

Glory to God,
Peace on Earth,
Good Will Toward Men

- The Bible gives us a well known and well read account of the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ →

Understand Christ's Coming

Luke 2:1-14

(1) And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (2) (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) (3) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. (4) And Joseph also went up from

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Understand Christ's Coming

Luke 2:1-14

Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) (5) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. (6) And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished

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Understand Christ's Coming

Luke 2:1-14

that she should be delivered. (7) And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. (8) And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their

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Understand Christ's Coming

Luke 2:1-14

flock by night. (9) And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. (10) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. (11) For unto you is born this day

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Understand Christ's Coming

Luke 2:1-14

in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (12) And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (13) And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, (14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

- READ
- On this day a multitude of the heavenly hosts appeared with the angels and proclaimed
 - "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"
- And it is this 3-fold proclamation that I would like to be the focus of our time together today
- Because when the heavenly host made a proclamation on the basis of the child's birth
 - These were the associations that came to mind
 - God's glory
 - The earth's peace
 - And good will toward men
- So let's talk about them together →

Understand Christ's Coming

Glory to God in the highest

- FIRST - glory to God in the highest
- The word "glory" is an interesting one in the Bible
 - In the OT it is primarily realized through the Hebrew word KAWBODE
 - And in the NT it is primarily realized through the Greek word DOGZA
- Now the word itself is very general, speaking of the ideas surrounding real or perceived honor, magnificence, and reputation
- Many things are said to be glorious, or contain glory
 - God, certainly
 - But also men, and cities
 - Really anything of honor, majesty, wealth, or splendor qualifies to be called glorious
- The term is not necessarily a sanctified one
 - Meaning it is not reserved for God and the things of God alone as we might consider a word such as "holy"
 - And that because "glory" is not a concept rooted in character
 - Not an inbuilt trait per se
 - But rather rooted in stature, action, or appearance
- And we ask the question foremost...what does it mean "in the highest"
 - And there are a couple of possibilities
- FIRST, it could mean "Glory to God (who is) in the highest"
 - Meaning Glory to the God of heaven
- SECOND, it could mean "Glory to God (to the highest degree)
- THIRD, it could mean "Glory to God (is established) in the highest"
 - Meaning that this glory redounds in the heavenlies
- Of these possibilities the 2nd and 3rd are grammatically viable
-

Understand Christ's Coming

Glory to God in the highest

- That they are either saying that the glory to God should be to the highest degree
 - Or that the glory to God is in the heavenlies
- And this is where our context helps us
 - Because their next proclamation begins with “and on earth”
 - Letting us know that the focus is a contrast between “the highest” and “earth”
- Leading us to understand that this act of sending Messiah established the glory of God in the heavenlies
- And why
 - Well, there are many things about sending Messiah that would manifest God’s glory
 - But as it relates to heaven
 - To the heavenly hosts
- There is one that stands out above the rest
- Last time we were together we were considering the message of Malachi
 - And right toward the end of that message I took you to the declarations of Zacharias on the day of his son’s circumcision
 - There Zacharias proclaimed →

Understand Christ's Coming

Luke 1:68-73

(68) Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, (69) And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; (70) As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: (71) That we should be saved from

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Understand Christ's Coming

Luke 1:68-73

our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; (72) To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; (73) The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

- READ
- The promises of God's redemption of mankind have gone all the way back to the time just after Adam's rebellion, where God promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent
- God's marvelous works among the children of men would be evident in every successive generation as humanity interacted with the True and Living God
- But for thousands of years, though the glory of God was manifest in many ways
 - This promise yet remained
 - Reiterated time and again, but never coming to pass
- And the time just prior was probably the most helpless and hopeless of all
 - As we considered last week in Malachi, the prophet ended his revelation with this familiar promise of the Divine sunrise that would break through the darkened night of sin and sorrow
- But for 400 years the nation sat in silence and sorrow
 - And then God visited his people
 - Then the promise made thousands of years prior was kept
- When the fullness of time God come, God did not forget
 - God did not delay
 - God did not forsake them
- God kept His promise to His people
 - God kept His promise to the world →

Understand Christ's Coming

Glory to God in the highest

- The God of history wove it together and on that night so many years ago those shepherds of Bethlehem watched it all unfold as God had promised
- And this is something which the heavenly hosts got to watch through the generations as their Master and Lord wove history together unto this end
 - They watched Adam fall to sin
 - They watched the world fall into such wickedness that God send the flood
 - They watched as God confused the languages at Babel
 - They watched as God called Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
 - And Redeemed Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand
 - And then watched as the nation turned from Him again and again
 - And finally watched in silence for 400 years as the nation struggled to even exist
- Then at the end of all of that
 - They watched as God sent Gabriel to Zacharias
 - Then to Mary
 - Then to Joseph
 - They watched Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem
 - And they saw the great unfolding of God's eternal plan →

Understand Christ's Coming

Glory to God in the highest

- In short
 - They witnessed the power, wisdom, and capacity of God from age to age that culminated in this child being born
 - And their declaration was “glory to God in the highest”
- Now that same glory was not yet realized on the earth
 - There is coming a day where all things in heaven and upon earth will bow to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords
 - But that day has not yet come
- But in that God had been faithful
 - That God's power and majesty had brought about the advent of the promised one
 - Surely God's power and majesty would also bring about the great conclusion unto which the Promised One was sent
- And that leads us to our 2nd point →

