

The Ornaments of Christmas

A Christmas Devotional by Kathy Howard

The real reason we celebrate Christmas can easily be lost in our culture's version of the holiday. But, many of the ornaments we use to decorate our trees and homes today remind us of the real Christmas story.

The Christmas Angels

God's messengers played a vital role in our Savior's birth. The angels did not take God's good news to kings or rulers or religious leaders. Instead, these mighty messengers visited the humble. The lowly. Those willing to hear, to believe, to receive.

The angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary and gave a greeting that would change her life forever:

"Do not be afraid Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." (Read Luke 2:29-38 for the whole encounter.)

Gabriel also visited Joseph, the carpenter betrothed to Mary:

"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." (Read Matthew 1:18-25 for the whole encounter.)

On the night Jesus was born, an angel of the Lord also appeared to shepherds in the fields surrounding Bethlehem:

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord!" (Read Luke 2:1-20 for the whole encounter.)

Question for reflection: How would you have reacted to the angel? Would you have run in fear? Listened with skepticism? Or humbly and joyfully accepted God's great news about our Savior?

The Christmas Star

Stars at Christmas remind us that God longs for us to know Jesus. The Christmas star appeared to magi in the east and led them far away to Bethlehem so they would find the baby King.

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. ...The star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped

over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.” (Read Matthew 2:1-12 for their story.)

But the star also reminds us of Jesus Himself, the bright, morning star who lights our hearts.

Time of Thanksgiving: Thank God for the guidance He gives to bring you to Himself. And thank Him for Jesus, the true and eternal Light.

The Christmas Crown

The crown reminds us that Jesus - that tiny babe born in Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago - is our glorious, eternal Lord and King.

Centuries before Jesus' birth, the prophet Isaiah foretold His eternal reign:

"Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever" (Isaiah 9:7)

The magi from the east endured that long journey for one reason - to worship the King:

"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star when it rose and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:3).

Yet many failed to acknowledge Jesus as the divine, eternal King. Thirty-three years later, when He was arrested, beaten, and condemned to die, the Roman soldiers ironically mocked Him:

"And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" (Matthew 27:28-30).

But God's truth, will, and purposes prevail. Jesus was, is, and will always be our King eternal!

"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever'" (Revelation 11:15)

Time to worship the King eternal! Alone or with your family, sing a favorite carol, hymn, or praise song that acknowledges Jesus as King!