

Christmas Day 2009

“And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” (Isaiah 52:10)

No sermon on Christmas Day can ever be as neatly wrapped as the swaddling clothes on the baby Jesus! This is especially true preaching the very challenging first chapter of John.

We celebrate on Christmas Day the feast day of Jesus' birth. The amazing story of this day is that Christ was born against all odds. Born to a teen mother and the risks associated with being so young. There were the dangers of travel in that day for His parents, yet they were kept safe. Like those who believe in His name, Jesus was born of God literally, though He arrived in utter humility. This sacred birth occurred unknown to all that day except shepherds and those they told.

The world that came into being by His creation has not always known Jesus as its Savior. It is as if the significance of His life is hidden from view by a cloud. The identity of our Lord Jesus Christ is still debated today. Man or God, flesh or spirit, myth or fact; people can not decide who they want Him to be. Even the fact of His birth is still a question. How then can Jesus' birth bring comfort and peace, as God did for Israel hundreds of years before?

How can the world receive Jesus if they do not know Him? Cable programs continue to ask the question, “Who was Jesus?” The answer to “How can the world receive Jesus?” is: *One soul at a time*. Over two billion people on this planet look to Christ as their Savior. That's a remarkable phenomenon given Jesus anonymity. Throughout history people's lives have been changed. Consider a few of the unlikely lives that have experienced a re-birth:

- St. Augustine was a womanizing man who ran with the wild crowd, before becoming one of the church's greatest leaders.
- John Newton was a drunken slave trader before he wrote “Amazing Grace.”
- Johnny Cash was a hard-living country singer before coming to Christ.
- Chuck Colson was a convicted Watergate conspirator before he met Christ. The Lord led him to begin Prison Fellowship, and Colson has become one of the prophetic voices of our time.
- Alice Cooper was a wild, drug-crazed rock singer before coming to Christ, where he sits under the teaching of Reformed theologian, R.C. Sproul and other programs.

However, not everyone accepts the opportunity of a new birth, just as in Jesus' day. *“He came to what was His own, and His own people did not accept Him.”* We know that

Herod, Pilate, and many people of the time rejected Him during His ministry. He is still rejected today. Despite rejection by some, there are many others who believe and receive Him.

“But to all who received him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.” Just as God gave birth to Jesus through Mary you and I may be born of God through the Holy Spirit.

How then will all the nations of the earth come to know Him? Again, it is only by God’s grace that the story survived to be passed down orally and then written down; and the eyes of the world have seen and read of the greatest life ever recorded. All this happened so that we might hear and read the word proclaimed of Jesus Christ, and come to faith just like those spoken of in John’s gospel. God’s faithful promise of comfort and peace to His people has arrived for us, just as it did for the restored nation of Israel. God kept His word.

Jesus was born that we might become the children of God. Hallelujah! May we take comfort and peace in believing through the power of the Spirit. Amen