

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

24 December 2020

Combined Christmas Eve Service

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

Address: 63 Cranwell Road, Singapore 509851

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Sunday School: 10 am

Sunday English / Chinese Worship Service: 11 am

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.30 pm

**Rev Colin Wong (HP : 9665 8160); Elder Daniel Tau (HP : 9761 5415);
Elder Peter Ong (HP : 9626 7045); Elder Royce Yeo (HP : 9362 3067)**

Christmas - The Birth of Jesus Christ Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-21

Introduction

Christmas, also known as the Feast of Nativity, is an annual Christian festival celebrating the birth of Jesus. The day 25 of December is widely accepted as the date to celebrate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Christmas has also become a secular holiday in many countries and is observed by non-Christians. Non-Christians, usually celebrate Christmas with gift exchange and coming together for a meal. Christians, however, usually attend the Christmas Eve worship service to commemorate the birth of Jesus, and some visit and give to the sick and needy and share the message of hope and salvation to them.

When I was a child before I became a believer of Jesus Christ, Christmas to me is Santa Claus. The first Christmas gift I remembered having was given to me by a man dressed up as Santa Claus in a Christmas party my late uncle brought me to. I was overjoyed to receive the gift that day because it was not often someone gave me anything.

In my growing up years till now, Christmas, to me, is the time of the year when many people are busy shopping for presents for loved ones and friends. Whether in the workplace or home, there will be gift exchanges followed by the Singaporean's favourite pastime – our beloved "makan" session - where log cakes, fruit cakes, honey-baked ham, hot-dogs, turkey and drinks are served. Well, this is how many of the world's nations celebrated the cultural Christmas.

Well, what then is the true and factual Christmas narrative, the Nativity of Jesus – the Occasion of Jesus' birth? What is the significance of Jesus' birth? What is the biblical Christmas?

Reading from the Gospel of Luke chapters 1 and 2 in the New Testament will help us find the answers to the questions put forth earlier.

Birth of Jesus Foretold (Luke 1:26-38)

Here, we learn the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The angel, Gabriel, appeared to Mary and told her three things. First, that she was highly favoured by God. Second, that the Lord was with her. Third, that she was blessed among women. Mary was indeed uniquely different among women, for she was chosen by God to bear the baby Jesus and became the chosen vessel in the fulfilment of God's prophecy given in Isaiah 7:14 – "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Mary was troubled at the saying, and tried to understand what sort of greeting this might be. While she was still shocked to receive the news, the angel said to her, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God." I am sure by now, Mary's heart was calmed by the phrase, "fear not". The angel went on to pronounce the most glorious news heaven and earth ever heard, that God shall be with us, that He shall be called Emmanuel – God with us (Matthew 1:23).

Mary was told that she would conceive in her womb and bear a son, and that the child should be called JESUS. The name JESUS tells us that He shall save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21) JESUS is none other than the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament. I believe, by now, Mary finally came to understand this truth, this great pronouncement by the angel Gabriel. However, like everyone when confronted with such great truth, she responded by asking the angel how it is possible for her to conceive a child when she is still a virgin.

Again, the angel Gabriel was ever patient to explain to Mary and said to her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, and so, the child to be born would be called holy—the Son of God. This title "Son of God" is understood by the Jewish people to be equal to God (John 5:18). And so, here we have God with us in the person of JESUS.

Like Mary, many of us, especially our non-Christian friends, may find this pronouncement by the angel Gabriel farfetched, nonsensical, unbelievable and impossible. How could a virgin give birth to a child? How could God come to us in the flesh, in the child JESUS?

Well, for men, it is indeed impossible. However, we must understand, God is different from us. He is the Creator and we are His creatures. God in His mercy, through the angel gave the most comforting truth in Luke 1:37, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." The angel then gave proof to Mary that her cousin Elizabeth who was beyond child bearing age was already six-month pregnant with a child.

We learn in this passage of the Gospel of Luke that JESUS is Emmanuel, God with us, and He

came to save us all who are sinners. The child JESUS grew up, walked perfectly and fulfilled God's law on our behalf. He went to the cross at Calvary to bear our sins, was nailed to it, died and rose again on the third day that we who would believe in Him as Lord and Saviour should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Would you believe this truth? I pray you would believe this truth by the grace of God.

The Birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 2:1-7)

The passage of scripture describes to us the Nativity of Jesus. It is most ordinary by any standard. Many of us are born in a much better environment and medical facilities, and have even better neonatal care than Jesus.

Jesus was born in the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. Mary, His earthly mother, had no place to settle down to give birth and Jesus was born in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn. This was the humble surrounding of Jesus when he was born.

His humble beginning, His humility and His teaching and finally His humiliating death on the cross at Calvary, tells us that Jesus came to save and to serve His people. For this reason, the apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:7-11 – “But (Jesus Christ) made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The birth of Jesus is the most unique birth in the history of man because God became flesh and dwelled among His people. JESUS came to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10) The lost refers to us born sinners because of the Original Sin of Adam and Eve, our first parents. (Genesis 3)

Would you confess to God that you are a sinner and believe in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour? I pray you would confess to God your sin and believe in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, by the grace of God.

The Shepherds and the Angels (Luke 2:8-21)

The angel of God proclaimed the birth of Jesus to a group of shepherds out in the field tending sheep and the sight of the angel frightened them. It was told them that “unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” After which, the shepherds saw a multitude of angels praising God, saying “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” When the angels left them, these shepherds quickly went to Bethlehem and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger, as God had made known to them. Upon seeing the babe, these shepherds made known the saying that had been told them concerning the

child. And, Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

The birth of JESUS was proclaimed publicly by the angel to humble shepherds and these, when they had seen the child JESUS, went away glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told to them.

Tonight, my friends, the biblical narrative of the birth of JESUS, is made known to you, although not by angels, but by God's own written words found in the Gospel of Luke, what would your response be? I pray your response would be like those of the shepherds, who, when they learned of the birth of the Saviour, they went immediate into the city of David, Bethlehem to confirm for themselves. Will you confirm for yourself that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Saviour, by praying to God to show you JESUS is the Son of God, your Lord and Saviour? Or, will you ignore and refuse this truth which is the true reason for Christmas, Jesus Christ, the Son of God our Redeemer, who was born some 2000 years ago and came to seek and to save them which are lost?

Closing

Beloved and friends, would you ponder the true and factual Christmas narrative, the Nativity of Jesus – the Birth of Jesus – and, consider seriously your decision to believe? Have you understood the significance of Jesus' birth and the meaning of Christmas recorded for us in the Bible?

When you believe JESUS, the Son of God, you will receive the wonderful gift of God which is the salvation of your soul, the forgiveness of your sin and eternal life in Christ. This one gift no man can give. Only God can give you. Come my beloved and friends, come and believe in JESUS and receive the gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The apostle John says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1John 5:13)

May God bless you and may you have a truly blessed Christmas. Amen.

Elder Daniel Tau

**Theme for the Quarter :
FREE IN CHRIST (An Exposition on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians)**

**Rev Eric Kwan speaking at the Combined Christmas Eve Service on
The Spirit of Christmas (Philippians 2:1-11).
Interpreter : Brother Seow Zhi Fa.**