

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES
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His claims, to be the Messiah, to be the Son of God. We know the Jews put Him to death because He claimed to be equal with God. We know He rose from the dead, because the whole of Christianity and the very existence of the Christian Church is built on the Resurrection, on the faith of the Apostles that they had seen Him and handled Him after He rose from the dead. Had there been no Resurrection the history of the Church and of Christianity would never have been. So we believe it, and we believe Him because the evidence is so convincing. But we do not stop even here. We test Christ and we test the Christian religion by the most searching trial of all, EXPERIENCE.

Does the following of Jesus Christ lead to inward harmony, to peace, to light, to a power of goodness unknown before? Yes it does, and anyone who wills can try it for himself: to follow Christ faithfully brings a man to a singleness of aim, an inward confidence, a secret joy, a new power for righteousness and helpfulness, which he never knew before. Those who try it know. Try it, and you will be your own evidence and your own proof. But when you have won this faith by the help of God, then you must fling to the winds half-heartedness and faltering faith.

Start again this Christmas. Dare to believe boldly, learn to rejoice heartily, begin to build Christ's kingdom. Start in your own home and work outwards as widely as you can. Go out into an indifferent and selfish world and lay deep and broad the foundations of Christ's kingdom for all men, wherein shall be found righteousness and peace and salvation for every child of God. And when Christmas comes around do not be afraid to rejoice. It is the birthday of the Redeemer, the Nativity of your own beloved Friend and Savior. Prepare for Him in Advent, watch for Him on Christmas Eve, greet Him in your heart and at His altar on Christmas Morn. Command the inspiration of a new courage and a new confidence every Christmas Day. God be blessed for Christmas Day.

"THE GREATEST GIFT"

By Rev. Arnold H. Kehrl,
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In the sixth verse of the ninth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah we find expression of our thought in these words,

"For unto us a Child is born and unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

We celebrate on Christmas day the incarnation of God in fulfillment of these words.

The counsel of Heaven concluded to send Jesus Christ to meet the need of Redemption. He came, announced only to the shepherds who watched their flocks in the vicinity of Bethlehem, and heralded by a multitude of the Heavenly host.

Planned in the Infinite wisdom of God the Father, the program of world redemption had its first visible manifestation here.

Christmas day and the birth of Christ is but a means to an end and never an end in itself. It is true that His Virgin birth was the very keystone and cap-stone of His manifestation but had it stopped there the program would have been far from complete, Heaven would still be closed and man would be without salvation.

Omitting familiar references to Christmas day with its variety of applications and misconceptions, without expounding our well-formed ideals on the matter of gifts with their innumerable and joy-giving accompaniments, let us pursue the thought of THIS gift as the greatest which mankind can ever know. Follow to a logical conclusion the issue introduced by the birth of our Lord and without doubt our fixed topic would be "Celebrate by the worlds biggest holiday, the worlds best gift."

May I, by three terse statements and brief expounding of the same, summarize for you the program so far enacted. It began "When God came down to Earth." The birth is the entity in embryo, hence in Christmas we acknowledge ALL.

First it was "GOD WITH US". "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US." Matthew, 1:23. Hence Christ was God manifest in the flesh. Prophets foretold this 1500 years previous as in the words of the text. 700 years before the event transpired, Bethlehem was designated as His birthplace. When He came and the star shown bright, the Jews were not surprised for they knew it long before.

God WITH us, what a thought, and why? Our idea of limitations is now

broken and Christmas becomes a recognition of the incarnation of God instead of the celebrating of the insignificant birth of an ordinary child. History's pages were stained and blotted with repetitions of man's failures and yet in spite of this, as man's extremity is always God's opportunity, He came, in the form of man, as sinful flesh, yet spotless.

Disclaim the Virgin birth of our Lord and you have but an empty philosophy and a theory that can lead you nowhere.

Again it was, "GOD FOR US."

Approximately thirty-three years, and only the closing three having been given to ministry, and the second great event in the program was transacted. "He gave Himself FOR us. Humanly speaking, He had to come before He could live, He had to live before He could minister, He had to minister before He could die, He had to die before He could be saved. Falsely accused, falsely betrayed and cruelly sentenced. Dying an ignominious death on the Cross, suspended there between Heaven and earth as tho fit for neither, bearing the scorn and shame without protest, God gave Himself for us. This is the fundamental, here the battle supreme was fought, here the wonders of Love were wrought. Bearing the burden of the sin of the world, a cry of anguish ascended on high but triumph came. Associated with His death there is the event of His resurrection and later His ascension. These cannot be separated from His birth.

Life and death spells for us here, manifestation and sacrifice. It was God FOR us on the Cross.

Little wonder that the Christian heart sings,

"I will sing of my Redeemer
And His wondrous love for me
On the Cross He sealed my pardon
Paid the debt and set me free."
In the culmination it is "GOD IN US."

This final consideration is manifested the eternal unity of the Trinity, foregoing sentences reveal God, the Father; God, the Son; and now we see God, the Holy Spirit. "Christ in you the hope of Glory," that is God tabernacled in the flesh. He is a tent-dweller. True Christianity is not the man in the church, it is God in the man. Without this factor God has no place on earth, He dwells not in the rocks, but in hearts. If in our life this fact finds first place, then surely we will say, THIS is the greatest gift.

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