

## Jesus is Coming

Sunday, December 2, 2018— about the time you receive this newsletter— is the beginning day of the church season of Advent.

What does this mean? Those of you who have not been in a “liturgical” church may not know, so I’ll tell you. Advent is the season of the church year when many Christians prepare for the coming of Jesus. Not only His birth, which we celebrate as “Christmas,” but also His Second Coming— His triumphant return to earth, as described in the Bible.

Are you ready?

Are you ready to celebrate Christmas? Are you focused on what Jesus did for all of us when He came to earth as a baby, and grew to manhood? When He ministered and taught for three years, and gave us such powerful words to remember and live by? When He took responsibility for the sins committed by you and me and the whole world? When He took our punishment and died a horrible and shameful death for those sins, though He was sinless and innocent Himself?

The world does not want you and me to celebrate the coming of Jesus. The world perverts things. It took the stories of the good works of a 4<sup>th</sup> century man of God, Nicholas of Myra, and created “Santa Claus,” a magical god-man who is omniscient, who can visit the homes of all of the kids in the western world in a single night, and whose main function for the last two hundred years has been to teach children to want more things.



The world perverts things. It took Christmas, which originally was a worship service to celebrate the birth of Jesus (*Christ’s mass*), and turned it into Xmas— a whole season of shopping and gift-buying and gift-giving, of hustle and bustle and over-indulgence in food, especially sweets, and even in strong drink. In place of Jesus, the Holy One of God who came to

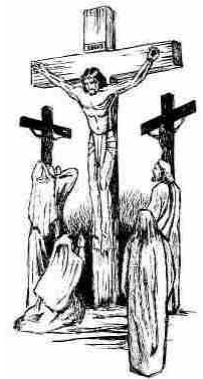
save sinners, we have a sweet baby who doesn’t cry; who probably never even needs to be changed. The reality of His humanity, and what He came to do, is rarely if ever mentioned in our current Christmas celebrations. “Merry Christmas” has become synonymous with “Happy Holidays,” and equally meaningless.



Here’s the bottom line: Jesus did not come to earth so that we could have a self-indulgent party. Jesus came to save sinners. If you are a sinner (and you definitely are), then celebrate that fact. Thank God for the coming of Jesus. Tell others about it. Do your best to ignore or downplay all of the “stuff” the world wants you to do.

If you’re behind bars this Christmas, you have even more reason to celebrate Jesus. He came for you, wherever you are and whatever you have done. You can worship Him and be thankful, alone or with fellow inmates, without so many of the meaningless trappings that go with a worldly “Christmas.”

One of the things we have done in my church as we prepare for Advent is revisiting the accounts of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus. We do this to remind ourselves why He came, and what He had to go through for our sake. It helps us to think about and understand the real significance of His coming to earth.



During Advent we also talk about Jesus’s return to earth, which will happen someday— perhaps soon; perhaps not for many years. We don’t know, and we can’t know, how soon it will be. Here are the words of Jesus from Mark, Chapter 13:

*... In those days ... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will*

*send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.... But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.*

So we don't know when it will happen. What do we actually know, from the Bible, about the Second Coming of Christ?

**It will be obvious to the whole world.**

*"For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, 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."  
(Matt. 24:27,29b-30)*



**The saved who have died will be resurrected.**

*For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thess. 4:16)*

**All of the saved will be gathered to Christ.**

*And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matt. 24:31) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with [the resurrected] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:17)*

**The saved will receive new, immortal bodies.**

*So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ... We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (1 cor. 15:42,51b-53)*

Beyond that, it gets a little fuzzy. Most Christians believe, as the Nicene Creed states, that Jesus "will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead," and those who are unsaved will be sent to a place or condition of eternal punishment while the saved will live joyfully together with Jesus and the Father "forever," either in Heaven (the spiritual place where

Jesus now is— if it is a place— or in a rebuilt physical Earth, where there is no more sickness, sadness, or death.

Many have studied, taught, written and preached about Heaven and Hell and related matters. The truth is that we only know as much as God has revealed to us— and that's really all we need to know. When we need to know more, He will reveal more. Some of our questions will never be answered in this life, and perhaps not in the next, either. The simple fact is that He is God, and we're not. We need to be content with that.

We can be certain of one very important thing about what

happens after this earthly life: it will be a whole lot better to be with Jesus than to be without Him. That's why I thank Him every day for the gift of grace— the forgiveness of my sins, which are many, along with the presence of the Holy Spirit to help me as I try to live the way He calls me to live. I'm grateful also for the opportunity to share with you, my brothers and sisters, whatever insights God gives me into the truths He has revealed to the world.

