

Christmas Story for 2009

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This past Friday I had the privilege to tell the Christmas Story to three children; a 4 year-old, a five year-old, and a 7 year-old. If you think that is an easy thing to do you just try to explain what a virgin is to a 4 year-old child.

And another thing, tell the true Christmas Story and use only the Bible. The small children had never heard it told that way and one of the grown-ups admitted that neither had they heard it told that way either.

It would be a good thing if I am wrong about this but I'm going to venture that some of you have never heard the Christmas Story using only the Bible.

Tis the season; so let's hear the Christmas Story for 2009. I have much more latitude since my audience this morning is mostly grown-ups.

Brother Walter said that he was glad that he was not scheduled to preach this year around Christmas because he had already done all his Christmas stuff.

Well, over the past forty years I too have preached on all of the events in singular fashion. These were individual sermons on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy; the census; the Incarnation; the manger scene in the Inn; the shepherds who visit the Christ child; the star in the East; Jesus' fulfillment of the Law of Moses in His circumcision; Mary's purification in the temple; Simeon and Anna in the temple; the visit of the Wise Men; Herod's attempt to kill the newborn King; and the flight into Egypt. Each subject is important and can appropriately be the focus of an entire message.

Please bear with me this morning because this Christmas message will be nothing new; I simply want to relate the "Christmas Story for 2009" from the Scriptures.

So have your Bibles open and find the Scriptures while I tell you the Christmas story. "I Love to Tell the Story of Jesus and His Love."

On Wednesday Brother Gables read from John Chapter 1 and commented on the fact that Jesus is the Creator. Let me add that this is where the Christmas Story begins. When I talked with those small children about the Christmas Story I began with God and Creation, the Garden of Eden, and how sin began, and what is sin.

Mr. Charles Alexander has an excellent commentary on the Spiritual Interpretation of John's Gospel. His title for Chapter One is "The Uncreated Word." That's who the Baby Jesus is: God!

Turn to John 1:

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 1:14

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The darkness did not comprehend it!

What spiritual blindness; what ignorance; what arrogance; what darkness!

What darkness there is today when a person can be religious and even celebrate Christmas without Jesus Christ and still considered to be saved; but without repentance and faith in Christ alone.

Many people get all sentimental about Christmas and never have a thought about Jesus of Nazareth, Who He is, and why He was born.

The Savior came from eternity where and when there was only the Triune God in pure Spirit. The words "where and when" are meaningless when applied to eternity. In eternity there is no "when" and there is no "where." God is nowhere because He is everywhere!

There was no light and it was not dark; there was just pure Spirit. And the God created the heavens and the earth. God spoke the universe into existence out of nothing!

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Human history progressed, rather digressed, for about 4000 years from its beginning in the Garden of Eden until it was time for the testimony of the prophets to be realized.

Revelation 19:10

“... Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Then into a sin-darkened world, that did not comprehend it, the Savior was born into the midst of a world of sinners; many of whom He came to save and they too did not comprehend it.

And they still do not comprehend it unless and until God the Holy Spirit seeks them out and by an act of God's sovereign will He gives to them the new birth.

Sometime read and meditate on Isaiah 45. While the smart people of this world worship the false god of evolution we have the record of the Creator who was born of a virgin according to the Scriptures.

Have you ever considered how it was before Creation - when there was only God? God revealed a hint of this to Isaiah. There was no light and it was not dark; there was just pure Spirit. Our finite minds can only think in terms of light and darkness; We can't imagine neither light nor darkness.

You physics majors know that cold is the absence of heat, and that darkness is the absence of light.
But how about neither light nor darkness?

Isaiah 45:5-7

⁵ I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other;
There is no God besides Me.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me,
⁶ That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting
That *there is* none besides Me.
I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other;
⁷ I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity;
I, the LORD, do all these *things*.'

This is the Year of our Lord 2009 and by tradition on Friday of this week, December 25th, we will celebrate the birth of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, born of a virgin according to the prophecy of Isaiah [7:14], and born in the little town of Bethlehem in Judea, according to the prophecy of Micah [5:2].

Isaiah 7:13-14

¹³ Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Micah 5:2

² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth *are* from of old,
From everlasting."

Bible question? What is Ephrathah?

