

God's Christmas Card

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in the book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 6, Exodus chapter 6, and we're going to read from the beginning.

But the Lord said to Moses, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.

God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord. I am the Lord.

You know, in the 21st century, we live in an age where almost all of our communication has gone digital.

Writing letters has given way to email. Phone calls have been substituted by FaceTime. Even Skype has been updated by Zoom.

[1 : 18] And sermons, they're now streamed live on YouTube. And not to mention, there's WhatsApp, there's Facebook, there's Twitter, there's Instagram, there's Snapchat, half of these things, I don't even know what they are or what they do.

But you know, we live in an age where almost all our communication has gone digital. Which raises the question, are Christmas cards a thing of the past?

Are Christmas cards a thing of the past? As you know, we've been sending and receiving Christmas cards since way back in the Victorian age.

But now that we've gone paperless and we do almost everything on a laptop or a tablet or a smartphone, the question has to be asked, are Christmas cards not a bit old-fashioned and outdated?

Well, apparently not. Because in a survey that was carried out last year by the Royal Mail, it revealed that 72% of people would prefer a traditional handwritten Christmas card, while 10%, they would be happy with just a text message or WhatsApp, and 6% would be content to just receive their festive greeting through social media.

[2 : 32] So research seems to show that there's still a place in our heart and in our lives for a handwritten Christmas card with a thoughtful message inside.

And you know, as we consider Exodus chapter 6 this morning, I want us to see that this is God's Christmas card. This is God's Christmas card to you.

Now, in the run-up to Christmas, we'd usually look at some of the more traditional passages of Scripture. We'd look sometimes at what the prophets Isaiah and Micah foretold about the birth of the Messiah.

Sometimes we would consider the Psalms, and we'd look at Psalm 40, which, as we said earlier, was the psalm of the Incarnation. Or we'd look at Psalm 96 or 97 or 98, which are all Christmas psalms.

We'd also study the gospel accounts and think about the angels and the shepherds and the wise men and how the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[3 : 33] And you know, it's good and it's great to look at all these passages in the Bible every Christmas. But you know, the amazing thing about the Bible is that Jesus is on every page.

He's not just on these particular pages. He's on every page, and He's on this page too, because He's in Exodus chapter 6. And in Exodus chapter 6, we have God's Christmas card.

We have God's Christmas card. We have, first of all, the writer of the Christmas card, then the reassurance in the Christmas card, and then lastly, the recipients of the Christmas card.

So we have the writer of the Christmas card, the reassurance in the Christmas card, and the recipients of the Christmas card. The headings are not quite alliterative this morning, but they're close enough.

So we have the writer, the reassurance, and the recipients of the Christmas card. So first of all, we see the writer, the writer of this Christmas card in Exodus chapter 6.

[4 : 39] We're told in verse 1, it says, The Lord said to Moses, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.

God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord. I am the Lord. Now, whenever we write a Christmas card, we usually begin with who it's to, rather than who it's from.

We usually begin with the recipient's name, rather than our name, the writer's name. But in the ancient world, you would always begin with the writer. And we see that in almost all of the New Testament letters.

The identity of the writer is revealed from the very outset. Whether it was Peter or Paul writing the letter to the churches, they tell them from the outset who has written it.

And in a sense, that's what we have here. Because God's Christmas card, it begins with the writer of this Christmas card, where the identity of the writer is revealed.

[5 : 42] And it's signed and sealed right at the top. Signed and sealed with the signature statement, I am the Lord. So we know straight away who has written this card.

I am the Lord. Now, as we said before, whenever we see the title Lord, Lord, or the name Lord in capital letters in the Bible, whenever we see that name, we have to remember that it refers to Jesus.

Because Jesus is Lord. Jesus is King. He's King of Kings, and He's also the Covenant King. And so the one who's speaking here, the one who's written and signed this Christmas card, is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But more than that, when we see the title Lord, it means the one who keeps covenant. The one who keeps covenant. Because the Lord is the one who makes promises to us.

And the Lord is the one who keeps His promises with us. He is the Lord. He's the one who keeps covenant. And we'll see more of this in a moment, when we come to the reassurance in the Christmas card.

[6 : 52] But the writer of this Christmas card was the Lord. He's the one who keeps covenant. And His signature statement is important here.

