

GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

Chapter One

The Christ Child

Once each year, in thousands of pulpits across the land, sermons will be preached extolling the virtues of a man born some two thousand years ago. The text will be taken from Matthew chapter two, or Luke chapter two, or both.

Many will wax eloquently about three kings riding camels, carrying three bags containing gold, frankincense and myrrh, arriving at the stable in Bethlehem. At the same time the shepherds appear to find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

We will then be told that the three kings were wealthy and could afford gifts, while the shepherds were poor and could not afford gifts.

In our first lesson on "God's Greatest Gift" to man, the gift of Jesus Christ coming into the world, we will compare the most accepted teaching of the birth of Christ, the one just mentioned, with what the Bible actually teaches.

The common notion that three kings came from the east, riding camels and led by a star to a stable in Bethlehem is not supported by Scripture. Nowhere in Scripture will you find that these wise men were kings.

In the Greek dictionary the Greek word is "magi," and means "oriental scientists." Having seen the star, these were no doubt astronomers. Nor does the Bible anywhere give the number of the wise men. There were at least two or more. Nowhere are we told that there were three. Nor does the Bible say they rode on camels. There is no record of how they came. The complete story is recorded in Matthew chapter two, verses one through twelve, and takes about one minute and thirty seconds to read. The story is as follows.

**"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
Then Herod, when he had prively called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.**

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented him with gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.” (Matthew 2:1-12)

We present the complete story so that we may get a clear picture based on the Word of God, and not on tradition.

The wise men did not find a babe in a manger, but a “young child” in a HOUSE. We read in verse eight **“Go and search diligently for the young child.”** In verse nine we read **“and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.”** Verse eleven says, **“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother.”** Verses 13 and 14 also mention **“a young child,”** three times. **“The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt—for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.”** **“When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”**

We have every reason to believe that the appearance of the wise men took place up to two years following the birth of Christ.

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.” (Matthew 2:16)

I am sure many are asking, “What is the reason for bringing up such trivial matters? What difference does it make? It may be immaterial in this case; however, if your knowledge of salvation comes from the same traditional source, it may prove to be very serious indeed.

One of the greatest evils of the day is that for many the only knowledge of the Bible comes, not from a personal study of the Scriptures, but from sermons, books, and commentaries about the Bible.

It is our desire that the lessons given by radio, the printed page, CD’s, or posted on the Inter-Net will be of help and promote the study of the Bible. They are in no way meant to take the place of your personal Bible study.

We do not give the lessons on the three wise men just to be critical, or in a condemning spirit. These lessons are nothing new. The record has not changed. It has been there for many years for all to see. Our only reason for pointing this out is for those who base their conception of the three wise men upon what they have heard or read in books, instead of the Word of God.

We have two questions, “Did you get your information about salvation from the same source?” Did you get your information from a book, or from “THE BOOK, THE BIBLE?”

There is only one authentic and reliable record concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe this record means LIFE; to reject this record means DEATH.

**“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.
And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.
These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (I John 5:10-13)**

If you only see Jesus as an example, a martyr, a teacher, or even just a prophet, you have not seen the real Jesus of the Bible. If you do not believe that Jesus is who He says He is **“Ye shall die in your sins.” (John 8:24)**

The ONE born in a stable, and laid in a manger was “the very God who created the universe.”

**“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.
All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”
(John 1:1-4)**

Also in John 1:14 we read:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

Someone has said “This record is God’s foolproof declaration of the Deity of Christ.” The very God of the universe became man.

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)

We are presented with an abundance of Scriptural evidence that Jesus was both God and man. This is the reason He is called, in the Bible, “The Son of God” and “The Son of man.”

The human name, Jesus, was given to present Him as “the son of man.”

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

The name “EMMANUEL” was given to present Him as “very GOD.”

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matthew 1:23)

That there may be no doubt that Jesus is God He is called “the Word,” in John 1:1 and 2.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1, 2)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

It is sad, to say the least, that the fictitious character of Santa Claus is better known and more honored than the very Son of God.

There would be no better time for one to turn from the “beggarly elements of the world” and start:

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

Chapter Two

Christmas

We have come once more to the time of year when the whole religious world goes into a frenzy celebrating the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet there is absolutely no precedent in the entire Bible for the observance of the day we call Christmas. There is no record of the early Christians observing, or paying attention to the birthday of Christ.

I have no personal objection of setting aside a day each year to celebrate the birth of our Lord. According to Romans 14: 5 and 6, we are not to judge a person of the day they decide to set aside to honour the Lord.

“One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.” (Romans 14:5, 6)

Knowing the history of December twenty-fifth, one must give some thought as to why the religious world would select this day to celebrate the coming of our Lord into the world.

