This clearly speaks of the divinity of Christ. He is God. In Christ the words "Immanuel" (which means, God with us) (Matthew 1:23) is fulfilled. Again in John 8:57, Jesus used the title by which God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush—I Am: "before Abraham was, I am." "Here Jesus declared Himself to be Yahweh, i.e., the Lord of the OT"¹.

He Is The Son Of God—The Second Person Of The Trinity

...and the Word was with God (v.1a).

¹ Notes on John 8:58 The MacArthur Study Bible (Thomas Nelson, 2006, Kindle Edition)

In John 1:1, we notice Jesus was not alone. The word was with ‘Somebody’ and that person we are told was God. Further, we are told Jesus shares attributes with that person, i.e., He Jesus was God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This is the heart of the great historic doctrine of the Trinity ¹. Scripture reveals God to us as One being in three persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit: “Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.²

In Matthew 3:16-17, we see a full revelation of the Trinity when Jesus was baptised. We are told the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove with a Voice from heaven saying this is my beloved Son. Clearly, the eternal union of God the Father with God the Son is captured in the words: “He was in the beginning with God” (v.2). In John 17:5, Christ spoke of the glory He had with the Father before the world existed.

He Is The Creator

All things were made through him...(v.3a).

¹ John Piper in an Online article titled *In The Beginning Was The Word*

² James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity*, (Bethany House Publishers, 2012, Kindle Edition)

All of Creation owes its existence to Christ: “...without him was not anything made that was made (v. 3b)” He is the King of kings and Lord of Lord’s over all of life. Nothing exists outside of the creative work of Christ: “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things were created through him and for him” (Colossians 1:16). When we trace our path back to the beginning of the Bible, we are told “In the beginning God created...¹”. Looking at this in light of John’s words, we see Christ as the Creator.

He Is Life And Light Of The World

In him was life and the life was the light of men (v.4).

As the Creator, all lives take their source from Christ. Without Christ, no one has life. Paul says in Acts 17:28 that “In him we live and move and have our being”. This depicts Christ as the Sustainer of all lives. “He upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3). Christ is both the natural source of life and the spiritual source. Spiritually, all human beings, without a saving knowledge of Christ are in darkness, that is, living in sin and separated from God. This interprets to mean they are dead without light. But Christ gives life which dispels darkness and brings

¹ Genesis 1:1

light into the life of anyone who comes to Him in faith. In v.10, we are told “He was in the the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him” (v.10). The question is, “Why”? It is because the world is dead spiritually and separated from God: “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned”¹. To know Christ and receive Him requires a spiritual work. One has to be regenerated by the spirit to come in faith. When this happens, we are brought into God’s family by faith in Christ: “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (vv.12-13).

He Is The God-Man

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (v.14).

Core to Christian beliefs is the virgin birth of Christ. He “was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary”² Perhaps, done of the most contested

¹ 1 Corinthians 2:14

² The Apostles Creed

doctrine of Christianity is the nature of Christ —his divinity and humanity ‘fused’ together in One person called—hypostatic union (see also *Historic Heresies Relating To The Nature of Jesus*). Jesus is fully God and fully human. God took on human flesh in Jesus Christ. He became the God-man among His creation: He “dwelt among us”. He became man and lived among His own people (1John 1:1-2).

God walked among humanity in Christ and manifested His glory: “we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son” God’s glory—the radiance of His majesty and power was revealed through Christ. “The Son, the Word—who is eternally with the Father, face to face with him, gazing upon and enjoying the glory that emanates from him— has now become flesh in our fallen world”.¹ When Jesus was born, we are told “an angel of the Lord appeared to [shepherds watching over their flocks by night], and the glory of the Lord shone around them”².

Jesus is superior over all others and the book of Hebrews describes Him as “...the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature”(Hebrews 1:3). In His glory, Christ reveals to us “grace and truth”. His coming to earth was to

¹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Child In The Manger* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 2016) Pg. 35

² Luke 2:29

show us the grace of God towards humanity and lead us into the truth of God's word.

He Is The Lamb Of God

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!(v.29).

Here is one of the most important truths to know about Christ. He is the Lamb of God. The Jewish reader will immediately understand what John The Baptist was saying when he described Christ as the Lamb of God. In Old Testament rituals, the Lamb without blemish was used to atone temporarily, for the sins of God's people (Exodus 12:3, Leviticus 3:7). Now the rituals of the Old Testament pointed to a better sacrifice for sins because as the Hebrew writer will say: "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). The efficacy in the blood of bulls and goats was powerless to do away with sin once and for all. But Christ, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"(John 1:29) offered an acceptable sacrifice to God for the atonement of sin once for all (Hebrews 10:10). Christ is God's acceptable sacrifice for sin.

