

This is it! The day after, the night before when it all happened! I wonder what it was like the morning after the night when Jesus was born. Mary resting after the ordeal of childbirth, admiring the perfect little life lying next to her, wondering what the future held for Him, and Joseph perhaps busy with the basics of life.

The previous night might well have been a blurred memory. What a night! The birth of a child not “theirs”, yet in every sense of the word, entrusted to them. A unique child, the only one in all of Bethlehem born the night before, who was “wrapped in swaddling clothes **AND** lying in a manger”; wasn't that the identifying sign the Angel gave the shepherds?

And the shepherds! Where did that noisy lot come from?! Both parents knew from personal experience, Angels are God's messengers, delivering His message to those who can be trusted with it. The excited shepherds could not stop talking about the angelic choir, the presence of God, and the specific message, “To you is born this day, in the City of David (Bethlehem) a Saviour, who is the Christ, the Lord God Himself!” and “you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes **AND** lying in a manger”.

Fear Not! Go and Behold your King!

“Behold”! Look at, gaze upon, look on and marvel at this child in the manger, who is, and yet is not, like any other infant; He is very different:

His coming to live among us was forecast for thousands of years in the past, with exacting detail. He came here for a specific purpose - to take upon Himself, the consequences of our separation from God through an excruciating death on a cross, then, having broken the chains of death which holds us back from fellowship with God, through His resurrection, to restore us into full fellowship with God.

George Fredric Handel captures the significance of this “Saviour, who is the Christ, the Lord God Himself”, in his touching and moving musical masterpiece, *The Messiah*

The kingdom of this world
Is become the kingdom of our Lord,
And of his Christ, and of his Christ;
And He shall reign forever and ever,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

I love Handel's expression, *The kingdom of this world, is become the kingdom of our Lord... and He shall reign forever!* There is no violence, bloodshed, mayhem, nor brute force, or power play; the kingdom of this world **becomes** the Kingdom of God!

If you read the text of Handel's *Messiah*, it will not stretch of anyone's imagination to realise, every expression in it, is a masterpiece of Christian theology and doctrine. Where does Handel get this? He has seen and encountered his Saviour, this Christ who is the Lord God Himself, as revealed in His Word, the Bible.

On the night when Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary saw for themselves what the angel had told them separately. To Joseph he said, *that which is conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit, a son whom you will call Jesus; He will save His people from their sins, which is all and everything that separates you from God, and* to Mary he said, *He will be called the Son of the Most High, and God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. Of His kingdom, there will be no end!*

On the night when Jesus was born, a band of shepherds **saw** for themselves, the Saviour who is the Christ (Messiah), the Lord God Himself.

Eight days after His birth, Joseph and Mary took the baby boy to the Temple to be named Jesus, where devout worshippers and deliverers in God's Word, Simeon and Anna, **saw** for themselves *God's salvation... prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, **and** for the glory of your people Israel.*

The community of astrologers travelled long distances to **see** the "King of the Jews" and worship Him.

Every person who had a role in the birth of Jesus, first encountered God telling them He was at work accomplishing and delivering on His covenant with us. When they acted in obedience to God's plans, God revealed to them, His purpose.

God invites us to come and see the newborn baby, the infant who will grow up to challenge the errors of our thoughts and the mistakes in our way of life, and invites us to accept Him as the Way, the Truth and the Life, who leads us to the Father.

This is the story of Christmas. The story did **not** start in the cradle, and it does not end on the cross.

The story of Christmas is the story of the Father who sacrifices His reputation and runs out and away from the safety of His home to embrace, receive, bring back home and restore the son, the child who had rejected his father and willingly run away from home.

The story of Christmas is the story of the same Father who dishonours Himself as host, and humiliates Himself as a respected elder, going out from His home into the streets where his elder son was sulking, to beg and plead with him to join the family celebration, but the elder son, who had lived in the family home all His life, never allowed himself to

experience his Father's love and as a result, misunderstood His Father to be a selfish and stingy man who never honoured his son by sharing his wealth.

The question to us this Christmas morning is, *Do you want to know God the Father? Not the indifferent God portrayed by the world, but the real Father whose love knows no bounds? The only way to know Him, is to accept God's invitation to see for yourself, the Saviour of the world, the Christ, Lord God Himself, and allow Him to reveal His true self to you?*

It will require you to trust Him, make yourself vulnerable to Him, but He is like none other. If you surrender to Him, He will not abuse your trust in Him, nor will He force His Will on you. He will not wage war against you. He will not let you suffer, and when you do, because we live in a broken world where there is suffering, He will stand with you and help you through it, but **only if you let Him.**

Behold your King!

AMEN