

**December 24, 2023**

**An Out of this World Christmas: Week 4- Christmas Eve**

God LEFT His world, and came into OURS!

When you think about it, it's really unbelievable!

I. And maybe the more unbelievable part of the story is NOT that He came, but HOW he came!

He left the Splendor of Heaven with... Myriads of Angels declare praise around the throne both day and night, the foundation of Heaven is laid with precious stones, and the streets are made of pure gold, transparent as glass!

And then showed up in our world to be born in a barn, wrapped in strips of cloth, and laid in a feeding trough.

You have to admit, it's truly unbelievable! In one divine moment, there was a divine exhale-followed by a tiny breath, the King of the Universe stepped away from the Glory of Heaven, and stepped into the Gutter of Earth. WHY come this way?

To show us He is Approachable, Accessible, and Available! Which is great news to every one of us! No palace gates, no bars on the windows, no posse of bodyguards preventing our approach. He endured Our worst, to give us His best!

II. And can we talk about the ANNOUNCEMENT?!

As strange as it may sound, this great God of the Universe showed up almost totally unannounced! Who's ever heard of a King entering like that?

But when the Angels of Heaven filled the skies, it was to Shepherds that they declared: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the LORD.

With this message, along with their declaration to Zechariah, to Mary and Joseph, the Angels give us this assurance.

- FEAR NOT!
- We bring you good news that will cause Great Joy for ALL the people.
- And the reason for this Joy is because the LORD has come!

God knew exactly what we needed:

- If our greatest need was Information, God would have sent an Educator.
- If our greatest need was Technology, God would have sent us a Scientist.
- If our greatest need was Money, God would have sent us an Economist.
- But since our greatest need is Salvation, God sent us a Savior!

### III. The Offer of Heaven

You would think if "GOD" was willing to go through all of this, to show up in the way He did, to be announced as the Savior of the World, it would seem improbable that we have any choice in the matter!

How many had a Mom that spent the whole day cooking while we were out with our friends, and when we came home we said, "Yeah, I'm not that hungry, thanks!" I don't know about you, but my mom would have said, "After everything I went through to make this meal, you're going to eat every bit of it!"

But God loves us enough to make us an Offer, with a right of Refusal. It sounds crazy, but that's the crux of a relationship! We're not forced, we're Invited!

Christmas is an Invitation, an Offer. Usually when we receive a Formal Invitation, it's something to behold!

There are multiple envelopes, gold foil paper, fancy script, glitter and confetti falling out... but the point of the Invitation is NOT THE WRAPPING, it's the Response!

Christmas isn't a special service, it's not religion, it's not pressure to believe something or be something... It's the Introduction to an Invitation that moves us to a Personal Response!

The Offer isn't to Force you into Anything, it's the Opportunity to receive Everything!

There are Invitations being sent every day, around the world, throughout the course of history by Kings, Princes, Presidents, CEO's, Billionaires and I've never received ANY of them, and my guess is, neither have you.

But CHRISTMAS makes me realize, we did get an Invitation, from not just any king, but THE KING!

Today, I bring you good news that will cause great joy for ALL the people. The Greatest Exchange GIFT ever!

*2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)*

God made HIM who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in HIM we might become the righteousness of God.

IV. The Good News to all of us today is He didn't come ABOVE us with no way to relate. Not as a pampered, privileged ruler because we live in a world of double standards, right?

A rich kid gets into trouble, and somehow gets out of it, and we know if it happened to us we'd be going to jail!

Instead of coming to earth as a pampered, privileged ruler, Jesus showed up BELOW us, showing us everyone gets the same great invitation!

An Invitation to COME! An opportunity to be changed. An opportunity to have Peace. The opportunity of Everlasting Joy!

Our secular holiday surrounds itself with Santa coming with gifts. In fact we tell our children, if you're not good, or you don't go to bed, Santa won't Come! But in the Biblical Story, just the opposite is true. Jesus IS the GIFT!

We just have to Respond to the Invitation and accept the Gift wherever you are! The Gift came simply wrapped, but He brings the power of the King of the Universe!

In your struggles, in your challenge to believe, in your hurt and pain, in your brokenness, in your thought that there has to be MORE, Christmas invites us to Come let us Adore Him!

Here's what I want to pray over you today:

- 1.) God did the Unbelievable. to give you an Opportunity.
- 2.) God orchestrated the Extraordinary. and sent YOU the Invitation.
- 3.) That God didn't just show up a long time ago. He's here TODAY bringing the Gift of Christmas into your life!