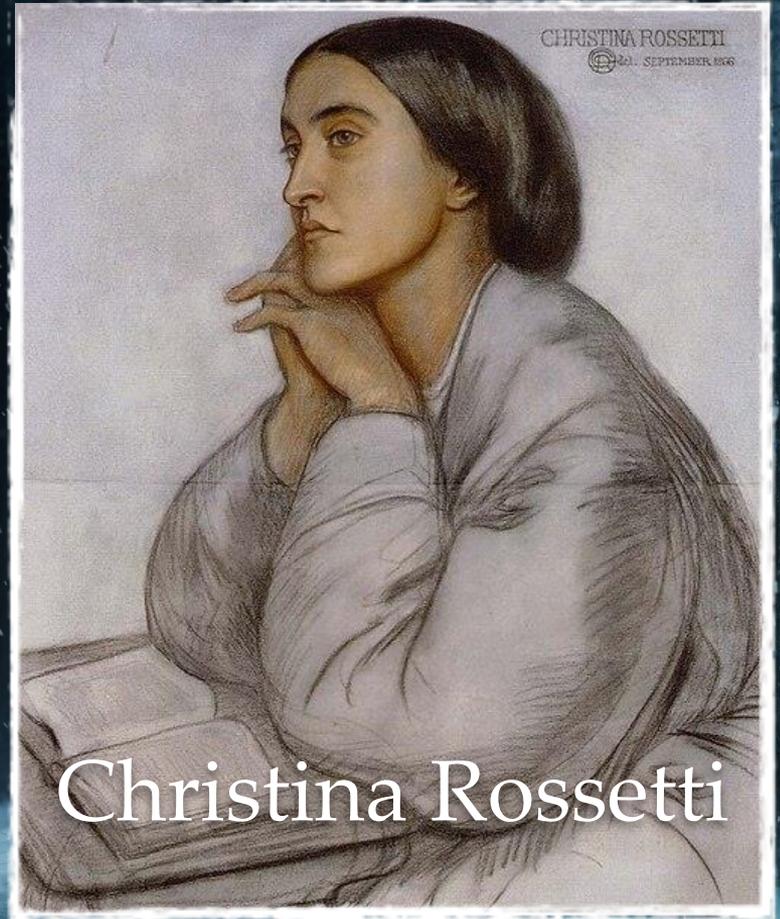
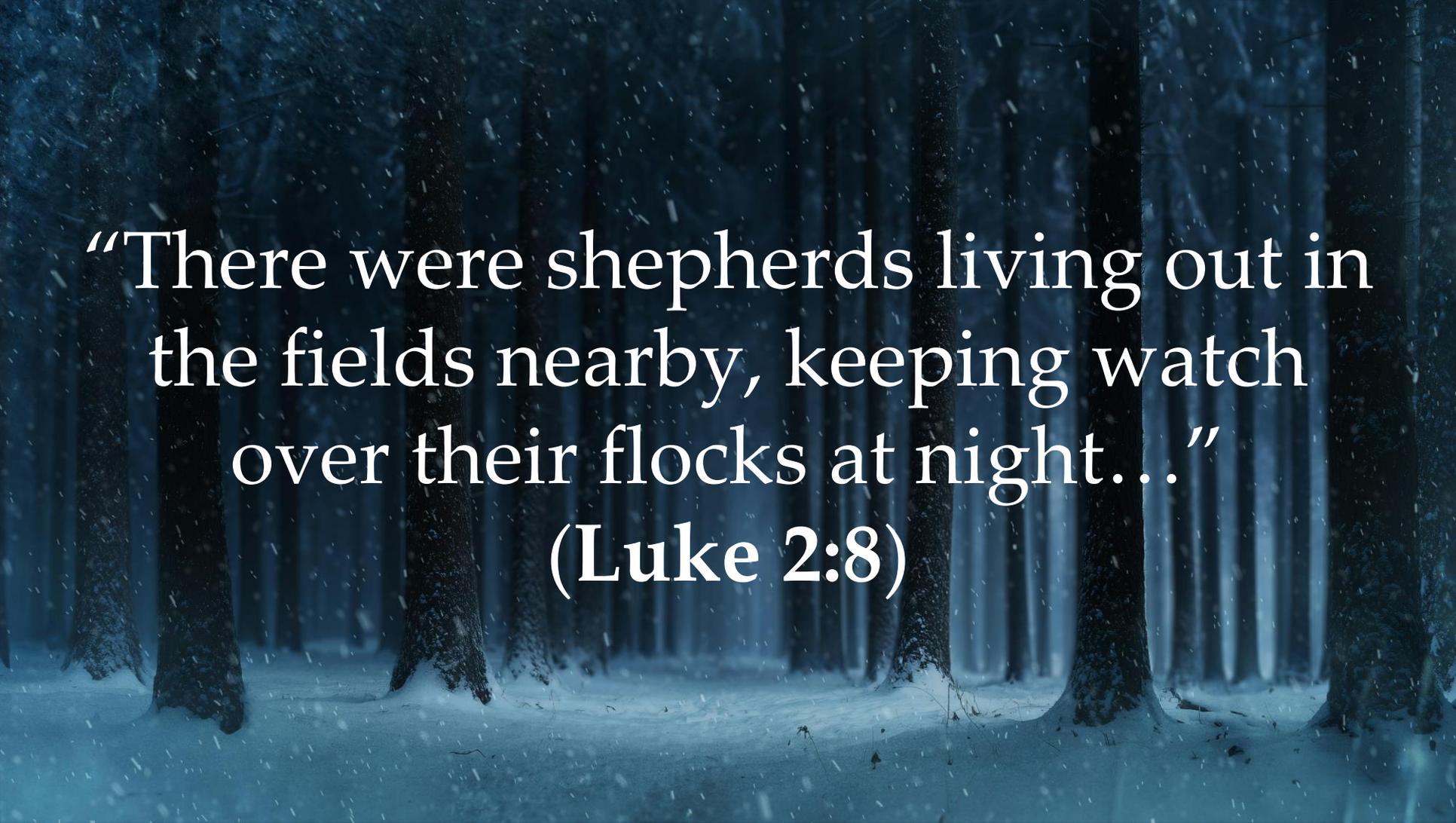




In the Bleak Midwinter

“In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on
Snow, snow on snow on
snow,
In the bleak midwinter,
long long ago.”