Because He says, I am the Lord. Now, if you remember last Lord's Day, when Moses and Aaron were reunited as brothers in arms, they revealed their plan and their purpose, the plan and purpose of the Lord, which was to redeem and to rescue the Israelites from slavery and bondage in Egypt. And you remember how Moses and Aaron, when they told the Israelites what was going to happen, everything looked so promising. It looked so positive and so progressive. Things were moving forward because openings were being made and obstacles were being removed and opportunities were being given.

And Moses and Aaron, they had this passion where they marched right up to Pharaoh's palace with the promise of the Lord and the passion of the Lord. And they were full of enthusiasm and excitement and expectation that the Lord was going to move and do mighty things and miraculous things in Pharaoh's palace.

And as Moses and Aaron, as they came up to Pharaoh, they powerfully preached the word of God. Do you remember what they said? They said, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let my people go.

[8 : 15] But you remember how Pharaoh responded? He responded with resistance and rejection. Pharaoh responded by saying, Well, who is the Lord that I should obey him?

Who is the Lord that I should listen to his voice? Who is the Lord that I should let Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go.

And you remember that Moses and Aaron, they went home with their tail between their legs. When Pharaoh resisted and rejected Moses and Aaron, they lost their nerve.

They recoiled and they retreated, just like we often do when someone reacts and rejects the gospel in that way.

When we encounter and we experience resistance or rejection to the gospel, we recoil, we retreat. Sometimes we become more reserved and reticent in sharing the gospel or inviting people to come to church.

[9 : 21] But as we said before, when it comes to sharing the gospel or inviting people to church, we're to love our unconverted friends patiently, passionately, pastorally, and persistently.

We're to love our unconverted friends patiently, passionately, pastorally, and persistently. And that's what the Lord reminds and reaffirms Moses here in chapter 6.

Because at the end of chapter 5, Moses is questioning the Lord. He's saying to the Lord, why did you send me to Pharaoh? Why did you send me to that hard-hearted man?

Why did you send me when you knew that he would resist and reject you? Why did you send me when you knew that he would say to me, who is the Lord? And then the Lord answers Moses in verse 1.

He says, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will send them out. And with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land. And God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord.

[10 : 32] I am the Lord. Pharaoh questioned, who is the Lord? And the Lord reaffirms here, I am the Lord. He signed and sealed this Christmas card with his name.

I am the Lord. And in doing so, the Lord was asserting and affirming to Moses and to Aaron that he will rescue and he will redeem the Israelites.

And we know this because the Lord had already asserted and affirmed to Moses back in chapter 4. So you go back two chapters. He said to Moses in chapter 4 that the Israelites were his firstborn son.

He says, I am the Lord. I am going to redeem them. I am going to rescue them because Israel is my firstborn son. Israel is my firstborn son.

And then we read the phrase here with a strong hand. It's in verse 1. It's repeated twice. For with a strong hand he will send them out. With a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.

[11 : 41] And you know, the language that's been used here is the language of redemption and rescue. Where we've been directed to the writer of this card, this Christmas card.

And you know, it's amazing when you actually put it all together. There's the promise here, Israel is my firstborn son. I'm going to rescue them. I'm going to redeem them.

I'm going to bring them out of Egypt because I am the Lord. And you know, you look at this, the writer of this card and it's actually pointing us forwards.

Pointing us forwards to the Christmas narrative of the New Testament. Because you know, you'll remember that just after the birth of Jesus there were the wise men and they all turned up from the east and they came bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And then just after that meeting, Joseph was instructed by an angel of the Lord to flee where? Into Egypt. Go into Egypt, he was told.

[12 : 45] Stay there until Herod dies. Then we read, this was to fulfill what was promised. Out of Egypt, I called my son.

Out of Egypt, I called my son. And here in Exodus, the beginning of this story of salvation, we have the Lord calling Israel his son.

We have the Lord saying to his people, I'm going to redeem you. I'm going to rescue you. And we have the Lord saying, I am the Lord. And it's all pointing forward.

Pointing forward to Jesus, to the Christmas story. And so my friend, the writer of this Christmas card here in Exodus 6 is asserting and affirming that he's going to fulfill his promise.

He's going to provide an exodus. Not just an exodus out of Egypt, but an exodus from slavery to sin. And the Lord gives reassurance of this promise here in his Christmas card.

[13 : 53] That's what I want us to see secondly. The reassurance in the Christmas card. So first of all, the writer. And then secondly, the reassurance in the Christmas card.

Look at verse 3. This is the Lord speaking. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty. But my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them.

I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groanings of the people of Israel, whom the Egyptians hold as slaves.

