



PROPHECY IS LIKE A LAMP SHINING IN A DARK PLACE. 2 PETER 1:19

Lamplighter

LAMB & LION MINISTRIES
a Non-Denominational Christian Media Ministry

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022

Awaiting Our **MESSIAH**



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SERVING WITH OUR BEST
FOR HIS GLORY



For the past couple of years, I often
open my End Times presentations by
asking a question:

What are You Looking Forward To?

Inevitably, most of us are looking
forward to things like our next family
reunion, the Christmas season, the birth
of a child or grandchild, or even our next
meal! I can honestly say that all of those
apply to me.

Some of us are more prone to be excited
in our anticipation. Like children who
are eager to arrive at a destination, we
inwardly ask, “Are we there yet?” Others
seem downright blasé about the course
they are on—unconcerned about where
they are going or when they are going to
get there.

Scripture tells us that we should be
looking forward to Jesus’ return. Over
and over again we are told to be watchful,
alert, and ready. We are told to look for
our Blessed Hope—“the appearing of the
glory of our great God and Savior, Christ
Jesus” (Titus 2:13). But life has a way of
distracting our gaze and dulling our senses.
Without mutual encouragement—the
“iron sharpening iron” of Proverbs 27:17,
we lose our edge.

FROM THE EDITOR

Tim Moore
Director & Sr. Evangelist

This edition of the *Lamplighter* is
designed to offer you “good news
of great joy” in this season of joy. It
is meant to lift up your eyes to your
coming help (Psalm 121:1). Building on
the example set by Simeon and Anna,
we intend to glorify Him who is “a light
of revelation to the Gentiles and the
glory of [God’s] people Israel” (Luke
2:32).

If you’re not eager to see Him
already, I pray that as you read this
Lamplighter edition your heart will
thrill anew with the joy of knowing
that He has come, He has risen, and
He is coming again.



Lamb & Lion Ministries recently held a
fantastic Regional Conference, “The Con-
vergence” in Pennsylvania. Along with Tim
Moore and Nathan Jones, Mondo Gonzal-
es, Steve Heaster and Al Gist were fea-
tured speakers. Although a regional-wide
internet outage caused interruptions with
those watching online, the videos of each
entire presentation are available now to
enjoy! Visit our YouTube Channel (youtube.com/christinprophecy).

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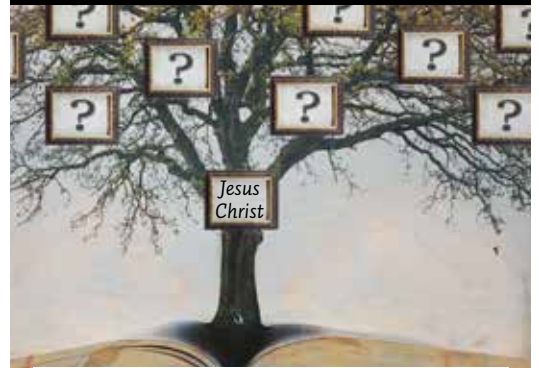
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**Start Making Plans Now
to join us at the
LAMB & LION MINISTRIES
ANNUAL BIBLE CONFERENCE
JUNE 9-10, 2023
Denton Bible Church
Denton, TX**

**PLUS Don't Miss These
Exciting 2022 Events!**

**Alpha & Omega Conference
Granbury Baptist Church
Granbury, TX [Jones] (Nov. 18-19)**

**Speaking Engagement
Calvary Chapel Inverness
Inverness, FL [Moore] (Nov. 20)**

EDITOR'S CORRECTIONS

Lamb & Lion Ministries goes to great lengths to ensure that everything we produce aspires to excellence—from our Christ in Prophecy television program to our books and printed materials to the Lamplighter magazine. From time to time we realize that unintended errors have slipped through our proofing process.

I have long observed that Amish craftsmen purposely include some minor blemish in their well-built furniture—to reaffirm the truth that only God is perfect. Until we receive our glorified bodies, all of us manifest the same reality. Still, while to err is human, to pursue godliness and perfection is the mark of a sincere follower of Christ.

In that spirit, we will endeavor to offer corrections for typographical or factual errors that are egregious or might mislead our readers. We hope that by doing so our faithful readers will continue to extend grace when we do err.

Listed below are two corrections from our Sep/Oct edition:

1. In the table on page 8, under the Worldview of Humanism "Truth is relevant" should be "Truth is relative."
2. On the back cover book advertisement, Marko Kiroglu's name was misspelled.

AWAITING OUR MESSIAH

And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Luke 2:25

TIM MOORE

In the long dark years following the completion of the Old Testament, Israel descended into a period of silent darkness. As prophesied, there seemed to be a famine for the Word of the Lord, because following Malachi there were no more revelations.

The Greek Empire rose and fell, eventually giving way to the Roman Empire. Positioned at the crossroads of the ancient world, Israel became a subject state. Short-lived revolts offered short-lived hope. Just over 2,000 years ago, the heavy boot of Roman peace had crushed the religious and nationalistic hopes of most Jews. Only the Zealots were ready to take up arms and fight against Rome.

The Judean provinces represented an ongoing annoyance to the Roman overlords. Always bickering, and stubbornly resistant to embracing Roman gods, the Jews insisted on stiffening their necks and worshipping their own God instead of going with the flow of Roman rule.

It was during this dark time in human history—in a remote but strate-

gic location—that God sent His Son into the world.

We are all familiar with the Christmas story, even if some of the details we know are extrabiblical. Gabriel appeared first to John the Baptist's father, Zecharias, and then to Mary. Joseph also had an angelic visitor who foretold Jesus' birth.

Other than those three and Zecharias' wife, Elizabeth, there is no record in Scripture of Jesus' actual birth being foretold to anyone else.

On the night Jesus was born, angels appeared in the sky above Bethlehem. They did not come to proclaim the Good News to the well-connected or religiously proud. They came to "some shepherds"—men on the very edges of society who slept with their livestock in the fields by night. But, oh, what a sight they beheld when a multitude of the heavenly host appeared above their heads and burst into a song of praise. Advised of the Savior's birth, they hurried to Bethlehem to see the Baby. As they returned to their flocks, they went "glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told to them" (Luke 2:20).

But there were two other people who the Bible says were anticipating the Lord's Messiah. Simeon was an old man who was looking for "the consolation of Israel"—a title referring to the promise that the Messiah would deliver Israel. And Anna was an 84-year-old prophetess. Widowed for many years, she was at the temple night and day, fasting and praying and waiting upon the Lord.

Luke describes how these two faithful Jews were given the blessing of meeting the Baby Jesus. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not see death before he had





And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Luke 2:26

seen the Christ (Luke 2:26). Anna too was spiritually discerning. As soon as she saw Him, she recognized Jesus as the Anointed One and gave thanks to God for allowing her to look upon the Redemption of Jerusalem.

WHY ONLY TWO?

We might like to assume that Simeon and Anna—a devout man and woman—were representative of a much larger group that was awaiting the Messiah. But I do not think that is the

case. We know that when the magi came to Jerusalem seeking to find and worship the “King of the Jews,” Herod was troubled—and all Jerusalem along with him.

Why was the Idumean king troubled, and why was the city upset along with him? Certainly not because they lacked signs regarding Jesus’ birth. The chief priests and scribes who assembled to respond to Herod’s inquiry rightly said the Messiah would be born “in Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what has been written by the prophet” (Matthew 2:5). Scripture does not indicate that any of them bothered to go to Bethlehem and see for themselves. Unlike the lowly shepherds who hurried to see Baby Jesus, they couldn’t be bothered to trek the handful of miles to the city of David—literally on the outskirts of Jerusalem to the south.

Herod too was uninterested in going to see or worship the infant King of the Jews. He sent the visiting magi on their way and asked them to report back to him. Herod’s claimed desire to eventually worship was patently false, which is why God warned the wise men in a dream not to return to Herod.

No, the Idumean king of the Jews was troubled because the true King of the Jews—even as a small child in Bethlehem—represented a great threat to his reign. Herod had his beloved wife Mariamne and two of his own sons killed, just because his paranoia led him to think his power was at risk. So, given Herod’s tendency to lash out at anyone who might undermine his claim to the throne, the entire city was on edge wondering how he might react when foreign emissaries came to worship the newborn Messiah.

