THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Luke 2:8-14

(8) And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
(9) And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
(10) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
(11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
(12) And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
(13) And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
(14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Christmas is a special time of the year. It means different things to different people. To the child it is a time to receive gifts. Some look forward to the days off with pay. The merchant sees it as a time to make money. Others like the times of wordly celebration. Christmas is so highly commercialized, you can almost dread it because of the money you will spend in addition to your indebtedness. You almost have to dig and search for the true meaning of Christmas.

I am thankful that we do observe Christmas time. A lot of customs and traditions concerning Christmas are wordly and unscriptural. However, the birth and purpose of Jesus is proclaimed in song, carols, nativity scenes, and programs nationally and even worldwide.

As we read Matt. 2:1-11 and Luke 2:8-34, we find the true meaning of Christmas.

I. BASIC FACTS CONCERNING JESUS' BIRTH
A. The Angel announced His birth.
B. The shepherds glorified and praised God.
C. The wise men sought Him and gave gifts in worship.
D. Simeon blessed God for seeing his salvation.

II. PARALLEL FACTS CONCERNING JESUS' BIRTH
A. As the angels announced His birth, so should we announce His birth.

Charles Swilling

The prophet Isaiah prophesied, "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isa. 7:14

The blessed Angel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary, "...The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee", Luke 1:35

Mary was a virgin and questioned how she could bear a child. Luke 1:34

The Angel announced to Joseph that Mary was carrying a child conceived by the Holy Ghost. Matthew 1:20

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Both Mary and Joseph were of the kingly line giving Jesus a double right to the throne of David. Isaiah spoke of the kingship and government of the virgin born son of God. Isa. 9:6 The Angel told Mary, “He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and he shall reign forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke 1:32, 33

The Heavenly messenger told the lowly shepherds, “Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Luke 2:10 The proclamation of the Redeemer, Saviour, and Deliverer from sin was accomplished by a multitude of Heavenly Host praising God.

God help us to ever tell the blessed story of the Son of God foreseeing Heaven and all of its glory to be born a babe in the manger. Jesus prayed, “And now, 0 Father, glorify thou me with thine ownself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” John 17:4 He was God personified or manifested in flesh. “And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14 God has spoken unto us in these last days by His precious son. “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds,” Heb. 1:2

B. AS THE SHEPHERDS GLO- RIFIED AND PRAISED GOD SO WE SHOULD GLORIFY AND PRAISE GOD.

As the shepherds watched their sheep, the Angel appeared unto them with the glorious news about the birth of the Saviour. An Angel of Heaven announced the birth of the Holy child, Jesus. The glory of the Lord shone round about. God’s glory illuminated the night and dispelled or drove the darkness away.

The glory of the Lord often filled the Tabernacle. Numbers 16:19 The Lord’s glory illuminated Moses’ skin as he received the Law. Exodus 34:30 This could have been the light that shone round about Saul on the Damascus road. Acts 9:3 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” John 8:12 John the Revelator wrote, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Revelation 21:23

Any where the message of the Redeemer is proclaimed, light shines round about. The blessed message of the glorious birth of our precious Saviour always illuminates the hearts and minds of men. Paul writes, “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” II Tim. 1:10 Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.” II Cor. 4:4

The shepherds made known abroad the things told them about the child. They zealously heralded the news of the Saviour. They returned from seeing the child glorifying and praising God. The message of the Angel had been confirmed. The message was a living reality in the hearts of the shepherds. They were lowly men of a humble trade, but they were privileged to be visited by the Heavenly Host.

As we think of Jesus’ birth, life, and death, we should joyfully and zealously glorify God. Paul wrote, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” II Cor. 9:15 The great gift and giver is revealed in the golden text of the Bible. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

The poet wrote, “How can my praises find end.”

C. AS THE WISE MEN SOUGHT JESUS, SO WISE MEN SEEK HIM TODAY.

Wise men came from the East seeking the King of the Jews. Matt. 2:2 They followed His star to Jerusalem. They followed the star with rejoicing and exceeding great joy until it led them to the young child. Matt. 2:9, 10 These men had the ability to use knowledge. They were men of understanding and perception.

