



Christmas

THE NEW SHOFAR

Christmas gift suggestions: To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect. Oren Arnold

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God speaks in and through everything, everyone

This is Truth: God has never stopped revealing himself to us. That divine voice has been speaking to his people throughout history, revealing Himself to us. We all know the Bible, the wonderful stories of what God has been doing. God wants us to know Him, to love Him, to worship Him. God reveals Himself through His creation, through the sunrise and sunset, through the sun, moon and stars, speaking constantly so that we know Him.

God spoke to Moses in the burning bush. He spoke to the Israelites from the smoke and fire on the mountain. He spoke to Elijah in a still, small voice, to Isaiah in a vision in the temple. God spoke to Hosea through his family circumstances and to Amos in a basket of summer fruit. He spoke to Jeremiah through a potter's clay and to Joseph through dreams. God even spoke His message through a donkey! But wait! There is more! God has been speaking His message through visions and dreams, through angels, through Urim and Thummim, through symbols, natural events, and many other means. He could reveal Himself in Ur of the Chaldees, in Haran, or Canaan or Egypt or even in the despicable Babylon! There is no lack of variety for God's revelation! There is no set way for God to speak, no blueprint for God to follow. God does all things in His own amazing way.

God is only revealed when people are searching

Immediately before the coming of Christ, there had been 400 years of silence. Since the prophet Malachi last uttered his messages from God (he wrote around 432 and 425 B.C.), there had been no prophets in Israel until John the Baptist arrived. God's revelations in the Old Testament were fragmentary, occasional, and aimed at addressing God's people in specific times of need. No single revelation contained the whole truth. They were fragmentary, providing mere glimpses into the saving intent of the Almighty.

God had been speaking, but people were not getting the message. They did not understand His heart. They didn't understand God's plan. Too many claimed to be speaking for God but they only misrepresented Him to others. There was never a shortage of false prophets. Confusion, not understanding, resulted.

God speaks through Christ

Now, at last, God sent His Son to bring His message to us! He brought a message and was Himself *The Message*. In Jesus Christ, God revealed Himself directly to us. He is the living, divine Son of God, the Saviour promised from the time of Abraham.

Jesus came to reveal God, to make Him known to us in ways that we can understand. John's Gospel describes Jesus as the Word becoming flesh, God making a home among us. If we want to know what God is like, look to Jesus! When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus replied, *Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father* (**John 14:9**). Jesus declares in **John 10:30** *the Father and I are one*. That is our Christmas message.

God speaks to transform, revitalise

The miracle of the message is not just in the fact that God speaks to us today through His Son, but that the message has the power to transform our lives. Christmas is the celebration of the greatest message ever proclaimed. God is with us – *Immanuel*. God came to us so that we could draw near to Him. **1 Timothy 2:6** says *Jesus gave His life as a ransom for all*. The fantastic miracle of the message is that God in Christ is reconciling the world to Himself. Jesus came so that God could reveal Himself and His plan to us in a way that we could understand. Jesus came to proclaim God's message that we can be set free from sin's hold on our lives.

Why would God bother? Because He wanted us to experience His great love for us. The Almighty wanted us to know that He created us for a reason, that we are here so that we might know Him, love Him and serve Him. He came to proclaim the message that we have been set free from all those things that limit and restrict us.

Conclusion

We live in a world that is constantly bombarded by messages, most of them petty, some of them damaging and none of them lifegiving. But in the midst of all of this noise, there is another message: *nothing whatsoever can ever separate you from my love* Jesus says, *trust in Me with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge me, and I will direct your paths*. Amid life's betrayals and bitter messages, God whispers, *Forgive those who mistreat you*. Amid life's messages of joy and celebration, He shouts, *Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad!*

The miracle of Christmas is the miracle of its message - **God loves you and God loves me!** That is the life-changing, life-enriching message from God. Believe this revelation from God that is proclaimed to us at Christmas and life will never be the same again. Not just hear it with our ears, or sing it in our hymns. We do that every Christmas. “Believe” here means nothing less than living out the truth that God has made his home among us and that God continues to live with us. .

Yes, the true meaning of Christmas is love. The real Christmas is the story of God's becoming a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. Why did God do such a thing? Because He loves us! Why was Christmas necessary? Because we needed a Savior! Why does God love us so much? Because He is love itself (1 John 4:8). Why do we celebrate Christmas each year? Out of gratitude for what God did for us, to do to others what God has never stopped doing to us.