Ephrathah

(2.) The ancient name of Bethlehem in Judah ([Gen 35:16,19; 48:7](#)). In [Ruth 1:2](#) it is called "Bethlehem-Judah," but the inhabitants are called "Ephrathites;" in [Mic 5:2](#), "Bethlehem-Ephrathah;" in [Matt 2:6](#), "Bethlehem in the land of Judah." In [Ps 132:6](#) it is mentioned as the place where David spent his youth, and where he heard much of the ark, although he never saw it till he found it long afterwards at Kirjath-jearim; i.e., the "city of the wood," or the "forest-town" ([1 Sam 7:1](#); comp. [2 Sam 6:3,4](#)).

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A young Jewish couple, whose names were Joseph and Mary, were betrothed and in the Jewish culture they were considered as being married, even though they had not consummated their marriage in sexual union.

The angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would bear a Son conceived of the Holy Spirit.

It is noteworthy that it was the angel Gabriel who informed Daniel when the Christ would be sent into the world. {Cf. Daniel 9:20-27}

Apparently the angel Gabriel was assigned the special privilege of announcing the coming of the Christ. Gabriel came to Daniel, to Mary, and to Joseph. My educated guess is that Gabriel was the "music director" when the heavenly hosts appeared to the shepherds on the night of His birth.

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!"

²⁹ But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, "*The* Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible."

³⁸ Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

What peace and faith that satisfied Mary {38}. But when Joseph learned that Mary, his betrothed, was with child and he knew that he could not be the father, they were faced with a "problem pregnancy."

Sav-A-Life ministers to women, mostly young girls, who are also faced with a "problem pregnancy." The abortion industry hovers over them and tries to convince them that it is reasonable and convenient to kill the "mass of tissue" that is their baby. There are better answers to problem pregnancies that don't involve taking an innocent life. Some of our members are directly involved in Sav-A-Life, Bessemer, viz. Debbie Bunger and Walter Swain.

Let's get back to Joseph and Mary's "problem pregnancy."

This child is inconvenient and will cause Joseph, a just man, to be humiliated and embarrassed. Joseph, because he was a just man, considered his only two options which were:

1) To make Mary a "public example," which would be to have her stoned to death for adultery; or 2) To divorce Mary, i. e. "put her away privately."

While Joseph, considered his two options the angel Gabriel came and gave Joseph a third option; the angel told Joseph that the baby boy in Mary's womb was conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Then in an act of faith, a faith that can only have its origin in God, Joseph believed the angel.

Then the angel Gabriel instructed Joseph, a son of David, that the Child's name shall be called Jesus, which means Deliverer, or Savior and that His name shall be called Immanuel, which is translated "God with us."

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the

Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,*" which is translated, "God with us."

²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

Now before the birth of the Christ-child, and in the providence of God, the Caesar, who was Augustus, ordered that a census be taken. That meant that everyone had to travel to the town of their birth to be registered. This is how God arranged for Joseph and Mary who lived about seventy miles to the north in Nazareth, to find it necessary to travel to Bethlehem, even though Mary was "great with child." Travel in those days was not easy, even for men and women not dealing with a child about to be born.

There were "No Vacancy" signs in all of the Motel Sixes so Joseph and Mary took lodging in a cow stable. The Creator of everything that is not God, the Almighty, the Everlasting Father, the Eternal Word [Logos] was about to become flesh. He would not be born in a palace like an earthly king; but a King He is.

Luke 2:1-7

And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³ So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

⁴ Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. ⁶ So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Bible has a lot to say about sheep and shepherds.

1 Peter 5:1-4

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

On the night of our Savior's birth, out on the hillside there were shepherds tending their flocks. Is it not fitting that the angelic announcement of the birth of the Chief Shepherd of our souls be made to shepherds?

Luke 2:8-20

⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

¹⁵ So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely* known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Everything that is God,

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;” {Colossians 2:9},

took on true humanity as a single cell in the womb of a virgin and the Man Jesus was born just like every other human, except for Adam and Eve, yet without sin because God sent Him into the world to save sinners, and one sinner cannot save another sinner!

The Savior was born under the Law, so on the eighth day, Joseph and Mary were still in Bethlehem; Jesus was circumcised according to the Law of Moses.

Luke 2:21

²¹ And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Notice that His circumcision and Mary’s purification are separated by over a month. So 33 days later the Law of Moses regarding the birth of a male child required that Mary present herself in the temple for her purification.

So the young couple took their newborn child, left Bethlehem, and went to the temple in Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice for Mary’s purification. They offered the sacrifice of the poor, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” The offering of the poor is enough to tell us that the wise men, the Magi, did not come to the stable in Bethlehem; else they would have had gold, frankincense, and myrrh, wealth enough to buy a lamb for the offering.

