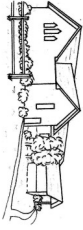


**NORTHWOODS
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



**4723 GRIFFITH AVENUE
CHEYENNE, WY 82009**

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH. JOHN 4:24



And she brought forth her firstborn
Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling
cloths, and laid Him in a manger,
because there was no room for them
in the inn. Luke 2:7



Every year the Christmas story is told from the pulpits around the world to all who would listen. It is the Greatest Story ever told. The story is given to us in the Gospel of Luke. Here is the historical record as given in *The New Testament In Modern English* by J. B. Phillips,

At that time a proclamation was made by Caesar Augustus that all the inhabited world should be registered. This was the first census, undertaken while Cyrenius was governor of Syria; and everybody went to the town of his birth to be registered. Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to David's town, Bethlehem, in Judaea, because he was a direct descendant of David, to be registered with his future wife, Mary, now in the later stages of her pregnancy. So it happened that it was while they were there in Bethlehem that she came to the end of her time. She gave birth to her first child, a son. And as there was no place for them inside the inn, she wrapped him up and laid him in a manger.

There were some shepherds living in the same part of the country, keeping guard throughout the night over their flock in the open fields. Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood by their side, the splendour of the Lord blazed around them, and they were terror-stricken. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! Listen, I bring you glorious news of great joy which is for all people. This very day, in David's town, a Saviour has been born for you. He is Christ, the Lord. Let this prove it to you: you will find a baby, wrapped up and lying in a manger."

And in a flash there appeared with the angel a vast host of the armies of Heaven, praising God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest Heaven! Peace upon the earth among men of goodwill."

When the angels left them and went back into Heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Now let us go straight to Bethlehem and see this thing which the Lord has made known to us."

So they came as fast as they could and they found Mary and Joseph—and the baby lying in the manger. And when they had seen this sight, they told everybody what had been said to them about the little child. And those who heard them were amazed at what the shepherds said. But Mary treasured all these things and turned them over in her mind. The shepherds went back to work, glorifying and praising God for everything that they had heard and seen, which had happened just as they had been told. Luke 2:1-20



WAIT, WAIT, WAIT

By

Rich Cesal

I hate to wait. There are of course different causes for wait. There is the wait for an event far into the future that may or may not occur in your lifetime. There is the wait for an event without a definite time for the event but a knowledge that it will occur in your lifetime. There is the wait in traffic. There is the wait in long queues, such as you find at the post office. Then there is the wait which is to happen on or before a specified time, such as a doctor's appointment. It is the two latter waits which cause me the greatest distress. As I see the incompetence of the postal system or I see the time slipping farther past an appointment time, I lose all patience. Is that why doctors call us patients?

I suppose patience is a virtue. But that is one virtue I will never possess although I am convinced that God is trying very hard to impress upon me a better level of patience. The more impatient I get, the more obstacles God puts in my way. There is no gain in my impatience, the wait gets longer.

The Old Testament is one big wait for God's people. Almost immediately God promises to provide a redeemer to rescue us from our disobedience (Gen 3:15). When God said there was to be death to anyone not obeying His commands, it was clear that no one would be able to put themselves into a right relationship with God without some help. So to escape the wrath of God for disobedience, He

promised in pronouncing a curse on the serpent that the Seed of the woman would bruise the seed of the serpent. And thus began the epic which lasted perhaps 6000 years awaiting the coming of that Seed to fulfill God's promise. Now that is a long wait in terms of our concept of time. But, 2 Pet 3:8 tells us that to God it might just be a matter of six days. If I had even something close to that capability I might have a whole lot more patience.

During that span of time, God's people had to wait for the Redeemer to come. All the sacrifices of bulls and goats could not remove their sins. For it says in Heb 9:13-14, "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" And so it was wait, wait, wait.

But this was not the only wait we see in the Old Testament. Abraham received a promise from God that all nations of the earth would be blessed through his descendants. The Bible does not tell us whether Abraham was waiting and looking for that promise to be fulfilled but at any rate he never saw it bear fruit.

Also, that promise involved a son for Abraham even though Sarah was beyond the time for childbearing. Abraham and Sarah grew impatient with the Lord and decided to have a son through Sarah's maid Hagar and called him Ishmael. God rebuked Abraham for doing this and reiterated His promise that Sarah would bear a son. Although Ishmael was born when Abraham was 86 years old, Abraham had to wait another 14 years until he was 100 before Isaac was born.

