

# Truth to Wonder

The background of the cover is a deep blue night sky. A bright, multi-pointed star is positioned on the right side, casting a vertical beam of light. In the lower-left foreground, there are silhouettes of two palm trees. To their right, two figures are silhouetted against the sky; one is holding a long staff, and the other is pointing towards the star. A small, dark silhouette of a dog stands between the palm trees and the figures. In the lower-right background, there is a silhouette of a town or city with several buildings.

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Includes Christmas Gift Guide and Bumper Family Christmas Bible Quiz

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## Welcome to Truth to Wonder

Seasons greetings to all and welcome to the December issue of Truth to Wonder. Whilst this year has been a challenging year for all, we pause at this festive period and remember our Lord is a mighty God who holds all creation in His powerful hand. Let us all beware of the ease of which any of us can fall into the worldly distractions of Christmas, so that we can retain our wonder at the awe inspiring mystery that is the incarnation of our Lord in the flesh of man. In this house of clay, yet still the Almighty God, Jesus according to the will of the Father, fulfilling the law of God fully through the power of the Holy Ghost, so that His perfect blood could be offered as an atonement for our sins. Therefore let us all be joyful this Christmas time, not because of the gifts, food, decorations etc, but because of the Lord stepped into history so that we may live in peaceful eternity with Him. Let's now draw near to our God in prayer.

### Opening Prayer

Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, how we marvel and wonder at your eternal plan of salvation of we wretched sinners. It's magnitude of grace and mercy we cannot begin to comprehend with our finite minds, yet we give thanks for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. This ministry to our hearts breaths an eternal faith into us gifting us the revelation of the Triune Godhead that is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

How we stand in awe Lord at how you set aside your heavenly glory for a season, and took on flesh and blood, humbling yourself into the form of a newborn child. We join the worship of the shepherds those millennia ago, as they stood in humble adoration of the newborn king, theirs and our mighty redeemer who lay before them in gentle infant sleep.

Dear Lord such glory wrapped in swaddling clothes that was your Son given unto us so that we may be restored to you through His

perfect sacrifice, staggers the mind and stills the tongue as we cannot begin to fathom the depths of your eternal wisdom and glory.

Yet Lord though our minds can not comprehend the mystery of the incarnation of Our Lord Jesus, your only begotten Son, our hearts are so set ablaze by our joy at this incredible truth. As the star set by your hand in the skies leading to Bethlehem two thousand years ago, so does the Holy Ghost lead us to a place of stillness of soul so that we, as the kings of the East, come to give praise and worship before the Prince of Peace.



Lord, we come to you without the rich gifts that the Eastern kings placed before you in humble adoration. Our gift of praise is but our humble hearts, trusting in your abundant grace towards we filthy sinners. Yet even this offering is crafted by the pierced hands of your only Son, Jesus Christ, for He is the author and finisher of our faith. How wonderful He truly is, how great a counsellor unto our weary soul He is, how great a peace does our Heavenly Prince gift us.

Dear Lord, as we gaze on at a world tumbling ever further into fear and sin, we at this advent season, look towards the heavens awaiting your return. At that glorious hour we shall be with you at last in the twinkling of an eye, seeing our living Redeemer, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus with our own eyes. Oh Lord come, come quickly so that as the hymn writer sang reverently, we can behold the King of angels and adore Him for all eternity. This we do pray in Jesus name. Amen.

## Hark The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King!  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled."  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th' angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King!

Christ, by highest heaven adored:  
Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
Late in time behold him come,  
Offspring of the favoured one.  
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;  
Hail, th'incarnate Deity:  
Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel!  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King!

Hail! the heaven-born  
Prince of peace!  
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Risen with healing in his wings  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
Born that man no more may die:  
Born to raise the son of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King !"

### Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley

Felix Mendelssohn

1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, - "Glo - ry to the new-born King; Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, - God and sin - ners rec-on - ciled!" Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, - Join the tri - umph of the skies, - With th' an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is - born in Beth - le - hem!"

Refrain  
Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry - - to the new - born King."

2. Christ, by highest Heav'n adored;  
Christ the ever-lasting Lord;  
Late in time, behold Him come,  
Offspring of a virgin's womb;  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail th'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus our Emmanuel. *Refrain*

3. Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die.  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth. *Refrain*

## A History of Hark the Herald Angels Sing

This classic Christmas Carol was crafted by the blessed pen of Charles Wesley in 1739, first appearing in his collection entitled *Hymns and Sacred Poems*.

Charles Wesley always strived to ensure his hymns had sound theological teaching within the lyrics, and within this rousing carol we sing of the incarnation of Christ Jesus.

Wesley's original words for the beginning of the carol were, "Hark how all the Welkom rings, Glory to the King of Kings", before George Whitefield altered the opening in 1754 to the start we know today.

Originally sung in a much slower, humbler melody; the tune was adapted by William H. Cummings from a melody composed by Felix Mendelssohn in 1840, from his choral cantata *Festgesang*.

This adaptation by Cummings is still the beloved version that is generally sung around the world during the Christmas season. It's blend of powerful melody that begs to be sung with verve and gusto, blends beautifully with the rich lyrics of Charles Wesley's musical sermon. This true classic of Christmas Carols when sung with an attentive mind and humble heart, cannot fail but to remind the weary, anxious, stressed and distracted singer of today that Christmas is not a time for excess; it is a time for thanksgiving, for exaltation through heartfelt praise of the Lord Jesus. For we are made free from the chains of sin by His obedience unto the Father, so that He walked as a man amongst us, knowing our frailties yet living without sin. Thus at the appointed hour He offered himself up as a sacrifice in our place, fulfilling the Law before an accepting Father, shedding His blood for our salvation. In this wonder of atonement, He was raised up in power and glory on the third day, and those who know Him as their Lord and Saviour shall also live in glory forever, alongside the King of Kings, Jesus Christ.

*By Jonathan Badger*

## The Spirit of Christmas

As an American Pastor observed recently, Christians shouldn't always feel they have to be on the defensive when it comes to sharing their faith with non-believers. The unredeemed has equally to demonstrate the validity of their position and belief, a task many are quick to run from the very get go.

At Christmas time we have before us a wonderful opportunity to pose a question to the secular world. Why do you celebrate Christmas and have childlike hopes of capturing the elusive 'Spirit of Christmas'?

