

CHRISTMAS SERIES

WELCOMING JESUS

According to scholars, the time that Jesus actually came to this earth was most probably April. Since Christmas is set aside to remember Jesus and it is a holiday, it is a good time to remember the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this planet earth. I thought and prayed about it. I said, "Lord, your coming to this planet earth was prophesied nearly four thousand years of recorded Bible history. From the time of Genesis, right up to the time of John the Baptist the last prophet before Jesus, many men of God have prophesied before You came to this planet earth. An entire nation of Israel has been prepared for Your coming. All heaven looked forward to this majestic event. God the Father also looked forward to this event. However, when the Lord Jesus actually came to this planet earth nearly two thousand years ago, who were there to welcome You? If it is that important to heaven, if it is that important to all the prophets of old that men of God had looked forward to that event for four thousand years, when You actually came Lord, who were there to welcome You?"

As I look at who were those that welcome the Lord Jesus I felt disappointed. I said, "Lord, this world did not give you that kind of welcome that the angels had given you. Why were there not people welcoming you?" There is a spiritual truth there. The same hindrances that prevent people from knowing and welcoming His first coming will be the same hindrances that will prevent people from welcoming His second coming. The same principles in the spirit that

prepare some people to welcome Him are the same principles that will guide us to learn to welcome every move of God. We need to learn to welcome Jesus when it is time for Him to come again the second time. However, the same situation that hindered those people are going to hinder some people from being ready for the Lord Jesus when He comes again the second time. Therefore, we can learn from the Lord Jesus' first coming to the planet earth in order to prepare for His second coming.

Let us look first at the gospel of John 1:10. John is talking about Jesus the true Light of the world. *He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.* When He came the world did not know Him. The One who made the world, the world did not know Him. Verse 11 *He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.* The very people who should be the first to welcome Jesus were not there to welcome Him. Instead, other people welcomed Him. What a sad fact. However, there is a lesson we have to learn from the historical event of Jesus coming into the world. Let us look at those people who did not welcome Jesus. Why did they did not welcome Him? What cause them not to be ready to welcome Him? He says in verse 11 He came to His own people the Jews and there was no welcome waiting for Him. Why was there no welcome among the Jews the Israelites His own people? There were people to whom the Word of prophecy has been given, to whom the law has been given, and to whom the Lord Jesus say that I am sent to the lost sheep of Israel. They were the first people to be given the opportunity to receive Jesus. Why didn't they welcome Jesus?

Let us look over here at the gospel of Mathew 2. The people who was supposed to welcome Jesus when He came were the Israelites. When it was time for Jesus to come to this earth, they were not ready. It took some strangers from far away. By that time, it was two years before they arrived at Jerusalem. They saw the star from far away when Jesus was born. By the time the three wise men reached Jesus, Jesus was at least one to two years old. It says Jesus was standing in the house. That is in Matthew chapter two. The old story that the wise men came to the manger is not scriptural. They saw the star that was manifested when Jesus was born in the manger. However, they traveled so far that by the time they reached the place Jesus was between one to two years old. This was another reason why Herod had all children under two killed. That was about the age of

Jesus. You can see that the wise men came to Jesus in a house not in the manger in Matthew chapter two.

However, the surprising thing is two years has passed after Jesus has manifested and they still did not know. They still did not know, just like some people do not know when the Holy Spirit shows up in a service. One hour after the Holy Spirit came, they still did not know that the Holy Spirit or the anointing is already there. Sometimes, we are waiting for the move of God and the move of God has started from a place that we never expected. The move of God caused fire in a place or a group of people who were insignificant and who were not recognized and that we never recognize it. Therefore, some times one or two years passed by before we recognize that the move of God has come.

God has already moved and two years later, here comes the wise men. We are not sure whether they were three. How did they get the number three? Was it because there were three gifts. They may have been more than that. When they came in verse 2 *Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.*" When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Instead of being excited, they were troubled. Look at that - they were already two years delayed welcoming Jesus. Now the wise men came to honor the Lord. They wanted to worship the Lord who has come to this earth. It was so important to them that they traveled for nearly one and half years to two years. The response of the Jews all Jerusalem was fear and anxiety. Herod was troubled because in that day Herod was known as the king of the Jews. He had done a lot of favors of the Jews. They sort of acknowledged him as king. Therefore, here was someone to challenge him. Therefore, Herod and the Jews were all one crowd who never welcome Jesus, never look forward to His coming. Why didn't they look forward to His coming?

Firstly, they were happy as they were. They were not ready to change themselves in order to welcome Jesus. Every thing was highly organized and highly planned. They have organized themselves to the extent that they do not need the Holy Spirit any more. They planned their lives in such a manner that they do not need God to move any more. They are doing all the moving. This is also the state of many churches, denominations, and ministries. They may be

highly organized by men and women, but little was inspired or approved by the Holy Spirit. This is actually lawlessness since many works are done without seeking the Lord's counsel and approval. In such highly organized human enterprises, lawlessness has been institutionalized and established. It is therefore not a surprise that when there is a genuine move of God, the first to react negatively are these human enterprises that call themselves Christian.

Secondly, you notice here that when the wise men asked where to find the king of the Jews, this caused Herod to do some asking himself. Matthew 2: 4-6 *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. Therefore, they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: However, you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will be shepherd My people Israel."*

The Jews have the Word of God but they do not practice the Word of God. The Word told them where Jesus was going to be born. If they had been sensitive to the Word of God, they will know the time is right. First, they were comfortable in themselves. They had every thing they need. Every thing was going nicely - they had food on the table and shelter above them. They do not need God; they were just comfortable as they are. They have the Word but they do not practice the Word. They were hearers of the Word but they were hypocrites. Jesus later in His lifetime rebuked them. You have the Word but you do not do the Word. They were hearers of the Word but not doers. If you hear the Word long enough but never practice it, some thing will happen to your heart. You would be worse off than never hearing the Word. It means that now even the mighty Word of God has no effect on you. It means that now you will be many times as hard as you were before. Not to hear the Word is one thing. However, to hear the Word and not be moved by the Word will cause our hearts to harden against the Lord. When we receive a Word or command from the Lord and we refuse to obey, we choose to be a hearer and not a doer. We will move into this group that never welcome Jesus when He manifests. We will not be ready when Jesus comes.

Thirdly, here is Herod in verse 7 *Then Herod, when he had secretly called*

the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. He did it for a wrong motive. He did it because if he could find out where Jesus was he wants to get rid of Jesus. Jesus was not crucified by the masses that He healed, touched and blessed in His ministry. The crucifixion of Jesus was a plotted by this same group of scribes, Pharisees, and the high priests. The third reason these people did not welcome Jesus is that they have locked themselves into a position that if God wants to do something, God has to do it their way. If God manifests any other way, or if the voice of God comes from a carpenter and not from one of the Pharisees, they will not accept it. In other words, they are saying, "God, I want you to work my way. Yes, Lord we are looking forward to welcome You but if you want us to welcome You, You come on our terms and conditions. Please do not ask us to come on Your terms and conditions." They have made themselves bigger than God had. They have built their thrones higher than God's throne. Therefore, when God came lowly on a donkey they rejected Him while the crowds accepted Him. The third thing why they did not welcome Jesus is that they wanted Jesus to come on their terms. This group that did not welcome Jesus represent hearers of the Word but not doers. They have hardened their hearts to God's plans and purposes. They have planned every thing so well that they were not ready to welcome Jesus when Jesus came. In fact, His coming was considered an intrusion into their lives and unsettled their plans and programs.

The wise men - who do they represent? They represent the people of the world. They represent people who are hungry for God. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled." These people who were hungry for God had followed the star. They saw the star and they made a commitment to God. Therefore, these wise men represents people whose hearts are sincere towards God. When the light comes to them, they would gladly accept it and be born again. They will come to accept Jesus and accept the move of God when He comes. They have a hunger for God. For those who are neither hungry for righteousness nor hungry for God, the move of God can come and go and will make no difference to their lives. Those who are hungry for God will obey their spiritual hunger and go on a spiritual search.

