

“THE REAL CHRISTMAS TREE”

PSALMS 22

DECEMBER 20, 2009 – SUNDAY 11:00AM – DR. JACK GRAHAM

[applause] Absolutely beautiful! I asked that it be sung just like that because this is my theme for this message on the Sunday before Christmas. Actually I'm calling this message "The Real Christmas Tree... the Real Christmas Tree... the Christmas cross. Take you Bibles and turn with me to the book of Psalms, chapter 22.

Now since we're talking about Christmas trees today, I did a little brief study of the history of the Ch... Christmas tree... how it came to be. And I discovered that in the seventh century a monk traveled from England to Germany to teach the word of God. He did many good works there and he introduced the fur tree to the children to teach the lesson of the Trinity with the triangular shape of the fur tree, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And ah... the people, who were pagans in that region, formerly had worshiped the oak. But the fur tree came to be known as God's tree.

Later on, several centuries later... later over in Latvia after the Christmas tree became the symbol of Christianity in western and central Europe, ah... in Latvia in 1510 ah... the first decorated tree ah... was noted. And then Martin Luther the great Reformer is said to have decorated small Christmas trees with candles to show his children how the stars twinkled through the dark night. So today, to this very day, we celebrate Christmas... most of us, many of us ah... who celebrate Christmas with Christmas trees. And they're everywhere. How 'bout those right behind me? Aren't they beautiful?

And we've got a number of them in our house. In fact, we love decorating our Christmas trees. And, yes, I do participate, by the way... hauling those things down out of the attic. [laughter] I wish you could just sh... throw a sheet over them and throw them in a closet somewhere from year to year. But...

But we actually have a Christmas tree up in my man-cave which is my media room upstairs. We call it the man-cave, and my sports memorabilia is there. And so Deb did a really good thing this year. She put up a Christmas tree with ornaments... Texas Ranger ornaments, ah... Dallas Maverick ornaments, ah... Dallas Cowboy ornaments. (By the way, who dat beat them Saints last night, huh? [loud cheers and applause] [pastor laughs]) So we have that Christmas tree, and... and we enjoy... we love to turn on the lights and... and celebrate Christmas. After all, this is a great celebration! This is why we say Merry Christmas! This is good news, glad tidings of great joy!

But unfortunately many people who celebrate Christmas don't know Christ and even ignore Christ. Oh, they may pay some attention to the baby Jesus, but they never understand why He came and what He did for us when He came. And I tell you, Christmas makes absolutely no sense without the cross and the resurrection of Christ; because it is the cradle of Christ that touches the cross and leads

us to the crown. The Bible says, [Galatians 3:13] *"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."* The tree reference there is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is God's tree! God's tree is the cross upon which Jesus died!

Now the strongest, most objective evidence for the Christian faith and the infallibility of Scripture is fulfilled prophecy. Why is this true? Because only [tap] God [tap] can predict the future. And God [tap] only can predict the future because God orders [tap] the future, ah... God orchestrates the future. He originates the sc... ah... the future, He... He orders it, He orchestrates it! He brings it to pass!

And so when you read the Bible it is full of prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah, the coming of the King into the world. And the heart of Christmas is the fulfillment of these prophecies. And so in Psalm 22 there are many powerful prophecies that we're going to get to in just a moment but ah... the fact is that in Galatians 4:4 the Bible says, *"When the fullness of time had come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."* There was a convergence of circumstances and cultures and time and events; that in the fullness of time, at the exact right moment Christ came into the world. We even divide history based upon the life of Christ. B.C.... before Christ, and A.D. Your own birth date is dated by the coming of Christ into the world!

And again, it is the fulfillment of prophecy that makes it so vividly, obviously true. Listen to this quote from one of the early church fathers by the name of Augustine: *"The Old Testament is in the new revealed and the new is in the old concealed."* The Old Testament says someone is coming... the Messiah is coming; the Gospels tell us the Messiah... Jesus... Yhowshua [or Jehoshua] has come, and the Epistles tell us that He is coming again! Old Testament is in the new revealed; the New Testament is in the old concealed.