If you sit down and watch any one of a host of Christmas movies that litter the TV channels and streaming sites at this time of year, you will no doubt see a consistent thread emerge near the end of each film. As the lead character/characters overcome a variety of challenging situations that sharpen their awareness of their own selfish nature and the very real needs of others; the repentant hero/heroine will enjoy a winter wonderland celebration surrounded by a group of new friends, reconciled enemies and forgiving loved ones. The camera will pan out from this jovial, thankful gathering into a wider scene of the group being sheltered from the cold winter snows by a warm and beautifully decorated house.

What is it about this homely, peaceful, idyllic image that appeals so much to even the cynical sinner at this festive season? Ask the lost sinner why do they chase such ideals of generosity, forgiveness, love and reconciliation at this time of year? Why do they attempt to organise their busy schedules so that they can be with seldom seen but dearly held in the hearts loved ones (and sometimes not so dearly held)? Could it be that the conscience, that God given innate witness of the truth of the Gospel, speaks quietly yet powerfully to the hearts of man that at this time where we give particular place of mind and heart to the mystery of the incarnation of Christ; that they are missing such a utopia of existence that Hollywood can

only hint at poorly, whilst the Word of God reveals fully and beautifully?

Deep in the human heart, stored away in the caverns of the soul, lies an ancient ache in the very core of every life that has ever lived to feel and see how pain, suffering and indeed evil fills our world. Throughout the year, this ache is swept away with busy work schedules, holidays, hobbies etc. Anything that keeps the mind from true thought and analysis of life is sadly and often tragically seized upon by the lost soul.

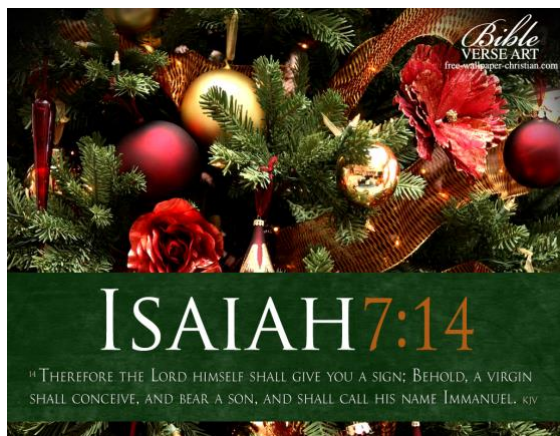


As the advent season comes into view, you will find the vast majority of people today are eager to delay its arrival because it's celebration is viewed as a source of great stress. However, as Christmas Day gets closer and closer, the reluctance often melts into idealism if only but for a short while, as misty eyed individuals fondly dream of how they long for a simple gathering with those they love that recaptures some of the treasured family traditions of past Christmases that allow the spending of a day away from the stain of an evil, sin filled world.

How the cynical come to this childlike Christmas dream is then dubbed the 'spirit of Christmas' or the 'magic of Christmas', as some sort of unquantifiable concept that can be used as some sort of explanation for this yearly dream of a distant utopia.

At this point ask the non-believer, if we are here by mere accident, with death the hero of the story of evolution (without the death of the weakest specimen in evolution, the stronger specimen cannot go on to pass their superior qualities onto the next generation), why at Christmas time do our hearts yearn for a scene that flies in the very face of evolutionary principle?

Christmas speaks to our hearts that we are all yearning at our very core for an existence with those we love in a place free from the pain and evil of the world we live in. It is a witness to the paradise of existence we once enjoyed in the Garden of Eden, a loss we all feel deeply and yet desperately seek to rediscover. This search for rediscovery of paradise lost is what drives so many people in their lives to build a 'perfect life', so as to silence that quiet voice in the heart that nags away everyday that we were made for more.



Yet at Christmas, that chasing after the unattainable by man is quietened by the gentle yet inescapable witness of the conscience, as it stirs up hopes for peace, purity, innocence, forgiveness, reconciliation, hope, contentedness and love above the temporary trinkets of the world.

Where the world blindly calls this feeling 'Christmas spirit', the believer correctly identifies it as a yearning for the hope realised in the first advent, the birth of Our Lord Jesus.

In the birth of Jesus, we were given a Saviour, a perfect Redeemer who could reconcile us to

Our Heavenly Father at long last through His sinless existence as a man, fulfilling all the Law of God. In Jesus, we were given God's only begotten Son, so that we may know a peace, a contentedness of heart, an innocence of soul, a love that we experienced in blurred shadows as a hopeful, trusting child.

As believers, we can say to the sceptic, the dream of Hollywood in its depiction of joy, peace and goodwill on earth to all men at Christmas time is no dream to us, it is a certain hope, a promise fulfilled two thousand years ago in the town of Bethlehem.

We can say with utter conviction of faith that we celebrate Christmas because it is through the birth of Jesus Christ, that we were gifted in His mighty grace a way back to the paradise we all yearn for. It is because he took on flesh and blood, lived a sinless life and then offered up that same spotless blood as an atonement for our sins unto the Heavenly Father we rebelled against, that we can be reconciled and returned to our original place, with our heavenly family, enjoying an existence of utter joy, peace and contentedness, safe at last from the grasp of pain, suffering and evil. Tell the non-believer it's not 'Christmas spirit', that unknowable, intangible concept that is easily swept away by the struggles of life, that chases after them at the advent season. No, it is the conscience, that ancient witness to what we lost, what we yearn for and who has delivered it again to us through his incredible grace.

Tell them that the hope of Christmas that adorns a thousand Christmas movies, adverts, cards etc, was set in motion at the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden; was furthered by the much prophesied arrival of the first advent, the birth of Jesus Christ; set in triumph at the Calvary and soon to be fulfilled in the glorious return of Our Lord Jesus, the Second Advent, when peace at last will reign by the governance of His wonderful counsel and might.

By Jonathan Badger



## Jerusalem Troubled By A Newborn King

All who know the account of the birth of Christ are familiar with the teaching that King Herod of Judaea was greatly troubled at the news given to him by the visiting Wise Men, of a new born king: a King of the Jews no less (Matthew 2:2).

However what is often missed in the account given by Matthew, is how the news of the birth of the new king was greeted by the rest of Jerusalem. One would expect that such news of the promised king foretold by the prophets of the past would be greeted with great joy and celebration. Yet what we read indicates a very different situation. If we turn to Matthew 2:3, we read, **“When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him”**.

As we can see, it wasn't just Herod who was troubled by this wondrous news that had been delivered by the travelling Wise Men of the East, it was the whole of Jerusalem.

One would have thought that an occupied people as the Jews were at this time, living under the rule of the Roman Caesars, that they would be overjoyed at the news of the promised king's birth. Remember, Herod was a puppet king, selected and controlled by Roman power. Furthermore, Herod was not even an ethnic Jew as he was of Arabic origin and merely practiced Judaism. So with this historical and societal context, the surprise at Jerusalem's reticence and indeed worry over a true Jewish King being born unto them becomes ever greater.

