

### Christmas Eve 2021 "Holy Night?"

Throughout this Christmas Season we have been looking at all of the clues that God placed in His Scriptures about the coming Savior. Why did they come to adore this Child? He hadn't done anything....why was He unique? Why was He worthy of adoration or worship?

What would lead rational people to bow down and worship a baby.....Well it turns out that many that night....didn't just see a baby....they knew they were looking into the eyes of God. How did they know? God had made it very clear in His Holy Scriptures. God was coming to earth and He wanted to make sure that we did not miss his arrival.

In this series we have been exploring 17 of these clues or promises from God.

For those who study the Scriptures they are obvious. People were expecting Him. They knew the Promised One...must arrive very soon.

But throughout this series, I have been praying about something that has bothered me.

How could they have missed it? One of the greatest events in human history...clues throughout.....and most people were clueless when He arrived.

I began thinking that the same thing is happening today. Now we have over 2500 very specific clues, prophecies, to tell us what is going to happen and most people are going to miss it.

Jesus will return to judge the earth very soon. Each day brings us one day closer. It is so obvious in Scripture that it is hard to believe that anyone could doubt it.

But many back then and today reject the Scriptures. It is not that the Scriptures or prophecies are incorrect, but rather most people just don't submit to their authority.

Yet throughout History..God has foretold what would happen..most people discounted his promises....and then were surprised when the event happened.

It has literally occurred hundreds of times....God promises. God delivers. Not one wrong yet. Of the 2500 prophecies, 2000 are fulfilled today...to the letter..without question..down to the most specific details..... and people still doubt God, how many does it take?

Particularly today. You can read the Bible and know exactly what is going to happen in our world going forward. We are living in end times. Every day major league prophecy is being fulfilled and reported every night on the news.

Every year I say it. I am amazed that we are all still here. I believe that the return of Jesus is imminent. It could happen at any time and not surprise me. The Scriptures are THAT clear and I am considered conservative compared to many others.

But for so many. These iron clad promises from God mean nothing tonight. And the promises meant nothing to most people on that First Christmas Night.

God made sure that those who lived prior to that First Christmas who really wanted to know...could recognize the Messiah when He came. Those who didn't care, didn't take time to study God's Truth...had no idea what was going on...much like we see today.

God gave over 332 specific clues about Jesus in the Old Testament..In this series, we looked at 17 of them..clues that God gave in His Scriptures that would identify the Promised 1...Of all the people ever born...only 1 met the criteria that God specified..and the Wise Men and others knew it.

God said....The Savior of the World....will be a Man...Semitic.... Abraham....Not from Ishmael but rather Isaac...Not from Esau but rather Jacob...Of all the 12 tribes....God says keep your eye on the tribe of Judah.....Of all the families of the tribe of Judah....keep focused on the branch of Jesse....Of Jesse's sons watch the youngest one David.....And of all of David's sons keep your eye on Solomon.

He will be the one from Solomon's line that is born of a sexual virgin.....in Bethlehem...not the Bethlehem in Galilee but the one in Judea....Shepherds will bow and worship Him....You will find Him is wrapped in love in swaddling cloths...Kings of Persia will bring Him gifts...specifically gold and frankincense.

Children will die and mothers will wail around the time of His birth....He will come out of Egypt....He will arrive at the temple to be examined on Palm Sunday 33 AD....and people will call Him Wonderful Counselor....Mighty God...Everlasting Father....and Prince of Peace

If those are not specific enough for you....God gave another 315 that Jesus fulfilled in his earthly mission. 28 on the Day of His crucifixion alone. And as we said, 2500 about world events and future events. Only about 500 left to fulfill and they will almost all happen in a single day when Jesus returns.

God made sure that those who cared. Those who were paying attention recognized the Savior of the World when He came.

And so....Just as God had promised.

He came to us....in the weakest of ways...waiting for us to come to Him...yet willing for us not to. Waiting for us to see....yet willing for us to turn away. Waiting for us to worship Him....yet willing for us to renounce Him.

