

The Christmas “Story” – Various Scriptures

Welcome; Mt 1:21-25 (p.807)

I want to talk to you about The Christmas “Story” this morning . . .

And to get started, I’d like for u to take a look at this **video** (The Paradox of Christmas)

The Christmas story is indeed a paradox, isn’t it?

With parts that don’t seem to go together; But that doesn’t make it any less true

Nor is it just a “story” – a bedtime tale told in a grandfather’s voice, along the lines of

Aesop’s Fables

Rather, it’s the historical account of the birth of Jesus

- But even that is only a small part of the picture
A very big picture that goes a long way toward explaining the paradoxes, and has significant implications for you and me
Implications you can’t afford to miss, paradox or not
That’s what I want to talk to you about – the Christmas story in all its fullness

And before we’re done here, I’m going to give you an opportunity to respond to it

An opportunity to not only *know* it and see it like maybe you’ve never seen it before . . .

But an opp to be a part of it; To make it your own

- With that in mind, let me just say a few things to manage your expectations
I don’t have a bunch of warm, fuzzy Christmas stories for you this morning
You can get plenty of those on the Hallmark channel

What I *do* have is truth that will save your life; And truth that will change you forever

So that when you sing “Joy to the world, the Lord has come” – you mean it, with

unspeakable joy

And when we sing “Jesus Messiah, name about all names” – it’s more than just words

It’s a confession of praise for the One you love and follow

Second, I want you to understand that I’m not going to give you *my* take on the Christmas story, but God’s take – the perspective found in the Bible.

Which means we’re going to look at a *lot* of verses this morning, so that whenever

possible, I’m speaking God’s words, and not my own

IOW what I’m about to tell you isn’t my *take* on the truth, it *is* the truth

The truth that will set you free, and change your life forever, if you accept it

That said, the Christmas Story actually begins hundreds of years before Jesus ever showed up, when . . .

He was foretold by prophets (Mt 1:21-25)

Mt 1:21-25; This is where an angel is speaking to Joseph in a dream, and says re Mary . . .

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

Now, that’s a pretty astounding prophecy in v23, but it’s only one of 65 astounding prophecies about Jesus in the OT

Prophecies that were made anywhere from 400 to 2000 years before he was ever born

Prophecies about who he was, what he’d do, where he would be born, and how

Like this one that Matthew quotes from Isaiah 7, saying he would be born of a virgin

And as if that wasn’t enough, Isaiah said that he would also be God in the flesh!

Immanuel

Not just a messiah – a promised deliverer, someone *anointed* by God; but God himself

Someone who would *save his people from their sins* the angel said (21b)

Which means that at the very least, he’s somebody special, and worth investigating

In addition to that, he was . . .

Expected to rule (2 Sam 7:12-13; Is 9:6-7)

In **2 Sam 7:12-13**, God told King David through the prophet Nathan – *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*

Meaning that someone of David’s lineage, would rule forever *****

Which is why Matthew took such great pains in his genealogy, to show that Jesus was a direct descendant of David

In fact, it’s the very thing he says, in the very first verse of his gospel – *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David*

And then lays out 42 generations to prove it; Which means he was expected to rule

- All the more so b/c of prophecies like the one in Is 9 (**Is 9:6-7**), where he says that a light would shine in Galilee, a part of Israel . . .

[B/c] *to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder [implying that he would rule], and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government [again, implying that he would rule] and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.*

No wonder they expected him to rule; And rightfully so *****

But what many people missed, is that he would *first* come as a suffering *servant* to rule in the hearts and lives of those who *seek* him

And only *later* would he rule over the world; So they missed him, or rejected him

- And many people still do – many people *still* reject him b/c they’re looking for the wrong *kind* of ruler, or in most cases, they’re not looking at all
And it’s a grave mistake, b/c your life literally depends on seeing him and accepting him for who he is and what he’s done

Don’t miss him b/c you’re too busy to pay attention

And don’t reject him b/c he hasn’t answered all your questions, or satisfied all your doubts

Let him rule in your heart, and you’ll find that your questions/doubts will quickly fade [the Christmas Story actually begins 100’s of years before Jesus ever showed up when]

He was foretold by prophets, expected to rule . . .

And spoke with authority (Mt 7:28-29)

When he finally did come, he spoke with authority; Mt 7:28-29

When Jesus finished these sayings [referring to his famous sermon on the mount], the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Instead of appealing to someone else's authority, like rabbis of that day tended to do . . .

Or hedging themselves in case they were wrong . . .

Or apologizing for what they said so as not to offend, like so many people do today . . .

Instead of all that, Jesus spoke with authority

Teaching *the way of God truthfully*, and with conviction – not caring what people thought of it (Mt 22:16)

And he still does through his word, the Bible

The question is, are you *listening*? Are you reading it?

Do you hear him saying, “Come to me all you who are weary, and I will give you rest?”

Or, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except thru me?”

Or, “I am the vine and you are the branches, and apart from me, you can do nothing?”

Do you hear him? B/c he spoke those things, and did so with authority

And I guarantee you, if you *listen*, you *too* will be astonished

He was foretold by prophets, expected to rule, and spoke with authority

But came as a baby (Matt 1:24-25)

That's the *first* paradox of the Christmas story – that the one foretold by prophets and expected to rule, came as a baby

Matt 1:24-25 – *When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

That's about as humble, and helpless, and innocent as you can get

He could have brought his throne with him and lived *apart* from us . . .