A dark, snowy forest at night. The scene is dimly lit, with snowflakes falling from the sky, creating a soft, white glow against the dark background. The trees are silhouetted against the light, and the ground is covered in a layer of snow. The overall atmosphere is quiet and serene.

“There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night...”

(Luke 2:8)

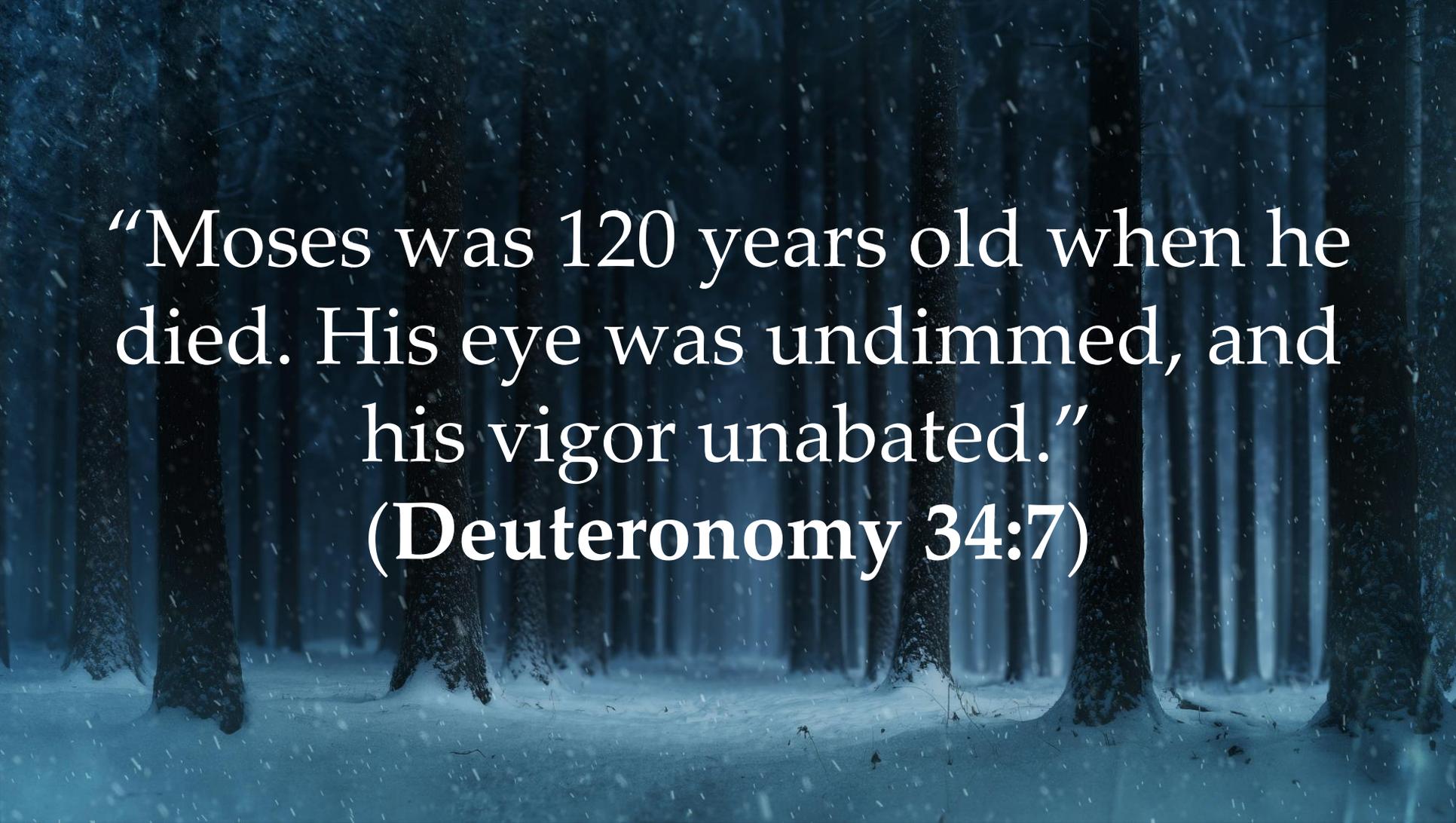


Saturnalia & The Feast of Sol Invictus

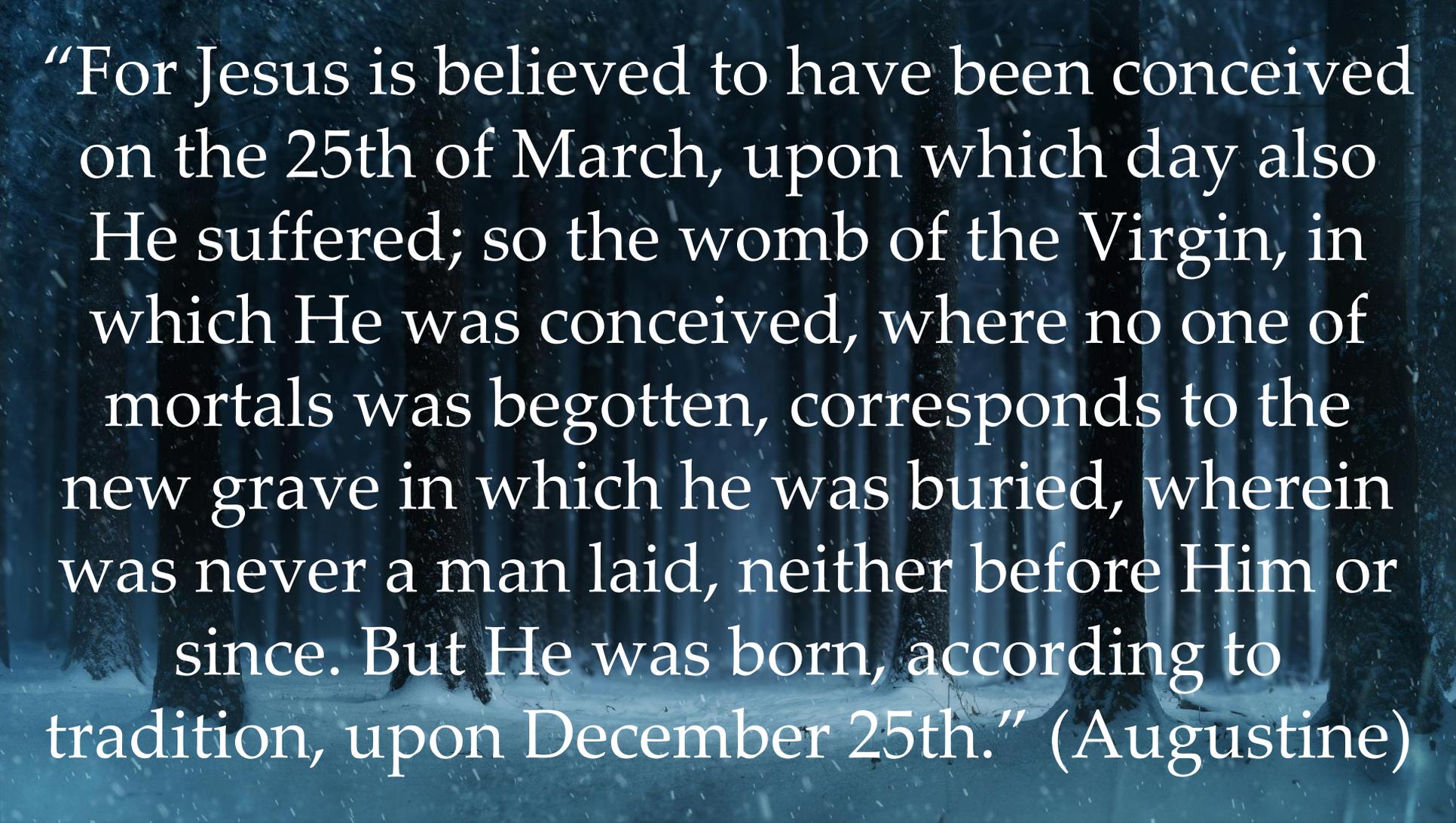


Sextus
Julius
Africanus

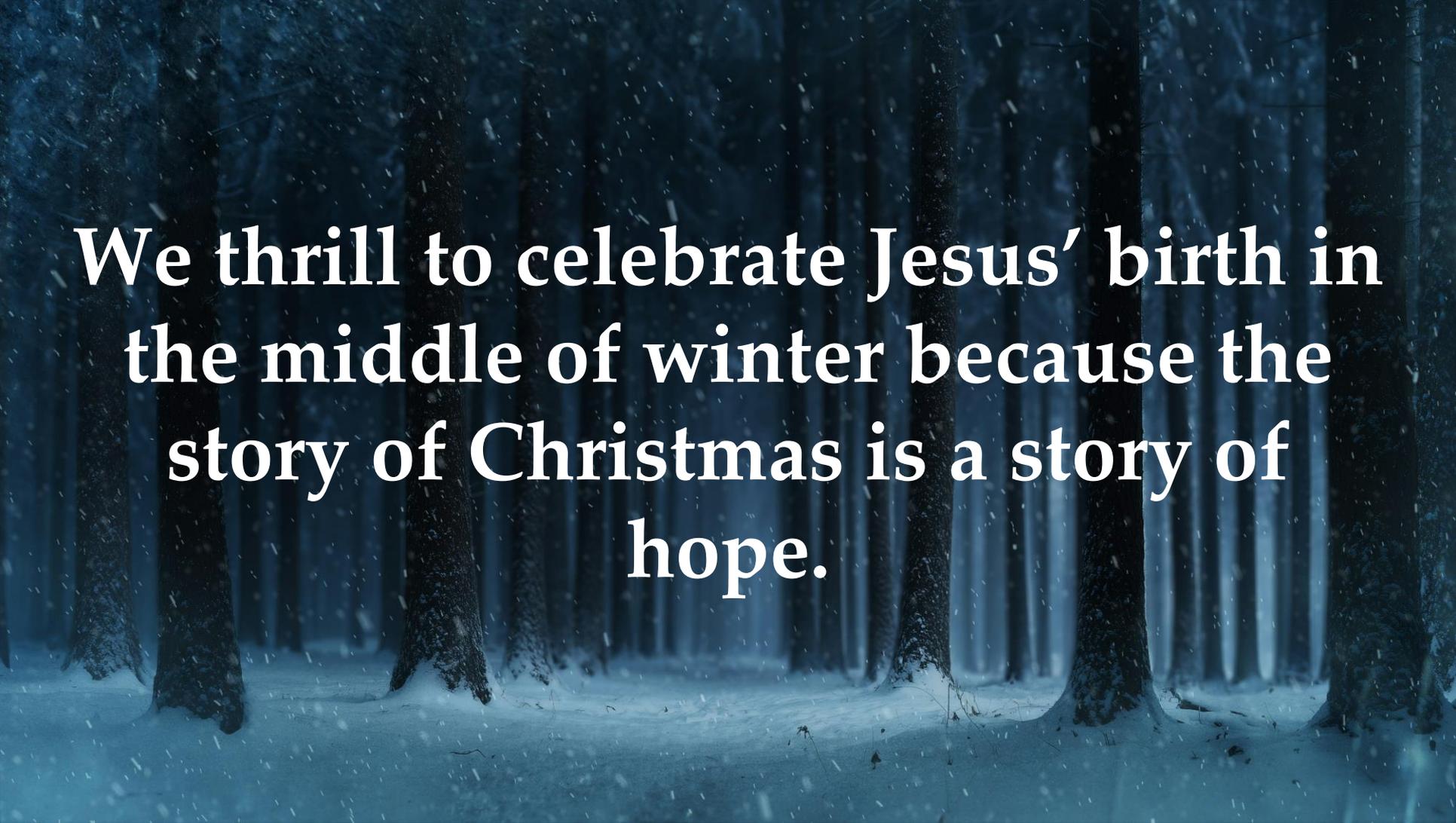
(160 – 240 AD)