He Baptises With The Holy Spirit

So far, our attention has been on the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. But all of

God's revelation of Himself is Trinitarian¹. So here in John 1, John doesn't leave us without telling us of the Holy Spirit through the words of John the Baptist: "...He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33). Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. This means, when we come to faith in Him, He gives us the gift promised by the Father. Without the Holy Spirit, no one can be a believer (Romans 8:9). And the Holy Spirit joins us in union with the Godhead.

These are not exhaustive Christology ² but these are important and relevant to the Christmas season.

¹ God's self-revelation of Himself as God The Father, God The Son and God The Holy Spirit

² The doctrine of Christ

FIVE

AFTER CHRISTMAS, WHAT NEXT?

The story of Christ's birth is the most unusual event in human history. The Bible records these events and also expound with clarity the reason for Jesus' birth in Matthew 1:18-23 and other places in Scripture. A virgin called Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before they consummated their marriage, Mary was found pregnant "with child from the Holy Spirit."(v18). Joseph, caught in a dilemma, reflects how to end the relationship. However, at night, in his sleep, an angel appeared to Him in a dream saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."(v20-21). We see explicitly the reason Jesus Christ came into the world:

To "save his people from their sins".

This is the overarching theme of Holy Scripture. From Genesis to Revelation; all God is doing in the world through Christ is the salvation of His people. (2Corinthians 5:19). The birth of Jesus was not arbitrary. It was planned before the foundation of the earth (1Peter 1:20). Jesus' birth was not an afterthought of God. It was prophesied, announced

and spoken of long before He was born. Matthew tells us that “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet ”(Matthew 1: 22). What is Matthew saying? In the next verse He quotes Isaiah 7:14, saying “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”(Matthew 1:23).

Christ is the promised Messiah who was spoken of through the prophets to deliver humankind from the effects of sin. When Adam disobeyed God, his fall (disobedience) passed on the ramifications of death—physical and spiritual— to all of humanity. He was our federal head. And in his fall, we were all declared sinners. This sin, alienated us from God. It rendered us helpless and unable to be right with God on our own. These are facts of the gospel and in a season of celebrations, it is possible to lose sight of what the season actually stands for. The season can pass without any lasting impact.

Now, the Christmas story of the birth of Christ has implications both for the believer and the unbeliever alike. The difference between eternal life and eternal damnation rests on what we do with the facts revealed in Scripture about the life of Christ. There is no middle ground. Either we believe and accept what the Scripture says, or we spurn it. But whatever we do with the truth about Christ, eternity hangs in the balance.

Bearing this in mind, it is pivotal therefore, to pause and ponder our lives after the euphoria of the

season has died out.

The Unbeliever Must Turn To Christ In Faith For Salvation

That Jesus was born, lived a perfect life without sin, was crucified, buried, resurrected the third day, ascended into heaven and will come back again to judge the world has dire eternal consequences for those who don't believe in Him and are not submitted to His Lordship: "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.(John 3:18).

Because Christ came to save sinners, it is of utmost importance that sinners turn to Him in faith.

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus lived a life of perfect righteousness, of perfect obedience to God, not for His own well being but for His people. He has done for me what I couldn't possibly do for myself. But not only has He lived that life of perfect obedience, He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice to satisfy the justice and the righteousness of God¹.

The Believer Must Continue In Christ

It is not enough to profess Christianity. If we have

¹ R.C. Sproul, online article titled What Is The Gospel?

come to saving faith through Christ Jesus, we must have fruits to show for it. James rightly said “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22). Beyond the celebrations, we must grow in grace and bear fruits. Again, James said “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead”(James 2:17). The Christian is saved by grace alone through faith alone. But it must be clearly stated that true faith shows in good works. Indeed, that is what we have been created for; “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”(Ephesians 2:10).

Any Christian belief we hold which is inconsistent with our way of life must be examined. Of course, I am not preaching sinless perfection. But there must be evidence of the out workings of the Spirit of God in our hearts. If we are lacking in progressive sanctification, we might have to pause and check our hearts.

Whoever you are—believer or unbeliever— let this passing season leave a lasting impression on your heart