Luke 2:22-24

²² Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “*Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD*”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “*A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*”

While they were still in the temple a just and devout man named Simeon was there waiting for the Consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he saw the Lord’s Christ.

Luke 2:25-35

²⁵ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹ "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³² A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel."

³³ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵ (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

And the story is not complete without including Anna.

Luke 2:36-38

³⁶ Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷ and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. ³⁸ And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And what we are told next is ignored by many; Joseph and Mary immediately went home to Nazareth in Galilee.

Luke 2:39-40

³⁹ So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their *own* city, Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

The Bible is clear enough that the wise men that came from the East came first to Jerusalem and asked Herod the king, "where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

Herod and his party did not want to hear about another king so Herod called in all the chief priests and scribes to inquire where the Messiah, the Christ was to be born. The prophet Micah had written that the Ruler and Shepherd of His people would be born in Bethlehem.

Well, the wise men followed the star but the star did not lead them to a manger in Bethlehem but to a house where they found Mary and the "young Child."

Matthew 2:1-11

2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, **2** saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

3 When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

6 *'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.'*"

7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. **8** And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

9 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. **10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. **11** And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

FRANKINCENSE

lebonah, from *laban* "to be white." A vegetable resin, brittle, glittering, bitter, used for fumigation at sacrifices ([Ex 30:7-8,34-36](#)), got by incisions in the bark of the Arbor thuris; the first flow is white and transparent, the after yield is yellowish. It was imported from Arabia ([Isa 60:6](#); [Jer 6:20](#)). Arabian frankincense now is inferior to that of the Indian archipelago; the latter frankincense is yielded by the *Boswellia serrata* or *thurifera*, growing 40 ft. high in Amboyna and the mountains of India. Arabia may have anciently, as now, imported the best kind. The *papyrifera* grows on the E. of Africa. The Indian is called looban in Hindu temples, related to libanos and lebonah.

Frankincense, with its sweet perfume, symbolizes prayer accepted before God ([Ps 141:2](#); [Rev 5:8](#); [8:3-4](#)). The angel does not provide the incense; it is "given" to him by Christ, whose meritorious obedience and death and intercession are the incense rendering the saints' prayers well pleasing to God. They do not pray to the angel; he is but the king's messenger, and did not dare to appropriate what, is the king's alone ([Mal 1:11](#)). The time of offering the incense, morning and evening, was the chosen time for prayer ([Luke 1:10](#)). Frankincense was among the offerings of the wise men to the infant Savior ([Matt 2:11](#)).

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MYRRH

Hebrew *mowr* from *maarak* "to drop," and *lowt*. An ingredient of the holy anointing oil ([Ex 30:23](#)), typical of Messiah's graces ([Ps 45:8](#)) as well as the church's through Him (Song of Solomon). In [Song 1:13](#) translated "a scent box of myrrh." The *mowr* is the *Balsamodendron myrrha*, which yields myrrh, of the order *Terebinthaceae*. The stunted trunk has a light gray odorous bark. It grew in Arabia around Saba; the gum resin exudes in drops which harden on the bark, and the flow is increased by incision into the tree. It is a transparent, brown, brittle, odorous substance, with bitter taste. The "wine mingled with myrrh," offered to but rejected by Jesus on the cross, was embittered by it. As it stupefies the senses He would not have that which mitigates death's horrors, but would meet it in full consciousness. It was one of the three offerings of the wise men ([Matt 2:11](#)). Nicodemus brought it to embalm His sacred body ([John 19:39](#)). *Bal* is its Egyptian name, *bol* the Sanskrit and Hindu.

Lot is not strictly myrrh but ladanum, the resinous exudation of the *Cistus* (rock rose) *Creticus*, growing in Gilead where no myrrh grew, and exported into Egypt ([Gen 37:25](#); [43:11](#)). "Odorous, rather green, easy to soften, fat, produced in Cyprus" (Dioscorides i. 128); abounding still in Candia (Crete), where they gather it by passing over it an instrument composed of many parallel leather thongs, to which its gum adheres.

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As soon as the wise men worship King Jesus in Nazareth and give Him gifts they are warned in a dream not to return to Jerusalem and tell Herod where the King is but to go home by another route. If Herod can find the King he intends to kill Him.

Matthew 2:12

¹² Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

King Herod wanted to know when the star had appeared and he lied about wanting to worship the Christ. When Herod found out that the star had appeared two years earlier he ordered all the male children two years old and under to be killed. This was Herod's vain attempt to eliminate any threat of another king.