The encyclopedias I consulted all pretty much agree on the origin of Christmas. Scholars believe that the day was derived in part from rituals held by the Germanic and Celtic people to celebrate the winter solstice.

In the fourth century Christians adopted December twenty-fifth and incorporated pagan customs, such as holly, mistletoe and the yule log. The Christmas tree was added early in the seventeenth century.

Santa Claus was brought to the new world by Dutch settlers with the custom of celebrating St. Nicholas day on December sixth; and especially St. Nicholas eve when gifts were given to children. The character today, called Santa Claus, we are told is a corruption of the Dutch St. Nicholas.

None of these things mentioned have absolutely nothing at all to do with the coming of Christ into the world.

I know all too well the unpopular nature of what I am saying. But we must remember that Christmas is a religious holiday in name only, and should be treated as such.

I am not mounting a crusade to change Christmas, or to “put Christ back in Christmas.” As far as the record goes, Christ was never in Christmas in the first place.

It is not my place to judge anyone concerning the day they choose to honour the Lord. Let me repeat, as stated before:

“One man esteemeth one day above another: another

esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” (Romans 14:5)

The reason we are not to judge is the Scripture says:

“Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” (Romans 14:13)

Lest I be misunderstood, there is nothing that I enjoy more than setting aside a day to honour my Lord, with sweet fellowship with family and friends. If Christmas has any place at all, it should be for Christians.

It simply does not make sense for an unbeliever, one who rejects the Lord Jesus as Saviour, to celebrate His birth. To go all out in celebration of only the birth of a Saviour, and then not recognize the primary reason for His coming into this world, to die for their sins, is inconceivable. How fitting the words in John 1:9-10.

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” (John 1:9, 10)

With all the commercialization and debauchery that has become a part of the Christmas celebration there is, however, a very positive side to the Christmas season. Even for those who never read their Bible, every year at this same time one cannot escape the fact that some two thousand years ago a man named JESUS was born into this world and changed the course of history forever.

One may ask, “Wherein lies the greatness of this man who had such a profound effect upon history?” We have only the record of the Bible to verify the facts.

Apart from the announcement of His birth by the angels there is nothing unusual about His birth to cause, some two thousand years later, all this attention.

He was born of obscure parents. His foster father was a lowly carpenter. He lived for thirty years in a small town.

He never wrote a book. You can read everything that is recorded to have been said by Him in a couple of hours.

He lived a simple life of poverty. To pay His taxes He sent Peter to catch a fish. **“...Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money...” (Matthew 17:27)**

When asked if it was lawful to give to Caesar, Jesus asked for a penny to reveal the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. (Matthew 22:17-21)

The ministry of Jesus only lasted a little over three years. There MUST be something about this “man” that would warrant countless millions to go into a frenzy, every year, celebrating the occasion of the presumed date of His birth.

When we understand the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ coming into this world, we understand why those who have believed and know Christ as Saviour have cause to celebrate; not only on December twenty-fifth, but every day of the year.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that

which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” (I Timothy 1:15)

We who know the Saviour can say like the apostle Paul: **“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” (II Corinthians 9:15)**

The word “unspeakable” means “indescribable.” Mere human language is inadequate to convey the full meaning of God’s greatest Gift to mankind.

Paul, no doubt, through his travels was fluent in a number of languages, but he seemed to be at a loss for words in his effort to convey all the gracious attributes of our Saviour. So he ended with the words, **“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”** Have you received this GIFT?

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

There is no way of escape if you neglect so great a salvation.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.” (Hebrews 2:3)

There are at least three reasons concerning the urgency of your decision to receive “God’s Unspeakable Gift.”

“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (II Corinthians 6:2)

1. You have no assurance of one more day on this earth.

“Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” (Job 14:5)

“Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” (Proverbs 27:1)

The Bible presents the brevity of life as:

(a) The swiftness of a weaver’s shuttle.

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope.” (Job 7:6)

(b) Of few days, like a flower that is cut down, and as a shadow.

**“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.
He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” (Job 14:1, 2)**

- (c) As a vapour, that appears for a little time.
“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” (James 4:14)

The Scripture tells us that with every passing day we are coming closer to the inevitable. **“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27)**

2. There could come a day when you will say “no” for the last time.
“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” (Proverbs 29:1)

**“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections.” (Romans 1:21 and 26)**

3. According to the Word of God, there is coming a day when God will shut the door and you will have no hope of entering in.
“And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.” (Genesis 7:16)

When God closed the door to the ark, every living thing outside the door lost all hope of being saved.

**“Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,
Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.
When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.” (Luke 13:23-25)**

This solemn warning is repeated in Matthew 25:10-13.

One day, without warning the door will be shut, and all who know and reject the truth will be left behind.

