

CHRISTMAS SUNDAY INTERLUDE
Joyfully Bearing Christ's Reproach At Christmas
(Matthew 2:13-23; Hebrews 13:12-14)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Amid the many needs that we have this Christmas Season, we need God's guidance on handling contempt for our beliefs of Biblical "fundamentalism," our beliefs in Christ's virgin birth, His bodily resurrection, the inerrancy of Scripture, Christ's substitutionary atonement and His imminent, bodily Second Coming! We explain (as follows):

Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church last month said, "(D)ialogue can help bring 'an end to all forms of fundamentalism and terrorism.'" (Deborah Ball and Ayla Albayrak, "Pope Francis Prays in Mosque in Show of Commitment to Christian-Muslim Relations" in The Wall Street Journal, 11/29/2014; wsj.com)

His words reflect an unjust bias that has long circulated against the **original** "Fundamentalists" who produced "the 1909 publication, 'The Fundamentals'" that "proposed five required Christian beliefs for those opposed to the Modernist movement." (religioustolerance.org, "Religious Terminology: 'Fundamentalism' in Christianity & Islam") Those beliefs are Christ's virgin birth, His bodily resurrection, Scripture's inerrancy, the substitutionary atonement and Christ's imminent, bodily Second Coming. (William W. Sweet, The Story of Religion in America, 1973, p. 407)

After the 1920s Scopes trial where creationism was ridiculed by the American Civil Liberties Union and the press (Bolton Davidheiser, Evolution and the Christian Faith, 1976, p. 89-90), the media began to use the term often "to denigrate a religious group, implying that they are intolerant or prone to violence," Ibid., religioustolerance.org.

Unfortunately, the Pope himself repeatedly promotes this errant bias: on November 30, 2014, he said, "You can't say . . . that all Christians are fundamentalists. We have our share of them . . . All religions have these little groups," (Reuters, 12/2/2014, jpost.com), and in an interview earlier this year with the Spanish-language magazine, "La Vanguardia," he said: "A fundamentalist group, although it may not kill anyone, although it may not strike anyone, is violent. The mental structure of fundamentalism is violence in the name of God." (huffingtonpost.com, "Pope Francis: The Mental Structure Of Fundamentalists Is Violence In the Name of God," 6/14/2014)

Thus, when Pope Francis last month called for the "end to all forms of fundamentalism and terrorism," he lumped us together with violent Islamic terrorists and called for an end to our most basic Biblical beliefs!

Need: Thus, we ask, 'In view of how secular and religious entities promote a woefully errant bias against our most basic Biblical beliefs of true ORIGINAL 'fundamentalism' this Christmas, what would God direct that we do?!!'

- I. The Matthew 2:13-23 narrative of events surrounding Christ's birth tell how Jesus came to be given the title of **REPROACH** in being called a "NAZARENE" (as follows):**
- A. After Jesus' birth, events under God's direction led the infant Jesus to grow up in Nazareth of Galilee:
 - 1. As the husband of Mary, Joseph was told by God to take Mary and her newborn, virgin-born infant son Jesus and flee into Egypt from Israel's king Herod who was about to seek the infant to kill him, Matt. 2:13.
 - 2. Joseph immediately obeyed the Lord, fleeing with his family into Egypt, and he stayed there until God told him to return to Israel after those who had sought Jesus' life had died, Matthew 2:14-15a, 19-20, 21.
 - 3. However, when Joseph returned to Israel, he heard that Archelaus ruled in Judaea, and he badly mistreated the Jewish people (Z. P. E. B., v. Three, p. 138), so Joseph was afraid to go there, Matthew 2:22a.
 - 4. God also warned Joseph in a dream similar to past directives (Matt. 2:22b with 1:20, 2:13, 19) to avoid Judaea, so he traveled far north in Israel to settle his family in Nazareth of Galilee, Matthew 2:22c-23a.
 - B. Jesus was thus destined to be called by the **contemptible** term of "Nazarene" in fulfillment "the prophets," Matt. 2:23b. No Old Testament passage claims Israel's Messiah would be called a "Nazarene," but since this was "a term of contempt" in Jesus' day, the Matthew 2:23b reference to "the prophets" **in general** meant that Messiah would be **despised** (B. K. C., N. T., p. 23) as taught in passages like Isaiah 53:3-4 and Psalm 22:6-8.
- II. However, though the term "Nazarene" came to be despised due to an extra biblical claim by the Jews who founded Nazareth, God in GRACE USED the term BIBLICALLY in BEHALF of JESUS' HONOR!**
- A. Ronald B. Allen's article, "Does Anything Good Come from Nazareth?" (Winter 1999, Kindred Spirit, p. 3, 11), reports he once saw a road sign outside modern Nazareth with Arabic and Hebrew translations of the city name using a "ts" letter for the English "z," so the name is from the Hebrew word "**netser**," meaning "branch."
 - B. These translations match the oldest Jewish spelling of the town on a 3rd to 4th century marble plaque found in Caesarea in 1962, Ibid. Also, excavations from the old city of Nazareth reveal that around 100 B. C., a small group of Jewish exiles returning from Babylon settled there, giving the area its family name, "Natsara." They

believed the "Branch," the Messiah, would arise from their midst, and this belief apparently led other Jews in Israel to scoff at their extrabiblical claim, the beginning of the derision of the name of "Nazareth," Ibid.

