

*It's Christmas!*

# **It's Christmas!**

**by**

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## **Chapter One - Where's The Joy?**

It's hard to believe that Christmas is this week! Where has this year gone? It's interesting as I drive around town to see so many people who are unhappy and stressed. Drivers are becoming more aggressive and less patient. Shoppers are moving faster and with less satisfaction. We see lighting displays all around the area that include the word "joy" in the message, but where is the joy? Where's the peace and joy we believe comes with the Christmas season?

Here's some insight from the Bible:

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

It may seem too simple to be true, but I believe it is. Joy comes with being inside God's will for our lives. One of the most-asked questions I've heard from Christians since I was saved is "How can I know God's will for my life?" God's answer is simple, direct and powerful!

1. First, always be joyful. Remember who you are in Christ. Remember your eternal hope in Christ. Christians have **THE REASON** to be joyful. Enjoy every day God gives you and each new opportunity to enjoy Him. God gives us Joy rather than happiness. Happiness comes and goes with circumstances and moods. Joy lasts forever. Joy outlives circumstances and moods. We have the Joy of the Lord in our hearts because Christ is in us and we are in Christ. No circumstance or mood can change that.

2. Second, pray continually. That's possible because Christ is in us and we are in Christ. God is always with us. We don't have to wait until a certain time of the day to pray. He's always in us. We don't have to wait until we're in a certain place. He's always in us. We don't have to wait for others to pray. He's always in us. Christians can live a life of prayer because we are in Christ and Christ is in us. That's a permanent prayerful relationship. Always be in an attitude of prayer and dependence on God. Trust Him for everything. He's your Father. He loves to give good things to His children. And He does!
3. Third, give thanks in all circumstances. Be glad for what God's given you. See the good in what God does for you. Know that God cares for you with all His Heart and watches out for you every moment of your life. He gives you so much and wants you to be thankful. Understanding Christ in you and you in Christ is to be thankful forever!

When we live our lives in this way, God can easily and clearly point us to other areas of His will for our lives. The difficult decisions about what to do, where to go, who to marry, etc., will become clear as we understand what it means for Christ to be "in" us and us to be "in" Christ. The Will of God lives in us and guides us. Ours is to listen, obey and enjoy.

What does this have to do with Christmas? Jesus came from Heaven to earth to bring us **joy!** Remember what the angels sang when they announced the birth of Jesus Christ –

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, 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, goodwill toward men!” Luke 2:8-14

The angels of Heaven brought the people of earth “good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.” Notice the angel used the words “great joy.” Most of us have experienced joy in our lives, but what the Jesus brings us a message of great joy.

Where’s the joy? It’s in Jesus! If Jesus is your Savior and you are in His will for your life, you will experience great joy.

## **Chapter Two - Exceedingly Great Joy!**

I love words. Each one carries a world of meaning, especially as we join one word to another and another and another, until we've created a thought. That's what this blog is about ... thoughts ... thoughts about God's amazing Grace. Words are what make the thoughts understandable and life changing.

One of the words that means so much to me, and millions of Christians around the world, is **joy**. Joy is at the heart of the Christian faith. Take the three wise men who traveled a long distance to see what the star would show them.

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

Matthew 2:10-11

The wise men knew the prophecies about the Messiah and they read the prophetic signs in the sky. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. Did you see that? They rejoiced with **exceedingly great joy!** They were so excited to see the star. They knew that the ancient prophecy was coming true at that very moment. It was no longer an old prophecy. It was happening during their lifetime. It was happening in front of them. They were going to be part of the prophecy!

It's amazing to me that these three learned men were astute enough to see in the alignment of stars in the sky that God was on

the move. He was going to do what He told prophets centuries before that He was going to do. The Messiah, Israel's Savior and King, had been born! That caused the wise men to rejoice "with exceedingly great joy."

The story of the Magi (three wise men) looking for the prophesied Messiah of Israel has captured the hearts and minds of millions of people for centuries.

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.' When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: '*But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.*' Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.' When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was." Matthew 2:1-9

The wise men in the Greek language were called *majos* (plural is *majoi*) and *magus* in Latin. The Magi were members of an ancient and sacred caste dating back to at least the 6th century B.C. The Greeks, as well as other ancient people, wrote about the religious wisdom of the Magi. Some of them were responsible for the religious training of kings and emperors. They were also known as “king makers” because of their powers of wisdom and knowledge to influence the choice of kings. The Magi were also close advisors of the king during his reign. Their involvement in the supernatural gave rise eventually to the use of the word *magikos* (English – magic) to describe what the Magi did. The 5th century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus wrote about the Magi coming from Persia (modern Iran).