I hope each of you is looking forward, as I am, to observing Christmas. Let it be a true celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus, with all that He came to do for us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ..." And also join me in looking forward to His triumphant return, to gather all of those who love Him, whether or not they have passed from this earthly life, into their eternal Home. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

*Brother Roland*

## Luke 2

I know that my readers like these word search puzzles, so this month you get two of them — one about the first time Jesus came to earth, and once about His Second Coming. Enjoy!

### Puzzle:

H E R F I R S T B O R N S O N E K E D M T M M U D X D I N T S D Q  
D J R E G N A M A N I Y B A B E D T X H C X E I F L U E B N H R L  
R E U J Y O T W M N J R W I N E S U E U G B A G E A N V E A T O H  
N M H W Q Z T P O S O G J W B O L A T M S S S I V I E Q O N R L E  
X E S T Q Q W O Q J A I O Z H J N T J I S N F O K D H Y V G I E X  
P Z H Y O U Z H B X N T G Y O G Y O E L T E W M C I X Q W E B H H  
N X R A Y R R R W E S N L E E J O S E P H L E F T N A Z A R E T H  
S P D U N Q T S H I T N I L R R U G X T S H U W Q A V M S P V T T  
D I A S S D R E H P E H S E H T N B N J T B R M B M K G W S A S O  
B M Y G C O T O B V B A L M H A A I B D X H E X A A D U D A G I P  
Z E E H K D T O A S I W E E T T S H N S E D G J E N M B Q W E R Z  
S H L F P H E E N D I W K A H D N U T Y X Q I T G G P H J E H H O  
E E P Z C E H T P R R H H F R E O I X N H C S N I E Y N O H S C T  
E L O A T E S Y S Z A W X E U R M A G E I H T Q I R S O Z S U B R  
W H E R H H U O J A T E H J A D E N R U T E R S D R E H P E H S A  
H T P T E C T U J V H P F E N Z S Y Q R P R A I S I N G G O D N V  
A E L Y G T S L D D E H N X G K A Z A S G C T J A X F R M L A X E  
T B L M L A U L Y H N O T S U D D E N L Y W I T H T H E A N G E L  
H O A V O W G F S I H A V I S Z N Z O S K G O T V C A R G F D O E  
A T R P R G U I D S N P Y I W O Y R G X E J N S Y M K E Q E I A D  
P T O N Y N A N S T C G H R E T Y R X Z T R D L Q O L J T U S C W  
P N F H O I R D W N F T I C A T N T H E Y W E R E A F R A I D R I  
E E Y J F P A A O V N B A N O M N E Y R Z E C H P O O D G G A L T  
N W O W T E S B R R X E Y G A B D O W P N S R P T P A N A P J W H  
E H J Q H E E A O E P S O W V M I N M Y N K E G E E F S P V K G M  
D M M U E K A B G M D D W L E N A M U W E A E R O O L E A R I Y A  
B T L Z L I C Y T I C S D I V A D N I O R H Y W R D D I G V N D R  
P N K C O L F R I E H T R E V O N M G E F E T Y P H U P H Q I N Y  
R T H E R E W A S N O P L A C E O E D E H E O I I E T N G W M O A  
S W A D D L I N G C L O T H S F D C J T R U A M F P R M R J X M R

### Words:

CAESAR AUGUSTUS  
REGISTRATION DECREE  
EACH TO HIS TOWN  
JOSEPH LEFT NAZARETH  
WENT TO BETHLEHEM  
CITY OF DAVID  
TRAVELED WITH MARY  
HIS BETROTHED  
SHE WAS PREGNANT  
WHILE THERE  
SHE GAVE BIRTH  
HER FIRSTBORN SON  
WRAPPED HIM  
SWADDLING CLOTHS  
LAID IN A MANGER  
THERE WAS NO PLACE  
IN THE INN

IN THAT REGION  
SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELD  
KEEPING WATCH  
OVER THEIR FLOCK  
AN ANGEL APPEARED  
THE GLORY OF THE LORD  
SHONE AROUND THEM  
THEY WERE AFRAID  
THE ANGEL SAID  
FEAR NOT  
I BRING GOOD NEWS  
JOY FOR ALL PEOPLE  
BORN THIS DAY  
IN DAVID'S CITY  
A SAVIOR  
CHRIST THE LORD  
A SIGN FOR YOU

YOU'LL FIND A BABY  
LYING IN A MANGER  
SUDDENLY WITH THE ANGEL  
A MULTITUDE  
THE HEAVENLY HOST  
GLORY TO GOD  
PEACE ON EARTH  
THE SHEPHERDS SAID  
GO TO BETHLEHEM  
SEE WHAT HAPPENED  
THEY WENT WITH HASTE  
FOUND MARY AND JOSEPH  
BABY IN A MANGER  
THEY REPORTED  
WHAT ANGELS SAID  
SHEPHERDS RETURNED  
PRAISING GOD

## Matthew 24

The end of the world will not be a pleasant time. Fortunately, we who belong to Jesus can look forward to the final outcome, which will be wonderful. We have His word on that.

