

Merry Christmas! With Understanding

Iverna Tompkins

As transcribed by Jane Vaughn

December is such a wonderful time of year! It's also a very important time, and one that causes the whole world to have to sit up and take some notice of the God-man, Jesus. That may answer for you why so much – I'll just say, "stuff" – has been happening – to you and in your home. The enemy does not like it when Jesus captures the focus of a few, let alone so many multitudes, and he is very active meddling in lives. That's why the pastor said, "No matter what has been happening, we can praise the Lord" – because he experiences that kind of victory.

I think the enemy is fearful during this season of the year, the time we acknowledge and recognize the birth of Christ. It's not that Jesus was actually born in December. Who cares what the exact date was? It just isn't that important. But this is the time we set aside to recognize the actual birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, who was prophesied to come and He came! (Is.7:14; Lk.1). It's that time on our calendars for us to remember and celebrate!

It's also time for us Christians to recognize that it's not about the pretty trees and all those other things we enjoy and that make everything so festive. Now, if you're so legalistic you can't have a Christmas tree – I'm so sorry for you ☺ because God made the material for the false trees – we simply copy what He created so beautifully in the natural. And He gave man the ability to put it altogether for our pleasure. I just feel sorry for people that are Christians and still are serving the Law. That's just a very heavy way to live.

Have I read the articles about how they used trees and decorated them to worship the foreign gods? Oh, absolutely I've read them – and burned them – because I have no false gods. So – I put up a Christmas tree and decorate it with all the decorations that I own. I put up signs and nativity figures as well. I LOVE this time of year! ☺ Good for you as you find your liberty in the Lord! (cf. Gal.5:1).

One of the things I fully enjoy at this time is the lights. We put up lights – lights – lights! Everywhere we can! In fact, I don't even have to turn on a lamp in my den anymore, because everything is so bright! ☺ Well, that's as it should be! And the reason it is "*as it should be*" – even though people in the world do not recognize why they decorate at Christmas time with lights – but we know that Jesus said: "*Ye – are – the light of the world*" (Mt.5:14). And so, we put lights on our house and all over the trees and so forth, and we recognize it as a beacon shining out there for the neighborhood. We display the Light.

Christians ought to walk through the Malls these days – instead of pulling out our credit cards and being sorry in January ☺ – we need to walk through the malls and simply enjoy it! Enjoy the brightness! And realize that one day, we, as God's jewels, are going to light up the whole earth! Absolutely! And when you walk into a store, you ought to have a big friendly smile on your face. ☺ Then when the clerks are harassed and busy and – crabby, growling: "NEXT!" ☺ you should just step up there and say, "I made it to the front of the line! It's good to see you! How *are* you? Are you doing okay today?" Just create a little joy in people's lives. Watch their faces lighten up when you bring your light!

I want us to read a passage from the Bible now – a very short piece of Scripture – and you'll think then I'm going to quit, but I'm not, because later, we're going to read a very long passage. ☺ First, however, I want to set the stage for declaring the greeting: "Merry Christmas!" Will you read with me, Luke, chapter 1, beginning at verse 26? I'm going to read from the Weymouth translation – which is very similar to the King James – or whatever one you have (text in italics below).

"Now, in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth."
I'm going to make four points that I hope will stick with you.

This opening sentence is interesting to me because of what it tells me: First, God knows exactly where we are. He knows what you're going through. He knows the situation at work, the situations at home, the situation in your health, and all the other troublesome situations in your life. He knows where you are. And when He wants to say something to you, He *can* find you! Isn't that good?

You don't have to worry about whether you are going to hear from God or not. You are going to hear when He gets ready to say something. And you had better hope that you're in a position that what He says will be a delight to you. ☺ Church in the back, did you get that? ☺

Remember in the Garden when the Lord said, "*Adam! Where are you?*" (Gen.3:9) Yes or no – do you remember that? How many of you think God didn't really know where they were? ☺ Why then, would He call: "Adam, where are you?" I believe it's because He wanted *Adam* to recognize where he was. Oh, Selah.

Sometimes the Lord just says to you, "Where are you?" And our response, so sadly, pathetically is: "Well... I'm just sort of... down. I'm this – I'm that..." And God says, "I thought so!" ☺ because He already knew that.

"*Adam, you're hiding from Me. Where are you?*" The pitiful response is almost whined. "Well, ummm, we were naked and didn't want to have our usual walk with You. Things just aren't the same any more, God. And, well, just – leave me alone, please. I'm not worthy to walk with You."

