

CHRISTMAS DAY 2022
ISAIAH 9:1-7

“IT’S NOT WHAT I EXPECTED, BUT IT’S EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED”

INTRODUCTION: Christmas season has become the busiest time of the year for businesses and many individuals. Holiday shopping, family gatherings, conversations about Santa Claus, and gift exchanges are common with most families, along with some acknowledgment of the birth of Jesus the Christ. If “Jesus is the Reason for the Season,” then why is this time of year often stressful, depressing, and disappointing? Also, how do you respond when someone gives you what you needed, rather than what you wanted?

BACKGROUND: *The Lord has always given gifts to people who did not deserve them.* He also gives the Perfect Gift every time to those who are willing to receive from Him. Our custom of giving gifts on December 25th is a combination of fact, fiction, and fantasy. (See attached handout) Many of our Christmas cards refer to Isaiah 9:6, yet many do not know the history behind the promise. God promised a gift to His people and to the entire world during a very dark season. It was not what they expected, but it was *exactly* what they needed.

I. ANYONE WHO IS IN DARKNESS NEEDS LIGHT TO SEE. THE LORD HIMSELF IS THE PERFECT LIGHT OF LIFE. (Isaiah 9:1-5)

- A. Israel was facing some of the darkest days in her history. The Lord and His Word had been rejected. The people were consulting sources of darkness in search of truth. The results were anger, fear, and frustration. They needed what only the Lord could provide. How He chose to do it was unexpected!
- B. Assyria had been the dominant world power for over 250 years, and the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to suffer when these Northern tribes were invaded by Assyria around 735-732 BC. (2nd Kings 15:29) This geographical area was where Nazareth and Galilee, of the Gentiles, were located. Hardly anyone expected good gifts to come from Galilee! (Isaiah 9:1-4) (John 1:43-46) (John 7:52)
- C. It is always darkest just before the dawn! The people were living in dark times, and certainly our nation and world are in some of its darkest days. We have ignored the light of the world and the Word that gives light! (John 1:1-5)
- D. Some believers continue to trust more in their zodiac signs and psychic networks than they do in the God who knows the end from the beginning. Why?? (Isaiah 8: 18-20) Either we fear Him and trust Him, or live in fear of everything else. (Isaiah 40:26)

II. THE PERFECT GIFT CAME BY SPECIAL DELIVERY, WRAPPED IN PACKAGING THAT HAD NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE! (John 1:1) (John 1:14) (John 8:56-58)

- A. Isaiah uses precise theological terms to describe the Eternal Son of God who was given and the human child who would be born, God wrapped up in the body of Jesus. (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- B. Christ has existed eternally as God the Son. He took on human nature to be born, live a sinless life, die for sinners like us, and conquer death so we can live forever! (1st Timothy 1:15-17)

III. WE WILL SPEND ETERNITY UNWRAPPING ALL THAT WAS IN THE PERFECT GIFT THE LORD HAS GIVEN. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

- A. **Wonderful Counselor**-He would perform miracles and wonders, and provide counsel by making plans and decisions (Colossians 2:3) His name is full of wonder and secrets only He can reveal. (Judges 13:15-18)
- B. **Mighty God**- He possesses all the strength of the Almighty God, able to overcome any and all opposition, including Satan and death itself!
- C. **Everlasting Father**-He is the "father of eternity" because He existed outside of the Creation He would one day bring into existence, and He has no beginning or end. (John 1:1) (Colossians 1:16-17)
- D. **Prince of Peace**-He is the One who can bring wholeness to society, defeat all kings and end all wars. He is our Peace, He made peace between us and God, and He preached peace to those who were at war with God. (Ephesians 2:14-16)
- E. The Lord's reign will never end, and when He does there will finally be peace on earth. He will occupy the throne promised to King David and his descendants, ruling Israel and the world with justice and righteousness. God's own power and zeal guarantees this future will become reality.

