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EXPOSITORY SERMON

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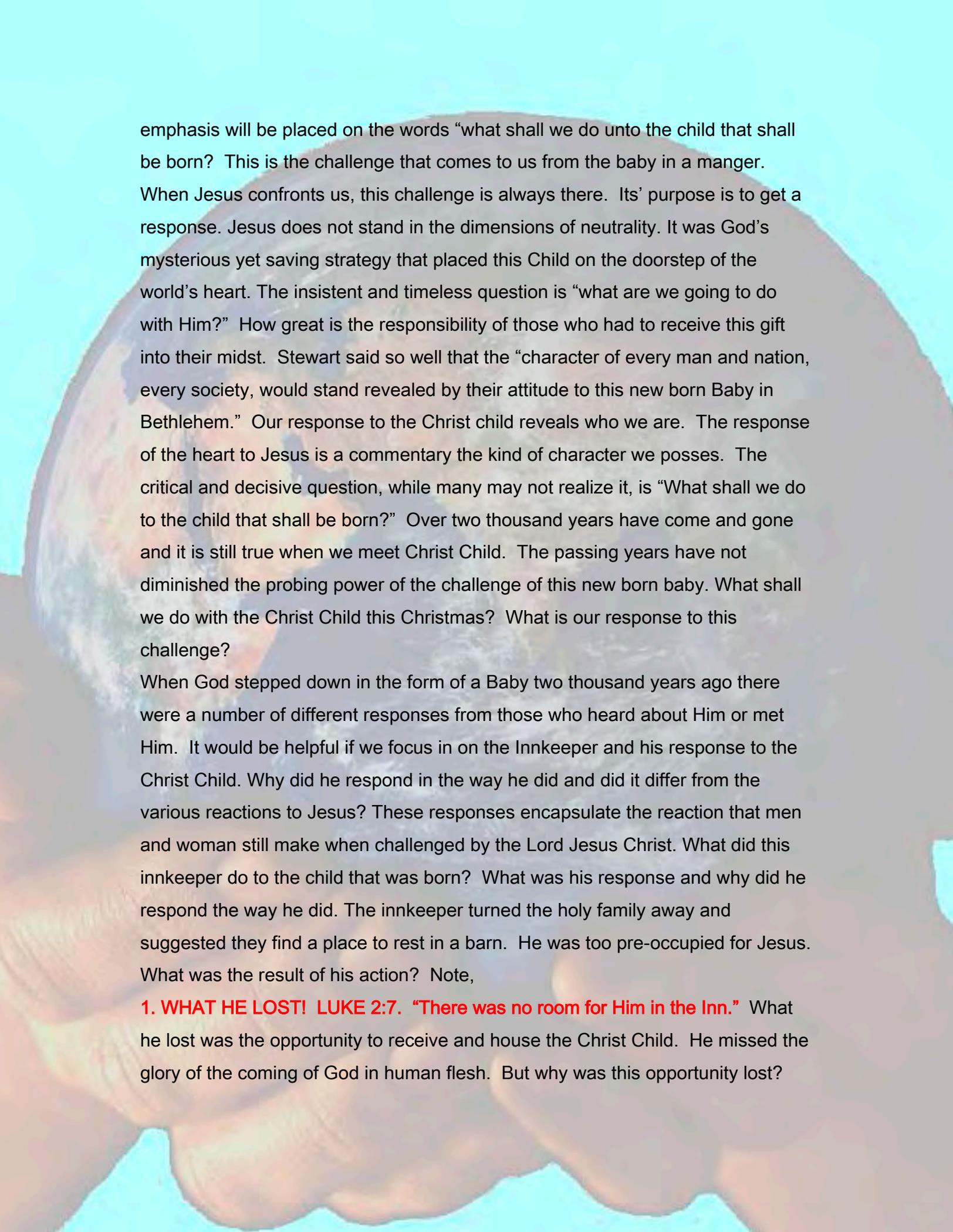
I am sending an additional expository sermon this Christmas season to remind ourselves of the greatest gift God ever gave to mankind. – His One and only Son. Let us unite our hearts in love, gratitude and praise to God for the incalculable sacrifice He made for our salvation. Let me remind you of the words of the angel to Mary – “The angel said to her ‘You will be with child and give birth to a son, you are to give the Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end. “ Luke 1:31-33. This is our hope and joy. I want to take this opportunity of wishing all of you a very merry Christmas and a blessed New Year. May God enrich your lives with His grace and love and use you in His service.