Have you ever been there? "Oh God, I'm not even going to ask You for a blessing. I'm just a... I'm not good." You see it, don't you? God knows where you are and you are never a shock to God! When you sin, He doesn't lament and exclaim, "Oh! I didn't know they'd do that!" ☺ What He wants is for us to be able to say, "I have sinned Lord, cleanse me." (1Jn.1:9) and then get on with our walk *with* Him (1Jn.1:7; Is.2:5; Rom.6:4; 8:1; 2Cor.5:7; Eph.4:1,17; Col.1:10; 1Th.2:12; 4:1; 1Jn.2:6).

Now, in the sixth month the Scripture says, He goes exactly, precisely, to the place where He is going to speak. "*To a maiden betrothed to a man by the name of Joseph, a descendant of David*" (Lk.1:27). In other words, God says that the prophetic word that the Messiah would come through the lineage of David is going to happen – here and now – just like the scripture said it would. That is what this is all about. "*The maiden's name was Mary*" (vs.27b).

He not only knows where you are, darling, but He knows who you are. You can fool me – I'm easily fooled. You can give me a false name. Judy over here could introduce herself to me for the first time and say, "Hello, my name is Denise." I wouldn't know any different. And we do the same thing without it being our name – when we sometimes *represent* ourselves as being something we are not. Hello? I mean, we can put on a "church face."

When it is useful, we put on a church face and we even speak a "church language." That is, we speak differently in our church environment than we do at home. There we might be cross with the children or upset with one another – in the house – at times. Well, maybe only one or two of you are that way. ☺ But then on that same morning, we head out for the church service, step inside the church building and say so nicely to everyone we see, "How are you? God bless you! It's so good to see you." Church faces.

I watch it happen every single service right here – in this church. What I observe is that we walk in, sit alone or with our same friends – often in exactly the same place week after week. We're not interested in anyone else – until the leader says, "Now, turn around and tell five people that you *love* them." Then suddenly, we're all declaring: "I love you! Love you! And you! And you! And you too!" (Is that five?) ☺ And we become totally different people from the way we came in just moments before this one. But, hear me, the Lord doesn't buy into those facades. He also doesn't believe it when we *sing* to Him – if it isn't true! Hello.

In fact, as much as we enjoy the singing together – and we do! You do, don't you? ☺ Well, I enjoy that time – most of the songs (well, some of them... ☺). But, we do enjoy that time of musical worship. It's wonderful – the corporate anointing for worship is simply wonderful. We sing, "I love You, Lord. I just came to tell You that I love You – more than anything!" When we sing that together and I hear the voices, my whole spirit leaps like Mary's must have in the presence of the heavenly messenger. It's thrilling! Do you understand that? Don't you feel that way? When we come together singing, offering to Him that united voice: "And I love You, more than anything." Powerful. It's truly a powerful experience.

But, let me tell you how the Lord listens to it. He knows the truth in each heart of those singing: "That's true. That's not true. That's true. That's *not* true. Are they *listening* to these words? The words are great – but I'm after their hearts." That's what it's all about when the Scripture says, "*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup... worthily...*" (1Cor.11:27-29).

We have to do the same thing in praise and worship! Our hearts must be pure before Him. And if you are in need of it, you can become cleansed – *instantly*. You can come to Him simply and honestly in any given moment and say, "Lord, I ask Your forgiveness for... I'm so sorry, I put other things before You." Then when you sing: "I love You, more than anything..." He'll say, "Oh, that *is* true!" I pray this is making sense to you.

The words of the songs we sing – I love them! – even when I don't know the melody or can't keep up with the beat. I do love those words – because they express, honestly and truly, a reality of what's inside me – from the inside out. We sing a chorus that goes something like that: "from the inside out..." I don't really know the song or the lyrics, but I sing along with it every time. ☺ And – I mean it! I agree with the words from deep within my heart! Because I want cleansing from the inside out – and I – LOVE Him! – from the inside out! Are you there with me?

So, don't you sit there and think complaining thoughts: "I don't know that song – so I'm not going to participate." Don't do that – because He is marking it down. Listen, He's saying to you, "*I miss your voice! The choir is incomplete without you! I want the praises of all My people – to resound from – TRUTH!*" He knows who you are.