**“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”
(I Thessalonians 4:16, 17)**

Following this momentous event the door will be shut to all who have known and rejected the truth. They will then be blinded to the truth, and will believe a lie.

**“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie;
That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”
(II Thessalonians 2:10-12)**

Chapter Three

The Word Made Flesh

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world is recorded in a number of places in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The most well known record of this event is recorded in Matthew chapter two, and in Luke chapter two. However the record given by the apostle John, in John 1:1-3 and 14, presents the most momentous statements in all Scripture.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:1-3)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

In these brief verses John declares in simple, easy to understand language that the WORD is God, manifested in the flesh. This WORD is none other than the man called JESUS CHRIST, the ONE whose birthday is celebrated every year by the religious world.

The Scripture also states that the ONE called the WORD had no beginning. This, no doubt, is the reason no date of his birth is recorded.

The beginning of Christ did not begin with the birth of the babe, in the stable in Bethlehem. Here, in the stable, He only took on the form of man, as stated by the apostle John. For the sake of clarity I repeat John 1:1-3 and 14a. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”**

If this was the only passage in the entire Bible pertaining to the subject of the Deity of Christ, this Scripture alone is sufficient proof of the eternal, preexistence of the Babe born in a stable some two thousand years ago. No wonder John 1:1 has been called “God’s foolproof declaration of the Deity of Christ.”

No amount of theological gymnastics can change the clearly stated facts. It was “the very God” who became flesh on that day in Bethlehem.

It is no wonder that the Holy Spirit, being limited to the vehicle of human language, searches all of creation to present to us the many attributes of His grace; His supernatural conception, virgin birth, sinless life, blood atonement, resurrection, His coming again, His love, and above all His preexistence.

Some seven hundred and forty years before His birth the Holy Spirit, through Isaiah, gave just a few of the names that paint for us a picture of the greatness of His being. This is only a glimpse of the magnificence of God’s unspeakable gift to mankind.

**“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince
of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)**

Besides being called “Wonderful,” “Counsellor,” “The mighty God,” “The everlasting Father,” and “The Prince of Peace,” there are hundreds of descriptive names and titles given Him to present to us some of His infinite greatness. Any one of the many names given Him would be worthy of consideration.

In this lesson we will consider one of the many names given our Lord. John 1:1-3 and 14 answers the question that was asked by our Lord in Matthew 16:13-16.

**“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi,
he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that
I the Son of man am?
And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist:
some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ,
the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:13-16)**

Two questions are also asked in Matthew 22:42. **“What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?”** The answer to these two questions demands our full consideration. One’s eternal destiny hangs in the balance; therefore the correct answer becomes very important.

The questions, “Whom say ye that I the Son of man am?” “What think ye of Christ?” and “Whose Son is he?” cannot be answered for you. They are questions that only you, and you alone must answer. You cannot escape the fact. One way or another you will answer these questions. What you believe will determine your eternal destiny.

We, as ambassadors for Christ, can only present conclusive Bible evidence that Jesus Christ is who He says He is, **THE VERY SON OF GOD!**

You may not believe that Jesus is God; however, you cannot say that the Bible does not teach that Jesus is God, manifested in the flesh.

The Jews did not believe that Jesus was God, but they certainly understood that He claimed He was God.

**“I and my Father are one.”
Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.
Jesus answered them, Many good works have I
shewed you from my Father; for which of those
works do ye stone me?
The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work
we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because
that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”
(John 10:30-33)**

Jesus answers the Jews with these words.

**“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.
But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the
works: that ye may know, and believe, that the
Father is in me, and I in him.” (John 10:37, 38)**

II Corinthians 5:19 also makes it plain that Jesus is God.

**“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world
unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;
and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”
(II Corinthians 5:19)**

The only reason for bringing these lessons is stated in verse twenty.

**“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God
did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be
ye reconciled to God.” (II Corinthians 5:20)**

An Ambassador, according to my dictionary is “an authorized messenger or representative.” The Greek dictionary has the same meaning, “to act as a representative.”

An Ambassador does not make policy, or enforce policy. An Ambassador is only responsible for delivering the exact message given to them.

The acceptance of the message is up to the one to whom the message is delivered. It is impossible for the messenger to force the hearer to believe or accept the message.

As an Ambassador of Jesus Christ, the Believer is to deliver the message. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to the hearer.

**“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the
Christ, the Son of the living God.
And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art
thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not
revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in
heaven.” (Matthew 16:15-17)**

It is not a matter of what others think or say, but “**Whom say ye that I am?**”

To understand and know that Christ is the Son of the living God is only revealed from the Father to us by the Holy Spirit. This is why the majority of the religious world see Jesus as only “a” son of God, not as “the” Son of God. What difference does it make? The difference is “Life” or “Death!”

