

Jesus, Son of God

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As we approach the celebration of our Lord's birth it is fitting that we focus on the Person of Jesus - Son of God. I believe we who are "protestants" have failed in many respects to honor or properly emphasize the various seasons based on the events in the life of Christ. We often find it more convenient to go through the various seasons rotely while preaching from our pulpits totally unrelated messages..."as the Spirit leads," of course.

December 25th

Admittedly we don't know the exact time our Lord was born. Yes, December 25th was the date of a Roman pagan festival inaugurated in 274 A.D. as the birthday of the unconquered sun at which the winter solstice occurred. But has not time abundantly erased this pagan desecration of one of God's blessed days? Have not centuries of honor, adoration and worship of the Christ Child elevated the human use of that day to a new pinnacle? Instead of worshipping the sun of the solar system as the Romans did we worship the Son, the solar system's Creator. Should we not celebrate the birth of the Son of God while we are warmed by the sun of God?

The Birth of Jesus

This blessed event is recorded by Luke in the Scripture:

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.'"

Why was our Lord sent as a child?

Why did this Christ Child, this baby Jesus, come

as a child? Why didn't He simply manifest Himself here on earth as in His Old Testament theophanic appearances, complete His work and return to His Father?

God's love for humanity is so complete that everything He does for us reflects that love. The Scripture says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16 KJV).

Why then did He come as a child? Since man failed to obey God's instructions and thereby became alienated from the Father, it was required that a man rectify the wrongs of mankind to reconcile man with the Father. In other words it was necessary that a man must obey God's instructions...perfectly.

The only being in the whole universe capable of doing Father's will completely was Jesus. But to do so He had to be subject to the same temptations as mankind in order to fully feel the power of temptation that we do. He had to know the childhood pain of skinned knees and painful hurts. He had to taste the grandeur of the multitudes' adoration... and hear their humiliating, angry cry of, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Yes, He knew that to be fully our Savior He must fully identify with us sinful creatures. He must leave His heavenly glory and come down here and become one of us. God's love through the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus in Mary's womb. God's love brought Him forth in this world as baby Jesus. God's love ruled.

God's Joy!

How pleasant it is to behold the father of a newborn son! His smile - his joy. How he delights in the announcement of the birth of his son!

How much more our heavenly Father rejoiced at the birth of His Son, Jesus! I imagine that every available angel in heaven was gathered together that night when the heavenly host of angels appeared to the shepherds to herald the birth of Jesus! What joy and excitement in the heavenlies that night. Our Father sent His messengers to announce the blessed event!

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase

of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this." (Isaiah 9:6-7 NIV).

A Son is born! I am so glad He wasn't born in a king's palace. If so, I could not approach Him for I am not of noble birth. I am so glad that Father brought Him into this world in such a place that even the poorest of the poor can approach Him. Yet because of His magnificence the truly wise also pay Him homage and bring gifts to Him.

Why the Shepherds?

Why did Father send the angelic host to the shepherds...and not to kings, princes and rulers? That's easy to understand. Father sought out those who had eyes to see and ears to hear! He looked for someone who was willing to receive His joyful announcement.

Father, grant us eyes to see what you are doing in our world. Give us ears to hear your angelic proclamation of things that bring joy to your heart. Lead us more deeply into your vast world and out of our small one. Dim our eyes to the glitter of things that obscure visions of you. Deafen our ears to the noise of things that drown out the voice of your heavenly heralds. Lead us this year to see the baby Jesus and hear the angelic choir sing the joy of His birth!

"Joy to the World! The Lord is come: Let earth receive her King: Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and heaven and nature sing..."

Why Not to Princes and Rulers?

Could the answer be that those who hold prominent positions in the established world order would feel threatened with the news of a new king being born? Those who have no standing, those who have nothing to lose, those are the ones who have everything to gain! The shepherds didn't feel their position in life was at stake. The birth of the Son of God didn't destroy their world...it rather opened the door to a whole new world. It brought to them a life in which they could be kings and priests!

We see then that those of us who cling tenaciously to this world with its accompanying honors,

titles, wealth and position are as Israel of old...we have eyes that see not. We will not receive God's proclamation, "...a child is born..." It is only those that view this world as not satisfying the deep inward needs of life who will receive the glad tidings of His birth. Those are the ones who will leave the task at hand and turn aside to worship Him who is born of a virgin.

What power did this Child possess that drew the shepherds from their duties? What compelled them to travel by night to adore this baby Jesus? It was not an earthly power but a heavenly power, a heavenly Spirit, God's power and His Holy Spirit.

We must understand at the outset, the issue is not whether we hold a "position" in this world but rather does the "position" hold us? Matthew held a very high governmental position as a tax collector for the Roman government, but the position did not hold him. When Jesus looked at him and said, "Follow me." he forsook his position and followed Jesus. (Mark 2:14). On the other hand there came one day a rich young man to Jesus aspiring to follow Him. Jesus saw that his position in life and his self-esteem lay in his possessions. When told that he must give up his possessions (i.e., his position) to follow Jesus the Scripture says, "...he went away sad, because he had great wealth." (Matt. 19:16-22). It is most important to note that Jesus usually doesn't require us to forsake our position unless it has a hold on us.

Those who have no earthly position or who aren't held by their position will gladly receive the proclamation, "...a Savior has been born to you."

Why Did Jesus Say He Came?

The answer is found in its simplest form in Luke 4:18-19, quoting Isaiah 61:1,2:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

He came in the power of God, His Father and our heavenly Father, to usher in a new order. An order in which those of mankind who aren't satisfied with this world...may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10 NIV).

