

The annual anticipation and excitement surrounding what many consider to be the most exhilarating season of the year is well upon us. Christmas is the super bowl, the world series and all the rest for those who celebrate Jesus. The spirit of Christmas is in the air. All around are decorations, music, gift exchanging, fun, the unmitigated joy of the season, the wonderful and delightful attitude of folks putting their best foot forward, all this and more reflecting the spirit of holiday cheer and the gift of the birth of Christmas. Such things are indeed a big part of the spirit of Christmas - but there is yet more! Let me lay before you as evidence from our HOLY scriptures, starting with the Old Testament prophet Isaiah who wrote some 750 years before the birth of CHRIST:

Isaiah 63:7-11 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD And the praises of the LORD, According to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, According to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. 8 For He said, "Surely they are My people, Children who will not lie." So He became their Savior. 9 In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old. 10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; So He turned Himself against them as an enemy, And He fought against them. 11 Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying: "Where is He who brought them up out of the sea With the shepherd of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit within them,

Look carefully at what Isaiah prophetically recorded:

Verse 7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD And the praises of the LORD, According to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, According to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. GOD is to be praised – lips that praise God from whom all blessings flow, lives that demonstrate that love have an appreciation for life, joy and happiness that is restricted or outright missed in others. Put a smile on your face and praise on your lips and you will

destroy the strategy of satan to imitate, violate, and mutilate the gospel message of the birth of the Christ child.

Verse 8 is as if it were written by Isaiah nearly 2,800 years ago for this generation to be reminded the acceptance in the world of this practice will not be tolerated by God:

8 *For He said, “Surely they are My people, Children who will not lie.” So He became their Savior.*

Christians are to read the word, study it’s context, use it as a determining factor in our own resistance to the sin of exaggeration and outright lying! It is all around us modeled by those we want to respect and trust. It is so prevalent and accepted that we must be taught and reminded not to compromise our basic Christian Value System: Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

The scripture has much to say about the topic of lying, here is a sample:

Leviticus 19:11 *‘You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.*

Proverbs 6:16-19 *These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.*

Colossians 3:9 *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,*

Ephesians 4:25 *Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another*

Hear again the specific words of Isaiah 63: 8 ***For He said, “Surely they are My people, Children who will not lie.” So He became their Savior.***

Isn’t it amazing that satan has available the scriptures just like we do. And he spends his time seeing what God says is honorable and just for living a happy and righteous life – and then satan and his demons twist everything God says around to make it seem alright: Genesis 3:1 *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’? That is why I said earlier: Put a smile on your face and praise on your lips and you will destroy the strategy of satan to imitate, violate, and mutilate the gospel message of the birth*

of the Christ child.

We need to review the 8th verse so we get the pronoun connection for the 9th verse, watch carefully: Isaiah 63: 8-9a *For He said, "Surely they are My people, Children who will not lie." **So He became their Savior.** 9 ~~In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old.~~—Who was afflicted according to the Christmas prophecy? It was He who became their Savior – and who was that? Isaiah is explaining to us that the failures including lying of the Hebrew nation afflicted Jesus!*

With great sorrow in my heart for my own sin I acknowledge along with you for your sin that our sins afflicted Jesus. It is a solemn reminder that our affliction upon Jesus was the reason for His birth, life, death, and resurrection as Savior for the forgiveness of our righteously dishonorable conduct. That is the reason for the Christmas season and the manifestation of every expression of joy we are able to generate!

Look at verse 9 again for a further exciting revelation: *9 In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them;* If there were no other reason (but there are plenty of scriptures) for angels being a part of Christmas this is just amazing: *And the Angel of His Presence saved them;*

God has chosen to inform us about angels, but always with the clear message of their service and message bearing – never, ever to be worshiped or venerated. In this case we learn this unusual description of an angel – with the name or title capitalized in our NKJV. *the Angel of His Presence.* The angel had some part in ministering to the Hebrew nation and rescuing them at the time of Moses from Egypt where he rescued the nation physically.

We continue in verse *9 In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them;*

The reason we can understand the pronouns in this last section refer to Jesus is first because He alone could redeem people and secondly our translators capitalized those pronouns in reference and respect for Jesus. Through JESUS then, we and all the nations were given an opportunity and choice to be rescued SPIRITUALLY.

For all who claim and obey Jesus - HE is our REDEEMER and why we celebrate

Christmas.

Now concluding verse 9: *In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old.*

That carries us into the New Testament where the evidence continues: Romans 15:4-6 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

All scripture was written to teach us how to live in praise and adoration to our CREATOR which results in unity of faith and action. It is most interesting to analyze the opposite of verse 5 *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,*

GOD the creator grants unity to those who follow CHRIST JESUS totally/// - but every degree deviating from that faithfulness results in less and less unity until total chaos results. People and nations without GOD squander unity and peace and are given over to confusion and turmoil.

