

Far Above Rubies



Light in the Darkness

I love Christmas and always try to do my Christmas shopping early to avoid the Christmas rush. This reminds me of the story of Jim, who found himself in front of the judge. When the judge asked him what he was charged with, he replied, "Doing my Christmas shopping early, your Honour." "That's not illegal. How early were you shopping?" asked the judge. "Before the shop was open," Jim replied.

Have you noticed in recent years how much more commercial Christmas has become? Christmas merchandise is on display in shops from August and Christmas trees are being put up as early as October? For me, December is time enough to decorate the tree and it's something I really don't enjoy, as it can be quite time consuming. Content that the baubles and lights are reasonably symmetrical, the tree can still appear quite dull and lifeless, but when the lights are switched on, what a transformation. The tree just comes to life! It's the light that attracts our attention and the darker the room the brighter the light shines. This reminds me that Jesus is the Light of the World and the true light of Christmas!

There are many references to Jesus as the Light of the world in Scripture but we'll just look at a couple. In John 8 v 12 Jesus himself says *"I am the Light of the World; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* Also in John 1 v 4-5 we read that *"In Him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."* At the time of Jesus' birth, the Jews had come through some of the darkest periods in their history. Following several invasions because of their apostasy and disobedience, Israel was now under Roman rule. This is a reminder to us that there are always consequences to sin and disobedience. In spite of their current situation, however, many Jews still eagerly awaited the leader that God had promised them in His Word – the Messiah. The One who would surely deliver them, and free them from foreign oppression!

Amazingly, Jesus wasn't quite the warrior King they expected nor did He arrive in the way they could ever have anticipated! There was no grand palace or grand entrance for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus was born into what appeared to be relative obscurity as we see from Luke 2 v 7 that Mary "... *gave birth to her first born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*" Heaven, however, ensured that the birth of God's Son would not go unnoticed. There was great rejoicing over the skies of Bethlehem as myriads of angels proclaimed the Saviour's birth to shepherds abiding in the fields. Wise men from the east, "*rejoiced with exceeding great joy*" (Matt 2 v 10) when they saw the star that God had placed in the sky and which guided them to Jesus. When they found Him they fell down and worshipped Him, bringing Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

When Simeon met Mary and Joseph in the Temple as they presented Jesus to the Lord just over 40 days after His birth, Simeon knew immediately who Jesus was. Luke 2 v 29-32 tells us that Simeon took Jesus in his arms, and blessed God saying, "*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel.*" This tells us that God's salvation is for "*all people*", Jew and Gentile alike. When Jesus died on the cross, He paid the price for the sin of the whole world. No one is excluded.

The truth is that Jesus was not the King that the Jews expected – He was more and so much more! Jesus came to bring light to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death (Matt. 4 v 16). He came to bring salvation to the world by dying on the cross to save us from our sins. In Luke 4 v 18 Jesus himself said, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.*" If that is not a cause for rejoicing this Christmas, I don't know what is! Always remember that whatever dark place you find yourself in, Jesus can meet your need.

This Christmas let's try not to get caught up in all the worldly trappings, but determine to focus our attention on the One who brought light and life into our dark world – Jesus!