That's why it's very important that you not only read your New Testament, but your Old Testament as well. If you don't read your Old Testament and see Christ in the Old Testament, you're missing one of the real joys of Bible study, because in prophecy, in picture, in type and illustration Jesus is through and throughout the Scriptures.

Ah... ah... A gentleman by the name of Graham Goldsworthy said this: *"The most compelling reason for Christians to read and study the Old Testament lies in the New Testament. The New Testament witnesses to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the One in whom and through whom all the promises of God find their fulfillment."* And then here's another quote: *"The theme of promise and fulfillment runs like a thread through the whole Bible... like a thread through the whole Bible."*

When we built this beautiful building and worship center, in the atrium we discovered there were sixty-six windows. What were we going to put in those sixty-six windows? Well, guess what? There are sixty-six books of the Bible, so we put a window... a beautiful artist and stain-glass creator gave us each book of the Bible and in each window... and we have a guide to this if you'd like to pick one up... what each window is ah... representing. Because in each one there's a symbol of Christ... there's a picture of Christ. Like in Exodus, for example, there is the great I AM in the burning bush, so you look at Exodus and you see the burning bush there, and so on.

But something that is very unique that... that I asked be added to these windows. You will see moving throughout the sixty-six books of the Bible in those windows a scarlet ribbon or a scarlet thread

running through and through. In fact, if you look behind me here in the baptismal window with the... with the crown and the sword of God, which represents the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, you'll see that red ribbon running right through there. Why?

Because the Bible is a book of salvation! It is a book of redemption! And the theme of the Scripture that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ is this redemptive message: Jesus Christ is the Son and substance of biblical prophecy! Jesus is the living Bible.

And, of course, the more familiar passages that refer to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah is the fact that He would be born in Bethlehem—Micah 5:2, *"That you, O Bethlehem Ephratah, you are too little to be among the cl... clans of Judah; from you shall come forth for Me One who is to be the ruler of Israel; whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days."* And you know that according to history that the Roman census was taken, and Mary the mother, her espoused husband were commissioned... conscripted to travel from Nazareth where they lived to Bethlehem when she was great with child, and there Jesus was born in the little town... the little sleepy town... the shepherd's town of Bethlehem.

Isaiah, the prince of prophets, prophesied that Jesus would be born of a virgin—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 Emmanuel, which means God with us."* Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit the Messiah. She knew no man. She said, *"How can these things be..."* When the angel announced the coming of Christ, she... she said, [Luke 1:34-35] *"How can these things be? I've never known a man."* The angel said, *"The Holy Spirit will overshadow you"* and Jesus was born of a virgin to fulfill this Scripture.

You say, *"Does that really make a difference?"* What difference does it make? Is... is that a saga? Is that a story? Or does it really matter if Jesus were born..." Well, I'll tell you what difference it makes: it makes the difference between heaven and hell in your life, because if Jesus was born in... under natural circumstances... had a human father, than human blood would have been coursing through His veins. He Himself would have needed a Savior, and could not have been the Savior. Jesus was not a man who became a God... that's impossible. But He is God who became a Man... the God-Man, one hundred percent God, one hundred percent Man. He was born of a virgin.

And then there's that powerful story fulfilled of Jesus and His family living in Egypt. Hosea 11:1 says, *"When Israel was a child, I loved Him and out of Egypt I called My Son."* When the cruel King Herod was killing the boy... Jewish boys under the age of two for the threat of the King... of the Jews who had been born, an angel appeared to Joseph and said, *"Take the child and Mary and flee to Egypt"*, and they went to Egypt when Jesus was a small child, thus to fulfill the Scripture. And that's recorded in Matthew 2:13-15. *"...out of Egypt I have called My Son."*

Jesus Himself claimed many times to be the Messiah based on the fulfillment of Scripture. He fulfills the law and the prophet. You remember that occasion in the Gospel of Luke after the resurrection when Jesus was walking with those two ah... disciples along the road to a little village names Emmaus? And the Bible says, Jesus opened up the Scriptures to them, and showed him in the law... them in the law and the prophets all the things... Showed them, rather, in all the Scriptures... [Luke 24:27] *"showed them in all the Scriptures those things concerning Himself."* If He has showed the... showed them all the things, they'd still be out there walking. But He showed them in all the Scriptures. Jesus is throughout the Scriptures!

