

## Christmas Meditation

### I. Christmas' Dawn in Heaven

*Ephesians 1:4; Luke 15:7; Luke 2:13; 1 Peter 1:12*

Do you have your Christmas shopping done? “That’s a silly question,” you say, “because after all, *today* is Christmas!”

But what I mean is, do you have your Christmas shopping done for next year? Or for 2024? Some complete their gift buying and preparation weeks or even months in advance of Christmas; and some will make purchases in the coming days for next year. But it is completely safe to say that the children who the other night told us about Jesus’ birth will not be buying gifts for their grandchildren’s first Christmas anytime soon—not even the high school students will be doing that, not even the collegiates and other young adults. There is a limit to how far in advance one can prepare a gift, especially if the one receiving the gift isn’t even born.

There is a limit to early Christmas gift-gathering when you yourself are limited. But God is unlimited and as the limitless God He planned our Christmas gift from eternity—before He ever created a single human being. “...[God] chose us in connection with [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4).

God is so great and so gracious that He planned our souls’ salvation from eternity, and when the holy all-powerful God plans something, it is done! The only thing left at that point is for time to catch up with His purpose. “*When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son*” (cf. Galatians 3:4).

When God gave you His long-planned Christmas gift, Christmas dawned in *Heaven*. For God, Christmas dawned by giving glory to His name. The fulfillment of His promises and the gift of a Savior to sinners who rebelled against Him all testified to His faithfulness and to His amazing love.

For the angels, it was the joy of seeing their great and glorious Creator accomplish His will. Peter tells us that the ways of God and His salvation are “*things the angels desire to look into*” (cf. 1 Peter 1:12). Jesus tells us that the angels of Heaven rejoice over one sinner who repents and is brought into salvation (cf. Luke 15:7). Thus, when the one angel messenger was sent to earth to declare the news of Jesus’ birth, Christmas dawned in Heaven; and then, the joy of all the angels in Heaven overflowed to the earth as the multitude of angels appeared to the shepherds and proclaimed: “*Glory to God in the highest!*” (Luke 2:13).

**Hymn:** *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* [TLH 94:1,3]

## II. Christmas' Dawn on Earth

*Luke 2:14; Romans 8:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:19*

“Hark the Herald Angels sing...God and man are reconciled.” It’s amazing, really, because if you have ever been hurt by someone (and I’m sure you have), you know how difficult it can be to forgive. It can be difficult to let the past slip away and let go of grudges, to let go of the memories of disagreement, the sins against one another, and the pain all of this caused. This is difficult enough so that in our day we have become familiar with the term “irreconcilable differences.”

Now, put yourself in God’s place. You’ve created a magnificent universe and have given it to the crown of your creation—the part of the creation that was made in Your own image—two human beings, a perfectly matched set, man and woman. You have *literally* given them the world, but within a short time they think you have withheld something from them, they want more, and they rebel against you. How could they? Hadn’t You done everything for them? Hadn’t You *made* them?! If you or I were in a similar position we would be finished with them! We would say, “You miserable, ungrateful, rebellious creatures! Out of my sight!” (if we didn’t destroy them on the spot). If ever there was an irreconcilable situation, this would be it!

Thanks be to God that His character is so different than our own. Oh, God, was angry at the sin Adam and Eve brought into the world. He cursed the serpent and the earth because of their sin. He had every right to curse or even to destroy Adam and Eve on the spot—right then and there. But instead, God led them to a realization of their sin and promised a Savior on the spot—right then and there.

When Jesus, the promised Seed of the woman, was born, Christmas dawned on the *earth*. From the fall into sin until now and until the end of time “*the whole creation groans and labors*” (Romans 8:22) under sin’s curse. The earth laboring under sin’s curse longs for the day when it “*...also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption...*” (Romans 8:21).

At the moment Adam and Eve sinned they were separated from God because of their sin. From the moment of our conception we inherit the sinfulness of our parents and are separated from God because of our sin. Without God’s intervention our sins would remain irreconcilable with the holy and just God, our Creator. Without God’s intervention, Adam and Eve, and all their descendants—in other words, all people—would remain alienated from God and eternally condemned in Hell. “*But God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.*” (2 Corinthians 5:19). God removed the sin that stood between us. Through Christ and the forgiveness of sins God restored peace between Himself and sinners.