Yet should we be so surprised of this reaction by the people of Jerusalem at this dramatic news? Actually, no, no we shouldn't be. Why? Because so many of us are guilty of a similar reticence, a similarly troubled heart at the news given of the returning King.

The people of Jerusalem has fallen foul of that old trick used by Satan so effectively for millennia against mankind. This trick being comfort and familiarity of existence, even

when that existence is derided, disliked and even hated, our human nature is to stay with what we know as this appeals to our rebellious urge to stay in control of life. Consider how the Jews who were freed by Moses from captivity in Egypt, complained at how they would've been better off staying in slavery than wander in the wilderness as at least they had some degree of food and shelter. As Solomon observed, there is nothing new under the sun; mankind does not change at heart no matter how many centuries and millennia pass.

So the people of Jerusalem at the time of Herod, fearing the unknown of the future under the governance of the newly born king, retreated into the all too human trait of comfort and familiarity. So we too today are quick to observe the collapse of the world around us. We are swift and eager to offer our complaints against the crumbling society, readying our tongues for a impassioned speech against the foolishness of those around us and indeed who govern us. Yet observe the change of tone when one noting this commonly felt position, then speaks joyfully, as the Wise Men did, of the impending return of the King of Kings. The conversation will plummet from ranting to murmuring as those who were once vocal in their musings now stumble and feel troubled in their hearts.

Why are they troubled? Because the human heart knows innately that this prophesied king, the same who took on flesh and blood and walked among men two thousand years ago in Israel, is a just and mighty King. The human heart naturally does indeed want to be freed from evil, but not to be free from indulgent sin. Any normal king will seek to control obvious evil, but they will not seek out and judge the sinful heart. This weak form of kingship while inevitably derided by the masses will be tolerated. Whereas the King of the Jews, the Lord Jesus, the King of Kings, is a Sovereign King, who righteously judges evil and the sinful heart, leaving no sinner a place to hide from his eyes of fire.

Such a natural reticence of Jesus was the cause of the need for the work of John the Baptist, a messenger sent to prepare the way for the Lord. Our God is loving, patient and slow to anger, knowing our fearful yet rebellious hearts, and so he sent John the Baptist to soften the heart and make ready the soul so that the glorious words of the Gospel that would flow from the mouth of the Lord Jesus would be heeded by many.

Therefore, as the people of Jerusalem those two thousand years ago, many will be deeply troubled at this time of year. The Lord sends out his messengers today, the Godly men and women of faith who boldly declare his word and speak joyously of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus.

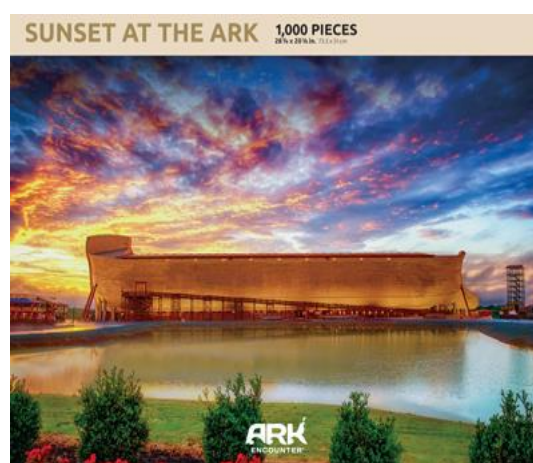
We should not be surprised that many are troubled by the true message of what is celebrated at Christmas. Doubtless you were once also troubled deep in your heart by the news of the arrival of the prophesied King of Kings. Yet even this memory, while bringing shame into the heart of the believer is a mysterious gift of God, for it brings compassion also. In compassion for the lost, we should be joyfully sharing the Gospel message, using this wondrous time of year to speak to all who will listen of Wonderful Counsellor that is the Prince of Peace the Lord Jesus. Go out and be unafraid to trouble the hearts of the non-believer this Christmas time. Be compassionate to their dire situation, a life trapped in knowing pain and affliction, yet fearful of change. Calm them, listen to their sorrow filled words and point them to the word of God. In this perfect, final revelation of the heart of God, they can see for themselves the radiant light that is the grace of Christ. They will be brought through the dark night of sin by the certain steps of the Holy Ghost so that they can witness the tender love offered by the Lord Jesus. They will at long last give praise unto Him, giving glory to the Father. In this gift to them, they will know a Christmas like no other.

By Jonathan Badger

## *Christmas Gift Guide*

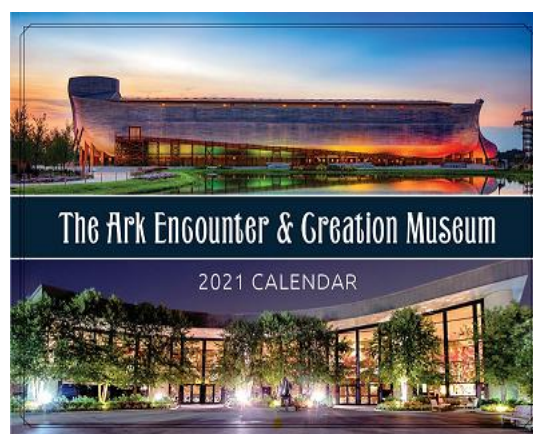
The yearly struggle to find Christmas presents for a varying host of friends and family is often a difficult task. Here are a selection of Biblically based gifts to help remind those dear to you of why we mark this miraculous time of year.

### **Ark Encounter Sunset At The Ark Puzzle**



A beautiful puzzle showing the sunset at the Ark Encounter! 1000 pieces. 28.875 x 20.125 in. 73.5 x 51 cm – available at [answersingenesis.co.uk](http://answersingenesis.co.uk)

### **Ark Encounter & Creation Museum Calendar**



Experience our two world-class attractions throughout the year with this beautiful calendar of the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter. See the wonder of highlights from

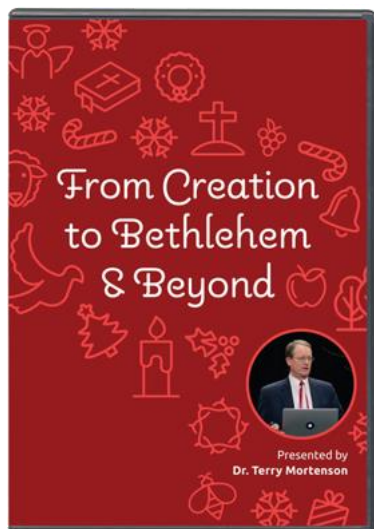
the grounds and exhibits through the seasons! 14-Month Calendar. Thick, high-quality paper folds out to big 12" x 18" spreads. Available at [answersinGenesis.co.uk](http://answersinGenesis.co.uk)

### 7 C's Creation Evangelism Cube



Use this clever “puzzle” to effortlessly share the gospel. Both you and your friends will have fun turning the faces of this unique cube to reveal the Bible’s 7 C’s of History. Colorful, sturdy, and perfect for nearly all ages. Includes an easy-to-understand downloadable guide that will make many evangelism attempts almost effortless ... and amazingly well-received!