But of all the prophetic Scriptures, perhaps Psalm 22 is the most vivid prediction and fulfillment of Christ that we find in the Bible, because here God prophesied the crucifixion of our Lord in vivid detail!

Now crucifixion was invented by the Phoenicians, but it was, quote, perfected by the Romans. And Roman crosses were seen throughout the ancient world. And it was obviously cruel and unusual punishment and execution. A... a terrible way to die! And Jesus died on a Roman cross.

And yet 1000 years before the cross, even before the cross was invented as an instrument of torture, David the psalmist spoke of the cross in detail, in such description, it is as though he is an eyewitness to the cross! As though he is standing at the foot of the cross!

There are thirty-three direct fulfillments of prophecy, fulfilled in Christ on the cross! I'm going to mention nine this morning so lick your fingers, get ah... Psalm 22 open and be ready to go. We'll help you with screen notes, but watch this!

First of all, we see this fulfillment in the words that Jesus spoke: verse 1, Psalm 22: *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from saving Me from My words, the words of My groanings."* These are the very words that came from our Lord, recorded in Matthew 27, verse 46: *"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out, and with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani!', which means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

And the word *forsaken* there means total abandonment! It's the... it's the strongest word for... for desolation and even damnation. It was at that moment when Jesus became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God; that He bore on the cross the curse of sin, when the wrath of God... the judgment of God was being poured out. And God the Father who is of purer eyes than even to look at iniquity... The Bible says God's eyes cannot even look at iniquity! God the Father turned His back on His darling Son! I can't explain that.

Again, Martin Luther said, "God forsaken of God. Who could fathom that?" Great is the mystery of godliness. But somehow in that moment God turned His back on His Son who was bearing our sin. And Jesus died alone and abandoned! The believer dies in the presence of the Lord... carried into the presence of the Lord. But Jesus [strike], bearing [strike] our [strike] sin [strike] died alone! And that was the moment of spiritual death.

I was asked just the other day in a conversation, "What happened on the cross? Did Jesus die spiritually on the cross? How could Jesus die spiritually? Is... isn't spiritual death eternal death?" And I said no, Jesus did die spiritually. In a finite moment of time He bore the infinite wait of eternal sin and judgment and condemnation. And in some amazing way that we'll perhaps understand... we will understand on the other side, Jesus, taking our cross, died spiritually; which is the spiritual condition of every person who is separated from God. If you don't know Christ... if Christ is not your Savior, you're living in spiritual death. You're existing... You're like that Christmas tree that's... that's cut off.

Jason and Toby and Ian, our grandson Ian and his parents went out and actually cut down their... their own Christmas tree this year. Had the most fun... said they'd ever had. Just really fun. Some

farm out in east Texas. So they got it in water I presume. I don't know how they do this. And ah... but... it... it... it looks good. It's alive. It's got, you know, it... it's decorated, it's beautiful, but it's cut off... it's dead. In a few weeks you know it will be bristly and... and it'll cut you when you try to take it down, because it looks alive. It's all filled with lights but it's dead! [tap] That's like a lot of people! Cut off from the life of God! Look alive [tap], beautiful, but spiritually dead! So what happened to Jesus on the cross, He died spiritually!

