

## Merry Christmas

Matthew 1:18-25 - NCBC, December  
23, 2018

Main Point: **Christmas is a time to rejoice in God's rescue of sinners.**

- God's Christmas Rescue Initiated  
(Matthew 1:18)
- God's Christmas Rescue Threatened  
(Matthew 1:19)
- God's Christmas Rescue Revealed  
(Matthew 1:20-21)
- God's Christmas Rescue Predicted  
(Matthew 1:22-23)
- God's Christmas Rescue Embraced  
(Matthew 1:24-25)
- God's Christmas Rescue Accomplished  
(Galatians 4:4-6)

Application: **Believe in Jesus and rejoice in God's rescue of you!**

### Opening Announcements:

- All Invited to our Christmas Eve Service at 4pm  
Tomorrow!!

<<Joy has Dawned>>



The Babe of Bethlehem is now the Lord of all history!  
The cradle has been replaced with a crown. O come, let us adore Him now as we open our Bibles to the record of Jesus' birth in **Matthew chapter 1**.



If you don't have a Bible today, simply raise your hand and we'd be delighted to give you one. **Matthew 1** is on page \_\_\_\_ in the giveaway Bibles today.

And while you're preparing to read from the first chapter of **The Gospel according to Matthew**, just a quick word

about some of our upcoming plans for the new year together.

Throughout the last several months our elders have prayed and counseled much together about what shepherding priorities God may have for our church family in 2019. Repeatedly we have recognized the Biblical priority on financial stewardship as an indicator of spiritual health. Now we recognize that culturally it can be considered taboo for pastors to talk about money.

Yet the biblical priority on money cannot be disputed. There are over 2,350 verses on money, possessions, and stewardship in the Scriptures. Over half of Jesus' parables reference money or possessions.

The strong financial emphasis in Scripture is not because God needs our money, but because money is how we communicate value, and God desires to be most valued by His people! Since God truly is the most valuable, then our management of our finances as His people should reflect our worship and treasuring of Him. For like Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."<sup>1</sup>

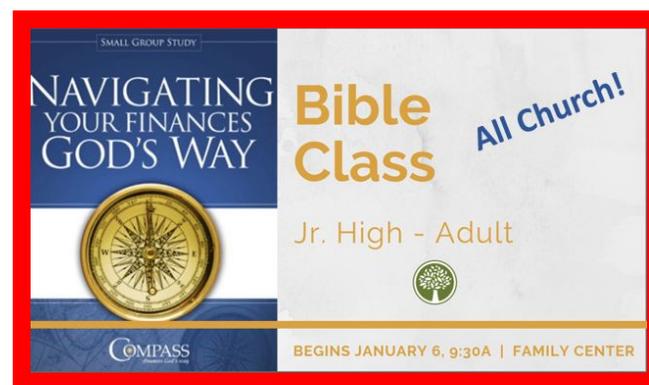
Our individual checkbooks and balance statements are honest indicators of who or what is our functional god. And we recognize that we live in a debt-saturated culture that constantly affirms the lies of, why wait – just finance today! You deserve it. Just charge it!

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 6:21  
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But God didn't save His people from sin so we could live for ourselves.<sup>2</sup> Or only for us to become enslaved in the financial bondage of consumer debt and living beyond our means. God's Word gives good and sufficient counsel to all of His people on how to live in financial freedom out of a worshipping heart for God that uses money and possessions generously for His greater joy on this earth.

So here's our elders' plan for 2019: Trusting in God's help, we have planned several different initiatives to help us all grow in our understanding and practice of biblical stewardship.



Our first initiative begins Sunday January 6<sup>th</sup>, where we are excited to invite ALL of you to attend a 6-week class at 9:30am on Sunday mornings. Everyone in our church family – from Jr. High to Adults are encouraged to participate in these 6 weeks of concentrated teaching and training on biblical stewardship. We will not be offering our normal discipleship programs for these 6

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:15

weeks – instead all of our Youth Group and ABFs will be meeting together in this room at 9:30 am starting on January 6<sup>th</sup> for this biblical study of *Navigating Your Finances God's Way*, put out by Compass Ministries.

Everyone needs a workbook, and complimentary workbooks are provided for you when you sign up either on the Connection Card, or through the NCBC smartphone app. Yesterday I went on the app, just clicked *Sign Up*, and got myself signed up for this class in less than 30 seconds.