We have all read this passage of Scripture and

perhaps wondered, "Why are there still the poor, why are there still prisoners, why are there still the blind..? What did Jesus really mean when he uttered these marvelous words?"

"...to Preach Good News to the Poor."

It is obvious that Jesus wasn't referring primarily to the economically poor. He was speaking of the spiritually poor. Unfortunately, many of us who are spiritually poor today are quite well off economically and don't know that we are spiritually bankrupt. How sad. In order for one to receive the "good news" Jesus spoke of we must realize the state of our spiritual poverty.

Some of the spiritually poorest people I know travel the world first class, drive the finest cars and eat the finest foods in many of the world's best restaurants. Yet these poor souls are totally devoid of any spiritual knowledge of this wonderful baby Jesus who became the Savior of the world and the giver of true riches to the poor.

"...To Proclaim Freedom for the Prisoners..."

Surely Jesus is concerned about those who are prisoners of various governments, states and municipalities around the world. But, again, we must look for a deeper meaning in His proclamation. Here He is speaking of those who are prisoners of Satan, sin, fears, ideologies, the various "isms" of our world, the opinions of others and, last but not least, those of us who are prisoners of our own guilt.

How does this baby Jesus set us free? Because He became LORD of all the universe and He now holds the keys of death and hell. How may we be set free? The answer: We must 1) confess our sin to Jesus and any others He may direct us to, 2) be repentant, i.e., truly sorry for our sin, 3) forsake completely the practice that brought about the condition in the first place, and 4) submit ourselves to the Lord's will for our lives.

"...to Proclaim...Recovery of Sight to the Blind,"

Again, Jesus is primarily referring to those who are walking in spiritual darkness. Though He has in the past and does now open the eyes of many who are physically blind, His major work in this part of His ministry is to deal with those who have spiritual blindness. After opening the eyes of a man born blind

in John's Gospel Jesus said,

"For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, 'What? Are we blind too?' Jesus said, 'If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.' (John 9:39-41 NIV).

What would be His assessment of our spiritual eyesight? Do we identify with the blind man, or with those who claimed to see? Would His assessment of our sight be 20/20, or 40/20, or 80/20? Or would He simply declare us totally blind?

If we are blind, how does this baby Jesus restore our spiritual eyesight? He who became the Light of the world shines His light into our hearts when we come simply and helplessly to Him asking for His sight. Only two things are required of us to receive as it was for the blind man in the Apostle John's gospel, chapter nine. He BELIEVED the Lord's words and he OBEYED them. Then we see his eyesight at work: In his argument before the Sanhedrian he possessed more knowledge about Jesus, having never seen Him with his natural eyes, than did the Pharisees who had watched Jesus closely for over three years!

It's obvious that the Pharisees didn't know they were blind. How dangerous! If such was the case, might we also have the same problem? Lord, cause us to know our state!

"...to Release the Oppressed,"

Who are the oppressed? They are those who are physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually oppressed. Today there are millions of souls who are oppressed by the conditions that surround them. Wives oppressed by husbands and vice versa. Others are oppressed by children, parents, siblings, peers, cultish pressures, alcohol, drugs, sexual habits, fears, anxieties, work pressures, relatives and neighbors, and so on.

This baby Jesus grew to become our Burden Bearer. He said,

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light." (Matt 11:28-30 NIV).

No two circumstances are alike. No two people have the exact same set of problems. Many such complexities defy human answers. Only Jesus can provide relief for the many things that oppress us. In order to receive relief we must go to Him, lay our problems at His feet and humbly beseech Him for solutions. Then we must add the ingredients of time and obedience. He has promised to bear our burdens as we faithfully present them to Him. But remember we must be willing to forsake any sin of our own that may be a contributing factor.

Jesus' statement, "Learn from me." has particular significance. It implies that we must 1) ask of Him, 2) be teachable, and 3) be obedient. The Apostle Paul said,

"...I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Phil 4:12-13 NIV.)

It's apparent from Paul's statement that learning from Jesus is a process...not an act, just as the baby Jesus grew to become a man. This learning process takes time and a willingness to submit to His instructions, not our own immediate wants and desires.

Yet it's equally apparent that once we learn the process the benefits are tremendous! Paul said he had learned to be content in every situation! That's all encompassing, isn't it? That's surely releasing the oppressed!

"...to Proclaim the Year of the Lord's Favor."

In the law God gave to Moses Israel was commanded to let the land rest every seventh year,

that is, there was to be no farming and no planting every seventh year. At the opening of the seventh seven years, or forty-ninth year, in addition to the land resting, all debts were to be forgiven, all land was to return to its original owner and all slaves were to be freed. This was known as the Year of Jubilee. Surely such is the year of the Lord's favor!

Since the announcement of the birth of Jesus heralded the cancellation of all our debts on Calvary, freedom from the bondage of sin, and our transport to the heavenlies by seating us with Him in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:6) we are living in the year of Jubilee! For us, every year we live is a year of the Lord's favor!

The Christ of Christmas

So as we approach this Christmas in which we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior let us rejoice at the scenes of baby Jesus in the manger. Let our hearts overflow with thanksgiving as we walk through the shopping malls listening to the Christmas music proclaim His Eternal Reign! It thrills me to be in one of the world's pagan shopping centers and hear the music of Mendelssohn and the words of Charles Wesley resound;

"Hark, the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the new born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations rise.
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Even so! Come Lord Jesus!

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