*Then a Shoot
will spring
from the stem
of Jesse,
And a Branch
from his roots
will bear fruit.*

Isaiah 11:1

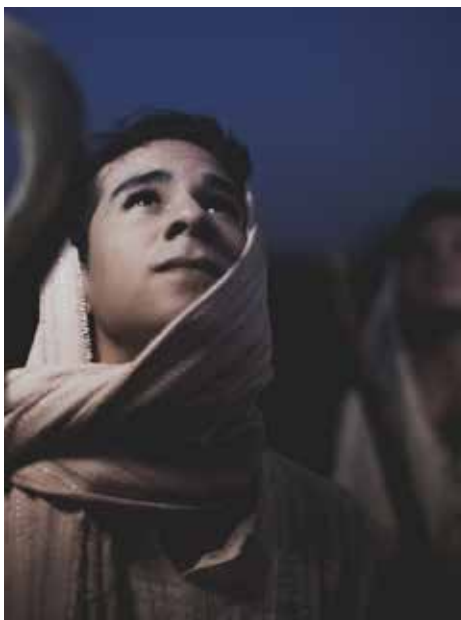
Isaiah said that the Messiah would spring from the root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), but that like a “tender shoot” or a “root out of parched ground,” He would have “no stately form or majesty” (Isaiah 53:2). Regarding the reference to parched ground, the 400-year gap between the Old Testament and the New reflects that period of heavenly silence and demonstrates at least a partial fulfillment of Amos 8:11-12:



“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.”

The Anointed One born in Bethlehem was not the mighty warrior king many Jews were longing for. They wanted a savior to deliver them from Roman oppression and restore their national primacy, not a Savior to deliver them from their sins and restore their relationship with Almighty God. Indeed, the priests and scribes took great offense when Jesus dared to suggest that they would be deemed unworthy, or even worse, that the grace of God would be extended to Gentiles instead of them. As David Bowen’s article attests on page 22, it was Jesus’ reference to





God's blessing being extended to Gentiles instead of Jews that outraged the people gathered at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:22-29).

From the time He was born, Jesus was not heralded by the masses. According to Scripture there were only six Jews (Mary, Joseph, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon, and Anna) who were looking forward to Jesus ahead of time, along with "some shepherds" who were told of His arrival. The rest of the Jewish society seems to have been going about their lives with no spiritual discernment whatsoever.

THE CONSISTENT PATTERN DURING HIS MINISTRY

As a child, Jesus was not just precocious; He was unlike anyone who had come before (understatement of all time!). When He was only 12 years old, the teachers of the Law at the temple were "amazed at His understanding and His answers" (Luke 2:47). After His public ministry began, He confounded the scribes and Pharisees by teaching as someone with authority. And still, people did not recognize Him for Who He was.

From the time He was born, Jesus was not heralded by the masses. According to Scripture there were six named people who were looking forward to Jesus ahead of time, and "some shepherds" who were advised about His arrival.

Even Jesus' disciples were unsure what to make of Him. Multiplying loaves and fish; calming a stormy sea; healing the deaf, lame, leprous, and blind; releasing the demon-possessed from bondage; it still took the revelation of the Father in heaven for Peter to finally confess, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:13-17).

Meanwhile, the masses, although drawn by miracles of nourishment and healing, were largely unaware that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah.

For His own good reasons Jesus did not broadcast that fact. More often than not He told the people He healed to follow the Law but not tell anyone about Him. He even spoke in parables so that the fulness of His meaning

would be unrecognizable by the masses who had not really put their trust in Him. His words and the truth they revealed were for "those with eyes to see and ears to hear" (Matthew 13:16).

In a very real sense, only the sheep who recognized His voice would hear and follow Him—then, and now (John 10:27-28).

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

John 10:27-28





For some of us, the promise of His coming resonates in our hearts and inspires our days. We wake up every morning hoping that He will come that very day.

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

If the anticipation of His first coming was so sparse, what about today? Like society in ancient Judea, people still tend to fall into one of several different categories:

1. Some people literally do not know that Jesus is coming again. They either don't know Him at all, or nobody has told them that He is coming.
2. Others claim to know Him, but do not live as if He has had any impact on their lives. They manifest complete apathy about His return.
3. Other ostensibly faithful Christians are convinced that He is not coming anytime soon, or at least not in a glorious manner that will fulfill the prophecies of His coming literally. They are often ignorant or fearful of Bible prophecy, convinced that it doesn't have any relevance to their daily lives.
4. But for some of us, the promise of His coming resonates in our hearts

and inspires our days. We wake up every morning hoping that He will come *that very day*. We take communion faithful to Paul's admonition that we commemorate Christ's death "until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). We long for Jesus to come again even as we seek to serve Him in this life.

The unbelieving world clearly fits in Category 1. People who do not know the Lord or have rejected Him outright do not realize that He is coming soon. They live carefree lives oblivious to the fact that they live on the brink of eternity and that the wrath of God abides on them (John 3:36). Living in spiritual darkness, they say, "peace and safety," unaware that "destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Like most of the people living in the time of Noah, they will be swept away when God's wrath is poured out upon the world.

Too many professing Christians fall into Category 2. Polls by the Pew Research Center, the Barna Group, and other Christian-affiliated organizations have proven that many self-declared Christians do not adhere to the basic tenets of the faith. They don't believe in Creation as described in the Bible, the virgin birth of Christ, the literal death and resurrection of Jesus, or the promise of His return.

(Astoundingly, 20% of professing Christians say they don't believe in the God of the Bible!)

We are witnessing a great falling away of these Christians of convenience as our society becomes increasingly hostile to genuine Christian faith. Without social capital to be gained from church membership, the rolls have declined dramatically in many urban areas. The accelerating drift of lukewarm Christians toward secularism explains why "None" is the fastest growing category of religious affiliation in the United States today.

Over the past several years, I've come to realize that most churches fit into Category 3. Even vibrant churches full of sincere followers of Jesus Christ manifest an aversion to His prophetic Word. Disdainful of extremists who have sown division and fanatics who peddle in the sensational and manipulate and misquote the Word of God, many pastors are leery of any presentation relating to Bible prophecy.

But the signs of the times are so obvious that faithful Christians are moving into Category 4—eagerly awaiting the Messiah and hungry for teaching and preaching about Bible prophecy.

CASTING OUR CROWNS

When the magi came from the East, they brought gifts to the infant Jewish King. Scripture says that they presented Him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh—rich gifts suitable for royalty. Over time, song and lore envisioned these wise men as kings, and assumed that there were three of them because that was the number of their gifts. But



*Any glory that I
experience will be
a reflection of the
glory that is His.*

the Bible does not specify that detail and it is unlikely that they were rulers in the classical sense.

What we do know is that the wise men discerned a sign in the heavens and undertook a long and difficult journey to see the Messiah. The magis' quest to encounter the Holy One of Israel offers a model for us—along with their determination to have something of value to present to Him.

I opened this article focusing on Simeon and Anna, the only two Jews recorded in the Gospels as eagerly anticipating the Messiah other than Jesus' parents and Zacharias and Elizabeth. Even John leaped for joy while still in his mother's womb in the presence of his unborn Lord.

We believe that the wise men learned of the coming Messiah from the Hebrew scriptures and from the testimony of faithful Jews who lived in the pagan kingdom of Babylon. In that regard, they had the same prophetic Word we have in the Old Testament—although we have the complete canon of the Old and New Testament prophecies. And, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, illuminating God's Word in our hearts.

So why aren't we as determined to watch for the signs the Lord is revealing all around us today? The signs of the times are multiplying before our eyes—and converging as never before. Soon—perhaps very soon—He will burst from the sky. We won't have to follow “yonder star” to find His

humble birthplace, He will come in radiant glory to reign upon the earth.

Have you ever wondered what you will give Him when you first see Him? That is a question worth pondering.

Scripture speaks of several crowns we will be awarded in heaven:

- An imperishable crown
(1 Corinthians 9:24-25)
- A crown of exultation or rejoicing
(1 Thessalonians 2:19)
- A crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4)
- A crown of life (Revelation 2:10)

Paul also says that there is a crown of righteousness laid up for all who have loved Jesus' appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). That is one crown reserved just for those who have been eager to see the Messiah, like Simeon and Anna.

I've always wondered what I would do with a crown. Then, reflecting on the magi's gifts and turning to God's prophetic Word it dawned on me. Like the elders described in Revelation 4:10, we will cast our crowns before the throne of the Lamb and say,

**Worthy are You, our Lord
and our God, to receive
glory and honor and power;
for You created all
things, and because of
Your will they existed, and
were created.**

Oh, how I want those crowns! Not for my own glory—or to give me what

David Reagan describes as an eternal neck ache!! Any glory that I experience will be a reflection of the glory that is His. The eternal life I enjoy will be thanks only to His death and resurrection.

And the righteousness manifest in the crown I receive will be credited to me from His infinite righteousness and holiness.