He is Lord over all of creation....Yet He placed Himself at the mercy of His creation...To betray Him...if we are willing. Willing for us to deny Him...mock Him...beat Him...and impale Him on a cross...Yet even knowing all of that...He comes to us. Cradled in the most unexpected of places...Coming in the weakest of ways...

This child came with a secret...He came to earth to do the one thing he could not do in heaven...He came to die.

His timing was perfect....anticipation and expectations were very high. That night was planned thousands of years in advance. God was orchestrating everything...all that He said would happen had happened. Paul said it this way.....

Galatians 4:4–5 (ESV) 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

The Fullness of Time. We have learned about the prophecies...but God was arranging everything else too....

Everything...everyone...perfectly in place. The greatest stage in all of mankind is set... the fullness of time has come....and....God opens the heavens...and steps into earth. That first Christmas Night

So What?!

NO really...so what? What does it matter? Here we are on Christmas Eve.... Presents wrapped....Trees and Houses Decorated...Family and Friends...perhaps....large meal.... Lots of dessert....Time playing with our latest toys...not matter what age we are. Many in our culture will have a great holiday...Without a single thought about Jesus...So what does it matter? Prophecies fulfilled....perfect empire..perfect language..Perfect Timing...So what?

If you study and believe these Holy Words from God, you don't have to wonder about what is going to happen in the future..it has already been written. The events of today have been spoken of for thousands of years.

If you study and believe these Holy Words from God, you can live at peace, free from worry....not matter what circumstances you encounter.

If you study and believe these Holy Words from God, you can live your life totally free from the fear of death, disease or tragedy.

If you study and believe these Holy Words from God, you can finally know that you are complete. You no longer have that void.... and you know that you can live free and have joy. You discover that your life here is about something much greater than yourself. You discover that you are here on a mission.

You discover a new you. You have changed but you didn't change yourself. Something has happened to you. You thought you were learning about Jesus with your mind....but along the way you discovered a very real relationship with a very real and present God. You can't really explain it...but you have experienced it. You just know that you know that you know that you are right with God and living in relationship based on His love.

You know what Paul meant when he wrote to the Romans that there is no condemnation for those in Christ. You have been set free from guilt and shame. You no longer fear meeting God because you do it every day.

Yet..most in the US will spend this Christmas apart from all of that. Great Holiday if the Christians don't bother us too much with that salvation Savior stuff.

The Story of Jesus, God, and God's plan of Salvation for us is so obvious in the Holy Scriptures...that I truly believe that they are self revelatory. You have to do some pretty incredible interpretive gymnastics with the Bible to miss such an obvious revelation from God.

And that is when it hit me. The answer to So What? Why does this book mean everything to some and nothing really to others? Why do some study it every day and find God speaking to them, directing them, and encouraging them and to others it is a boring book of Jewish history.

What separates the two groups?

Well the answer is written on the cover.

Every Bible ever printed has two words on the front. HOLY BIBLE.

You see for some people over the centuries, this is simply a Bible. A book. Just like any other book. Written by Man. Full of fanciful stories, made up miracles, and some decent moral teachings. Jesus was a world influencer, a religious man, and perhaps was even a prophet. But this book is no different than the Iliad, War and Peace or the Koran.

But this book self proclaims that it is Holy **PHOTO 1**.

Holy means originating from God, having the very essence of God, and expressing the very nature of God.

But for many others over the century this book is The Holy Bible. It is not a book of religious ideas...It is a Holy Book written by God Himself. It was written by God through His Spirit. He spoke to the heart of its writers and directed every word, every thought, and ever idea expressed in the Holy Text.

This book is without error, without contradiction, and contains the only truth in the world. It reveals, reflects and defines God, human origins, human events, and future events with perfection. It is the story of Jesus. God who came to earth to save those He loves.

You see your entire experience this Christmas depends upon that one word....Holy.

**PHOTO 2** The Holy Bible is still the number one best seller of all time. It was written by 40 authors...over 1500 years...most never knew each other....The writers often wrote things that made no sense to them. But they wrote them anyway and revealed exactly what God directed them to.