So please, join your elders in praying that God would grow all of us in our understanding and practice of biblical stewardship in 2019. There is much joyful freedom ahead of us. Please don't miss out on this teaching.



Now this morning, let's turn our attention to the reason we celebrate Christmas! Please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word, as I read **Matthew 1:18-25** from the **English Standard Translation**.

*<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

This is God's historical record of Christmas. You may be seated.

### Let's Pray.

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This morning our aim is simple. Let's turn down all the noise from the outside world. Let's look away from all the glitter and blinking lights. And let's refresh our faith together by just walking through the familiar account of the birth of Jesus Christ found in **Matthew chapter 1**.

In the midst of all kinds of gift purchasing, and gift giving, and family gathering, and drama, I want to just take time this morning to remember that,

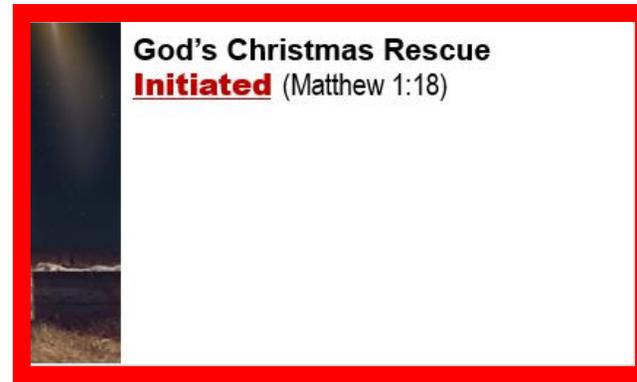


Christmas is a time to rejoice in God's rescue of sinners.

Most of our traditions of cookies, and trees, and presents are all precious and sweet. But we must always be careful that we don't lose sight of the real events of Christmas which should excite our highest joy.

Christmas is our celebration of God's rescue of sinners! Christmas celebrates that what God had promised for centuries actually came to pass when Jesus Christ became a human being: Emmanuel – God with us! All so Jesus could become our substitute, so we could be rescued from the guilt and shame of sin, and live forever with God in the blessed joy of eternity.

So let's walk through this familiar account together, with a focus on how Matthew's account reveals God's amazing Christmas rescue of sinners like you and me today.

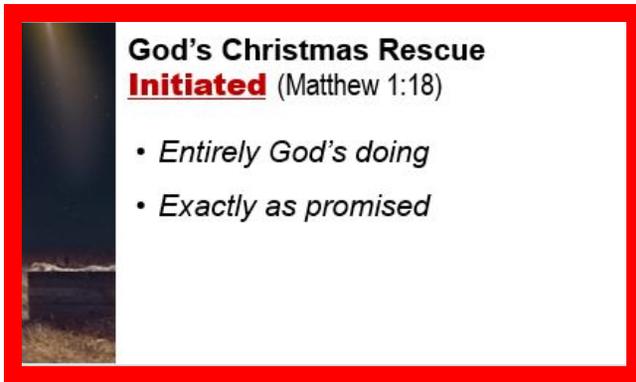


In Matthew 1:18, we first see, God's Christmas Rescue Initiated.

Would you like to know how God starts His amazing rescue operation of wicked and proud sinners? How is it even possible for God to restore sweet relationship between Himself and His prodigal children?

Well, *the birth of Jesus* the Messiah – the birth of the promised Deliverer – the birth of the Anointed Rescuer – *took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed – or legally pledged to be married – to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.*

There's two things I want to make sure we notice about God's initiation of His Christmas rescue from this verse:



First, notice that this rescue operation is **entirely God's doing**. O for sure God's plan involved other people – but the rescue of sinners through the birth of God's Son into the world was entirely Divine and supernatural. This is something only God could conceive!

**Verse 18** is clear. Joseph and Mary were legally considered husband and wife by Jewish custom, they were not yet married and had not yet been physically intimate with one another. Mary was a virgin. Yet she discovered that she was pregnant!! *She was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.*

God's Christmas rescue of sinners was entirely His initiation. There was nothing Joseph or Mary could have done to initiate God's Christmas rescue of sinners. This was a miracle accomplished by the Holy Spirit Himself.