Many scholars believe the Magi of ancient Persia had been influenced by the Hebrews taken into captivity. There is some thought that the Hebrew prophet Daniel, who was a leader during the reign of the Babylonians and later the Persians in the 6th century B.C., may have influenced the Magi greatly with the dominant spiritual wisdom and power that God had given him. Through Daniel or other means the Magi learned about the promised Messiah King of Israel. They shared their knowledge about the Messianic promise through the centuries so that the Magi of Jesus’ time knew to look for a specific star and follow it to where they would meet the Messiah. They were “king makers” and knew they had an important role to play in the birth of the young King.

It’s interesting to note that the Magi of Persia knew more about the Messianic prophecy than the king of Israel at the time, Herod.

The Magi told King Herod the time and place of Messiah's birth. Herod said he wanted to worship the Messiah, but murder was in his heart. The Magi continued to follow the star until "it stood over where the young Child was."

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." Matthew 2:10

The three Magi were filled with great joy when they saw the star stand in the sky over the location of the Messiah. The words "exceedingly great joy" in the Greek are *charan megalen sphodra*.

The first word, *charan*, is a noun that translates as "joy, rejoicing, gladness." If that wasn't enough to describe how the Magi reacted to seeing the star, the author Matthew added the words *megalen sphodra*. *Megalen* is an adjective that describes the "joy" as being "great, glorious, wonderful." *Sphodra* is an adverb that means "excessive, very much."

This noun, adjective and adverb give us amazing insight into how the star standing over the location of the Messiah affected these wise "king makers" from Persia. They "rejoiced with exceedingly great joy!" It was most likely the greatest moment in their lives and they knew what they were seeing with their own eyes was the culmination of centuries of prophecy. They had read about it in their ancient texts and been told specific details of the prophecy by elders of the Magi. They had been chosen by the God of Heaven to follow the star and see the Messiah with their own eyes!

The Magi, wise men from Persia, made a long journey following a star in the sky to find the promised Messiah King of Israel. They knew to look because of a Hebrew prophet named Daniel who was appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to be the “chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers” during the 6th century B.C. (Daniel 5:11). Daniel prophesied the doom of Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar’s son King Belshazzar just hours before the Persian army killed the king and took over Babylon (Daniel 5:30-31). God blessed Daniel under the new leadership and he became one of three governors to rule with the new king. Daniel faced tough political enemies, but overcame adversity with God’s protection and ruled with both King Darius the Mede and King Cyrus the Persian.

The Magi knew well what Daniel had seen, done and written as the chief Magi of Babylon and Persia. God showed Daniel great visions of the future of the great world powers. One of those visions concerned 70 weeks that the angel Gabriel explained was 70 weeks of years to accomplish specific things in Israel’s life.

“Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.” Daniel 9:24

What an amazing list of things God was going to do during the 70 weeks of years ( $70 \times 7 = 490$  years):

1. finish the transgression
2. make an end of sins
3. make a reconciliation for iniquity
4. bring in everlasting righteousness
5. to seal up vision and prophecy
6. anoint the Most Holy

All of these things would be accomplished under the rule of the Messiah of Israel:

“Know therefore and understand, *That* from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, *There shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” Daniel 9:25-26

The Magi had done the math and knew it was time for Messiah to appear. They studied the heavens, as astrologers (the earliest astronomers) would do in that situation, and saw the movement of a special star. They saw the signal in the sky that God was on the move and they followed the star to the place where they found the Messiah.

“... and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the

house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Matthew 2:9-11

The special star “stood over where the young Child was” and the Magi rejoiced with “exceedingly great joy.” They were overwhelmed inside their hearts and minds to know they were eyewitnesses of Daniel’s ancient prophecy. They went into the house, saw the young Child with Mary His mother, then fell down and worshiped Him.

Doesn’t that seem a little strange? Why would three Magi from Persia, who had their own king and religion, fall down and worship the prophesied Messiah of Israel? They worshiped Jesus because they knew from Daniel’s prophecy that He was going to become the great ruler of all the world, not just one country.

