



PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE — 2024

*“The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned.”*
(Matthew 4:16, quoting Isaiah 9:2)

In the midst of these dark days of continuing conflict and uncertainty in our region, We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, remain steadfast in proclaiming to our local congregations and the wider world the eternal Christmas message of the True Light shining in the darkness: the birth of our Lord Jesus in Bethlehem (John 1:5).

For in Christ’s Nativity, the light of God’s salvation first came into the world, enlightening all who would receive Him, both then and now, and offering them “grace upon grace” to overcome the dark forces of evil that ceaselessly conspire to bring about the destruction of God’s creation (John 1:16).

John the Baptist later testified to the light as “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the Lord’” (John 1:23; Isaiah 40:3). As the above passage reveals, its divine rays first dawned upon our spiritual ancestors, who received the message of salvation while dwelling “in the region and shadow of death” (Matthew 4:16). Enduring many hardships, they went on to pass along the Holy Light of Christ’s Resurrection, becoming His witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout the Holy Land, and to the ends of the earth.

This ancient path of redemption leads us full-circle to our time, when wars still rage and untold millions in our region and around the globe continue to suffer grievously. Outwardly, little seems to have changed. Yet inwardly, our Lord Jesus Christ’s holy birth sparked a spiritual revolution that continues to transform countless hearts and minds towards the ways of justice, mercy, and peace (Micah 6:8; Ephesians 2:17).

For those families of the faithful who have remained in the Holy Land, as well as those who have joined us, it is our privilege to continue to testify to the sacred light of Christ in the very places where He was born, ministered, and offered Himself on our behalf, rising victoriously from the grave to a new resurrected life. We do this by offering Him our worship at the holy sites; by welcoming pilgrims and visitors into our midst; by proclaiming His sacred Gospel to all who will hear; by continuing His ministries of teaching, healing, and loving-kindness; and by advocating for “liberty for the captives, and release to the prisoners” (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18–19).

In this hopeful Christmas spirit, we give thanks to the Almighty for the recent ceasefire between two of the warring parties in our region, and we call for it to be expanded into Gaza and many other places, bringing an end to the wars that have plagued our part of the world. We likewise renew our appeal for the release of all prisoners and captives, the return of the homeless and displaced, the treatment of the sick and wounded, the relief of those who hunger and thirst, the restoration of unjustly seized or threatened properties, and the rebuilding of all public and private civilian structures that have been damaged or destroyed.

Finally, during this sacred Christmas season and beyond, we call upon all Christians and those of goodwill around the world to join us in praying and working towards this noble mission, both in Christ’s homeland and wherever there is conflict and strife. For by together doing so, we will indeed be truly honoring the Prince of Peace who was born so humbly in a stable in Bethlehem more than two millennia ago.

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem