

# CHRIST, THE STAR OF OUR HOPE!

(Christmas 2017)

Scripture Reading Mat. 2:1-6)

**Introduction:** Christmas story is not some entertaining Disney story that we see, hear, and enjoy. Christmas story is a very relevant story for all of us, and it actually affects our life from every angle, past, present, and the future. We cannot just sing some songs, exchange gifts, eat and drink, reminisce a little bit about Christ's birth, and then go our merry way. This story must affect us radically and should change us totally. Let me give you some reasons why it relates to our time from every angle, and this story affects us so much!

I. First of all, the Christmas story reminds us of our day to day problems of our life. Ecclesiastes says that there is nothing new under the sun. It is true to some extent. What was going on 2000 years back is still going on. Let us see some of those similarities.

There was a serious political turmoil during the birth of Jesus Christ. There was a power struggle among the Roman leaders, as well as in Israel. Herod the great was very insecure, and was afraid of losing his kingship in Israel. He was a paranoid, and was very afraid of his own family members. He thought that one day his own family members would kill him and take his kingship. So he started killing those suspicious family members one by one in order to eliminate power struggle. The Christmas story about babies being killed in Bethlehem validates his true paranoia schizophrenic personality.

We are going through similar political power struggles: the power struggle is not between individuals nowadays, but among the parties, between Democrats and Republicans. The political environment is so toxic and hostile. Christians also, instead of standing in the gap to bring both toward peace and truth, they have totally sold themselves to one party! In one presidential election, they say, we must vote for the candidate for his character and integrity, and not be loyal to one's party. In another presidential election, they say that one must put the party over leader's integrity and character. What do we really stand for? We are supposed to be the champions for the cause of poor. But we seem to side with the rich. We are becoming increasingly hard hearted, and indifferent. It is sad to see secular people raising their voice for the poor people and not Christians!

There is political turmoil not only within USA but in the entire world. The world is slowly teetering toward nuclear holocaust. Every day our heart is troubled, not sure when the nuclear holocaust will begin. Christmas story brings out similar political unrest, and the uncertainty of Roman Empire.

There is another similarity also over Taxes and census in this narrative. Census is taken everywhere so that the government can collect taxes from everyone. But in our time, both the parties use the census for not only taxing but for gerrymandering too, which is redistricting to favor one's political party!

The tax issue has been another hot-button issue in any century. In Israel, Romans set a fixed figure to the tax collectors and made the tax collectors collect it. But the tax collector would

add exorbitant commission to it and force the people to pay. The story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) gives us a glimpse of this unpopular tax collector.

But today we face tax with an interesting twist. A huge tax cut is given to the corporations, and the middle class is held on a tight leash! The middle class tax bracket is higher than the corporate tax. The signature of this tax bill is that it will be a permanent 21% for the corporations! Really? Permanent? You mean until Christ returns? The Word “permanent” is a very big word! Since when did we become gamblers of public economic, fiscal policy? This new tax cut is a high stake poker game, and most of the economists say, it may add 1.5 trillion dollars to the deficit! Still we rushed it without a single hearing and made it permanent, and not temporary like the individual tax. Tax policies will always raise the blood pressure. It did for Joseph, and now for us!

Here in this Christmas story, Romans were collecting the extra tax from the Jews. It was a huge controversy. Even Jesus questioned taxing one time: He asked, "Should children of the kingdom pay tribute? (Mat. 17:25). There is no escape from tax. The only way we can escape tax is by reducing spending or growing deficit, as in the case of tax cut here! There was no escape for Mary and Joseph. They were not rich either. They had to travel from Galilee to Bethlehem in order to pay this tax and account for the Roman census. There is nothing new under the sun.

Also, there was that common human drama of pregnancy in this Christmas story that we all share. Even though pregnancy brings so much joy, it can be a very discomfoting, painful experience. Mary had to travel on a donkey. That is not exactly like traveling in a comfortable

car. In our cars, the shock absorber and the struts make our journey very smooth on well paved roads. Even then women will feel it if they are pregnant. Romans' roads were made of cobblestones. Just imagine riding on a donkey, and the up and down motion every step on those cobblestones, and the sideways movements. Pregnant women today can identify some of that pain and discomfort of Mary and be comforted.

Then we come across the inconvenience of travel and traffic jam. It was dangerous to travel also because of robbers. It must have been a time of mass exodus, everyone going to their hometowns, and there must have been traffic jams. Don't we know about a traffic jam? We go through that every day. People come home very tired, not because of their tough work, but because of the stressful traffic jam! So we can identify some of those problems of traveling even today.

I see another similarity also in this Christmas story concerning one's attitude toward the needy. Just like there was no room in Bethlehem for Jesus, we also love to say, no room! We love to say "no room" to those poor destitute, refugees coming into the United States from other countries. But there are some countries, they always have some room for the needy. India is only one-third size of USA, and it is holding 4 times more population than USA (1.3 billion and still counting, according to 2016 World bank count), and yet they still have room for people crossing from Burma (Myanmar) and Bangladesh. Why can't we be little compassionate in the United States? Yes, they may have entered our land illegally, but still, we need to show some compassion. Did the early pilgrims enter the country legally? Did all those puritans who came with guns and canon guns come legally? They muscled through their



strength and settled here. Where is our compassion when people come running to us because of mafia gangs, dictatorship, and poverty? We keep singing that same old Christmas tune, no room! Moses ran to another country as a refugee. Baby Jesus and His parents ran to Egypt as refugees. Yes, Christmas story reminds us of our own attitude towards others. At least the innkeeper showed some compassion on Mary and gave her the animal shelter to stay. But we are on the other hand, ready to build the wall, and our Christian brothers and sisters are rooting for it! Where is our compassion? Why are we so hard hearted? If we do not show compassion, God will not show compassion to us. Beware! We are even anxious to kick out those hard working people who came here on a legal visa. “No room” attitude is the same yesterday and today, and it will never go away!