Even the crowns He gives me belong to Him. I want all five crowns to be able to lay them as gifts at the feet of my Lord and Savior.

LOOKING FORWARD

I believe that some reading this magazine in 2022 will not see death before the Lord's Messiah comes (Luke 2:26). Are you praying earnestly for Jesus to rend the heavens and come down? Do you wake up each day crying out, “Marranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!”

The “Light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of [God's] people Israel” has come. He is coming again—not as a humble babe to be wrapped in swaddling cloths, but in power and glory.

The last stanza of *We Three Kings* sounds the expectant, triumphal chorus of the Second Coming:

*Glorious now behold Him arise;
King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Sounds through the earth and skies.*

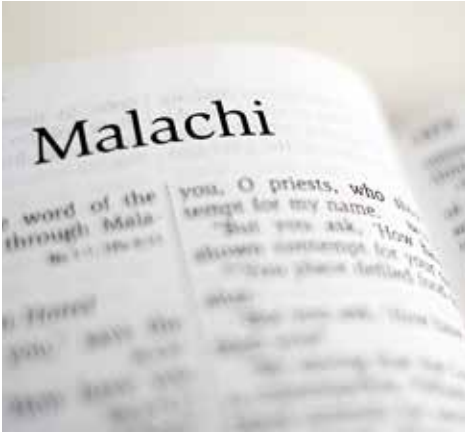
Amen. Come Lord Jesus!



The Very Human Genealogy of Jesus

AMIR TSARFATI

Even in times when it seems like God is silent, He is there, faithful to His promises, remembering all of them as He has sworn.



Mary, Elizabeth, and Zechariah

Names and places are important in God's prophetic plan. Every person and place mentioned in His Word are there for a reason.

Names and places are important in God's prophetic plan. Every person and place mentioned in His Word are there for a reason.

After 400 years of silence upon the completion of the Old Testament with Malachi, we hear of two names: Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah means, "the Lord remembers," and Elizabeth means, "the Lord has sworn." Both names, Zechariah and Elizabeth, are a token of the hope that we can always have, even in times when it seems like God is silent. He is there, faithful to His promises, remembering all of them as He has sworn. Both people were righteous in times when the Holy Spirit was not too active, and yet, obeying God's word was their source of light in the darkness.

UNEXPECTED LINKS IN THE CHAIN

Another demonstration of God's Word piercing the darkness is conveyed in the lineage of Jesus. Who were some of His ancestors?

1. A woman who slept with her father-in-law while pretending to be a prostitute.
2. A woman who was a prostitute.
3. A woman who was a foreigner and whose people served other gods.
4. Lastly, a woman who sinned with the greatest king in Israel's history.

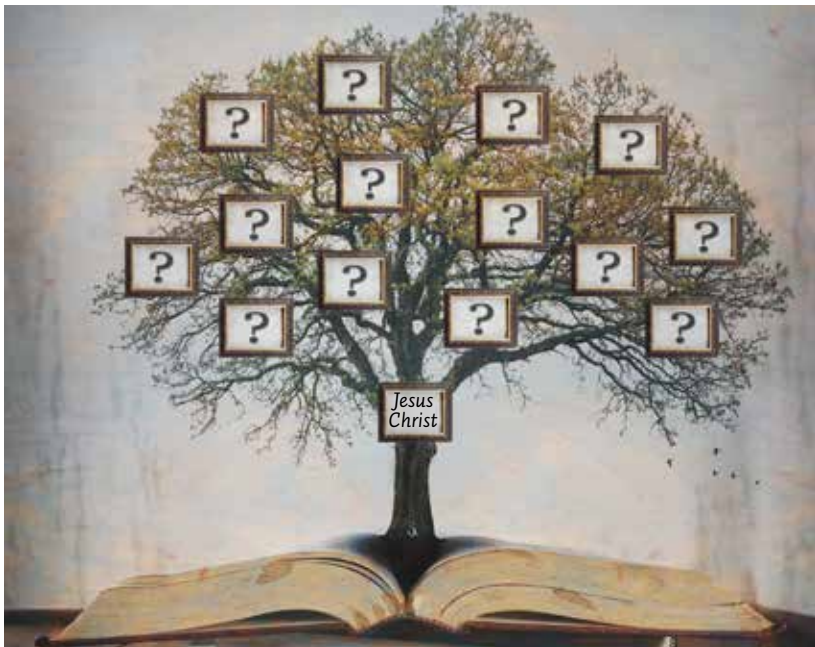
So, what do we gather from this?

The Savior of the world came from people that we would not even want anything to do with. The Savior of the world came from people that we would ridicule. The Savior of the world had to come to this earth because of people like His relatives. Why? God wants us to see that through Him, anything is possible. Through Him, even you and I can be used. Through Him, it does not matter how bad our past is. Through Him, our lives can be changed although we don't deserve it.



TAMAR (GENESIS 38)

Genesis 37 describes how Judah, along with his brothers, sold Joseph into slavery. In chapter 38, this namesake of the tribe Jesus would come from left home and married a Canaanite woman. His wife bore him three sons, and Judah arranged for his oldest son to marry a Canaanite woman named Tamar. But his first two sons were evil in the sight of the Lord and died. Judah convinced Tamar to remain in her father's house until his youngest son was old enough to marry her, but Tam-



The Savior of the world came from people that we would not even want anything to do with. The Savior of the world came from people that we would ridicule. The Savior of the world had to come to this earth because of people like His relatives. Why? God wants us to see that through Him, anything is possible.

God accepts and forgives us not because of what we are, or might be, but based on whether or not we will put our trust in Him.

ar came to believe that Judah was an ungodly man who would not keep his word.

So, she disguised herself as a prostitute and stationed herself along the route she knew Judah would be taking. Judah, unaware of who she was, hired her as a prostitute and left some of his possessions as a guarantee of payment. Sometime later, Judah became indignant when he was told that his daughter-in-law had become pregnant. He insisted that she be put to death for her immorality, until she produced his own seal, cord, and staff—items that were as good as fingerprints. Judah confessed that Tamar was more righteous than he.

Tamar bore twins to Judah. Her son Perez would be the one through whom the Messianic line would be continued, no thanks to Judah. Pretty interesting person, that Tamar. In spite of her sin, she is part of the Messiah's royal family lineage. Let's look at another woman listed in this genealogy.



RAHAB (JOSHUA 2; JOSHUA 6:15-25)

Rahab is mentioned eight times in Scripture, and in six of these occurrences, her name is connected with the word “harlot” (KJV) or “prostitute” (NIV). This story wonderfully illustrates God's grace. He is no respecter of persons. He accepts and forgives us not because of what we are, or might be, but based on whether or not we will put our trust in Him.

This also points to God's sovereignty over the affairs of men and how He directs the steps of those who rest in His provision or are looking to know Him better. God knew Rahab's faith and her longing to know God, and, perhaps, even to become a part of God's people. So, God worked and brought Hebrew spies and Rahab together for their protection and her blessing.

Why was Rahab saved? Because she believed in the God of Israel. Hiding the Jewish spies was an outworking of her faith, just as many godly people hid Jews in European countries during World War II. Because she believed that the God of Israel was indeed “God in heaven above and earth beneath” (Joshua 2:11), Rahab is listed in Hebrews 11, the famous Hall of Faith chapter.

So far, we have found a woman that slept with her father-in-law and a prostitute. Top of the line, right? Let's keep looking.

RUTH (RUTH 1-4)

Ruth was a Moabite woman. The Moabites were the race that resulted from the union of Lot and his oldest daughter. The Moabites were forbidden from entering into the assembly of



Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

2 Samuel 11:2-3



the Lord to the tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:3). The Israelites were not commanded to annihilate them, and they were not forbidden to marry them.

Most of us are familiar with the story of Ruth. A famine in the land prompted Elimelech to leave Israel with his family and to sojourn temporarily in Moab. Elimelech and his sons soon died, leaving Naomi and her two widowed Moabite daughters-in-law. When Naomi decided to return to Israel, Orpah stayed behind but Ruth was determined to remain with Naomi no matter what.



When they arrived in Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem, the people immediately recognized her and were excited that she had returned. Naomi was quick to tell them her woes, blaming her troubles on God, who seemed to have it out for her, or so she implied (Ruth 1:20-22). Ruth immediately set out to provide for Naomi's needs. She began to glean in the nearby field of a man who "just happened" to be a near relative of Elimelech (Ruth 2:3). Boaz quickly noticed Ruth and was impressed by her kindness toward Naomi.

In time, Boaz and Ruth were married, and the child Ruth bore to Boaz was named Obed. Obed was the grandfather of David. Here we have a foreigner who somehow gets into the line of Jesus. So far, we have a conniving woman, a prostitute, and a foreigner. Let's look at the last woman listed in this genealogy.