- C. Accordingly, though Jesus was led of God to be called a "Nazarene," a term that was begun by an extrabiblical belief by Hebrew settlers that other Jews thus disbelieved and so treated with contempt, since Jesus **WAS** the **TRUE, Biblical Messiah**, the "**Branch**," the otherwise contemptible term of "Nazarene," literally meaning "Branch-Man" (Ibid.), is for *Jesus* an **ACCURATE title, so it is NOT DISHONORING as used of HIM!**

III. In addition, the Scripture CONTEXTS of the Messianic "Branch" PROPHECIES reveal GOD'S WORK to USE the MESSIAH GREATLY to REVERSE the FALLEN, DISHONORED line of DAVID:

- A. Isaiah 11:1, the only prophecy actually to use the word "*netzer*" for Messiah, the "Branch," presents Messiah as a shoot growing out of the cut off stump of the fallen Davidic monarchy *in contrast* to the **permanent** fall of evil Assyrian rulers, Isaiah 10:5-34 with 11:1. This "Branch" would "be characterized by the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2) and absolute integrity (11:3-5)," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Isaiah 11:1-5.
- B. Isaiah 4:2 uses a synonym that is translated "branch" to predict Messiah as the "Branch" Who would spring up from David's fallen and hence humiliated line of kings as beautiful and glorious in the Messianic Kingdom.
- C. Jeremiah 23:5 (and Jer. 33:15) notes Messiah as the "Branch" would rule and prosper in righteousness, justice and judgment, that Israel would dwell safely under Him Whose name was also "The Lord Our Righteousness."
- D. Zechariah 3:8-9 predicted the "Branch" would rise to power and glory from the humiliation of David's fallen line, and as the "Stone," He would judge all who wronged the godly, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1554-1555.
- E. Zechariah 6:12 predicted Messiah as the "Branch" would build the temple in the Kingdom, Ibid., p. 1558.

IV. Besides, God's directing JOSEPH, the husband of Mary, to go north to settle in Nazareth of Galilee has HUGE applications of PERSONAL BLESSING for JOSEPH in the Kingdom and in eternity:

- A. Joseph was of the royal line of the fallen and thus the humiliated line of Davidic kings, cf. Matthew 1:1, 16.
- B. Also, Judah's king Jeconiah, an ancestor of Joseph, was himself and all his seed like Joseph put under a divine curse never to prosper if they sat on David's throne (Jer. 22:24, 28; 37:1). Thus, though Joseph was in line for the Davidic throne, he was under a curse not to prosper were he to rule on it, Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Matt. 1:11!
- C. However, **Jesus** was born **not** through the *cursed* line of *Joseph*, for Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit in His earthly mother Mary's womb (Matt. 1:18-25). Rather, Jesus is David's "Branch" through His earthly Mother *Mary* who was from **Nathan**, a *younger* son of David, a son *not* in line for the *throne*, but **free** from Jeconiah's *curse* (Lk. 3:23-38, 31; Ibid., ftn. to Luke 3:23). By way of Mary's marriage to Joseph, then, Jesus of Nathan's line **inherits** the **right to rule** as **ALONE qualified to reign with BLESSING on David's throne!**
- D. When Joseph thus heeded God in moving north to settle and raise Jesus in Nazareth of Galilee, Jesus fulfilled Messianic prophecies, and Joseph himself will be greatly blessed by Messiah in the Kingdom and in eternity!

Lesson: *Though God had Jesus raised in Nazareth with the despised title of "Nazarene," despised because it was formed by an extrabiblical belief, since that title CORRECTLY DESCRIBES the TRUE Messiah, JESUS, the REAL "Branch" of David's temporarily fallen monarchy, in the Messianic Kingdom and in eternity, the TITLE "NAZARENE" as used of Jesus will forever be HIGHLY HONORED, a JOY for ALL BELIEVERS!*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) Though the title "fundamentalist," a wrongly represented and so despised title, may be used of us, recall the despised title of "Nazarene" was used of Jesus, and that the beliefs represented in the original title of "fundamentalist" as used of us are Biblical just as "Nazarene" is Biblical when used of Jesus, that we thus willingly "bear the reproach of Christ," Hebrews 13:12-14.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

The **value** of holding to **Biblical** "fundamentalism" is **great** regardless if the term is *contemptible* to the *world*:

In the book titled, The Coming Evangelical Crisis, 1996 (John H. Armstrong, gen. ed.), R. Albert Mohler, Jr. on page 33 noted that some evangelical leaders in the mid twentieth century decided that the separation from the world practiced by fundamentalists had left them not respected and ineffective. These evangelicals thus chose to "engage the larger world of thought and culture"! However, interacting with errant theologians and philosophers of the world led some evangelicals to adopt the very error that Protestant denominations had adopted before them, Ibid.

Yet, if we heed 2 Timothy 2:20-22 to **separate from** errant teachers, spiritually unclean vessels that carry defiled teaching, and **fellowship** with those who "call on the Lord out of a pure heart," we will be blessed of God!

Thus, regardless if it is misrepresented and held in contempt, this Christmas, may we unapologetically hold to Biblical "Fundamentalism" like our Lord Biblically took the title of "Nazarene," and so be blessed of God!