Here's Mary so innocently at home – "*So Gabriel went into the house and said to her...*" Wait a minute. How would you feel if that happened to you? Be honest, now. You're just sitting there – and all of a sudden there's the angel: "*Joy be to you, O favored one! The Lord is with you.*" I dare to say that at least half of us do not believe that statement as the truth – that we are actually favored by the Lord. Oh – we sense His Presence – sometimes – particularly when we're gathered together in worship. But when things go *awry* (well, that's an antiquated word, isn't it? ☺). When things aren't so *good* – when there's a shadow over your life – and when God didn't do what you told Him to do – in Jesus' name, of course. ☺ I think you know what I'm saying.

When it's a very difficult time for you and someone says, "Aw, come on, the Lord is with you. He really loves you." Have you ever replied: "Oh, yeah, well if He is with me, how come this...?" I don't really feel so guilty about that attitude, sometimes, because I read it in the good Book – that others have felt the same way.

Remember? Gideon said, "Lord – if the Lord is with me, where are all the miracles?" That's in Judges, chapter 6 – you read it. Gideon just dared to say it aloud to the Lord. And many times, David in the psalms cries out something so similar to that. But negative situations in our lives do not change the *fact* that the Lord – *is* – with us.

The Word came and spoke specifically, to a specific individual, in a specific place – all of which fulfilled specific prophecies from the Old Testament. That's a "WOW!" WOW! That 4000 years before this

actually happened, it could be prophesied (cf.Gen.3:14,15) – that in this very town, this was going to happen (cf. Mic.5:2).

This “Advent Season” ought to be the most exciting moment of our lives because it gives us reason to testify! We have a reason to say to people: “It isn’t a matter of ‘if you just really believe in whatever god.’” Or, “If that’s your god, I won’t attack that.” Oh, yes, I will attack it! “Here’s the truth: **there’s only one God. There’s only one true God!** And we have proof of Him, as was prophesied of old and fulfilled specifically.”

God knows where you are – and secondly, He knows who you are.

Then Gabriel goes into the house and says to Mary: “*You’re highly favored and the Lord is with you.*” This is still from the Weymouth translation: “*And she was greatly agitated at his words and wondered at what this greeting meant.*” Now some people say she was just a little troubled or maybe startled – but this word is /diatarasso/ in the Greek and it literally means “to agitate greatly; to trouble greatly.” Mary was up-set! I wonder if she might not have said something like: “How did you get in here?!”

Let’s be real now. When the Lord invades your space with a heavenly being – that is startling! And yet, we pray for it almost daily, don’t we? “Send Your glory, Lord.” “Oh, Thy Kingdom come, here on earth.” “Lord, reveal to me...” “Let heaven invade earth!” All of those are wonderful prayers!

But if you looked up from your routine – cooking or cleaning or mowing the lawn – and the angel suddenly was there and spoke to you, “*The Lord is with you...*” Do you really think you’d just accept that as the norm? “How do you know? Who are you? Get out! Get out of here!” ☺ Unless we’re walking close to Him, we do not recognize the Divine Presence!

You are going to be surprised when the time comes that He is with you in eternity, fellowshiping, and He says to you, “Do you remember that time...? *I was there.* Do you remember that time when you...? I was *there* too. And do you remember...?” You see, truly He never leaves us (Heb.13:5). He’s there with you when you consider your day and make plans to do this or that.

We tend to think He’s only there with us when we’re on our knees consciously praying, “Father, in the name of Jesus...” Jesus said, “I want you to pray (Lk.11:2ff;Mt.6:6ff) – and you should pray – but ‘Lo, I am with you – always’” (Mt.28:20). All the time – day or night, rain or shine, in hard times or easy – He is always there.

Christians today do not readily recognize the Presence of God within because they do not really recognize that they are – sons of God! (Jn.1:12; 1Jn.5:1;1Jn.3:1). This is a powerful word if you can grasp it. We (believers) have been birthed into Jesus Christ and given the absolute right to come before the throne of a holy Almighty God – fearlessly!! – so that we may obtain more mercy and more grace than we’ve ever had before! (Heb.4:16). But His Presence – that Holy Presence – must be recognized.

Mary was “*greatly agitated.*” I’ve watched people walk out of a church service when certain things occurred that they didn’t understand – supernatural things. Now, I’m not talking about “woo-woo.” ☺ When some people think they sense the anointing of God they often do “woo-woo” things. You know – whooping and gyrating and... whatever. And that is plainly disgusting to everyone – except, of course, to themselves. They think they’re “*responding.*”

But when the true Spirit of the Lord manifests – let me tell you – you will not be upset – if you’re walking in the Light! You will be thrilled! We are today on the verge of those kinds of things occurring – regularly. I’m telling you that there *is* an open heaven over this place (and many others)! We have been praying and seeking God for it and He’s about to pull the heavens back and demonstrate some things we’ve never seen before! So – it’s one thing to be frightened in the moment. It’s another thing to listen – listen to what the Spirit *says* to us.