Imagine writing a book...knowing that you should write something down in a very exact way but also knowing that what you are writing makes no sense to you or anyone else that you currently know who will read your text.

For Example, The Prophet Zechariah had to describe a vision God had given Him....of horror no one in the First Century could imagine....He didn't know what to call it so He called it a plague. But, he describes what is clearly to us and nuclear explosion in End Times. It made no sense to John but he wrote it because God directed him to. Look at his attempt to describe such a horrible event.

Zechariah 14:12–13 (ESV) 12 And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. 13 And on that day a great panic from the Lord shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.

Prophets described foretold of Jesus being crucified hundreds of years before anyone thought of it. Prophets spoke of a day...a specific day...The Sunday before Passover 33AD when the Messiah would arrive at the temple in Jerusalem to be examined...they foretold this hundreds of years before that date happened. We today call it the first Palm Sunday. The streets were lined with people because they expected Him to arrive...on that day...and that specific time

No other religion wrote the perfect autobiography of its leader thousands of years before He was ever born. Describing thousands of details most of them extremely specific and undeniable. Not one even a smidgen wrong.

This Book claims to be Holy

Almost everything that we know about God, Man, Sin, Heaven, Hell, and Salvation come from this book.

**PHOTO 3** Holy Bible....Holy Scriptures....Holy...it means not of man. It means that it is pure, untarnished, and comes from the throne of God. These are God's Scriptures...not ours. These are God's truths...no ours. Holy sets apart these ancient writings from every other book ever written. Holy means without fault, without contradictions, without error. God is pure and perfect thus His revelation to Man must be the same. There can be no contradiction in Holy Scriptures. There can be nothing false....They are either Holy or they are not.

These are self proclaimed Holy....Scriptures....Literally the writings of God. God's revelation of Himself to man and God's revelation of truth to man. These ancient Holy Words come straight from God...His directions...His insight...His truth....to those He states that He loves.

These Holy Scriptures are literally breathed out to us from God just as He breathed Life into us at birth.

**2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

All Scripture...All...Every Word...Every verse...Every story....Every doctrine..All of it. It all comes from God. That is not in doubt... the question is how we receive it.

For those who believe that this book is Holy....you can't change it, manipulate it or stand over it with your idea or what should be right or wrong. Doing so, mocks God. He has defined truth. He defines sin. God says there is a heaven. God says that there is a Hell. God says we must put our faith in Jesus to be saved. It is non-negotiable.

But so many say....God I know that this is what you said is true, this is your truth, but I know more. I don't think you got this right. I want salvation if you offer it, but I am not into your Holy Book. There are things in there I don't like. So I will change it so I can feel better. Because God, I, not you know what truth really is.

You see the Scriptures are either God's Truth or they are not. Not an opinion...just reality. This book claims to be the Holy Revelation of God to man. It either is or it isn't.

God has either revealed all to us that we need to know, sealed , guarded and protected the message through generations...or He has not.

These words were penned and recorded long before God gave us life and the free will to have an opinion about them. Our opinion does not change the truth about these words.

If this book really contains God's truth....our opinions don't change it. If this book does not contain God's Truth, our opinions don't change that either. This book stand and falls on its own. It claims to be the undiluted Holy Truth from God. We choose to accept that truth or not.

We can embrace it as Holy ...we can reject it as not..but we cannot change it. We can't reshape it or redefine it...God tell us to take it or leave it. Because it claims to be His Words...man can't touch it.

If you don't like it you can write your own Scriptures...that is what Mohammed did...So did L Ron Hubbard with Scientology....So did Joseph Smith Jr with the Mormons. There are hundreds of other religions and human philosophies. Some have tried to take these Holy Scriptures and put their opinions and thoughts into them. To make them say what they want them to say. To redefine and update God's truth for today's "modern world" They aren't interested in God's truth...just their truth if they were God.

But only one collection of ancient texts claims to contain the Holy Scriptures of God. Only one claims Holy..Perfect...No contradictions...No errors....and then backs it up.

