

CHRISTMAS HOPES AND JOYS.

– *LUKE 2:8-20.* – *DECEMBER 31.* –

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

CHRISTMAS (or Christ's festival) by general usage is celebrated on December 25th; and since its commemoration is not enjoined in the Scriptures, but is merely a voluntary commemoration of a great fact rather than of a particular date, we do well to celebrate it decorously at the usual time; – notwithstanding the fact that we disagree with the date, and hold, according to the evidences, that our Lord was born about October 1st, and that December 25th, nine months previous, was probably the date of the annunciation.* – Luke 1:30,31.

*See *MILLENNIAL DAWN*, Vol. II., p.54.

Our confidence in Jesus that he was the sent of God, the Redeemer, the Messiah, the Deliverer of his people, rests not merely upon the testimony of the apostles in the New Testament records, wonderful and convincing as these testimonies are: they gain nine-tenths of their weight and importance from the fact that they evidence the fulfilment of promises, types and prophecies given by the Lord with more or less explicitness from time to time throughout the preceding 4,000 years. He who does not discern something, at least, of the divine plan of the ages in connection with our Savior, his birth, his three and one-half years' ministry, his sacrificial death, his resurrection, his ascension, etc., fails to get the real strength of the divine revelation, designed by the Lord to be the firm foundation for his people's confidence in him and in all the glorious things which he has promised he would yet accomplish through this great Savior.

Note the original promise of the Savior shortly after sin had wounded our first parents and brought them under divine sentence. (Gen. 3:15.) Note the promise made to Abraham respecting Messiah

that he should be of his posterity. (Gen. 22:18.) Notice the same to Jacob. (Gen. 28:14.) To David. (2 Sam. 7:12-16.) **[R3115 : page 363]** Through Isaiah the prophet, his coming and his greatness are foretold. (9:6,7; 11:1-9.) Daniel, the prophet, also refers to the importance of his work of making an end of sin and bringing in everlasting righteousness, and thus sealing the visions and prophecies which the Lord had just given respecting him and the favor to come through him. (Dan. 9:24.) We recall also how he was typified in Isaac who was not only the heir of the promises made to Abraham, but who was also in a figure put to death and received again from the dead. We remember also the types and figures of the Mosaic arrangement, and how Moses himself was declared to be like unto the greater one to come after him.

Had the hopes of Israel been merely concoctions to deceive the people, we may be sure that the deceiver would have been careful to have marked out some remarkable line of parentage for the coming Messiah; – free from blights, scandals, etc.; but this was not done; instead, the weaknesses of the flesh amongst our Lord's progenitors are fearlessly noted. Judah, the son of Jacob, and head of the tribe from which our Lord sprang, was not above reproach and his general character was faithfully portrayed; his son, Phares, through whom our Lord's lineage runs, was born of an unlawful union. Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, a foreigner who became an Israelite indeed, was amongst our Lord's progenitors; so was Ruth, the Moabitess, another foreigner adopted as an Israelite. The line even through David is compromised by coming through Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah, the Hittite. The New Testament writers are similarly candid and make no hesitation in recording the genealogy. All of this is in full accord with the scriptural presentation of the matter; namely, that our Lord's virtue, his sinlessness, his separateness from sinners, was not through the flesh, not through his mother, but through his Father, God.*

*See [MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. V., chap. iv.](#)

According to the flesh, Jesus Christ took hold of the seed of Abraham, as the Apostle explains; but as we have already seen, through various circumstances he was indirectly related also to the outside world. All of this is interesting to us, but nothing to be compared to our still greater interest in the fact that our Lord Jesus, although born a Jew under the Law, and redeeming those who were under the Law, did more than this, in that his death as planned by the Father and accepted by himself was a propitiation "for the sins of the whole world." He died as the ransom price for Adam and his sin, and thus purchased from condemnation not only Adam, but his entire posterity involved through his transgression; hence, as the Apostle points out, "He is able to save [deliver] unto the uttermost all who come unto God through him." (Heb. 7:25.) Not only so, but our Lord's circumstances of birth and early experiences in comparative poverty as a working man, impress us with the thought that he is indeed able to sympathize with mankind in every station of life; having passed from the glory of the Father to the lowest condition of humanity and back again, he is surely able to appreciate and to sympathize with all conditions and classes.

The narrative of our lesson is so simple as to require few comments; our chief interest centers in the message which our heavenly Father sent us through the angels at the time they announced the birth of Jesus: "Fear not" – the angel understood well that through sin and degradation a fearful apprehension comes over man when he finds himself in contact with spirit beings; he is apprehensive of certain further condemnation or punishment; his acquaintance with man in influence, authority and power, leads him to dread the still greater authority and power of the Almighty, lest it should be injurious to him. Only the true Christian, having the eyes of his understanding opened to appreciate the length and breadth and height and depth of the love of God, can have that perfect love toward the heavenly Father which is built upon an intimate knowledge of his Word, and which casteth out all fear. We are reminded of the prophet's words respecting the Lord's people of today, "Their fear toward me is taught by the

precept of men." (Isa. 29:13.) The Lord would have his people free from this fear, though not free from a proper reverence toward him.

