

## WORSHIPING ON THE LORD'S DAY

December 21, 2014

*Worship, as God intended, is a supernatural event. As we enter into this service of worship, we cross the threshold of the secular to the sacred, from the common to the uncommon, from the profane to the holy. Prepare yourself therefore for this most holy convocation!*

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Prelude

Worship Theme

Christ is Meek

2 Corinthians 10:1-2: "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ- I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! I ask that when I am present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh."

**God Calls us to Worship Before the Cross** Ps. 96:7-10

+We Adore Him

Hymn #208, "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

We Confess Our Sin

Almighty God! When tried by the lofty and unerring standard of Your Word, our best actions and duties are marred with defilement! How much self-seeking and self-glorying! And how little animated by the predominating motive of love to You, and singleness of eye to Your service!

Transform us more and more into Your own image. May we know more and more the happiness of true holiness- that we are really blessed in seeking to walk so as to please You. May the power of grace wax stronger and stronger, and the power of sin wax weaker and weaker. May trials and crosses become light and easy to us, when borne in a spirit of meek, unrepining submission to Your Divine will. May this quiet every doubt and misgiving: "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things!" In Jesus' name, Amen!

We Thank Him For His Forgiveness

Hymn #271, "Sing, Choirs Of New Jerusalem"

**God Calls us to Worship Thru Dedication** 2 Cor. 9:12-14

We Give Him Our Offering & Concerns

We Give Him Ourselves

Hymn #529, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

**God Calls us to Worship Thru Fellowship**

Heb. 4:12

We Read His Word

Sermon

\*We Partake Of The Lord's Supper

Hymn #12, "Exalt The Lord"

**God Blesses us in the Benediction**

Welcome and Announcements

Postlude

(Containers have been placed at the front for communion cups and small trash)

+You are invited to raise your hands during the prayer of adoration.

\*Visitors, please see note below on the Lord's Supper.

## The People who Missed Christmas, Pt. 3

Select

Study Notes for December 21, 2014

### I. Introduction

### II. The People who Missed Christmas, Select.

- A. The Self-Absorbed, Lk. 2:1-7.
- B. The Fearful, Mt. 2:1-8, 13, 16.

### C. The Idolatrous, Lk. 2:1-7.

#### 1. The Act of their Neglect, Lk. 2:6-7.

Lk. 2:6-7 details the events of the first Christmas day. And as we have seen, this **passage** is explicitly concerned with a lonely birth; this is clear from how Luke chose to record Christ's birth...

Leon Morris wrote, "The birth of God's Son is described very simply... That Mary wrapped the child herself points to a lonely birth." (Luke, TNTC, p. 100)

G. Campbell Morgan made the following observation based on how Luke recorded the event, "...Oh, the pity of it, the tragedy of it, the loneliness of it; that in that hour of all hours, when womanhood should be surrounded by the tenderest care, she was alone. **The method of the writer is very distinct. She with her own hands wrapped the Baby round with those swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger. There was no one to do it for her.**" (*The Gospel According to Luke*, emphasis added, p. 36)

J. B. Green speaking of the multitude of Angels appearing to the Shepherds in Lk. 2:8ff wrote, "The wealth of these acclamations stands in contrast to the poverty of the sign, a baby in a manger, wrapped in bands of cloth. What sort of sign is this? The sign to the shepherds does not take the form of an extraordinary demonstration of divine power- as was the case with Zechariah's muteness and Elizabeth's conception... **The sign helps to bring out the meaning of the message.** In 2:7, 12, 16, **this is accomplished by drawing out the significance, via scriptural echoes, of this oxymoron:** the Savior-Messiah-Lord wrapped in strips of cloth lying in a feeding trough, 'for no king has had a different beginning of existence' than to be 'nursed with care in swaddling clothes' (Wis 7:4-5)." (*The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, emphasis added, p. 135)

What a contrast to the celebrations that accompanied the birth of royalty in that day. Josephus records the circumstances surrounding the birth of one of Ptolemy's sons in *Antiquities* 12.4.7-9 which illustrates the lavish celebrations that occurred on account of the birth of a king at the time...

...yet in Bethlehem on that first Christmas there is nothing but a deafening silence. Think of it! A multitude of Roman soldiers and officials were present (on account of the census), and yet, NOT one observed the advent of "the king of the Jews," paid tribute, came by, offered a toast to His health, or sacrificed an animal to God!

Why? It is tempting to plead ignorance for the Roman officials. Yet as we saw last week, Mt. 2:1-3 indicates that Herod, and thus the Romans, knew of the birth of this King. Herod even considered Him to be the Messiah! Perhaps then it was on account of hostility? No, the Romans never considered the Jews a threat. Why then did Rome miss the coming of this King?

#### 2. The Cause of their Neglect, Lk. 2:1-2.

This verse contains what most consider to be the reason the numerous Roman soldiers and officials (stationed in and around Bethlehem) missed the birth of Christ: Caesar Augustus! Consider...

##### a. The Background

- 1. **His Beginnings:** Augustus Caesar stands as the greatest leader that Rome, and perhaps the world, would ever know. He lived from 63 B.C. to 14 A.D. during which time he reigned for 55 years (43 B.C. to 14 A.D).
- 2. **His Advent as the Leader of Rome:** It was under his reign that Rome went from being a Republic (ruled by many) to an Empire (ruled by one)- which was no small thing...

3. **His Regency:** Now if the advent of Augustus's reign was shrewd, his regency as Caesar was little short of amazing...

*The Roman Temple of Janus Quirinus*

- b. **The Neglect:** In light of all of this, it is little wonder that when God became man, every Roman soldier and official missed Him. Rather than...

...the Romans viewed Jesus' birth as just one more number in their census! Why? We can only surmise! Yet it is reasonable to suggest- from our knowledge of the Roman system and culture- that it was on account of their Idolatry! Christ did not fit into the Roman pantheon. The Romans had Augustus Caesar: he was their stability, strength, hope, joy, and god! What need was there for a "King of the Jews"?

### Toward Implementation

1. All of this raises a very important question: "Will you miss Christ on account of idolatry?"

The classic definition of Idolatry comes from Tozer, "Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilized peoples are therefore free from it. **The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him. It begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has taken place.**" (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, emphasis added, pp. 11-12)

2. Is it possible for a child of God to fall into the sin of Idolatry? Indeed! Turn with me to Ez. 8:1-4, 7-12...
3. The Romans missed Christ because He did not fit into their pantheon. The elders of Israel missed Christ because He did not fit into their expectations for God. And many this day in the church miss Christ on account of a false-view of Christ (cf. Dan. 10:5-6)...
4. Now as you reflect upon the glory and greatness of our Lord, let me ask you how much time have you spent this past year endeavoring to bless God? Serve Him? Minister to Him? Please Him? In your walk with God, have you been self-centered or God-centered this past year? How much of your prayer life consisted of praise this past week? Or did you even pray? ...and you and I wonder why we struggle when it comes to the things of the Lord?!
5. Unless Christ be lifted up in our lives, we will never be healthy in our walks with God! We will fail to grow as we ought! Our fellowship will be stunted! And we will miss Christ! And again, what do we mean by "miss Christ"? You won't perish in your sin, but...

...in contrast, if we will bow before the Lord and entrust our souls to Him; if we make Him our delight and glory in God (Is. 40:31; 8:14; Ps. 46:1).