BATHSHEBA (2 SAMUEL 11)

It was evening, and David was just getting out of bed. If we had any doubt about why he stayed home while his army was at war, it is all gone now. The king was not catching up on his paperwork. David was goofing off! "And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful in appearance" (2 Samuel 11:2).

If he had used his head, he would have gotten off of that rooftop patio pronto. But he lingered and let his eyes feast on Bathsheba's fleshly charms until he could think of nothing but having her for himself. Bathsheba was not guiltless either. She may not have purposely enticed David, but she was immodest and indiscreet.

David found out who the beautiful bather was, sent for her, and the thought became the deed. The inevitable happened, and Bathsheba sent word to David that she was pregnant.

In an effort to cover over his sin, David sent for her husband, Uriah.



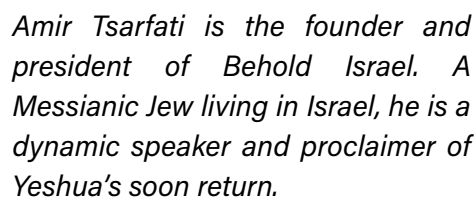
After a short period of mourning, Bathsheba entered David's house and became his wife. The two lovers finally had each other to enjoy freely and uninterruptedly ... except for one thing: "But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27). It is interesting that in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, Bathsheba is still referred to as the woman "who had been the wife of Uriah" (Matthew 1:6).

All of these names—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba—are important links in the genealogy of the Messiah. But there is a Name that is above all names. So, why did God declare that His Son be given the name, Jesus?

need and has caused them to do so many evil things in the name of Jesus that now, without having any understanding, Jesus has become a curse. But His given name—YESHUA—is a name that comes from the word “YESHUAH,” meaning, “Salvation.” He is our salvation. In Him, we are saved. JOSHUAH is “Jehovah will save,” but YESHUA is salvation.

The day Jesus was born, everything changed. Through a broken line of sinful individuals—men and women—the “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” came to that which He created to provide eternal restoration.

not what we were or have been. What matters is who Jesus Christ is, what He has done, and that He is faithful to all His promises. He stands ready today to pierce the darkness in your life.



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The Mystery of the Incarnation

Author Unknown

He who is Almighty – became a suckling baby.

He who is all wise – took on the ignorance of a new born.

He whom the heavens cannot contain – was enclosed in a woman's womb.

He before whom the seraphim continually cry "Holy! Holy! Holy!" – was born of a sinner into a world under the dominion of sin.

He who is unchanging – went through nine months of constant change to enter a world of change.

He who is infinite – became but a microscopic cell.

He who is all-knowing – had to communicate through baby cries.

He who is love – was born outside a hotel because no one had room for His laboring mother.

He who is the Creator – became a creature.

He who has always been spirit – took on the frail frame of a human body.

He who is eternal – allowed Himself to be bound by time.

He who is light – was entombed for nine months in warm darkness.

He who is perfectly just – was accused of being an illegitimate child.

He who is sovereign God – became dependent on a human man and woman for His food and clothing.

He who is clothed with majesty – was laid at birth in a feed trough.

He who alone is self-sufficient – had to be cleaned and nursed.

He who is life – was born with a death warrant around His neck.

Can there be a greater mystery?

Can there be a greater miracle?

Praise be to God for the gift of His Son!

Thanksgiving: Not Just Looking Back

TIM MOORE

Next to Christmas, Thanksgiving is the holiday most cherished as a time to gather with family. Christians wonder how modern Jews can faithfully celebrate the Passover without recognizing the divine source of their deliverance from Egyptian captivity so long ago, but many Americans likewise commemorate Thanksgiving without confessing God as the proper recipient of their thanks.

Each of us should reflect on the blessings poured into our lives. Family, friends, health, memories, love, and life itself are all reasons to be grateful. Gratitude is meaningless unless it is directed at a person. A good exercise for families and individuals alike is to count our many blessings—one by one if necessary. As we do so, we indeed recollect what God has done.

But have you ever considered the importance of anticipatory gratitude?

Gratitude in hindsight is the rightful response to favors given. The grace of God demonstrated in the Person of Jesus Christ is offered to everyone who trusts in His finished work on the cross of Calvary. Unworthy as we are, we receive His unmerited favor by simply believing on the Messiah for our salvation.

Over the years, I've made many lists—mental and written—of the blessings God has poured into my life. Each of them is incomplete, because it



"Freedom from Want," also known as "The Thanksgiving Picture" or "I'll Be Home for Christmas," is the third of four oil paintings by American artist Norman Rockwell, known as the Four Freedoms series. The works were inspired by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1941 State of the Union Address, also known as Four Freedoms.

is simply impossible to produce an exhaustive list of what God has done for each of us. Yet I don't know that I've ever taken time to consciously thank Him for the many blessings I am looking forward to. I proclaim them with great anticipation and urge others to become excited about what lies ahead for those who long for Jesus' appearing. I want to receive the crown of righteousness Paul spoke of in 2 Timothy 4:8.

So, this Thanksgiving I will intentionally thank God for the blessings I am still awaiting. Because His prom-

ises are "Yes and Amen"—and more certain than my own existence—they are as good as fulfilled already. That is why God often spoke through the prophets in the past tense even as He revealed the future. All that God has spoken will come true.

Whether you gather with family or friends this Thanksgiving, I hope that you'll take time to express your gratitude for what God has done, what He is doing, and what He will soon bring to pass—in your life and for all who hear His Voice.



How Much Longer?

TIM MOORE

When I was a teenager, I met a wonderful man named Bill Smith. He was a senior adult at the church I attended and simply took the time to express genuine interest in me. Each time I saw him at church, he made a point to speak to me. Eventually, I began calling him Grandpa Smith. His wife Nellie became Grandma Smith.

They did not have any grandchildren but in the years that followed, my entire family adopted Grandpa and Grandma Smith. We also met and loved their daughter, Annette.

Bill Smith had been a world-class car salesman, earning awards and recognition at the national level. He was also an avid golfer—walking 18 holes every day except Sunday well into his eighties. But for most of his adult life, he was far more committed to serving the Lord and sharing the Gospel with everyone he could.

Grandpa Smith carried a Gideon Bible everywhere he went. He was always in good spirits and ready to share a Scripture verse with someone in need of encouragement or direction. In short, he exuded the kind of joy every Christian should exhibit.

Bill went home to be with the Lord in 2013. His daughter asked me to speak at his funeral, and then offered me anything from his estate that would have meaning to me. I asked for his beloved Gideon Bible. It is now one of my most cherished possessions.

Bill began carrying that Bible in 1967—the year after I was born. He had notes in the front and back fly-leaves, including a series of Bible verses to lead someone to salvation. But he also had notes that I reprinted in my booklet, “Looking Forward to the Reign of Jesus Christ.”

Here is what Bill Smith wrote as his own personal testimony:

- 2000 years—Adam to the Flood
- 2000 years—Flood to Christ
- 2000 years – Holy Spirit (Church Age)
- What time is it?
- How much longer?
- Our Lord may come sooner than we anticipate.

Bill Smith with Tim's parents, Sammie and Larry Moore



Grandpa Smith's willingness to pour into a young man 53 years younger than him tell of a man secure in Jesus Christ and eager to pass his faith forward to another generation. His Gideon Bible and handwritten testimony demonstrate his eager anticipation of Jesus's soon return. I believe with all my heart that his faith and his anticipation are inexorably linked.

Some would say that Bill's hope was not realized. Unlike Simeon, he did not live long enough to see the Messiah with his own eyes. But that misses the point. He is now with the Lord—and will live forever in His glorious presence. When Jesus comes for His Church, Bill Smith will rise from the grave and be given a glorified body. And like Paul, He will be given a crown of righteousness, because he truly loved the Lord's appearing.

I look forward to seeing Grandpa and Grandma Smith again. How much longer? Perhaps much sooner than we anticipate...

✧

...in the future there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

2 Timothy 4:8



Bill & Nellie Smith



*Bill's treasured
Gideon Bible*

God's Ultimate Purpose

CURT BLATTMAN



Does the Creator of the universe have an ultimate purpose? And do we play a role in this ultimate purpose? I believe that the answer to both of these questions is a resounding YES! And perhaps one verse that is not always memorized by Christians — but should be — gives us the answer. For we read in (Romans 9:23): “and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.”

I love what John Piper says regarding (Romans 9:23): “If you are a Christian today—if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead—this is what you are: a vessel of mercy prepared before the cre-

ation of the world for glory — that is, to know the riches of the glory of God.”

