

The Significance of Christmas

Christmas is the time when the birth of Jesus Christ is commemorated. This article takes a deeper look into the significance of Christmas within the context of the whole Bible.

After hundreds of years of being unfaithful to their covenant promise to God, the nation of Israel irretrievably broke the Mosaic Covenant which resulted in their expulsion from the Promised Land.

722 B.C. - The Northern Kingdom Israel falls to Assyria. Deported into captivity, the Northern Kingdom Israel ceases to exist. Witnessing this, the prophet **Isaiah** foretells of the fall of Jerusalem.

586 B.C. – Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom of Judah no longer exists. The prophet **Ezekiel** was taken earlier and massive deportations take place. The prophet **Jeremiah** stays behind.

The prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah all witness the nation's loss of the promise of land. While they all prophesize of God's judgment of Israel's infidelity, they also speak of God's New Covenant which will bring His people back to the Promised Land. Ezekiel explains why God is making this New Covenant:

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Lord God says: "**It is not for your sake, house of Israel**, that I am about to act, **but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations** where you went. And **I will vindicate the holiness of My great name** which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. **Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,**" declares the Lord God, "when I show Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the lands; and I will bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols." (Ezek 36:22-25)

There are two observations of note here:

1. The nation of Israel profaned the name YHWH (I AM WHO I AM [equivalent to: I AM HE WHO EXISTS]). The nation of Israel treated God's name as a common god; in essence, God was equivalent to a dead pagan god.
2. God was concerned about this view of His Holy name. When the nation of Israel made a covenant with God in the land of Moab, God established them as the people of God who represented Him on earth.

"You stand today, all of you, before the Lord your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, that you may enter into the covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath which the Lord your God is making with you today, in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Deut 29:10-13)

At the start of the New Testament, when Mary was pregnant, an angel instructs Joseph to name their newborn son Jesus:

She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. (Matt 1:21)

The proper name "Jesus," translated from the Greek name "Iēsous," originated from the Old Testament Hebrew name of "Yēšua'." The ancient form of Yēšua' was Y^hōšūa' which is the oldest name containing God's memorial name Yahweh, and it means "Yahweh is help" or "Yahweh is salvation."

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As the apostle Paul evangelizes, he places an emphasis on the name of Jesus, what He did on the cross in atonement of sin, and His resurrection:

But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth **Jesus as Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for “**EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.**” (Rom 10:8-13)

Everyone who calls on the name of “Yahweh is salvation” will be saved. God does literally vindicates the holiness of His great name. Through the name of Jesus Christ, all nations know of the name of God.

Christmas is a time of remembrance of what God did through His Son Jesus Christ despite the sinful nature of human beings:

Therefore they said to Him, “What are we to do, so that we may accomplish the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” (John 6:28-29)