But then there's the supernatural darkness. Verse 2 of Psalm 22 said, *"O My God, I cry by day but You do not answer; and by night, but I find no rest."* Matthew 27:45: *"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour."* Jesus was put on the cross... nailed to the cross at 9:00 AM in the morning. He died at 3:00 PM in the afternoon. And it was day until midday at noon and a supernatural darkness moved in. With shock and awe and terror everything became dark.

The night Jesus was born that... that night the heavens were resplendent with the glory of God. But that night... that day that became night became very, very dark as He hung on the cross. The sun refused to shine... the sun [tap] refused [tap] to shine [tap] when Jesus [tap] died. The Creator of life, the One who said, *"Let there be light"* and there was light, is now hanging in utter darkness. He dies in darkness as if to por... portray the outer and utter darkness of hell itself. A supernatural darkness.

Then there was the murderous, hideous mocking that the Savior received. This was all predicted. Look in Psalm 22, verse 7 and following: *"All who see Me, mock Me. They make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 'He trusts in the Lord; let Him deliver Him. Let Him rescue Him for He delights in Him.'" And we'll stop right there.*

When Jesus was dying on the cross to pay for our sins, the skeptics taunted Him. Matthew 27 and verse 39: *"And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You're the Son of God, come down from the cross!'" And so also the chief priest with the scribes and elders mocked Him, saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself! He is the King of Israel. Let Him come down now from the cross and we will believe in Him. If He trust in God, if He desires Him. For He said, "I am the Son of God." And the robbers who were crucified with Him also reviled Him in the same way."* The Word of God said it would happen just as it happened. When Jesus was dying these skeptics scoffed. *"If You're the Son of God... if You are who You say You are... save Yourself!"*

And, of course, Jesus could have saved Himself! He was fastened to that cross not by nails alone, but by love that kept Him there! Love for you! He could have called those same angels that heralded His birth and sung Glory to God in the highest. Those majestic, powerful angels could come with drawn swords and destroy the accusers and the enemies of Christ. He could have done it just like that, and saved Himself. But Jesus did not come to save Him; He came to save you! He came to save you and you and you and you and everyone who will believe in Him. He calls these bulls and beastly men that hurled these insults. Their mouths are open. They're just jawing. And the prophecy came to pass.

Number four, the water that flowed from His side. Look at verse 14 of Psalm 22. *"I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within My breast."* According to John's Gospel, chapter 19, verse 34, *"But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water."* The pericardium... the... the liquid sack around the heart, under great

duress, can swell with blood and bodily fluids. And under the great torture of the cross the great heart of God exploded! The spear thrust into His side, out came water and blood! Jesus died of a broken heart, separated from the Father, bearing the sin of the world! He died! Oh, that we would have the heartbeat of God in us!

I remember my dear friend Adrian Rodgers telling a story about seeing a photograph in the Houston Chronicle several years ago; a very unusual photograph ah... of an older woman who was in a hospital room and she's leaning down over the bed of a... a middle-aged man, and she has her head on his chest. And you don't understand why until you read the caption, for that woman is listening to the beating heart of her son who had died in an accident, which had now been transplanted into that man's chest. She's listening... ka-thump, ka-thump, ka-thump, ka-thump... to the heartbeat of her son.

Reminds me of the Apostle John who is called the apostle that Jesus loved; very close to Jesus. And says that, at that final supper, the Passover, he laid... John, that is, laid his head over on the chest of Jesus as though he was listening to the heartbeat of God for the world. Would to God that the heartbeat of the Father's Son would be in our hearts for the Lord... the mission of God to save the world would be our mission. Yes, out came the blood and water just as the Scripture predicted.

Number five, His body was twisted out of joint. Psalm 22, verse 14: "*I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint.*" His bones were not broken to fulfill the Scripture. Though normally the bones of the criminals on crosses would have been broken, Jesus' bones were not broken, but they were out of joint. "*My heart is like wax melted within My breast.*" In Matthew 27 [:35] it says, "*And when they had crucified Him, they divided His garments among them by casting lots.*"

Crucified Him...! When a man was nailed to a cross, they would then lift him up and drop him into a deep hold. And often in the dropping of the cross into the hole, it would so jar the individual on the cross that the... that the bones and the shoulders would come out of joint! So there He is writhing in pain! His bones are out of joint! The terrible cross experience! It's all talked about a thousand years before it even happened!

