

You Shall Call His Name Jesus

*“She will bear a
Son; and you shall
call his name
Jesus, for he will
save his people
from their sins.”*
—*Matthew 1:21,*
*New American
Standard Bible*

IN FULFILLMENT OF THIS long-promised event concerning the birth of our dear Lord Jesus more than two thousand years ago, many Christian people throughout the world will once again celebrate God’s most wonderful gift to mankind on December

25th. Jesus was born into the world to save the human family from the inherited ravages of sin and death. In God’s own time and manner, this true meaning of his Son’s earthly ministry will be made plain to all men.

THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The annual holiday season is a very special and festive time, and for many there is a general feeling of joy and a deep sense of anticipation throughout the weeks leading up to Christmas Day. More than any other time of the year, mankind’s attention is directed, at least in a limited way, toward thoughts of peace, love and good will toward others. It serves

as a time to be reminded of the miraculous birth of our Savior, his earthly ministry, sacrificial death on the cruel cross and his ultimate resurrection as the “firstborn from the dead.” (Col. 1:18) Since Adam’s fall in Eden, his was the only perfect life that had ever been lived, and he remained perfect unto death. —Heb. 7:26

There also may be a sense of nostalgia among some who recall this special season from their childhood, reliving sweet memories of a more secure time now long past. The sobering reality, however, is that the spirit which once marked the Christmas season is now largely ignored, having given way to increased commercialism, stress, and anxiety. The spirit of our Lord that once prevailed is now often replaced by indifference, irreverence and selfishness in our materialistic society.

Our modern world often gives only passing interest and attention to the true meaning of our Lord and Savior’s humble birth. The holiday season has become a hectic time of the year filled with anxious preparations for earthly pursuits and happiness at the cost of observing the season’s intended import. It is a time that is more and more being propelled by a sense of frenzied commotion and fanfare. Holiday shoppers are caught up in the last-minute quest to find the perfect gifts for family and friends, as well as for others they hardly know whose names appear on a list at their workplace.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Various thoughts have been offered by historians as to how a special day now known as Christmas originated. Whatever those origins may have been,

over the centuries they gradually evolved into a celebration of Christmas Day as a remembrance of the birth of Jesus. The result has been that in more recent history, it has become a sacred and festive religious holiday. We learn from an examination of the Scriptures, however, that December 25th is not the day on which Jesus was born. Many Bible scholars agree that this great event occurred during the autumn season of the year, more nearly corresponding to late September or the early part October.

While we rejoice in joining with others in thankful remembrance of the Savior's birth, the Scriptures do not specifically mandate that we should celebrate that event on a specific day. Instead, we are instructed to remember our Savior's death, which accomplished the redemption price for sin, thereby satisfying divine justice. This is shown in the Old Testament Pass-over picture, where we read concerning the sacrificial lamb, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." (Exod. 12:14) At the institution of the last supper, Jesus passed two symbolic emblems to his disciples which, by his own words, clearly represented his sacrificed life. We read, "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Thus we see that Jesus was the true "Lamb of God."— Luke 22:19,20 John 1:29

NO OTHER NAME

The name Jesus is the Greek rendering of “Joshua,” which means in the Hebrew language “Jehovah-saved.” No other name in the history of the world can claim such depth of meaning. It clearly points to the Master as the only one who could serve as the agent of our Heavenly Father in the ultimate effecting of mankind’s salvation. The Scriptures clearly teach, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—Acts 4:12

The Apostle Paul later wrote, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Heb. 2:9) Our Lord paid the price for mankind’s sin: “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”—Matt. 20:28

God’s Holy Word teaches us the importance and necessity of believing in the Master Teacher, and in the merit of his ransom sacrifice on behalf of mankind. This point is stressed in John’s epistle, where he writes, “This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” (I John 3:23) The only foundation for the world’s return to favor with the Heavenly Father is to have a true appreciation and understanding that Jesus alone paid the ransom price for sin. The purpose for which Jesus died was that mankind would be given the opportunity to be recovered from sin and death.

CHRIST—THE ANOINTED

Our Lord is often spoken of as Christ, or Jesus Christ, in the New Testament. Christ means “anointed,” and is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew word “Messiah” of the Old Testament, which likewise means “anointed.” (Dan. 9:25,26; John 1:41; 4:25) Concerning God’s arrangements in this regard, we read, “Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.”—Acts 4:25-27; Psalm 2:1,2

The Apostle Paul also wrote, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11

SON OF THE HIGHEST

In Luke’s gospel is recorded the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary concerning the promised birth of Jesus, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” (Luke 1:32) Mary was a descendant of David through his son Nathan, who was a brother to Solomon. (Luke 3:31; I Chron. 3:1-5) Thus the earthly lineage of Jesus and the reference to the throne of David was through his mother.