Remember what we learned yesterday about the Magi? They were “king makers.” When the Magi said a man would become king, he was going to be king. The Magi had a special power in their culture and God used them to pronounce Jesus as the Messiah King of Israel, and because of Daniel’s vision, the King of Kings!

Christmas 2010 is just a week away. The malls and shopping centers are filled with people searching for just the right gift for mom and dad, brother and sister, aunt and uncle, boyfriend and girlfriend. It’s a time of giving and receiving. When did the idea for giving presents at Christmas begin? At the beginning.

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”  
Matthew 2:10-11

The Middle East, where Jesus was born, is steeped in history and tradition. Life began there. The great struggles of God’s people happened in the hills, mountains and valleys of the Middle East. The Magi who came from Persia to find the prophesied Messiah who would become the ruler of the world were experts in the traditions of “king making.” Bringing gifts to the one who would be king was an important role they played in that tradition. The gifts they brought were not picked up at a local store as an afterthought. The Magi knew exactly what to give the Messiah Prince who would become King.

The first gift is often overlooked as we read this ancient story. They “fell down and worshiped Him.” Bowing down or falling prostrate before a person was the well-known gift of demonstrating great respect for someone of a higher class or position. Putting the head down on the ground and placing the hands in front of the head was the idea of “kissing forward.” It was an act of great admiration. The Magi first gave Jesus the gift of respect and admiration for who He was and who they knew He would become. Jesus was sent by God and would become the ruler of Israel and the world!

King makers like the Magi would not arrive at a royal court without gifts. It would be rude and a show of great disrespect. If the Magi had fallen down and worshiped Jesus but not brought Him gifts, the visit would have been viewed as a great sham and farce. The Magi were experts in giving gifts at the royal court. They knew the great traditions of the Middle East and they knew what was expected for every situation. The gifts they brought to Messiah would fit the occasion perfectly.

“And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Notice that what the Magi brought to Jesus were “treasures.” It is the Greek word *thesaurous* and means “a place of safe keeping.” They kept their gifts to Jesus in a special place that kept the gifts safe on the long journey from Persia. Those gifts would be protected at all cost. When they saw the Messiah, they opened their special treasure vault to retrieve the gifts. We do something similar to that when we wrap presents. The gift wrapped in special paper and with bows is our treasure to family and friend and to only be unwrapped upon the special occasion of giving the gift.

The Magi were renowned in the Middle East for their ability to foretell the future. It began with the Hebrew prophet Daniel, the chief Magi of the royal court of Babylon and Persia hundreds of years earlier. It was Daniel’s prophecy that led the Magi to watch the sky for a sign that God was on the move to bring the promised Messiah into the world. The Magi knew exactly what gifts would be appropriate for this amazing event. Even though similar gifts were given to kings and princes who would become kings in the

Middle East, each of the gifts the Magi brought Jesus also expressed a spiritual meaning.

The first gift presented to Jesus was **gold**. Gold represented the highest and most precious of metals and was the best gift to give a king. It demonstrated that the king held the highest position in the country and would be the wealthiest. It also spoke to bloodlines and the right of the king to rule. Gold was a pure metal and demonstrated the purity of kingship. It was a statement of the “value” the king had to his country. (Jesus was quite familiar with the value of gold. He had paved the streets of Heaven with it.) Jesus the Messiah had the highest value for both Israel and the Gentile nations. He had come to earth to become the King of Kings.

The second gift brought out of the boxes by the Magi was **frankincense**. Incense was very important in the Middle East. It had been used for centuries to cover the course smells of life. It was also used to improve people’s thoughts and attitudes and was often used to treat depression. The best incenses were expensive to buy and frankincense was quite expensive. Its fragrance would attest to its value. Incense was also used by priests as a method of worshiping God, intervening for the needs of people and sending prayers to Him. Jesus was also God’s High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16) and would intervene for the needs of those who were His. Frankincense had a holy place in the plan of God for His people:

“And the LORD said to Moses: “Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with *these* sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. You shall

make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy. And you shall beat *some* of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. But *as for* the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the LORD. Whoever makes *any* like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people.” Exodus 30:34-37

The third gift brought out of the treasure of the Magi was **myrrh**. Myrrh also has a strong smell and was used in the Middle East to cover the smell of a dead body. It was used in the preparation of a body for burial. Myrrh was bitter to the taste and thought to describe well the bitterness of death. Myrrh was also used by God in displaying His holiness and anointing humans for holy service.

