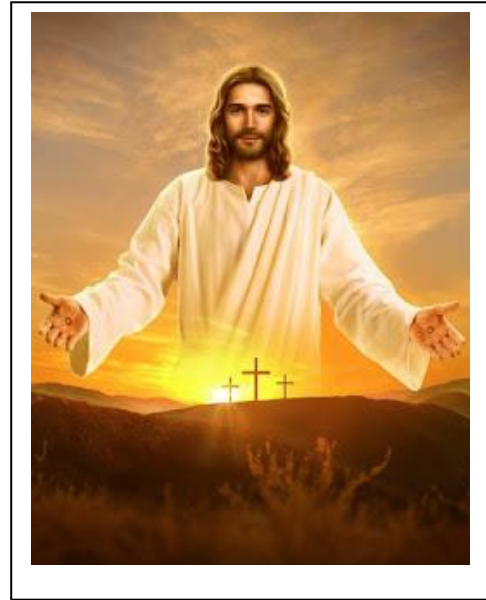


SUNDAY 18TH December 2022

Why call Jesus Lord and Saviour?

I guess most of us have seen the images of the Nativity as we move around. They look so nice don't they – a happy baby Jesus – no sign of any crying, Mary and Joseph looking on so calm, quiet animals, a stable that



looks pretty light and clean. It is interesting the way we have changed this scene to make it more palatable for us.

Luke's gospel provides us with images of the events surrounding the initial hours of the birth of Jesus in which God came to dwell with us.

Slide 1

We have Mary and Joseph finding no room in the Inn, yet the correct translation of this word is “Guest room”. Houses in that time had guest rooms and Joseph would have had relatives living in Bethlehem but because of the influx of people, the only place for them to stay was in the lower level of the house. This was often built into a hill or was a cave where the animals were placed at night to protect them from predators. Animals provided the people with meat, milk, labour and fertilizer,

Slide 2

Because the animals were fed in the cave, feeding troughs known as mangers were placed in the shelter. These were usually made of mud or stone and this is what was likely used as a bed for the newborn King. Placing Jesus in swaddling clothes and lying Him in a manger sent the Lord's message to Israel about the nation's relationship with God. That is why Luke mentions the manger three times in relating the events of this special day.

Gabriel told Mary that her son would be great, would be called the "Son of the Most High" and would sit on the throne of David (Luke 1:32).

Normally such a monarch was born in a royal setting, yet we find the Rescuer of the world lying in a feeding trough. Mangers were not ordinarily used as a bed for an infant and certainly not for an infant with royal blood flowing in His veins.

Jesus in the manger like the food in the feeding trough – would be Israel's nourishment. Yet would Israel understand well enough to recognise the Anointed One?

Do we understand well enough to recognise God's anointed one this Christmas? Babies are cute – so vulnerable, so innocent – yet Jesus was no ordinary baby.

I wonder if Mary and Joseph knew that they were fulfilling prophecy as contained in the book of Micah?

Micah 5:2 says: *But you, Bethlehem... though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me One who will be Ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.*”

Do you notice how the verse ends? “**His origins are from of old, from ancient times.**”

As Micah says: God’s promised King is very old. In fact the word there for **ancient times** is the word for **eternity**. So the verse is saying, ***God’s promised King who’s going to be born in Bethlehem, He is God’s eternal King.***

Slide 3

God and His King Jesus go WAY BACK. And I mean WAY WAY WAY back. Before there were any people or planets or protons – God and His eternal King Jesus existed. And then 700 years after Micah, that Eternal King is born in the little town of Bethlehem. So the Baby in the manger is Ancient – He’s from eternity!!!

Jesus Christ is not 2000 years old. He is MUCH more ancient than that. He is God’s Eternal King. There has never been a time when Jesus did not exist with His Father. So on that first Christmas, the Baby wriggling in the manger is ancient – an eternal King.

In Philippians 2:5-8 we read what Jesus was thinking.

“Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man He humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.”