And this tells us also that the young Child was about two years old when the wise men follow the star and find Him in a house in Nazareth.

In order to be sure that Herod's soldiers cannot find Jesus, but really to fulfill the words of the prophets, Joseph and Mary flee with the young child into Egypt.

Matthew 2:13-15

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, ¹⁵ and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "*Out of Egypt I called My Son.*"

Matthew is quoting Hosea.

Hosea 11:1

"When Israel *was* a child, I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.

In a most wicked attempt to eliminate the threat of another king Herod fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah regarding the slaughter of the innocents.

Matthew 2:16-18

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

¹⁸ *"A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more."* Jeremiah 31:15

* * *

In his exposition of the "Life and Ministry of Elijah," when Elijah built and altar and prayed to God, Brother Gables' stressed the importance of precision and detail in dealing with God's word. That is why I am stressing the details of the Christmas Story. Does it really matter if we have scenes of angels and shepherds and wise men all about the manger when the wise men came to a house in Nazareth? Does it really matter when some preachers have Jesus circumcised in the temple when Mary's purification was 33 days after His circumcision?

To me it matters a great deal and we should not be loose and careless about the events and circumstances involved in the Christmas Story.

What I told you is the Bible's account of the birth of Jesus who is the Christ. And now let's take a broader view, or as Paul Harvey would say, "The Rest of the Story."

There is a perspective on the four gospels by George Morrison that should help us lay the foundation for seeing just how necessary it is to have the Old Testament in your mind when you come to read and interpret the New Testament.

Referring to Jesus the Christ:

The Fact of Jesus - Mark's Gospel

Mark is thought to be the earliest of the Gospels.

It is notable that in Mark there is no genealogy; he does not say a word about His lineage or ancestry of Christ. There is no attempt to explain the fact of Christ by relating it to the long past. The *first* thing is to have Jesus shown to us, to be confronted with Him as a living person.

His Relation to the Old Testament - Matthews's Gospel

Matthew relates Jesus to the past.

If you want to understand Jesus you must go back to David and Abraham. Christ is "the son of David, the son of Abraham." You must know David and Abraham in order to know the Christ. In other words, if you want to understand the Lord, you must take in the whole of Jewish history. Without Him it [Jewish history] is inexplicable. It was to Him that all the sacrifices pointed. It was of Him that all of the prophets wrote ["For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" Rev 19:10]. That is why, for all of its difficulties, we can never dispense with the Old Testament. Christ is the son of David, who is the son of Abraham.

His Relation to Adam - Luke's Gospel

Luke does not trace the lineage to Abraham, he traces it to Adam: "which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam." Beyond the parent of the Jewish race stands the parent of the human race. Beyond the representative of Israel stands the representative man. To understand the Christ calls for more than the history of Israel; it calls for the long story of humanity. Much in Christ will always be veiled unless you know the pages of the Old Testament. Christ is the son of Adam; He is vitally related to humanity.

Matthew says, "If you want to understand Him, you must lay your hand upon the Jewish heart." Luke says, "If you want to understand Him, you must lay your hand on the human heart." And Luke is full of tender human touches: Roman officers are touched; the Good Samaritan is there. In Luke there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free. He is the son of Adam.

His Relation to God - John's Gospel

What is the lineage that John gives? David, Abraham, or Adam? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

Mark gives us the fact of Jesus and bids us to contemplate that.

Matthew relates that fact to Jewish history; and Luke to the whole history of man. Then comes John, after a lapse of over 30 years, and says, “All that is not enough. If you want to understand the Lord you must relate Him immediately to God.” The glory of the Man John had known is that of the only begotten of the Father. He comes from Abraham. He comes from Adam. Yes, but there is another lineage:

“...the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

* * *

The Christmas story is so much more than the birth of Jesus!

That is what I meant when I said the world still does not comprehend the significance of the birth of Christ.

Christ was born for Calvary!

If you do not see the purpose of Christ's birth you are left with religious sentimentalism and feel-good projects. I am all for feeding the poor people at Christmas, but don't they get hungry during the rest of the year?

Now I am aware of the year-round ministries such as Jimmy Hale Mission in Birmingham, and The Foundry in Bessemer, but I am addressing the people who come to life in the Christmas season and never give a thought to Jesus Christ except as a baby in a manger.

To repeat: Christ was born for Calvary!