ADVENT – WHERE DOES GOD FIT IN?

Scripture Reading – Luke 2:1-11. Text- Luke 2:7. “.....There was no room for Him in the inn.”

Introduction

The central Christmas challenge is summed in a verse of scripture which is found in the book of Judges concerning the coming of a well known figure that lived during of the period of the judges. The angel of the Lord visited Manoah and his wife and he told them they would expect one who would eventually become a great leader and a deliverer of his people. He would break the power of the Philistines. These words refer to Samson who, as one has rightly points out, would be “the agent of a redeeming strategy.” James Stewart, who has a telling sermon on these words, pointed out that it is a daunting responsibility to be the parents of such child. Manoah, Samson’s father prayed “Teach us what we should do unto the child that shall be born.” It seems that in essence Manoah asked as prayed, “Would God give them a special measure of grace and guidance? Would He show them the way to take, and prepare them to receive aright this babe whose destiny would be so dramatic” ‘What shall we do unto the child that shall be born?’ Centuries later, the angel of the Lord returned to a young virgin. For God was now sending another Deliverer to his people, greater than Samson. He, too, would come as a Child. He, too, would redeem captive Israel. He, too, would fight and smash the Philistines: only His Philistines would not be a warring tribe...but the world, the flesh and the devil. The powers of darkness that corrupt and shackle human life with chains of slavery, the ruthless forces that rot man’s soul...” That was His fight. These pertinent words from the pen Dr James Stewart should not only serve to challenge us as it applies to the Babe in Bethlehem but also impress upon us the vital and redemptive mission of Jesus in our world. God stepped on to our planet to save us from our sins. The question that confronts us in this advent season is “what should we do to the child that is born in Bethlehem of Judea?” Its’ is relevance as it applies to the coming of the Christ child the Lord Jesus Christ is abundantly clear. The



emphasis will be placed on the words “what shall we do unto the child that shall be born? This is the challenge that comes to us from the baby in a manger. When Jesus confronts us, this challenge is always there. Its’ purpose is to get a response. Jesus does not stand in the dimensions of neutrality. It was God’s mysterious yet saving strategy that placed this Child on the doorstep of the world’s heart. The insistent and timeless question is “what are we going to do with Him?” How great is the responsibility of those who had to receive this gift into their midst. Stewart said so well that the “character of every man and nation, every society, would stand revealed by their attitude to this new born Baby in Bethlehem.” Our response to the Christ child reveals who we are. The response of the heart to Jesus is a commentary the kind of character we possess. The critical and decisive question, while many may not realize it, is “What shall we do to the child that shall be born?” Over two thousand years have come and gone and it is still true when we meet Christ Child. The passing years have not diminished the probing power of the challenge of this new born baby. What shall we do with the Christ Child this Christmas? What is our response to this challenge?

