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Hope Of The World

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Aloha everyone! This week begins our favorite time of the year! Today, we are starting our Christmas series, entitled, “The Hope of the World.” December is a wonderful time celebrating the presence of Christ and anticipation of His return.

The word “Christ” comes from *christos*, a Greek word meaning “anointed.” “Anointed” is to be signified as consecrated and highly favored by God. Christ, is the equivalent of the word *mashiach*, or Messiah, in Hebrew. So, to be the Christ, or Messiah, is to be “the anointed one of God, our Savior. Jesus Christ, therefore is our savior.

And we think of Christmas, not as a one day event to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but a festival for the entire month of December to commemorate His presence in the world, past, present and future. We are going to take the next four weeks and look at the identity of Jesus in hopes of knowing Him better, so that we will come to understand ourselves in light of who He is.

Let’s begin in the first chapter of Matthew’s gospel. It says,

“The mother of Jesus Christ was Mary. And this is how the birth of Jesus came about. Mary was engaged to marry Joseph. But before they married, she learned that she was going to have a baby. She was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary’s husband, Joseph, was a good man. He did not want to disgrace her in public, so he planned to divorce her secretly” (Matthew 1:18-19 ICB).

It’s interesting to note that this account is attributed to Matthew and to his point of view. Matthew, as we may recall, was a tax collector. He worked with numbers, presumed to be logical and would have valued accuracy and specificity, especially in being employed by the roman government. It surely would have meant dire consequences if he hadn’t. Matthew writes

in such a way, with the intent of wanting the reader to know the rich origin story of Jesus. Two things come to mind. Matthew wants us to deeply understand who Jesus is and the significance of who we are, in light of who He is.

We see through the story that Jesus was the product of teen pregnancy. He is flesh, blood and bone, fully human. We hear of stories like that today, yet, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit. One can think that as Jesus came to earth through the conception of the Holy Spirit and an unwed teenage mother, it may also be possible He already pre-existed in the spirit in order to bridge heaven and earth. So, is Jesus flesh or spirit? The answer is both and humanity is modeled after Him. He came as a solution to the imperfect condition of human existence. He came to address the problem of mankind's fallen state and to elevate our current reality.

God knew that a solution needed to be presented that was not of this world.

“While Joseph thought about this, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, “Joseph, descendant of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son. You will name the son Jesus. Give him that name because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21 ICB).

Scripture calls Joseph a good man. He was a righteous man and that is a wonderful thing to be said about anyone. However, how many of us men, upon hearing that our fiancé has been impregnated with someone else's child, would have handled it differently? Joseph honored his intimacy with Mary and it was within his legal right to call off the engagement, which he intended to do so respectfully. The Holy Spirit was able to speak to Joseph because he possessed the ability to recognize the presence of God. Therefore Joseph remained faith filled, reverent and obedient as a wonderful example, living intimately with God.

Specifically, the angel of God, instructed Joseph to name the baby, “Yehoshua.” Joseph knew what that meant. It means “Yahweh Saves.” Being conceived of the Holy Spirit, the baby was born to save us from our fallen incomplete state of existence, separate of God. We must remember God desires intimacy with His creation. Yet, mankind does not necessarily possess

the vision to see the truth. Because, Joseph was a faithful man, we can believe he was familiar with the teachings of the prophets of history, like this one spoken by Isaiah, 700 years prior.

“All this happened to make clear the full meaning of what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and they will name him Immanuel.” This name means “God is with us. When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord’s angel had told him to do. Joseph married Mary. But he did not have intimate relations with her until she gave birth to the son. And Joseph named the son Jesus” (Matthew 1:22-25 ICB).

Jesus is known by many names, describing His identity and His relationship to humanity. In addition to “Yahweh Saves,” here we see He is also, “God With Us.” Stay tuned for next week’s message.

So why does the world need saving? Largely, not everyone confesses Christ’s identity as “Salvation” or “being with us.” This may be due to ignorance. It may be a rejection through arrogance and pride or a disregard due to other lesser forms of false expressions of perceived methods of salvation. Jesus followers believe the decision we make to engage in intimacy with God, or not, ultimately determines the state of mankind’s eternity. Therein lies, the full demonstration of God’s love. He sent His son, His representation and through Christ we humanity has the ability to relate to God. God’s solution to humanity’s problem needed to come from outside of this world, and it came through the expression of Christ’s existence. Let’s look at a few passages from Genesis in the old testament to understand how humanity and God was supposed to have co-existed.

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it” (Genesis 1:26-28 HCSB).

Genesis was the first indication of the existence of the trinity, God, the Father of creation, the Son Jesus, in human form, which we are modeled after, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. One can think that Jesus was present in spirit form at the time of creation. Later in chapter 15 of

Genesis, God has an intimate conversation with Abraham and we see God's intention more clearly.

“He took him outside and said, “Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then He said to him, “Your offspring will be that numerous” (Genesis 15:5 HCSB).

Scripture tells us Jesus descended from the genealogy of Abraham 14 generations later. We can think of stars in the sky as equivalent to infinity. The stars refer to every nation, every race, every culture and every soul that God loves and desires to exist intimately with for eternity. Let's go back to the new testament to see how Jesus reemphasized this objective.

“Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20 HCSB).

We see how Jesus is communicating the same thing God spoke to Abraham, but delivered in a contemporary way. Jesus is saying to mankind once again to be the stars that was shown to Abraham. There is a mixture of races, countless cultures that exist today. Independent nations reason their own existence by their own spiritual understanding. Jesus says there is only one way to intimacy with God and that He and only He possesses the authority. Jesus urges us as believers and disciples to work together to reach out and share the message of divine love and intimacy with the One who originated it all. Just as Jesus was there at creation, He is here now by the Holy Spirit's power and he promises to be with us for all time.

To summarize, Jesus is the hope of the world. He is “Yahweh Saves.” We know He is the “solution” to reestablish humanity's intimacy with God once again. Jesus has all authority to overcome evil and sinfulness in this world. Through Christ He is our victory as He calls us to our elevated existence that we may not be overwhelmed by the discouragement of our current world condition but to remained attuned to our spiritual existence. In doing so, we can hope for the future of an eternal, intimate relationship with God.

Discussion Questions

1. Reflect on your memories of past Christmases and share the impact it has on you. Has it been memorable for you? In what ways?
2. We celebrate Jesus being born. What does that mean for you? Do you believe Christ will return? How does this prepare you for his arrival?
3. What is the significance of the name, “Yahweh Saves.” How is does it pertain to your life? How does it pertain to your loved ones, friends and family?
4. Pretend you were either Joseph or Mary. Can you see how conflicted people would be? How would you have responded to the news you were having the baby supernaturally?
5. What is your understanding of being one of the stars that Abraham saw when he gazed into the sky. Is that a truth you accept? Is it a truth you disregard? Why?