Now you know why the angels praised GOD and said in Luke 2:14 *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”* NKJV

Just think of what our world would be like if Celebrating Jesus at Christmas were a complete, world-wide experience - it would be like GOD originally created us in HIS own image to possess; and like HE has prepared for Christians in eternity: here is a hint to further delight your Christmas celebration: Because of Jesus granting us to chose our eternal destiny which in heaven Suffering, starvation, sickness, and addictions would be unknown.

Selfishness would be replaced with selflessness.

Senseless strife and silly bickerings would be replaced with encouraging words, and helpful actions.

Racial animosities would be drowned in a sea of brotherhood.

War would be an utter impossibility

The prayer of JESUS for the unity of his followers would be answered.

John 17:20-23 *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

With the fulfillment of that prayer - Peace on earth will become a glorious reality and we are given opportunity to celebrate with the vigor and zest of one having been snatched miraculously from the path of a crushing avalanche.

I close today with this first-person account from a mother about her family as they ate dinner on Christmas Day in a small restaurant many miles from their home. Nancy, the mother, relates: We were the only family with children in the restaurant. I sat Erik in a high chair and noticed everyone was quietly eating and talking. Suddenly, Erik squealed with glee and said, "Hi there." He pounded his fat baby hands on the high-chair tray. His eyes were wide with excitement and his mouth was bared in a toothless grin. He wriggled and giggled with merriment. I looked around and saw the source of his merriment. It was a man with a tattered rag of a coat; dirty, greasy and worn. His pants were baggy and his toes poked out of would-be shoes. His shirt was dirty and his hair was uncombed and unwashed. His hands waved and flapped on loose wrists. "Hi there, baby; hi there, big boy. I see ya, buster," the man said to Erik. My husband and I exchanged looks, "What do we do?" Erik continued to laugh and answer, ""Hi, hi there." everyone in the restaurant noticed and looked at us and then at the man. The old geezer was creating a nuisance with my beautiful baby. Our meal came and the man began shouting from across the room, "Do ya know patty cake? Do you know peek-a-boo? Hey, look, he knows peek-a-boo." Nobody thought the old man was cute. My husband and I were embarrassed. We ate in silence; all except for Erik, who was running through his repertoire for the admiring skid-row bum, who in turn, reciprocated with his cute comments. We finally got

through the meal and headed for the door. My husband went to pay the check and told me to meet him in the parking lot. The old man sat poised between me and the door. "Lord, just let me out of here before he speaks to me or Erik," I prayed. As I drew closer to the man, I turned my back trying to side-step him and avoid any air he might be breathing. As I did, Erik leaned over my arm, reaching with both arms in a baby's pick-me-up, position. Before I could stop him, Erik had propelled himself from my arms to the man's. Suddenly a very old man and a very young baby realized their love relationship. Erik in an act of total trust, love and submission laid his tiny head upon the man's ragged shoulder. The man's eyes closed, and I saw tears hover beneath his lashes. His aged hands full of grime, pain and hard labor - gently, so gently cradled my baby and stroked his back. No two beings have ever loved so deeply for so short a time. I stood awestruck. The old man rocked and cradled Erik in his arms for a moment, and then his eyes opened and set squarely on mine. He said in a firm commanding voice, "You take care of this baby." Somehow I managed, "I will," from a throat that contained a stone. He pried Erik from his chest unwillingly, longingly, as though he were in pain. I received my baby, and the man said, "God bless you, ma'am, you've given me my Christmas gift." I said nothing more than a muttered thanks. With Erik in my arms, I went to the car. My husband was wondering why I was crying and holding Erik so tightly, and why I was saying, "My God, my God, forgive me." I had just witnessed Christ's love shown through the innocence of a tiny child who saw no sin, who made no judgment; a child who saw a soul, and a mother who only saw a suit of clothes. I was a Christian who was blind, holding a child who was not, I felt it was God asking --"Are you willing to share your son for a moment?", when He shared His for all eternity. The ragged old man, unwittingly, had reminded me, "To enter the Kingdom of God, we must become as little children."

One thing remains for each of us is to live fully for Jesus each and every day in spite of what the world says and does. Amen

Our invitation hymn

Isaiah 63:7-11

Galatians 6:7

Leviticus 19:11

Proverbs 6:16-19

Colossians 3:9

Ephesians 4:25

Isaiah 63: 8

Genesis 3:1

Isaiah 63: 8-9a

Isaiah 63: 9

Romans 15:4-6

Luke 2:14

John 17:20-23