And so Jesus chose to be born. **Who here chose to get born??** We didn't decide to get born. I'm guessing if we had been offered the chance to get born, we would have taken it. But Jesus is the Ancient Ruler, God's Eternal King – He's been around forever. If He gets born into the human race it's only because He chooses to get born into the human race. And that's what He did – He chose to get born.

But I suggest that if we were in His shoes, we would never have chosen what He chose. If we were in very nature God, if we were the Eternal King, surrounded by the worship of heaven, in the direct presence of our Father who we adored with all our heart and had done forever – if we were in Jesus' shoes we would not have chosen what Jesus chose. Because this is how Jesus considered things: Being in very nature God, He chose not to grasp at His privileges or to exploit them. Instead He chose total self-emptying.

Slide 4

Jesus the Eternal King, chose to be born. Chose to empty Himself in service, He chose to take the form of a servant and humbled Himself. He left the riches of heaven to become poor. He left the throne to

become a servant. He exchanged being Commander in Chief for becoming obedient – even to death on the cross.

Imagine at this very moment, you are looking at Jesus in Heaven with His Father and what He was surrounded with. Then imagine you are looking at the baby Jesus lying in a manger. The two images – a King in Heaven and a King as a vulnerable baby boy. It is like watching a man falling. Because Jesus came from the highest heights. And on Christmas morning you see Him heading down. Down, down, down all the way to death.

And all of this happens – the crib and the cross happens – because, Jesus made a decision. He considered His options. He weighed it up. On the one hand He could stay in heaven and hold onto His divine privileges. But Jesus thought No. Because staying on the throne would not show us the true nature of God. The true nature of God is shown by climbing down off the throne, pouring Himself out as a servant, wriggling in the manger and writhing on the cross. **That's what shows us the very nature of God!**

Not grasping but giving. Not exploiting but emptying. Not being served but serving. Not domination but humility.

Jesus has served you and me in the most incredible way. That baby in the manger is the Lord of heaven stooping down to serve us.

It shows us something very important. It shows us the love that Jesus has for us. Jesus came down from the heights to meet us where we are

– in the depths. That’s how Jesus uses His power, to stoop, to serve, to save.

Isn’t that the most wonderful thing in the world, that He would do that for us? God the Father thinks it’s the greatest thing ever.

In Philippians 2: 9-11 we read: Therefore God exalted [Jesus] to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

One day everyone will bow the knee to Jesus, the LORD, and they will do so because He poured out His life to death. And when the Father sees that He says “YES! That IS what it means to be LORD. And He exalts Jesus to His right hand to tell the universe: This Servant is LORD. This is what it means to be in very nature God.

And one day every person who has ever lived will bow before Jesus, the Divine Servant. Whether they love Him or hate Him, EVERYONE will be flattened by the glory of the Servant King.

When He returns one day, still bearing the scars of His crucifixion, we will be overwhelmed. Everyone in this room will bow to Jesus. Whether gladly or reluctantly. Everyone outside this room will bow to Jesus. We won’t be able to help ourselves. The power of His Self-Emptying Majesty will force us down on our faces to confess

that this – the Most Humble Servant there’s ever been – is LORD of all.

I wonder how you are seeing that little baby in the manger now and realising for the first time, who He is and realising that He chose to come, chose to serve, chose even to die – and He did it for you and I.

Maybe you’ve never worshipped Christ the LORD before. Well maybe today you realise: life’s not about you, it’s about Him. He is worthy of worship. And maybe you’ve realised God’s not aloof. He draws near. And maybe you’re feeling Him drawing near. The good news is that Jesus comes to all – including the plain and the ordinary. He comes to anyone with a heart humble enough to accept Him.

Whoever you are, whatever you do you can have Jesus in your life. Jesus offers more than temporary political or physical changes. He offers us new hearts that will last for eternity. Perhaps in your heart right now you’re beginning to worship Jesus. If so, I’d love to talk with you about this.

This Christmas – rejoice that God really is that good. Don’t think dark thoughts about God. Don’t wonder whether He loves, whether He cares, whether He’s interested. Christmas tells you He loves, He cares, He hears and He comes. This Christmas let us worship Christ the LORD.