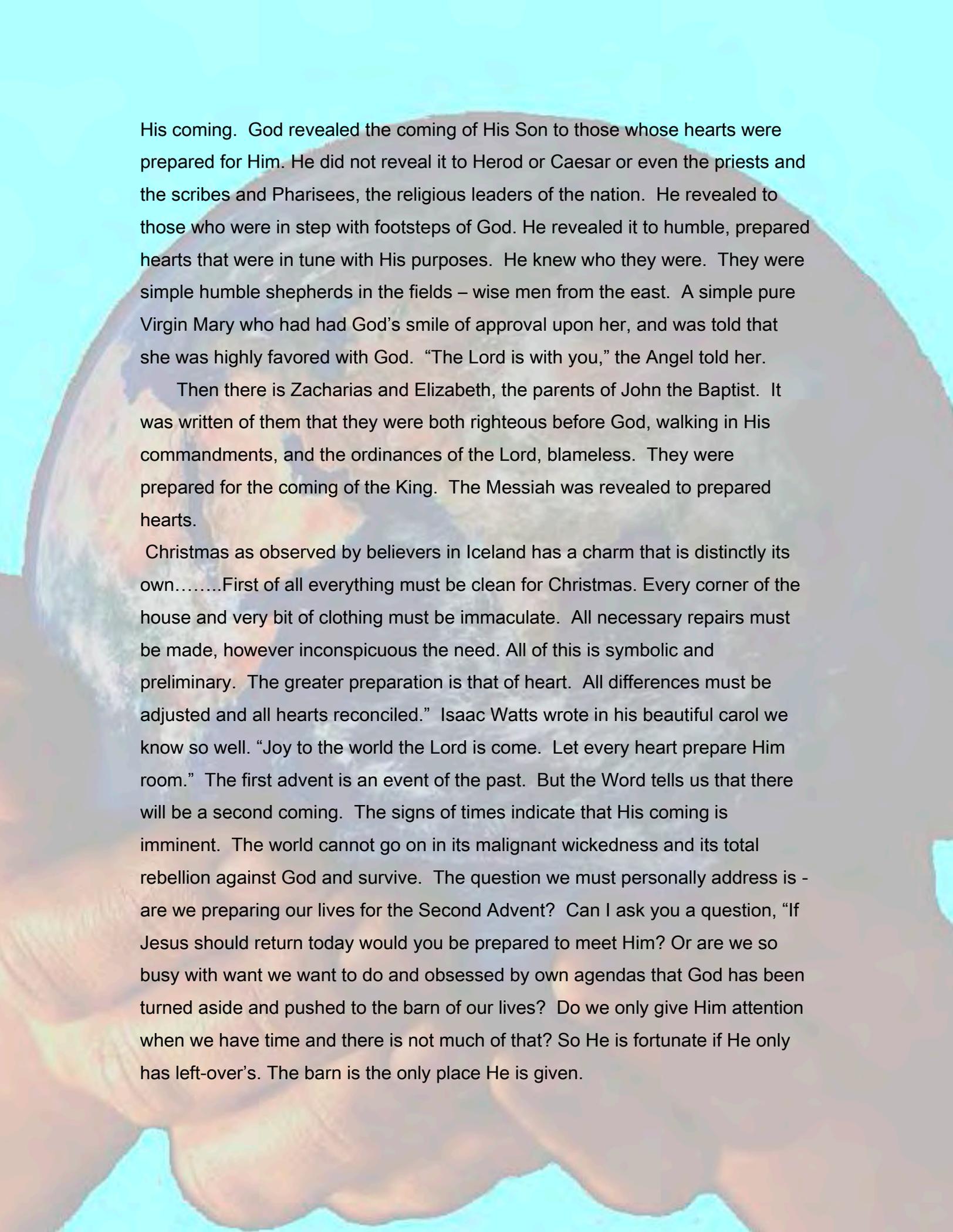
When God stepped down in the form of a Baby two thousand years ago there were a number of different responses from those who heard about Him or met Him. It would be helpful if we focus in on the Innkeeper and his response to the Christ Child. Why did he respond in the way he did and did it differ from the various reactions to Jesus? These responses encapsulate the reaction that men and woman still make when challenged by the Lord Jesus Christ. What did this innkeeper do to the child that was born? What was his response and why did he respond the way he did. The innkeeper turned the holy family away and suggested they find a place to rest in a barn. He was too pre-occupied for Jesus. What was the result of his action? Note,

1. WHAT HE LOST! LUKE 2:7. “There was no room for Him in the Inn.” What he lost was the opportunity to receive and house the Christ Child. He missed the glory of the coming of God in human flesh. But why was this opportunity lost?