We have, I believe, one of the finest preachers in the land today – prophetic – cutting edge – insightful – and delightful! That’s why I’m here in this church. It’s because of his preaching. I love it! It *feeds* me when I hear it and I sense the Presence of the Lord. When I sense the Presence of the Lord, I tune my ear to what He is saying and I take every *message* that comes from our Pastor *very personally*. Then I search my heart. In fact, I think I could get saved just about every Sunday morning – all over again. ☺ No, not really. But I search my heart to say, “Lord, what are You saying to *me*?” I have lifted sick hands and said, “I’m healed!” I mean – we have to do what the Lord tells us to do.

And the angel said, “*You are very blessed, Lady – because the Presence of the Lord is with you!*” Now, Mary looks at the whole experience. First, there is *fright* – she’s agitated, upset. The second thing is *awareness* as she listens. And here’s what she hears: “*You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you’re to call His name, Jesus. He will be great*” (Lk.1:32a). That’s the part we lose – that last sentence.

It’s not about you and it’s not about me and it’s not about this Pastor or our wonderful church staff or these great musicians. It’s not about us! **It’s about Him!** He is the reason for the season! “*He will be great and He will be called ‘the Son of the Most High.’ And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His forefather David. And He will be King over the House of Jacob for the ages and of His Kingdom will be no end*” (Lk.1:32,33).

What a word to a young woman! A virgin. “*You’re going to get pregnant – by the Spirit – it’s gonna be a boy. You’re going to call His name Jesus – and here’s what He’s going to do: He’s going to rule and reign and be great!*” How would you feel? About like you do when you get a prophetic word through one of our prophets here. “Oh, the Lord is going to use you mightily! There’s going to come a day of opening of doors...” Thrilling and a little scary all at once because of the awesome responsibility that accompanies that kind of ministry call..

We receive or hear those prophetic words and then we think them through with questions and no small amount of doubt. “Oh, sure! Right. That’s me.” ☺ I think that’s a little of how Mary responded. She probably said, “Uh, can I just get a little information here? How you gonna do this? I mean, I’ve never been with a man, and you’re telling me that I’m going to get pregnant and ... and ...” And the answer to that “how” question (and yours) is: “*The Holy Spirit will overshadow you*” (vs.35).

Now, until the Holy Spirit overshadows you, you will not become impregnated. Not as long as you have to be seen! It’s not about you! Have you ever seen a singing group where one of the singers just can’t tolerate it being *a group*, and as they’re all singing together that one steps forward? – all the time? You know what I’m saying. That’s overshadowing the others. It’s like: “Watch me. I’m the *one* to see.” Even though it’s a whole group thing?

That’s the way we sometimes are with the Lord.

We don’t become impregnated because it’s all about us. We don’t want to be *overshadowed*. When the Holy Spirit overshadows you, no one really knows your name. Are you there? When the Holy Spirit overshadows us – He is the One! He came to magnify Jesus (Jn.16:13,14). Then it’s all about Jesus and people will think and say: “I saw Jesus in her! I *saw* Jesus... Oh! The *Lord* spoke today!”

And that’s the way it has to be in order for us to be impregnated with a desire, or a seed, if you will. A seed that will grow within us: that we long to bring forth – the Son of God!

Does that frustrate you? That terminology? Please, don’t let it. This church is *pregnant*. This church absolutely is pregnant – with vision. We have a pastor who imparts it constantly. Vision – vision – vision. Not just vision for growth. Thank God, yes, for that too. People will come – but vision that we will know Him! Another way to say it is that we will bring forth Christ!

Here in this place, and everywhere we go – we are pregnant! Let me remind you that it affects everything when you're pregnant. Your appetite changes – all of a sudden, you don't want to eat the same thing you used to eat. And you can't get enough – you just keep eating. Hello?

And it affects your walk! The more pregnant you become, you just walk differently. ☺ Everything is different. Being pregnant is not *normally* comfortable. That's why you're feeling what you're feeling in your spirit. Am I making sense to you – at all? We are pregnant! The Body of Christ – we're expecting! And we don't even know *what* we're expecting.

Now Mary gets all the answers: it's going to be a boy – you're going to call His name Jesus – and this thing is from the Holy Spirit and... “Fine!” (we say!). “I don't know what it'll look like. I don't know how it's going to *happen* – I don't know what my part in it is.”