Millions who believe these words to be Holy have died because of that belief- more each day today than ever before in human history. But the world is fully of Martyrs for all kinds of causes and religions.

So How do we decide? Because what others decided to do with these Holy Scriptures...doesn't matter to you and me. What matters is what you and I decide to do with them.

If there is even an ounce of faith in you to believe that these words could be Holy Truth's from God...then they are self revelatory. Once in your heart you decide it is possible....you will find Him. You cannot study these Scriptures with a true desire to know Him and not come out on the other end certain that they are Holy. It is that obvious.

However, if you study these Ancient Texts having already decided that they are not God's Truths...or that you know better than God, your opinion has already been placed over them...You will read them and they will make no sense to you. God will literally blind you to them because you don't really have a heart to want to know Him.

If you change God's truth to your own, you aren't seeking Him, you are trying to use Him and worship yourself. You aren't embracing Holy Scriptures you are embracing the book you would write if you were God. Sadly, that book is not going to save you.

These Holy Words are only revealed to those who are seeking with their Hearts. It is not a mind thing. Once your heart is set to know the truth....God reveals it in buckets. I never understood it until I lived it. On the day, when I finally grew up around age 30, I told God that if He was really real...if these truths were really His...then I HAVE TO KNOW. I was desperate to discover truth. I knew my life had to be about more than me. Discovering the truth about God became the most important pursuit of my life.

I didn't want to believe. I didn't want to be like my parents...I didn't like church and didn't like or want to be a Christian. I didn't like that Jesus claimed to be the only way...I didn't agree with God about some of His truths....I honestly didn't want them to be true. No one likes the idea of Hell...No one likes to be corrected....I didn't like what He said about sexual purity or sexual orientation. No one likes to surrender....

Becoming a Christian was the last thing I wanted to be....I even went to church one Easter to laugh at these weak people who thought that they needed God. And most of all, I didn't want to admit that I had been wrong and didn't want to surrender to God's truth in my life. I still wanted God on my terms...not His.

But I got to a point..where I needed more..my life was incomplete...and those Christians seem to have something I did not....peace. A deep sense of peace. It was as if everything was ok no matter what happened to them. Not denial...peace. I wanted to live in that kind of peace more than I wanted to be right. I wanted to live without worry, anxiety or fear of the future. I knew that they had it and I didn't. . I knew deep in my heart that they had found something or someone that I had missed. They accepted God on His terms and I had not.

So, one day. I picked up this book and told God from my heart....If you are real...If this book truly contains Ancient Holy Scriptures and Truths...the God....please Show Me. If you are real...I have to know.

I didn't realize it at the time...that God had already promised in His Word....to show me.

Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV) 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, declares the Lord,

IF you seek me with ALL your heart you WILL FIND ME. A promise straight from God's mouth to our hearts. A promise that He will reveal Himself when you seek with your heart.

I discovered that you don't turn off your mind to find God..in fact just the opposite...God wants your mind fully engaged in His Holy text...but you have to add the pursuit of your heart....You have to have a heart that say, "God if I determine these words to be Holy, then I will surrender to your truth. Show me God, why these words could not have come from man. Convince me that they are from you and I will be all in."

God says...Do that and you will find me. Guaranteed. I, along with millions of others over the years have found that promise to be true.

## Closing

So tonight, all across the world, people are celebrating Christmas. They are giving gifts, connecting with loved ones, and eating a lot of food. There are two groups really. Some tonight are celebrating Jesus as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Others are celebrating with no real thoughts about Jesus at all. I have been praying and asking God why was it so hard for me to see the truth? What kept me from following Jesus all of those years? God often answers prayers in odd ways.

Recently I was watching a movie about Abraham Lincoln. You likely know that I am a Civil War buff. Parts of the movie were hard to watch. The violence in that war and every war was senseless....it needed to stop. People on both sides just lined up and walked into a hail of bullets. In one battle, the bodies were spread across the battle field. So many that they said you could walk across the huge battlefield and never touch ground.