Even as **verse 22** testifies in our text this morning, it was **exactly as promised**. Ever since **Genesis 3:15** God had been preparing His people for the Rescuer's arrival, promising in **Isaiah 7:14**, *Therefore the Lord himself will*

*give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

Here's the point I want us to remember this morning.

We celebrate Christmas because of what God initiated – entirely of His own doing, exactly as He had promised to do, to bring about our salvation from sin's guilt and shame.

The reason angels and shepherds and magi and prophets and prophetesses all rejoiced<sup>3</sup> at the birth of Jesus was because this was the initiation of God's long-promised rescue plan for sinners like you and me.

But like most rescue operations,



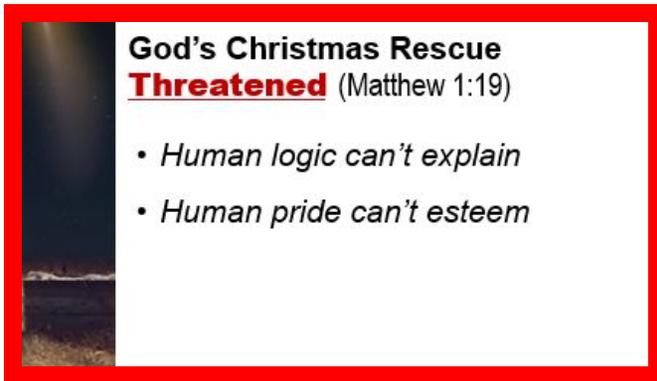
**God's Christmas Rescue was also Threatened** in **verse 19**.

*Mary's husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.*

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:8-38; Matthew 2:1-12

Joseph's initial response to Mary's pregnancy well illustrates two common obstacles to God's Christmas rescue.



First, **human logic can't explain** how a virgin could conceive a child by the Holy Spirit. In fact, human logic can't explain why a holy God would desire to send His own Son to the earth to save wicked sinners who just hate and despise Him.

Perhaps this is an issue for you personally this morning. Perhaps you believe the Christmas story is not any more true than Santa Claus and flying reindeer.

So many people stumble over God's rescue plan. Undeserved grace doesn't make sense. And their **human pride can't esteem** such a plan that brings such shame and ridicule from others.

You see, Joseph loved Mary. But logically, how could he trust her anymore? And what would others think and say

about her and him once they found out about the pregnancy?

Loved ones – God's way of accomplishing forgiveness and peace between us and Him is foolishness to the world.<sup>4</sup> When you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and turn from your sin in repentance, this world will mock you and ridicule you and shame you. Our human pride hates that God's saving grace is so unconditional and undeserved by us.

So let me ask you – is your pride hindering you from participating personally in God's Christmas rescue? Are you more concerned with what others might think of you if you really started following Christ?

Joseph was trying to manage the unfortunate situation he found himself in. And in **verse 19** he thought he had come up with the best plan possible.

So what about you in your life right now. Are you just trying to manage your way through life's disappointments and failures? Listen – Christianity is not a blind faith. God's Spirit is able to provide us with adequate understanding for His ways through His Word. But your demand to understand everything perfectly about God and His ways before you trust Him will keep you from benefiting in His rescue.

You need to be rescued. You have fallen short of God's standards of perfection. Your own secret sins are known by God, and they deserve eternal punishment.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18

Therefore, this Christmas is an opportunity for you to humble yourself, and receive Jesus as your Savior – as your rescuer.

God is intervening in your life right now with His Divine revelation, just as He did for Joseph in **verses 20-21**,



Where God's Christmas Rescue was Revealed.

The Scripture says that *as Joseph considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from ... the Romans?*

Is that how **verse 21** ends? After all, that's the rescue that all the Jewish people thought they were waiting for, right? Their human logic was that God would someday rescue them from their difficult circumstances on earth by changing their earthly conditions. Joseph and Mary – along with all the other faithful Jews in that day – would

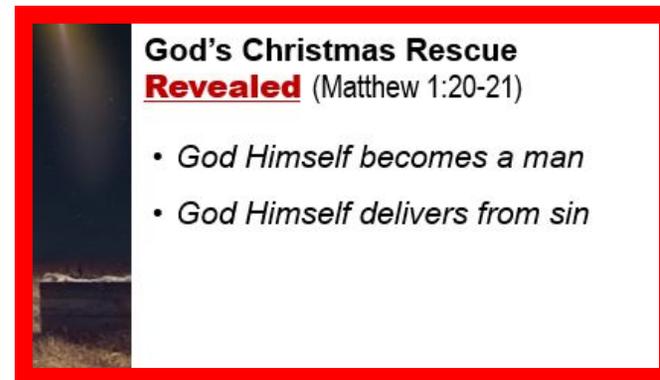
have been expecting God to rescue them from Roman oppression.