Your part in it is simply this: just breathe in and out ☺ and the Holy Spirit will do all the rest. Honey, if God speaks a word to you, He plans to fulfill it – in your life. The only thing that will stop it is for you to say “No,” and that would be so foolish. So we say, “*Be it unto me as Thou hast spoken*” (Lk.1:38).

That's what Mary said. “I don't have a clue what you're talking about – I don't know anything – I don't know what I'm to do – but, ‘*Be it unto me.*’” Or what we would say in a kind of careless vernacular is, “Hey! Go for it!” ☺

That's what the Lord wants from us: “Go for it, Lord! Whatever it takes in my life. Whatever it takes – so that I can have a fulfillment of the things You have spoken to me – I say, ‘Yes!’” And the answer to that is: He will be great!

He knows *where* you are. He knows *who* you are – and thirdly, He knows what He's going to do in your life. That's why our praise time ought to be – *incredible!*

That should be message enough to stir you through the “Merry Christmas” season. But it would be a little unfair if I didn't tell you that this Child – and this Child **is** coming – is far bigger than to compel Joseph to obey without understanding. Hello?

“*Fear not to take Mary. She's pregnant, but it's by our Spirit – by the Spirit of the Lord*” (Mt.1:20f). I can just hear Joseph: “Oh, yeah, well, I know everyone's going to believe that!” ☺ Come on – you have to think of these things. ☺ These weren't supernatural people. They were just ordinary people. He was just a guy! A nice guy – and he was going to try to cover it up for her (cf.Mt.1:19). But the angel came in a dream and said, “It's okay, Joseph, I'm in charge” (Mt.1:20.21).

I want to say that same thing to you. I want you to hear it clearly. “It's okay, God's in charge.” I don't care what is going on in your life – it's okay.

But this Child coming... The reason for the angelic visitation was far more than simply to get a young maiden to say, “*Oh! Be it unto me as Thou hast spoken!*” Far more than just to say to a group of shepherds... “Rejoice!” Did you know shepherds were the lowliest of people then, socially speaking. In their culture at that time, they were not at all acceptable – yet *they* are the first ones who received the message of Jesus' birth from Almighty God Himself (Lk.2:8ff). Is that not exciting? That's for free, but still an important point.

This is the story of a little maiden and a guy that's engaged to a gal. He's got everything going for him and then suddenly – it looks crazy – and he has to do it anyway. “Oh, man! Marry her but don't touch her. Oh, sure! This is a real fun walk!” ☺ Think it through in their reality.

The “walk” isn’t always a real smooth thing. We don’t always see the details ahead of time. We don’t always understand God’s ways of doing things or His ultimate purposes. We don’t always know how our little part fits into the whole.

But, what’s the *BIG PICTURE* – of why Jesus came? **To reconcile the world to Himself!** (cf. Eph.2:11-18). For both Jew and Gentile – He came to become that *bridge* between God and man (1Tim.2:3-6; Heb.9:11-15). He came to be the way of a cross-over – for “*as many as would receive Him, to them He would give POWER to become the sons of God!*” (Jn.1:12)

We’re going to read a large portion of Romans 8. In fact, it is so worth our while to read the whole chapter from Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome. *Don’t skip through this.* Read with your minds in tune and your hearts receptive to God’s personal revelation to you. Think about what you’re reading and rejoice in the fact that this passage includes you! It’s specifically for you in your specific place in life – today.

Romans, chapter 8, from The Message Paraphrase:

1 With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ’s being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. **2** A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death. **3** God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn’t deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that. **4** And now what the law code asked for but we couldn’t deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us. **5** Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God’s action in them find that God’s Spirit is in them - living and breathing God! **6** Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. **7** Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. **8** And God isn’t pleased at being ignored. **9** But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won’t know what we’re talking about.

10 But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells - even though you still experience all the limitations of sin - you yourself experience life on God’s terms. **11** It stands to reason, doesn’t it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he’ll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ’s! **12** So don’t you see that we don’t owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. **13** There’s nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. **14** God’s Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go! **15** This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It’s adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike “What’s next, Papa?” **16** God’s Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children.

17 And we know we are going to get what’s coming to us - an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we’re certainly going to go through the good times with him! **18** That’s why I don’t think there’s any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. **19** The created world itself can hardly wait for what’s coming next. **20** Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in **21** until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens. **22** All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it’s not only around us; it’s within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We’re also feeling the birth pangs. **23** These sterile and barren

bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. **24** That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. **25** But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

26 Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. **27** He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. **28** That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

29 God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. **30** After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

31 So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? **32** If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? **33** And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? **34** Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us - who was raised to life for us! - is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. **35** Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture: **36** They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one. **37** None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. **38** I'm absolutely convinced that nothing - nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, **39** high or low, thinkable or unthinkable - absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

Oh, the power of the Word of God!

