

THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

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"The Protestant Faith"

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THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Today is the Sunday before Christmas. Christmas carols are being sung all around us and perhaps we are joining in ourselves. The first Christmas carol was the song of the angels at Bethlehem "Unto you is born this day a Saviour", Christmas reminds us of the coming of the Saviour, indeed the name "Jesus" means "Saviour", and Joseph was given a message from heaven before Jesus' birth that the baby to be born was to be called Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. Jesus is Saviour, but what does that mean to us? A saviour is only of any value if we need saving. But what does Jesus save us from? In a word He saves His people from eternal judgement and condemnation. If this does not mean much to us then plainly we will love and trust the message of Christmas to something else like a season of Good Cheer, because the essential message of Christmas is that our Saviour has come. Christmas underlines the reality of eternity and of the righteous judgement of God, from which we need to be saved. After all, there are only two groups of people in the world, sinners and forgiven sinners. You may think there is a third group of people who are not sinners and therefore not needing a Saviour, but how many besides yourself would you be inclined to place in this third group of not being sinners. There are in fact only two groups, sinners and forgiven sinners. Christ came to transfer us from the first group to the second. He did so by identifying Himself with us sinners, bearing our penalty on the cross and overcoming it so as to rise triumphant from the grave. The Christian message which Jesus Himself gave to His disciples was that forgiveness of sins should be preached in His

name, and all who follow Him are forgiven through His death. That is what the Christmas message is, a message of peace, peace between us and God through forgiveness. When our conscience nags us that we are really guilty in this matter or in that, then the knowledge of God's forgiveness in Jesus brings peace. And when Jesus as Saviour brings peace within ourselves, conflicting emotions are pacified through His presence in our hearts. We learn to love the thing which He commands and desire what He promises. This brings peace in ourselves. And, thirdly, there is peace between us and those around us. Because as we have been forgiven, we are able to forgive others and no longer bear grudges for desire to get our own back or indeed even to get justice for ourselves; but being at peace with God through forgiveness His Spirit enables us to be a peace with other people even though they may not be a peace with us. And the peace which Jesus brings lasts throughout eternity as we continue to stand in God's presence in fellowship with His our Saviour, and in fellowship and friendship with one another, all forgiven. No wonder then that the Christmas message is one of great joy because it is joy in this life and the next. The message of Christmas is that Jesus is Saviour bringing peace and joy to those who look for His salvation.

THE PROTESTANT FAITH
is broadcast every Sunday at
8.24 p.m. over Radio 2CH.

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obtained (\$5 per year posted) by writing
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19.12.76 51/76

Rebroadcast

20.12.81 50/81