

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO CHRISTMAS**

Adapted from a family talk by the Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton

Looking ahead to Christmas is always exciting. It is fun to think about the wonderful things that can happen at Christmas time. When you think of Christmas you may be thinking about the presents you're hoping to get, or about some special holiday fun that you're going to share with your friends. Perhaps you're looking forward with excitement to decorating your home, and to setting up the Christmas tree with all the pretty lights and balls. There are many, many things about Christmas that you can look forward to with excitement.

Imagine a world without Christmas. Imagine a world where no one knew what really happened on Christmas day, where no one celebrated the birth of the Lord as a little baby in Bethlehem. If you can imagine such a world, you know how people before the Lord came into the world must have felt. You look ahead to Christmas with excitement. Imagine how much people must have looked ahead to the very first Christmas. For thousands of years people had been wondering when Christmas would happen. They knew that it would happen, but they did not know when it would happen.

How did people know that the Lord was going to be born? The answer is found in many places in the Old Testament. Again and again, in the Word, people were told by the Lord that He would come. These statements are called Christmas prophecies, because they predict the Lord's coming. We hear many of them at Christmas: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.... And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6-7). "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near" (Numbers 24:17).

These are just a few of the predictions about the Lord's coming that we find in the Old Testament. In all, there are seventy-six different Christmas prophecies. Each of them reminded people about the coming of the Lord and so helped them to feel the excitement of what would happen. Just as you look ahead with excitement to Christmas, so people, when they heard the prophecies, looked ahead with excitement to the Lord's coming.

You know that these predictions about the Lord's coming on earth did come true. The very first Christmas did happen. The Lord Himself was born on earth as a little Baby in a manger, in Bethlehem of Judea. And this little Child grew up to rule over all the heavens as King of kings and Lord of lords.

## Preschool Talk

What an exciting time Christmas is. What a wonderful time, full of surprises, full of awe. Certainly, when we think of Christmas we can rejoice and be filled with the glad tidings that the angels proclaimed to the shepherds when they said: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).

Amen.