And I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord. And I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

And I will deliver you from slavery to them. And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. You know, when you receive a Christmas card that has been delivered by

our good friends in the Royal Mail, you open the envelope and you read the handwritten message inside.

[15:06] And traditionally, Christmas cards, they, well, they wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Sometimes there's a little more depending upon who it's from. But for the most part, Christmas cards, they come with a general statement of season's greetings.

But you know, what we read here is that God's Christmas card comes with specifics. It comes with specifics because God's Christmas card comes with confirmation, covenant, and commitment. God's Christmas card comes with confirmation, covenant, and commitment. Because we see here that the Lord confirms His identity. He confirms who He is.

I am the Lord. And He says to Moses, He says, just to summarize what He's saying, He says, in the period of the Genesis, in Genesis, in the book of Genesis, in that book of beginnings, I revealed myself to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob by the name God Almighty, El Shaddai.

I revealed myself as the creator of the universe. But now, says the Lord, as things have progressed into the period of this Exodus, in the book of the Exodus, I reveal myself and I confirm my name as the Lord.

[16:27] Jehovah, Yahweh, the one who keeps covenant. And you know, my friend, God's Christmas card, it comes with confirmation. Confirmation that He's not only the creator God in Genesis, He's not only God Almighty, but He's also the covenant God.

This covenant God who is working in this great act of redemption in the Exodus, He is the Lord. And as the covenant God, the Lord says to Moses, I established my covenant with Abraham.

I established it with Isaac and Jacob. I pledged and promised to them, I will be their God. They shall be my people. I gave to them the assurance, the assurance of this promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

And I have heard the groaning of my people, He says. I have heard the groaning of my people and I have remembered my covenant. I have remembered my covenant.

Now, when the Lord says, I have remembered my covenant, it doesn't mean that He forgot it or that it somehow slipped His mind. No, when the Lord says, I have remembered my covenant, it means that He's going to act.

[17:41] He's going to do something. He's going to move. He's going to redeem His covenant people according to His covenant promise. He's going to redeem and rescue them from slavery and bondage in Egypt.

And that's the confirmation and commitment the Lord gives to the Israelites. He says in verse 6, the Lord says to Moses, Say therefore to the people of Israel, tell them, I am the Lord and I will bring you, and notice how many times He says, I will.

I am the Lord. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from slavery to them and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

I will take you to be my people and I will be your God and you shall know that I am the Lord your God who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

I will give it to you for a possession. Why? I am the Lord. I am the Lord.

[18:54] My friend, God's Christmas card comes with confirmation, covenant, and commitment. What better card could you receive? God's Christmas card comes with confirmation, covenant, and commitment.

But you know, the Lord is not only remembering His covenant here. He's actually revealing to His people His plan of salvation.

And He's revealing to His people that this is actually a progressive plan of salvation. The Lord is saying to them, this is all part of a bigger picture. It's part of a bigger picture.

And what the Lord is doing, the Lord is slowly but surely revealing His plan of salvation to His people. Where one day, the Lord is going to finally and fully reveal His salvation in the person of Jesus Christ.

My friend, the story of salvation is part of progressive revelation. salvation. The story of salvation is part of a progressive revelation.

[20:07] And I say that because in many ways, the Old Testament gives to us pictures and portraits of what is to come. The Old Testament gives to us types and shadows of what is going to be finally and fully revealed in the future with Jesus.

Because, as you know, the Israelites and slavery and bondage in Egypt, well, that's a picture to us. It's a picture and a portrait of our slavery and our bondage in sin.

Because the Israelites, they are just a portrait and a picture of us. As sinners, we were conceived in sin. As sinners, we commit sin.

As sinners, we carry out sin. And like the Israelites, we need to be rescued. We need to be redeemed by the one who is called the Lord. My friend, the Old Testament, it gives to us all these pictures, all these portraits of what is to come.

It's all these types and shadows of what's going to be finally and fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. And I've said it many times before, it's often said that the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament is that the New is in the Old concealed and the Old is in the New revealed.

[21 : 31] The New is in the Old concealed but the Old is in the New revealed. I mentioned to you before the 19th century American theologian B.B. Warfield.

And B.B. Warfield, he often used the illustration to describe the differences between the Old and the New Testaments and the progressive revelation of God's salvation.

And he used the illustration of a darkened room full of furniture. So in your mind you imagine your living room right now. You imagine your living room.

You come home on a cold, dark, winter's night. Your curtains are already drawn. And you go into your living room and it's full of, it's just dark.

You can't see anything. All you can see is shapes and shadows of furniture. You can't quite make out the furniture. You know it's there. It's not very clear. There's no detail.