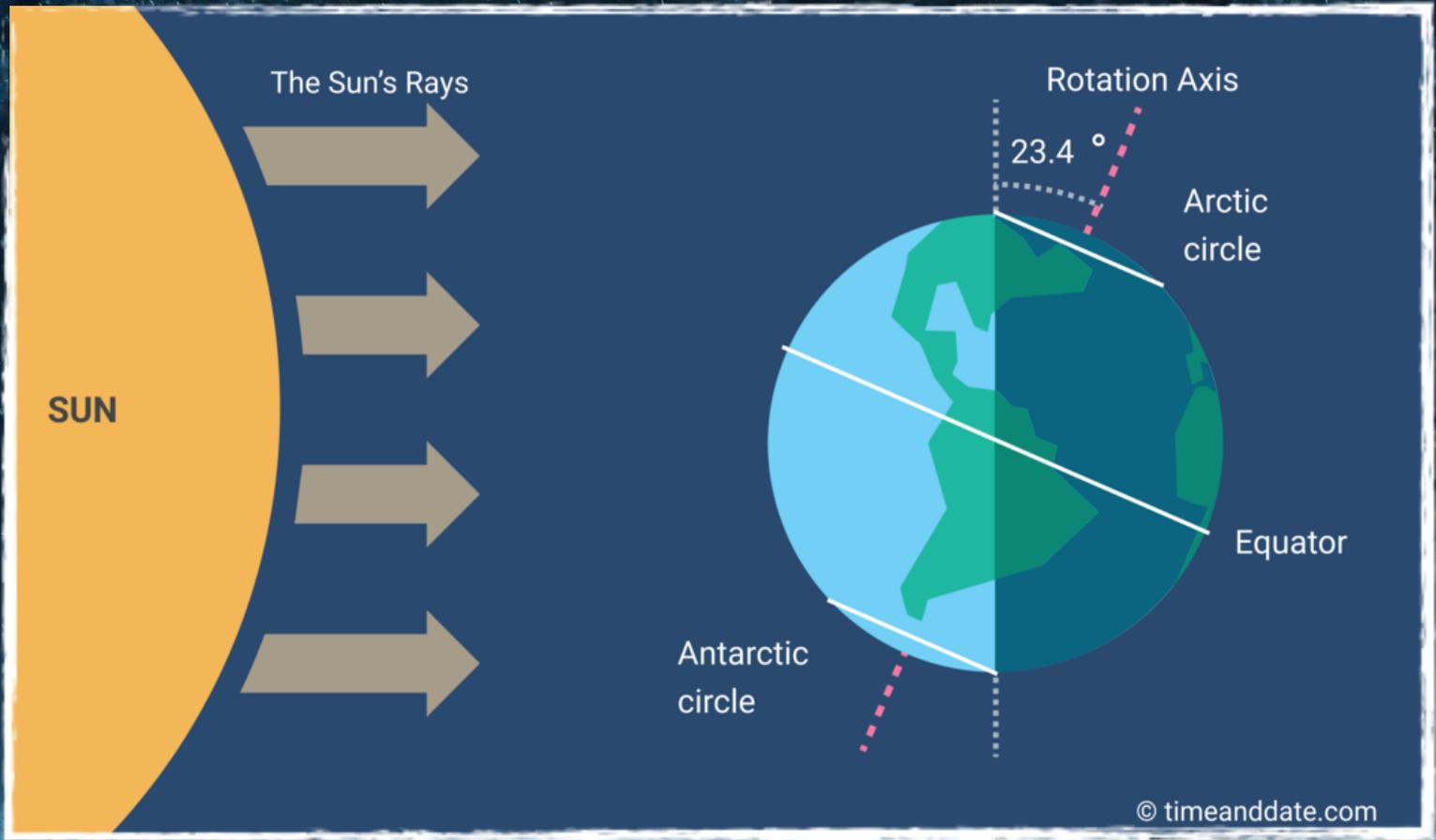
“Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.”
(Deuteronomy 34:7)



“For Jesus is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also He suffered; so the womb of the Virgin, in which He was conceived, where no one of mortals was begotten, corresponds to the new grave in which he was buried, wherein was never a man laid, neither before Him or since. But He was born, according to tradition, upon December 25th.” (Augustine)