At that very moment I received my daily devotional on the phone. It's title was Christmas-Peace on Earth. I looked at my phone....back up to the screen. Then a truth hit me....There can be no peace...without surrender. As I watched the North and the South...fighting for control. I realized that they kept going until finally one side surrendered.

Ulysses S Grant was known as US Grant and the US it was said stood for unconditional surrender. The war would not end until Robert E Lee bowed and surrendered to US Grant. His only option was surrender or death. He finally realized that he had come up against a power greater than his. That is when it hit me. I realized that we have been doing the same thing with God

Since Adam and Eve, man has been in a battle with God over His Authority. He demands of us that we allow Him to be God and we stiffen and reject Him. Even knowing that death is imminent and certain, we hold on to an independence we never really had and reject God.

It doesn't seem to matter how many prophecies are fulfilled...how certain it was that Jesus Died and resurrected...How many undisputed miracles Jesus performed...or the overwhelming evidence in the Holy Scriptures. Some people will sadly go to Hell all the while claiming to still be in control. God will love them enough to give them what they want. An eternity separated from Him.

God could have forced our surrender through brutal force, but instead...he chose a more powerful force...Unconditional...unmerited...and unlimited...LOVE. God desires that every person surrender to His truth rather than die trying to fight Him. That baby in



the manger, God Himself came to earth, to show us God's love. The kind of love that is not of this world. The love that comes only from God's Throne.

His love is unconditional. We argue with God...He loves. We reject God...He loves. We curse God...He Loves. We chase other gods...He loves. We reject His truth...He loves. We ignore His suffering ...He loves...We mock His truth...He loves. We live oblivious in the midst of His blessings in our lives and even take credit for them...He Loves....We sin...He loves. We try to change His truth..He loves. We ignore His birthday...He loves. We reject the cross...He Loves. We go to Hell...He loves. God's love for us is unconditional.

His love is without conditions. Nothing you do makes Him love you more and nothing you do makes Him love you less....He just loves you...whether you like it or acknowledge it. God loves you...so deal with it. In fact God loves you and will for all of eternity...even if you never love Him.

It is God's very nature to love us. He can't not love us. He hates our sin because He knows what it does to us. But He loves us.

When you realize How much He loves you....surrender becomes much easier.

I never felt the true Love of God until I stopped fighting His authority. Once I allowed my heart to consider the possibility that Scriptures were Holy....God opened my eyes and I began to experience His overwhelming Love.

I thought that I knew love when I married my wife. I thought I knew a deeper love when God blessed us with our children. I couldn't imagine loving anyone or anything more than my kids.

But then I experienced God's Love. His Love is completely overwhelming and consuming. When you experience it you can never be the same. His Love changes everything about you. You know that no form of human love can come close. God's unconditional love is poured out from His throne. It is like finally going home, finally being loved for who you are without any restrictions, being fully known and fully accepted.

So those of us who read the Scriptures and know that they are Holy.....We see this night and know that it is indeed a Holy Night...We live at peace with God because we have surrendered to the authority He has always had.

We brought to Jesus our unconditional surrender and in return we were soaked in His unconditional love. We want everyone to experience it...to live at peace with God. To be loved and accepted just as you are. To stop trying to perform. To live this life free of anxiety, worry, or fear. To know the future and to know that it is good.To come home and know that you have finally arrived where you have always belonged.

God gave us His Holy Bible. It is His truth. His outline and guide for our lives. It is His perfect revelation of Himself to us. It reveals His authority and His only plan for our salvation. He demands that we surrender and accept Jesus as our Lord, but doing so is like diving in to the unlimited depths of His love.

The Promised One "Holy Night?"  
Frank Burns MDiv

Christmas Eve  
Remnant Church of Sarasota

So on this Christmas Eve....my prayer is that you will consider that maybe just maybe the events of this night are Holy. Ordained and Orchestrated by God. It is Holy because everything about Christmas is from Him. When you realize the full extent of His Holiness....there is only one response...fall on your knees....in unconditional surrender. Let's Pray