I came from a Buddhist family. When I was young, I did believe in God. In primary school, I believed in God although no one told me about God. I looked up the sky and knew that there must be a God. By the time I was 16, I became an

atheist and did not believe in God any more. Too much education, too much scientific experimentations and too much materialism made me doubt the existence of God. I thought atoms and molecules were the stuff of life. However, when my sister got demon possessed, I heard the demons speaking through her. I saw the demons manifesting through her. Something in my philosophy cracked and I saw that science could not explain that unseen demonic presence. I went on a spiritual search. I became hungry for the truth. I yielded to that hunger and went on a spiritual search. Along the way, some friends brought me to church and I was born again. There are people who are hungry but will pay no attention to that spiritual hunger. Every night before they sleep, some thing asks them where they are going in eternity. What will happen when you die? They try to rub it out of their mind with distractions. They will have to face that question and resolve it.

Secondly, these wise men had obeyed the Word as soon as they had the opportunity to hear the Word. The first time they heard the scriptures, it was from the most unlikely people - the chief priests and the scribes. The wise men asked, *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."* (Matthew 2: 2) The chief priests and the scribes said that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem. Straight away, they went to Bethlehem. Look at the way the wise men obeyed God's Word. The moment the scribes and Pharisees said, "Bethlehem," the wise men said, "All right we are going there now." They are not going to delay. They are not going to procrastinate. They are going there now to look for the King of the Jews. These wise men represent people who hear and straight away obey the Word of God.

The same scenario will be played out in these end times. Many students of prophecy will be able to give outlines of the end times with Bible chapters and verses. However, when the rapture were to take place now, most of them would not be ready. There is something deceitful in the hearts of man. Like the chief priests and the scribes, they take pride in knowing chapter and verse of Scriptures to predict the birth of the Messiah and other coming events. But unfortunately, like the chief priests and the scribes, they would also be unprepared for the very events they can predict so accurately. What gives? Their intellectual and spiritual pride have deceived them into thinking that they are smart enough to be caught up in the rapture.

Today, many churches are running their church life in their own flesh. Many think they are right. However, one day after the rapture, many would realize how wrong they had been. But it would be too late.

Thirdly, in Matthew 2: 11, *And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. When they had opened their reasures, they presented gifts to Him, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.*

The third point is they were worshippers of the Lord. There is no calling higher than being a worshipper of God. God brought them into true worship.

The gospel of Luke 2 shows two groups of people in the world - those who are hungry for God and those who are not hungry for God.

Luke 2:1 *it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.*

Firstly, these people had a big event taking place in their midst. The world had never done this before. No such census has happened in the world before. This is the first time they were having a census. It was also a time of celebration. You can see that all the major towns and cities were filled. All the hotels in town were booked. We all know what it is like. If your city were to host the Olympic Games, guess what? All the hotels in town would be booked months ahead. It is such a big event in the life of the city. It would be the talk of town. The bus drivers would be talking about it. The taxi drivers would be talking about it. Now here is something exciting - the whole world was having a census. Everybody is going to the towns of their tribal origins and at the same time, they make use of

the season to visit their friends.

This group of people who did not welcome Jesus was the worldly people. Firstly, they never read the signs of the times. God is ordering some things in the world today. Behind the headlines, the back lines and in the middle lines of the newspaper is the hand of God. However, the carnal mind is not sensitive to the times and seasons that are happening. Do you know that this whole census is for one reason? There is only one reason for the census. The Roman Empire thinks the census is for their records. However, there is only one reason - God wanted Jesus to be born in Bethlehem. He moved an entire Roman Empire for that census to take place. An angel must have come to the Roman Caesar and whispered the call for a census. Therefore, in the end he called for a census. The entire reason for that census is because Jesus is to be born in Bethlehem. However, the world never saw it. The world saw the census but not the Lord. There are many out there in the world that are not sensitive to some things happening out in the world. They do not read the signs of the times and the seasons we are living in. The nations in the world are moving in a way for God's end time plan to be fulfilled. They are not getting themselves ready. Instead of being hungrier for God, they get busy with the affairs of this world. In the time like the census, they took the opportunity to do more business. They do not understand everything so that they could welcome Jesus. They got trapped in the hassles and the concerns of this life.