“Moreover the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Also take for yourself quality spices—five hundred *shekels* of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon (two hundred and fifty *shekels*), two hundred and fifty *shekels* of sweet-smelling cane, five hundred *shekels* of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. You shall consecrate them, that they

may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that *they* may minister to Me as priests. And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: "This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make *any other* like it, according to its composition. It is holy, *and* it shall be holy to you. Whoever compounds *any* like it, or whoever puts *any* of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his people." Exodus 30:22-33

The Magi brought the perfect gifts to the prophesied Messiah King. Gold represented His purity and value as the One who would rule the world from His rightful position of King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Frankincense represented Christ's role as the Most High Priest of God. Myrrh represented Messiah's holiness and anointing for His ultimate sacrifice of laying down His life to save people from their unholiness (sinfulness).

I've heard people say that the story of the Magi bringing gifts to Jesus should not have been included in the Bible. Their reasoning is that the Magi were members of a false religion (Zoroastrianism) and God would have never used someone from a false religion to be involved with Israel's Messiah.

First, it's a little late to be second-guessing God about His Word. Even though many people are still arguing about what is and is not God's Word, the Holy Spirit (who inspired every word of God's Word) put His stamp of approval on His Bible centuries ago.

Second, God has used members of false religions to do His will. Remember Egypt's pharaoh? He worshiped many false gods, but the True God of Heaven hardened pharaoh's heart so that Israel would see that He was greater than all the gods of Egypt. Remember Baalam? He was an Ammonite who intended to curse Israel, but God turned Baalam's curses into blessings. Remember Nebuchadnezzar? He was a pagan king who worshiped idols, but God humbled Nebuchadnezzar and changed his heart to praise the True God of Heaven. God can and does use anyone He wants to for his purposes.

Third, the Magi had been deeply influenced by the Hebrew prophet Daniel. As we saw in our earlier studies, the armies of Babylon took Daniel and other young Israelites captive. King Nebuchadnezzar saw first-hand the power of God in Daniel's life: "And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers who *were* in all his realm." (Daniel 1:20) Daniel became the chief Magi of the royal Babylonian court through the supernatural powers God gave him and was a trusted advisor to King Nebuchadnezzar from the end of the 7th century B.C. to the middle of the 6th century B.C. Daniel was also the chief Magi during the reign of other kings until his death. Writings about the Magi began in the 5th century B.C. Many scholars believe Daniel was the first chief Magi and passed along his wisdom to his students who taught their students and passed along the teachings of Daniel for hundreds of years.

The Magi who visited Jesus knew well the Hebrew prophecies about Israel's Messiah and brought the news to Israel's king:

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: *But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.*” Matthew 2:1-6

Fourth, it’s obvious from Scripture that God was personally involved in the Magi’s mission:

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.’” When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for

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Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "*Out of Egypt I called My Son.*" Matthew 2:10-15

Notice what God's Word says about the Magi: "Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way." God warned the Magi not to return to Jerusalem to tell Herod what they had found, so they returned to their country by another route.

God did use the Gentile Magi for His amazing purpose.

## Chapter Three - The Virgin Mary

I used to refer to the story about the Virgin Mary to demonstrate my belief that the Bible was an absolute fairy tale. No one could be born of a virgin. How ridiculous (or so I thought). That was almost 40 years ago when I didn't believe in the existence of God and the supernatural. I know better now. Receiving Christ as Lord and Savior does a lot to change an atheist's beliefs about God. God did send His One and Only Son to be born of a virgin. Let's see what we can learn about this amazing event.

It's important to remember that the virgin birth of Jesus Christ should have been no surprise to the people of Israel. It was the fulfillment of ancient prophecies.

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.’” So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: *‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His*

*name Immanuel,'* which is translated, 'God with us.'  
Matthew 1:18-22

The angel of God quoted Isaiah 7:14 to Joseph: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isaiah wrote his prophetic Book more than 700 years before the birth of Christ. Anyone who had access to a copy of the Book of Isaiah would have known that Immanuel (God with us) would be born to a virgin. That would be a sign to Israel that God was bringing about the certain events of prophecy.

The Book of Matthew looks at the paternal and kingly lineage of Christ beginning with Abraham and continuing through the centuries to David and eventually Joseph, the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus. The Book of Luke does not list any human lineage for Christ. It presents our Lord as coming directly from Heaven to the womb of a virgin. There would be nothing natural about this Holy Birth. It is that amazing relationship between God and the human race that we'll investigate as we quickly approach Christmas 2010.

