



# Coming of Christ



“Christmas” is typically defined as “the annual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.” In the United States, we annually observe the birthdays of famous people like George Washington and Martin Luther King.<sup>1</sup> Can this compare to Christmas? No! How is it different?

## Conception

- ❑ Mary “gave birth” to Jesus (*Luke 2:7*). Jesus was “born of a woman” (*Galatians 4:4*). He was physically born like us, but the conditions of his birth were wonderfully unique.
- ❑ Mary did not become pregnant in the normal way. “[Before Mary and Joseph] came together she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit” (*Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:31, 34-35*).<sup>2</sup>
  - 📖 “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).” (*Matthew 1:22-23; cp. Isaiah 7:14*)
- ❑ Jesus is uniquely “God with us,” which leads to the next point.

## Incarnation

- ❑ Humans normally come into existence through the process of conception and birth.<sup>3</sup> But the Son of God (who is “the Word”) existed from eternity (*John 1:1-18*).
  - 📖 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us ...” (*John 1:1; 1:14a*).
- ❑ At a particular time in history, the eternal Son of God (or God the Son) took on human flesh and entered into humanity (*Philippians 2:5-11*).<sup>4</sup> He was given the name Jesus (*Matt. 1:25*).
- ❑ Since the Son existed before his physical conception and birth, the word “coming” may better represent the significance of Christmas. Furthermore, his coming was anticipated.

## Anticipation

- ❑ Christ’s coming was anticipated (expected) because God had promised it. The prophets spoke about it hundreds of years before Jesus’ birth. Many of our Christmas hymns and traditions are based on the Old Testament promises and prophecies, and the resulting anticipation (expectation, hope) of the coming Christ.<sup>5</sup>
- ❑ Isaiah is one of the prophets who spoke clearly of Christ’s coming. What did he say? Let’s consider one of his many prophecies about Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Many people don’t truly ‘celebrate’ these birthdays, but they are public holidays.

<sup>2</sup> ‘what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit’ (*Matthew 1:20*). Jesus’ conception was a miracle of God.

<sup>3</sup> Theories about the origin of human souls (e.g., creationism, traducianism) are beyond the scope of this lesson.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, this raises questions. How can God become a man? Actually, God did not change into a man, but rather took on human flesh to enter into humanity. This is called ‘the Incarnation.’ The Son was still fully God, though he laid aside his divine prerogatives (*Philippians 2:6-7*). He is more accurately called the God-man – fully God and fully man. This is still a difficult teaching. If the Father is God, and the Son is God (and the Holy Spirit is God), how can Christians say there is only one God? This leads us to the teaching of ‘the Trinity’ (tri-unity), another difficult teaching. If you have questions or objections concerning the Incarnation or Trinity, ask Jay for more information.

<sup>5</sup> For example, ‘O Come, O Come, Emmanuel’ reflects Isaiah 7:14, 11:1 & 60:1-3. The tradition of ‘Advent’ (which means ‘arrival, coming’) typically involves reading Old Testament prophecies and then reading from the New Testament to see how the coming of Jesus Christ fulfilled those prophecies. The ‘Christ’ (*christos* – ‘anointed one,’ Hebrew ‘Messiah’) refers to the great king who would deliver God’s people and establish His rule (kingdom).

## Darkness, Distress & Gloom

- ❑ In the time of Isaiah, Israel and Judah faced oppressive powers and threats of destruction. They experienced conflict and war, and their leaders were not trusting in God. It was a time of darkness and gloom. Israel and Judah would eventually be destroyed.<sup>6</sup> But there was hope.

## Light, Joy & Hope

1. Read Isaiah 9:1-7. Summarize the conditions described in verses 2-5.<sup>7</sup>



- ❑ Due to these blessed conditions, the people will rejoice (9:3). But the realization of these conditions will require the coming of a person who will bring these conditions into being.

## “A Child is Born”

- ❑ Isaiah had earlier mentioned the birth of a child who would be called Immanuel (7:14). Isaiah 9:6-7 provides more information concerning this child.
2. Based on verses 6-7, what are the role, character, and nature of this child?<sup>8</sup>

📖 *Over 200 years before Isaiah, God promised King David, “I will raise up your offspring to succeed you...and I will establish his kingdom. ...Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:12b, 16).*

- ❑ This child is the promised King the Jewish people were anticipating (expecting, waiting for). He will be a descendant of David, and he will reign over an everlasting kingdom of justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9:7; 11:3-5), peace, security, and harmony (11:6-9).

## The Coming of Christ

3. *When* is this child to be born? *Who* is this child? Read Luke 1:26-33.



- ❑ Our world is still a place of darkness, distress and gloom, if not physically then spiritually, if not presently experienced then eventually experienced. We *all* desperately need the good news of Christmas – that is, the coming of Christ (the King) and his salvation and kingdom.

4. How can we experience Christ’s kingdom?<sup>9</sup> How can we stay encouraged?

<sup>6</sup> Israel (the northern kingdom) was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BC. Judah (the southern kingdom of Israel) was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

<sup>7</sup> Darkness will turn to light (9:2). Gloom will turn to joy (9:3). Oppressive yokes (like Assyria’s) will be removed (9:4). War will end; military equipment will not be needed (9:5).

<sup>8</sup> ‘Mighty God’ (*‘ēl gibbôr*) – reference to deity. ‘Everlasting Father’ – ‘father’ in the sense of leader and protector (as a good king), not as Trinitarian Father.

<sup>9</sup> The kingdom has come, for the King has come! However, its full realization is future, when he comes again (his 2<sup>nd</sup> advent). For now, the kingdom (as the dynamic rule of God) is realized in the hearts of those who submit their lives to the King. First of all, we need to enter the kingdom through faith in the crucified and risen King – Jesus Christ. It should be noted that his [first] coming included his death (for our sin and shame) and his resurrection. Through trusting and abiding in Christ, we experience the love, peace, joy, and hope that come from God by the power of the Holy Spirit. All of this is possible because of the coming of Christ. That’s something to celebrate!