

Box 80A

THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

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"The Protestant Faith"

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THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Today is the Sunday before Christmas. I do not know how it is with you but Christmas seems to come on quicker and quicker each year and here we are within a week of Christmas day. 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 "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 are in a predicament from which we need saving. For example, those hostages who were hijacked and landed in the aerodrome at Uganda were saved by the Israeli expedition. Since the hostages faced quite likely death, the paratroopers who rescued them were plainly saviours from death. But what does Jesus save us from? In a word He saves His people from eternal condemnation. If this does not mean much to us, then plainly the message of Christmas will have to be twisted to something like a season of Good Cheer because the essential message of Christmas is that our Saviour has come. Christmas should lead us to reflect on the reality of eternity and of the righteous judgment of God. 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 of people, sinners and forgiven sinners. Christ came to transfer us from the first group to the second. He did so by identifying Himself with sinners, bearing their 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 guilty in this matter or in that, then the knowledge of God's forgiveness in Jesus brings peace. And then Jesus as Saviour brings peace within ourselves, conflicting emotions are pacified through His presence in our hearts. We 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 or desire to get our own back or indeed to get justice for ourselves; but being at peace with God through forgiveness His Spirit enables us to be at peace with other people even though they may not be at peace with us. And the peace which Jesus brings lasts throughout eternity as we continue to stand in God's presence in fellowship with Him our Saviour, and in fellowship and friendship with one another. 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.

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