Then there's the terrible thirst that Jesus experienced. Verse 15... Psalm 22: "*My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to My jaws; you lay Me in the dust of death.*" Fulfilled according to the words of John 19:28: "*And after this, Jesus, knowing that it was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), 'I thirst.'*" The One who had made the oceans and the lakes and the rivers... the One who is the water of life is now dehydrated, His tongue is swollen, sticking to the roof of His mouth, His body cries out for just a drop of water.

Remember the story that Jesus told about that man who died and went to hell? And he cried out from hell that someone would come and just take a drop of cold water and put it on his tongue? So in that moment Jesus was so thirsty... just a drop of water. He was so parched and pained. And it is fulfilled, He cried out, [loud whisper] "*I thirst.*"

Number seven, the cruelty and the agony of the cross. "My strength (verses 15 and 16, Psalm 22) "*My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to My jaws; you lay Me in the dust of death.*" Who is the you there? God Himself. "*The Lord laid on Him (Isaiah said) our iniquities.*"

When I first learned to share the Gospel through the Evangelism Explosion method, I learned a... a vivid illustration about how to show people how... what Christ did for us on the cross. It's called the record book of sin. And you just take a book in your hand and you say, "You know, God's keeping a record of all of our sins, from the day we were born and accountable we began to make ah... choices that break God's commandments, and God records the sin. And they just pile up. I mean, if you only sin three sins a day... I mean. You know three sins a day, that might be decent, right? Well, three sins a day over a lifetime adds up and some of our books are heavier than others. Right? But these sins are being added up day by day, this record book of sin, weighting us down, weighting us down, weighting us down. Ultimately carrying us down to judgment and to hell.

But in Isaiah 53 which is called the Gospel according to Isaiah, the Bible says, "*The Lord laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all!... The Lord laid on Him (Jesus) [tap] the iniquity of us all!*" He [tap]took the record book of sin... He took the weight of our sin and accepted [strike] God's judgments and wr... and wrath and hell! He died for us upon the cross! This is why He came!

So maybe we need to leave the... you know, the... the... the party crowd that dances around the tree and come to the real Christmas tree, the Christmas cross where Jesus died.

He mentions also [Psalms 22:16] "*for dogs encompass Me.*" The dogs refer to the Gentiles... the Romans who were there. And then "*a company of evildoers encircles me...*" The company no doubt refers to the... to the Sanhedrin... or the Jewish religious leaders, the assembly of the wicked... speaks of the Jewish council. Such a miscarriage of jus... justice as Jesus was delivered over. And the little baby's hands and feet that we see at Christmas... those little... little chubby hands and feet that, you know... we see the baby Jesus and everyone is thrilled, and we're blessed at the birth of Jesus. But now these little baby's hands and feet are nailed to a cross! [Psalms 22:16b] "*My hands and my feet are pierced.*"

Number eight, Jesus was stripped of His clothing. Psalm 22, verse 17: "*I can count all My bones – they stare and gloat over Me*". Matthew 27:36 – fulfillment: "*Then they sat down and kept watch over Him there.*" The artistry of Jesus... the portrayals of Christ on the cross are modest, covering the shame and the nakedness of Jesus, but a man would have been crucified without clothing. Jesus was naked before the world! His mother must have stood at the cross and held her head in shame as her darling Son, Mary's little Lamb is butchered and displayed like a dirty criminal! "*They gloat over Me! They shame Me!*" Imagine the pure, holy Son of God exposed to the world in such shame!

And then number nine, the gambling for His garments. Verse 18 of chapter 22 says: "*They divide My garments among them and for My clothing they cast lots.*" This happened.

