

CHRISTMAS—Responding to God’s Great Invitations!

- I. **Responding to God’s invitation for salvation and “Immanuel” (Matt. 1:18-23).**
 - A. The name “Jesus” is the Greek form of “Joshua,” which means “The Lord saves” (Matthew 1:21). “Immanuel” means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23).
 - B. The fate of every human being revolves around being forgiven and forgiving.
 - 1. Eternal blessing of being forgiven (Romans 6:23)
 - 2. Destructive consequence of not forgiving others (Matthew 18:21-35)

- II. **An invitation to be filled with the very Presence of God (Luke 1:26-38).**
 - A. The angel told Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35).
 - B. Mary foreshadowed the experience of all believers to come. God invites everyone to be born again by the Spirit, to be baptized (filled with the Holy Spirit), and to minister to others in the power of the Spirit (John 3:3-8; Acts 1:4-8; 2:38; 5:12-16).
 - C. Mary opened the door to all of this because she said “Yes!” in faith (Luke 1:34-38).
Could it be that every person has a book of promises and destiny waiting to be fulfilled by simply saying “Yes!” in faith to God’s invitations?

- III. **We cannot let pain and disappointment get in the way of the miracles God wants to do in our lives.**
 - A. Personal disappointment can cause our hearts to be so burdened that we become blind to invitations God is giving us. Zechariah’s heart was burdened and unbelieving when he received his Christmas invitation (Luke 1:11-20). He caught on later (Luke 1:57-67).
 - B. Joseph’s heart stayed soft long enough to let God’s plan unfold. He became a mighty man of dreams and visions, able to hear God’s voice and direction (Matthew 1:18-21, 24-25; 2:13, 19-23).
 - C. In contrast, when Jesus began to fulfill His ministry to Israel, the people were in pain and strangely hardened to hearing God’s voice (Matthew 13:13-17; Luke 19:41-44).

- IV. **The Christmas story helps us understand that our hearts need to be soft and flexible to flow in His miracle culture.**
 - A. “God...shows favor to the humble” (James 4:6). (E.g., a stable, shepherds, a young girl who believed the most incredible news ever heard—Luke 1:38)
 - B. God responds to the hungry of heart (E.g., Magi—Matthew 2:1-12; Simeon and Anna—Luke 2:25-38).
 - C. God responds to anyone whose heart is open to Him—shepherds, Magi, tax-collectors, sinners (Matt. 11:18-19), the poor, crippled, or blind (Luke 14:21-24).

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December 24, 2023*