The wise men fell down and worshipped Jesus. They presented Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matt. 2:11 After they worshipped Jesus, and offered their gifts to Him, they returned to their own country. Matt. 2:12

Wise men are still seeking Jesus today. Our Lord said any man who hears His words and does them is a wise man. Matt. 7:24 Men are wise to listen and obey because they are building their foundation upon the rock of ages. Paul writes, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” I Cor 3:11 A life built upon the rock of ages will stand the test of time and the fires of judgement.

Solomon wrote, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...” Prov. 1:7 David wrote, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: A good understanding have all they that do His commandments: His praises endureth forever.” Psa. 111:10

All of the mysterious questions about life and death are answered in Jesus and His precious word. Psa. 119:105

We ought to worship and give gifts unto Jesus just as the wise men did. He is due worship and praise. We could heartily make the words of Rev. 4:11 our very own. “Thou
art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: For Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Praise and worship is to be given to Him who has redeemed us to God by His own blood. Rev. 5:9,10 Every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2:10,11 We ought also to give gifts unto our Saviour. He is worthy of all of our giving. Give Him your soul, your life, your possessions, your family, your talent, your influence. Give all upon the altar of sacrifice. Rom. 12:1 Lose your life for the sake of Jesus and the gospel and you will save it. Mark 8:34-38

D. AS SIMON BLESSED GOD FOR SEEING HIS SALVATION, SO WE SHOULD BLESS GOD FOR SEEING OUR SALVATION.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

THREE KEYS TO FELLOWSHIP

Charles Swilling

Text: II Cor. 6:14-17

Intro. Fellowship means agreement. It has been defined as two fellows in a ship. There are vital keys to having fellowship with our fellow Christians. Fellowship with others saved by the wonderful grace of God is a daily need in the life of the redeemed.

I. THE KEY TO FELLOWSHIP IS LOVE.
   A. The example. John 8:12
   B. The command to love. John 13:34,35
      Rom. 13:8
   C. The covering of love. Prov. 10:12
   D. The characteristics of love. I Cor. 13:1-8

II. THE KEY TO FELLOWSHIP IS LIGHT.
   A. The example. John 8:12
   B. The enlightenment. I John 1:7
   C. The election. I Thess. 5:5
   D. The expectation. Matt. 5:16
   E. The exaltation. I Cor. 10:31

III. THE KEY TO FELLOWSHIP IS LONGING.
   A. Longing for the Prince. Phil.3:10

   Simeon, a just and devout man, waited for the consolation of Israel. Luke 2:25,26 He was given the knowledge that he would see Jesus before his death. The parents of Jesus brought Him to the temple to obey the custom of the Law. Luke 2:27 Simeon saw the child, took Him in his arms and blessed God. Simeon said, "For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Luke 2:30 He realized the child Jesus was the promised Messiah.

   Blessed and happy is the person who sees and experiences the salvation of Eternal Almighty, God. Jesus was born to save people from their sins "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: For He shall save His people from their sins." Matt. 1:21 He is Saviour.

   When you are saved by God's grace and you are fully persuaded you belong to the Lord, death holds no fear for you. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1:21 The grave gains no victory when the saved dies. We are victorious in Jesus, even over death. I Cor. 15:5-7

   The true meaning and reality of Christmas should set our hearts afire to praise and thank God every day of every year for His precious Son who was willing to leave the portals of glory, to live and die for man, for the purpose of opening the way for all men to be saved. You can be saved by repenting of your sins and receiving Jesus as your personal Saviour. Luke 13:3; John 3:16,33.

B. Longing for peace. Rom. 12:18;
   I Tim. 2:2; II Cor. 13:11; Col.3:15

C. Longing for prosperity (spiritual fulfillment) Josh. 1:8; I Pet. 2:2

D. Longing for patience. Rom. 5:3,4
   Col. 1:11; Luke 21:19; James 1:3

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OBTAINING VICTORY

TEXT: Joshua 6:1-27

The area of our study in this book of the Bible deals with God's people appropriating the blessings that are available to us. Many of God's people are dieting on cheese and crackers instead of enjoying the steak fillets that are available to us in the Lord. Many are letting the philosophies and thinking of the world rob them of what is theirs in Christ. We also allow the diabolical characteristic of pride bind us in a web of defeat and despair.

