

Unbelievable – Gal 4:4-7

Thanks you guys; It's so good to dwell on these things each year, and I want to continue doing so by turning to Gal 4:4-7 (Intro)

It's not a passage that's normally *associated* with Christmas, but it summarizes the facts and implications, as good as any in all the Bible

- I don't know about you, but it's not uncommon for me to **look** at a beautiful landscape like this, and exclaim – “Wow! That's unbelievable!”
Or maybe you've stood atop a **mountain range** and had the same feeling – like Becky and I did as young adults when we were skiing in Colorado
Or maybe it was a circus show you saw; Or a sports performance; Or a concert

On the other hand, I'm sure you've also heard or seen **something** that's too good to be true, and said the same thing, but meant something entirely different
“That's unbelievable; It's not real; No way”; Ever been *there*?

If so, you've covered the spectrum of people's response to Christmas*****
For some, it's *unbelievable* – amazing, awe-inspiring
While for others, it's literally unbelievable; Difficult to accept

And to some extent, you can't fault them; Especially in such a scientific, anti-supernatural culture like ours; Where everything is doubted unless it's repeatable and provable
Which certainly isn't the case with dreams, and angels, and a virgin birth
In fact, at first glance, the Christmas story lends itself more to make-believe and fairytale than anything else

But here's the thing . . .

As unbelievable as Christmas may seem, you can believe it

And you should; For a whole slew of reasons; Not the least of which, is that . . .

- **It's too counter-cultural to be fabricated**

The culture in which that first Christmas is set, was far too rational and fact-based to accept such a fantastic story like God becoming man in the form of a baby
It's just too out there; Neither the Romans *nor* the Jews were prone to such things
Pragmatism reigned, not make believe; Proof, not speculation
Logic and reason was the order of the day, not fantasy and mysticism

So the chances of somebody making this up, and having it accepted by so many, are slim to nil; It's just too counter-cultural to be fabricated

Not only that . . .

- **It's too verifiable to be false**

All the facts of the Christmas story were verifiable by those still living at the time; And people could have been questioned; And were
And there were too many involved to support a conspiracy or collusion; It just wouldn't have held up

Which not only makes it believable, but worthy of your attention
B/c when you get right down to it, Christmas holds the key to your life
And that's where Gal 4 comes in

- But I'd like to start at 3:28 to pick up the flow of thought (**Summary**)

[28] *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* [when it comes to salvation, distinctions of race, occupation, and gender don't matter]. [29] *And if you are Christ's* [if you're saved, by virtue of your belief], *then you are Abraham's offspring* [you're a part of God's family], *heirs according to promise* [recipients of God's blessing].

And then, he sets up an analogy to help us understand that

[4:1] *I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, [2] but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.*

[3] *In the same way we also, when we were children* [when we were without Christ], *were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.*

Referring to things like the lust of the flesh, and desires of the eyes, and pride of life
And selfishness, and greed, and self-gratification, and rebellion

Those are some of the *elementary principles of the world*, that enslave us; That keep us from receiving all that God wants to give us

Just like a child's immaturity keeps him from receiving his inheritance; Or a slave's bondage keeps him from freedom; That's the analogy

[4] *But when the fullness of time had come* [and this is the part about Christmas], *God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

That's about as concise a summary of Christmas you can find

- The problem is, we're so familiar with it, at least the basics – it's become commonplace and even mundane; And *nothing* could be further from the truth; In fact . . .

As routine as Christmas has become, it's unbelievable (Gal 4:4-7)

As in amazing; Incredible; Awesome; Mind-blowing

But the familiar in life *always* tends to lose its luster, doesn't it?

Like driving a Ferrari; Though I don't know from *personal* experience; But I imagine it starts to become just another car after a while

Or how about riding in an airplane? A hundred years ago it was almost unthinkable to even *fly*; But now, we jet-set all over the place and think nothing of it
B/c that which is *routine* tends to lose its luster, even if it's unbelievable

Which is why passages like this are so important; B/c it restores the shine to the Ferrari, and reminds that Christmas is indeed, unbelievable

1. Unbelievable because God had a plan

That's the idea of the first phrase in v4 – *when the fullness of time had come*

God had been preparing for this point in history, for a long time

And finally the day was here; Finally things were in place; Finally conditions were right; Finally the world was ready; Finally people were desperate . . .

Finally the prophecies were ripe

Like his promise to crush Satan's head from Gen 3:15

And bless all the nations in Gen 12; And establish an everlasting kingdom in 2 Sam 7;
And raise up a king who would reign over all
It wasn't just happenstance, God had a plan; And the time had come, to make it happen

2. Unbelievable because God sent his Son

That's v4 again – *God sent forth his Son* (4)

His own flesh and blood if you will; His own likeness

You see, a son in those days was considered to have all the attributes of his Father

So this is the Bible's way of saying that God sent somebody exactly like himself – fully

God, and fully possessing all of his characteristics

In fact, the way the Bible describes this Son, we know *now* what they couldn't have

imagined then – that he's part of the godhead

Co-existent with the Father and the Spirit, in perfect unity and fellowship

So much so, that you might say God sent *himself*; That *God* came forth

That's the idea – Immanuel, God with us; Just like the prophet said

3. Unbelievable because God became flesh

Born of woman it says; Jesus didn't just appear, he was *born* – just like you and I

