

# HOPE WORTH HAVING

## The Most Unusual Message in History

**By: Pastor Mike Sanders**

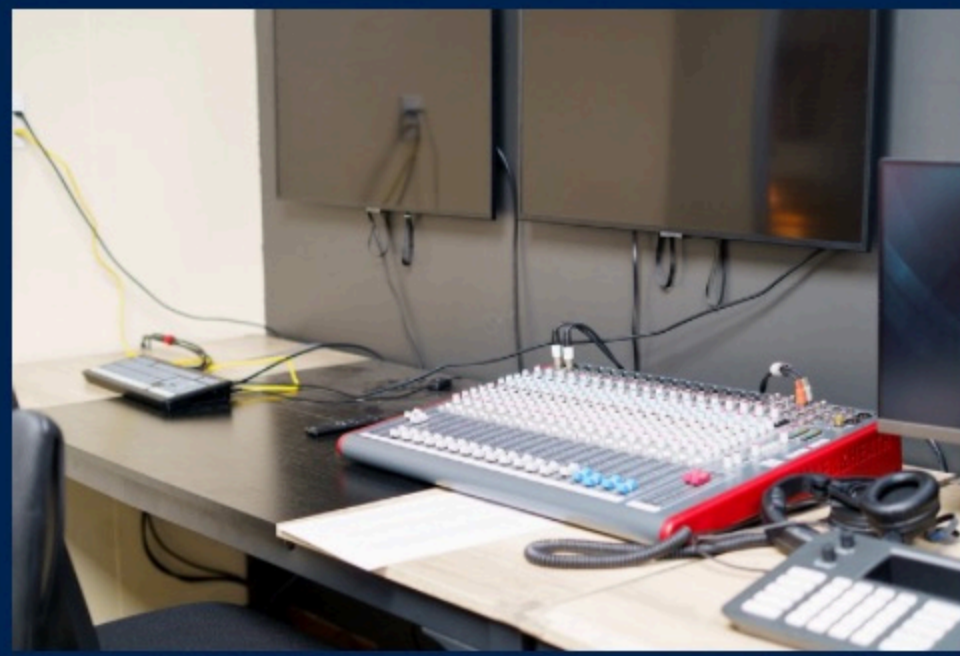
A little girl once opened a big box under the Christmas tree to find a giant doll that, when set upright, towered over her. Her parents noticed a few minutes later that the toy had fallen to the side, but the little girl was having a ball playing in the oversized box. We're apt to do the same at Christmas, discarding the baby but having a great time with the wrappings. This Christmas season, I'd like to turn our attention to that baby. When Christ was born, He was named Jesus. The name of Jesus is a name above every name. It was a simple name because He identified with simple people. "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Joshua," meaning "Jehovah Saves," or "Salvation of Yahweh." Entwined into the syllables of that name, we see the suffering He would experience and the salvation He would bestow.

All through the Gospels, we find that name over and over—172 times in Matthew alone: "Jesus was born in Bethlehem...Jesus was led up by the Spirit. Jesus began to preach. Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching..." The greatest songs in history have been about this sweet name: "Jesus, the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease... Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so...Jesus is the sweetest name I know, and He's just the same as His lovely name." The name Jesus contains and conveys His mission—to seek and to save those who are lost. In Gabriel's brief announcement, four different "sonships" are given to Jesus. He is (1) Son of Mary (v. 31); (2) Son of the Highest (v. 32); (3) Son of David (v. 32); and (4) Son of God (v. 35). Two of these references imply His human nature (son of Mary; son of David), and the other two refer to His divine nature (Son of the Highest; Son of God). He is both God and man. (John 1:1 KJV)

Only Christianity presents a God who, out of love, became a human being through the womb of a virgin to provide forgiveness for our sins. (John 1:14 KJV)

He will be given the throne of David and will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end. His kingdom is a mighty kingdom. If the skies could part as they did for Stephen in Acts 7, we would see Jesus on His throne, worshipped by angels, feared by demons. (1 Corinthians 15:24 ESV) Jesus was born without human interaction, of divine conception, of a virgin who had never known a man. Here we enter one of Christianity's deepest and holiest mysteries. (Galatians 4:4 ESV) Gabriel explained it using two phrases: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you," and "the power of the Highest will overshadow you." Similar language in the Old Testament describes the clouds of glory resting on the tabernacle in the wilderness. In some mysterious way, the creative power of God was to come upon Mary as the clouds of glory had rested upon the ancient tabernacle. As a result, the child Mary bore would be called the Son of God. (1 Timothy 3:16 KJV) Mary's response to this message was sincere and straightforward: "Behold, the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." When we come face-to-face with God's wondrous plan for us—a plan that is always centered around Jesus Christ—there is no response better than: "Behold, I am your servant. Let it be to me according to Your word."

# Behind the Scenes



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