Jesus' connection to the severed line of Solomon came through Joseph, his mother's espoused husband, though he was not Jesus' true father. (Matt. 1:16; Luke 2:4,5) We also note our Lord's words as recorded by the revelator with regard to his lineage through David: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."—Rev. 22:16

THE "STEM OF JESSE"

In a further connection made between Jesus and the throne of King David, the Prophet Isaiah says, "A shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit." (Isa. 11:1, *NASB*) Jesse was David's father, and is thus an important link in establishing Jesus earthly lineage as a "shoot" and "branch" from that genealogical tree. (Matt. 1:6) The prophet then says concerning this "shoot" that "the spirit of the LORD will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."—Isa. 11:2, *NASB*

Isaiah's prophecy continues by showing that the wonderful work of God's future kingdom of truth and righteousness will be carried out by this one who came from the line of David—Christ Jesus, the Messiah. "With righteousness he will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about his loins, and faithfulness the belt about his waist." (Isa. 11:4,5, *NASB*) Finally, Isaiah again makes the connection

to the throne of David when he says, “In that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and his resting place will be glorious.”—vs. 10, *NASB*

THE BRANCH

The Prophet Zechariah also identifies the “Branch” and says, “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.” (Zech. 3:8) Here the prophet describes the role that Christ will assume during the time of his kingdom rulership. Zechariah stresses this point again when he writes, “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: ... and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”—Zech. 6:12,13

Truly our Lord Jesus is the Son of the Highest, and his faithfulness was demonstrated by laying down his perfect life in sacrifice for the human creation. Having been raised from death by the powerful hand of his loving Heavenly Father, he will exercise his right to bestow the benefits of the kingdom as the greater King David. Then, rather than being a “shoot” or “branch” coming out from David, he will be the “Root of David,” the source through which “everlasting life” will be made available to the entire human family.—Rev. 5:5; John 3:16

DAVID’S HEIR

God made a special promise to David, saying, “Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established

for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.” (II Sam. 7:16) When David died, the promise was passed on to his son Solomon. The Lord then spoke to Solomon and said, “If thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.”—I Kings 9:4,5

Solomon’s obedience was required to fulfill the will of God. “If ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people.”—vss. 6,7

The new king did not obey the commandments of God. “King Solomon loved many strange [foreign] women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.”—I Kings 11:1-3

We are further told of Solomon's disobedient actions in subsequent verses. "The LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded." (vss. 9,10) We learn the consequences of his disobedience to the Heavenly Father when we read, "The LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee."—vs. 11

NATHAN FAVORED

The lineage from King David therefore passed to Mary through Nathan rather than Solomon, whose life was tainted with arrogance and disobedience. Thus we find that our Lord Jesus was born from the more faithful line of Nathan, though he was much less honored in the sight of men than Solomon. Mary had evidently been made aware of this aspect of her choice by God to be Jesus' mother, and she rejoiced at such a great honor. She said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation."—Luke 1:46-50

Mary's statement shows her sense of humility in sharing in God's wonderful works. She continues, "He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath

scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.”—vss. 51-55

TIDINGS OF JOY

At the birth of Jesus, the angel of the Lord made a most wonderful announcement. “There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ... 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. 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.”—Luke 2:8-14

The humble surroundings of the infant Jesus, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, was a beautiful, symbolic token of our loving Heavenly Father’s good will toward the sin-sick and dying human creation. Jesus was destined to become mankind’s Savior, and in his coming kingdom he will be a great and righteous ruler, restoring peace on the earth. The angels knew this and praised God!

A DARK WORLD

The heavenly hosts proclaimed and appreciated the glad tidings given on that special night long ago.

The significance of the great event, Messiah's birth, gradually dimmed in the eyes of a spiritually dark and sin-filled world. The world would soon enough enter its darkest period of history, commonly referred to as the Dark Ages. It has been more than twenty centuries since the "Prince of Peace" was born, yet, the prospect of peace and good will between peoples and nations still seems an improbable, if not impossible, dream.—Isa. 9:6,7

During this long period of time God has been calling a "little flock" of Jesus' footstep followers. (Luke 12:32) These are striving to know and to do the Heavenly Father's will faithfully, even unto death. (Rev. 2:10) When his work of calling, developing, and proving faithful each member of this class has been completed, and all things come to their divinely appointed culmination, they will then share with Christ Jesus in blessing all the families of the earth during the time of his promised kingdom.—Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Acts 3:25

All the peoples of earth will be given opportunity to walk up the "highway" of holiness and return to their Creator's favor. (Isa. 35:8) At that time will the words of the prophet come to pass: "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."—Isa. 9:7

The prophet, using another symbol, points to Christ's role as the "arm" of God in his coming kingdom, ruling over the nations with strength, but also with love and gentleness. "Behold, the

Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”—Isa. 40:10,11

LASTING PEACE

The Christmas season is a time when we may once again reflect upon God’s promise of peace on earth and good will toward men. How the world needs this more than ever—peace and good will, in all the earth and toward all people!

Today we acknowledge the fact that at the present time there is no true, lasting peace anywhere on earth. We are living during a time of increasing lawlessness, and men’s hatred toward many of their fellows is being manifested in many violent and slanderous ways. “Polarized” is the term most often applied to today’s world.

Although many among mankind continue to yearn for the spirit of peace and good will, no nation or group of nations at the present time can establish it. Indeed, this glorious condition cannot be attained without divine intervention in the affairs of men. True peace will only be realized through our Lord Jesus’ kingdom of righteousness, as the true Prince of Peace. Under that administration, mankind shall come to know and obey our loving Heavenly Father and learn of his marvelous plans for blessing all the families of earth. During this holiday season may we continue to pray for that blessed time to come soon. “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”—Matt. 6:10 ■