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JESUS CHRIST - OUR REDEEMER REVEALED

Anticipation - over! Promises - realized! The hope, peace, joy, and love of the season of Advent now culminates with the birth of Jesus at Christmas. He's here! So ends the waiting, and so begins the joyous celebration of His life - now, God with us! - as the great pageant of history climaxes in Jesus Christ.

It had been 400 years since a prophet spoke a word from the Lord. But God had promised. And suddenly, good news! "**For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord**" Luke 2:10. These titles reveal the uniqueness of Jesus in His deity and humanity, fully God and fully man.

The prophesied One. Promised in extraordinary ways. Conceived in miraculous means. Announced with phenomenal message. Now, born in exceptional circumstances. Who is He? As you peel back the layers of prophecy and history - like opening the windows on your Advent calendar each day - the picture painted in Scripture becomes crystal clear. *In five words: Creator, Cradle, Cross, Crown, Come.*

Jesus Christ is your divine **CREATOR** who made you in His own image - now come to a **CRADLE** in human flesh to live a perfect life - to go to the **CROSS** to redeem you, pay for your sins, be resurrected to life - to gain the **CROWN** of eternal life, so that all who **COME** to Him, believing and receiving Him as Lord and Savior, are re-created, re-born and adopted as God's children. His new life living through theirs.

No ordinary child. Wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. Announced to simple shepherds at Bethlehem, not kings and priests in Jerusalem. Things which speak of profound purpose. This child in the cradle is destined for a cross. The swaddling cloths will become grave clothes. The stone feed trough will become a tomb. The adoring visitors will become a crowd crying "Crucify Him!" He will be spat upon, whipped, beaten, and put to death. But the grave will not hold Him. He lived, He died, and He lives!

We prefer the pageantry of Christmas, not the reality. We like to dwell on romantic notions of candles and nativity scenes. We don't want to think about how we've sinned - so that we need a Redeemer. Mostly, we don't want to think about this child in a cradle going to the cross. That's gross, you say?

But to ignore the cross of Christ is like admiring the gift without opening it. That's like little kids playing with the box instead of the present inside. But adults do that too. Statistics show about 80% of shoppers buy a gift card at Christmas - amounting to over 100 billion dollars a year. Trouble is, people aren't playing their cards right, since about one-fourth don't get redeemed that next year.

Are you like that with God's gift? Are you just putting up with Christ in Christmas? Attending services to please someone else? Enjoying the kids and the candles? But not the Christ-child? Not the Redeemer. Are you just admiring the wrapping of God's gift? Are you just playing with the box?

Or have you truly received His gift - so that Jesus has changed your life - making all things new for you! Because the good news about Christmas is five words - our **CREATOR** came in a **CRADLE** to go to the **CROSS** to gain the **CROWN** of life so that all who **COME** to Him can receive His resurrection life.

Baby Jesus grew up and fulfilled God's purpose for His life. He's inviting you to fulfill God's purpose for yours. Because at the end of the year you think about your life and all you've experienced. **And when you realize who Jesus IS and why He has come, you realize that your real life isn't what happens TO you - it's what happens FOR you.** It's all happened so that you will know that Jesus is real and He has come to take all your griefs and sorrows - to give you back eternal joy unspeakable.

John 1 says Jesus is the life, and His life is the light of mankind. The darkness cannot overcome the light and life of Christ. He keeps all His promises. And all this new life in Christ begins by humbly receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and then living for Him - His life through yours, His power through you.

And like the angels and shepherds, you go out and tell everyone about Him. Because **HE IS** the good news. Jesus is the reason for the season - so that YOU can be re-born from above, receive forgiveness of your sins, new power and purpose for your life, and the crown of eternal life that Jesus gives.

When you truly receive God's gift of Jesus, you WILL have a Merry Christmas - and a Happy New Year!