When Jesus actually came the sad thing Luke 2: 7 tells us is that everybody else had a hotel room but none for the One for whom the census was planned for. The whole purpose of the census was planned for the birth of Jesus to take place in Bethlehem. However, the One for whom the entire heaven and earth was moved to plan for, there was no room for Him. That shows how unwelcome He was. There was no room because everybody was busy. There was no room for Him. That is the second thing that takes place in Luke 2: 7 they relegated Jesus to a humble manger. They put Him in a place fit for animals. It was a place where the animals' dung and dirty smells were. Mary had to make the best out of her worst situation. That happens when we become too busy for God and do not know the times and seasons

Secondly, we will relegate Jesus to a time of convenience. It is not convenient for us now to have time for Jesus. We are not ready for You. Some people worship the God of convenience. "I will only think about eternity when I make my living." They are worshipping convenience. "When it is convenient for me, then I will come to church." "When it is convenient for me, I will think about future things." You do not talk about the Almighty God, the heaven, and the earth that way. You do not talk to the boss you work for that way. "Boss, although you employ me I will serve you when it is convenient." You will be fired that very day. Yet we talk to the Creator who gave us life who gave us breath and we say we will worship You when it is convenient. We will welcome You when it is convenient. That happened to them.

The third thing that happened is that which is not recorded here because Jesus came and went and they did not know it. They never experience Jesus. They never saw Him. When you choose to draw near to God, God will draw near to you. God did say this in the Old Testament, "If you reject Me, I will reject you." He will have a grace period before He does that. However, if you constantly reject God there will come a time when we will be like Pharaoh and He will put us in the second level of pre-destination and say that's it you are now set aside for the judgment. Those who love God, God will love them. Those who hate God, He will still love them but then judgment will come upon them because God will take His hand of protection away from them after a season.

What about those who welcome God? This group was the shepherds. Why did God specially go to the shepherds? As I looked at it, I asked, "Lord, why did You specially go to the shepherds? Why didn't you send the angel right to the Town Hall where the people gathered?" On that day, the King was born and laid on a manger. Why go to the shepherds in the country when everybody was in the city? Remember the census was on and everybody was in town. Just like on Christmas Eve night when we were driving through town to get to church, there was a huge traffic jam and it looked like a morning rush hour. I do not know what the world is doing on Christmas Eve night when they do not know the Lord. It looks like rush hour traffic. What is the world doing? It is busy. I asked, "Lord, why do not You appear to the world?" The Lord said, "If He sent His angels to them they would have ignore the angels because the world would not receive Him and God knows it." Therefore, God do not waste time. God does not waste

time sending angels to the Town Hall and the hotels. They were too busy for God's plans. Those three points were working against them. They are not interested in God so God did not bother to send angels to them. However, out in the country there was a group of people the shepherds. They were away from the world. Firstly, they were people who were not caught up with the things of this life. Some shepherds took off to town but this group of shepherds were not interested in those things. There are special stall opened today for the shepherds. These shepherds in the country said, "No, we are not interested. We just like to look up into the sky above thinking about God." Therefore, the first thing why these shepherds had a special manifestation they were not tied up to the world or the world system. They were simple folks who just love God more than things. However, the people in the world love things more than God.

