

“The Creator is with us.”

When I was a kid, I was always **super excited** for Christmas. That was because Christmas for me was about getting **gifts**—more specifically getting the gifts I **wanted** and had put on a **list**. I would spend literally months and hour after hour building my Christmas list. I would look through magazines and ads for hours desiring, coveting, and longing for the toys I did not have, but really, **really** wanted. There was one Christmas in particular where I was set on getting a particular Nintendo video game. My hopes were set on this video game. I wanted it—I **needed** it. When it came time to open the presents, I opened each one hoping, thinking, praying that it would be **that** video game. After each present I was crushed, because I did not get that video game. That game was what I wanted—I had coveted it for months and months, daydreaming about playing it—how could I not get it?? Everything else became irrelevant to me—I didn’t care what other gifts I got, I was ungrateful and upset because I did not get the specific gift that I wanted and desired.

The desires of our flesh often guide us and control us, dominating our existence. Our desires easily **blind** us as well. We become laser focused on what we **want** and **desire** to the exclusion of all else. We lose perspective and often cannot see anything else going on around us. This is what my desires around Christmas time often did to me as a kid. I was unable to truly understand the gift the Creator was giving me at Christmas because of the **materialistic** gifts I was desiring and focused on. My flesh was so focused on materially gratifying itself that my spirit was blinded to the truth. As Jesus said, ***“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”***

At Christmas, the Creator is doing something incredible and amazing. But it is not what we are expecting, desiring, or looking for. It has nothing to do with Black Friday, Santa Claus, shopping, toys, electronics, clothes, or gadgets. It has nothing to do with **earthly** and **fleshly** treasures that rot, rust, decay, and get stolen.

When the people of Israel were desiring the Messiah—the Christ—they were doing so according to their **flesh**. They wanted **fleshly blessings**—they wanted a Messiah who would make them rich, powerful, and successful. They wanted a Messiah who would give them what they **wanted** and fulfill their **desires**. But when Jesus came, he was **not** the Messiah that the people wanted. He was not the kind of “gift” they were looking for. They had their hopes and expectations set on the **flesh**—on a Messiah who would wield the **physical** sword and make their nation **materially** great again. But Jesus was lowly and outcast, and was coming to judge everything they had built—he was going to flip the world, as they knew it, on its head. He was coming with a **spiritual** sword to chop down the rotten tree of their existence so that the Creator could regrow what he desired in its place. Jesus was coming to give them **spiritual blessings**. Jesus did not **preach** the message they wanted. Jesus did not **do** what they wanted. Jesus was **not** what they wanted.

But Jesus was exactly what they **needed**. They needed the Creator and his loving judgment. Jesus was the presence of the Lord, he was the Creator **among** them, **with** them, and **for** them. Everything they built was going to be destroyed. Jerusalem and its temple would burn. Their whole nation would be crushed and wiped off the face of the earth. But the Creator would be **with** them. He would take them by the hand and lead them through the destruction, through death and into resurrection life.

This Christmas, we are not going to get what we **want**, we are not going to get **fleshly blessings**, but the Creator is going to be **with us**. If we have the eyes to see, we will see that he is giving us exactly what we **need**. We will be judged and the Creator will be with us. We will lose everything we have and the Creator will be with us. We will die and the Creator will be with us. The Creator is coming through his Spirit and with fire. ***“The Creator is with us.”*** This is **terrifying** because the Lord is a consuming fire, but it is **joyous** because the Lord is mercy, compassion, and love.

So what are you looking for this Christmas? What are you longing for and seeking? Are you desiring the things and blessings of the **flesh**—material things which will fade, rot, and be destroyed? Or are you desiring the things and blessings of the **Spirit**—the love, judgment, and peace of the Creator in your life?

Regardless of what you want or what you are seeking, ***“the Creator is with us”*** — he has come among us in Christ Jesus. We may be blind and oblivious, but he is here among us, doing his work to save us. We can ignore him and fight him and make ourselves miserable chasing after the flesh—or we can repent and turn to the work of his Spirit with open hearts, being filled with his peace and joy while he works to save us amidst a very broken, hurting, and painful world.

“The Creator is with us.” This is the gift we all need. May we have hearts attuned to the Spirit and not the flesh, ready to receive him this day. Merry Christmas. ***“The Creator is with us.” Amen.***