You might say that we are looking at it from a hindsight which is 20/20. How would he know it was the Christ Child? I thought about this as I studied the scriptures and suggest that this opportunity was lost because there was,

a. A Lack of Expectation in His Heart. Luke 2:7. It was clear that the last thing he expected was to have the parents of the promised Messiah on his door step. He did not anticipate that the Messiah could be born under his roof. It was the last thing on his mind. Let us not forget, however, that he was a Jew and he would know about the coming of the promised Messiah. He was Jew under the suppression and oppression of the Roman Empire. He was part of a nation that groaned under the yoke of Roman rule. The highways of the land shook with the thunder of the march of the Roman legions. They chafed under the taxes demanded by Caesar. Being a Jew he would have known that his people were meant to be a free people - God said so. Being a Jew he would have known the ringing prophecies that came from the lips of the prophets down through the corridors of the centuries. The message they proclaimed was clear. One day a Messiah would come to set God's people free. It was these prophecies that kept the Jewish hope alive. That time had arrived and he was oblivious of it, and so he missed the opportunity to welcome God in the form of a baby into his house. Could it be that so much time had elapsed that he had lost hope or became apathetic. Maybe he felt that God had forgotten about His people. Maybe the delay of His coming had dulled his hope. It is clear that most certainly he did not expect the Messiah on his doorstep in that busy season. There was lack of the expectation of the coming of Christ. Because there was a lack expectation there was also

b. A Lack of Preparation in His Heart. Luke 2:7. Expectation will give birth to preparation. Had this innkeeper's heart been filled with expectation for the coming of the Messiah, he would have been prepared for His arrival. He would have been ready for God to reveal to him what great events were taking place in this quiet town. If you think that this is farfetched and we are stretching this thought let me substantiate it if I can. There were those who were prepared for



His coming. God revealed the coming of His Son to those whose hearts were prepared for Him. He did not reveal it to Herod or Caesar or even the priests and the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the nation. He revealed to those who were in step with footsteps of God. He revealed it to humble, prepared hearts that were in tune with His purposes. He knew who they were. They were simple humble shepherds in the fields – wise men from the east. A simple pure Virgin Mary who had had God’s smile of approval upon her, and was told that she was highly favored with God. “The Lord is with you,” the Angel told her.

Then there is Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. It was written of them that they were both righteous before God, walking in His commandments, and the ordinances of the Lord, blameless. They were prepared for the coming of the King. The Messiah was revealed to prepared hearts.

Christmas as observed by believers in Iceland has a charm that is distinctly its own.....First of all everything must be clean for Christmas. Every corner of the house and very bit of clothing must be immaculate. All necessary repairs must be made, however inconspicuous the need. All of this is symbolic and preliminary. The greater preparation is that of heart. All differences must be adjusted and all hearts reconciled.” Isaac Watts wrote in his beautiful carol we know so well. “Joy to the world the Lord is come. Let every heart prepare Him room.” The first advent is an event of the past. But the Word tells us that there will be a second coming. The signs of times indicate that His coming is imminent. The world cannot go on in its malignant wickedness and its total rebellion against God and survive. The question we must personally address is - are we preparing our lives for the Second Advent? Can I ask you a question, “If Jesus should return today would you be prepared to meet Him? Or are we so busy with want we want to do and obsessed by own agendas that God has been turned aside and pushed to the barn of our lives? Do we only give Him attention when we have time and there is not much of that? So He is fortunate if He only has left-over’s. The barn is the only place He is given.