As we develop this lesson we'll notice the following:

I. The Perception which needs to be understood
II. The Passage which unveils these truths to us.
III. The Profitable truths which unfold to us new dimensions in our Christian life.

I. THE PERCEPTION WHICH NEEDS TO BE UNDERSTOOD.

In our last lesson we noticed a most pre-eminent truth being that the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who gives the orders. He is the one we are to listen to. We hear so much talk today, even in the religious world, which surely must nauseate the Lord. It seems like many are asking different ones about their opinions and concerning what they think. It does not matter what we think! That which gets the job done is "Thus saith the Lord".

If we'll make a commitment to listen to and obey the Lord, then we'll begin to experience real victory in our lives. It may be well to point out here that this real victory must begin within the believer. God must be allowed to do His work within us before the evidences of His mighty power can be seen by others in our lives.

We must also perceive another great truth if we are going to understand the experiences that we'll encounter once we make this commitment to allow the Lord to be our captain and commander.

Before there can be victory there must be a conflict. This reality was unknown to me for many years and because I was not aware of what was going on in my experiences, I was left in a state of bewilderment and despair. It seemed to me that in my Christian experience that everyday I dedicated my life to the Lord I expected victory immediately. This of course did not happen, but rather, conflict came instead. At this point is when I fell into the pit of despair. Most of the time, when this happens, we back up and refuse to press onward, thus we never experience the victory. Perhaps at this point, we should insert Gal. 6:9. "And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap (or experience victory), if we faint not." We miss many blessings and victories in our lives because we faint! Remember any time there is Divine operation, there will be satanic opposition. Anytime we make a commitment to really let the Lord have our lives, the devil will cause us to encounter a great conflict. The perception needs to be understood or we'll fail and live in defeat.

In the text you'll notice that the conflict that Israel faced was Jericho. These Jericho's are anything in our lives that keep us from being the man and woman that we long to be for the Lord. It's that which blocks our path to the full blessings of God.

Now let us notice how this city was captured. It was captured by faith. Notice Hebs. 11:30. What is faith? Notice Hebs. 11:1. The importance of faith is declared in Hebs. 11:6. How is faith acquired? Notice Rom. 10:17. Let's try to put all of this together. We have been saved by grace through faith. (Eph. 2:8-9) After we're saved we are to walk by faith. (Col. 2:6 & Gal. 2:20). Faith therefore is a positive reaction to the word of God. Before we can exemplify faith, the Lord must speak. He speaks to us through His word. When we allow the Lord to speak to us through His word and then become obedient we are exemplifying faith and this is the element that helps us to overcome and be victorious. (1 John 5:4) It's not just what we've done, but rather what we allow Him to do through us.

So, in reality, the difficulties in the Christian life are for the purpose of teaching us the sufficiency of our Lord. We can't - but He can! The only way for faith to be stabilized and strengthened is for it to be tested. Let Psalms 37:1-7 become a precious part of your spiritual diet.

II. THE PASSAGE WHICH UNVEILS THESE TRUTHS TO US.

In the first place, we see where the DELIVERANCE is announced. Notice Joshua 6:1-2. The Lord told him he had the victory, even before it was experienced. This came as a result of communication with the Lord. Along with this passage, also notice Jeremiah 33:3 "Call unto me and I will show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." You can see there the great necessity of Bible study and prayer if we desire victory in our lives.

In the second place, we notice that the DIRECTIONS are given. Notice Joshua 6:3-5. He told him exactly what to do. It may be well here to point out that at times the way of the Lord may not seem logical to our way of thinking, but it will work because He says it.

Notice now, in the third place, that DEVIATION is forbidden. This is seen in Joshua 6:6-9. They were to do exactly what He said.

In the fourth place we see...
where the DEMAND is made. Notice Joshua 6:10.