THE PEOPLE LIVING IN DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT, YET MOST STILL LIVE IN THE DARK. (Matthew 4:16) THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD HAS COME, (John 8:12) AND HE WILL BE COMING BACK SOON. ARE YOU LOOKING FOR HIM MORE THAN THIS WORLD LOOKS FORWARD TO CHRISTMAS DAY?

***Dr. Ronald J. Morrison
December 25, 2022***

CHRISTMAS: FACT, FICTION, OR FANTASY

The world-wide celebrations of Christmas on December 25th, the day Christians celebrate the birth (Incarnation) of Jesus, originally had nothing to do with Jesus. On this date, pagans celebrated Saturn, the supposed god of the unconquered sun. It was a day of feasting, drinking, and partying. In 354 AD, Pope Liberius changed it to a day of worship for the Unconquered Son of God, calling it a Mass for Christ (Christmas)

Tradition says; Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the Temple on the Day of Atonement, in the Fall, on September 25th. Mary visited Elizabeth six months later (March 25th) then gave birth to Jesus nine months later (December 25th).

Nicholas was born in 280 AD to elderly wealthy parents in Patara (Asia Minor; Turkey). Having been unable to previously bear children, like Abraham and Sarah, they believed Nicholas to be a gift from God. Nicholas was a worshipper of the Lord Jesus Christ, became a bishop, and was very generous with the wealth his parents left him. Tradition says he secretly threw bags of gold through the window of a man who was about to lose his daughters to slavery over unpaid debts, and one bag supposedly landed in a stocking hung by the fireplace. Upon discovery, Nicholas asked that his identity not be revealed. This story led to a tradition of secret gift giving on the night of Nicholas' death, which happened in December of 343 AD.

The Catholic Church eventually gave him the name Saint Nicholas. His name spread around the world. His name was pronounced in different languages, giving us pronunciations like Saint Niklaus, SinterKlass, and eventually Santa Claus in English. In our culture, Santa Claus has been given attributes that only belong to the Lord, such as Omniscience!

The Western Church celebrated December 25th as the holiest day. In Eastern Europe the Church observed January 6th as the supposed day of Jesus's baptism and date of the visit of the wise men. Since no consensus could be reached about which dates to should be celebrated, eventually we wound up with the twelve days of Christmas being honored.

The Puritans refused to celebrate Christmas, but the Dutch reformers did.

During the Reformation, around 1517 AD, Martin Luther tried to get all acknowledgments of saints to stop, including Saint Nicholas, so Christ alone would be worshipped. Many people were caught up in gift giving around the celebration, so an attempt to focus people's thoughts on the Christ Child was made. Christ Child in German is Kris Kindl, which eventually became Kris Kringle in our day.

The lights on trees traces back to the Feast of Hanukkah and Feast of Lights from the time when the Jews drove out the wicked Syrian King named Antiochus Epiphanes. Martin Luther is credited with setting up a tree with lights and candles to commemorate Christ as the light of the world as he reflected all the stars in the sky, connecting it with the stars in Bethlehem that night. (See Jeremiah 10:1-5 for why some believers will not use a lighted Christmas tree.)

The first letter for Christ in Greek is "X" which is pronounced "Chi." Over time, this X came to stand for the Cross of Christ.

Legends grew over time to say that Saint Nicholas would come back once a year as a mini-prejudgment day, checking on whether or not children were being good or bad. Supposedly, the angels kept the books recording the acts of others, and these angels eventually became known as the elves. Nicholas would return with reindeer in countries that did not have horses. The New Jerusalem eventually was substituted by the North Pole.

FACT, FICTION, AND FANTASY HAVE ALL BEEN MERGED TOGETHER FOR THE EVENTS OF DECEMBER 25TH. HOWEVER, WE HONOR THE WORD BECOMING FLESH LIKE US, SO WE COULD BECOME LIKE HIM!

*Dr. Ronald J. Morrison
December 25, 2022*