Which makes him a *man* just like you and I; A human

Except *he* is the *God*-man; Untainted by sin, and holy through and through

B/c though he was born of a woman, he was *conceived* by the Holy Spirit; Just like the angel said to Mary in **Lk 1:35**

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”

He became flesh, but he wasn't tainted by it; He became man, but was still God*****

And no matter how you parse that out, it's unbelievable; God became flesh

4. Unbelievable because he lived like us

Jesus lived like us; That's the idea of being *born under the law* (4)

Instead of *exempting* himself from the constraints and futility and imprisonment of the Law – he lived by it

Instead of *excluding* himself from the pool of sin/sadness in this world– he went all in

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us the Bible says (Jn 1:14)

In addition to lowering himself to *enter* our world, he actually subjected himself to the same constraints and *influences* of our world

So that *we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* (Heb 4:15)

It's unbelievable – he *lived* like us, but didn't sin like us

5. Unbelievable because he came to set us free

Or as Paul says it in v5 – *to redeem those who were under the law*; And by implication, those who are *enslaved to the elementary principles of the world* (3)

Which is all of us; Every single one of us is born with a sin nature the Bible says, and every single one of us has an all-consuming desire to act on it; And we do

Not just in the things we commit, but the things we *omit*; The things we *don't* do, but know we should; We sin, and lack the power to break free; Or keep the Law

So that no matter how you slice it, we're enslaved

And the unbelievable thing about Christmas, is that Jesus came to *redeem* us; To set us free – free from the bondage and consequences of our sins

6. Unbelievable because he came to call us his own

God sent forth his Son . . . so that we might receive adoption as sons. (5)

We might be accepted into his family; We might be considered one of his children, one of his own

And receive all the rights, privileges, and inheritance that go along with it; Just like *actual* sons did in the Jesus' day

God doesn't just set us *free* when we believe, he welcomes us into his family – complete with brothers and sisters; The church

He doesn't just open the gate of our prison and give us a bus pass to the city, he opens the door of his home and embraces us as his child; Never to let go

He doesn't just help us from afar, he loves us up close

He doesn't just throw us some change as you would a homeless person, he gives us an inheritance; He doesn't just give us a room, he gives us a home

It's unbelievable; And it starts at Christmas

7. Unbelievable because he came to dwelt within us

That's v6 – *Because you are sons* [present tense; speaking to those who already believe], *God has sent the Spirit of his Son* [the Holy Spirit] *into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”*

When you believe in the Christ of Christmas, his Spirit takes up residence in your heart

He dwells within you to lead, guide, comfort, and empower; It's unbelievable

And completely different than the compulsions of those *without* the Spirit

Check out how one **commentator** put it:

“Legalists are led by the law; hedonists are led by their desires; materialists are led by their possessions. But sons of God, Christians, are led by the Spirit. What prompts their actions, what stirs their emotions, what guides their behavior, and what determines their careers is God's Spirit.” (Scot McNight, NIVAC-Galatians, p213)

And he dwells within us to do so*****

➤ Not only that, but he testifies to God on our behalf, that he is our Father and we are his children; Crying “*Abba!*” as it says

Which is a very *personal* term for Father; A term that that conveys fondness and familiarity and endearment; Kind of like saying – “Daddy!”

So God gave us his *Son* at Christmas, and gives us his *Spirit* when we believe

Solidifying our relationship, expressing our love, and guiding our life; It's unbelievable

8. Unbelievable because he came to give us life

V7 says – *So you are no longer a slave, but a son*

IOW in Christ, you're no longer bound by the constraints and consequences of sin and the Law, like a slave . . .

Rather, you're free to enjoy all the rights and privileges of *adoption* as a *son*

If you believe in *the* Son, Jesus; And all that God did through him at Christmas and beyond

That being the case – you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. An heir of God’s inheritance; Which is life to the full and life forever
Just like **Heb 9:15** says – *He [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant [a new guarantee], so that those who are called [those who are saved] may receive the promised eternal inheritance*
The promised inheritance of eternal life, in the presence of God

And it’s all b/c of Christmas; When God sent his Son – to set us free, and call us his own
It’s unbelievable (**Summary**)

➤ But it’s all for naught if you don’t believe it; If you don’t embrace it; If you don’t believe in the one it’s all about
If you don’t surrender to his Lordship
If you don’t confess your sin and ask forgiveness
If you don’t live his way, for his glory
If you don’t love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength
It’s all for naught if you don’t believe

➤ Pray – If you feel like I’ve been speaking to you, and want to be set free from your sin to receive the life God offers . . .
If you want to be a part of his family and one of his own – pray with me

“God, I believe; I believe that you sent Jesus, to redeem me from my sins and set me free;
I believe it; And I believe in him
And I repent – I admit that I’m a sinner, I confess that I’ve sinned, and I need your forgiveness; Please forgive me; I’m done with my way, and want to live yours
So come into my life and take up residence; I receive you now, as Lord and Savior”

If you just prayed with me, I want to pray with you as we close
God, would you guide/protect each and every one who just called on you to be saved?
Would you bless them and keep them as they walk in your way?
Would you lead them by your Spirit and fuel them with your Word?
And for those who already know you, would you restore the shine of Christmas in their hearts? Would you give them great joy in believing
We praise you for all the unbelievable things you’ve done, and eagerly await your return