Then, in Joshua 6:11-21 you see the DELIBERATE action which is taken. They deliberately did exactly what they were told. This is hard for us so much of the time. We need to learn how to take orders if we expect to be successful.

Finally we see where the DIVINE promise was kept in Joshua 6:22-27. Because they did exactly what they were told they found out that the Lord can do what he has promised. This is a great thrill that can be experienced by God’s children. Instead of us being so preoccupied with calculating what “we’re doing”, why don’t we start watching what He is able to do in us, for us, through us, and with us.

III. THE PROFITABLE TRUTH WHICH UNFOLDS TO US NEW DIMENSIONS IN OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE.

DUTY OF THE

HUSBAND

Johnny Williams

TEXT: Col. 3:19; Eph. 5:25-33
INTRO: What this country needs is more real men that are leaders at home as well as at the office. Being a husband carries some responsibilities clearly outlined in God’s Word. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WIFE ARE DEPENDANT ON THE HUSBAND FULFILLING HIS. THE SECRET OF HAVING A “GOOD WIFE” IS FIRST BEING A “GOOD HUSBAND”.

I. THE COMMAND OF LOVE – “Husbands love your wives”

A. The Matter of Love

1. The literal Greek rendering of Col. 3:19 says: “you husbands, keep continually loving your wives, and stop being bitter toward them.”
2. Love does not do what it feels. It does what is right.
3. The key to love is dying to self. I Cor. 13
4. Love is not bitter. The Greek word translated “bitter” in Col. 3:19 is better translated “exaspe-

rate” or “irritate”. In other words, we are not to irritate our wives if we really love them, at least not intentionally.

B. The Manner of Love - Four attitudes each husband should have are these:

1. CONSIDERATION - being understanding, sensitive to her needs.
2. CHIVALRY - She should be both wife and sweetheart.
3. COMMUNICATION - Talk to each other. She is not a possession like your car, she is a person.
4. Communion - Fellowship together. Whatever it takes make time to be with your wife. A healthy relationship has to be cultivated.

C. The Motivation of Love

1. Real love for her as a person. Not just lust.
2. Treating her as Part of your own body. Eph. 5:28,31
3. Understanding the Love of God for us. Eph. 5:25

II. THE COMMITMENT OF LEADERSHIP

Titus 2:6-8

A. Husbands are to lead out in physical things

1. Sobriety-Seriousness v. 6
2. In Sincerity. v. 7a
3. In Sound Speech. v. 8

B. Husbands are to lead out in Spiritual things.

1. Bible teachings
I BELIEVE

GOD!

D.B. Wright

TEXT: Acts 27:20-29

INTRO:
A. Paul is not in the midst of Amen and applause when he said, "I believe God!"
B. He had not just returned from a revival atmosphere when he uttered these words.
C. He had not just been released from prison, from a fiery furnace, nor from a lion's den.
D. He was not among well-wishing friends and loved ones!
E. He was in the midst of 276 unsaved sailors and prisoners on board a ship in the midst of storm where the ship had suffered much loss and they had seen neither sun nor moon for many days.
1. Paul's declaration of faith was not in "financial security," "freedom to chart his own course" or "personal success or achievement."
2. His was an expression of faith in God.
3. Like the man of patience, Job, he believed God when there was nothing but faith to cling to. Job 13:15a, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him;"
4. Paul's faith was not in the wisdom, ability, or good-will of the sailors. His faith was anchored in Jehovah God.

I. I BELIEVE IN THE PERSON OF GOD.
A. Genesis 1:1
B. John 1:1-3
C. Psalm 19:1
D. I believe in God, the great and eternal "I AM."
   1. Exodus 3:14
   2. John 8:57,58
E. John 1:18
   1. I have not seen electricity but I know there is electricity.
   2. I have not seen God but He can be felt and heard.
      a. Acts 17:27
      b. I Kings 19:11-12
      c. Romans 1:20

II. I BELIEVE IN HIS PRESENCE.
A. Psalm 46:1
B. Psalm 139:5-11
C. Matt. 5:34-35
D. God is not always revealed in the spectacular, but He is always there.
   1. Psalm 23:4

2. He appeared to Elijah under a tree at the mouth of a cave in a still small voice, 1 Kings 19.
3. He saw Noah through the flood.
4. He saw Jonah safely to land.
5. A very I enjoy preaching is "Where the Lord is With Us":
   a. In our defense of the faith
   b. In danger seen and unseen
   c. In dungeons
   d. In moments of depression and frustrations
   e. In the dark side of life
   f. In the valley of shadows
   g. Yes, and in death.