Understand Christ's Coming

Peace on Earth

- PEACE ON EARTH
- In relation to mankind, peace on earth has always been the great elusive concept
- And this has led to an interesting perspective on this time of year we call Christmas
 - Because when a man says that this season is about “peace on earth”
 - Which is a consistent way to describe the holiday in light of LUKE 2
 - The minds of many goes to the desires and attempts of humanity to bring this very thing about for millennia
 - So that people have imposed upon the idea of Christmas any number of motivations or auras surrounding any number of modern human conceptions about what it will take to achieve world peace
 - But while Christmas most certainly has everything to do with the desire for “peace on earth”
 - It most certainly has NOTHING to do with any of mankind’s ideas about how that peace will come about
- See, generations have dreamed of peace on earth
 - Have longed for peace on earth since forever
- But every attempt
 - Every system
 - Every design has been encumbered by a single fatal flaw that has doomed it to failure
- And that fatal flaw is humanity →

Understand Christ's Coming

Peace on Earth

- The lofty and wonderful goal of “peace on earth” is encumbered by a human race which
 - At is very fundamental core
 - Is sinful
 - Selfish
 - Corrupt
 - Proud
 - Fundamentally incapable of bringing about, much less living in, a state of constant peace
- So Paul, as he quotes numerous and varied OT Scriptrues, describes the nature of mankind in ROMANS 3, saying →

Understand Christ's Coming

Romans 3:10-18

(10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (13) Their throat is an open sepulchre; with

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Christ's Coming

Romans 3:10-18

their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: (14) Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: (15) Their feet are swift to shed blood: (16) Destruction and misery are in their ways: (17) And the way of peace have they not known: (18) There is no fear of God before their eyes.

- READ
- This is the natural condition of mankind
- And this natural condition form the fundamental barrier which stands between this earth and peace
- Mankind has not know the way of peace
 - Because there is no fear of God before his eyes
- So that for the angels in the heavens to speak of "peace on earth" is to speak of something fundamentally out of place
 - ...except when spoken in the context of Messiah
 - The one called in ISAIAH 9 the "prince of peace"
 - In that prayer of Zacharias in LUKE 1 he described the ministry of Messiah this way →

Understand Christ's Coming

Luke 1:79

To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

- READ
- Messiah came to guide the feet of mankind in to the way of peace
- So what did that look like?
 - Once again, not as the “human” in us would expect
 - Jesus came, not with words about mankind reforming their actions in order to foster a better environment
 - But rather reforming their hearts in order to submit to the True and Living God
- Jesus’ message was one of repentance, not reformation
 - NOT a message calling for the world to change to conform to a goal which the human heart is fundamentally incapable of achieving
 - But RATHER a message calling for the world to ADMIT to this fundamental incapacity
 - Then fall on their knees before God to CHANGE THEM in to something ENTIRELY DIFFERENT
- And when men have been changed, then peace can reign
- And that leads us to the 3rd and final proclamation of the heavenly hosts
→

Understand Christ's Coming

Good will toward men

- GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN
- The concept of “good will” in this context is speaking of the manner in which God has thought and acted toward humanity
- It is perhaps best described by God’s message to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah →

Understand Christ's Coming

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

- READ
- LUKE 2:14 expands this idea to all mankind
 - That the thoughts which God thinks toward us are thoughts of peace, not of evil
- And that baby in the manger was the manifest declaration of those thoughts of peace
- Manifest in the early days of Jesus' ministry
- Where he told Nicodemus in JOHN 3:17 →

Understand Christ's Coming

John 3:17

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

- READ
- The deepest essence of God's good will toward men is the gospel of Jesus Christ
- And notice that the gospel is not a blanket declaration of toleration
 - Much to the contrary, the gospel – though open to all – is a narrow way
 - And a divisive way
 - It – as Jesus said in MATTHEW 10:34 – does not initially come into this world with peace, but with a sword
 - The gospel, initially, separates mother and father
 - Child and parent
 - Husband and wife
 - Because it is something which calls for fundamental submission
 - And results in a fundamental change of character
- But the end of this divisive way is salvation for all who will receive it
 - And with that salvation comes, in these days, peace within our hearts
 - As we considered last week
 - But will also end with peace on earth
 - As Jesus establishes His kingdom in righteousness and justice
- And to this end the advent of Christ is God's expression of good will toward men
 - Christ in the manger is a reflection of the true and living God reaching out to lost humanity
 - Not to condemn them – that was already a reality through the sinfulness of their own hearts →

Understand Christ's Coming

John 3:17

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

- But to save them
 - The deepest and most pure expression of good will toward men
- And these truths as well redound to the glory of God
 - For not only was the birth of Christ a manifest proclamation of God's wisdom and faithfulness
 - But it was also a key checkpoint in God's plan to undo what was lost in Adam
 - And so bringing peace back to the earth
 - And God will do it all without compromising His mercy toward mankind
- Rather inviting him to enter into this salvation
 - For the good of man
 - And the glory of God
- And to this end the coming of Jesus Christ is the beginning of the greatest and most consequential period of time in human history
 - And it is for this reason that we take time out of years to remember
 - And to rejoice in the God of our salvation
- Because if mankind has any hope of peace
 - If mankind has any hope of salvation from the depths of his own sinful state
 - Then that hope is in Christ and Christ alone
- And for we who have received that hope, we find at the end of that road fullness of joy
 - And to that end we celebrate the life of the one who gave us life →

Understand Christ's Coming

John 3:17

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

- We celebrate Christ as the fullest expression of God's great plan for this earth
 - A plan to bring peace on earth
 - And to extend good will toward men
- And through our remembrance and celebration
 - Not only can there be glory to God in the highest
 - But also on earth
 - As we live in God's good will toward us
 - And eagerly await the day when Christ will return and establish peace on earth