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My First Real Christmas!



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #321 ~

Rome – The painting Adoration of Magi in the church Chiesa id san Giuseppe alla Lungara by Mariano Rossi (1768).

It was 30 years ago, Dec. 2-4, 1994, that my wife and I went to a prophecy conference on the book of Revelation given by *Marvin Rosenthal*. Talk about changing our lives! That weekend of Bible study and interacting with Marv set in motion 30 years of learning, hope, and excitement about Christ's coming and the 1000-year kingdom age!

After going home, I could not stop thinking about Christmas and Christ's 1st coming in conjunction with His 2nd coming. And I was wondering why many churches were just focused on Jesus' birth. Don't get me wrong – I'm not dismissing the necessity of His birth, the Incarnation, for it's

vital to the gospel and God's purposes. But I was learning that there was so much more, that Jesus' birth was part of a much larger picture.

Hearing Marv's excellent end-times' Bible teaching, being immersed in God's prophetic word for three days, was helping me to fully see God's plan for Christians, Christianity, and the world. That weekend started me on a journey of understanding the connection between Christ's 1st advent and His 2nd advent, of seeing the big picture, of knowing the entirety of God's purpose for His people and planet earth.

There was Christ's birth, **and** His life, death, resurrection, ascension, the church, and His return to rapture the church, punish the sinners, and reign over this world. And for the first time ever, I had a panoramic view of my own life, that I was chosen, foreknown, predestined, called, that I was justified because of what Christ did at His 1st coming, that I am now being sanctified, and that I will be glorified at His 2nd coming. Rom. 8:28-30

Let's now look at Matt. 1-2 and Luke 1-2 for it helps us see the big picture – it speaks of Christ's 1st coming and 2nd coming, of Christ being both a Savior and a King.
– Matt. 2:1-12. The magi were searching for the King, for they wanted to worship Him and give Him gifts. They ask, *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we… have come to worship Him"* (vs. 2). Vs. 5 is based on the Mic. 5:2-5 prophecy predicting that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and be a ruler. *"Bethlehem, land of Judah…out of you shall come forth a ruler."* Rev. 12:5 confirms this truth about Jesus – *"She gave birth to a Son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations."*

Luke 1:26-35. The angel Gabriel, on a surprise visit to Mary, told her that she would miraculously give birth to a baby, the son of man, and that He would be the Son of God. Not only that, but He would be a King, the fulfillment of God's promise to David – *"The Lord God will give Him*

the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Lk. 1:32-33, 2 Sam. 7:12-13). That Jesus is a King and will be the King of this earth is a major theme of the Christmas story.

Luke 1:54-55. *"He* (God) *has given help to Israel His servant... as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever."* Mary knew the Davidic Covenant, God's promise to David, and the Abrahamic Covenant, God's promise to Abraham. (Gen. 12:1-3). She believed this promise, that Abraham would be greatly blessed, that his descendants (Jewish people) would become a great nation, inherit a special piece of land (Israel), and that they and all the people of the earth (Gentiles) would be greatly blessed.

Luke 1:67-75. Zacharias also spoke about the Abrahamic Covenant, *"... His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father"* (Lk. 1:72-73). And he understood redemption and salvation, the New Covenant, that God would forgive people their sins. *"I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more."* Jer. 31:31, 34; Lk. 2:68-69, 77-79

Luke 2:25-35. Simeon, knowing God's promises to the Jewish people, was expecting the Messiah to fulfill them, knowing this would result in Israel being comforted (Is. 40:1, 61:1-2). Simeon was convinced that the Messiah would deliver the Jews from their sins, bless them with land, and be a great and glorious King who would rule over them and the entire world. *"I will be their God, and they will be My people."* Ezek. 37:21-28

Simeon then saw Jesus, the Messiah, and actually held Him. Praising God, he said, *"Mine eyes have seen Your salvation"* (Lk. 2:30). Simeon knew that the Messiah, a descendant of Jews, didn't just come for Jews but also for Gentiles. He then prophesied, *"this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel"* (Lk. 2:34). The *"fall"* tells us that

many Jews would reject Christ as their Savior, and since His 1st coming this has been true. The *"rise"* is saying that a few Jews will be saved during this church age, but moreso at Christ's 2nd coming and in the kingdom ages. Ps. 96, Is. 45:17, Rom. 11:25-27

Luke 2:36-38. Anna, believing God's promises to the Jews, was expecting, was waiting for the Messiah, was *"looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."* Anna knew that God had promised spiritual and physical blessings to the Jewish people – salvation, land, and a King who would rule over Jerusalem, Israel, and the whole world.