III. I BELIEVE IN GOD'S POWER.
A. Genesis 17:1
B. Psalm 62:11
C. When God speaks things happen.
   1. The creation was spoken into being.
   2. The walls of Jericho crumbled
   3. The earth opened to swallow those who opposed God's leader.
   4. The earth trembled.
   5. The dead lived.
   6. Hearts were opened.

IV. I BELIEVE GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION.
A. Acts 20:20,21
B. Romans 10:8-10
C. John 6:40
D. Yes, I believe Romans 5:8.

V. I BELIEVE THE GREAT PURPOSE OF GOD IN CHRISTIANS.
A. Isaiah 43:7
B. I Cor. 6:19-20
C. I Cor. 10:31

VI. I BELIEVE IN THE PROMISES OF GOD.
A. John 10:28,29
B. John 14:1-3
C. John 11:25,26
D. Acts 1:11
E. I Cor. 15:25,26
F. I believe His promise to Israel, Gen. 12
G. I believe His promise to His church, Matt. 16
H. I believe Matt. 6:33; Psalm 37:25.
I. I believe Phil. 4:19.
J. I believe II Cor. 9:8.

VII. I BELIEVE IN GOD'S SPIRITUAL PROVISIONS.
A. Grace sufficient. II Cor. 12:9; Rom. 5:20.
B. Abundant mercy. Isaiah 55:7
C. Mercy to save. Titus 3:5
D. Love unmerited. John 3:16

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III. HONOR THE WORD OF GOD
A. A Christian home can't be built without the reading and studying of the Word of God. Deut. 6:7-9, II Tim. 2:15
B. The Word of God tells us we need the following in our homes:
   1. Love- Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:4
   2. Respect- Ephesians 6:2
   3. Submission- Ephesians 5:22
   4. Discipline- Eph. 6:1; Prov. 29:15
   5. Prayer- James 5:16 Prayer is the key to every need. Prayer is the cord that binds together.

Conclusion: May God help us to build homes which glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

WARMING OUR HEARTS

TEXT: 24:13-35

INTRO:
Perhaps the most needful commodity among Christians is the need to have warm hearts. This is evident in the lives of many who do not attend church, support the work, or who are just plain ornery and their Christian lives are a turmoil and a drudgery.

I. WHY DO CHRISTIANS NEED TO HAVE THEIR HEARTS WARMED?
A. Because of indifference. If a Christian does not have a warm heart, he must have another kind and another kind is usually an indication of indifference. Rev. 3:14-22.
   1. They could not be at fault for not understanding.
   2. Yet the glorious events could not have happened had it not been for the disappointments.
B. Because of unbelief in things we understand. v. 25.
   1. You understand the advantages of a faithful life.
   2. You do understand the promises to faithful stewards.
   3. When you don't respond to things you understand, it is because of a heart that needs warming.
C. Because of the fact that we are weak:
   1. Like the disciples in the garden of Gesthemene.
   2. Or like Peter three days before.

II. HOW DO WE GET OUR HEARTS WARMED?
A. By talking about Jesus and what he has done for us.
   1. People have no trouble talking about fishing etc.
   2. If they were as anxious to talk about Him...
III. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HEARTS ARE WARMED?
A. A different outlook on life.
B. Appreciation for our brethren
C. We are a blessing to others.

IV. HAS YOUR HEART BEEN WARMED THIS MORNING?
If not, you may need to be saved.

Merry Christmas

The Grace M.B.C. and the staff of S.O.T.W. want to wish you and yours the very best during the holiday season. May the love of our precious Lord and His good will towards all men illuminate your heart.

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