



December 2023

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

Every year we celebrate Christmas in the last week of the last month of the year. Is *December 25 the end or the beginning?* Are we celebrating the end of a passing year or the beginning of a New Year...or are we celebrating the beginning of the end?

For the past three years we have battled deadly foes, unseen like COVID and visible like the tyrannical Putin of Russia and the unspeakable brutality of war, most particularly in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. *Dare we hope that December 2023 is the end of some really difficult years, and that relative peace and prosperity is on the way for our world?*

If you start reading the Bible on the last page you will find this passage: “*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*” [the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet] says the Lord God, “the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 22:13, my emphasis).

The passage says of Jesus that he is “the Beginning and the End” but could it also be he is **the Beginning of the End?** As the “*Sound of Music*” advises, “let’s start at the very beginning, a very good place to start”:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning (John 1:1-2)

Jesus was present **in the very beginning**, whenever that was. He, the divine Word of God, came into our world in the person we know as Jesus, the Son of God and the son of man—the God-man, to be in our present. He was here, in the flesh, in our flesh, just like us, though not completely for he was and is the God-Man. God incarnate.

“**I am the Alpha and the Omega,**” says the Lord God, “**who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty**” (Revelation 1:8).

Jesus is, he was and he will return. Jesus 1) is here now in our present, as our risen Lord—2) he was here then, in the flesh, as he walked the face of this earth, served, gave, loved, was crucified and risen—and 3) he will, one day, be here, once again, on this earth, when he returns.

The birth of Jesus is the official beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the planting of the flag of the Kingdom of God on the shores of the kingdoms of this world—*the birth of Jesus is the beginning* of the reign of God’s love, mercy and grace.

The birth of Jesus is the beginning of the end of the lust, corruption and brutality of the kingdoms of this world. This is the GRAND HOPE of the gospel—this is our abiding faith. **He is, and was and is to come.** The birth of Jesus ushered in a new era, when the Son of Righteousness, the Light of World came to become our risen Lord, and thus be our Beginning, our Present and our End.

Almost everything we humans know has a shelf life. We and the world around us is matter, and slowly decomposing. We are mortal and corruptible. We are, and the world around us is, aging out.

We have an expiration date. All things other than God are limited, created, combustible, subject to wear-and-tear and eventual death.

While we humans naturally long for stability and security, the world seems terribly insecure and shaky. We can feel anxious and overwhelmed, disconnected, and sometimes angry.

Jesus was born into a world just like the one we live in—for that matter, the world that the vast majority of humans who have ever lived have experienced. A few months ago I was a part of a group conversation in which several others expressed the desire of so many in this world—when can we “get back” to the good old days, the way things were before COVID and before wars like Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine?

While there have been times and places when and where people experienced more peace and stability than others, the history of our world, and in particular since the time of Jesus Christ has been one horrific crisis after another.

Christ-followers do not look back to some idyllic time of happiness and prosperity but instead we go forward, in him, with him, transformed and transported forward to the fulness of the Kingdom of God. The good news of the gospel is that we, by the grace of God, we—ALL HUMANITY—may be saved and rescued from the misery, pain and corruption of our own making—by Jesus who is, who was and who is to come. **Jesus is the beginning of the end.**

Jesus was not born into a dream world in which pain, poverty and abuse did not exist. In fact, Jesus came into this world, into this barnyard of swill and corruption, at one of the worst times of oppression, evil, suffering and depravity.

- *The time when Jesus was born* was a time of evil, corruption, political strife and deep lines of division and hatred—it still is.
- *The time when Jesus was born* was a time of religious totalitarianism, oppression, shame and guilt—it still is.
- *The time when Jesus was born* was a time of political power with all of its graft and bribery and deals, not to mention brutal tyrants and dictators who unleash death and mayhem—it still is.
- *The time when Jesus was born* was a time of class contempt and bigotry, whether of racism, culture or religion—it still is.
- *The time when Jesus was born* was a time of self-centered nationalism, militarism and bloodshed, of grinding poverty and diseases run rampant, of hunger, drought and starvation—it still is.

Our hope, our faith, and our dream is that the birth of Jesus is the beginning of the end of warfare, greed, poverty, corruption, hatred, bigotry and oppression. **Jesus is the beginning of the end!**

Jesus’ birth was the introduction, the official beginning of the Kingdom of God, and the beginning of the end of the Kingdoms of this world.