God changed Jacob's name from Jacob to Israel and told Jacob that all the land he promised Abraham and Isaac would be his and his offspring after him. Jacob never saw that happen since because of what happened to Joseph, Jacob's offspring ended up in Egypt until Moses led them out. Thus it was in Egypt that Jacob died without possession of the promised land.

Then there was that forty-year wait in the wilderness during which God's people became impatient and grumbled at God. That impatience kept those people from entering the promised land. The Bible tells us that the only persons entering the promise land were those under 20 and Joshua and Caleb. Is there a lesson here for me?

After being exiled starting in 609 BC, there was the wait to return to the land. The exile lasted 70 years. Then when the exiles returned, they had to rebuild the Temple. The temple rebuild was begun in 535 BC. The post-exilic people largely rejected their Lord. Full restoration depended on repentance but the people did not

engage in true repentance. Divorce, intermarriage, withholding the tithe, and offering of diseased and defective sacrifices defiled their worship as told by Malachi.

The Lord did not return to His temple (Mal 3:1) because the repentance was not complete and the people had no interest in Him. And due to idolatry and other sins the temple's completion was delayed for 20 years. Thus, the obedient people of God had to wait for God's house to be complete so that His presence could be experienced as that was needed for proper worship.

And then 500 years later, all of the prophecies of the Messiah and the promises of God were fulfilled. After that long, long wait, Jesus was born. Finally the expected King had come.

Sometimes the predictions were about a coming Prophet. Sometimes a coming Priest. Sometimes a coming King. And sometimes a Messiah. When the long awaited Jesus was born, there was confusion because He didn't look like a person who could overthrow the Roman control of the Israeli people. His birth was entirely non-monumental. If it weren't for the wise men, His birth would have gone unnoticed by the governing authorities.

When His ministry started, not too many recognized the event for what it was. Even when word spread about Jesus and His miracles, many of the people were doubtful.

With that first advent of Christ, that 6000 year wait was over. The Redeemer, Savior, and Messiah had come. Jesus the promised Prophet, Priest and King was now a reality. But just as many times in the past, the people did not recognize God's answer to them and many rejected their Messiah.

Then with Jesus' resurrection and ascension, a new wait begins. He promises to return to put a final end to earthly misery and sin. We are now two thousand years into this wait. And so as we celebrate and remember the first advent on December 25th and His death on this coming Easter, resurrection and ascension, we long for and look forward to the day of the second advent. This second advent will eclipse the first advent. He will not go unnoticed this time. This one will be acknowledged by everyone, unbelievers as well as believers and not only those alive at the time but all people from all time.

The Bible says in Phil 2:9-11, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is

Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Everyone who ever lived will know that Jesus is Lord and bow to Him.

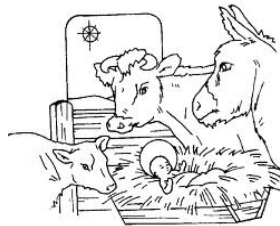
"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books . . . And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.", Rev 20:12,15. And also in Mat 24:30-31 Jesus says, "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Now the New Testament is full of the prophecies of the Second Coming of Jesus. And the people of God are once again in a waiting period. But this time, at the end of the wait there will be no more waiting. The Bride of Christ will be wed to Christ and the wedding feast will begin as God destroys the earth and recreates it as a world without sin and a place of God's always presence. Those whose names are in the Book of Life will join Jesus and be with Him for all eternity.

From the first Adam to the second Adam, there was about 6000 years. And now we are into the time from the first advent of the second Adam until the second advent, when Jesus returns to destroy this current universe and create the new. To us who live in the temporal universe, this seems like an enormous amount of time. But according to Scripture, this may be a relatively short time to God.

It should be obvious that God is in no hurry by our standards to bring an end to this life. Perhaps we have another 4000 years to go. As I said in the beginning, I hate to wait. Ω

And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Became a Child on earth for me?
Sir John Betjeman, 1954



It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From Heaven's all gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever over its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!



O Come, O Come, Emmanuel by Keith Mathison

Of the many beautiful hymns that have been composed in celebration of the birth of Christ, few in my mind equal the depth of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. The origins of the Latin version *Veni, Emmanuel* are obscure. It may have been composed as early as the 8th century. The melody appears to have originated in France in the 15th century. The hymn was translated into English by the Reverend John Mason Neale in the mid 19th century. The English version originally consisted of five verses, which began "Draw nigh, draw nigh, Emmanuel." Alternate versions of most of the verses and additional verses were composed later, and one can now find numerous versions of this hymn.

