

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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The Responses To The Lord's Coming

Introduction

As we approach Christmas an individual can easily get caught up in the bustle of crowded streets, stores, tinkling bells, Christmas carols, and fail to consider the Christ Child. I shall possibly never forget a situation which happened on Christmas morning 1956. We had been to see the big Christmas tree at the Belfast City Hall and as we drove toward Mum Jennings home in Belfast, I a child of twelve years of age began to sing as we drove down Ebor Street:

Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Bible say
Mary's boy child, Jesus Christ, was born on Christmas Day.
Hark now hear the angels sing, a king was born today
And man will live for evermore, because of Christmas Day.

Little did I know the full meaning of the words I sang but to me it was such a lovely truth, "Christ was born that man might live forever more". I began my baby steps in the understanding that Christmas brings a message of hope in the world of hopelessness. It shines as a light in a world of darkness and spells peace in a world of turmoil.

When that message was first announced who was it to and what was the reaction?

Those To Whom It Was First Announced

The message of the imminent birth of the Saviour was made to:

- a) Zacharias as he ministered in the temple (Lk. 1:8-17)
- b) Mary, seemingly at home (Lk. 1:26-35)
- c) Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, when she heard the voice of Mary (Lk. 1:41-45)
- d) Joseph, Mary's espoused husband, as he slept (Matt. 1:18)

The declaration that the Lord had been born was given to:

- a) Shepherds as they watched their flock (Lk. 2:8-14)
- b) The wise men from the East (Matt. 2:1-2)
- c) Approximately a month later, when in the temple after the circumcising of the Baby, Simeon and Anna also entered into the wonder of who this baby was. (Lev. 12:2-4)

The Reaction of The Unsaved

The first observation is the reaction of these individuals set in sharp contrast to that of the political world over which Herod ruled. We must never lose sight that the political, religious, financial, and entertainment worlds still have no time or place for Christ. When the Lord was crucified His superscription was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (Jn. 19:20). Hebrew was the religious language, Greek was the cultural language, and Latin was the political language. That superscription cried that the political, the cultural, and the religious world had no time for Christ. Herod sought to destroy the young child (Matt. 2:13), and when he saw his deception had failed he gave the command to slay all the children under two years of age (Matt. 2:16). The world today is no different, they will use Christmas as a means of financial gain, but man will not let Christ reign as King.

The Reaction of Those In Fellowship With God

1) Zacharias

- a) Zacharias's response to his wife having a baby was one of disbelief and being struck dumb, but when the child was born his speech returned and his response was worship and praising God (Lk. 1:68-79).

2) Mary

- a) The response of Mary was a bowing to the purposes of God irrespective of how it made her appear to human eyes. How rich are her words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Lk. 1:38). Then having heard the declaration of Elizabeth she begins that which is commonly called the "Magnificat" (Lk. 1:46-55).

3) Joseph

- a) When Joseph was made aware of the work of God upon Mary, upon rising from his sleep and confident God had spoken to him, immediately he took Mary to be his wife. An interesting fact about Joseph is that there is only the single inspired record of anything he spoke (Matt. 1:25). That which is recorded of him is immediate obedience (Matt. 1:24), he simply obeys.
 - i) In Matt. 2:13-14 the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph again telling him to take the young child and flee into Egypt, and immediately he does it.
 - ii) Again in Matt. 2:19 God speaks to him in a dream and the response is immediate (Matt. 2:21). The key word with Joseph is "Take". "Take unto thee Mary" (Matt. 1:20), "Take the young child" (Matt. 2:13, 20); and with the command immediate obedience.

4) Elizabeth

- a) Elizabeth's response was inexpressible joy and awe (Lk. 1:42-45). There was not a hint of jealousy but confidence in the unfolding purposes of God.

5) The Shepherds

- a) I have no doubt the shepherds were chosen by God and were men of spiritual qualifications. Having found the babe lying in the manger their sheep were a secondary issue. In like manner as the lepers who said: "This day is a day of good tidings" (2 Kgs. 7:9), the shepherds went out and, "made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child" (Lk. 2:17) and returned glorifying and praising God" (Lk. 2:20).

6) The Wise Men From The East

- a) Having been given the ability to understand from the "Star" that the King of Israel had been born, these wise men came from the East (Matt. 2:1). It is of no consequence exactly where they came from, else the Lord would have told us, but what is important is that based on their understanding they came to see the young child. A similar incident happened years later when, "Certain Greeks . . . came therefore to Philip . . . saying, "We would see Jesus" (Jn. 12:20-21). The response of these wise men was threefold. They came, they followed step by step as the way was opened up to them, and seeing the child they worshipped Him.

7) Simeon and Anna

- a) The first observation is the wonder of the providential movings of God on humanity. What a blessing that Anna did not come in first. If we put ourselves in the place of Mary and Joseph how dark his last words would have been: "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul" (Lk. 2:35). Heartache and the wondering of grief would shadow the life. Thankfully, while we do not read of any words Anna spoke to the young parents, we do know her response.

i) Simeon

1. Mary and Joseph had brought the child to the temple for His circumcision, but interestingly, there is nothing of unique importance done at this time. To all outsiders it was just a young couple with their baby boy who was getting circumcised (Lk. 2:21). It was another thirty-three days before they were back again for the purification of Mary (Lk. 2:22) and to present the baby to the Lord. It was an act of dedication as prescribed by the law (Lk. 2:22-23). At the same time sacrifices had to be made, and “he came by the Spirit into the temple” (Lk. 2:27). Having had a revelation from God, when he saw the child there was an immediate recognition this was the Messiah. Then taking the child in his arms, he spoke words which are both comforting as we advance in years and dark for the parents. Concerning the child, what a blessedness was his, he took the child in his arms. It is so easy to visualize, the elderly man with the little baby and wondering parents. This little baby brought peace in the face of approaching death (Lk. 1:29). He recognized this child was not just another baby, but was the One in whom God’s salvation depended and would be secured (Lk. 2:30); a salvation which would be universal, open to all humanity (Lk. 2:32); yet there would be major out-flowing from this baby (Lk. 2:34) and dark days for the mother (Lk. 2:35). It is interesting that Simeon does not say, “A sword shall pierce through the parents souls”, but it is singular, speaking only of that which Mary would experience, an indication that when that time came Mary would be widowed.

ii) Anna

1. The discernment of Anna was very acute for the Holy Spirit goes at great lengths to record her character (Lk. 2:36-37). Just when Simeon was finishing his worshipping and wonderings of the Christ, we read: “She coming in at that instant” (Lk. 2:38). Swiftly to quell the depressing of Mary’s spirit from the last words of Simeon, this godly woman, clearly seeing the baby, began to give thanks unto the LORD, and like the shepherds, began to speak to all those who looked for the redemption in Jerusalem. What a glorious gospel, Christ, the fulfiller of all the Messianic prophecies, the comfort in the face of approaching death, the Saviour of the world has come. Surely, as the wise men did so long ago, it is our privileged place to worship Him.

As we think about Christmas and the joy of giving and receiving, for some it will be a time of sorrow; for the first time a loved one will not be there; others will spend the day in hospice or making arrangements at a funeral home. What can give the slightest beam of light in those situations is the truth that the One who came into the world defeated the power of death, is alive for evermore, and because He lives we shall live also.

For others it may be the first time they have really thought of why He came. They know the story of Christmas but never really saw that He became the sacrifice offered to God to cleanse them from their sins. For such it is the bowing to the Lord and accepting Him as their Lord and Saviour.

... Rowan Jennings



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