### Puzzle:

W L C O M I N G O N T H E C L O U D S Z R S P U I T J W L G Q Q H  
G V O F D E Y J S O L L A C T E P M U R T H T I W B V F M L G N E  
A G R U R Q O N D I O T I N H E A V E N M Y S I G N D D A Y W Y W  
W W A E D Y U E N T D Y C E N I H S T O N L L I W N O O M X V A H  
X D L H D H M K I A E Y D E K S A S E L P I C S I D O T T O Z N O  
H L L Z G L U A W N Q O T T L A L L E A R T H W I L L M O U R N E  
B O W X S N S H R T R U T H Z E I A M T H E C H R I S T I D R J N  
S C O B R S T S U S I W I O T H E N C O M E S T H E E N D G W H D  
R W U S X T B E O N N I S S I J G H R G M K Z Q Y D P C N H S Y U  
A O L T R E E B F I R L K E N D O F T H E A G E M M N I V Y U F R  
W R D A Q H R L E A N L Q D M O X T M F T J Y P S Q N G G N N P E  
E G P R R P E L H G P B R A K Z T S T F O F Y M U N H U M V W S S  
B L E S A O A I T A D E F Y A F T E R T H E T R I B U L A T I O N  
L L R W W R D W M N E H R S N G N W V O S E K G H O Z N K D L A H  
L I I I H P Y S O O V A M S H O Z E B E X E E A N O O X L S L M T  
I W S L A E X R R I A T L H E J T H H N N B N L S I E R F D B C E  
W E H L T S N E F T S E C O C C U T P W E T Y D T R O K E V E C L  
E V G F T L I W E A E D X R T E U O H H S T H A O W O R Q L D E S  
R O B A H A Y O I N B S U T B H Q T T E H W L E E U E F E K A L Z  
E L N L E F V P U L L L L E O P E T E E A U O L S W T S Q D R S P  
H K W L S I B A P V L W I N V N S S F D B N O N S O I A M N K Y Y  
T P Q U I L T Z M F I I J E F U O A O I A H G N K H N A N L E L H  
U U N G G Z L S L B W X T D J A T E R N W N A E R E N J X G N T C  
D Z M A N Y W I L L S A Y B Z H M T X E O S D E L Y N T Q T E R H  
S O G I S E K A U Q H T R A E P T I H I U F H K A S H O A W D L T  
E M O C L L I W I O S O Y R R A M T N S X T M S I H P R O J Y N S  
Y R O L G T A E R G D N A R E W O P E E A J T A Y L S Q Q N R I W  
V D E L S I M E B T N O D R P T M J O G S R W Q N C L G G Y X Q L  
X F T R G D M Q U V H L G M E C D E M I A L C O R P L E P S O G M  
A S L I G H T N I N G C O M E S S W A Y L D P P R W U N D E F M W

### Words:

DISCIPLES ASKED  
END OF THE AGE  
WHEN WILL IT BE  
WHAT THE SIGNS  
JESUS ANSWERED  
DON'T BE MISLED  
MANY WILL SAY  
I AM THE CHRIST  
THERE WILL BE WARS  
NATION AGAINST NATION  
FAMINES  
EARTHQUAKES  
JUST THE BEGINNING  
YOU WILL BE HATED  
PERSECUTED AND KILLED  
FALSE PROPHETS  
LEAD MANY ASTRAY

LOVE WILL GROW COLD  
HE WHO ENDURES  
WILL BE SAVED  
GOSPEL PROCLAIMED  
TO THE WHOLE WORLD  
THEN COMES THE END  
GREAT TRIBULATION  
FOR SAKE OF THE ELECT  
THOSE DAYS SHORTENED  
OR ALL WOULD PERISH  
AS LIGHTNING COMES  
EAST TO THE WEST  
SO I WILL COME  
AFTER THE TRIBULATION  
SUN WILL BE DARKENED  
MOON WILL NOT SHINE  
STARS WILL FALL

POWERS WILL BE SHAKEN  
IN HEAVEN MY SIGN  
ALL EARTH WILL MOURN  
THE SON OF MAN  
COMING ON THE CLOUDS  
POWER AND GREAT GLORY  
SEND OUT ANGELS  
WITH TRUMPET CALL  
GATHER HIS ELECT  
FROM THE FOUR WINDS  
NO ONE KNOWS WHEN  
NOT THE ANGELS  
NOT EVEN THE SON  
ONLY THE FATHER  
YOU MUST BE READY