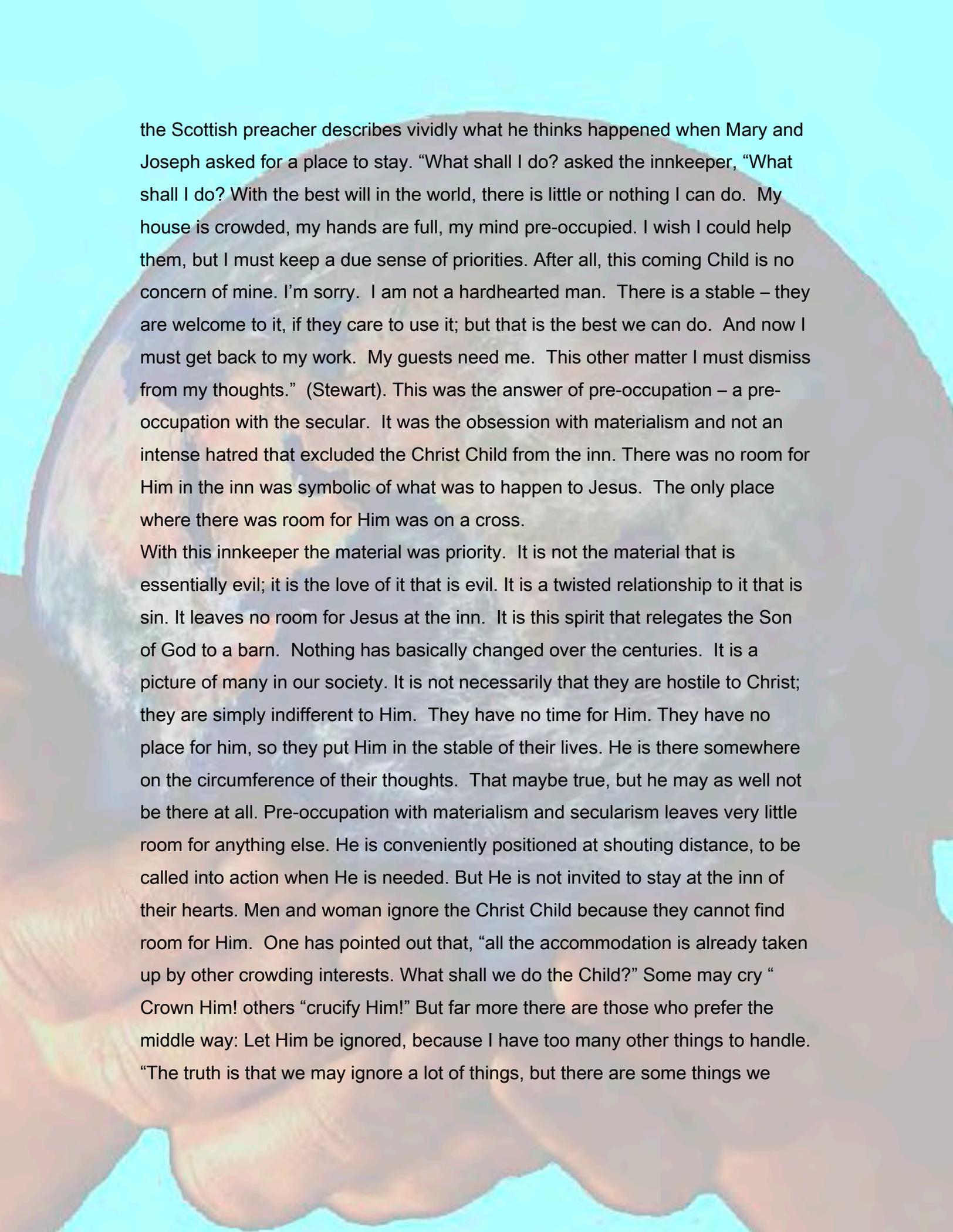
Now because of the innkeeper's lack of expectation and preparation for the coming of the Christ Child. It shows us not only what he lost but,

2. WHAT HE LACKED! Luke 2:7.

"There was no room for him in the Inn." This man lost a wonderful opportunity to receive the Son of God into his inn because he was insensitive to the events that were taking place on his doorstep. He turned the Christ Child away from the warmth and security of his inn. He rejected Jesus. Now there are different shades, types or degrees and intensities of rejection, but regardless rejection is rejection. No matter what the reason the result is the same. So the question arises what kind of rejection was the Innkeeper guilty of. It is important to see,

a. What it was not. Luke 2:7. It was not the rejection of hostility or rebellion. It was not even the rejection vindictiveness. It was not the rejection of a King Herod who, when the wise men asked for directions to find the baby who was called King of the Jews and where He was born, was plotting to find and destroy Him. It is true he made a show that he wanted to worship the new born King and asked the wise men to inform him of his birthplace when they eventually found Him. Herod was threatened by all if this talk of a new King. He felt that his position as a sovereign was in jeopardy and his reaction was one of hostility, and he plotted to destroy Him. This was his reason for rejecting the Christ child. Not so with the innkeeper. There was no hostility or hatred. Let us look as to,

