A Christmas Invitation

I. An invitation for forgiveness and peace (Matthew 1:18-21)

A. The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of "Joshua" which means "The Lord saves" (Matthew 1:21).
B. The fate of every human being revolves around being forgiven and forgiving.
   1. Eternal consequences (Romans 6:23)
   2. Destructive consequences (Matthew 18:32-35; John 10:10)

II. An invitation to host God's presence (Luke 1:26-38)

A. The Holy Spirit will "***come on*** you, and the power of the Most High will **overshadow** you" (Luke 1:35)
   1. *"Come on"* – "The Holy Spirit descending and operating in one" (*Thayers*) (Acts 1:8)
   2. *"Overshadow"* – "To throw a shadow upon, to envelop in shadow" (*Thayers)* (Acts 5:15; Luke 9:34-36)
   3. The use of the New Testament word *"overshadow"*..."seems to have been drawn from the Old Testament idea of the presence and power of God in a cloud" *(Thayers).*
B. God invites us to be born again by the Spirit, baptized (filled) with the Holy Spirit, and minister in the power of the Spirit (John 3:5-8; Acts 1:4-8; 2:38; 5:12-16).
C. What does it look like to host the Spirit? It looks like…surprise (John 3:8), unusual behavior (Luke 7:31-35), power for the impossible, joy (Luke 1:44-45), and revelation (Luke 1:67; 2:25-38).

III. An invitation for change that works for our good (Romans 8:28)

A. Israel was a nation in pain. Sometimes pain has a way of stealing faith and hardening the heart toward change, even when it is good.
   1. Example of Israel (Matthew 13:13-16; Luke 19:41-44)
   2. Example of Zechariah and Mary (Luke 1:18-20, 38-45)
   3. Joseph put aside his pain just long enough to be rescued by God's revelation (Matthew 1:19-21).
B. The hungry and the humble find it easier to change.
   1. The hungry can cope more easily with the strangeness of God (Isaiah 55:8, 9; Magi—Matthew 2:1-12; Simeon and Anna—Luke 2:25-32, 36-38).
   2. The humble, or those in humble circumstances, find it easier to believe and receive change.
      a. Jesus himself is humble of heart (Matthew 11:25-30).
      b. The shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)
      c. Mary (Luke 1:38, 45-55)
C. Repentance is a bible word for change (change of heart—New Testament—leading to a change of behavior—Old Testament).
   1. John the Baptist was sent before Jesus to soften the heart for change (Luke 1:16-17).
   2. The kindness of God leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4).
   3. Mark records the words of Jesus' first sermon as "Repent, and believe the good news" (Mark 1:14-15).

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