Even as God sent an angel to speak to Joseph, God sent an angel to speak to his espoused (promised) wife Mary.

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord is with you;

blessed *are* you among women!’ But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘*The* Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.” Luke 1:26-38

Wow! This has to be, if not the most amazing, one of the most amazing conversations between a human and an angel in the history of the human race. God sends the mighty angel Gabriel to a little town in the Middle East named Nazareth. Gabriel goes to a little house in the little town and speaks to a young girl named Mary who is a virgin.

Get a picture of this in your mind: a big, powerful angel travels straight from Heaven on a special mission from God to talk with a

young virgin girl. What are the first words out of his mouth? “Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord is with you; blessed *are* you among women!”

Gabriel tells Mary to **rejoice** because she is the “highly favored one.” These three English words are the translation of just one Greek word: *kecharitomene*. It comes from the root word *charitoo* and carries the idea of someone being filled with grace on the part of the giver. It is a perfect participle in the passive voice, which means someone else placed Mary in a present state of grace that resulted from a past action. That “someone” was the Lord! God Almighty had chosen Mary at a past time to be filled with His Grace at the present time. She was going to be a human vessel to bring God’s Son into the world in the flesh.

Mary was “troubled” (greatly disturbed, agitated) at what Gabriel told her. Put yourself in Mary’s place. How would you feel if an angel appeared to you, called you “highly favored one” and told you that the Lord is with you and you are blessed among women? I think it would be troubling. Mary “considered” (reasoned) what manner of greeting this was. Gabriel knew how his greeting was affecting her, so he was quick to say, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.”

Do you see how personal and loving this is? The Lord God of Heaven selected Mary out from all the women of all the ages of the earth to be blessed with God’s most Precious Gift. Mary was going to become the mother of God’s One and Only Son, Jesus.

She lived in a little town in the northern region of Israel named Nazareth. We don't know a lot about her personal history as a child, but we do know she found favor with God.

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!’ But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” Luke 1:26-33

God sent the mighty angel Gabriel to speak to Mary. Gabriel is mentioned by name four times in the Bible: Daniel 8:16 and 9:21, and Luke 1:19 and 26. Gabriel met with the great Hebrew prophet Daniel twice. The first time was when Gabriel interpreted Daniel's vision about the ram and goat. The second time was when Gabriel explained the meaning of Daniel's vision about the 70 weeks that included the Messiah being cut off for His people. God sent Gabriel to bring the news about the birth of John the Baptist to

his father Zacharias. Gabriel also brought the news about the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary.

**It's important to note that every reference of Gabriel in the Bible is connected to the promised Messiah of Israel.**

Gabriel gave Daniel, Zacharias and Mary prophetic knowledge about the Messiah. Here's what Gabriel told Mary:

1. The Messiah will be great
2. He will be called the Son of the Highest
3. He will receive the throne of David
4. He will reign over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever
5. There will be no end to His kingdom

We know from what Gabriel told Daniel and Zacharias and the other prophecies of the Old Testament that this was exactly what would happen in the future. Mary, who would become the mother of the Messiah, was hearing straight from the angel Gabriel that the Son she would soon birth and raise would be the One Israel had waited for for so long.

We all might wonder what our response would be if an angel of God spoke to us. Each of us would probably respond according to our own personality and circumstances. Notice how Mary responded to this amazing prophecy from Gabriel.

“Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’”

Mary was focused on the one thing that affected her immediately: how could she be pregnant with the Messiah since she had never had sexual relations with a man. I don't know if Mary was able to immediately comprehend the magnitude of her future Son's impact on the world, but she certainly understood the impact on her. How could a virgin have a baby?

Gabriel explained how this was going to happen in terms that may have been difficult for Mary to understand at first, but he also gave her a human example she could grasp.

“And the angel answered and said to her, ‘*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.*’”

Notice how the Triune God is involved in a virgin girl becoming pregnant with the Son of God. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

First, the Holy Spirit would “come upon” the virgin Mary. The Greek word is *epeleusetai* and is used only this one time in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit did something for Mary that He would never do again. He came upon her for the express purpose of Mary becoming the virgin mother of the Messiah.