### From Creation to Bethlehem & Beyond



At Christmastime we look back at the amazing events surrounding the birth of Jesus. We know those events point to his saving work for us on the cross and in the resurrection. But to really understand the significance of his birth, we need to start at

the beginning of creation and also look to his second coming. Dr. Mortenson explains these “big picture” truths using AiG’s Seven C’s of History and shows how the lies of evolution and millions of years destroy the gospel message. The babe in Bethlehem is first our Creator, then our Saviour, and then our coming King and Judge. Available at [answersinGenesis.co.uk](http://answersinGenesis.co.uk)

### Days of Creation 500 Piece Puzzle



This puzzle beautifully illustrates the six days of creation. Bring the family together and remember what God created on each day of creation. 27.5 x 19.625 in. 70 x 50 cm

### Creation Christmas Card Set



Sharing the gospel with loved ones can be easy! These exclusive Creation Christmas Cards are designed by Answers in Genesis artists and include a Bible verse, plus a brief gospel highlight on the back. Each box



contains 20 die-cut cards (5 of each design) and 20 foil-lined envelopes.  
Available at [answersingenesis.co.uk](http://answersingenesis.co.uk)

### **The First Christmas Town**



Your family's understanding of the true meaning of Christmas will increase greatly through this one-of-a-kind production! Recorded live at the Creation Museum's annual "living nativity" outreach, this video communicates with passion both the obvious, and the easily overlooked, events of the first Christmas.

First, a modern-day archaeologist stresses the difference between the actual events and the traditions that shade our view. Then, four different one-man performances communicate with passion the emotions of various key people: Mary's cousin Elizabeth, the old woman Anna at the temple, a magi who visited the toddler Jesus, and a temple guard whose life has been totally transformed by Jesus's life. The soul-saving gospel message is clear! View all at once, or one performance per week as a new family tradition. Available at [answersingenesis.co.uk](http://answersingenesis.co.uk)

### **Pilgrims Progress Board Game**

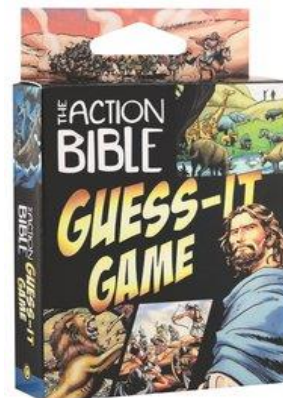
A small format version of this popular game. Choose your Pilgrim character and set off from the City of Destruction. Beware of

landing on despair cards as they will slow your



journey to the Celestial City. Draw a progress card and you will gain advantages over the terrors that await on the journey, a cruel judge, raging lions and the foul fiend Apollyon. You will meet good friends and advisors along the way, such as the Evangelist, Help, Goodwill, Faithful and many more, as you make your way to the Celestial City and your true home. Available from [Keithjones.co.uk](http://Keithjones.co.uk)

### **Action Bible Guess-It Game**



The Action Bible Guess-It card game is a great tool for generating an excitement for God's Word in kids of all ages! This oversized set of cards features 20 questions on each card that point toward the answer (a person, place or thing from the Bible).

Great for traveling or family game night; appropriate for mixed ages.

Available at [KeithJones.co.uk](http://KeithJones.co.uk)

## Book of Ruth - Part Three

We return to our studies of the wonderful Book of Ruth and come straightway to an exquisite moving of the Lord's hand in our studying of this remarkable account of God's sovereignty and faithful providential care.

As we mark the Advent season, that glorious time when the shepherds and Wise Men gathered in Bethlehem, to give worship and praise to the newborn Prince of Peace, we observe that we rejoin the text as Naomi returns to her home of Bethlehem with her devoted daughter in law Ruth. Such a beautiful message is relayed in the differing moods of the God fearing soul as they travel to this honoured town. For while the shepherds and the Wise Men arrived with anticipation, excitement, wonder, humility and joy unbound; Naomi enters the town with a truly heavy, grief stricken heart, weary of life and weighed down by the awareness of her God being bitter against her.



*Bethlehem at Christmas*

Yet in this dichotomy, there is a poignant similarity of hearts that sheds light on the condition of every heart that travels to find shelter in the presence of God. That similarity is seen in humility. As noted, the shepherds and Wise Men showed their humility in worshipping the babe in the manger; whilst Naomi displays her heartfelt humility in the insistent observation that the Almighty Lord is 'bitter against her' and 'testified against her' (Ruth 1:20, 21). Such is the broken nature of her words to her old friends and neighbours who have gathered to see the returning Naomi (Ruth 1:19), that Naomi declares, "call

me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." (Ruth 1:20). Naomi is so weary of spirit that the sound of her own name (Naomi in Hebrew means 'pleasantness') goes against her grief filled heart so markedly that she asks to be called Mara, or bitterness. This bitterness reflected in the name Mara, is not her own bitterness against her situation. This bitterness Naomi observed to be the bitterness of God against her (note Ruth 1:21). She feels the weight of the hand of God seemingly against her in the series of tragedies that has befallen her days. Naomi is in that fearful, low state of the awareness of God's judgement against sin and how the heaviness of His correction can test even the most faithful soul. She is burdened with this knowledge that so many assuredly redeemed believers are very familiar with; that terrible fear of security of salvation when such dark days fall upon them and the light of the morning seems so very far away.

Yet as the Lord does with each saved soul who falls into this doubting of the power of saving grace; this doubt that surfaces through the whispers of Satan in the weary ear, He has already moved to reassure the heavy hearted of their care in His hands. What is truly humbling, what is truly staggering however, is that He masterfully does this even through His correction of sinful deeds and sinful hearts. Naomi as we have seen is very certain of how these tragedies of her life are from the hand of God, given in testament **against** her. However the Lord is using this period of correction on the Naomi and the house of Elimelech to bring about a work of such magnitude and beauty that it would provide the line of the birth of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus himself. Furthermore, this heavy weight of God that Naomi is feeling will soon be relieved by the deliverance of herself and Ruth through the moving of events and people by the same hand of God.

