

Christmas

The Christmas season has become a dangerous time! No, I am not referring to shopping at Wal-Mart, although you are taking your life into your hands when you go there during this time of year. I am talking about Christmas or really, Christ Mass. It seems that Praise has given way to Party, the Savior has given way to Santa, Glory has been exchanged for Gifts and that Bows have been replaced by Bows. But, I would like to remind you that Christmas, the Mass of Christ, is a whole lot more than boxes, bows and ribbons. It is more than trees, tinsel and lights. It is certainly more than reindeer, rooftops and Ho, Ho, Ho's. I know full well that people are going to do as they please and they are going to follow all their Christmas traditions, but I would like to remind everyone, that it wasn't Santa Claus who came to town that first Christmas night.

The true story of Christmas has fallen on dangerous times. There is a danger that we can hear it so often that it become too familiar. There is a danger that we will lose the significance of the message, because we are too familiar with it. Every year we tell the same stories told in the same ways. We talk about shepherds, angels, wise men, Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. If we are not careful this annual handling of this precious truth might just cause us to take it for granted. We know all the details and if we are not careful, our over acquaintance with the Christmas story can cause us to overlook just how amazing the story really is.

We really need to start at the beginning of the story and I mean the beginning of the story. When man fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, God made a promise that a Redeemer would one day come. This Redeemer would come as the Savior of sinners. All through the Old Testament, God worked to bring this event to pass. Every sacrifice, every ritual of Jewish worship, everything God did was moving steadily toward the moment when the Lamb of God would enter this world and pay the price to save men from their sins. Our Gospel reading tells us about the night that father's promise was fulfilled. It was also the moment when God's promise to send His Redeemer into the world was fulfilled. As we look in on the events of that night 2,000 years ago, we can learn something about how God provided His son, that would go on and die a most horrible death on a cross to save us.

I am going to change the way you think about this story forever. In tonight's Gospel reading of Luke 2:1-14, there are six prophecies from the old testament about the Messiah, that came true just in his birth. I can hear some going, so, what is the importance of that. Think about this; Scholars argue on the number of Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, but there are around three hundred plus. Simple little fact for you, he fulfilled them all.

Someone did all the math and figured out that the probability of just eight prophecies being fulfilled is one chance in one hundred million billion. That number is millions of times greater than the total number of people who have ever walked the earth. Here is another way to look at it. If you took this number in silver dollars, they would cover the State of Texas, two feet deep. If you marked one silver dollar among them and then had a blind folded person wonder the

whole state and bend down and pick up one coin, that would be the odds that he choose the one that had been mark. What's the probability of three hundred being fulfilled? That can only lead to one conclusion; Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God. Jesus was born to save you and me from our sins, so we could have a relationship with God.

Let's look at these six prophesies in perspective of the Christmas Story.

First Prophecy, Daniel 2:44, "And in the days of these kings, *the kings of the fourth monarchy*, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Let's go to our reading, Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. We often just glance right over this first sentence, but this is the heart of the beginning. Jesus was born at the time when the fourth monarchy (Daniel 2:40) was in its height, just when it was become, more than any of the three before it, a universal monarchy. He was born in the days of Augustus Caesar, when the Roman empire extended itself further than ever before or since, so that it was then called *Terraram orbis imperium* - The empire of the whole earth; and here that empire is called "all the world", for there was scarcely any part of the civilized world, that was not dependent on it. Now this was the time when the Messiah was to be born, according to Daniel's prophecy. Praise be to God, the kingdom of Jesus rules all, no kingdom can overcome it!

Second Prophecy, Genesis 49:10, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people." Back to our reading, Luke 2:2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. Jerusalem was taken by Pompey, the Roman general, about sixty years before this, for Judea was ruled by Cyrenius the Roman governor of Syria: the Roman writers call him *Sulpitius Quirinus*. Now just at this juncture, the Messiah was to be born, for so was dying Jacob's prophecy, that Shiloh should come when the scepter was departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet. This was the first taxing that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude; therefore now Shiloh must come, to set up his kingdom. Shiloh, is the Messiah, is Jesus.

Third Prophecy, Micah 5:2, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." Back to Luke 2: 3-5, So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. The place where our Lord Jesus was born is very observable. He was born at Bethlehem, as it was foretold by Micah, the scribes so understood it, so did the common people, The name of the place was

significant. Bethlehem signifies the house of bread, a proper place for Jesus to be born, in who is the Bread of life. But that was not all; Bethlehem was the city of David, where he was born, and therefore there he must be born who was the Son of David. Is it amazing how God disposes man's purposes, how providence orders all things for fulfilling of the scripture. Think He makes the projects of men, who designed them to server their purposes, but quite beyond their intention, to serve his. How else, at the time of Mary's birth, that she would have traveled to Bethlehem. No women, days before giving birth, would travel the rough conditions from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to give birth in a place she knew not and didn't have a place to stay.

Fourth Prophecy, Isaiah 49:7 "Thus says the LORD, The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, To Him whom man despises, To Him whom the nation abhors, To the Servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, Because of the LORD who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You." From our first couple of verses here in Luke 2, we saw he was born under the law; for he became a subject of the Roman empire as soon as he was born, a servant of rulers. Being born during the time of the taxing, he was enrolled as well as his father and mother, that it might appear how he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. Instead of having kings tributaries to him, when he came into the world he was himself a tributary.

Fifth Prophecy, Job 38:9 "When I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band" Look at Luke 2:7, "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." It was the Jewish tradition when a baby was born, they were washed in water, rubbed in salt, and then wrapped in swaddling clothes. Jesus was born in common with other children; he was wrapped in swaddling clothes, as all are when newborn. There was nothing special in the manner in which the infant Jesus was treated. As if he could be bound, or needed to be kept straight. Here it is: The everlasting Son of God became a child of time, the ruler of heaven and earth, came as the least among us.

Six Prophecy, Isaiah 9:6 , "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Luke 2:8-11 reads; "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One; he is the Lord, Lord of all; he is a sovereign prince. He is a Savior, and he will be a Savior to those of us that only accept Him as their Lord. Here is what the Angel is saying: "The Savior is born, he is born this day; and it is matter of great joy to all people, it is not to be kept secret, you may proclaim it, go tell it to all. He is born in the place where it was foretold, in the city of David; and he is born to you; to you Jews he is sent in the first place, to bless you, and to you

shepherds. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, the son of God. This is a matter of joy indeed to all people, great joy. Let heaven and earth rejoice before this Lord, for he cometh. He came to govern heaven and earth.

Then summarized for us in Luke 2: 12-14, And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

You can see, this Christmas story is more significant and more powerful in proclaiming who is the Christ, the Prince of Peace. It is just not the story about shepherds, angels, wise men, Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. It more than the nativities set up around town, it is more than the Christmas plays being acted out in our churches every Christmas season. Now when you hear this story every year, when you see a nativity, you will not be in danger of losing its message. You will know that baby born 2000 years ago, can be no other than the Son of God, the Messiah, That God's promise to send His Redeemer into the world was fulfilled. No, it wasn't Santa Claus who came to town that first Christmas. It was Jesus! He is still here, looking for all who have room for Him in their lives and hearts. We are saved! Thanks be to God.

I leave you to think about a seventh prophesy, Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.