[22 : 34] But you know the furniture is in the room. And it's only when you switch on the light that everything is finally revealed. Warfield. And Warfield says that putting on the light doesn't actually add any furniture to the room.

It just reveals what was already there in the first place but not fully seen. And Warfield explains, he says, that's what God is doing in the Bible. That's what God is doing in the Bible.

When you read through the Bible from Genesis, Exodus, right through to the Gospels, God is revealing His plan and purpose of salvation. He's revealing and unveiling the story of salvation.

But more than that, God is actually revealing His identity. Because as we saw, even as the Lord said there, He is the Creator God who revealed Himself to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob in the book of Genesis.

He revealed Himself as El Shaddai, the God Almighty. Then you come into the book of Exodus, He reveals Himself not only as the Creator, but also the covenant God.

[23 : 43] He is the Lord, the one who keeps covenant. But if you carry on reading through the story of the Bible, and I always encourage you to read through the story of the Bible, you'll see the story of salvation unfolding, where God is progressively revealing Himself using all these different names, all these different titles.

Because you go into the book of Joshua, Joshua confesses that He is the King of Israel. David acknowledges that He is the Lord of hosts. Solomon recognizes that He is the anointed Messiah.

He is the Christ. Isaiah, when you read the book of Isaiah, you see that He is going to be the suffering servant. Then you go to the book of Daniel and all His prophecies, and Daniel sees the Lord in a vision.

He is the Son of Man. He is the Ancient of Days. And then there is this progressive revelation down throughout the centuries, and we come to the Gospels, to the New Testament, where He is finally and fully revealed as the Son of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

And you know, when you read the New Testament, I don't know about you, but all I see is excitement and enthusiasm. And there is excitement and enthusiasm in the New Testament because God has not hidden Himself.

[25 : 03] God has made Himself known. He has revealed Himself. That's what we were singing in Psalm 98. He has made His salvation known. This is the good news, we're told, that the Son of God has revealed Himself as the Savior of sinners.

Isaiah prophesied that the people walking in darkness have seen a great light. And they've seen a great light. Why? For unto us a child is born.

Unto us a son is given. My friend, in the New Testament, the light goes on. It's all revealed. This glorious gospel message is made known to sinners in all its fullness.

And the New Testament writers, they have such excitement and enthusiasm because all they want to do is preach and proclaim this good news message.

All they want to do is speak and share this message of salvation. They want to go to the housetops and the highways and the hedges and they want to just compel people to come in.

[26 : 13] They want to compel sinners to come to this Christ for salvation. Do you know, my unconverted friend, you look what's in your hands right now, this morning.

You hold in your hands the full and final revelation of God. You know, there's no greater privilege. You hold in your hands the full and final revelation of God. That's what the Bible is. It's the revelation of God. God has revealed Himself to you. It's royal mail given to you from heaven itself. And you know, the amazing thing is you know more than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ever did. You know more than Moses, Aaron, and Joshua did.

You know more than Daniel, Solomon, Isaiah, and David did. You know more than all these Old Testament saints because you have the full and final revelation of God in your hands.

[27 : 23] And you know what that means? It means you are without excuse. That's what that means. You have royal mail from heaven, which means that you are without excuse.

my friend, God's Christmas card is being delivered to you this morning. And it's been delivered by the royal mail of King Jesus. And you've been reminded, reaffirmed, and reassured that God has fully, He has finally revealed Himself to you in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus has made Himself known. He is not hidden from sight. He is being highlighted in the gospel. And so you are without excuse. We are all, whether you are here or at home this morning, you are without excuse.

And so from Exodus 6, we have God's Christmas card. We have the writer of the Christmas card, the reassurance in the Christmas card. Then lastly and briefly, we have the recipients of the Christmas card.

The recipients of the Christmas card. Now look at verse 14. We're told that these are the heads of their fathers' houses, the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, Hanoch, Palu, Hezron, and Carmi.

[28 : 50] These are the clans of Reuben, the sons of Simeon, Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of the Achananite woman.

These are the clans of Simeon. These are their names of the sons of Levi according to their generations, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years, and so on. Now when I was young, I always remember my mother sitting for hours at this time of year, and she would be writing lots of Christmas cards to various people.

But in order to post all these Christmas cards to the right home, she would have to use her address book. It wasn't on a tablet or a phone, it was a handwritten address book.

But the thing about handwritten address books is that after a few years, well, they need to be renewed because, as you know, addresses change, people move, others get married, they start a new job.

