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**GIFT**

# MERRY CHRISTMAS!

***“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.  
And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!”***

***Isaiah 9:6-7***

People all over the world, on every continent, in every country, from every culture and language, celebrate Christmas because of one man: Jesus Christ. Christmas is a celebration of Jesus' birthday. Why is Jesus' birthday so important? Because of WHO HE IS and WHAT HE DID! Jesus was not just an ordinary man and he came to earth to do something so amazing, so unbelievable and so wonderful that it forever changed the history of the world and the history of mankind.

**WANT TO KNOW MORE?** Keep reading!!!

**The Bible** is the most published, most printed, most translated, most purchased, most shared and most read book in the history of the world! Why? Because there is no other book like it on earth! The Bible is a collection of 66 books, written over a 1500 year time period by 40 different authors all telling ONE STORY through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. The Bible tells one panoramic story of love, brokenness, grace and redemption. The Bible is God's love letter to the world. In the Bible, we learn where we came from, why we're here and where we're going. The over-arching message of the Bible and the reason for Christmas can be summarized in one special verse:

***“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16***

Let's look at this important Bible verse more closely to understand it more clearly.

***“For God*** *so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16*

The Bible declares that there is ONE GOD over all. He is the Author and Creator of everything in existence. God is all powerful, all knowing, perfectly holy, just, merciful and loving.

***“I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.” Isaiah 45:5***

Don't believe the atheist. Atheism proclaims there is no god. That we are all here by accident. That there is no absolute meaning or purpose for our existence. There is no absolute truth or standard to follow. Without GOD there can be no ABSOLUTE anything! If we are all truly just animals then we can act like animals and do whatever we want, but that leads to chaos, violence and suffering. The Bible says human beings are different from animals because we alone were made in the image of God which means we alone were given the capabilities to reason, think, ponder, question, dream, and have deep emotional and spiritual relationships with each other and with the God who made us.

Don't believe the buddhist and practitioners of other mystical world religions who teach that there are MANY gods. How can so many gods coexist and claim to be all powerful? How can more than ONE be ALL powerful? It simply doesn't add up. Neither is it true that we can become gods. Such thinking is delusional. We are mere mortals. We live a VERY SHORT life on earth, often in weakness and struggle and then we die. Only a fool would believe that we can become gods...trees live longer than us!

The truth is that there is only ONE GOD and this God created us because He wanted to have a relationship with us. He didn't NEED us, but He WANTED us to know and experience **HIS GOODNESS AND LOVE.**

*“For God **so loved the world** that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16*

In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, we read the story of creation. We learn that when God made the heavens and the earth, the sun and moon and stars, the land and seas, the animals and all the creatures on the earth, including male and female human beings...“God saw all the He had made and it was GOOD.” In the beginning, everything was GOOD.

But things didn't stay good for long. When God created human beings, He gave us something powerful that we would all abuse: FREEDOM. The freedom to love Him or hate Him, to believe in Him or deny Him, to trust Him or reject Him. Why freedom? Because there can be no true relationship without freedom. Our freedom is actually the undeniable proof of God's unfathomable LOVE. God could have FORCED us to believe in, trust in, love and serve Him, but he didn't want us to be like robots. He wanted us to CHOOSE Him and so He gave us the freedom to think, feel, believe and choose for ourselves.

Tragically, every human being who has ever lived has used their freedom to reject, rebel and sin against the holy and loving God Who created us. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US.

***“All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory...The wages of sin is death.” Romans 3:23, 6:23***

We all choose to believe in, trust in and love OURSELVES more than God. This is pride and pride is our greatest sin against God because it leads us to reject Him. Sin breaks our relationship with God. As a result, we are no longer connected to the Source of Life and although we may be physically alive, because of our sin we are spiritually dead inside. And when we breathe our last breath on earth and our souls depart, we will be eternally separated from God.

BUT EVEN IN OUR SIN, GOD STILL LOVES US! And in fact, God always knew we would reject and walk away from Him. From before time began God had a plan ready to rescue us from our sin and spiritual death and restore us back into a life-changing and eternal-life-giving relationship with Him.

**HERE IS THAT PLAN...**

*“For God so loved the world **that He gave His one and only Son**, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16*

God knew our sin would break our relationship with Him and forever separate us from His holiness, goodness and love. God is holy and holiness cannot abide anything less than perfection. God is just and justice cannot pardon the guilty. If God does not judge our sin, then He is not holy and if he does not punish our sin then He is not just. A penalty for sin must be paid and death is the verdict. A sacrifice must be made. Blood must be spilled. In the Old Testament, God instructed the Jewish people to sacrifice an animal - a spotless lamb - as atonement for their sins, but this was an imperfect atonement. What the sacrifices were truly meant to accomplish was to show the people just how Holy God is and how sinful they are and ultimately point to One who would one day come and be a complete and perfect sacrifice for us all.

