

### **AFTER CHRISTMAS SPECIAL**

Wrappings and boxes thrown out. Guests are gone. Now what? Getting back to work, taking down trees, putting away lights, making the most of after-Christmas sales. Is that it? The traditional church calendar has Advent as a season of anticipation between Thanksgiving and Christmas, expecting the coming Christ. Then comes Christmas Eve, His birth, and the twelve days of Christmas extend the holiday (*holy day*) celebrations into the new year, looking forward His coming again. These past weeks we've looked at the Coming Christ in promises and prophecies, His person and purpose, in the pictures of Christmas celebration, and now in terms of His presents and His presence.

**1- Consider the presents of the Christ.** If you simply think of Jesus as the baby in the manger, you miss the message. Think of lighting the center candle of the Advent wreath, signifying His coming. Consider how the flames flicker with reflections on the cross in the background. Christmas is about the Creator of the universe coming in a humble Cradle, in order to go to the Cross and pay for sins, then to rise again to gain the Crown of life, to make new Creations of all who trust in Christ alone! Christ is "The Gift" of Christmas, and He comes to give you gifts that last for eternity. All this is eloquently presented by theologian RC Sproul in the Ligonier Statement on Christology: "The Word Made Flesh - We confess the mystery and wonder of God made flesh, and rejoice in our great salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. With the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Son created all things, sustains all things, and makes all things new. Truly God, He became truly man, two natures in one person. He was born of the Virgin Mary and lived among us. Crucified, dead, and buried, He rose on the third day, ascended to heaven, and will come again in glory and judgment. For us, He kept the Law, atoned for sin, and satisfied God's wrath. He took our filthy rags and gave us His righteous robe. He is our Prophet, Priest, and King, building His church, interceding for us, and reigning over all things. Jesus Christ is LORD; we praise His holy Name forever. Amen." Hallelujah! Jesus saves! Christmas miracles point you to Easter miracles.

**2- Consider the presence of the Christ.** The presence of Christ guarantees the presents of Christ. John 1:12 and 3:3 says, to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of the will of the flesh, but of God. Born again from above by the Holy Spirit, as you receive and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The name Jesus means Jehovah saves. The author of life re-creates you to eternal spiritual life. Then His life lives through yours as you trust and obey Him in all things, by His power, 24/7. Him in you, you in Him! In receiving Him, the Bible says the amazing gifts He gives include His Word, grace, mercy, reconciliation, forgiveness, righteousness, adoption, sanctification, anointing, spiritual gifts, power, persecutions and more. And you will receive the crown of life, the inheritance laid up for the saints. Jesus guarantees all that Christians have received and will receive, by giving the indwelling Holy Spirit now. And all this looks forward to His coming again, for the consummation of all the promises of the Old and New Testaments, as Jesus will resurrect all believers, for eternity in His very presence. God with us!

**3- Consider how you present Christ to the world.** God gave us Christ, the wisemen gave Him gifts, and you emulate this by giving gifts. You humbly offer to Jesus yourself, heart, mind, will, time, talents, treasures. Not to gain salvation but because you have received salvation by putting all your trust in Him. This reflects your complete dependence upon Jesus, the miraculous person of the mysterious promises and majestic purpose. Angels proclaimed Him as Savior, Christ and Lord, God Himself come to deliver His people. You live on this far side of the cradle and cross. You now look forward to His coming again in judgment and glory for the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. And in making you a new creation, He has given you a new purpose (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). You are now His representative, His ambassador, making God's appeal to the world, to trust in Jesus alone. He empowers you, and has given believers all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:4), grace upon grace (John 1:16). This includes His written-down Word, the Bible, with everything you need to know and do. You can read through the whole Bible in a year in about 10 minutes a day. Make that a goal for 2018. May you be filled with the peace of the Christ-child, the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the wisemen. And like them, share the Good News about Jesus with everyone around you, every day of the new year! *Because He is coming again!*