Secondly, these shepherds were faithful. Luke 2: 8 *Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.* They knew they had a job to do and if nobody does that job, the sheep will be lost. These people had a high measure of faithfulness. They were sacrificial and they were faithful. They said to the other shepherds who wanted to go to town, "Never mind, you go ahead. Somebody has to do this job. We will sacrifice and we will look after the sheep. We will take all your jobs for you while you are away." They were faithful people. Luke 2:9 *And behold, an angel of the Lord stood them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. This will be the sign to you. You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace, goodwill toward men."*

The shepherds responded in verse 15 *Therefore, it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one other, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.* What the world could not attract them to leave their jobs the Lord could. Every thing Satan had offered to them, to draw them away from their jobs could not. However, when the Lord sent His angels and talked about His glory, they were willing to let go and let God rule them. They said, "Let us go." What

about the sheep? Let us commit that to God. If it is God who sends us there God will take care of our sheep. The only reason we go to Bethlehem is to see the Lord. They do not want to see the new stalls. They do not want to see the festivities, the carnival, the circus, the clowns in town. Seeing such a commitment, I am sure the Lord will take care of the sheep for them. That day the angels were doing the shepherding for them to make sure no bears, no lions would attack their sheep. You can see the third response. They immediately responded to God. They were right and ready for the harvest. They were people who trembles at God's Word and who loves God. The moment God says anything, they were willing to drop everything and just say, "Lord Jesus, I will follow you wherever You lead." That is why God blesses the shepherds. They went very quickly. They were not going to postpone for two years. I mean if its important for the angels, then it is important for them. If it is important for Jesus, then it is important for them.

Now there was a fourth group of a person who also responded correctly and that is Simeon and Anna. How did this fourth group respond to God? Verse 25 *behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.* Firstly, this fourth group has set themselves apart. They have kept all the conditions that the shepherds kept but they went further. The shepherds only saw the manger but Simeon and Anna saw the Lord and they even know the future. That is what the church should be like. Firstly, Simeon waited for the coming of Jesus. Every day he looked forward to that. He will be like the Christians today getting up in the morning and saying to God, "Lord, when are you going to come back? We miss you, Lord Jesus. We know that you are delaying because there are more people who should be saved when You come back. However, O Lord we look forward to Your coming. We keep ourselves consecrated separated for your coming." That is the first thing they look forward and they prepare for Jesus coming. Whenever God does anything new or bring a fresh move of God or fresh revelation, they will always be the first people to move into it.

Verse 26 *Therefore, he came by the Spirit into the temple. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God.* Secondly, the Spirit leads this group of

people. They learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. That day Simeon may have been praying and the Holy Spirit said to him, "Simeon, I want you to go now to the temple because the Messiah is being dedicated there." When he heard the voice of the Holy Spirit and he followed it, the Holy Spirit led him to see Jesus. It is important to be led by the Spirit. I was just sitting with a brother in the Lord. He was a successful man beginning to do some ministry. Then he made this statement, which I know to be true since he is serving the Lord since January 96. He said, "I find that not many people led by the Spirit. A lot of them walk in the flesh. Even some ministers claim to be led by the Spirit but they do not know the Spirit. They do not know His sweet gentle voice. They do things that are in the flesh. The Spirit leads a small percentage." However, bless God the day is coming where the Spirit is leading more and more people. You are going to be led by the Spirit. You are going to hear His voice. You are going to hear His call. They will be at every place the

Lord leads them to go.

The Italian mystic, Maria Valtorta, had a series of visions of the life of Jesus, which she wrote in a five volume book called, "The Poem of the Man-God." She described the following scene of Simeon beholding the Babe Jesus as follows:

Simeon, whom I always thought belonged to the sacerdotal class, and is instead a simple believer, at least according to his garments, takes the Child and kisses Him. Jesus smiles at him with the typical smile of sucklings. He seems to watch him inquisitively, because the old man is crying and laughing at the same time and his tears form a sparkling embroidery running along his wrinkles and beading his long white beard, towards which Jesus stretches His little hands. He is Jesus, but still a child, and whatever moves in front of Him, draws His attention so that He wants to get hold of it to see what it is. Mary and Joseph smile and so do all the others who praise the beauty of the Child.

