

The Gift That Keeps on Giving



2,000 years ago God gave us the gift of His son, Jesus Christ. The gift of the Christ child was intended to be shared by Mary and Joseph with mankind everywhere and for all time. His birth, life, teachings and resurrection are as much as us today as for those who lived the earth in the time of His birth.

Tonight, on Christmas Eve, we will hear the story of his birth through the scriptures. We will be reminded of the miraculous conception. We will hear about the Magi who followed the star to the lowly barn, which King Jesus shared with the stable animals. But why is this story relevant for us *today*? It reveals that the story of Jesus' birth is

about the *future* of mankind.

There are a number of reasons why we can believe the surreal biblical account of Jesus' birth:

- It is a story that was **foretold**: 700 years prior to the birth of Jesus the prophet Isaiah foretold God's plan. Isaiah proclaimed that the Messiah would be born to a virgin, would come from the royal lineage of David, would suffer, executed and resurrected. God carried out everything that He said He would do. He has a plan for us, too. (Amos 3:7).
- It is a story with substantial **support**: Eye witness accounts recorded in the four Gospels verify Jesus' life and ministry. There is substantial manuscript evidence that God fulfilled prophecies and that Jesus is the son of God. Modern day archeologists are continually finding evidence to support the stories in the Bible.
- The birth of Jesus Christ is a story that has **endured the test of time**. It is chronicled in the most read book of all time, the Bible. (read Proverbs 30:5).

So, what are the key storylines of Jesus' birth?

- It is a story of **hope**. Because of Him and what He would do for us, we have hope for forgiveness, salvation and eternal **joy**. (Revelation 21:4)
- It is story of **survival**. Jesus survived a jealous Herod, who murdered other males under the age of two, because Herod was afraid. God saw to it that Jesus would not only survive but change the world. (Psalm 34:4)
- It is a story about creating a **better way of life**. It is a lifestyle dramatically different than the corruption and oppression of its time and our time. (John 8:12)
- It is a story of **peace and good will**. "Peace on earth" and "good will towards men" are more than words we hear on Christmas Eve. They are a foundation of the faith. (Luke 2:14). Isaiah 9:6 clearly tells us that Jesus in the Prince of Peace for our life.
- It is a story about **family**. Jesus grew up in a loving, obedient, spirit-led family. Yet, Jesus would provide direct access to the family of God for us all. Christmas is the most special family time of the year. As we gather together with our families let us remember that God's family is as large as the number of believers. (Exodus 20:12)
- It is a story of **humility**. Jesus was born in the most humble settings and through his entire life he claimed to be a servant. He came not to be served but to serve. (Matthew 20:28)
- Most of all, it is a story about **Love**. God the Father loved us so much He was willing to send His only son into the world to die for us. Because of His victory over death we can have salvation. (John 3:16).

The Advent wreath we light each week of preparation has candles representing **Hope, Love, Joy and Peace**, with the Christ candle in the center. The candles are arranged in a circle, which represents the Victory that Jesus will have for our life. The Christmas story is the beginning of the Victory that Jesus will achieve for us all. He is the future of mankind, a future conceived by God so that we would seek to be more like Him, and in so doing, we will receive the gift of eternal life with our loved ones in the faith.

Jesus was then and is still is, today, a gift from God. Receive the Gift of Christ for your life and your life will be much enhanced, forever. It is truly the gift that keeps on giving.

Scripture: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).*