You know sometimes skeptics will say, "Well, the... the disciples... Did Jesus Himself just sort of arrange all these fulfillments of prophecy? Absolutely not! These things could not be arranged. They happened to fulfill the predictions of the... of the Scripture.

They're casting lots. There were four minor garments that the typical Jewish male wore. There was a seamless robe that was worn as a kind of undergarment. And it was this seamless robe for which the soldiers gambled.

Roman soldiers loved to gamble. In fact, when we go to Israel perhaps my favorite place to go... the most powerful place in many ways... is known as Pilate's Praetorium. It is the place where Jesus stood before Pilate. And the Roman stones are still there where the blood of Jesus would have dripped on the ground. And we often get on our knees on Pilate's pavement (it's called) and pray, and sing, and remember what Christ ... when He was mocked [strike], when He was beaten [strike], when they put the crown of thorns.

And there etched in the floor are Roman games... gambling games. In fact, I brought you a photo of one. There's one right there. That's... that's a stone taken from Pilate's Praetorium and that is a Roman game that was etched on the floor in which they would gamble. Well, they gambled at the cross of Jesus. And it was all in order to fulfill the Scripture.

God put Him on the cross, Jesus was crucified by the hands of hateful men. Look at verses 6 and 8 of Psalm 22: *"But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people."* The word for worm there literally means maggot [strike]. He is crushed [strike] beneath the heel of mankind and despised and mocked by the righteous hand of God, by the cruel and hateful hands of men and by the damnable work of Satan himself.

Verses 19 to 24 of Psalm 22 speaks of... of the devil. *"Deliver My soul from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog! Save Me from the mouth of the lion!"* Hell had a holiday when Jesus died. That's hell's holiday. Not the birth of Jesus but they were celebrating His death. Demons were shrieking "He is finished! It's done!" Jesus cried out, [John 19:30] *"Tetelestai – it is finished!"* Those demons of hell must have slapped high-fives and said, "It's done! [strike] He's finished!"

But Jesus was not finished. IT was finished! The work and the plan of God and salvation is now accomplished! He came for this purpose! He came for you! But He not only was born and came to earth, but He descended into hell [strike] and back so that we could go to heaven! That's the Christmas cross!

And thus, in closing, the amazing victory of this cross is seen in verse 22. A definite shift in the theme takes place at verse 22; a major shift takes place. Because now the risen Redeemer is speaking. The resurrection after His death is... is definitely implied. *"I... I will tell you of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:"* The Savior is now alive! He is speaking as prophet... listen to this!... as Prophet, as Priest and King!

As Prophet He declares the glory of God... verses 22 to 25: *"I will tell of you your name to my brothers (speaking of the disciples) in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear the Lord, praise him!"* As the Prophet He is proclaiming the wonder and the praise of God! Jesus is inviting us as Prophet to worship Him. And when we gather to worship Him, He is our Immanuel. He is with us! Right here, right now! God inhabits the praises of His people. He is enthroned upon the praises of His people!

So don't be a spectator or a consumer when you come... a religious consumer, but participate in the worship of Immanuel! When you gather your family around your Christmas tree or around your table, don't make it about just... just the presents; that's fine, but make it about Jesus! Worship Him! Pray! Tell the story of Jesus!

How foolish it would be to enjoy all the glamour and the glitter and the gifts of the season and not [strike] glorify [strike] Jesus [strike] Christ! [extended applause] He's Prophet!

But not only is He declared here as Prophet, but He declares Himself as Priest! Verse 26: *"The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him shall praise the Lord!"* Those who are hurting, those who are afflicted, those who are broken, those who are having a hard time, those who are ah... suffering... He is a High Priest unto us to satisfy us. Jesus came to give Himself for us to satisfy us. He will... Those who seek Him will praise Him. They will eat and be satisfied. He feeds us and He leads us, and He ever lives to make intercession for His saints.