Second, the power of the Highest (God the Father) “will overshadow” you. The Greek word is *episkiasei*. It means “to throw a shadow upon” and was used here for what God the Father did for Mary, for the bright cloud that covered the disciples at the transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9:34), and for Peter’s shadow covering many people as they were healed of their illness (Acts 5:15).

Third, the Son of God became flesh inside the womb of Mary: “that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” All members of the Godhead were intimately involved in the pregnancy of the virgin Mary.

The angel Gabriel is ancient in his wisdom and understanding. God created him to be at the top of the angelic host and to play a vital role in the mission of the Messiah to save Israel from their sins. Gabriel knew the heart and mind of human beings well. He had been present when God created Adam and Eve and when they fell into the temptation of Satan. Gabriel knew and understood the human heart. He knew how to help Mary understand the reality of the gift God was giving her even if she couldn’t grasp the depth of all its spiritual and supernatural meaning.

“Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.”

Gabriel gave Mary an example she could understand. Mary knew Elizabeth and how much she and her husband Zacharias wanted a

child. Mary would have understood the physical impossibility of a woman Elizabeth's age becoming pregnant and giving birth. Elizabeth had always been barren, so there was no physical clue that she could become a mother, especially at her advanced age. The fact that Elizabeth was pregnant and in her sixth month would have shown Mary that this was the special work of Almighty God. "For with God nothing will be impossible." Even though Mary may have first thought the angel's prophecy couldn't be true, she could see through the example of her relative Elizabeth that nothing was impossible for God. God could give an elderly, barren woman the ability to become pregnant and He could overshadow a virgin so she could give birth to the Son of God.

"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her."

Mary received God's Word into her heart and agreed to become the willing vessel for God's will!

Once the angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary she was going to give birth to Israel's promised Messiah, things happened quickly.

"Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said,

“Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” Luke 1:39-45

The idea of “Mary arose in those days” is that when Gabriel left her, Mary prepared quickly and made a fast trip (“with haste”) to visit Elizabeth. We know from reading further in the first chapter of Luke that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months. I’ve heard some people surmise that Mary left Nazareth quickly because she or her parents or Joseph her espoused husband were embarrassed about her being pregnant and unmarried, but that doesn’t fit the context or the historicity of the event.

Even as Luke tells about Gabriel’s personal encounter with Mary, Matthew tells about Gabriel’s meeting with Mary’s espoused husband Joseph. Comparing the two accounts gives us wonderful insight into what happened after Gabriel visited Mary.

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary

your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.' So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: '*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,*' which is translated, 'God with us.' Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS." Matthew 1:18-25

What we see from Matthew 1 and Luke 1 is that Gabriel visited Mary first, then Joseph. The two angelic visitations would have been close together. Here's why I say that. God "came upon" and "overshadowed" Mary as soon as Gabriel finished his announcement and she received God's Word ("Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word."). One of the keys to how fast everything happened is in the words of Luke: "In the sixth month God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph." The context of Luke 1:24-26 shows that the sixth month referred to Elizabeth's pregnancy. Elizabeth became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. Gabriel visited Mary in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months before returning to her home in Nazareth. The next thing Luke tells us is that Elizabeth gave birth to her son. The numbers six and three added together are the nine months of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

Joseph learned about Mary's pregnancy between the time the Holy Spirit "came upon" her and when she traveled to see Elizabeth. This was quite a problem for Joseph. Mary was promised to Joseph and was a virgin. She was found with child of the Holy Spirit "before they came together." How was Mary "found with child?" How did Joseph get the news that his promised bride was pregnant within days of God's "overshadowing" Mary? Only God, Gabriel and Mary knew she was pregnant. We know from the context of Matthew that God and Gabriel didn't tell Joseph right away. He most likely learned about it from Mary, which was a very brave thing for her to do.

Mary was legally bound to Joseph as his wife. The official marriage ceremony had not happened yet, but they were promised to each other legally in the eyes of Hebrew law (betrothal was a formal contract). One Old Testament example is 2 Samuel 3:14: "So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, 'Give *me* my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.'" Another example is found in Deuteronomy. Notice how brave it was for Mary to tell Joseph that she was pregnant.

"If a young woman *who is* a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you." Deuteronomy 22:23-24

A woman betrothed to a man in Israel was legally his wife. According to Jewish Law, Joseph could have demanded that Mary be taken outside the village and stoned to death. But what did he do instead? “Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.” This tells us a lot about the kind of man Joseph was. His response was to take care of this situation privately rather than make Mary a public example.