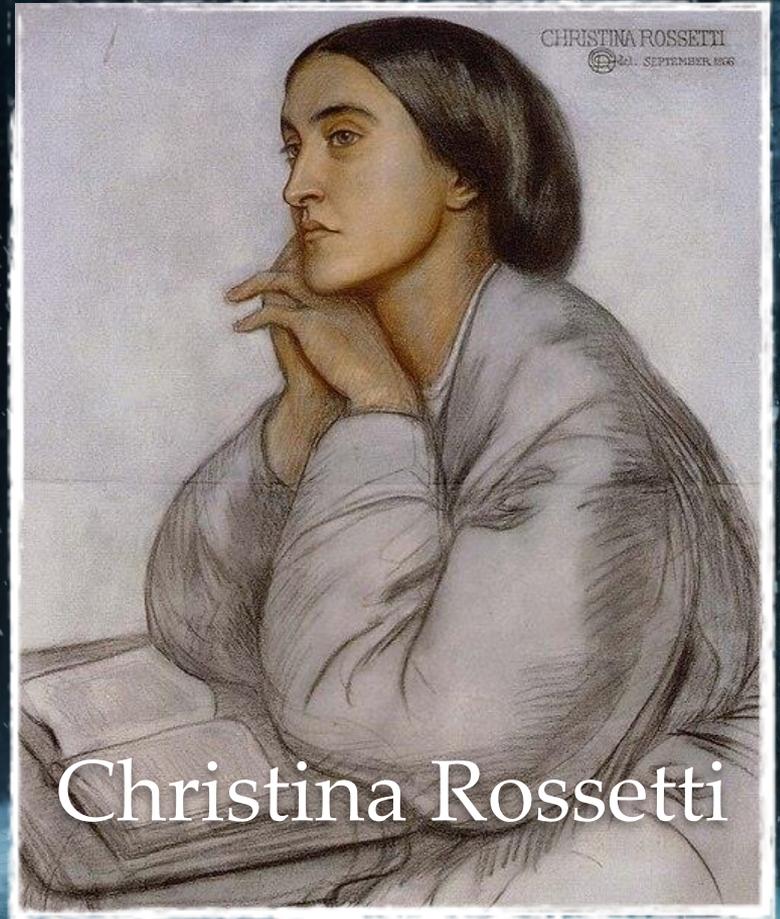


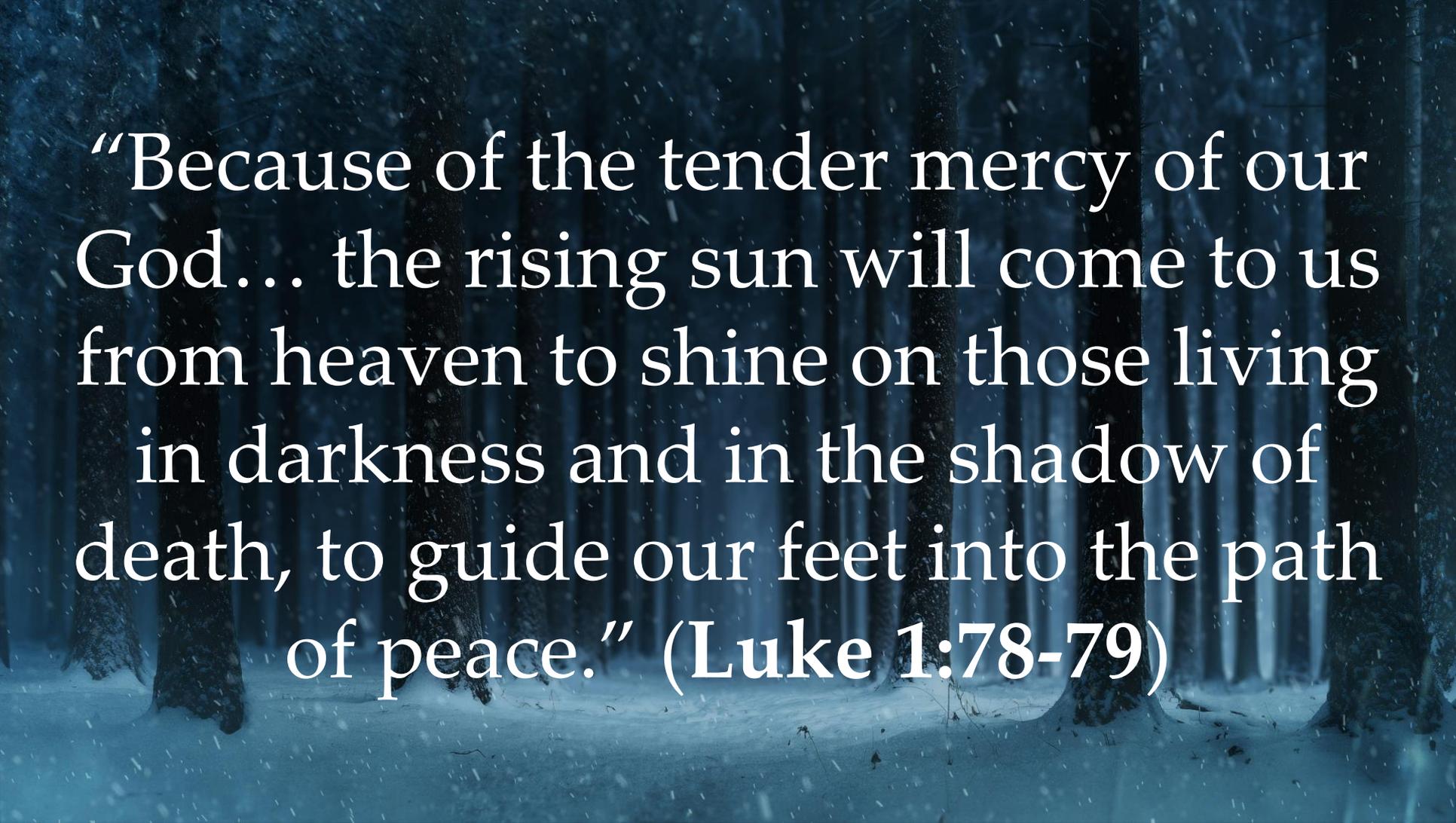
**We thrill to celebrate Jesus' birth in
the middle of winter because the
story of Christmas is a story of
hope.**



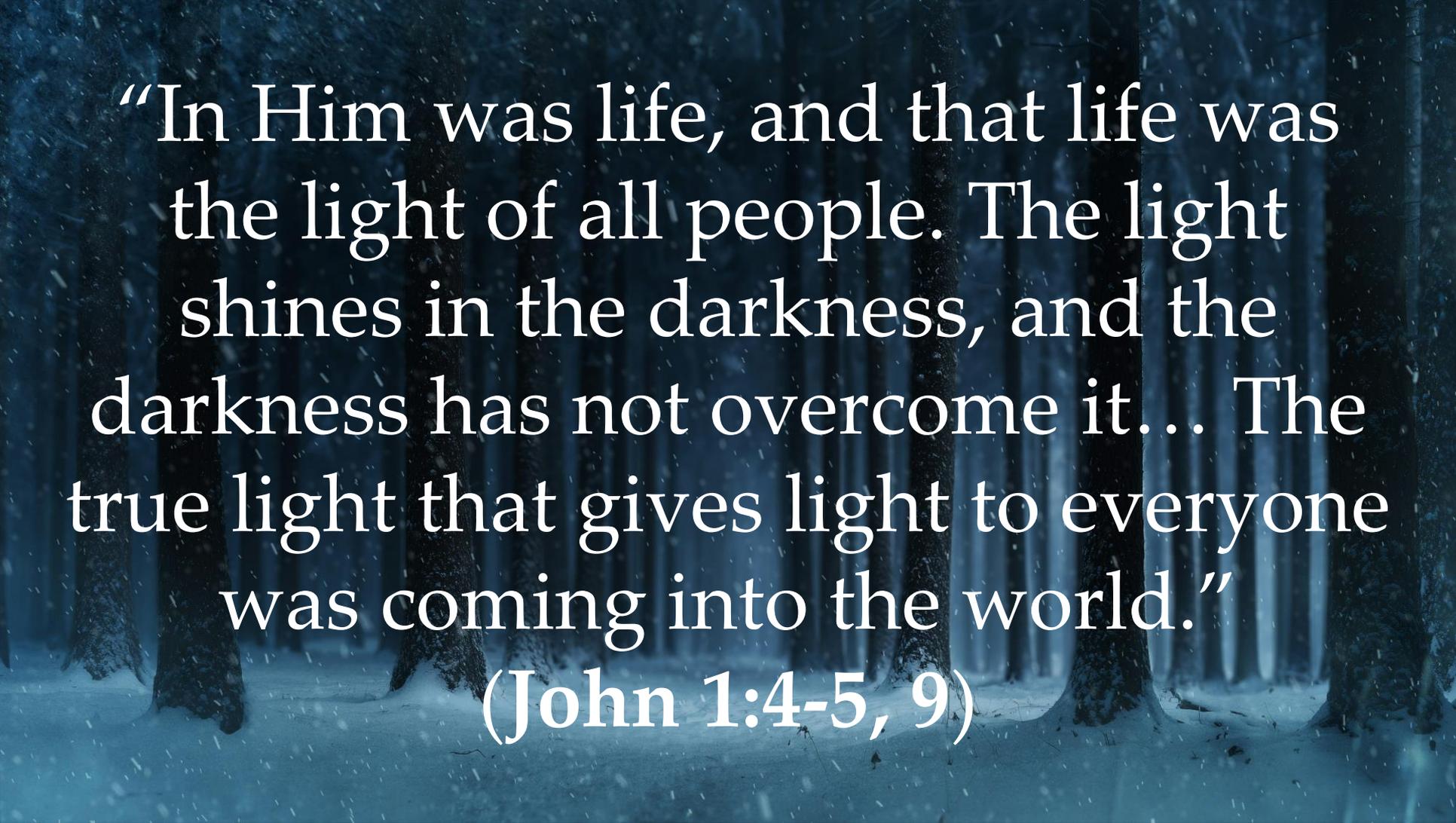
The Winter Solstice, “Midwinter”

