

**“Hidden Christmas” – An Advent Bible Study**  
*on the Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ,*  
**Chapters 1 and 2**

Chapter One

“A Light Has Dawned”

**The Darkness of the World**

*Years ago, I read an ad in the **New York Times** that said, “The meaning of Christmas is that love will triumph and that we will be able to put together a world of unity and peace” In other words, we have the light within us, and so we are the ones who can dispel the darkness of the world. We can overcome poverty, injustice, violence, and evil. If we work together, we can create a “world of unity and peace.”*

**Is the prevailing opinion today – “If we work together, we can create a world of unity and peace”? Can this ever happen? Can we ever get close?**

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**The Realism of Christmas**

*Notice that it doesn’t say from the world a light has sprung, but upon the world a light has dawned. It has come from outside. There is light outside of this world, and Jesus has brought that light to save us; indeed, he is the Light (John 8:12)*

**Why does Keller place importance on the fact that the light has come from “outside”?**

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**The Meaning of Light**

*St. Augustine famously said, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee” (Confessions 1.1.1). Augustine believed that even when you seem to be enjoying something else, God is actual the source of your joy. The thing you love is from him and is lovely because it bears his signature. All joy is really found in God, and anything you do enjoy is derivative, because what you are really looking for is him, whether you know it or not.*

**Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?**

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**The Dawning of the Light**

*First of all, if Jesus Christ is really Mighty God and Everlasting Father, you can’t just **like** him. In the Bible the people who actually saw and heard Jesus never reacted indifferently or even mildly. Once they realized what he was claiming about himself, either they were scared of him or furious with him or they knelt down and worshipped him. But nobody simply liked him. Nobody said, “He’s too inspiring. He makes me want to live a better life.” If the baby born at Christmas is the Might God, then you must serve him completely.*

**What is it about Jesus that demands a response? Do you think it is possible to remain neutral?**

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**The Light of Grace**

*There has never been a gift offered that makes you swallow your pride to the depths that the gift of Jesus Christ requires us to do. Christmas means that we are so lost, so unable to save ourselves, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God himself could save us. That means you are not somebody who can pull yourself together and live a moral and good life.*

**If this is true, why do so many people believe that their salvation and acceptance by God is based on performance?**

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Chapter Two

“The Mothers of Jesus”

**The Gospel is Good News, Not Good Advice**

*But the Christian Gospel is different. The founders of the great religions say, in one way or another, "I am here to show you the way to spiritual reality. Do all this." That's advice. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, comes and says, "I am spiritual reality itself. You could never come up to me and therefore, I had to come down to you." That's news.*

**Why do you think Keller points out the difference between Good News and Good Advice? What difference does it make to how you view the Gospel?**

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**The Gospel Story Changes How We Read Other Stories**

*Put another way, even though the fairy tales aren't factually true, the truth of Jesus means all the stories we love are not escapism at all. In a sense, they (or the supernatural realities to which they point) will come true in him.*

**Think of your favorite "Once Upon a Time" stories – how do they find their origins in the story of Jesus?**

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**The Gospel Turns the World's Values Upside Down**

*There is not one then, not even the greatest human being, who does not need the grace of Jesus Christ. And there is no one, not even the worst human being, who can fail to receive the grace of Jesus Christ if there is repentance and faith.*

**If this statement is true, why is Christianity viewed to be so exclusive?**

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**God May Take His Time, But He Keeps His Word**

*God's grace virtually never operates on our time frame, on a schedule we consider reasonable. He does not follow our agendas or schedules. When Jesus spoke to the despairing father Jairus, whose daughter had just died, he said, "Believe" (Mark 5:36). He was saying "If you want to impose your time frame on me, you will never feel loved by me, and it will be your fault, because I do love you. I will fulfill my promises."*

**In what ways have you seen God's time frame not align with yours? How have you responded to his timing?**

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**The Gospel is Ultimate Rest**

*In Jesus you stop having to prove yourself because you know it doesn't really matter in the end whether you are a failure or a king. All you need is God's grace, and you can have it, in spite of your failures. After you know him, you want to live your life to please him; but you don't have to clean up your life in order to know him as Savior, and that brings rest inwardly.*

**What does "rest" that Keller writes about look like in your life? What letter grade would you give yourself when it comes to resting in God's grace?**

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All texts in *italics* are taken directly from the book Hidden Christmas written by Timothy Keller. Copyright 2016

**Class #1 - Saturday Nov 27, 2021 (1/2)**  
Class #3 - Saturday Dec 11, 2021 (5/6)

Class#2 - Saturday Dec 4, 2021 (3/4)  
Class #4 - Saturday Dec 18, 2021 (7/8)