It's obvious from the context of Matthew 1 that Mary did not tell Joseph everything about her pregnancy. Gabriel is the one who told Joseph that what was conceived in Mary was of the Holy Spirit and that she was going to give birth to God's Son. It's also obvious from the time frame of Elizabeth's pregnancy, when Mary went to visit her and how long she stayed, that Mary told Joseph about her pregnancy almost immediately after the Spirit of God came upon her.

I don't believe Mary was running “from” her pregnancy because of embarrassment. Instead, she was running “to” Elizabeth to help her. Gabriel had just told Mary that her elderly relative was pregnant, a miracle in itself since Elizabeth had been barren all her life and now was quite old. Mary was a young teenager and Elizabeth was most likely in her 70s or 80s. The coming together of the pregnant virgin Mary and the previously barren Elizabeth was sure to be an amazing scene, and it was!

“Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when

Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting and the baby leaped in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. The baby inside Elizabeth was going to be named John. Gabriel’s prophecy concerning John would be that he would become a prophet of God and would “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17) John would become known as John the Baptist and would one day preach the coming of the Messiah, who was the child in Mary’s womb. The unborn John leaped in his mother’s womb at Mary’s greeting. John’s mother was “filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Whenever someone in the Bible is “filled with the Holy Spirit,” special things happen. God granted Elizabeth an amazing insight into who was in Mary’s womb.

“Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.’” Luke 1:42-45

God revealed to Elizabeth something that Mary had not had time to tell her and that an angel had not told her. This revelation was straight from the Holy Spirit of God. Elizabeth knew that Mary was the “mother of my Lord.” The Greek word used to describe

Jesus as Lord is used here for the baby in Mary's womb (*kurios*). Notice also the insight about the impact of Mary's visit on Elizabeth's unborn child: "the babe leaped in my womb for joy." God's Spirit shows us that the unborn John the Baptist was filled with **joy** when he heard the greeting of the woman who would give birth to his Messiah. Elizabeth also knew, before Mary had time to tell her, that Mary had believed the Word of God and that all the things the angel had told Mary would be completed (fulfillment).

Mary's visit had a profound impact on Elizabeth, John and I'm sure Zacharias as well. That visit also led to one of the most famous and memorable of all pronouncements in Scripture, and it came from the mouth of the young virgin pregnant with the Son of God. We'll look at what she said tomorrow and how it has affected the people of God for centuries.

## Chapter Four - Why Was Jesus Born of A Virgin?

Why did God use Mary to become the mother of the Son of God? The pre-incarnate Christ created the worlds and fashioned Adam and Eve with His own Hands. God's Son spoke directly to so many of the great patriarchs of old: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samson, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, Job, Ezra, Nehemiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel ... and the list goes on and on. God's Son is the great Ruler of the universe. Why did He need to be born to a woman?

The answer begins within seconds of Adam and Eve's sins against God. Let's go back to the beginning, Genesis.

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves

coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where *are* you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?' Then the man said, 'The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.' And the LORD God said to the woman, 'What *is* this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, You *are* cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.' To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you.' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it": Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the

ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return.’ And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’— therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”  
Genesis 3:1-24

God told the snake (Satan) that the **Seed of the woman** would bruise Satan’s head, while the seed of Satan would bruise **His heel**. That’s our first clue about why the son of God was going to be born of a woman. A key word here is “bruise.” It’s the Hebrew word *sup* and means “to break or smite in pieces, cause great injury or wound.” It’s obvious from the language God used that Satan and the Seed of the woman (Jesus) were going to be in a fight. The Seed of the woman would “break or smite in pieces” the head of Satan, and Satan would “cause great injury or wound” the heel of Jesus.

Here's how other translations of the verse read:

“... he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (NIV)

“... He will bruise and tread your head underfoot, and you will lie in wait and bruise His heel.” (Amplified Bible)

“... He'll wound your head, you'll wound his heel.” (The Message)

“... He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” (New Living Translation)

“... One of her descendants will crush your head, and you will bite his heel.” (New Century Version)

Question: how could Satan cause great injury or wound the heel of the Son of God? There's no way Satan could do that. He is a powerful angel, but he's just an angel. God's Son created the heavens and the earth and every creature in it. The Son of God is All-powerful. Nothing He created could cause Him the slightest injury ... unless ... He did something that would cause Him to become vulnerable to the attack of one of His creatures.