b. What it was. Luke 2:7. The innkeeper was insensitive to what was happening. What was the reason for it? It had to do with a pre-occupation with the secular and the material. There was no fierce opposition in his mind. There was no furious hatred, "no malignant hostility in this innkeeper, but simple inattention, unconcern disinterest and apathy. There was a dullness of spirit." It is a known fact that obsession with the secular can produce apathy and dullness of the spirit towards things eternal and spiritual. Too often there are those in our society that have become so pre-occupied with the material that they are scarcely seen in the house of worship, the place of prayer or active in Christian service. There is no room for the Christ at the inn of their hearts. James Stewart



the Scottish preacher describes vividly what he thinks happened when Mary and Joseph asked for a place to stay. “What shall I do?” asked the innkeeper, “What shall I do? With the best will in the world, there is little or nothing I can do. My house is crowded, my hands are full, my mind pre-occupied. I wish I could help them, but I must keep a due sense of priorities. After all, this coming Child is no concern of mine. I’m sorry. I am not a hardhearted man. There is a stable – they are welcome to it, if they care to use it; but that is the best we can do. And now I must get back to my work. My guests need me. This other matter I must dismiss from my thoughts.” (Stewart). This was the answer of pre-occupation – a pre-occupation with the secular. It was the obsession with materialism and not an intense hatred that excluded the Christ Child from the inn. There was no room for Him in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus. The only place where there was room for Him was on a cross.

With this innkeeper the material was priority. It is not the material that is essentially evil; it is the love of it that is evil. It is a twisted relationship to it that is sin. It leaves no room for Jesus at the inn. It is this spirit that relegates the Son of God to a barn. Nothing has basically changed over the centuries. It is a picture of many in our society. It is not necessarily that they are hostile to Christ; they are simply indifferent to Him. They have no time for Him. They have no place for him, so they put Him in the stable of their lives. He is there somewhere on the circumference of their thoughts. That maybe true, but he may as well not be there at all. Pre-occupation with materialism and secularism leaves very little room for anything else. He is conveniently positioned at shouting distance, to be called into action when He is needed. But He is not invited to stay at the inn of their hearts. Men and woman ignore the Christ Child because they cannot find room for Him. One has pointed out that, “all the accommodation is already taken up by other crowding interests. What shall we do the Child?” Some may cry “Crown Him! others “crucify Him!” But far more there are those who prefer the middle way: Let Him be ignored, because I have too many other things to handle. “The truth is that we may ignore a lot of things, but there are some things we

cannot ignore.” We cannot ignore the laws of gravity or of health or the inevitability of death. We cannot ignore the basic principle that “whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap.” And of all the greatest truths in life that refuse to be ignored The greatest by far Is the Lord Jesus Christ.” He has followed the human race for over two thousand years. It is true that men and women have tried to escape Him, and after all of their trying He still follows them. We have learned that if we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, we will find Him there. And whether we ascend to the heavens He certainly will be there. If we plunge into the depths He will be there to. We may resist Him, trample under His sacred name and wash our hands off Him. He comes back as our Judge and our Redeemer and Savior. He pursues us and stand at the doors of our hearts and knocks waiting for us to open up to Him. He maybe rejected but He will not be ignored. He will continually confront us with His claims. We may have no place or time for Him but He will come to us again and again. One tragedy that is evident is that there those who claim the name of Christ who are content to leave Him the stable of their lives because they have no room for him at the inn – He is not a priority; and they would be offended if their commitment was challenged. But He is not at the center. Notice finally note,

