

Are You Prepared for Christmas?

Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1:18-23

No one else's birth is celebrated in the whole world except the birth of Jesus Christ. Yet like most of the people in Jerusalem when Jesus was born, people today miss the joy, the pleasure and the enjoyment of Christmas because they have not focused their celebration upon the celebrant. God prepared and arranged every detail of the incarnation of His Son. As His people, we too need to prepare our hearts in celebration of this wonderful occasion. God prepares His people by instilling in their hearts three things:

1. *A yearning for the _____ of God*

The angel's message to Joseph is a message of salvation. "... and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Psa. 103:3; 130:4; Isa. 43:25; 55:7; Micah 7:8; Acts 4:12; Rom. 11:27). We are all sinners in need of forgiveness (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). God's forgiveness is one gift that we all need and without it, no other gift matters eternally. Without it, both human relationships and our relationship with God would be meaningless. Forgiveness of sin is what John the Baptist came to preach (Mark 1:4). Christmas carries the important message of forgiveness because it is the foundation of all of God's blessings (2 Chro. 7:14; Psa.32:1; Romans 4:7).

2. *A longing for _____ with God*

The angel's words to Joseph, in verse 22, fulfills what the Lord has spoken by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14). Mary's baby shall be called "Immanuel" ("God with us"). God made a covenant with His people wherein He promised, "I will be your God and you will be My people and I will dwell with you in your midst" (Genesis 17:7-8; Exodus 29:45; Jer. 31:33). Jesus is Immanuel. He came to save us from our sin so that we could experience the presence (fellowship, friendship) with God. Enjoying God's presence is what we were created for (Genesis 3:8, cf. Exodus 32; 33:3, 14).

3. *A desire for the _____ of God*

Jesus Christ is God's precious gift of Christmas! He is called the "consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25), and the "Hope of Israel" (Jer. 14:8 and 17:13). Consider Isaiah 9:6. As a child born to us, Jesus became man to endure temptations, yet be without sin (Hebrews 4:15). But as a Son given to us, Jesus as our saving God came in human flesh to conquer sin and death forever (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). He will establish His kingdom and He will reign as the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace."

Do you realize that you need for the forgiveness of God? Do you long for the intimate fellowship with God? And do you desire the great favor of God? If so, then you'll be prepared for Christmas!