The Gospel did not begin when God tried to put a "Band-Aid" on a small scratch to give man time to heal himself. The fall of man into sin was total ruin. And it takes a Sufficient Savior to save a spiritually dead sinner.

In regard to the eternal purpose of God in sending His Son into the world to save sinners, Brother Gables reminded me of what E. W. Johnson said about the death of Christ:

"The cross was not an ambulance sent to the scene of an accident."

On the contrary side I actually heard Ernest Angsley say, "God did not know He would need a Calvary when He created Adam in the Garden."

God's purpose in the birth of Christ began before Creation.

God has chosen a people in Christ and God has arranged all of the means in His Divine Providence that will bring His elect under the preaching of the Gospel and God the Holy Spirit will convict these certain ones of sin and guilt, and they will willingly repent and believe the Gospel.

That is why we preach the Gospel. The Gospel is the means of calling God's people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

And God's sovereign choice in election in no way relieves the sinner of his or her responsibility to repent and believe the Gospel.

Let's read about when the Christmas Story began.

Ephesians 1:3-6

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

1 Peter 1:19-21

²⁰ He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ²¹ who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Revelation 13:8

⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

John 17:1-4

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

John 17:24-25

²⁴ "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

The story of redemption in Christ Jesus was settled before the creation of anything.

But the certainty of something does not eliminate the necessity of it.

It was certain that Christ would be born and that He would die for sinners; but He had to be born according to the Scriptures, and die, and be raised again on the third day according to the Scriptures.

It is certain that God's elect will repent and believe the Gospel but if a person will not repent and believe they have no hope or assurance in God's sovereign choice in election!

A person can say they believe the doctrine of election but if they don't personally repent and trust Christ alone for their justification they will join Judas and myriads of other lost souls in eternal hell! There is no doubt in my mind that Judas Iscariot believed in the doctrine of election! Judas probably preached on Election as good as John or Peter!

The Gospel had its origin before the foundation of the world and before the creation of a significant man called Adam.

Adam needed and was given a helper comparable to him and although they lived in a perfect environment they were not content.

Satan was able to deceive Eve and she gave the forbidden fruit to Adam and he did eat.

In that beginning of the history of man the Gospel message was introduced for the first time.

Genesis 3:1-15

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"

² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where *are* you?"

¹⁰ So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

¹² Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

¹³ And the LORD God said to the woman, "What *is* this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.

15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,

The battle for the souls of men began in the Garden of Eden but the outcome of the battle for the souls of men was determined before Creation.

Satan fell because he refused to submit to the Authority of God and to the knowledge that he and the other angels would finally be subject to man, a lower order of creation.

Adam fell because he refused to submit to the Authority of his Creator to make a law.

And dear soul, if you refuse to bow to the Authority of Jesus Christ everything that has been said today will only add to your condemnation.

All through the period of the Old Testament the conflict continued as the forces of the Wicked One fought against the generations of the seed of the woman.

At the birth of Jesus we have seen how the life of the Seed of the woman was threatened. When Jesus began His public ministry, immediately after He was baptized, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil.

Herod, Satan, the Pharisees, the Jewish leaders, the Roman soldiers, and the grave could not defeat Jesus Christ.

What I have attempted to do is to tell the Christmas Story in order to stress the real meaning of Christmas.

A popular personality on TV has been touting his latest book and talking about the "real meaning of Christmas." The only problem is he never mentions Jesus Christ, at least I haven't heard his mention Jesus yet.

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and told him the real meaning of Christmas.

1 Timothy 1:15

¹⁵ This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

Paul also wrote this to Timothy.

1 Timothy 3:14-16

¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.

And the Christmas story has an ending.

Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Revelation 20:11-21:8

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

21 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, * "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! * I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, * and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, * abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

So I will conclude the Christmas Story 2009 with two questions.

1) Have you bowed the knee and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord in Christian baptism?

In my own case I made a profession of faith and was "baptized" as a teenager. The Lord saved me 19 years later when I was 33 years old and I was truly baptized as a believer.

2) What is it about Jesus that you find so offensive that you will not repent, confess your sin and guilt, and put your trust in the righteousness of Christ and that alone? What sin or sins do you love more than Jesus?

Our practice in this local church is to preach the Gospel and trust that the message is the invitation. That said, we do encourage you to talk to one of the elders and let them help you come to a clear understanding of what being saved is about. We want you to be saved but we want your salvation to be Scriptural.

Merry Christmas.

Repent and believe the Gospel.

Amen.

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