3. WHAT HE MISSED. Luke 2:7-11.

What he missed was what the Christ Child could have given him. Incredible and amazing things took place on this man’s doorstep that night. He missed the glory of it all. It was not the glory of the world and its tinsel. He missed the glory of the Christ Child – God in Christ.. I thought about this and asked myself could it be that his secular preoccupation so dulled his hearing that he was excluded from listening to the song of the angel’s. Is it possible that his soul was so in tune with the material that that he missed the joyous message of the hour? Were his eyes so focused on wealth that he was blind to the star in the east? The probing question is this “was his mind and soul so fixed on material gain that God could not get through to him?” He got through to Mary and Joseph, the wise men and the shepherds. He revealed the truth of the coming of Jesus to a righteous man

called Simeon and a prophetess by the name Anna. Zacharias and Elizabeth the parents of John the Baptist were holy and righteous people. They too did not miss the glory of the coming of Christ Child. There were those in Israel who were not preoccupied or obsessed with the trinkets of this world, to whom God came and revealed the glory of the arrival of His Son Jesus. The innkeeper also missed,

a. The Glory of the Personality of Christmas. Luke 2:11. The angel said that in the “City of David, a Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord.” He is the Messiah the anointed One. The word Messiah would cause the spiritual adrenalin to run through the Jewish veins. The Messiah the long awaited one had come and that would set their souls ablaze with joy. The Messiah is the one who would deliver them and set the captive free. This note would reverberate in their hearts. It would pulsate in their souls. The promised one is here. Christ the Lord is born to you this day. That would grip and excite the Jewish heart. “A Savior has been born to you.” He put on humanity that we may as Peter would say “participate in the Divine Nature.” 2 Peter 1:4. One has written that “He became a man that we might become the children of God. He in infancy He startled a King; He in boyhood puzzled the religious leaders; in manhood He ruled the course of nature, He walked the raging waves and commanded the sea to sleep, and healed the multitudes with medication. He never wrote a book; yet the libraries of the world are filled with volumes that have been written about Him. He never penned a musical note; yet He is the theme of more lyrics than any other subject in the world. Great men have come and gone; yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, death could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. All others have failed in some way, but not Jesus. He is the perfect One, who is the One and Only Son of God who has come from the heart of the Father and He stands towering in human history over the greatest in time. There are none to compare with Him.” The birth of the Babe in Bethlehem is the coming of the glory of God to this earth. His obsession with the secular had and material had blinded him to the glory of the eternal.

