

The Manger is Empty



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*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the **government** shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

*’Of the **increase of his government** and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to **establish it with judgment and with justice** from **henceforth even forever**. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” [Isaiah 9:6-7](#)*

Let me state right up front that I love the holiday seasons, especially now that we have grandchildren to celebrate with. There is something magical about the whole Christmas-Jesus-Christmas Tree thingee. Despite its pagan roots, Christmas is still a great time to share the story of the incarnation of Emmanuel with unbelievers. At no other time are Americans as open to hear about “Jesus” than they are at Christmas time.

But it is not the pagan roots and materialism of the Christmas season that concerns me as much as it is the incomplete story that the Christmas season tells. Yes, Jesus was born in a manger, and yes, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and yes, He came to save His people from their sins. But it is the partial message of the incarnation that seems so dangerous to me. In fact, the story of Christmas misses the entire point.

Jesus is no longer in the manger. Jesus is no longer a little child lying in a cow-feeder, surrounded by cattle lowing. Like every one of us, Jesus had a birth story, but that is not where the story ends. The birth of Jesus is where the story begins.

American Christianity is often controlled by the calendar, especially now that the "Christian" holidays have become more secular and commercial than spiritual. The two most celebrated days on the church calendar are the birth of baby Jesus and the crucifixion/resurrection of the suffering Savior. Christmas and Easter are the most celebrated days in all of Christendom, yet they both tell only part of the story.

Both the manger and the tomb are empty.

Jesus Christ is a RISEN King. He rules and reigns right now. His ever-expanding kingdom is not something that is in the future, but something that is very much in operation today. Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords RIGHT NOW!

He is not a helpless babe lying in a manger and he is not a crucified Savior hanging on a cross. He is the resurrected KING sitting at the right hand of the FATHER right now. Jesus is lord...NOW.

And...He is coming again to Judge the living and the dead.

Is that the message that you heard when you attended your candlelight service on Christmas Eve? Did your pastor speak more about the "babe" in the crib or the victorious King on His white horse? Did the people sitting around you at your Christmas service understand that Jesus rules and reigns today?

Why is that not the Christmas message? Oh, I know, the Babe in a manger thing makes us feel all warm and fuzzy as it floods our minds with childhood memories of Christmas' past. But the story doesn't end in the manger anymore than it ends

at the cross. Jesus is returning as a conquering King and when he returns it won't be as a baby or as a humbled human.

Jesus Christ is returning as the Conquering King!! He is King RIGHT NOW. He rules and reigns RIGHT NOW. He is putting all of His enemies under HIS feet...RIGHT NOW.

You can't read the Christmas story, or the Easter story, without connecting the dots to the Conquering King story. Shouldn't "the rest of the story" be part of both church celebrations?

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King Of Kings, And Lord Of Lords.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

¹⁸ That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

¹⁹ And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

²⁰ And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

²¹ And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” [Rev 19:11-21](#)

Isn't it time we made THAT the focus of our Christmas and Easter celebrations? Jesus isn't returning on some dime-store pony. He's riding a White Stallion fit for a King. The God of Mercy becomes the God of Justice and Wrath. Jesus rules NOW!!

The manger and the tomb are empty. It is time we told the world "the rest of the story."

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