Yes, Christmas story strikes the same tension what we all go through in our day to day living! Joseph must have been troubled over those political tensions in his country. He must have been overburdened about the census and taxes. He must have been very concerned about his Travel with his pregnant wife, and the availability of an inn. We are also vexed over our own problems of our life today. Our visa situation, our financial needs, annoying health problems, adverse job conditions, fighting traffic every day. We can easily identify with Joseph and Mary sufferings! Christ's birth story becomes a touching story when we empathize their sufferings with ours. It can become real to us. We can identify our sufferings easily with the Christmas story.

II. Second, The Christmas story is all about something new! It is indeed good news, and it does bring lot of joy within us!

This Christmas story is not a fake news nor bad news! It was a brand new news! Not the same old news. It was something that never happened before! Ecclesiastes says that there is nothing new under the sun. That was Solomon's conclusion. But Christmas story defies that conclusion. There were somethings new under the sun:

A virgin conceiving without a man touching her, and giving birth to a sinless baby! That was something new!

God becoming human in actual human flesh!  
That was never heard of!

The wise men following the first GPS, guided by God Himself!

Mat 2:2 2“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

“We saw HIS STAR!!! Not some star but His star!

The Scripture can be that guiding light also! The wise men relied on the star for direction, but the scholars knew the location already through the Scriptures!

Mat. 2:4-6 4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 6‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH,

ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;

FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER

WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’

Follow the Light of the Holy Spirit. This is something new!

There was something else that was really new about this Christmas story. A stunning revelation!

1 Cor. 2:9

The baby in the manger was to grow strong in stature and in wisdom, and to become the sacrificial Lamb of God one day for all our sins! The baby was to bring salvation by grace, and not by our works. This is something very new!

Also, this baby came to bring new covenant for our eternal salvation in Christ! The old covenant is annulled through this baby, and the new covenant of the Spirit to take over. We follow the law of the Spirit, and not the law of the letter. The new covenant is all about the shedding of the

blood of this holy child who is sinless, for the remissions of our sins. This baby grew up and became a grown man to die for our sins and rise again for our justification! We are washed in His blood and born of the Spirit as a newborn baby in Christ.

Yes, Christmas story has changed us all totally. Old things are passed away. All things are new. Yes. We must always celebrate Christmas with the thought of newness of our life in Christ! Christmas celebration brings newness to our life. Christmas story exemplifies our daily sufferings. Christmas narrative brings newness to life.

III. Also, Christmas story is all about worshipping this amazing baby, God's only begotten Son!

Shepherds coming to worship!

The wise men coming to worship!

They all did one thing in common. They prostrated and worshipped.

But I am not pleased with both the parties for one reason. They both came, they bowed down and worshipped, the wisemen gave some precious gifts, and then they all went their own ways. Did they ever come back to follow Him?

True worship leads to total surrender of ourselves. True surrender leads to total servanthood, and it must make us follow Him eternally. Yes. Worship of this baby cannot be a casual, special occasion. It must affect us totally, eternally. I demand today that kind of worship! True worship leads to total surrender and servanthood, and makes you a follower of Christ forever!

IV. Christmas story affects our future also, and it points to our bright future!

Birth of Jesus opened our eyes to God's marvelous provision of His own son and His redemption. His resurrection from the grave brought victory over death, and now we are promised of eternal life and glory forever.

Birth of Jesus has given us the star of hope, the eternal life, following that star of Holy Spirit. He will not take us to a manger anymore, but to that celestial city, eternal glory of heaven itself. Yes, this baby Christ is our hope of our future! Because He lives, we shall face our future with confidence. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

V. Finally, Christmas is all about love, peace, goodwill, mercy, and compassion toward all people. Jesus wants us to love all people, not some people. He wants us to love even our



enemies, and pray for them. Let there be peace and goodwill among all the people. Even if they hate us and push us away, we will exercise good will, peace, love, compassion with all people always.

Conclusion:

To summarize:

1. Christmas story highlights our day to day sufferings. We should be able to empathize with what Joseph and Mary went through. That suffering is no different even today.
2. Christmas story brings out always something new in us! New life in Christ, New Spirit!
3. Christmas narrative is all about worshipping our savior and surrendering ourselves to the baby, and following that baby all our lives. In other words, it must affect us totally!

4. Christmas narrative promises our future glory in Christ! Christ the baby is always in the center of our life, and He holds our future!

5. Of course, Christmas story is all about love, peace, goodwill, compassion, and mercy toward all humanity. Can we stop becoming hard hearted, and show compassion now onwards toward needy?

Yes, Birth of Christ affects our life powerfully at all levels!

Let us follow the Star of David, the Christ. Let Him be the center of our life. Let us abide in Christ, the star of our hope. He is indeed the Lord of Lords, King of all kings! He is the Christ, the Lord of our glory and hope. Let us prostrate, surrender, become His servants, and follow that light forever! Amen!