***“An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She***

***will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:20-21***

***John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29***

Jesus was the Son of God who became a son of man. He came down from heaven and lived a sinless life on earth to be the perfect sacrifice that God required. Jesus lived the life we COULD NOT live, and died the death we SHOULD HAVE died, to give us the eternal life we DO NOT deserve. This is how the GRACE of God defeats SIN and DEATH once and for all. This is what inspired John Newton to write the world famous song **Amazing Grace**:

*“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now I’m found. Was blind, but now I see.”*

On the cross, Jesus took our punishment upon Himself and by doing so, satisfied the holy wrath of God against the sins of all mankind. This is why Jesus willingly left heaven to enter time and space and be born as a helpless human baby on earth over 2000 years ago. He humbled himself and became a man to die for all mankind and to save all who would **BELIEVE IN HIM.**

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, **that**  
**whoever believes in him** will not perish but have eternal  
life.” John 3:16*

God’s plan was put into action right from the beginning. After God made the first man and woman, they began to populate the earth. They also began mankind’s rebellion against God. Long before sending Jesus, God chose Abraham - a man who believed in and trusted God - to make for Himself a nation out of all the peoples of the earth. God’s chosen people would become the Jews. He would teach them, lead them, display His powers to and through them, often test and discipline them. They would always be His people, but from the beginning God also promised Abraham that through him, ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH WOULD BE BLESSED. God’s ultimate plan was to save all people, everywhere.

***The angel said to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”  
Luke 2:10-11***

Jesus would be born a Jew, but he would die for ALL mankind and he would bring forgiveness and salvation to ANYONE who would believe in Him:

***“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”***

***Romans 10:13***

***Jesus said, “You believe in God; believe also in me.” John 14:1***

***“To all who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12***

After Jesus died on the cross. He was buried in a tomb, but three days later He rose from the dead. He came back to life!

**This was God’s plan all along.**

## **JESUS IS RISEN!** (Luke 24:1-11, 36-47, John 20:24-29)

24 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: <sup>7</sup> ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” <sup>8</sup> Then they remembered his words.

<sup>9</sup> When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. <sup>10</sup> It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup> But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

<sup>36</sup> While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

<sup>37</sup> They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup> He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

<sup>40</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate it in their presence.

<sup>44</sup> He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

<sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

After His resurrection, Jesus remained on the earth for 40 days, teaching and encouraging His followers. Over 500 of His followers saw Him after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). On his final day on earth, Jesus led his disciples to the top of a mountain and there He commanded them to go into all the world and tell everyone the good news of God’s love and salvation. His final command before ascending to heaven right before their eyes, was to share the good news so all can believe! **BECAUSE BELIEF CHANGES EVERYTHING!**

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him **will not perish but have eternal life.**”* John 3:16

Here is what Jesus said about Himself and the salvation He offers:

***Jesus answered, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** John 14:6

***Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”*** John 11:25-26

***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”  
John 10:10***

***“This is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and  
Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” John 17:3***

This is the **GOOD NEWS** of Christmas! Jesus came to save us from our sins, give us new life free from guilt and condemnation, satisfy the deepest longings of our heart and soul and restore our relationship with our God and Maker. Because of Jesus, we can experience the peace, joy, love and power of God during our life on earth and when we die, experience His goodness forever in heaven!

**At Christmas** time we give gifts to one another in honor of and in remembrance of the greatest gift of all...Jesus Christ! To receive God's forgiveness of all your sins (past and future) and to experience God's salvation, you only need to repent of your sins, believe Jesus is the Son of God and commit your life to following Him. This Christmas you can be forgiven, you can have peace with God, you can be filled with the power of God's Holy Spirit and you can know for certain that you will go to heaven!

A simple prayer like the one below is a good way to begin your new life in Christ:

*“God in heaven, I know I am a sinner. Please forgive me for the sins I have committed against you. Thank you for sending Jesus to take the punishment for my sins. I believe Jesus rose from the dead. I believe He is my Savior. I want to follow Him forever. Amen.”*

To learn more about Jesus and God's love for you and His plan for your life, **READ THE BIBLE!** You can also learn more at:

**[www.renshiyesu.com](http://www.renshiyesu.com)**

*Please take a few moments to read the original Christmas story as told in the Gospel of Luke.*

## **The Birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-2:39)**

<sup>26</sup> God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

<sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.

<sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

<sup>34</sup> "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

<sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail."

<sup>38</sup> “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

**2** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register. <sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

<sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

<sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

<sup>39</sup> When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.