Have you ever thought about yourself as the object of God’s ultimate purpose and that as a Christian you are indeed a vessel of mercy! My friends our salvation is all about God looking down the corridor of time and choosing to lavish His awesome mercy on us. We are not saved by our good works but only through God choosing us to be a vessel of His mercy. John Piper again adds insight here, when he shares: “We do not deserve to be Christians. We do not deserve to be chosen or called or saved or transformed or heaven-bound. It is all mercy. Undeserved. Oh, may believers hear this as humbling, and unbelievers hear it as hopeful! Nothing in us was

the decisive influence on God to make it happen. That we have received anything good; any forgiveness, any acceptance with God, any glimpse of His glory, any hope of everlasting joy — this is all mercy.”

So, we see that God created us to not only know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, but to know the glory of God; which He prepared for us to experience before the creation of the universe! Again (Romans 9:23) says: “and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.”

As a vessel of mercy, God has given all Christians the ability to experience the incredible blessings of knowing the riches of His glory, now and for eternity! So, God’s ultimate purpose is to create humanity so He can showcase His glory to His precious children.

God created us with a capacity to know His glory. While we remain in these finite and frail bodies we will never be able to fully know His entire glory but if we pursue His glory, with utmost passion, then I believe we will always stand in awe at just how glorious and wonderful Jesus is. You not only are created in the image of God but you are created to know, treasure, and enjoy His glory!

Have you ever looked up and pondered the beauty of the stars above? For when you do this you get a tiny glimpse of the glory of God. (Psalm 19:1) says it so wonderfully: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” Or have you ever read the Bible and

*...if we pursue His glory with utmost passion,
then I believe we will always stand in awe at
just how glorious and wonderful Jesus is.*

come away realizing that you are being treated to divine revelations and conversations with God! Or have you ever contemplated just who you are in Christ? I challenge you to meditate on (Deuteronomy 7:6) and begin to let God's infinite glory penetrate into your heart.

This amazing verse says: "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession." Imagine the Creator of the universe considers you "His treasured possession!"

God loves you so much that it is His great delight to make known to you the riches of His glory. As you look at the world around you why not behold the beauty it contains. And when you look at your relationship with Jesus, I urge you to get lost in the knowledge that our inheritance in Him is infinitely greater than all the riches our planet contains.

I close with this thought. I know that life has its trials and tribulations. But even reflecting on these difficulties can lead us to glimpses of glory that can't be measured. (2 Corinthians 4:17) says: "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." For you see as a Christian the glory of God, and the awe and wonder of this glory, is why you were created: to experience it now and forever!

✱

EDITOR'S REMARKS:

Curt Blattman is a Messianic Jew from New York City who became a passionate follower of Jesus in 1981. The retired vice president of a leading New York bank, he specializes in Christian Apologetics and maintains a dynamic website blog.

The author's John Piper citations were taken from his sermon entitled "God's Ultimate Purpose" delivered on February 23, 2003.

...and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

Romans 9:23 NKJV



The Wondrous Gift

LIZ CURTIS HIGGS



...But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them.

- Luke 2:19 (CSB)



Was it a census that sent Mary and Joseph on their long journey to Bethlehem? Or was it God?

You know the answer. “Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21 - NIV). This was God’s plan from the very beginning, now unfolding on the road south from Nazareth.

Mary was “great with child” (Luke 2:5) as they traveled. We can only imagine how uncomfortable, unsettled, uneasy she felt: *Where will my child be born, Lord? I am certain He will survive, but will I? Though Joseph has no recorded dialogue in Scripture, he no doubt encouraged his young bride, mile after difficult mile: I heard from an angel too, Mary. I know whose Child you carry. I will care for you and keep you both safe.*

A few miles beyond Jerusalem, the town of Bethlehem finally came into view. Nine months of expectation were over. Time for the Christ Child to appear!



UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

In a grotto beneath the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, a silver star marks the traditional site where Jesus was born. But two thousand years ago, His birthplace looked nothing like this.

Mary labored in a lowly stable and laid the Son of God in a feed trough meant for livestock. However fresh the hay, there was nothing clean about the place, nothing pleasant, nothing fragrant.

Even so, God came to us. Cast His lot with us. Became one of us.

She gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

Luke 2:7

A handful of words, as simple and humble as her surroundings. Mary wrapped Him in strips of cloth, cooed Him in linen, and held Him close.

Surely she wiped away tears of joy and relief, kissed His brow with trembling lips, counted His fingers and toes, then took Him to her breast.

Everything about this birth was both ordinary and extraordinary.

UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN

The Son of God wasn’t born to a princess; He was born to a poor, uneducated young girl. His first bed wasn’t covered in gold; it was stained with dung.

He didn't come in power; He came as a helpless newborn.

From his very first breath, the Son of God turned the world on its head. He identified with the poor, the meek, the lowly, rather than the rich, the influential, the popular. "He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2:7).



He was no coifed and manicured servant, but a humble and lowly servant. The kind of servant who later said, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Luke 18:22).

Mary had treasure on earth: the Son of God, nestled in her arms. We have an even greater treasure: the Spirit of God, residing in our hearts. He is the One who urges us to value what is truly valuable, and let go of things that aren't treasure at all, but trash. Disposable, unnecessary.

An interesting lesson for the Christmas season, isn't it? While we spend, spend, spend on gifts that are quickly forgotten, neglected, discarded, the

Lord is gently reminding us, "The gift that matters is my Son, who came to earth with nothing."

I don't believe God is saying, "You must be poor," but I do believe He is saying, "You must love the poor, serve the poor, care for the poor. Be willing to have less, so others might have more."

WE SAW HIS GLORY

And who were the first to come see God's Son? Of course. Poor shepherds, living in the fields, with no roof over their heads except heaven.

Shepherds in that time were despised and considered unreliable. How like God, to choose them as His witnesses. And oh, how He got their attention!

First one angel, shining in glory, proclaimed the "wonderful, joyous news" (Luke 2:10) and described how and where they would find this heavenly gift.

Then a whole host of angels filled the skies above Bethlehem, praising God and singing, "Gloria in excelsis Deo!" (Angels always sing in Latin, right?) Okay, then. "Glory to God in the highest heaven" (Luke 2:14) will do nicely.

And peace for those who love Him. Peace with God, peace with one another.

The shepherds took off at a trot, the angels' song still ringing in their hearts. Once they saw the Child, they began spreading the news and giving God the glory. No wonder people were amazed. *Shepherds heard a host of angels? Shepherds saw the Son of God?!*

Back at the stable, Mary was still processing all that had happened. Treasuring, pondering, storing them in her heart, "trying to understand them" (Luke 2:19).

Being a new mother, and at such a young age, would be overwhelming enough. Who could ever feel adequate to the task of raising God's Son? Even so, she did what moms do best: she loved her Child.

Not only did Mary trust God; God also trusted Mary with the greatest Gift ever given.

When God gives us an assignment, He never leaves us to fend for ourselves. He is with us, always. Guiding, leading (and occasionally dragging, in my case). Mary was not alone, and neither are we. Whether we are called to manage a household or manage a business—or both at once—God is with us.

Like the angels, like the shepherds, like Mary and her Magnificat, we're to glorify God with every step we take. That's our greatest calling and our greatest assurance of peace, every season of the year.



EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

Liz Curtis Higgs is a Christian author and blogger from Louisville, KY. A popular guest on radio and television, she combines warm humor with engaging Christian insight. For more information, visit her website at lizcurtishiggs.com.

Did Jesus Announce His Second Coming?

DAVID BOWEN



As the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him, Jesus stood up to read. He unrolled the scroll and publicly read from what we refer to as the sixty-first chapter of that prophetic book.

Each December, families look forward to sharing time together. That is especially true on Christmas, the day we celebrate the Lord Jesus coming to earth and being born in a stable in the little town of Bethlehem.

Centuries before Jesus' birth, the prophet Micah prophesied that this small village would be the Messiah's birthplace. The prophet Isaiah foretold that a child would be born of a virgin, and a King would be given to Israel. Hundreds of years before His birth, these and other Old Testament prophets gave amazing details about the Messiah's first Advent.

But did Jesus Himself ever speak about His second Advent or "Second Coming"? I believe He did in His very own hometown of Nazareth. Luke 4:14 records the scene. Jesus returned to Galilee and began teaching in synagogues throughout the region. Luke says that Jesus was praised by all for His teaching and insight. One particular Sabbath, Jesus entered the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth.

READING FROM ISAIAH

As the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him, Jesus stood up to read. He unrolled the scroll and publicly read from what we refer to as the sixty-first chapter of that prophetic book.