“In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on
Snow, snow on snow on
snow,
In the bleak midwinter,
long long ago.”



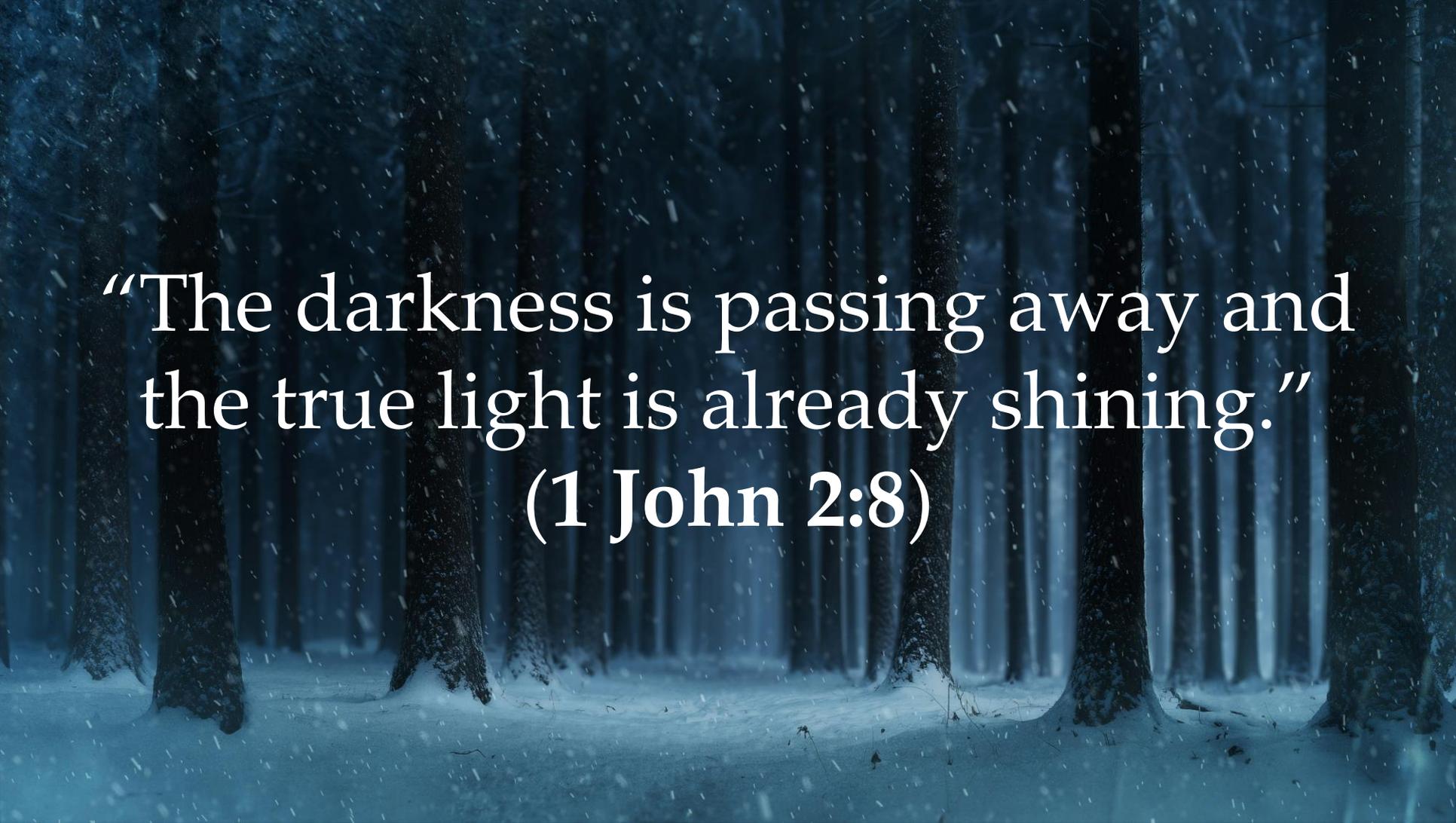


“Because of the tender mercy of our God... the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” (Luke 1:78-79)



“In Him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.”