I confess that that's how I often view God and His rescuing grace. I think, there's something that's hard in my life right now... so God please come and rescue me from it. Come and deliver me out of this hardship!

But that's not the kind of rescue that we celebrate at Christmas is it? Christmas isn't about God rescuing His people from cancer, or from difficult relationships, or from financial pressures.

The heavenly messenger clearly told Joseph to name the baby, *Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*

Here's God's Christmas Rescue made clear:



**God himself becomes a man** by being born through a virgin's womb so that He can do for us what we could never do for ourselves – namely **delivering us from our own sin.**

Only a perfect substitute who had no sin of their own could ever justly take the place of a sinner who deserves death as penalty for sin. **Romans 6:23** says *the wages of sin is death*...meaning that all who sin shall die and be separated from our Holy Creator forever. No amount of good works or trying harder is able to turn a sinner into a saint. Far more significant than our troubles outside of us, is the sin that brings guilt and shame inside of us.

So God's Christmas rescue announces the arrival of Jesus – God in human flesh – the only sinless human to ever live on this earth – so that His death can provide the atoning and all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all who believe on Him.

Therefore, imperfect and troubled hearts like ours still have overwhelming cause to rejoice at Christmas!! For God's Christmas rescue was never about earthly troubles – but eternal troubles. God's Christmas rescue offers you salvation from your sin!

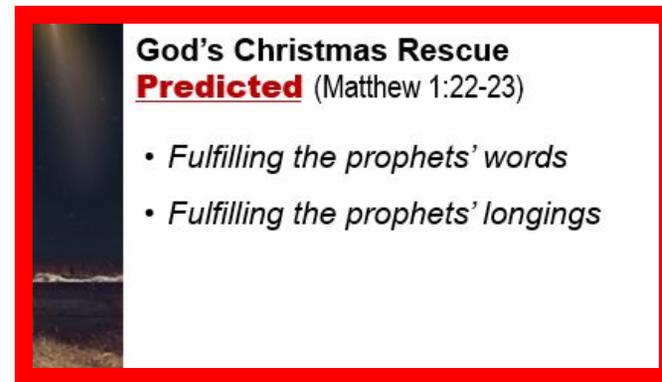
Now the angel went on to explain to Joseph that he was participating in the very,



**Christmas Rescue that God had Predicted** from the beginning of Messianic prophesy.

So be encouraged loved ones.

God always keeps His promises. You can trust God to always keep His Word.



**Verse 23** quotes **Isaiah 7:14** as the angel affirms Joseph that the virgin conception is **fulfilling the prophets' words**. And then the angel adds the definition of *Immanuel*, which means, *God with us*. This was **fulfilling the prophets' longings**.

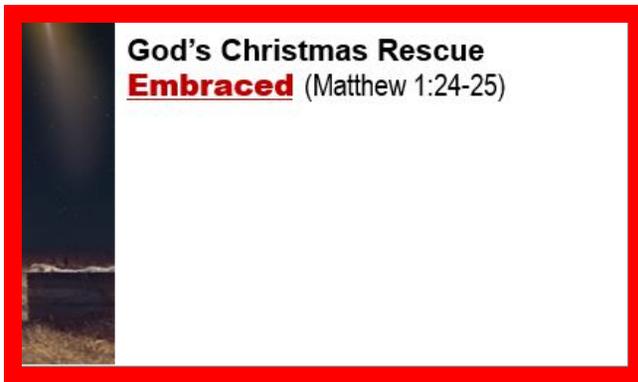
Everyone who has been created by God has an internal longing to be in loving relationship with God. Whether or not you are willing to admit it or not, the Scriptures are clear that you and I will never be more satisfied than when we are living joyfully in the presence of God, and He is dwelling joyfully with us.