**“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your
sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die
in your sins.” (John 8:24)**

Jesus made a most revealing statement to Martha, ending His statement with a question.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25, 26)

Martha declares”

“She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” (John 11:27)

The same declaration is made by Peter.

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16)

The Ethiopian eunuch, (Acts 8:36b), asked Philip **“what doth hinder me to be baptized?”** Philip said to him, (verse 37) **“If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest.”** The Ethiopian eunuch answered and said, **“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”**

This gives us an understanding of the strange answer that Jesus gave the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17 and 18. If Jesus was not who He claimed, He could not have been a good teacher, but would have been a liar and fraud.

We leave you with this solemn warning.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (I John 4:1)

The mark of a false teacher is the false doctrine concerning the person of Jesus Christ.

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (I John 4:3, 4)

Jesus Christ is God, and must be accepted and believed as “the only begotten Son of God,” the Saviour, just as the Scriptures declare.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” (I Timothy 1:15)

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

Chapter Four

Peace on Earth

Skeptics tell us that the Bible cannot be the infallible Word of God because it contains so many contradictions. As evidence of an assumed contradiction, one portion they point to is the announcement made by the angels at the birth of Jesus.

**“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14)**

The enemies of the Bible get a great deal of satisfaction in pointing out the fact that after two thousand years there has not been any evidence of peace. In fact, we are reminded that today there is more strife, hatred, war and aggression among nations than ever before.

Then they point to what the Prince of Peace says, in Matthew 10:34-36.

**“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth:
I came not to send peace, but a sword.
For I am come to set a man at variance against his
father, and the daughter against her mother, and
the daughter in law against her mother in law.
And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”
(Matthew 10:34-36)**

This statement was made at the beginning of our Lord’s ministry. As His ministry drew to a close, He made this statement.

**“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed
that no man deceive you.
For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ;
and shall deceive many.
And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see
that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come
to pass, but the end is not yet.
For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against
kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and
earthquakes, in divers places.
All these are the beginning of sorrows.
Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall
kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my
name’s sake.
And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one
another, and shall hate one another.
And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive
many.
And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall
wax cold.” (Matthew 24:4-12)**

Jesus declares that the age in which we live, instead of peace, will be filled with wickedness, divisions, hatred, strife, turmoil and confusion. He says that wars will become more and more frequent; and if it were not for the sudden intervention of God, man would annihilate himself.

Since the angels were not mistaken in their announcement of **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men,”** how can this seeming contradiction be understood?

This seeming contradiction can only be understood by the recognition of God’s dispensational dealing with man. Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that Jesus would be accepted as the Prince of Peace at His first coming.

Isaiah, chapter fifty three, paints for us a graphic picture of how the Lord would be treated at His first coming. The following are just five of the twelve verses that so graphically prophesied the reception that the Lord Jesus would receive at his first coming.

**“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?
For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant,
and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form
nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is
no beauty that we should desire him.
He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows,
and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our
faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed
him not.
Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our
sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of
God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was
bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our
peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are
healed.” (Isaiah 53:1-5)**

The ministry of John the Baptist was the offer of the Kingdom, the age of peace.

**“And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is
at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)**

After John was cast into prison, Jesus continued with the exact same message.

**“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say,
Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
(Matthew 4:17)**

Jesus commissioned the disciples to take this very same message.

**“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them,
saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into
any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:
But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

And as ye go, preach, saying The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 10:5-7)

The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand; however, the message, the miracles and the King was rejected.

“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (John 1:10, 11)

Because the nation of Israel rejected Jesus as their King, the golden age of peace and prosperity was postponed until His second coming.

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” (Romans 11:25-27)

Their rejection did not come as a surprise to God. All of this was in God’s plan from the beginning, for He knew they would not receive Jesus as their Messiah. Romans 11: 30 and 32 gives the reason for the rejection of the golden age of peace.

“For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:” (Romans 11:30)

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” (Romans 11:32)

Without the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, there would be no redemption. **“...without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Hebrews 9:22b)**

Like the apostle Paul, we can also say:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.” (Romans 11:33)

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)

The Bible leaves no room for doubt as to the one and only reason why the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world. **“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”** (Luke 19:10)

“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.”
(John 10:15)

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”
(I Timothy 1:15)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.”
(John 10:1 and 9)

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
(John 14:6)

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (I Timothy 2:5)

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (I John 5:11, 12)

You may not believe the record; however, you cannot deny the unmistakable meaning of the record.

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27)

If you go out of this world without salvation, you will have no one to blame but yourself.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” (I John 5: 9, 10)

The record of God's Son was given so that we may have the blessed assurance that we possess eternal life.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (I John 5:13)