While the origins of the hymn and its development over time are interesting matters, they are not the reasons for the hymn's profundity. That rests on the subject matter. The hymn is based on a prophecy in Isaiah 7, a prophecy that looks forward to the birth of a child who will be named Immanuel, which means "God with us." In Eden, God had been present with mankind, but as a result of the Fall, man was exiled from God's presence. From that point forward, the restoration of God's presence with man became a major theme that is developed throughout Scripture.

God chooses Israel as the people through whom He will reestablish His presence with man, and this begins in earnest with the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness and later the temple in Jerusalem. God dwells in the midst of His holy people, but only the high priest is allowed into God's direct presence and that only once a year. At the time of the exile, Ezekiel sees God's presence depart from the temple as a result of the people's sin, but he and the other prophets look forward to a time when God will restore His presence with His people in a way that transcends the temple built with hands. Isaiah's prophecy of the child called Immanuel hints at this.

And then, in the fullness of time, Jesus is born, and Matthew tells us that His birth took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet Isaiah (Matt. 1:23). Jesus is Immanuel. He is God with us. In Him all of the Old Testament types and promises that looked forward to the restoration of God's presence with His people are fulfilled. Jesus is the Son of God incarnate.

The words of the hymn express the hopes of Israel throughout her history for the fulfillment of Isaiah's promise. We as Christians can now look back to the fulfillment of those promises - to the most incredible, awe-inspiring moment in history, the birth of Immanuel, the incarnation of the Son of God Himself. In Jesus God established His presence once again with His people, and He is with us always - to the end of the age. Rejoice! **Ω**

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.

Refrain

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Refrain

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

Refrain

Glad Tidings to All

The Men's Breakfast and The Women's Bible Study will not meet this month because of all the other activities.

Down in a lonely manger
 Our humble Christ was born
 And God sent us salvation
 That blessed Christmas morn:
 Go tell it on the mountain,
 Over the hills and everywhere:
 Go tell it on the mountain
 That Jesus Christ is born!



Nursery Schedule for December

7th - CORY MILLER
 14th - JENNY ROPER
 21st - LAURA TWITCHELL
 28th - BECKY SHWEN

Please trade with someone if you are unable to do nursery duty on the assigned day.

Cindy Brown	7th
Phillip Newsom	8th
Shirley Brown	12th
Willis Christie	12th
John Sackett	14th
Keianna Tunnickliff	18th
Jacob Twitchell	19th
Christopher Trujillo	23rd



Harlan & Amy Edmonds
 Tim & Kelleigh Anderson

24th
 30th



December Specials



A GREAT TIME WAS HAD BY ALL. That's right, at last year's Thanksgiving/Christmas Dinner. Come and fill up not on the Word but on delicious food and fellowship. Sunday Dec 7th after the morning service we will do it again and the turkey and ham is provided by the church. There is a sign-up sheet for the trimmings. There is always plenty of turkey and ham and stuffing and sweet potatoes and mashed potatoes with gobs of gravy and . . . well you get the idea. There is no Evening Service this night.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL AND BUDGET MEETING. After the Thanksgiving/Christmas meal we will retire upstairs for the Annual Congregational/Budget Meeting. This meeting is very important to the work of the church. Please plan on attending. All are invited to attend. Non-members are invited to speak but cannot vote.



NORTHWOODS' CHRISTMAS PARTY - Dec 12th, Friday, 6:00 PM at Alex and Esther Davison's home. This is a white elephant gift exchange. Find something you don't use, wrap it beautifully and share. Oh, did I mention, there is also a great dinner. Look for a sign-up sheet and more information in the foyer. This always proves to be a great event in our church's yearly calendar and thoroughly enjoyed by all.



hear the real Christmas
 December 24th, 7:00 PM.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE - Be sure to celebrate our Redeemer and Lord's birth. Put aside gift opening and meal celebrations and come and bring the family and join in the excitement as the Heavenly Host did that first Christmas Eve night. Come and

Little Baby Jesus

Little baby Jesus,
so soft and so sweet
one day would have nails
pounded into His feet.
Tightly swaddled now,
in His mother's loving arms
one day He would wear
a crown of prickly thorns.
Small cooing sounds,
He now softly sighs
one day to His Father
He'll moan forsaken cries.
Wise Men bring to Him,
gifts meant for a King
one day to a cross
His life will painfully cling.
Little baby Jesus,
so soft and so sweet
came into the world
so Satan He could defeat.