So will you believe that Jesus – the baby conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin – the man who lived without sin for his entire life – the man who died on a

cross by the jealousy of the Jews – and the man who rose from the dead to triumphantly declare victory over sin and the grave – will you believe that Jesus is God’s Christmas rescue for you?

Jesus fulfilled all of the Messianic prophecies perfectly – exactly how the prophets had predicted Him to be.

So what’s your personal response this morning to God’s Christmas rescue for you through Jesus? Will you respond like Joseph and,



**Embrace** God’s Christmas Rescue by faith in God’s Word?

Don’t sterilize this historical account just because it is so familiar to you. Carefully consider all the emotions Joseph must have wrestled with through these weeks and months. We know from what happened when he arrived at his relatives’ home in Bethlehem that he and Mary were shunned and rejected by their family for what they perceived was a pregnancy out of wedlock.<sup>5</sup> They

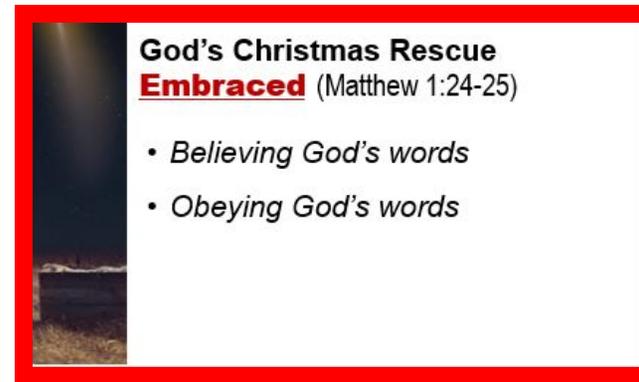
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<sup>5</sup> Luke 2:7 The word “inn” is better translated “household” or “dwelling”  
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despised the unborn child, and shamed Joseph and Mary rather than giving them help and welcome in their need.

My point is this – it wasn’t easy for Joseph to embrace God’s Christmas rescue, and it’s never easy for us to embrace God’s plan of salvation either. To receive God’s grace is costly to our pride, and devastating to our flesh.

But to embrace God’s Christmas rescue doesn’t require great feats of strength or long hours of service. Rather, it just requires the humility to,



**Believe and obey God’s words.**

**Verse 24** says that *When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

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here, as it is a different Greek word than what is used in Luke 10:34. Most likely the “inn” of Luke 2:7 was the home of Joseph’s relatives who rejected and despised the unborn child based on their perceptions of infidelity. C.f. Isaiah 53:3.

As much pain and inconvenience as it caused him... Joseph believed God, and obeyed Him. That is faith's response to the revelation of God's Christmas rescue.

Lord I believe that Jesus is the perfect God-man who came to earth to accomplish my rescue from sin by taking my place. Therefore I believe Jesus' death paid for all my sins, and Jesus' resurrection gives me eternal life. And because I believe this – I now live to obey God – even when my feelings are all out of sort just as Joseph's must have been – trusting God's Words as true and trustworthy, and thanking Him for initiating my rescue from sin and its death!!

Dear friend – it's Christmas time. Will you participate in God's rescue by believing and obeying God's Words today?

Look up from your sin. See its curse as you gaze upon Jesus hanging on the cross in your place. And believe that He did that for you – to bring you to God forever!

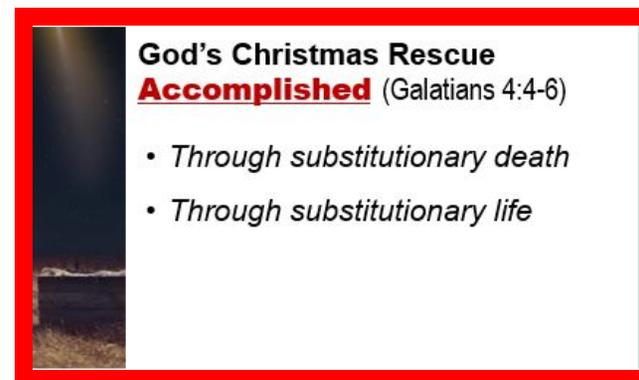
I appreciate so much how Paul summarizes God's Christmas Rescue in **Galatians 4**,



In **Galatians 4:4** Paul writes, *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

God's Christmas Rescue is **Accomplished** when sinners like me and you receive a heavenly adoption as beloved children of God. No longer slaves – but sons – everlasting heirs of God Himself!!