Here are some more clues from the Old Testament:

“But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:5-6

We know from the context of Isaiah that he was writing about Israel's promised Messiah. Interesting that He would be "wounded" for our transgressions and "bruised" for our iniquities. The word "wounded" is the Hebrew *halal* and translates as "pierced, stabbed." It carries the idea of someone dying from the wound. The word "bruised" is the Hebrew *daka* and translates as "crushed, broken." It carries the idea of the most severe inward and outward suffering.

Again, we ask the question: how could Satan kill God's Son? That's impossible ... unless ... He did something that would cause Him to become vulnerable to the fatal attack of one of His creatures.

In this same context in Isaiah, we see that the physical appearance of the Messiah would be disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness.

"See, my servant will act wisely ; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness — so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand."

Christmas is the day millions of people around the world remember the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But why did God's Son need to be born? His existence is from "everlasting to everlasting." Christ is Eternal. He is All-Powerful and All-Knowing. Why would He need to lower Himself to become like one of His own creatures?

God's Son was born of a virgin so He could **suffer and die**. It is impossible for the Eternal God to die, but sacrificial death is exactly what was necessary to redeem the human race from the destructive nature of sin. Life is in the blood (Leviticus 17) and God required the death of a spotless (unblemished) sacrifice for sins. There was no one in the universe qualified to die for the sins of people, except God. So, Jesus was born of a virgin so the tainted blood of Adam would not be part of Christ's human body. Look at what the Apostle John wrote about the things Jesus accomplished by being born of a virgin:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men ... And the Word became 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 1:1-4, 14

Jesus "became flesh and dwelt among us." The Eternal Word of God, Who was in the beginning with God, became flesh and lived among His creation. John and others who followed Jesus saw His

glory, “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.’ The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this Man give us *His* flesh to eat?’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.” John 6:48-58

Jesus is the Bread of Life and likened Himself to the manna that kept Israel alive in the desert between Egypt and the promised land. The Bread that He gave was His flesh, which He received through the virgin Mary. Jesus told His disciples that His flesh and blood would give them life everlasting.

Jesus made it clear on the night before His death that His Body and Blood were for the remission of the sins of His disciples.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Matthew 26:26-28

The apostles wrote often about the importance of God’s Son being born of a woman, becoming flesh and sacrificing His body and blood on the Cross. Look at all Christ accomplished by being born of a virgin.

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Acts 20:28

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1:1-4

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even

the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:21-26

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Romans 5:8-10

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:2-4

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” 1 Corinthians 10:16

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” 1 Corinthians 11:26-28

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”  
Ephesians 1:7

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” Ephesians 2:11-16

“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.”  
Ephesians 5:29-30

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins ... For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—” Colossians 1:13-14, 19-22

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.” 1 Timothy 3:16

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through

sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.' And again: 'I will put My trust in Him.' And again: 'Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.' Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." Hebrews 2:9-18

"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the

living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.' Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once

to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”  
Hebrews 9:11-28

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.’ Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one

offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,’ then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:1-22

“For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach ... Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.” Hebrews 13:11-13, 20-21

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied ... And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” 1 Peter 1:1-2, 17-21

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.” 1 Peter 3:18

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” 1 Peter 4:1

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7

“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” 1 John 4:2-3

“Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He who came by water and blood— Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” 1 John 5:5-7

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” 2 John 1:7

“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”  
Revelation 1:4-6

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.’ Revelation 5:8-10

“And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ Revelation 7:14

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Revelation 12:11

“His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.” Revelation 19:12-14

Do you see how important it is to believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin and became flesh? The Apostle Peter makes that clear: “*Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess*

*It's Christmas!*

*that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.” So does the Apostle John: “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”*

Another important note to make before we leave this study. It goes to the very heart of **why** God’s Son chose to be born of a virgin: *“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.’* Wow! **“But a body You have prepared for Me.”** That’s what God the Father and Holy Spirit did for God the Son; they prepared a body for Him in the womb of the virgin Mary so He could redeem many from the human race who were doomed by Adam’s sin.

The ancient doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ is not open for discussion or question. The Holy Spirit of God closed the door on that subject centuries ago by inspiring the authors of Scripture to make it plain that Jesus did come in the flesh and gave Himself for the sins of the human race.

I pray you and your family have a wonderful Christmas. My prayers are with you as you celebrate the real meaning of Christmas - the coming of our Lord and Savior in flesh.

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