Deborah Ann Belka



Is it a Sin to Celebrate Christmas?

By R.C. Sproul Jr.

You have heard it said, and rightly so, that it's rather important to define our terms. Here is a case in point. There are at least three ways

we use the phrase "celebrate Christmas." The first is as the celebration Mass of the birth of Christ, that is, as Rome has celebrated it for centuries. Our fathers objected to this, and rightly so. If by celebrating Christmas we mean attending Roman Catholic mass, most assuredly we should not. When I was a college student one Sunday I went with some friends to Mass. I knew enough to know that I should not participate, and so went as a student, studying the mass. My sister was concerned (okay, more likely delighted) that my dad would be angry with me. I thought she didn't quite grasp what a careful scholar I already was. So I told him what I had done, laughing off the notion that he would be upset. He replied, "Why would I be upset? You wanted to go and watch as Jesus was being crucified again? Where's the harm?" That was the last time I went to Mass, during Advent or any time of year.

A second definition would be more broadly cultural. Here what we mean by celebrating Christmas is decorations, Santa, the Grinch, eggnog, Rudolph, chestnuts roasting on open fires, Frosty, bells on bob tails, Charlie Brown, Texas death matches over the last Tickle-Me-Elmo, second mortgages for the latest game console, and everything Americans equate with the holiday. And no, this is not such a good idea either. Without much work one could rather quickly connect each of these Christmas traditions with breaking at least one of the Ten Commandments. At best this kind of Christmas is a deeply troubling distraction from where our hearts ought to be, at worst it is an evil, false, civil religion.

What though, if we mean something else by "celebrating Christmas?" What if we ask the question this way- is it wrong to remember the incarnation? Is it a sin to devote some time to rejoicing over the coming of the Messiah? Can we in our celebration feast with our loved ones, even giving them gifts? Can we sing of that little town of Bethlehem? Can we preach on the glorious gospel truth that God took on flesh and dwelt among us?

Some would argue that doing this third thing wraps us up in doing the first or the second. Some suggest that God has already given us one glorious holiday, that comes not once a year, but fifty-two times a year. Some believe that we are not only entering into the sin of our modern culture, and entering into Romish heresy, but that we are entering into the pagan holy day of Saturnalia. I'm sympathetic to these concerns. But I answer them this way. We do not re-crucify Christ at Christmas, nor do we re-advent Him. But we do remember our ancient fathers' longing, and we do long for His return. We do not have to buy ourselves into debt, nor tell stories to our children about a jolly old elf. But we do feast, and bless our children because we are His blessed children.

That He has given us 52 holidays a year does not mean that we cannot rejoice over His grace on Monday, and Tuesday, or any day- even December 25. That others before us celebrated the same day as us, for wicked reasons cannot mean that we cannot do what we will do in eternity

for godly reasons- rejoice over the coming of the Messiah. That others tell their children stories about Santa is no reason for us to not tell truth stories to our children about Jesus, and to laugh with joy as we do so. Ω

Season's Blessed Greetings

December 2014 Session Report

Emmanuel...God is with us! May we truly seek to know the one whom God sent His son to save us during this time of year.

This year, the session would like to invite all Northwoods families to join with us in a special devotional reading this Advent season. To help us appreciate the main point of the incarnation (*that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*), Joel Beeke has written 31 meditations on "Why Christ Came". The answers will encourage us to celebrate Christ's birth more deeply and see more clearly how the incarnation is vital to the rest of our Lord's ministry. We pray that this will

Our annual meeting is on December 7, 2014. Please be in prayer for the session and the Deacons as we plan for 2015 that we would seek God in all things.

Have a Need? Contact one of the officers.

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Rich Cesal, <i>Deacon/Treasurer</i>	637-6195 cheyoming6195@bresnan.net
Dale Vosler, <i>Deacon</i>	632-0133 tuliphill2@gmail.com

If you have a request for the prayer chain contact Branda Church 221-9206 and if not available, Kelleigh Anderson 635-2578.

*Hark the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Hallelujah, Amen*

Merry Christmas to all!