I hear the words of the holy old man and I see the astonished gaze of Joseph, the deeply moved look of Mary as well as the glances of the little crowd, partly surprised and moved, partly laughing at the words of the old man. Amongst the latter there are some bearded and conceited members of the Sanhedrin, who shake

their heads giving Simeon an ironic pitying look. They must think he is a dotard.

Jesus says: Truth is not revealed to a priest engrossed in rites, but absent with his spirit, it is instead revealed to a simple believer.

The priest, always in contact with Divinity, devoted to what concerns God and to everything which is above the flesh, should have realized at once who was the Child Who was being offered that morning in the Temple. But it was necessary for him to have a living spirit, in order to realize it. A mere robe covering a drowsy spirit, if not a dead spirit, was not sufficient.

The Spirit of God can thunder if He wants, and rouse like a thunderbolt and shake like an earthquake the dullest spirit. He can. But generally, as He is an orderly Spirit, as God is Order in each Person and way of acting, He inspires and speaks, not where there is sufficient merit to deserve His effusion – in which case His effusions would be most rare and not even you would know their light – but where He sees the “good will” to deserve such effusion.

How is such will exerted? With a life devoted, as far as possible, entirely to God: in faith, obedience, purity, charity, generosity, and in prayer. Not in practices: in prayer. There is less difference between night and day than there is between practices and prayer. The latter is communion of the spirit with God, from which you emerge with fresh strength and a decision to belong more and more to God. The former are common habit exerted for various purposes, which are always selfish, and they leave you exactly as you were, nay, they aggravate your burden with the faults of falsehood and sluggishness.

Simeon had such good will. He had not been spared troubles and trials in his life. But he had not lost his good will. Age and misfortunes had not impaired or shaken his faith in the Lord and in His promises, neither did his good will to be more and more worthy of God tire or falter. And God sent Him the ray of the Spirit to guide him to the Temple, that he might see the Light that had come to the

world, before his eyes of a faithful servant closed to the light of the sun, awaiting to be reopened to the Sun of God glowing in the Heavens, which I had reopened when I ascended after my Martyrdom.

“Prompted by the Holy Spirit” says the Gospel. Oh! If men only knew what a perfect Friend the Holy Spirit is! What Guide, what Teacher! If they only loved and invoked Him, this love of the Most Holy Trinity, this Light of Light, this Fire of Fire, this Intelligence, this Wisdom! How much more they would know of what is necessary to know!

The third point is found in Anna’s life in verses 36 and 37, *Now there was one, Anna, prophet, the daughter of Phanuel, the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but serve God with fastings and prayers night and day.* She had all the same conditions as the shepherds had. However, she went further. The group of people who will be there to welcome Jesus Christ are those who give themselves to prayers, to worship and fasting. She gave Jesus the kind of welcome that He deserves when He came into the world. Many believers today keep remembering the day Jesus came. We give Him the welcome that He so deserves. However, how sad that when He actually came there were so few to welcome Him. Although all heaven was praising God and rejoicing that night, however, on earth only a handful were rejoicing and praising God. However, that handful today has grown to ten thousand times ten thousand. Many believers in Jesus really understand the spirit of Christmas. We know that Jesus may not have been born on December 25 but today we want to say, “Lord Jesus, we missed welcoming You when You came. However, we want You to know how grateful we are when You came into the world. We want to welcome You. Again and again those ten thousands times ten thousand voices welcome You today this December 25. We want to give You that welcome that You missed. A welcome that was not accorded to You.” We want to remain a group of people who will welcome the Lord when He comes the second time. We want to be the group of people that welcome the Lord and the Holy Spirit whenever He does some thing in our lives. Let us be like the shepherds, lets be like Simeon and Anna. Let us not be like Herod and all those scribes. Let us not be like the people of the world who are not hungry for God. Let us be like these groups that welcomed the Lord Jesus.