How majestic is the Lord that even in His Fatherly correcting of our sinful hearts, He weaves the darker threads of this correction against the shimmering golden threads of His grace, so that when the tapestry is complete

and the life is moved beyond the night and into the light of day, the eye is inevitably drawn to the glimmer of the gold and not the dark thread of correction. Yes the correction is there, but it serves a wondrous purpose of drawing the eye to glory of God's eternal redemption of mankind through the Lord Jesus; the one who would be born of the line of Ruth centuries later in that same city of Bethlehem.

Therefore we have a full encompassing, a mighty embrace of the humble heart by the Almighty Lord. Whether the humble hearted are coming into the presence of God with anticipation, wonder and joy, or in fear, sadness, grief and heartbreak, Our Gracious Lord stoops down to gather up His beloved and draws them in close to His mighty arms. In such truth, in such a promise we can give thanks to Our Lord this Christmas time and indeed forever that He is Our unchanging Lord who is abundant in grace and mercy to the repentant of heart. Our King of Kings bonds us as brothers and sisters in His eternal grace and power, drawing together the strong of heart and the weary, ensuring that all are equal before Him.

Take this message wherever the Lord leads you this Christmas. There will be sadly so many who are struggling so greatly this season as Naomi did in her dark days. They will be troubled and likely envious of those who tables groan with delights and gifts. Yet tell these souls of the joy found in the Wonderful Counsellor who is Jesus Christ. Tell them that He is King of both the penniless shepherd and the rich wise man. He is the loving, Almighty King who nurtures, guides, protects and provides for all those who come before Him in humility and repentance of sin. Tell them that the greatest gift they will ever receive does not sit under a tree; it was given on a tree, a tree that bore His pure blood for our sins so that we may be restored to Our Heavenly Father and know peace, joy and glory for all eternity.

By Jonathan Badger

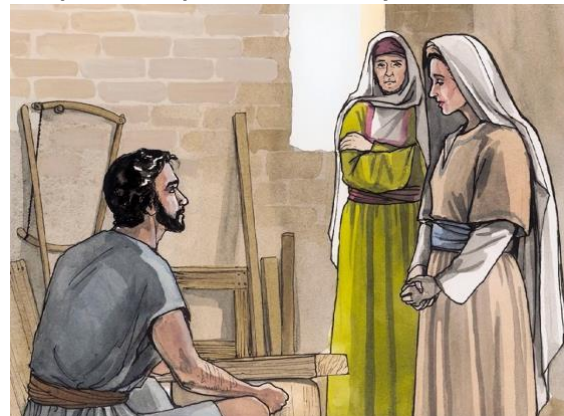
## A Quiet Man Of Faith In Action

In our modern world the role of a man has been so consistently attacked by various political agendas from Feminism through to Marxism, that men today are caught in a troubling limbo as to how they are to act in the world.

The plethora of broken homes across the western world has brought about a generation of men who have had no consistent male role model. The inner damage this wields on a man was famously explored in the book *Fight Club* back in the 1990's, as confused, angry young men desperately and tragically sought some outlet for their masculinity in a world where masculinity is often vilified as oppressive and toxic.

So where is a modern man to find a role model within a world where popular media celebrates messages such as 'God is a woman' and 'Who Runs the World, Girls' (see songs by Ariana Grande and Beyoncé respectively)? One excellent suggestion would be in the figure of Joseph, the husband of Mary.

### *Joseph the carpenter with Mary*



Joseph's character is one of consistency of faith, wisdom, leadership, compassion, love and a just heart. In Matthew 1:18,19 we are given a wonderful insight into the character of this Godly man as it reads, **"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.**

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

Joseph in being given the news that his wife to be is with child would've been deeply troubling news as the text clearly states he had not had physical relations with Mary. Yet in this shocking and hugely concerning revelation for Joseph, we see a staggering characteristic that is to be sought after by all men. He doesn't fly into a fit of rage over possible betrayal, he stands by his wife to be, trusting in the truth of her account of the miraculous event of the conception of the child she is carrying and takes immediate steps to protect her and the child. Joseph is acutely aware of the severe punishment from Jewish law that Mary would've received in being pregnant outside of marriage, and so hides her away not out of shame but out of love and compassion towards her and the child. This is the epitome of manhood, displaying protection of the vulnerable, sheltering and delivering of the innocent, nurturing and providing for those who are weaker, patience and trust in the promises of God even in the face of great confusion and doubt.

Modern man has been robbed of this incredible, God ordained role by a liberal society that has consistently vilified the scriptural male role since the 1950's. As a result modern women are denied the protection, nurturing and provision that they quietly seek yet are constantly told in the media they do not need.



***Modern confusion of roles of men/women***

It is no surprise therefore to see a growing trend of young women today stand against the feminist ideal of an 'independent woman' and look fondly on the golden age of Hollywood as the epitome of womanhood. This being an age where women were portrayed as truly feminine; a novel concept indeed!

Joseph also displays one of the hallmarks of any Godly man, action in faith. Note how each time Joseph is warned by God of imminent danger to the infant Jesus, he immediately acts in trust of the warning and follows the necessary course of action in great faith, uprooting his family from their homeland as a result.

Look at many men today and indeed even yourself if you are a male reader and think how many times men dither on the path God has laid ahead of them, often to tremendous personal and family cost. I am very much guilty of this sin myself, spending years in the spiritual wilderness of doubt and second guessing the Lord's will for me. We men often seek direction from God on a personal level, yet we are quick to neglect how the Lord has given us that direction for our steps through life, namely the Holy Bible. The word of God is sufficient for all things, this we know yet in our sin filled pride and innate tendency to lean on our own understanding we prefer to interpret the events and interactions of our life according to our corrupted viewpoint. This goes against what the Holy Spirit ministers to us daily and so we all too frequently find ourselves paralysed in a sense of confused dithering.

Joseph typifies the scriptural Godly man in that when God sends the dreams of the threat on Jesus' life posed by Herod and later Herod's son, he does not spend weeks or days considering the nature of the dream. He doesn't seek an natural explanation for such a clear warning within a dream. No, he acts immediately, leading his family out into the cold night in faith in God's word (Matthew 2:12-15). Now if Joseph can act so definitely with a message delivered from God through a



dream, why are we men of God today so hesitant to act when we have an even clearer direction in which to walk through life that is Holy Scripture? We have a consistent message that has endured accurately through two thousand years of unparalleled persecution, delivered into the pens of the apostles during the miracle laden apostolic age, in which these miracles were used by the Holy Spirit through the apostles to establish and validate the words they wrote. These words were then completed in the perfection of the revelation of God's word to mankind that we read today in our closed canon of scripture that is the Holy Bible. These consistent, time and hardship tested words have failed no man, woman or child who has trusted in its pages and yet we all too frequently turn away from studying it's pages.

