

CHRISTMAS ACCORDING TO ISAIAH

MARKETPLACE SERIES

Christmas is a time of great joy and thanksgiving for all that God has provided for us. It is also a time for family gatherings and there can be grieving, pain and even bitterness that overshadows this joy. It seems that I have heard the Christmas story of Jesus' birth many times. I know it. I need a new and fresh look to stir me out of my complacency and break the cycle of just enduring another busy and sometimes painful Christmas!

Why is the Christmas story so powerful? This is a story of hope that answers the basic questions that every human on earth needs to hear. Who is God? Who am I? How does He feel about me? How we respond to these questions informs every decision we will ever make. It will affect our attitudes and behaviors in every way even subconsciously. Most of us don't want to grapple with these questions because we don't like where they might lead us. These questions are all answered in the truth about Christmas and we can find peace in the answers.

Let's go back in time 700 years **before** the birth of Jesus to the time of the prophet Isaiah. This was a time where God's chosen people, the Israelites, had rebelled for generations and God was in the process of delivering them into captivity for their sin. It was also a time where God was being very honest with His people but also casting a grand vision for all humanity. Let us discover the truth about Christmas!

Who is our God?

- *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever. – Isa. 40:8*
- *Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor? – Isa. 40:13*
- *He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. – Isa. 40:22*
- *I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. – Isa. 44:6b*
- *Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I declare the end from the beginning, and ancient times from what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and all My good pleasure I will accomplish.' – Isa. 46:9,10*
- *This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go." – Isa. 48:17*

- *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” – Isa. 55:8, 9*
- *so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. – Isa. 55:11*
- *For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. – Isa. 64:3*
- *This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?” – Isa. 66:1*

Q. Which of these characteristics seems overwhelming to you?

Who are we? (Our sin condition)

- *The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught. – Isa. 29:13*
- *But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses. – Isa. 43:24b*
- *You were secure in your wickedness; you said, ‘No one sees me.’ Your wisdom and knowledge led you astray; you told yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me.’ But disaster will come upon you; – Isa. 47:10,11*
- *But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment. – Isa. 50:11*
- *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. – Isa. 53:6*
- *For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: – Isa. 59:12*
- *All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations – Isa. 65:2*

Q. What is a common theme in our sin condition?

What do we deserve?

- *Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground. – Isa. 45:9*
- *Your nakedness will be exposed and your shame uncovered. I will take vengeance; I will spare no one.” – Isa. 47:3*
- *“There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.” – Isa. 48:22*
- *I will expose your righteousness and your works, and they will not benefit you. – Isa. 57:12*
- *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. – Isa. 59:2*
- *Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them. – Isa. 63:10*
- *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. – Isa. 64:6*

Q. How does God view our sin?

How does God feel about us?

- *I said, ‘You are My servant.’ I have chosen and not rejected you. 10Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will surely help you; I will uphold you with My right hand of righteousness. – Isa. 41:9,10*
- *Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. – Isa. 43:4*
- *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you. – Isa. 54:10*
- *Let no foreigner who is bound to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.” And let no eunuch complain, “I am only a dry tree.” – Isa. 56:3*
- *Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. 16He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. – Isa. 59:15,16*

- *As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. – Isa. 62:5*
- *These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word. – Isa. 66:2b*

Q. How do you experience and internalize these sentiments?

What has He done for us?

- *“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. – Isa. 1:18*
- *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. – Isa. 7:14*
- *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. – Isa. 9:6*
- *Do not call to mind the former things; pay no attention to the things of old. Behold, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? – Isa. 43:18,19*
- *I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. – Isa. 44:22*
- *He says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” – Isa. 49:6*
- *But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations. – Isa. 51:8b*
- *Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. – Isa. 53:12b*
- *to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever. – Isa. 56:5*
- *“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the LORD. – Isa. 59:21*
- *you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. – Isa. 62:2b*

- *They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted. – Isa. 62:12*
- *Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. – Isa. 64:4*
- *See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. – Isa. 65:17*

Q. What new thing has God done for you this year that you did not expect?

What is our response to Christmas?

- *You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. – Isa. 26:3*
- *Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding; those who complain will accept instruction. – Isa. 29:24*
- *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” – Isa. 30:21*
- *The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever. – Isa. 32:17*
- *He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure. – Isa. 33:6*
- *but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. – Isa. 40:31*
- *All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. – Isa. 40:6b*
- *I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. – Isa. 45:3*
- *And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. – Isa. 61:6*

Q. How will your attitude be changed this Christmas?

LYRIC: *How Many Kings by Down Here*

Follow the star to a place unexpected, Would you believe after all we've projected, A child in a manger?

Lowly and small, the weakest of all, Unlikeliest hero, wrapped in his mother's shawl, Just a child
Is this who we've waited for?

'Cause how many kings stepped down from their thrones?

How many lords have abandoned their homes?

How many greats have become the least for me?

And how many Gods have poured out their hearts

To romance a world that is torn all apart?

How many Fathers gave up their Sons for me?

Bringing our gifts for the newborn Savior, All that we have, whether costly or meek. Because we believe

Gold for His honor and frankincense for His pleasure, And myrrh for the cross He'll suffer

Do you believe?

Is this who we've waited for?

Only one did that for me

All for me, all for you...