When Christmas dawned on earth it was the dawning of deliverance. It was the dawning of new hope and new life. It was the dawning of peace on earth between God and sinners and of God’s goodwill toward all mankind.

**Hymn:** *Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord* [TLH 91 (1,4,8)]

### III. Christmas' Dawn in Hearts

*2 Peter 1:19, 2 Corinthians 4:6*

To speak of a Christmas dawn in *heaven* seems so far away. By faith we know that it is true, but it might still seem rather remote because we aren't in Heaven and we weren't there to see the angels appear to the shepherds.

To speak of a Christmas dawn on *earth* feels much closer and strikes closer to home because we are earth born. We witness every day how the earth groans under sin's load, our consciences bear witness of our own sin, and the sin that flows out of our heart provides daily reminders as well.

But it is the Christmas dawn in your *heart* where God's Christmas gift becomes personal, and very real.

Think for a moment of the earthly gifts you have or will receive this Christmas. You know that the giver has given the gift out of love. You know that the giver's love will continue long after the clothes wear out, after the food is eaten, after the gift certificates are spent, and after the toys are outgrown.

Then there is another set of gifts—gifts that were perhaps hand-made, or very carefully and personally chosen, or personalized in some other way. The effort behind the gift and its personalization gives an added treasureable value because those gifts couldn't have been given to anyone else...they were made and given to *you*.

God personalizes His gift of salvation when the Holy Spirit brings that salvation into an individual sinner's heart. When the Holy Spirit brings the good news of the Gospel and faith takes root, it is there in the darkness of that sinner's soul and the blindness of his heart that a miraculous dawn begins to shine. Speaking of the Gospel, Peter wrote: "*...we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*" (2 Peter 1:19).

When God sent the plague of darkness on Pharaoh and Egypt, it was a darkness, we are told, that could be felt. The darkness of sin is no different. Our hearts carry that darkness by nature. Out of that darkness proceed "*evil thoughts... covetousness, wickedness, deceit*" (Mark 7:21-22), and every other type of sin. Into that darkness Christmas dawns with an amazing and miraculous light. Into hearts darkened by sin God brings the light of salvation and creates a new heart that delights in God and follows His will. "*...it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness (at creation), who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The greatest Christmas dawn is in *your* heart, for there is where God personalizes Christ's salvation and gives it to you. There is where His Word assures *you* that the sins you know all too well are indeed washed away. In *your* heart where fear sometimes rises, is where God says "Peace, be still." In *your* heart that is overcome with grief, Jesus lives to dry your tears. In *your* heart where your flesh still rears its ugly head, your Savior is there to crush the rebellion.

In *your* heart where Satan hopes to win the battles, Jesus is at your side building the defenses and standing with you in the battle's fray to give you His victory.

In *your* heart God has given His gift and Christmas has dawned. Rejoice and be merry in Him! Amen.

**Hymn:** *To Thee My Heart I Offer* [TLH 89]

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we stand in reverent awe before Your manger. We bow our heads in humble sorrow as we confess our sins. May we never lose sight of the cross in as the purpose for Your coming and in that truth sorrow over our sins, but also rejoice because of its salvation. Help each of us to enter into the true joys of this day. Open our hearts to receive and to treasure the news of Your birth and the joy it brings.

Light of the World, send out your light and your truth to people everywhere. We pray that people from pole to pole and east to west may come to a genuine knowledge that You are God's Son incarnate and their Savior from sin. Let the light of this truth reach the hardest of hearts and the most stubborn of wills; let it pierce the darkness of all who dwell in the shadow sin and death.

Look with compassion on the lonely, the sick, the troubled, the sorrowing, and the dying. Bring to their remembrance the comfort of Christmas, that You are Immanuel—God with us. Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer**

### **Benediction**

**Hymn:** *Joy to the World!* [TLH 87]

—Pastor Wayne C. Eichstadt