

# Front Page - 2019 12

## Christmas Thoughts

### Introduction

As we look around the world this Christmas and reflect on the past year, we wonder “What lies ahead”, will there be another Christmas?”. This is due to at least three reasons:

- a) For many there is a dark shadow across this Christmas Season. For some it is the loss of a spouse or a child and this is the first Christmas without the individual so deeply loved. Even if being amongst friends, the mind reflects on the last Christmas when they were all together. It just does not seem right that other folks should be happy as they scurry from store to store getting that someone deeply loved that special gift. There is an emptiness, a loss, a part of one missing, an aching heart, a loneliness that lies deep where no one sees.
- b) Then we look around the world and watch the political tremors of the earth’s politicians, the coups and attempted coups, the tornados, the hurricanes and suchlike. The increase in mind and life destroying drugs, the suicide rate and violence among men. Human life means nothing when an unborn baby is reduced to a group of cells which are used for profit. Barbarianism dominates the greatest creation of God, but should we be surprised? What does the Bible teach? Was the world into which the Lord was born a delightful scene of pastoral bliss, where serenity ruled in every sphere, where quietness and peace rested in every heart?
- c) The third thing that depresses and sheds a dark shadow is the emptiness of life, especially when one is striving for that which appears to satisfy but still leaves one empty. In the ancient world Solomon tried the fine arts, studying horticulture and every philosophy that could be thought of and found it left him empty.

So many can fit into one of these categories and in the darkness of the hour question, sometimes in their own heart and sometimes openly, “ How can people be so happy when there is so much to cause grief?” The answer is at least twofold:

- a) Some because they are excited due to a new arrival, getting together with family, and just the spirit of happiness in the people in general. It is called the Christmas spirit.
- b) Others because it reminds them of what the story of Jesus’ birth means to them personally.

### The Birth of Our Lord

When I think of the events surrounding the Lord’s condescension and incarnation and the virgin conception of the Lord, there comes into focus the following:

- a) God is the communicating God, and there is such a thing as divine revelation.
- b) God is not curtailed by the normal or natural way of doing things.
- c) God is sovereign in His overruling.
- d) God is working out a bigger plan than the life of the individual.
- e) God is supreme in His attributes.

### God is the communicating God, and there is such a truth as divine revelation

One of the questions often queried is, “Is there such a thing as divine revelation?” To prove such is the case one only needs to read the Old Testament prophecies, or better, “God’s promises” concerning the coming of the Lord into this world.

- a) “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)
- b) “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” (Mic. 5:2)
- c) “There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.” (Num. 24:17)
- d) “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of

## Front Page - 2019 12

### Christmas Thoughts

Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa. 9:6-7). Add to this the angel’s words to Mary and Joseph:

- i) To Mary: “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (Lk. 1:30, 31).
- ii) To Joseph: The angel said, “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” (Matt. 2:13).

#### **God is not curtailed by the normal or natural way of doing things.**

Throughout humanity’s history God has done some miraculous things regarding the conception of a baby. The natural way is by the joining of male and female and to replenish the earth as God commanded (Gen. 1:28). But, when dealing with the God with whom “all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26), and of whom the question was asked, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (Gen. 18:14), God is not restricted to “the normal”. One has only to read the scriptures and observe that God created Adam, and in doing so He made a man without a woman, (Gen. 1:27). He made a woman (Eve) without intimacy with a man (Gen. 2:22); in Isaac He caused Sarah to conceive when she and Abraham were both physically past age (Gen. 21:2); in Rachel (Gen. 29:31, compare ch. 30:22) and Hannah he caused them to give birth when they were both barren (1 Sam. 1:5; compare verse 20). Since God can raise life from dead parents, can He not cause a virgin to conceive and as such give birth to a baby? Adam did not know his wife until after the baby was born. We read the wonder of the conception and the words to Joseph, “for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 1:20).

We have the God who can do the impossible and no matter how dark my present hour is, God can bring light, hope and joy again. Many years ago in one of my darkest hours I heard a lady sing a most wonderful hymn:

You may be down and feel like God has somehow forgotten  
That you are faced with circumstances you can't get through,  
But now it seems that there's no way out, and you're going under  
God's proven time and time again, He'll take care of you.  
He'll do it again, He'll do it again  
If you'll just take a look at where you are now and where you've been  
Well hasn't He always come through for you?  
He's the same now as then, you may not know how  
You may not know when, but He'll do it again.

Thank God He is not restricted to the normal way of doing things.

#### **God is sovereign in His overruling**

A decree was given, and notice the wording of Dr. Luke, a man who had to be precise in his profession. “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria)” (Lk. 2:1, 2). The decree was made but not executed for some years. It is my understanding that a precise duration cannot be made, but there was a time difference. Why was there a duration from when the decree was made and actually executed? Simply because God had appointed a time for the birth of the Lord. Paul wrote, “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son” (Gal. 4:4). The coming of the Lord into the world was not too early or a little bit early in God’s timetable, but precisely perfect.

- a) When the baby was born and brought into the temple it just so happened that, “And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon . . . . And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and

## Front Page - 2019 12

### Christmas Thoughts

when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law” (Lk. 2:25-27). God was controlling when Joseph and Mary came, and when Simeon came.

#### **God is working out a bigger plan than the life of the individual**

One can feel quite sorry for Mary, especially any woman who has been or is pregnant and about to have a baby. It was, humanly speaking, all wrong. The wrong time to have to travel, the wrong time for the decree to be enacted, and the wrong time for the conception. I cannot imagine how she felt starting out on that journey of approximately 175 kilometers from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Sitting on a donkey (which they may have had) could not have been a smooth journey, yet this was God’s timing and it had to be this way for the Baby had to be born in Bethlehem. I am sure had they only been able to see that God calling the children of Israel out of Egypt was a shadow of this journey they were taking, it was necessary to show how the religious political world was against God and His anointed. Furthermore, God was showing that what He had promised in prophecy He could and would fulfill.

#### **God is supreme in His attributes**

When we muse deeply on the condescension of the Lord, it is impossible to fail to see the fullness of His love and the immeasurableness of the words, “Who gave Himself” (Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:25; 1 Tim. 2:6). No words in English or any other language, or blending of every tongue under the sun through every age, could describe the humbling of the Lord. He left the splendor of glory to come into the world to be born in a manger; to come unto His own and be rejected; to know before He ever came the purpose for which He was coming; the intensity of satanic hatred that would be spewed out on Him; the dreadfulness of being God forsaken when bearing my sins curse; for it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13). Well may we sing:

On such love my soul still ponder, love so great so full so free,  
Say while lost in holy wonder, “Why O Lord such love to me?”

As we approach this Christmas may our hearts be drawn closer to the One who left so much to give so much and in the words and as we look upon the Baby and then at Calvary, reconsider the modified words of Winston Churchill, “Never in the history of human conflict is so much owned by so many as to this one Blessed man”.

.. . . *Rowan Jennings*