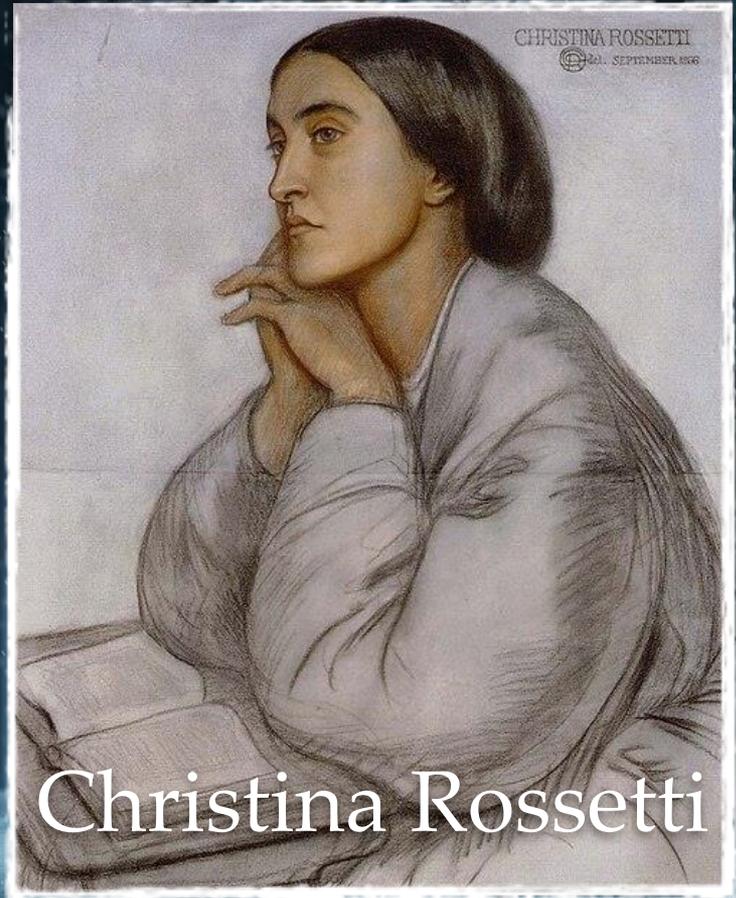
(John 1:4-5, 9)



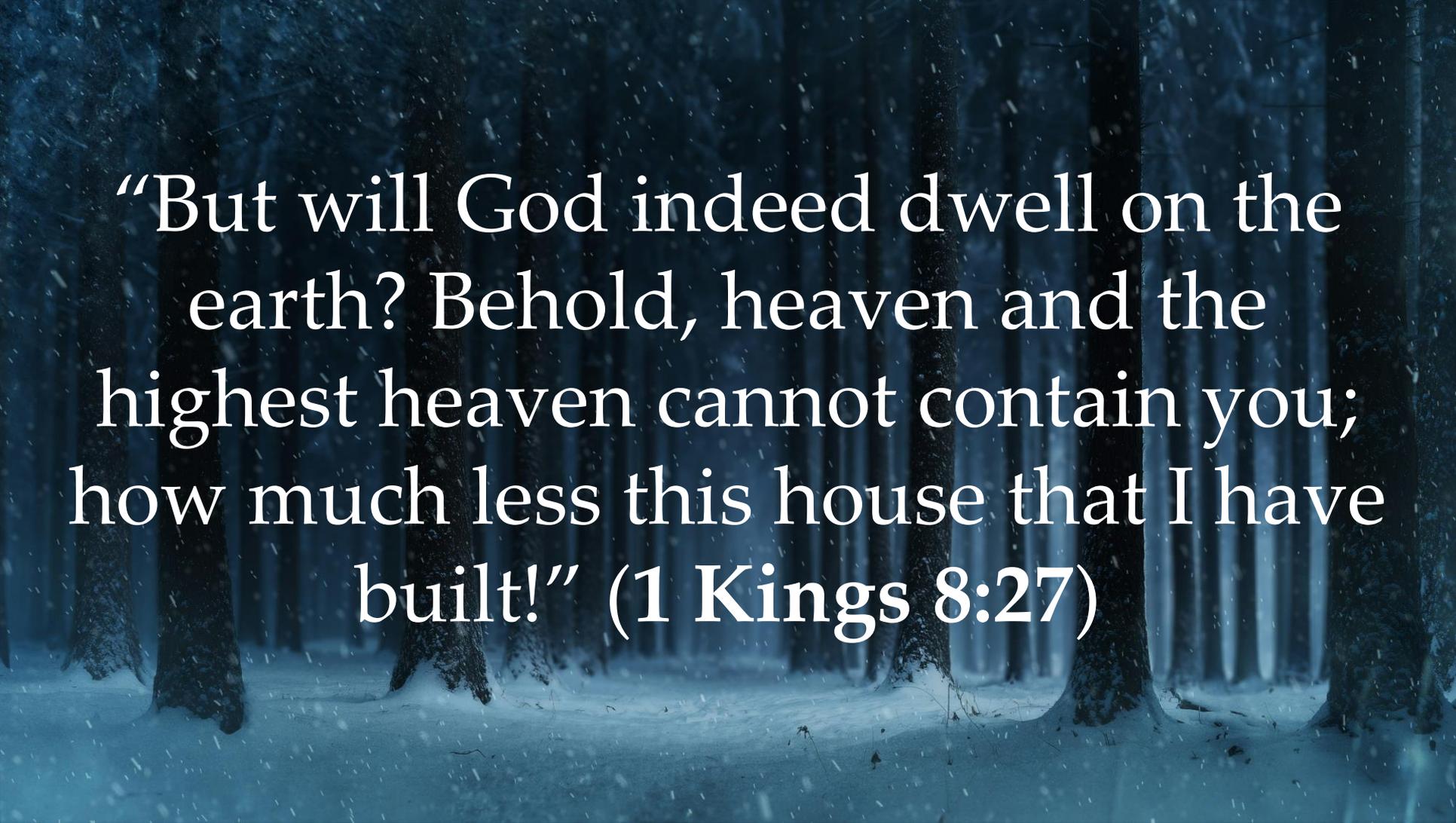
“The darkness is passing away and
the true light is already shining.”
(1 John 2:8)

“Heaven cannot hold Him,
nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee
away when He comes to
reign.