I wish I had more time to talk about that but I want to get to the final... the final word, and that is as King He's coming for us. Verses 27 and 28: *"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord... all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations."*

Jesus is King! Jesus was born a King! There was always something about Jesus that commanded worship. The shepherds came and worshiped Him! The wise men came and worshiped Him! The angels came and worshiped Him! He was born a King!

I love the great British preacher Charles Hadden Spurgeon; here's what he said, "The moment that Jesus came to earth He was a King. He did not wait till His adulthood that He might take His empire (listen to this) but as soon as His eye greeted the sunshine, He was King!" The moment Jesus was born into this world, He was King! And His kingdom was established within His people. But one day His kingdom will be established on earth and in heaven! Jesus is coming [strike] again [strike]; this time not in humility, but in majesty and great power and great glory! Sometimes people wonder when... when is He coming? When will the King come? Some ladies were weeping for Him at the cross, and He said, "Ladies, don't weep for Me." He said, "My hour is not yet come." But one day His hour is coming.

First Timothy 6:15: *"That hour in which He will display at the proper time – He who is blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords!"* His time is coming and it's coming soon! The King is coming! And when He comes... Philippians 2[:9]: *"Therefore God has highly exalted Him (if you know this say it with me) and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God!"*

He is Prophet! He is Priest! He is King! But the question is does He reign in your heart? Does He rule in your heart? Because it's possible to know the Christmas story, it's possible to say, "Oh, I believe in Jesus." But if He does not reign in your heart as your Lord and King, then He's not your Savior. The Bible says [Romans 10:9], *"If we confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the death, we will be saved!"* Jesus said if you're going to follow Me, [Mark 10:21] *"take up the cross and follow after Me daily."* So you may say, "Well, I'm a member of the church." Or... or... or "I... I believe in God." But if Jesus is not your Lord and your King, you need to surrender your life to Him now! You need to give your full allegiance to the Lord Jesus; take up your cross and say, "Lord Jesus, my life is yours!"

“Born My people to deliver; Born a child, and yet a King./ Born to reign in us forever. Now Thy gracious kingdom bring./ By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in our hearts alone/ By Thine all sufficient merit; raise us to Thy righteous throne.” Sing it at Christmas! Live it every day of your life! Accept what Christ has done for you at the cross.

There was no room for Jesus in the inn when He was born, but... “There’s room at the cross for you... Though millions have come there’s still room for one; there’s room at the cross for you.”

Would you bow your heads with me in prayer... every head bowed?

Don’t celebrate another Christmas without Christ. Don’t live another day without King Jesus reigning and ruling in your life. No doubt you’ll be receiving some gifts at Christmas. Can you imagine receiving a gift from someone who sacrificed maybe to buy you a gift and wrap it, and you never opening it? What an insult. What an insult it is to God for you to never unwrap God’s gift. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift! So right now invite Christ into your life. Unwrap the gift of salvation by receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Pray a prayer like this:

Jesus, I invite You into my life. Thank You for dying on the cross for me. I believe You rose again. Come into my life; forgive me, change me, make me Your child. Give me the strength and the power to live for You until You come for me.” Ask Him to be the King, the Lord, the Savior of your life and He will! And then profess your allegiance to your King by coming forward today and trusting Christ as your Savior.

In just a moment we’re going stand and sing, and upstairs in the balcony, on the lower level our ministers are going to be here. We have trained... ah... encouragers who will take an open Bible and explain more fully... if you have questions... what it means to know and follow Christ. But don’t walk out of here without coming forward and receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Come to Jesus; He came for you. Come to Jesus; He died for you. Come [tap] to Jesus; He loves you and will welcome you. No matter what you’ve done or where you’ve been in life, [it’s] Never too late for you to come to Him.

Father, thank You for these powerful words from the Scripture [music begins], for the fulfillment of prophecy and the anointing of Jesus the Messiah. May God bless these who come and welcome you into their lives as King of kings and Lord of lords. In Jesus’ name. Amen