Because Luke paints such a wonderful word-picture, in my imagination I can see Jesus standing on the teaching stone, possibly close to the Moses seat, facing the leaders of that

tiny village. His listeners were people who knew Him well. Some of them would have grown up with Jesus, while others were old enough to remember Him as a young boy and young adult working in His father's carpenter shop.

They would have heard about His growing impact in the region and been eager to hear their hometown boy. I can see the Jewish men gently rocking back and forth. I can envision heads solemnly bow as Jesus tenderly but authoritatively recited the first two verses of Isaiah sixty-one:

***The Spirit of the Lord God
is upon Me,
Because the Lord anointed Me
To bring good news to
the humble;
He has sent Me to bind up the
brokenhearted,
To proclaim release to captives
And freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year
of the Lord.***

I can imagine His voice bouncing off the block walls of the synagogue, as each word hung in the air. Isaiah prophesied that someday, the long-awaited Messiah—the Savior of Israel—would arrive and proclaim this amazing truth of freedom and deliverance.

Did those in attendance that Sabbath morning realize that the Spirit of the Lord was upon the familiar young man speaking to them? Did they understand that Jesus would fulfill the prophesied words of Isaiah recorded seven centuries earlier? Did the atmosphere change as He pronounced the Good News? Did they realize that the promised Messiah was essentially launching His public ministry that day?

I trust that most, if not all, in attendance were familiar with the words of Isaiah. Many of them could probably mouth the words as Jesus read them aloud. When Jesus began the second verse, I can only imagine His listeners' surprise as he stopped reciting the prophet's words in mid-sentence.

Was there something wrong? Did one of the synagogue leaders command Him to stop? Reading Luke's account, I can almost feel the tension when Jesus stopped reading. Luke describes the scene this way: "He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all the people in the synagogue were intently directed at Him" (Luke 4:20).

THE PROPHETIC WORD MADE TRUE

In verse 21, Jesus dropped the bombshell. He said to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

That statement provoked amazement as the crowd grappled with His words, saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22). Jesus then confronted the hardness of their hearts by citing examples of God's prophets being rejected by the very Jews they were sent to address. But He passed through their midst and went on His way" (Luke 4:28-30).

The uproar that ensued is palpable in Luke's recounting of that day. "...all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city and brought Him to the crest of the hill on which their city had been built, so that they could throw Him down from the cliff. But He passed through their midst and went on His way" (Luke 4:28-30).

At the beginning of this article, I asked a simple question: did Jesus Himself ever speak about, or give a clue to, His eventual return, His second Advent, His Second Coming? Yes, He did. In fact, I believe that is the reason He stopped reading in the middle of the second verse of Isaiah 61.

In Jesus' first Advent, He came to earth as a servant. He came to heal the brokenhearted, to set people free from bondage, and to make the blind see and the lame walk. However, when He returns, He will fulfill the rest of Isaiah's prophecy.

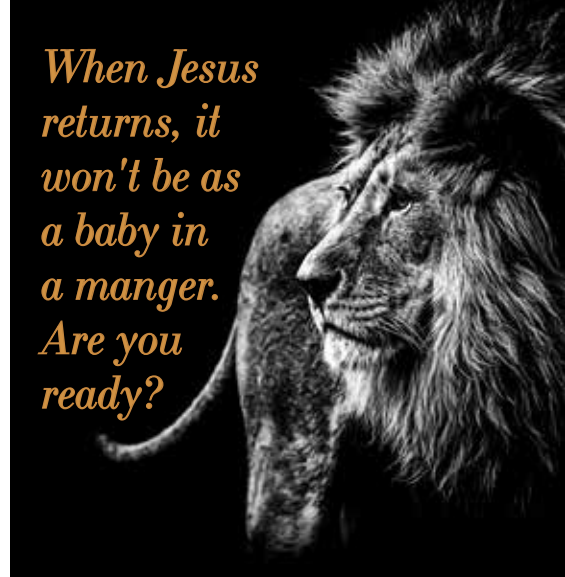
What Jesus did not say that amazing Shabbat service, was that He was also proclaiming "the day of vengeance of our God" in that tiny synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. That part of Isaiah's prophecy still awaits fulfillment. But when Jesus comes again, He will come as the Righteous Judge and the day of repentance will be over.

ANTICIPATION OF GREAT JOY

Two thousand years ago, Jesus came as a suffering servant. The prophesied sacrificial lamb, His innocent blood was shed to cover the sins of the guilty—meaning your sins and my sins. But when the day comes for His return, He will come as the Lion of Judah. He will execute God's wrath on a world that has sadly rejected His free gift of salvation. As God told his prophet Isaiah to proclaim, the day of grace will turn into the day of vengeance.

Each Christmas we celebrate the miraculous birth of our Lord and Savior. On that momentous night when Jesus was born, an angel appeared to shepherds near Bethlehem. Luke tells us that the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you

When Jesus returns, it won't be as a baby in a manger. Are you ready?



good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:9-11).

It is fitting to anticipate and celebrate Christmas, the day commemorating Jesus' first coming, with great joy. But we should be just as excited that He is coming again. In that small intimate synagogue in Nazareth on a Sabbath morning, Jesus told the world that He is coming again and that He will finish what He started. Fulfilling the remaining portion of Isaiah 61:2, He will execute "the day of vengeance of our God." Look up, for our Redemption draws near!




EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

Dr. David Bowen is the Senior Pastor of Standing Stones Community Church in Phoenix, AZ. He also founded the church's radio ministry, Interpreting the Times.



The Inbox

TIM MOORE


 *Christmas, at one time, meant a lot to me and I usually ended up sick because I overdid it.*

I have learned to walk away from what I felt was expected of me. I, now, recognize Christ's birth by giving gifts of baked goods to neighbors, etc.

Your explanation of when Christ was born goes along with some other teachings I have heard and I think it's a correct one.

However, since we do not know the exact date of Jesus' birth, shouldn't we just celebrate His birth each and every day and be thankful for it?

- Patricia W. (Christ in Prophecy blog)

 Patricia has the right idea in two regards: we don't know the exact date of Jesus' birth and we should be thankful every day.

Having said that, human beings are made in such a way that we need to remind ourselves from time to time of what is most important in our lives.

Husbands and wives should honor and cherish each other throughout the year, but the husband who does not remember his wife's birthday or their wedding anniversary will likely disappoint his beloved.

That is not to say that Jesus craves special adoration on a particular day or that God is upset if we do not com-

memorate certain key events of our faith on a particular day. Paul made that clear in Romans when he wrote, "One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord..." (Romans 14:5-6a). He simply emphasized that we should worship Christ freely and refrain from judging one another.



God Himself instituted times of reflection and celebration. He instructed the Jews to celebrate Passover every year and to place stones from the Jordan River in a pile. Jesus told His followers to commemorate His sacrificial death through communion. These memorials were not instituted to remind God of His mighty deeds, but to remind us.

Patricia's question is valid, but some who find fault with others regarding the day they commemorate Jesus' birth or His resurrection—or

the food they eat or don't eat—miss the point altogether. Similarly, the apostles addressed the threat of division over issues like keeping the Jewish dietary laws and circumcision. Peter asking rhetorically, "why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10).

Even the complaint that Christmas (and Easter too, for that matter) is associated with a date that harkens back to pagan festivals overlooks God's promise in Revelation 21:5: "Behold, I am making all things new." Just as He redeems and purifies each of us to be holy unto the Lord—and will someday make cooking pots and horses bells "holy to the LORD" (Zechariah 14:20), He can redeem any day and be glorified by any heartfelt praise.

So, whenever you choose to gather with family and friends to celebrate the first Advent of Christ, echo the words of the heavenly host who appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Luke 2:13-14). Then, take the opportunity to tell your loved ones that you are looking forward to the glorious return of our King of kings and Lord of lords!



Who Needs Christ at Christmas?

ROBERT J. MORGAN



EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

Robert J. Morgan is the teaching pastor of the Donelson Fellowship in Nashville, TN and a best-selling author.

Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about Him.
John 12:41

In 2013, an atheist group paid to put up one of those electronic billboards in Times Square. It flashed a question to the pedestrians below: "Who Needs Christ During Christmas?" The billboard then flashed the atheists' answer to their own question: "Nobody."

Well, the atheists are half right. They are asking the right question, but their answer is wrong. The correct answer is: "Everyone."