We are in a position of great blessing from the Lord in that we have this infallible guide that is the word of God that men such as Joseph did not have. This sets our own shame even greater and shows how mighty the strength of faith God placed within the heart of Joseph and displays a wondrous truth the child Joseph was placed to care for spoke some thirty years later in the greatest sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount. In the beatitudes of Matthew 5, particularly Matthew 5:8, we read "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Joseph's heart of faith, tested by miraculous revelations and warnings of mortal danger, granted him the incredible gift of seeing the Son of God with his very eyes. This blessing did not end when Joseph closed his eyes one last time and departed from his loved ones, for the certainty of his faith, born by the power of the one he once cradled in his own arms, enabled him to walk through this life with a definite step knowing that in adhering and trusting the Word of God, he would be see God in His fullness of glory for all eternity. Take this lesson given quietly by the assured steps of Joseph and strive to follow the same path of faith that purifies a heart, so it will be after the Lord's own, therein the LORD will direct our steps (Proverbs 16:9).

*By Jonathan Badger*

## Provision for a Nation Part Four

Before we embark on the next part of our series, I just want to take a moment to consider a brief thought that I had since part 3. In part 3 we discussed the second dream of Joseph's, in which the 11 stars and the sun and moon came down and made obeisance to Joseph. We looked at how in this dream the stars, sun and moon represented the family as a whole and how it would come to pass that they would indeed come to bow before Joseph in Egypt.



This could be seen to take the short view, a temporally close coming to fruition interpretation of the dream. But what else do we know? As we discussed in part one of this series, Joseph and the events of the history of this great man of God are a foreshadowing of Christ. With this in mind can we look at this another way? The heavenly bodies in the dream not only represent the family as a whole but also the Jewish nation as a whole. Gods chosen people. At the first coming of our Lord, the Jewish nation betrayed him, because they did not recognise him for who he was. More importantly they did not want to see, they hated him. They did not bow before him, and to have done so would have been unthinkable for them, for he

was a stumbling block. The foreshadowing of which we shall look at shortly. However, at his second coming it will be all too evident who he is and they will realise in horror what they as a nation did to their Messiah, and Christ will redeem and save his nation, the chosen people from almost certain annihilation. If we take the long view we can see this foreshadowed in this dream.

Leaving that brief thought there for now, we will turn our attention to the next section of our look at Joseph.

**Genesis 37: 12-14 – And his brethren went to feed their fathers flock in Shechem. And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said unto him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.**



First of all take a look at where his brothers are tending the flocks. Shechem was the name of the prince that defiled Dinah, the full sister of Simeon and Levi in chapter 34. He was the son of Hamor the Hivite, and assuming this land that the brothers now find themselves tending the flock was the same

land that was named for the prince, then this was a return to an area very familiar to Levi and Simeon for it was the site of their unbridled rage and vengeance on the males of the land. As they left the site of their murderous rage in chapter 34, they are said to have plundered in verses 27-29 the wealth of that place, including the sheep, oxen and asses. Therefore it would seem entirely reasonable that they now had possession of a flock in this area and that the peoples of that area would be less than keen to disagree with the arrangement.

This would seem to tie into the fact that Jacob seems less than at ease with the situation. His first question is rhetorical. He knows full well where his sons are and he is not entirely happy about it and wants to know what they are up to and probably to ensure they are not getting themselves into more trouble and by association him. We have seen Joseph bring report of his brothers to his fathers before and so it would seem he acts as Jacob's reliable roving reporter. Neither Jacob nor Joseph seem to in the least bit predict the events to come as neither seem hesitant in the undertaking.

**Verses 15-17 – And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed hence: for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.**

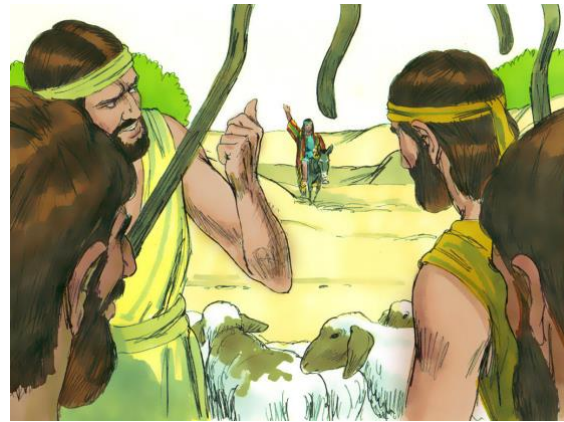
The brothers had already strayed from their predicted location! The eleven are anything but predictable. And this was an outcome that Joseph hadn't expected. Estimating the

distance between Hebron and Shechem at 50 miles it would have likely taken Joseph a couple of days to make the journey. On his arrival he found nothing and nobody, and appears from the text to be at a loss as to where on earth his kin have disappeared to. On seeing Joseph wandering in an empty field the unnamed man of this scene didn't exactly need a degree in human behaviour to figure out he'd lost something! You can almost imagine Joseph stood scratching his head. This stranger was apparently not just passing through as he had been in the region long enough to have overheard the brothers discussing their proposed move on to Dothan some time earlier. So on receipt of this information Joseph sets out to Dothan, which it is suggested was a further 20-25 mile to the north of Shechem. I wonder if he was even slightly annoyed! But this does also lay another point at our feet. Despite the fact that Joseph was not ignorant of his brothers hatred towards him, he still went on to carry out his duty to his father rather than return to Jacob with the news that they were not where they were supposed to be. Jacob was no doubt worried about his sons in this land and Joseph knew he could not return without a confirmed report of their whereabouts and their condition.

**Verses 18-20 – And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And**

**they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.**

It is the blood thirsty that hate the upright – Proverbs 29-10. This is a plot nearly as old as time, with the same jealous hatred being the



motivation for Cain's murder of Abel.

We are not told how this conversation between the brothers began, nor indeed who started it. But the text suggests that it began almost the moment they spied him on the horizon. They would have recognised their brother from the familiarity of his gait, the fact that they all likely had good eyesight, and of course the minor point that Joseph was wearing a very recognisable and colourful coat!