Do you see what God is saying? God is telling us that the key players in the 1st coming of Christ knew ahead of time about His birth, and that He would fulfill His promises to the Jews, the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. They understood the overall plan that God had for His people. But they did not know the timing, that Christ would go back to heaven, and much later come back as a King and then begin His rule on earth. Psalm 2, 47

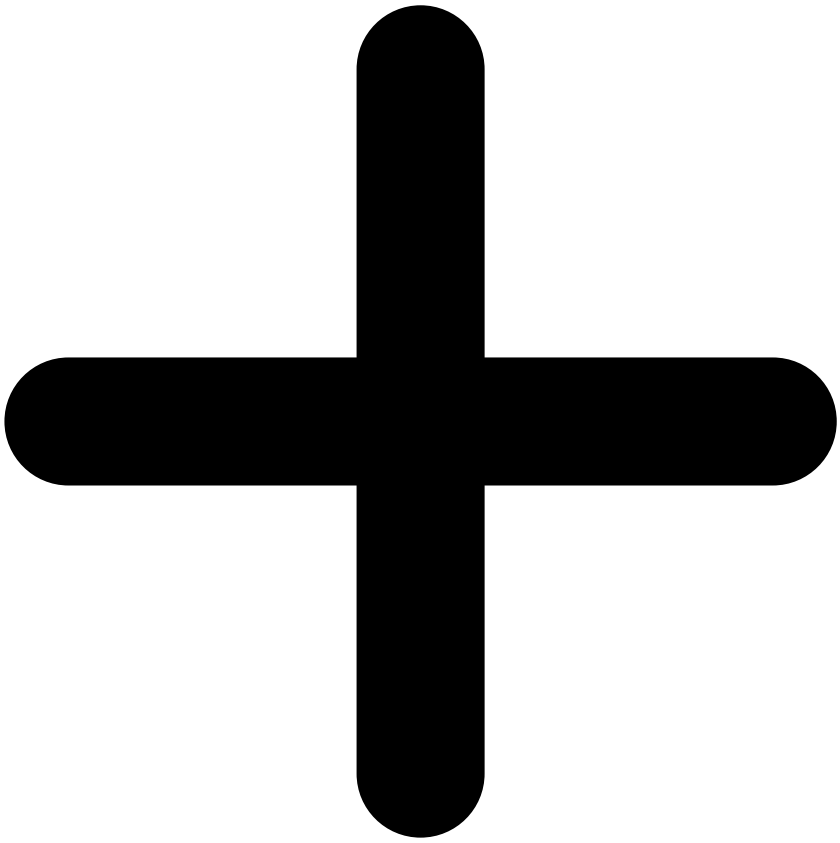
During this Advent season, might you see the big picture. Might you understand what Matt. 1-2 and Luke 1-2, in conjunction with God's prophetic word, is saying. Let me summarize some key thoughts and takeaways from these passages:
* God's promise of salvation is already being realized all over this world by a great many Jews and Gentiles.

* God's promises to the Jews about land and a King were not fulfilled at Christ's 1st coming but will be fulfilled at His 2nd coming. These promises also relate to Christians, for we too will inherit the earth, and reign with Christ as King. Matt. 5:5, 24:30; Rev. 5:10
* We're much closer to Christ's 2nd coming than His 1st coming. Since we live in the end-times, we know Christ's return is not a matter of millennia or centuries but decades, not hundreds of years away, but years away. *"Behold, I am coming soon."* Rev. 22:7, 12

* Be like Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, etc. They were excited about the coming Christ and were expecting Him to live on earth and fulfill His promises to them. They were praying (Matt. 6:9-10 – *"Your kingdom come"*). And like them, might we also tell others about Jesus Christ, our Lord, Savior, and King.
* Being glorified, being fully saved, is the first thing to happen at Christ's 2nd coming, and is in conjunction with God's renewed work with the Jews and the fulfillment of His promises to them. Matt. 24:9-31, 1 Cor. 15:20-23, 2 Thess. 2:1-9

I am so grateful that God opened my eyes to these important and relevant truths about God's plans for the end-times, Christ's coming, and the millennial kingdom. It's imperative that Christians, and now at this Christmas time, clearly understand that Christ came to be a Savior, and that He is coming again, and soon, to be a Judge and a King. *"Even a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us* (1st coming); *and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace…* (2nd coming)*."* Isaiah 9:6-7

Here are some previous posts about the real meaning of Christmas: *"First Coming to Church Age to Second Coming"*, *"The Christmas Story and Christ's Second Coming"*, *"Christmas is More than Baby Jesus"*, and *"The True Meaning of Christmas."*



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