Perhaps those who put up the sign have never investigated the evidence for the historical reality of the person of Jesus Christ and the remarkable way in which his coming fulfilled the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The people of our Lord's own day were skeptical too. As he entered Jerusalem at the beginning of Passion Week, many people were saying: "Who needs Christ? Nobody." But the apostle John pointed out that everyone needs Christ, and that the evidence for the person of Christ is as clear and accessible as opening the book of Isaiah, which was written seven hundred years before the birth of our Lord. Isaiah saw his glory and spoke about him. Isaiah is so Christ-centered that it has been called the Fifth Gospel.

All the Messianic predictions in the writings of Isaiah are worthy of careful study, but here are some rich samples:

1. His Virgin Birth

Isaiah 7:14: *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

2. His Galilean Upbringing

Isaiah 9:1: *In the future He will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light had dawned... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*



3. His Spirit-Anointed Personality

Isaiah 11:1-5: A shoot will come from the stump of Jesse, from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

4. His Swallowing Up Death on a Mountain

Isaiah 25:6-8: On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich foods for all peoples... On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces...

5. His Flint-like Determination to Prevail Through Suffering

Isaiah 50:6-8: I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

6. His Cross and Resurrection

Isaiah 52:13–53:12: He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was

oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.... He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.... After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear his sins.

7. His Transforming Impact

Isaiah 61:1-3: The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and to provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of despair.

Conclusion: In the passages referred to above, which are small portion of all the Messianic predictions in the Old Testament, we learn the Messiah would:

- Be born of a virgin.
- Be named Immanuel.
- Be God with us.
- Come from the line of Jesse and David.
- Hail from Galilee.
- Be the Light to the Gentiles.
- Be the Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Be anointed by the Holy Spirit.
- Possess remarkable traits of character and personality.
- Rendezvous with destiny on a mountain.
- Remove the shroud that enfolds all people.
- Swallow up death forever.
- Be beaten, abused, and spat upon.
- Set His face like a flint in the face of overwhelming suffering.
- Be rejected.
- Be despised.
- Be stricken by God.
- Be pierced for our transgressions.
- Bear the iniquity of our sins.
- Be led like a lamb to the slaughter.
- Bear His suffering in silence.
- Be executed with criminals.
- Be buried in a rich man's tomb.
- Rise again and see the light of life.
- Justify many.
- Be exalted on high.
- Have His message of salvation be proclaimed to the broken-hearted and prisoners and those who mourn.
- Give the oil of joy instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of despair.
- Make His followers like fruitful trees, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor.

*What Child Is This?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard
and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary.*



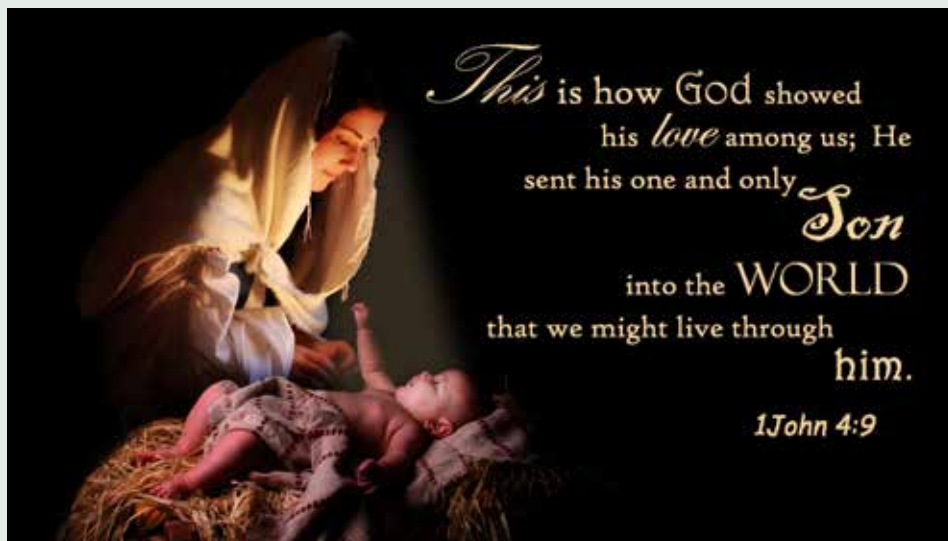
Mary Pondered These Things in Her Heart

ANN WIESE TOADVINE

As a mother of six and grandmother of five (so far), I have had the privilege to hold each of our precious newborns in my arms. It has always been deeply meaningful to me to imagine Mary “pondering in her heart” as she held her newborn.

The anticipation of the birth of a child is intense and exciting—like nothing else in our human experience. How perfect that Jesus, the Messiah, the Living Word, became flesh through

ance and greeting. She was perplexed. When Gabriel instructed Mary not to fear and explained that she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus, Mary did not faint, but asked a very good question: “How can this be?” Gabriel explained the “holy details” and told of her cousin Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Mary’s response was a beautiful example of submissive obedience, thankfulness and joy.



the normal, yet incredible, event of childbirth. And how perfectly natural, yet poignant, it is for a mother to hold her newborn, reflect on the miraculous gift of a new life, and ponder.

I do not wish to ascribe to Mary any experiences or qualities that she, as our Lord’s mother, did not possess. But I ask that you go with me for a moment back to the early days of the New Testament. Gabriel visited Mary in Nazareth, and we are told that Mary was greatly troubled by his appear-

MARY’S EXPECTATION

As a good Jewish girl, Mary would have been familiar with the prophecies regarding the Messiah. After learning about her singular role in bearing Immanuel, she had a few months to think about and make many preparations for Jesus’ birth. Then, when God orchestrated the census requiring Joseph to travel to Bethlehem to be registered because he was in the family line of David, she accompanied her husband on that arduous journey.



When I was expecting my fourth child, I gave great thought to Mary’s pregnancy and subsequent delivery in a humble location with a manger for a bed. My due date was December 21st, and we were expecting a boy.

All the events of the season caused me to reflect on Mary in a way I never had before. I had not considered all the challenges Mary must have experienced as a new wife and young mother until that Christmas season during my own pregnancy.

The Bible does not mention Mary’s discomfort in her last trimester of pregnancy, the challenges inherent in her trek to Bethlehem, or her disappointment over finding no room in the inn. My appreciation for Mary’s obedience and submission to the will of God grew immensely.

Isn’t it amazing that Christ made His appearance on Earth as the Baby Jesus through childbirth? Apart from Gabriel telling Mary not to fear (a common reaction when faced with an angelic being), Luke and Matthew do not record the fears of Mary. It does, however, mention her reaction to the shepherds’ visit. After all Mary had

endured, it must have been such an encouragement to hear the shepherds share about their encounter with the angels. “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19 NIV)

THE MIRACLE OF FORESIGHT

Today, with 4D ultrasounds, parents can find out so much information before a baby is even born – the gender, precise physical details, the measurements, the weight, even what the child looks like!

In a sense, the prophecies laid out in Old Testament Scriptures are similar to a 4D ultrasound. All the important details regarding our Savior’s birth were there, including: “seed of a woman” (Genesis 3:15), “from the tribe of Judah” (Genesis 49:10), “heir to the



throne of David” (Isaiah 9:7), “born in Bethlehem” (Micah 5:2), “time of His birth” (Daniel 9:25), and “born of a Virgin” (Isaiah 7:14), just to list a few. God the Father set the stage and sent His Son just as He said He would.

An online search will quickly reveal all the prophetic Scriptures regarding the Lord’s birth. Still, I find it astonishing that although the Jewish leaders had the Messianic prophecies available to them, they missed His arrival. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11, KJV).

DO WE LIVE EXPECTANTLY?

But before we hastily criticize the Pharisees and the Sadducees for refusing to recognize the signs and acknowledge the Messiah’s First Coming, perhaps we need to examine ourselves. Do we discern the signs of the times? And, when the Lord returns, will we be ready and waiting expectantly?

I eagerly awaited the birth of each my children. I worked hard to ready our home, which required effort, but was a joy-filled preparation. As a mother, I prepared the nursery, cleaned everything, shopped for groceries, stocked the pantry, caught up on the laundry and ironing, and packed my bag. In the same way, are we preparing for, and anticipating our Lord’s Second Coming?

We have all the information we need in Scripture telling us of His Second Coming, we have every reason to long for His appearance and His eternal rule—but are we joyfully anticipating and diligently preparing for Him to come again?

BIRTH PAINS AS A SIGN

Interestingly, the imagery of pregnancy and labor is used in describing the



times leading up to Christ’s Second Coming. The Lord clearly elevated/honored the life-bearing role women played throughout the Bible—from Creation and the promise to Eve that her Seed would crush Satan’s head, to Mary bearing the Christ Child and placing Him in a manger, to the description of all creation groaning as in labor, to the birth pangs that will proceed our Lord’s return (Matthew 24:8).