You may remember one of Winston Churchill’s uplifting, inspirational clichés as the tide of World War 2 seemed to start to turn in favor of the Allied powers. On the occasion of the victory at El Alamein, November 10, 1942 Churchill said: “*This is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.*”

Jesus' birth can be summarized as just that—the end of the beginning of the kingdoms of this world. *“The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever”* (Revelation 11:15).

I conclude this last letter of 2023 from me to you with a brief excerpt from one of my favorite authors, Frederick Buechner, in his book *“The Faces of Jesus”*

...when the child was born, the whole course of human history was changed. That is a truth as unassailable as any truth. Art, music, literature, Western culture itself with all its institutions and Western man's whole understanding of himself and his world—it is impossible to conceive how differently things would have turned out if that birth had not happened... for millions of people who have lived since, the birth of Jesus made possible not just a new way of understanding life but a new way of living it.

...it is a truth that, for twenty centuries, there have been untold numbers of men and women who, in untold numbers of ways, have been so grasped by the child who was born, so caught up in the message he taught and the life he lived, that they have found themselves profoundly changed by their relationship with him.

...What the birth meant—meant to them, to the world—was the truth that mattered to them most, and when all is said and done, perhaps the only truth that matters to anyone.

I conclude this final letter of 2023 from me to you with best wishes, love and prayers to you and yours from:

- 1) all of us on our CWR/PTM staff,
- 2) all of your Friends and fellow Partners in this ministry, as many, perhaps including you, assure us of prayers for fellow Friends and Partners around this world, and
- 3) a note of comfort to you because Jesus is, was and is to come, and his birth brings us incredible hope, knowing that his birth is the announcement of the beginning of the Kingdom of God which will know no ends, and the end of this world, which is fast fading away. The Light of Jesus will one day obliterate the darkness of this world—that is our hope, and that is the promise of the birth of Jesus!

I conclude this last letter of 2023 from me to you with yet another citation of the magnificent book of Revelation:

“Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come...” (Revelation 1:4).

Your brother in Christ, your friend and your partner in this ongoing work of ministry to the entire world—announcing the love, mercy, grace and forgiveness of God,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

CWR/PTM Prayer List—December 2023

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Pray for my son's struggle with alcoholism, and pray for my brother who's recovering from a knee injury.—Arizona

Please pray for my sister who has cancer. Thank you for all you do to encourage us and give us hope.—Oregon

Please pray for my health issues, including enlarged prostate and high blood pressure.—North Carolina

Thanks for all you do to help us learn the truth and give us hope. PTM/CWR is in our prayers.—Puerto Rico

Please pray for me in the loss of my husband. I'm glad he's no longer suffering but I miss him terribly.—Massachusetts

Please pray for my brother who is struggling financially. Thanks for your prayers.—West Virginia

Please pray for my brother who is an alcoholic and has been for years. His wife is divorcing him.—Indiana

Please pray for my healing and recovery from a heart attack and hospitalization.—Canada

Please pray about the US/Mexico border and for an end to drug cartels and human trafficking.—New York

Please pray for my youngest brother and his wife as they suffer from several health conditions.—Washington

Please pray for reduction in the senseless shootings in my city and for less violence all around the world.—Pennsylvania

Please pray for two close friends who are suffering with severe diabetic conditions.—Virginia

My daughter had surgery on her intestine and is waiting for test results. Pray for me to find a place near her.—Arizona

Please pray for my grand-daughter who struggles with autism.—New York

Please ask God to heal and strengthen me, now as I am in my 81st year. I thank God for CWR/PTM.—California

Please pray for a quick healing for my son. His shoulder was broken in two places, requiring two screws. He also has a cracked scapula and collapsed lungs. He needs to be able to return to work.—Kansas

Please pray for my six-year-old grandson. He's in a bad situation with his mother and her boyfriend.—Delaware

Please pray for God's healing of my niece who has breast cancer.—Kentucky

Pray that my family will be taken care of financially and that we stay protected and healthy.—California

Please pray for my mother who has pneumonia and the doctors don't think she will live.—Pennsylvania

Please pray for a close friend who lost everything in a house fire where he lived.—Virginia

Please pray for me and my sister, as we both suffer with limited physical and cognitive mobility.—Arizona

Please pray that God will help me persevere through my pain and suffering. Thanks CWR/PTM for all you do.—Texas

I pray for the love and peace of God to reign over our nation and the world. May God bless everyone at CWR/PTM and keep up the work you do.—Alabama

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.