The Bible does not allow us to know the instigators, possibly in order to save any of the tribes further stigma. But also in that to start with at least all were involved and of common thought, hence "they conspired". Only after sense prevails for two of the eleven do Reuben and Judah voice alternatives to first degree premeditated murder.

Their hatred of his dreams appears to be the driving force, being a factor in their initial comment of recognition, here comes the dreamer, and also in their desire to put an end to both the dreams and any possibility that they might just come true! But we could also remember the words of Jesus at this point, for they hated Joseph and therefore were already guilty of murder in their

hearts. It is a good point to note that no matter what the designs of man, they cannot overcome the ultimate plans of God, no matter how full proof they may feel the action their plan might be.

They also discuss throwing him in a pit as a means of disposal. They may have thought of digging a hole especially, but it is more probable that they intended to use one that had been already handily constructed. There were likely pre-constructed forms of cisterns for collecting rain water in order to water the flocks, as there were not necessarily wells in every location the flocks were grazed, and the Bible tends to refer to wells as wells, not pits. However in verse 22 Reuben refers to this as a pit in the wilderness. This could suggest a natural geologic formation or a disused structure. Ultimately we will never know in this lifetime, and in reality it is of little consequence as to the type of hole. More what it represents.



**Verses 21-24 – And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.**

Because God's plans are substantially different to those of Joseph's wicked brethren, Reuben's pricked conscience led

him to divert the plan from direct, immediate murder, to one with the plan of salvaging the situation at a later point. Reuben of all people should have been the one with the greatest hatred of Joseph, as the first born son who has witnessed favours bestowed on Joseph that he could have felt were rightfully his. However his favour had somewhat fallen after his acts of sinfulness, and this may have been a rather self-serving plan in his mind, acting as the hero of the day, returning him safe and sound, and recover some of his own lost favour. God however overrides this plan also, with an ultimate ending to the story that their mortal minds could have never even begun to fathom at that point.



Isn't this the way with Christ as our Saviour? As the beloved Son of his Father, he was sent to a wicked world willingly, to be met with only hatred and scorn, derision and humiliation, and murderous plots. But not one of these enemies could have fathomed the end result of the story. Their attempts to destroy him would save countless numbers from an eternity of separation through sin. The greatest story of all time, pre-planned before time, before the world came into existence, to redeem fallen humanity so as to be a bride for his beloved Son. Amen.

By David J Badger



## **Stunning fossil once again confirms the need for rapid burial.**

The North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, has just purchased a fossil that has been the stuff of whispered myth in paleontological circles over the last 14 years for a whopping 6 million dollars.

The piece that has been dubbed “Duelling Dinosaurs” is truly huge at a massive 30,000 lbs in weight, and consists of one of the best preserved and near complete pairs of dinos in the fossil world. The Tyrannosaurus rex and Triceratops appear to be intertwined in battle, with some of the T-rex teeth even embedded in the Triceratops.



**T-Rex and Triceratops fossilised in battle**

Due to go on display at the museum in 2022, this fossil has been held in various warehouses and storage facilities since its discovery on a Montana ranch in 2006. Owned by Lige and Mary Ann Murray, the ranch was the site of a fossil survey being undertaken by Clayton Phipps and team. During the course of this survey, Clayton Phipps cousin, Chad O'Connor located the triceratops pelvis, which lead to the gradual excavation of the duelling pair.

From this point on the fossil was moved to a private facility in Fort Peck, Montana where it

spent several years, over which time the Murray's and Phipps tried to persuade multiple museums to purchase the item for display. But they had no takers, with Phipps recounting that some of the paleontological community had a problem with how he had excavated and documented the dig,

After a failed attempt at auctioning the fossil which never managed to reach the 6 million dollar minimum bid, the fossil returned to storage, this time in a facility on Long Island.

Then in 2016 Lindsey Zanno, the head of palaeontology at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, approached Phipps about selling the fossil to them. She visited the Long Island facility to see the duelling dinosaurs and was immediately dumbstruck by the dynamic appearance of this fossil. This first hand experience lead to negotiations for its purchase which were going smoothly until partners of the Murray's who had an interest in the mineral content of their ranch got wind of the fossils sale and took the Murray's to court claiming essentially that the fossil was a mineral and therefore they were the rightful owners. After a long drawn out battle the court ruled in favour of the Murray's and the sale to NCMNS could go ahead.

But why the initial reticence of palaeontologists to accept this fossil? Did they feel because it was found by a fossil hunter rather than a recognised “scientific” body, that this find was some how inferior despite its uniqueness? Or was this in fact more of an issue with the composition of this fossil itself? As even now 14 years on it is a still regarded as a mystery by evolutionary experts as to how these two titans managed to become

fossilised whilst locked in battle. This requires rapid burial in sedimentary rock – i.e. that form of rock deposited by water as layers of material that solidifies as it dries. Some have suggested that the Triceratops was already dead, as if this somehow removes some of the difficulty of the need for massive volumes of sediment to encase instantly two large land dwelling animals.

Small-scale local events simply don't cut it. The volume of material would have to have caused the near instantaneous death of these two creatures and also held them in place, rather than dragging them off and separating them, as an event such as a local flash flood would. To preserve such a scene the amount of material overwhelming them would have to have been a truly monumental, in order to provide the rapid burial and prevent any movement to try and escape the event that had overwhelmed them. The cause of death of these two beasts was instantaneous fossilisation.

Once again Noah's flood provides a logical, intellectually satisfying answer to this question. Yet over the coming years this fossil held away from the public eye for so long will be subject to thousands of experiments, attempting to discern any cause other than a global flood. There are already plans to go to the site of the original excavation to look for clues as to origin of the event that produced this awesome piece of preserved history. May we pray that God guides the eyes of these teams, so they might be struck by the evidence for the global flood that presents itself so clearly before them.

By David J Badger

## Family Bible Quiz – Christmas Special (*Great for Christmas Day*)

1) In which verse does Isaiah prophecy of the one who would be Wonderful, Counsellor and the Prince of Peace?

2) Who ordered the census to take place at the time of Jesus' birth?

3) How many generations were in between Abraham and Jesus as listed in Matthew 1?  
a) 42    b) 43    c) 44

4) What was the first prophecy of Jesus' life as a man?

5) True or False. In the Bible, there are two Jacob's that have sons called Joseph?

6) Did Joseph have a vision or dream from God saying that Mary was carrying Jesus?

7) How many miles apart are Bethlehem and Nazareth?  
a) 90    b) 95    c) 100

8) Why were frankincense and myrrh strange gifts to give a newborn?