The message continues, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." How slow the Lord's people have been to believe this message and to accept the Savior at his full worth! How prone they seem to be to suppose first of all that he was to be a Savior merely for the Jews; or secondly, a Savior merely for a special elect class; or thirdly, a Savior only for those who under present darkness, ignorance, prejudice, superstition and devilish influences, manifest a special love for righteousness! But how broad is the statement – great joy – for all people! Our faith is not broader than the positive declaration of the Scriptures, when we hold firmly that our God graciously has arranged that every member of our poor fallen race shall yet be blessed with a clear understanding not only of his own weaknesses and imperfections through the fall, but also by a clear understanding of the great redemption price paid by the Savior, and a share in the glorious opportunities thus secured to return, if he will, back to full harmony with God and to full blessings and everlasting life.

The angels did not declare that our Lord came to **[R3115 : page 364]** bring universal and everlasting salvation to all people; but they do declare that the good message of joy, of privilege, love, hope, shall extend to all people. The explanation of this is that a Savior had been born – a deliverer of the weak, the helpless, the dying, able to succor to the utmost all who would come to the Father through him; able to open the blind eyes and to unstop the deaf ears that all may come to an appreciation of the goodness of God shining toward them in the face of the Lord Jesus.

The word Savior, otherwise rendered Deliverer, signifies in the Syriac language, literally Life-giver. What a wonderful thought is conveyed by that word! What is it that our poor, dying race needs? It needs deliverance from the sentence of death, and then it needs

deliverance from death itself, into life complete and abundant and everlasting. Our Lord has already become our deliverer in the sense that he has bought us with his precious blood, that he has settled our account with Justice. As a result of this work already done (since the church which is the body of Christ has followed in the footsteps of our Lord and has about "filled up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," (Col. 1:24), very shortly now, under the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, the mystery of God will be finished, – completed, – and atonement for the sins of the world shall be proclaimed with a full emancipation proclamation to all people. Good tidings of great joy it will surely be! full of gracious opportunities for enlightenment, restitution and obedience, and for a full return to all that was lost by father Adam, including life in perfect degree – lasting life!

No wonder after this message had been delivered, the Lord permitted an angel host to serenade the proclamation, and incidentally to prophesy also of the grand results yet to flow from the great work of redemption, which was then only beginning in the birth of the Redeemer! Properly the anthem begins with praise to him that sitteth upon the throne, to him who devised the great and wonderful plan of redemption and who sent his Son, our willing Redeemer; glory to him in the highest – in the highest strain of heart and voice, with fullest appreciation of him as a Savior! Next came the consequences on earth; namely, peace; – not such a peace as men might patch up between themselves and between nations and parties, and that under present conditions would be sure very soon to be scattered to the winds; but a peace with God, a peace which comes from a restoration to the race of the divine good will. It was because divine justice could not spare the guilty, that the sentence of death, the "curse," has borne down upon our race for now six thousand years. Under that divine sentence of death the dying race has become impoverished, not only physically but mentally and morally, and selfishness has become the rule, and in its wake have come all our selfish ambitions and pride and strife and vain-glory and money love which have caused so much of the trouble that mankind has experienced.

But now, glory to God in the highest! because peace has been established upon a firm foundation – the lifting of the curse through the payment of our penalty by the Lord's own arrangement! As soon as the body of Christ has suffered with the Head, the great antitypical day of atonement will be complete, and peace between God and man will be established, will be renewed, and as a consequence the Redeemer shall take to himself his great power and reign for the purpose of blessing and uplifting those whom he purchased with his own precious blood. In their interest it will be necessary that the great peace shall be introduced by the breaking in pieces of present institutions with the iron rod of the new Kingdom, as the vessel of a potter they shall be crushed as henceforth useless; that in their stead may come the grander and perfect institutions of the Lord's Kingdom. He will wound to heal, to bless, to bring in peace on the basis of everlasting righteousness; for ultimately he will destroy all those who, after being brought to a knowledge of the truth, will still love unrighteousness and tend to the corruption of the earth. He will destroy them, not in anger but in justice, in love, that an everlasting peace in full accord with that which is in heaven may prevail upon earth.

Wherever the story of God's redeeming love has gone, even though confused by various falsities, it has carried more or less of blessing with it; – even to neglectful hearers and not doers of the Word, it has brought blessing; and still more blessing to others who hear partly and obey partly; but its greatest blessing has been to the little flock, the royal priesthood who, entering into the spirit of the divine arrangement, have realized themselves justified through faith in the precious blood, and in harmony with the invitation of the Lord have gone forward, presenting themselves living sacrifices that they might have fellowship with Christ **[R3116 : page 364]** in the sufferings of this present time, and also, by and by, in the Kingdom glories that shall follow. It is this class chiefly that is now rejoicing in a still fuller opening up of the divine Word so long beclouded by the falsities coming down from the dark ages; it is this class that is chiefly now rejoicing in the discernment of the lengths and breadths and

heights and depths of the divine love and of the divine plan which has purchased the whole world and will eventually recover from present degradation all who under the favorable conditions of the Millennial Kingdom will develop the character which God demands of all who shall have eternal life – a love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity.