[29 : 54] Sadly, in many ways, people die, and the address book then has to be renewed. And in many ways, that's what we see here with this list of people, this list of names in the latter part of Exodus chapter 6.

You could say, well, this is God's address book. This is the address book. It's the name of every home and every family in Egypt that was to receive God's Christmas card. Now, this list of people, this list of names, names that I can hardly pronounce, they don't mean very much to us because we don't really know much about them.

We don't know who they were, really, or what they did. We know some of the names. All we know is that they're the names of homes and families in Egypt who received God's Christmas card.

They don't mean much to us, but they meant something to God. That's why their names are written and recorded in the Bible. The Lord delivered this good news to them. He wrote his, what we'll call, his Christmas card.

And he gave all these homes and families, he gave the recipients this gospel message. He gave the recipients this reassurance, a reassurance of redemption and rescue.

[31 : 12] The Lord pledged and promised that he would redeem these homes and families from slavery and bondage in Egypt. And all they needed to do, all they needed to do was trust him.

They needed to trust the one who called himself the Lord. They needed to trust Jesus. And you know, my unconverted friend, you know, you look at this passage and we can apply it to you.

because God's Christmas card has been written for intended recipients. And it has been written with the reassurance, a great reassurance of rescue and redemption, not from Egypt, but from sin and from slavery to sin.

God's Christmas card has been written, pledging and promising the homes and families in our congregation and our community and beyond that they can be rescued and redeemed from slavery and bondage to sin.

And all they need to do, all they need to do is do what the Israelites had to do, is trust in the one who calls himself the Lord. They need to trust in the Savior of sinners, Jesus Christ.

[32 : 39] But there's more. God has renewed his address book in the New Testament. And there's now only one word written in God's address book, if I can put it like this.

There are no names in God's address book, just one word. Because this good news message is addressed to whosoever.

That's the word written in God's address book. Whosoever. Whosoever. Whosoever. Which includes, as you know, everyone.

Whether you are here in person or at home online, it includes everyone and it excludes no one. You are not excluded.

You're not beyond the pale. You're not too far gone. No. God's Christmas card has been written for you. And it is addressed to you.

[33 : 41] And it's being delivered to you this morning by the royal mail of King Jesus. And it's for you. My friend, God's Christmas card is compelling you and even commanding you to come to this Savior.

To confess your sin to this Savior. To commit your life to this Savior. And experience his wonderful salvation. That's why he has revealed himself. That's why Jesus was born in a cradle in Bethlehem. That's why he went to the cross of Calvary. He has revealed himself to you. Not for himself. But for you.

He has made himself known. That's why they called him Emmanuel. Emmanuel. He is God with us. So this is God's Christmas card in the book of Exodus.

It's been delivered to you by royal mail this morning. Do not return to sender. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

[34 : 52] Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for being so willing to speak to us.

And Lord we do pray that we would listen. We would listen to the voice of Jesus. That we would be able to say even with the hymn writer that I heard the voice of Jesus say come unto me and rest.

Lay down thou weary one lay down thy head upon my breast. And I came to Jesus as I was weary and worn and sad but I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad.

O that we would find in thee rest for our soul realizing who Jesus is and why Jesus came that he came to reveal himself to make himself known as the saviour of sinners as our saviour one in whom we can trust and lean upon and look to day by day.

Bless Lord thy truth to us and that if anything was said amiss or that thou wouldst forgive us.

Cleanse us we pray. Help us to keep looking to Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith.

[36 : 10] Go before us we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing in Psalm 43.

Psalm 43 is in the Scottish Psalter page 264. Psalm 43 we're singing from verse 3 down to the end of the psalm.

This should always be our prayer when we come to God's word. O send thy light forth and thy truth let them be guides to me and bring me to thine holy hill in where thy dwellings be then will I to God's altar go to God my chiefest joy yea God my God thy name to praise my harp I will employ.

Down to the end of the psalm of Psalm 43 to God's praise. O send thy light for a night let them be guides to me and bring me to thy holy hill near where thy dwellings be.

Here then will I to God's altar go to God my chiefest joy yea God my God my name to praise my heart my heart my heart thou thou I will employ I will employ my heart thou then cast down my soul what should discourage me discourage me and why with venting thoughts are thou disquieted in me

[39 : 04] I yet in me still trust in God for him to praise good cause I yet shall love love hear o my God that is the hell my God my God my God my God my God my God that doth me save that doth me save

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be
with you all now and forevermore
Amen