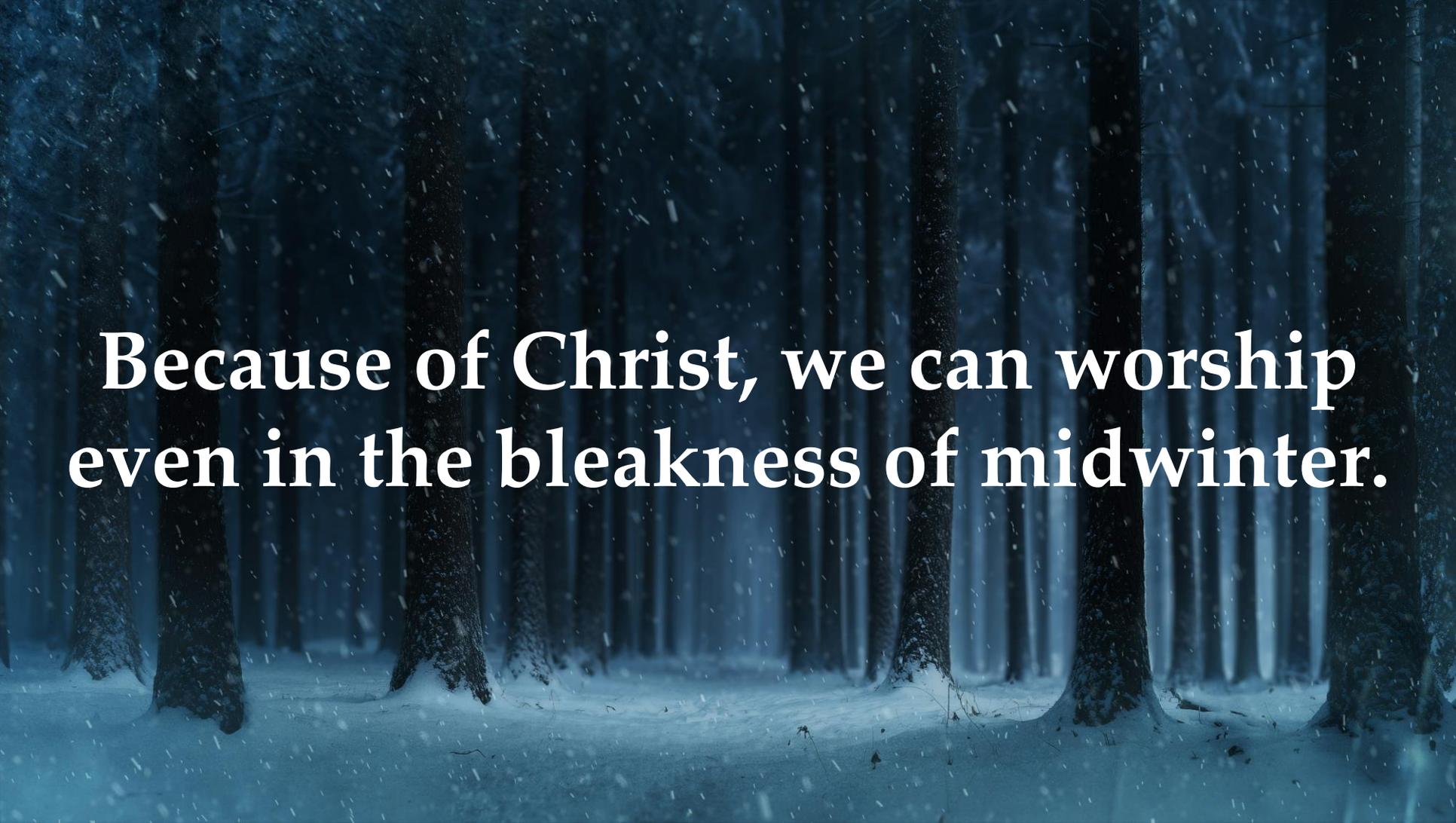
In the bleak midwinter a
manger did suffice
The Lord God Incarnate,
Jesus Christ.”



Christina Rossetti



“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27)

A dark, blue-toned forest scene with snow falling, serving as a background for the text. The image shows several tree trunks in a snowy forest, with a heavy snowfall creating a soft, hazy atmosphere. The lighting is dim, emphasizing the cold and quiet nature of the scene.

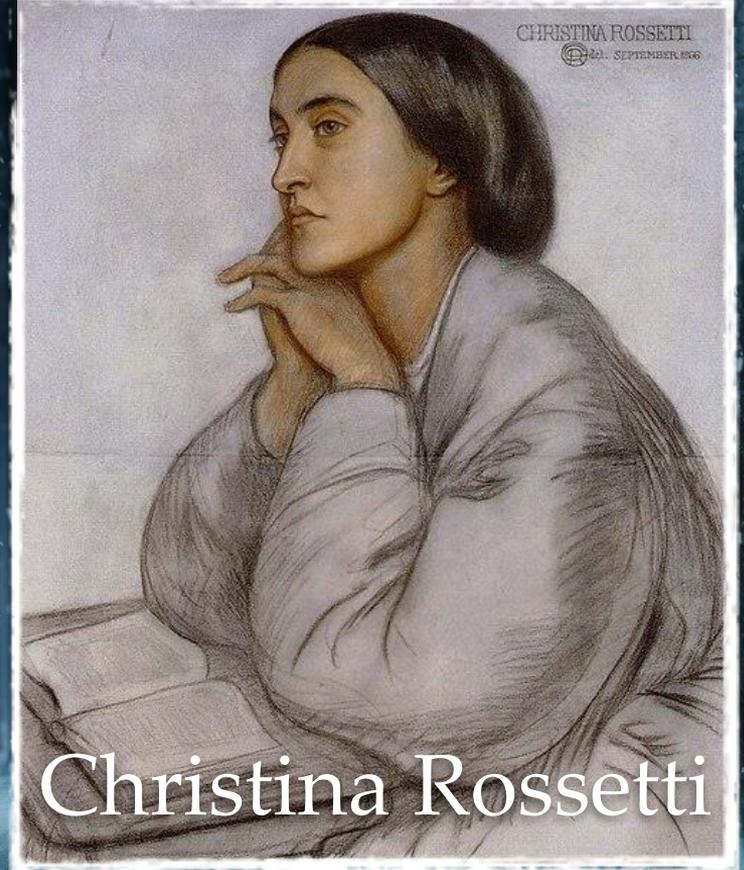
**Because of Christ, we can worship
even in the bleakness of midwinter.**

“What can I give Him,
poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I
would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise Man, I
would do my part;

But what can I give Him?
I'll give Him my heart.”



Christina Rossetti