**Prophecies of the Messiah**

**Where do you place your hope for peace and joy?**

**Empty hope from the world**

In today’s lesson we will be discussing the prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ and their importance in relation to this day that we mark as Christmas.

The world looks forward to this day for many reasons.

As was discussed last week; people make various plans with the motivation to enjoy many moments of merriment and peace on this day.

**The sad reality is that the overall majority** miss finding this as they do not focus on the real reason for this occasion.

It doesn’t take much to see how heavily commercialised this time of year is.

A quick dictionary search of the word brings up the definition:

**“If something is commercialised, it is used or changed in such a way that it makes money or profits.”**

Whilst it is great to be able to meet up with family members and the notion of buying gifts for each other can be used to express appreciation and generosity;

can we really say that these things are all this day is about?

Well, let us use this time wisely to consider the reality that there was a time before Christmas as we know it.

Many of the people of God in the OT, before Christ came, looked forward to the day that Christ would be born –

to the real Christmas event, **the incarnation of Christ!**

**Incarnation** is the word we use to explain how Jesus; the eternal Second Person of The Trinity, came into this world in human flesh (we will cover more on this in a few moments).

**2**

**So how about us, what should we think about Christmas?**

As Christians and as those seeking, or having an interest in the Lord, what should we believe and reflect upon in our hearts at this time of year?

**Living hope from God**

**Well, to bring out the main application,** I would like us to go back, right to the start of time as we know it.

We have recently been through the series

**“In the beginning”**,

where we discussed how this world came to be;

God eternal and all powerfully creating the universe and all things out of nothing, within 6 literal days.

**As the lessons continued**, we reflected upon the historical account of Adam and Eve and how, through their unbelief and wilful disobedience, sin and death entered into the world.

**One thing remained;** that God, Who is rich in mercy, even in the midst of man’s fall into sin, ordained (planned) a way that His chosen people would be saved.

**This brings us to the real meaning of Christmas** –

**The incarnation of Christ.**

We read in John 1 verse 1 that:

***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* -** **John 1:1**

As we continue in the chapter, we read that:

***the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*** *-* **John 1:14**

These verses explain to us the glorious truth of our Creator Jesus Christ coming into the very world that He made.

The prophets of old looked forward to this; to the coming of the Saviour and all that He was to accomplish.

**3**

God communicating to them at various times and in various situations - sharing promise after promise of the One who would come to save them from their sins.

They would live their lives in the hopeful anticipation of Christ coming, and we are blessed to be able to read these promises, preserved for us, as found in our Bibles today.

**Prophecies from the beginning**

Biblical scholars have attempted to count how many prophecies about Christ are in the Old Testament.

The general consensus is that there are over 300 in total.

These prophecies were given hundreds to thousands of years before Christ came, and they provided hope and peace to God’s people throughout the ages.

Here we will just read a few and reflect upon their meanings.

**The first prophecy of Christ** that we see is found in the book of Genesis. In the dialogue exchanged between God and Adam and Eve about their disobediently eating from the forbidden tree we read:

***And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:***

***And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel -*** **Genesis 3:14-15**

This is the first prophecy declared by God of the Saviour to come. **This is fulfilled in Christ,** who has conquered Satan the enemy, Hell, and the grave.

**4**

It is amazing to consider the fact that this prophecy was given 4000 years before Christ; showing that God had never left humanity without a promise of the Saviour.

**The next prophecy** that we will look at tells of the birthplace of the Saviour: -

***But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*** **- Micah 5:2**

It is a fact that even those who are not believers can attest to the reality that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

What is important to point out is that the people of God had this location revealed to them around 700 years before Christ actually came.

**We read in this next prophecy of the special nature of His birth:**

***Therefore, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel* - Isaiah 7:14**

This reveals to us the supernatural nature of the incarnation; again, being revealed around 700 years before His coming.

**The final prophecy** we will look at demonstrates to us why the Saviour was to come:

***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.***

***All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on***

***Him the iniquity of us all* - Isaiah 53:5-6**

**5**

This is undoubtedly expressing the events that took place on the cross of Calvary and again this prophecy was given around 700 years before the birth of Christ.

**The wrong response**

The facts that we read of in these prophecies are of profound importance; the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was one that would be a ground-breaking event in the course of human history.

The world dates history in years BC, and years AD - Before the birth of Christ and since the birth of Christ.

As such, even those who were not the Lord’s, were keeping an eye out for His coming.

King Herod, at the time of the Wise Men from the East’s visit, demonstrated probably the worst response in relation to the news of the Messiah.

**In his lust to retain his power**, he set about scheming as to how he could do away with Christ, enquiring after His whereabouts and ordering the killing of all males born in the vicinity of Bethlehem who were under 2 years old.

**Ultimately,** what we are seeing here is the attack of the enemy. Sin and the devil working in a last-ditch attempt to prevent the coming of the Saviour.

**But to no avail.** Christ was born in the flesh as promised, so that the prophecies might be fulfilled. **God always keeps His promises.**

**6**

**The right response unto life**

**The prophets of old had the right response.**

They heard the word of God and believed. They looked forward with the eye of faith to the promised Messiah and held the right attitude in their hearts in spite of those around them.

**This is what is pleasing to the Lord;** that we also look towards Him and trust His word.

**Let us follow their example** and keep dear to our hearts the real reason as to why we remember this day.

**We mere mortals, born in sin and in need of God’s forgiveness,** are looked upon by God with mercy.

**The Father sent forth His Son,** born of a virgin.

He lived a perfect and sinless life and went to the cross to take upon Himself the punishment of all those who would repent and believe in Him. **His Elect People.**

**Do you believe that He has done this for you, personally?**

That He hung on the cross, bearing the penalty for all of your sin? Pride, unbelief, selfishness, lying, stealing, lust.

**May I encourage you this day** to reflect upon the Saviour, remembering His coming into the world.

**Our hope and prayers are that you will find the true and real meaning of Christmas, the lasting experience of peace with God and forgiveness of your sin.**