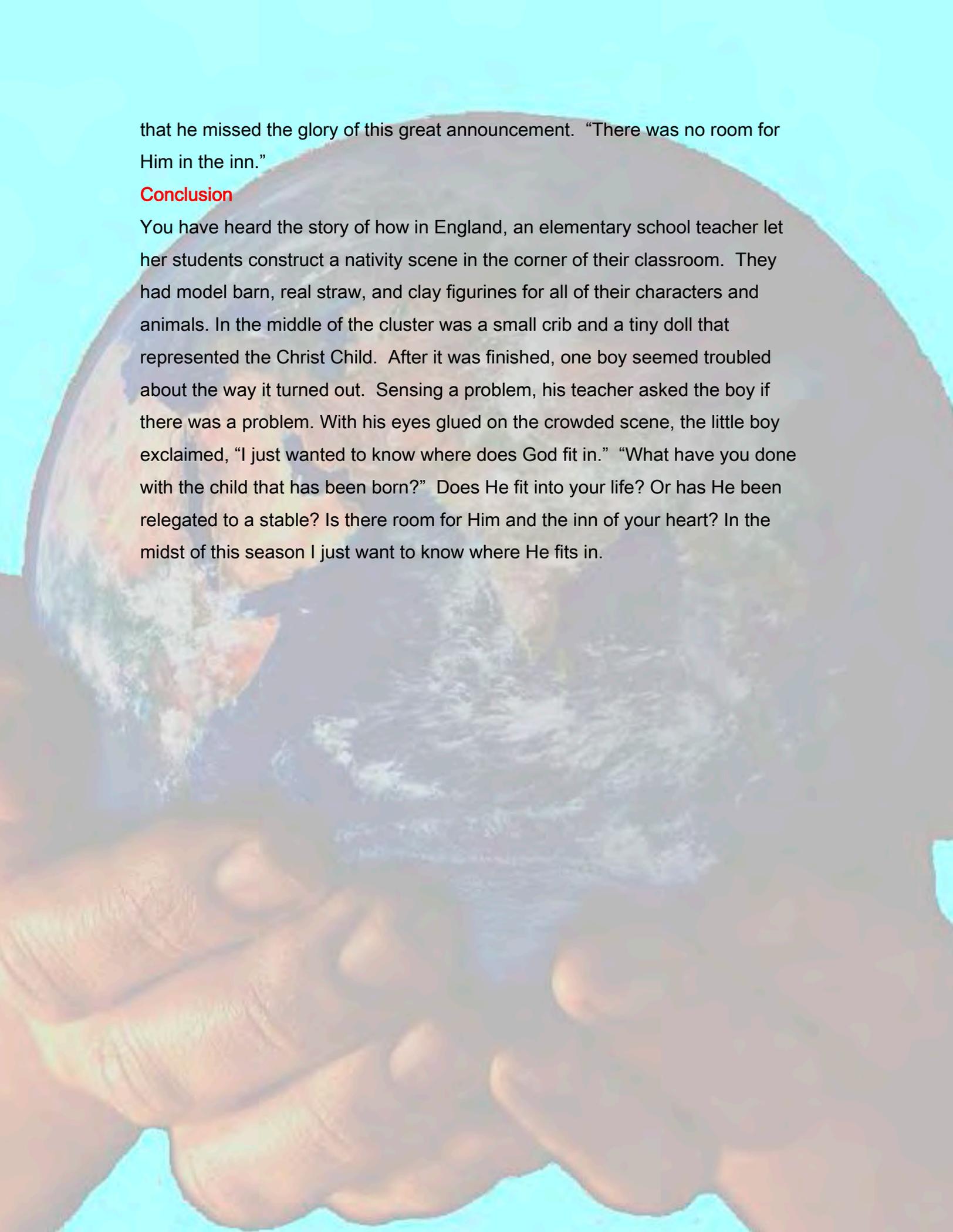
I would suggest that this mindset has not changed down through the centuries. In our day there are those who have the same pre-occupation. They are destroying themselves with the inner compulsion to acquire the material. Their minds are fixed on the things of this world to the neglect of eternal values. There are professing Christians who have been seduced by this life style. They are in the grip of greed. They have forgotten the exhortation of Jesus who said it is the better part of wisdom to invest in eternity. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break through and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21. This is wisdom, because there is no guarantee that earthly riches are secure. The unnecessary expending of energy and endangering and even crippling the body are all for nothing. The innkeeper was so busy with the secular that he missed the glory of the personality of Christmas. He also missed,

b. The Glory of the Proclamation of Christmas. Luke 2:11. "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord." This proclamation has three ingredients which make up its glory. It proclaims

i. A Savior. Luke 2:11. "A Savior has been born to you. Second it proclaims

ii. Salvation. Luke 2:11. The presence of a Savior implies the provision of salvation. Third it proclaims

ii. The Sovereignty of Christ. Luke 2:11. This Savior who has been born to you is "Christ the Lord." Jesus is the sovereign Lord. This Sovereign Lord is a Savior. His very birth was that He might become our Savior. For the angel said "A Savior has been born to YOU." Any other reason for the incarnation is inadequate. He did not need to become a Baby for any other reason. They called "His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins." His name defines him as a Savior. We are sinners; and He is the Savior. Sin is man's tragedy. Jesus is God's answer. This essentially is the glory of the proclamation of Christmas, and the innkeeper was so busy with the secular and the material



that he missed the glory of this great announcement. “There was no room for Him in the inn.”

Conclusion

You have heard the story of how in England, an elementary school teacher let her students construct a nativity scene in the corner of their classroom. They had model barn, real straw, and clay figurines for all of their characters and animals. In the middle of the cluster was a small crib and a tiny doll that represented the Christ Child. After it was finished, one boy seemed troubled about the way it turned out. Sensing a problem, his teacher asked the boy if there was a problem. With his eyes glued on the crowded scene, the little boy exclaimed, “I just wanted to know where does God fit in.” “What have you done with the child that has been born?” Does He fit into your life? Or has He been relegated to a stable? Is there room for Him and the inn of your heart? In the midst of this season I just want to know where He fits in.