Paul tells us in Romans 8:22 (NIV), “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” These birth pains have been going on for a long time! Have you noticed that these birth pains are getting stronger and closer together? And while trouble, turmoil, and persecution surely will affect us before His return, doesn’t it also indicate that the Lord has given us ample notice and we need to be ready?

In another context, the suddenness of the coming judgment is likened to labor pains that will catch those not watching for Him unaware.

In 1st Thessalonians, Paul tells us to encourage one another in looking for the return of Christ (4:16-18). He specifically says that we who are of the light and of the day should discern the season of His return (5:4-6).

But for those committed to darkness, “destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape” (5:3).

Perhaps even the pain of the age we

are living in is a good thing—if only to get our attention. Let us allow the “pain” of these last days to remind us to live faithfully, demonstrate our love for our Lord by serving others, and eagerly look forward to seeing Him face to face.

CHRIST THE LORD WAS BORN TODAY— HALLELUJAH!

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we ready our churches, homes and businesses with decorations, seasonal music, and manger scenes. We have parties, programs, and services to commemorate Christ’s birth. We purchase and exchange gifts. Some of us still even send Christmas cards. We ready our hearts with prophetic Scriptures and their fulfilled verses which have become beautifully familiar to us.

God revealed in Scripture all we need to know about the birth of Christ in a manger and about His Second Coming as a Conquering King. Are we pondering these things in our hearts as we eagerly looking forward to His glorious Second Coming?



EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

Ann Wiese Toadvine is an accomplished pianist who has taught privately and at the college level. A mother of six and grandmother of five, she has a servant’s heart and serves faithfully in her local church.



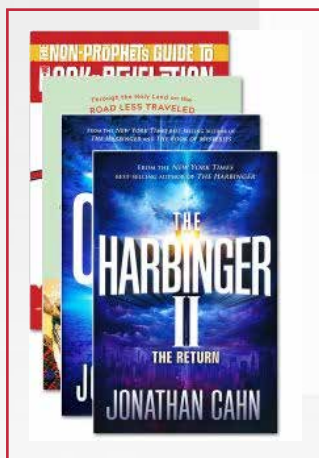
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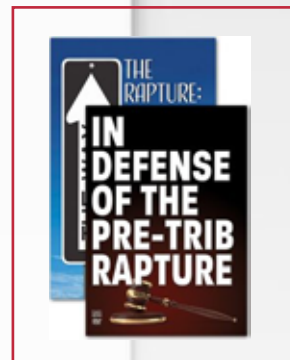
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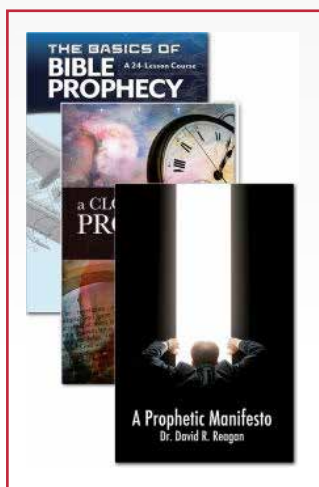
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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

TIM MOORE

Early this year, a friend told me that he realized that 2022 sounded like “2020—II”. Given the upheaval 2020 represented in hindsight, he dreaded the thought of reliving that *annus horribilis* (to quote Queen Elizabeth’s

description of another horrible year).

And yet, 2022 brought challenges of its own. The chaos and division that marked 2020 has only metastasized.

Political consensus seems to be a quaint idea from yesteryear, and un-

biased media outlets no longer exist.

Even as this magazine goes to print, the 2022 election portends great impact on our Nation.

Will America step back from “progressive” policies that are tearing us

NATURE



In spite of media hype about “climate change”, the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration predicted a less active hurricane season than in 2021 (which

was almost as active as 2020 and 1916—previous record years). As of mid-October, only one major storm—Ian—has impacted the United States.



Supply chains of food are being disrupted around the world and the United States government

remains fixated on promoting liberal policies at home and abroad, while recurring drought is subjecting millions of people to severe famine in places like Sudan.



SOCIETY



Parents eager to send their children back to school and reestablish a sense of normalcy have found that school systems around the country are promoting LGBTQ+ ideologies—even to the point of telling students they do not have to disclose their transgender inclinations to their parents.



Kelisa Wing

Reflecting the misguided effort to racialize every institution, the Department of Defense has jumped on the progressive bandwagon. Ke-

lisa Wing, the “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer” of the DOD agency that oversees instruction for the children of military personnel, says that “racism is ingrained into the very fabric of our society” and describes herself as a “woke administrator” who is “exhausted at these white folx [sic].” At the Air Force Academy, officially-sanctioned “Diversity and Inclusion” cadets police their classmates.

SPIRITUAL



The LGBTQ+ revolution has now infected the Mennonite Church USA. Bowing to the same pressure that has led other denominations to

abandon biblical sexual morality, the MCUSA has also declared its support for defunding the police and an anti-Israel agenda—leading many local Mennonite churches to denounce the national organization.



The Satanic Church in America is redoubling its efforts to establish “After School Satan Clubs” in public schools around the country, even in small-town locations like Greensboro, NC.

Have I not commanded you?
BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.
Do not be terrified;
DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED,
for the LORD your God
WILL BE WITH YOU
wherever you go.”

apart? Will we double down on the secularization and paganization of our society?

We know the trajectory the world is on, because God's prophetic Word

tells us what to anticipate in the end times. Even as the Signs of the Times multiply all around us, we can take courage, because Jesus is coming soon!

Maranatha—come quickly,
Lord Jesus!

POLITICS



With gas supplies from Russia to Europe interrupted by Russia's aggression toward Ukraine, the Eastern Mediterranean (EastMed) pipeline that offers to provide vast quantities of energy from Israel's offshore gas fields is seen as increasingly urgent, but the current US administration went out of its way to withdraw support in 2022. The specter of competition may motivate Russia to turn its attention toward Israel to "capture spoil and seize plunder" in fulfillment of Psalm 83:12.



Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill recently said, "We believe that this sacrifice washes away all sins that a person has committed." His disingenuous endorsement of Russian military actions in Ukraine offers false hope to Russian conscripts and contradicts the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

TECHNOLOGY



Scientists/Researchers at the South Korean Advanced Institute of Technology have developed tattoo ink that can monitor a person's vital signs and upload biometric data to a computer. Such technology is developing very rapidly and portends the mark of the beast that the Antichrist will mandate.



The precipitous rise in artificial intelligence and autonomous machines are sparking an increased aspiration among many secularists for what they label "transhumanism"—the ability to defeat death through increased intelligence and longevity.

*"The world is growing
gloriously dark!"*

- Pastor Adrian Rogers

ISRAEL



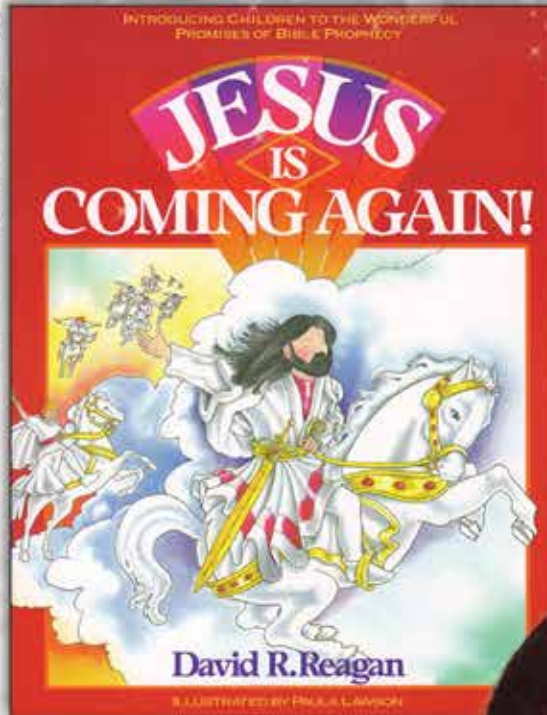
Tourism is finally rebounding after a dramatic drop-off during the Covid shut-downs of 2020 and 2021. Still down from a 2019 high of 4.4 million visitors, about 2.5 million people visited the Holy Land in 2022—even as Palestinians threaten to foment increased violence as Arab nations distance themselves from unrealistic Palestinian demands.



After ceaselessly promoting propaganda condemning Israel as "the world's greatest violator of human rights," the United Nations Human Rights Council could not muster enough votes to even discuss its own investigation condemning China's "crimes against humanity"—officially ignoring China's genocide against its own Uyghur people.



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