Let me put all of this in a nutshell and we'll close.

All of earth *groans*, the King James says (Rom.8:19,22,23). Yes, the earth *is* groaning today – waiting “*for the manifestation of the sons of God*” (vs.19). Why? What does that mean?

I think –if only we would remember that earth was here in that moment – in that great Garden of Eden – only then can we grasp a little portion of the incredible miracle of this. Earth was *perfect*. Earth was *beautiful*! There was not one negative to destroy anything God created on the earth. All of the rivers were clean – no debris – no pollutants. The oceans were gorgeous, rolling with great power and crystal clear waters! The trees were strong and tall and majestic. I mean – it had to be the most glorious thing we can possibly imagine. All of Creation. Earth remembers it the way it was at creation.

The stars were created by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Gen.1:16; Col.1:16; Rev.4:11) and He threw them into space and gave each one of them a name, the Bible Says (Ps.147:4; Isa.40:26). So, when you go outside and look up to the night sky and it's clear and you can see a multitude of stars – just look up there and say, “I wonder what that one's name is... and that one... and...” Did you know they all have names?

God *placed* the moon and the sun (Gen.1:16,17; Ps.8:3). Everything He created... everything God created was perfect! Earth now *groans* for a return of that perfection: “Oh, that we could be beautiful again! Oh, that we could be filled with the glory of our Creator!” Listen to them talk to one another, if you can. It will happen – that perfection will be restored one day... when the sons of God take over! When we learn to manifest the power and authority of God.

You see – this thing is bigger than just: “Hail, Mary.” It’s bigger than what we’ve looked at. *He* – set a pattern of what a “son of God” was to be – to look like – to act like – and put His Spirit in – and say, “You are holy! You are different than all the rest! And now I have a family! You’re my kids!” And God took Jesus back up and said to us, “You’ve got your pattern (Jn.13:15; 1Pet.2:21). And I’ll send the very same Spirit to you! (Jn.14:16-21; Rom.8:11) Now, walk as sons of God!” (cf. Rom.6:4; 8:1; 2Cor.5:7; Eph.2:10; 4:1; 5:15; Col.1:10; 1Thes.2:12; 1Jn.1:7; 2:6)

There’s going to be a generation who will get this! Yes, there surely is! When that happens... and I would be thrilled if it could be this generation, because I’m still here. ☺ But when that happens – **when that generation really believes what they are and who they are** – and **when they begin to walk in the Light and in the fullness** of all that God has planned – earth is going to be restored. Because the Lord is going to return! And when He returns – Hallelujah! – everything returns back to perfection! The beauty of all that has ever been will return.

So – I’m saying this: **the earth is pregnant – and so are you!** No wonder you’re miserable at times and excited at other times. ☺ We need to embrace the pregnancy. Are you there? We need to know: “Oh, okay – no wonder this happened to me today. It’s a birth pang! I’ve gotta bring it forth!” (And men – you have to learn it too! If we’re “sons” – you’re the Bride! ☺)

“I have to bring this thing forth! **I’m going to live in such a way, that I bring forth Christ!** And everyone who knows me will see only Him! ‘*He shall be great!*’ (Lk.1:32) ‘*He shall save His people from their sins!*’” (Mt.1:21). Your whole testimony will change, my Friends. Instead of it being all about you... Christ will be given His rightful place. “*He shall be great!*”

Instead of it being like this – “If you serve the Lord, you’ve gotta give up this and you’ve gotta quit that and quit this...” Why do you throw the law at people? What Jesus came to do was to say, “You go out and set captives free! (cf.Lk.4:18) Tell them that I’ve paid the price! (Isa.53:10-12; Mt.20:28; 2Cor.5:21; Tit.2:14; 1Pet.1:18,19). And they can be free of their sin! And they can just be free! (Jn.8:32). They can live in a world of victory and peace and joy! (Rom.14:17; 8:615:13). Not just to survive and get through this trial – but to thrive in Him! (Rom.8:1,2,5-9).

We have a testimony! And I want you to *know it* when you go out tonight and when you go out tomorrow and when you say, “Merry Christmas!” Let’s know what that means! Jesus is come to save us and *He shall be great!*