

A Family Christmas

Christmas is a time when families love to get together to celebrate the birth of the Saviour. Family members who have been away from home make every effort to return and meet with their loved ones. What a great blessing it is for parents to have their children, some of whom are married with families of their own, gathered at the table on Christmas Day.

The whole Christmas season is centred around a particular family. The story of this family is recorded for us in the Scriptures:

Mary

Mary was a young virgin who was betrothed to Joseph. One day the angel Gabriel appeared to her and informed her that she had been especially chosen by God to give birth to His Son. He told her that the conception of the child in her womb would be because of the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This young woman did not fully understand the implications of what might happen. However, she realised God had a personal interest in her as an individual, so she was prepared to submit herself into God's hands and trust Him concerning what was to come. Her unconditional surrender to the Lord is summed up in her own words. She said, "*Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.*"¹

Joseph

Joseph was the local village carpenter, but he could trace his ancestry all the way back to King David. When Mary informed Joseph that she was pregnant, he considered ending their betrothal quietly, to protect her from public disgrace. However, while he was thinking these things over an angel appeared to him in a dream and informed him that it was by the power of the Holy Spirit, and not in the natural way, that Mary had conceived. The baby in Mary's womb was God's Son. Joseph must have marvelled upon hearing that the child to whom Mary would give birth was the long-awaited Saviour. The angel said, "*She will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save his people from their sins.*"²

The angel's message highlighted two very important facts:

- » That people needed to be saved from their sins.
- » That Jesus was the One who could save them.

As the time approached for the birth of the baby, it became necessary for Joseph and Mary to travel from their home in Nazareth to register in a census in the city of Bethlehem. While there, Joseph knocked on the door of a guest house, seeking accommodation. However, the place was full. Joseph and Mary then found a stable, and it was there that '*she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*'³

Jesus

The news of Jesus' birth was announced by an angel to some shepherds who were keeping watch over their flock by night. 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 Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will*

be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”⁴

The angel brought good news:

- » The Saviour had been born.
- » This message was for all the people.

This was good news indeed because, according to the Scriptures, all people need to be saved from their sins, for *‘There is none righteous, no, not one.’⁵ For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’.*⁶ Mankind inherited a sinful nature from Adam, rendering us sinners by nature and by practice. As sinners, we are subject to sin’s penalty, which is described in the Scriptures as follows: *‘The wages [penalty] of sin is death’.*⁷ This means that all who die unrepentant and unforgiven will be lost. They will spend eternity in hell. Their only hope of salvation lies in the fact that *‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’.*⁸ Jesus said, *“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”.*⁹

The Gospel

Jesus made salvation for sinners possible when, on the cross at Calvary, He took the guilt of our sins upon Himself and bore the punishment we deserved. He became our substitute and sin bearer. Jesus paid, on our behalf, the penalty for our sins. By paying this penalty Jesus secured for us a Pardon. This Pardon will be put to the account of all who repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ, trusting in Him alone for their salvation. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*¹⁰ Referring to Jesus, the Apostle Peter said, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*¹¹

Something to Consider

*“What must I do to be saved?”*¹² This question, as recorded in the New Testament, was asked of the Apostle Paul many years ago by a man who was very concerned for his soul. The answer he received was as follows: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”*¹² This same question is still being asked by many people today. Perhaps you, too, are wondering how your soul can be saved? The answer remains the same. You must believe that the child who was born of Mary in a stable in Bethlehem on that first Christmas is the Saviour, and that through his death on the cross thirty-three years later, and His resurrection, He secured the forgiveness of sins for all who come to Him in sincere repentance, seeking salvation.

The Gift

Christmas is a time for the giving and receiving of gifts. This Christmas, God is offering to you a wonderful gift: *‘The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord’.*¹³ He is offering this to you because He loves you. Will you reach out by faith today and accept this amazing gift from God? The Lord said, *“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”*¹⁴

A Suggested Prayer

‘Heavenly Father, I know I am not worthy of your mercy. I know I could never earn or merit forgiveness or salvation. I thank you for accepting Christ’s sacrifice on my behalf, which makes it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. Thank you for offering me the gift of eternal life. By faith I now reach out and accept this gift, thanking you for your love for me.’

Scripture References

1: Luke 1 v 38

2: Matthew 1v 21

3: Luke 2 v 7

4: Luke 2 vs 10 - 12

5: Romans 3 v 10

6: Romans 3 v 23

7: Romans 6 v 23

8: 1 Timothy 1 v 15

9: Luke 19 v 10

10: John 14 v 6

11: Acts 4 v 12

12: Acts 16 vs 30,31

13: Romans 6 v 23

14: 2 Corinthians 6 v 2