

Are You Ready for Christmas?

By Bob Young

Introduction

Anticipation – I look forward to Christmas. I am always ready. Little kid at heart. I love the season, the memories, the family history.

December, the last month of the year. Hopefully, at Christmas our thoughts turn to the blessings we have received through God's greatest gift. As we anticipate a new year, thoughts turn to the need to improve our lives—resolutions, beginning again.

Are you ready for Christmas? Ready spiritually? Have you taken time to think about the big picture? All of this celebrating and resolution-ing can become quite mundane and repetitive apart from the bigger picture!

Getting ready for Christmas, seeing the bigger picture, requires that we think about God's story, God's revelation of himself across centuries of human history. Getting ready for a faith-building Christmas – today's lesson prepares us for next week's faith focus. "O Come All Ye Faithful...."

The Bigger Picture – the History of His-Story

Four truths –

-1- The Creating God created man for fellowship with him.

The relationship between God and his human creation was broken by the entry of sin into the world.

-2- The Calling God called mankind back to himself, he called humans for the purpose of re-creation.

The story of the Bible is the story of God at work to reestablish the broken relationship with his human creation. God will work for the re-creation of his creation.

-3- The Covenanting/Promising God promises blessings.

Now comes the story of Abraham and his descendants and a covenant promise that pointed to God's future blessings. It is a story of promise that moves from the patriarchs to the nation of Israel. The covenant is extended to Israel as God's people receive a law designed to help them live in holiness and a tabernacle was erected in the center of the camp.

-4- The God who wishes to be present among his people.

Again, the covenant is extended to Israel as God's people receive a law designed to help them live in holiness and a tabernacle was erected in the center of the camp -- so that God could dwell among them. Later, Solomon built a temple for God's presence among his people. Even before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, in the first stages of the Exile, Ezekiel saw God's glory leave the temple. Now what?

This is a "too quick" summary of the OT story, but it serves to set the context to get us ready for the Nativity, to get us ready for the Christmas story.

The Nativity Story of Jesus' Coming Continues the History of His-Story

God had not given up on the idea of dwelling among his people. The narrow context of Christmas is the story of a baby in a manger. The greater context of Christmas is that God has now come among us again to be present, that divinity dwells among us and in us.

- The Word became human and dwelt among us.
- In Jesus' coming, God is present in human form, divinity united with humanity, God united with us.
- Jesus Immanuel comes as the saving presence of God among men, making possible restored relationship
- We are the dwelling of God; Christ dwells in our hearts; we are the temple of God's Spirit.

Conclusion

Here's the good news! God's Emmanuel presence is for us at least eight things -- assurance, knowledge, power, comfort, guidance, confidence, joy, and peace!

Let us not become so focused on the temporal story of Christmas that we miss the eternal story that gives us hope that our lives can be changed.