Such a rescue is accomplished only,



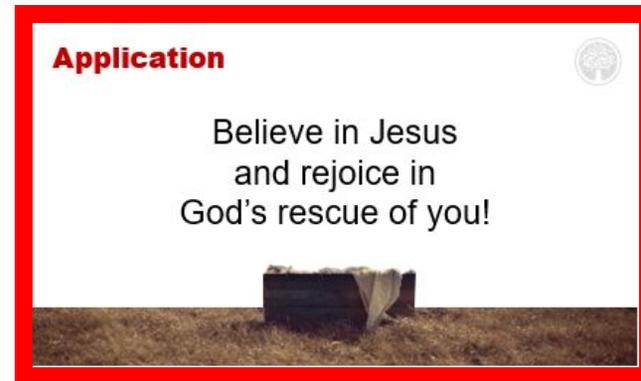
Through the substitutionary death and life of a man named Jesus – the Savior of the world.

Will you believe on Jesus Christ this morning?



Christmas is a time to rejoice in God's rescue of sinners.

Christmas is a time to rejoice that slaves have become heirs, and enemies have been made friends!! God Himself has made a way for sinners to come home. All by His grace – and not of anything that we can do. Simply by believing in Christ and His finished work on our behalf alone.



So then, this Christmas, Believe in Jesus and Rejoice in God's rescue of you!

Don't let another Christmas go by in which you merely glance at a cradle and forget about the cross. The cradle points to the cross – on which was accomplished Christ's crown – the salvation of His people from their sins!!

So Merry Christmas New Castle Bible Church!! Your sins can be forgiven through faith in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah. Come and believe on Him today – so that you may know the lasting joy of being rescued by God!

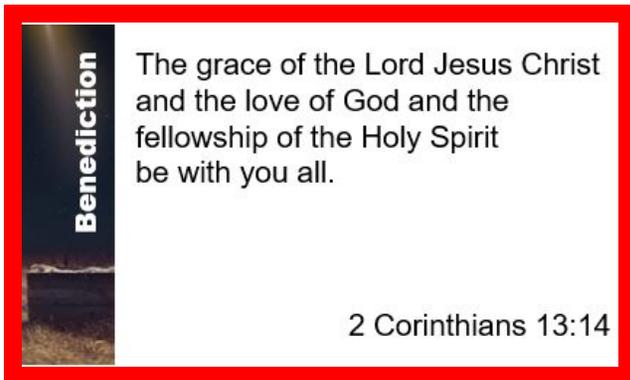


**Let's pray.**

<<Hallelujah, What a Savior>>

<<*Christmas Eve Service Tomorrow – 4pm*>>

**Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.**



*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**2 Corinthians 13:14***



### **Recommended Resources on Merry Christmas:**

- Genesis 3:15; 22:17-18
- Numbers 24:17
- Isaiah 7:14; 8:8, 10; 9:6; 11:1
- Jeremiah 31:15
- Hosea 11:1
- Micah 5:2
- Luke 1:26-2:21
- John 1:14
  
- <https://www.paultripp.com/advent-sermons>
- <https://www.crossway.org/blog/2016/12/10-things-you-should-know-about-christmas/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/seven-reasons-to-worship-on-christmas>
  
- The First Days of Jesus, Kostenberger & Stewart
- Putting Jesus in His Place, Bowman & Komoszewski
- Christ before the Manger, Rhodes

### **Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions**

1. Read Luke 1:34-37, 39, and 56, and Matthew 1:18. Consider how Mary's travels and the passing of time could have influenced Joseph's perceptions. What do we learn about Joseph's character then from Matthew 1:19?
2. Read Matthew 1:16. Why is the genealogical pattern ("the father of...") broken with Jesus?
3. Read Matthew 1:21. Note the angel didn't tell Joseph that Jesus would save his people from the Romans. What do you really believe you need deliverance from?
4. Read Isaiah 9:1-7. What part of this Messianic prophecy is most meaningful to you, and why? If his name was to be called all these wonderful things, why did Joseph name him "Jesus"?
5. Read Luke 1:26-38. Note every aspect of this revelation which gives cause for hope and rejoicing among God's people.
6. How is God calling you to worship and adore Him more today?