9) What verse in Micah says that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem?

10) What prophecy did Herod fulfil by ordering the killing of boys under the age of two in Bethlehem?

11) How many miles apart is Bethlehem to Egypt, the place where his parents fled with him?  
a) 420 miles    b) 426 miles    c) 429 miles

12) What verse is the hymn 'For unto us a child is born' based on?

13) What made the still unborn John the Baptist leap inside the womb of his mother Elisabeth?

14) Who was the governor of Syria during the time of the census?

- 15) What did the heavenly multitude sing in the skies at the birth of Jesus?
- 16) After seeing Jesus, did the shepherds keep the news to themselves or spread it among the people?
- 17) On which day after his birth was Jesus circumcised according to Jewish law?
- 18) What was the name of the old man of God who was granted to live until he had seen the Messiah?
- 19) What was the name of the prophetess, who waited daily in the temple on the Lord, who also saw the infant Jesus with Joseph and Mary at the temple?
- 20) Name five ancestors of Jesus as listed in Matthew 1?

Answers: 1) Isaiah 9:6 2) Caesar Augustus 3) 42 4) Genesis 3:15 5) True 6) A dream, Matthew 1:20 7) 90 8) They were used for embalming the dead. 9) Micah 5:2. 10) Jeremiah 31:15 11) 429 12) Isaiah 9:6 13) The voice of Mary as she carried the unborn Jesus. 14) Cyrenius. 15) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. 16) They spread the news abroad (Luke 2:17) 17) 8<sup>th</sup> day. 18) Simeon 19) Anna. 20) See Matthew 1 for list of ancestors of Jesus

By Naomi and Jonathan Badger

## The Terrors of the Lord

I came across this term in Spurgeon's powerful book *Counsel for Christian Workers*. In it he correctly asserts that we Christians have become weak in our Gospel preaching, all too concerned with offending the world with the truth of the sin of mankind and the salvation afforded to them by the blood of Christ, that was shed in full and final payment for the sins of man.

Today there is precious little or any mention in the pulpits or Christian literature of the wrath of God. The fury of God at sinners and the terrible judgement that awaits all unrepentant sinners is an awful truth that Jesus Christ himself was most vocal of in his preaching to the masses. Did he not speak of the place "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:44) Did he not say, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46)? It was Jesus who spoke of the parable of the condemned man in hell who cried out for but a single drop of water to quench his thirst for such was the intensity of his suffering (Luke 16:19-31).



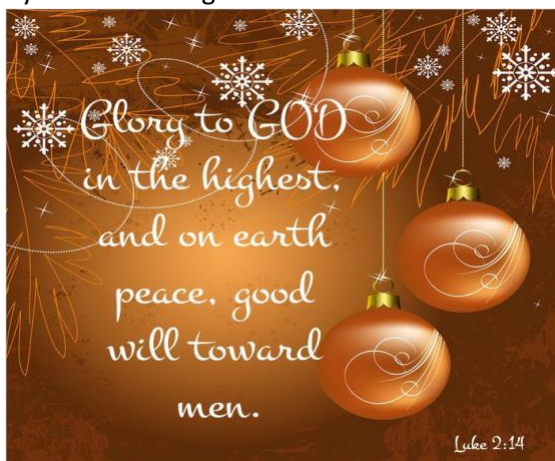
To my brothers and sisters in Christ who read this mark your heart with the heaviness of this inescapable truth. If your heart is not troubled by the weight of fury that lies ahead for those who do not know Christ Jesus as their Saviour then immediately cry out for such a sensitivity of heart. You were saved from this eternal damnation, to sit idly by and see others fall away into eternal hellfire without heartfelt words of warning is to bring a stain of blood upon your own head. I do not say this lightly with a sense of self righteousness, as I am of the highest rank in my guilt of this sin. I carry a weight of shame every day in knowing that my fear of offending one in the name of Christ, left a sinful, unrepentant heart adrift from God in their final hours.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that the Lord moves these words into your heart so that you may escape this pain of heart as it's ache is awful. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his early days as a preacher, would often split his Sunday messages into two so as to encourage his congregation to return for the evening service. One Sunday a truly troubled young man came to hear the morning message, yet

Dr Lloyd-Jones had left the climax of the message until the evening service, that being the sharing of the Gospel message. That troubled man never made the evening service as he died that same afternoon. Such was the heartbreak of Lloyd-Jones that he ensured that he never again left the people wanting in hearing the Gospel in case they were to be called to judgement that very hour.

I implore you that whilst this season is one of great joy indeed, remind yourself that Christ was born of flesh two thousand years ago in Bethlehem so that we wretched sinners may be restored to Our Heavenly Father through his eternal sacrifice in the shedding of his pure blood at Calvary. Without this message of hope being given the context of the tragic, hell bound fate of unrepentant man, then the majesty of song of which the angels sang in the skies above Bethlehem those two thousand years ago is lost in the garish fairy lights and poorly wrapped gifts of a worldly Christmas. Without the warning of the terrors of the Lord that are laid up against sinful man, then the glorious light of the Gospel, even when shared in the twinkling lights of the advent season, is rendered dim and unneeded. Such a thought should make every believing heart tremble in fear of failing their Lord and leaving lost souls in their condemnation. Do not let it fall on your own heart this Christmas, give the warning of God's terrors on the sinner, then give the light of the Gospel, that shining star that leads the repentant heart to the very presence of God.

By Jonathan Badger



## A Final Thought

### Luke 2:30 – For mine eyes have seen thy salvation

We are all familiar with the typical nativity scene. A mother joyously cradling her newborn, as her and husband receive the visit and gifts of the three wise men, while the shepherds arrive with their sheep to pay homage. We have met with it on Christmas cards and perhaps among our festive decorations. Our children are likely to become familiar with it at Sunday school. It all looks rather pleasant and quaint, but do we see all in the picture that we should?



Do we see, wrapped in swaddling clothes, as blessed Simeon did, our promised saviour? The fulfilment of the very first bible prophecy (Genesis 3:15) lay there in the manger as an infant. The word that was in the beginning with God was made flesh and had come to dwell among us (John 1:14). This is not merely a nice little picture for a Christmas card; this should make us leap with joy as did John the Baptist whilst still in his mother's womb, upon hearing of the pending arrival of his Lord and saviour (Luke 1:44). Do you, as Simeon, see the promise of salvation in the nativity scene? Do your eyes behold the coming of the lamb of God that was to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29)? Much more than a pleasant little picture; as you next see and consider the nativity scene, let it move you to reverence and worship of the blessed son of God.

By John Sivewright