

It seems every year Christmas comes into focus a lot earlier than the year before. I have noticed that in the flurry of activity and the anticipation of the commercial interest, Christmas gets lost in a blur of spending and holiday activities. There is no doubt in my mind that over the years the real meaning of

## a *Child* is born ... a *Son* is given

Christmas has ebbed, almost to the stage where we see it purely as eating and drinking too much and then wander off into the sunset for a short holiday break. Recently I read through the book of Isaiah and came across these verses that bring a whole new meaning to what Christmas is about. In Isaiah 9v6 it says *“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given”*. The significant thing here is that Jesus came in the most fragile and vulnerable form to this earth, to do the most incredible task of setting free mankind from the bondage of sin and death.

In chapter seven we read *“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel.”* The wonderful thing is that Jesus was given to us as a gift. He wasn’t forced upon us; it was something that we take willingly. Often I have noticed that when you share the gospel with someone and you tell them all you have to do is accept it by faith; they will look at you and think that it is very strange indeed; don’t we have to do something before we can receive something. What if you received a Christmas gift from a family member only to be told you can’t receive it until you do two hours work in the garden? Immediately your response would be, well it isn’t a real gift then is it. That is why we see here the Son of God was given to us as a gift, to be sacrificed on Calvary’s cross so that we might be set free from the bondage of sin and death.

So we need to recognise that the gift of salvation is something that is accepted by faith and not something that is worked for. This is why we read in Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace you have been saved through faith and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone boast.”* Notice the emphasis of salvation as a gift. So when we look at this whole aspect of Christmas, I think it is important for us as Christians to not only recognise that we have received the most incredible gift ever, but also to make known this gift to everyone who is willing to call upon the name of Jesus to be saved.

Then we notice a number of other things about this Immanuel, this Saviour of the world. We notice the government will be upon His shoulders. This tells us that Jesus will reign supreme over all governments, all thrones, all principalities in this world. When we look to Jesus and He governs our lives, we know He does it

### **PRAISE the Lord for:**

- The flow of extra orders coming into the office for our Christmas issue
- The ongoing prayer and financial support we have received this year from churches and individuals
- Another year of His wonderful faithfulness to the Challenge ministry

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with wisdom, graciousness and kindness. Whatever He does achieves His divine purpose in our lives. Many of the governments of this world have all sorts of agendas other than wise counsel and gracious dealings with their people; we see it on the news just about every night. Then we notice that this Child that was born is in essence God incarnate, the mighty God who reigns over all things, who can enable us to reign supreme over the world, the flesh and the devil.

Then we see He is the everlasting Father. I love that expression Father because it talks about His loving kindness and care for those who have yielded to Him, and have acknowledged their sin and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Not only does this speak about the eternal nature of salvation but it also speaks of the eternal nature of our Heavenly Father, that He has always existed and that He reigns supreme. Then it says He is the Prince of Peace. Now I don't know about you but as I look at the news I see it is filled with hatred, anger, revenge which is anything but peace. I have often said to people whether they are Christians or otherwise, that there won't be real peace until the Prince of Peace returns.

Now it is important to understand of course that there are two forms of peace that we can enjoy here and now. There is the peace we can have with God. This is brought out for us in Romans 5:1 which says *"Having been justified by faith we now have peace with God."* The sad thing is that before we became Christians we were literally at war with Jesus, because in

our own lives we wanted to do our own thing and run our own lives. It wasn't until we came to that place of seeing our desperate need and surrendering to Him that we experience peace with God. Then of course there is that wonderful peace we can have day by day as we pray to God. It says in Philippians 4:6-7 *"Be anxious for nothing but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make known your requests to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus."* You see friends this is what Christmas is all about. We can have peace with God, and then we can have the peace of God. No other religion or cult can offer this, because you see when Jesus died and was buried and rose again on the third day He conquered sin and death. No other prophet, no other religious leader has ever been able to do that; only the true and living God.

My great prayer is that at this Christmas time you will experience the true meaning of Christmas, that the gift of salvation is just that, it is a gift that sets us free from the bondage of sin and death and it is a gift that gives us not only peace with God but the peace of God.

{ CARL CARMODY  
CEO CHALLENGE }

#### **PRAYER needed for:**

- Ongoing effectiveness and growth of the Challenge paper worldwide
- A Financial Officer to work in our Perth office. We seek a qualified person for the day-to-day bookkeeping. Two days per week is a minimum requirement. Please contact [john@challengenews.org](mailto:john@challengenews.org) if you are interested
- Our amazing partners overseas as they continue to grow the ministry of Challenge - South Africa, USA, Malawi, Kenya, Philippines
- Our Challenge staff as they take a short break to rest over the Christmas period after a busy year

#### Challenge Direct Deposit details :

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