

Merry Christmas, People of God. During this season I'm sure we have heard untold number of songs about Santa Claus, and Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, and Frosty the Snowman. But you know that magical snowmen, reindeer and elves have nothing to do with Christmas.

For Christmas is a contraction of two words: Christ and Mass. Christmas is Christ's Mass. And the word Mass is itself is derived from the latin 'missa' meaning "to send." It was a part of the dismissal in the Latin Mass, where the Priest said, *Ite, missa est* ("Go, it is finished").

During Christ's Mass, we are celebrating the Sending of Christ into the world by the Father. And we celebrate it with a Eucharistic Service. At the end of our service we are also sent out into world, in the same spirit and power that Christ himself was sent into the world. Christ being the Light of the World commissions us to go and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. We do this with the understanding that this will result in the earth being filled with the glory of YHWH. The reason why Christ was sent into the world was fill the world with the Light of the glory of God. And he accomplishes this by sending us out into the world as sons of Light.

So as we celebrate Christmas, Christ's Mass, we must do so by first remembering the reason for the season. We are here to celebrate the Father sending Christ into the world to fill it with glory and light. And now during Christmas we fill our worlds with glory as light as we sing with the Angels - *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* - Glory to God in the Highest! We Hark with the Herald Angels and Sing, Glory to the New Born King!

We are seeing in real time, People of God, the purposes and plans of God from Ancient Days being fulfilled here and now among us, as we fill this place with His glory and light when we sing and rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ who is God of God and Light of Light.

But it is fitting for us to remember the old story of why Christ was sent to the earth from the Father in the first place. We know the ancient story of our first parents' fall in the Garden of Eden, at the deception of the Serpent. He told our first parents that they would be like God if they listened to him and did not believe and obey the Word of God.

But in their rebellion, they fell from their high place of glory and honor. We were made a little lower than the angels, and we had dominion over all the beasts of the field. But upon falling short of the glory of God, we placed ourselves under the dominion of a beast, the serpent. And so in our shame and nakedness our parents were clothed in the skin of beasts, to look like what they had become.

In our fallen state we became rebels against the light which shone within us, and we spurned the light of God's countenance which shone upon us. In our sin darkened state our glory turned into shame, and our righteousness turned to guilt, and our light turned to darkness. We exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal men, and birds, and animals and creeping things. God warned us about this, telling us that in the day in which rebelled, dying we would die.

In our misery and death, we became sinners, and we continually rejected every single move of God's redeeming love towards us. He sought after us, He rescued us, He provided miracles, He made promises, He gave us holy and righteous, and just laws. He gave us His word, and His prophets. And he continually called us to himself to worship Him who lives in the far north on top of Holy Mount Zion, where we could behold His glory and eat and drink in His presence and live. Very few have taken him up on that offer.

Instead of ascending up the Mountain of the Lord to behold His Glory and there learn to worship the Creator, and thus learn to become like Him; we chose to bow ourselves down on every other high hill and under

every other green tree, and we worshipped and served every false god and creature, being enslaved to our beastly nature.

In a twisted perversion, we climbed up to every high place to worship our false gods. But because our hearts were not lifted up toward the One True God, the foolish darkness of idolatry brought us down lower and lower, making us even more beastly. Until we had become like Gollum, loving dark things, and hiding from the shining brightness of the face of the Sun seeking to bury ourselves underneath the rocks of the mountains, hidden away from the light of His love. We were created to be light, but we coveted the darkness, and great was our fall. And this is the tragedy of our story.

We were created to shine, People of God. To radiate forth the glory of God, and to live in the world as a thousand points of light, with our praise and joy and love and righteousness shining forth like the stars of heaven, like the lights on the Christmas Tree. But in Adam we lost our light and became instead fascinated with our darkness and gloom. We became like those in Plato's cave, afraid to look upon or be seen by the sun, content to live amongst the shadows, lest our evil deeds be exposed.

And for many untold ages we languished in the deep darkness of our sin and miseries, crawling around in the shadows of death, sitting our own blindness and rejecting the testimony of those who have seen the Sun in its glory, and who sought to save us from our darkness. We called them crazy, fanatics, disturbers of the peace, troublemakers, fundamentalists, haters. We slandered the prophets and seers of old, we murdered them where they stood, precisely because they could see, while we were darkened in our understanding and in our hearts.

And then one day the Prophet Isaiah foretold that the light of God would shine upon us once again in our darkened state. In the fullness of time

God would send forth His Son into the world, the very light and life of men, giving us the hope of restored glory once again, saying,

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them a light has shone." Isaiah 9:2

And again, saying,

*"Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising." Isaiah 60:1-3*

God, being relentless in His burning love, was not content to leave the world laying in the darkness of its sin and error pining. After many thousands of years, the Light of light, and God of God, entered into our darkness, not by type, nor by mere flame flickering shadows of the coming one off the wall of history. But He came Himself, in the full strength and brightness and radiance of His glory, he came to this earth taking upon himself the nature of a man.

And Christ who is the glory of God, humbled himself to search for us wherever we might be found – in a cattle's feeding trough, among the shepherds, among a virgin and a carpenter, among the poorest of the poor, even coming to fishermen, tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners, zealots, slaves, thieves, rebels, priests, soldiers, mothers, fathers, children - he came to find our rebellious and sin wrecked raced by becoming like one of us, yet without sin, obedient to God, obedient even to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

And in his spirit he sought us even further down in to the underworld where he found our first parents and the patriarchs of old languishing in the darkness of the grave.

He awakened our race from the slumber of death, in the deep darkness of Sheol, and there in Hades he shined the light of His Gospel upon those who were bound by their fears of death, and their guilt and shame. There the Words of old were fulfilled, when Christ himself broke the ancient gates with a word saying,

⁷*Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.*

⁸*Who is this King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle!*

⁹*Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.*

¹⁰*Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory!*

And there he found us, lying dead in our trespasses and sins, and the Living Word of God spoke saying,

*“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”*

And shine He did, among the living and the dead, and among all the nations of the world, and over all principalities and powers in the heavenly places. And He shines even this very day in and among us

proclaiming the great hope of man, saying, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

In fact, this is the one who spoke light into the world at the beginning of the creation. And this *“same God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

The self-same Word which spoke life and light into the world at the beginning, and which breathed into Man’s nostrils the breath of life, He is the one of whom John says, *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

This Word of Life and Light is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Mary – He is *The Word made flesh. He dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

He has come to make His blessings flow as far as the curse is found. He resurrects the dead souls of Men with the light of His glory when he shines His grace and truth to in our souls, awakening us from our spiritual and physical death, like the dry bones in the Valley. He makes alive, and lights the fire of the Spirit inside us, standing us upon our feet, covering us with garments of light and glory, and filling us with His love, making us children of God once again. As the Lord himself taught us, when we, *by believing in the light, we become sons of light.”*

And as we continue to believe in the light, we ever behold the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ, and we become sons of light by being transformed more and more into the same image from one degree of glory to another, until that days when he appears, and we finally become like him, because we shall then see Him as he is. And this is the hope which purifies and enlightens the souls of all God’s people. The Beatific Vision. *For Christ in us is the Hope of Glory.*

Daniel the prophet foretold that this time would come. A time when *those who are wise will shine with the brightness of the heavens above, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.* And that time began on Christmas Day, People of God. This is why Christ came. He came with light of the star in the sky at night, so that he might make us to shine like the stars in the sky of a dark world still in its sins and misery. His arrival into the world slowly turns the darkness to the day. As the Prophet Malachi foretold, he is *the Sun of Righteousness who rises with healing in His wings.*

And so Christ says, *“I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”*

Until at last we come to the land of never ending day, the city of God which has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for there will be no more night, and the glory of God will give it its light, and its lamp will be the Lamb.

But until that day, People of God, we are to walk in the light and not in the darkness. As the Apostle Paul understood, teaching us, saying in 1 Thes. 5:

⁴But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

And again, in Romans 13 he says:

¹¹Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The Light of God is here, People of God, and God's Light lives in you. And His Light has been burning for 2000 years in the lives and hearts of His people all over the world, teaching us to walk in the light and to reject the darkness. So then, during this Christmas Season, let us celebrate the Light of God which has come into the world, which has come into our very own hearts and souls, by following and walking in that light, and filling our world with the light of His glory. Let us go out to the dark world, just as the Father sent the Son, "to open the eyes of the people, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus." Acts 26:18 Amen.