But instead, he took on flesh, and lived *among* us

And did so as a baby – *helpless* in every sense of the word, and *innocent* thru/thru

- But here's the thing – helpless doesn't mean hopeless

It didn't for Jesus, and it doesn't for you

Yes, you're helpless to do anything about your sin, and the eternal consequences you face b/c of it – but you're not hopeless

Jesus was not only a perfect *example* of that, but he's the *embodiment* of our hope

Through him and in him, you *too* can have hope – hope of innocence, and righteousness, and life, just like him

If you humble yourself, just like him

Humility is prerequisite for receiving the hope found in Jesus

If you're not broken in spirit and humble of heart, you'll never lay hold of that which he offers – including life to the full, and life forever

That's why he came as a baby, and . . .

Lived as a servant (Ph 2:5-7; Mt 20:28)

Ph 2:5-7 – *Have this mind among yourselves [this mind of humility], which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

He not only humbled himself by becoming man, a baby – but by becoming a servant

And he lived it out; Like he says in **Matt 20:28** – *The Son of Man* [referring to himself] *came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Did you catch that? His servanthood wasn't just washing people's feet, or showing compassion to those around him – *his* servanthood included dying

Dying so we could be ransomed; redeemed; bought back and released from the throes of sin and death *****

He *lived* as a servant – the very life to which he calls us . . .

And *died* as a servant – so we could live at all

That is the heart of the Christmas story; And another of its paradoxes

Especially when you consider that he . . .

And died as a criminal (Mt 27:35-38; 1 Pet 3:18)

He came as a baby, lived as servant, and died as a criminal

Mt 27:35-38 – *And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.*

He died a criminal's *death* – which was crucifixion, hanging on a cross

He was charged with criminal *acts* – which was failing to deny that he was a king

And he was lumped together with criminal robbers – one on the right, and one on the left

- So let me get this straight –the one foretold by prophets was being crucified as a criminal? The one who was expected to rule? The one who spoke with such authority? It doesn't make sense

Until, you look at Heb 9:22; Which says that *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins*

And if there's no forgiveness of sins, we can't be in God's holy presence

So in addition to coming as a baby and living as a servant (**1 Pet 3:18**), *Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God*

He died as a criminal, for our sins, that he might bring us to God

That he might provide a way for us to be reconciled with God *****

It's one of the great truths and great paradoxes of this story; But it gets even better

He was foretold by prophets, expected to rule, and spoke with authority . . .

But came as a baby, lived as a servant, and died as a criminal . . .

To rise as our Savior (Mt 1:21; 1 Jn 4:14; Rom 10:9,13)

Something that was promised by the angel, and preached by the apostles

Like the Apostle John in **1 Jn 4:14** – *We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.*

And the angel told Joseph – “*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*” (Mt 1:21)

The result of which is (**Rom 10:9,13**) – *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved . . . For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Jesus died as a criminal, to rise as our Savior – saving us from the consequences of our sins, and giving us eternal life

The only thing left to do, is *believe*

Believe that when Jesus died, he died in *your* place, for *your* sins . . .

And rose again to be *your* Savior; Do you believe?*****

I hope you do, b/c he also *lives as our priest*

He died as a criminal, to rise as our Savior, and . . .

Live as our Priest (Rom 8:34; Heb 4:14-16)

Rom 8:34 – *Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

And the writer of Hebrews picks up on that, saying (**Heb 4:14-16**) – *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For 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. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Similar to the OT priests, Jesus is *our* high priest, interceding between us and God

But unlike the priests of old – he’s in *heaven*, he’s able to *sympathize* with us in every way, and he’s without sin

Which means we can approach the throne of God with confidence that we’ll be heard, and receive mercy and grace in time of need *****

And if you’ve never done so, if you’ve never prayed to God, asking him to forgive you of your sins, and be your Savior – your time of need has never been greater
Your need for God’s *mercy* to withhold the *punishment* you deserve, and God’s grace to save your soul

He lives as our priest, and waits for our prayers

Have you called on him? And have you confessed him as Lord?

B/c he died as a criminal, to rise as our Savior, live as our priest, and . . .

Reign as our Lord (Rom 14:9; Ph 2:10-11)

Rom 14:9 – *To this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*

That he might be the loving master and leader, of everyone who’s ever lived

In fact, *God has put all things in subjection under his feet* the Bible says (1 Cor 15:27) . . .

(**Ph 2:10-11**) *So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth [meaning everyone, whether they want to or not], and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

There’s no disputing the fact that he reigns as Lord

The question is, have you acknowledged him as such? *****

Have you *confessed* him as Lord? *Your* Lord, and *your* leader?

Submitting to his purposes and his ways?

If you’re to be counted among his own, you must confess him as Lord

You must acknowledge him as the one who rules and reigns in your life

Not as lip service, but genuinely so, as *shown* by your life

B/c there’s going to come a day the Bible says, when he comes again as our King

He died as a criminal, to rise as our Savior, live as our priest, reign as our Lord . . .

And come as our King (1 Tim 6:13-16; Mt 25:31-33)

In **1 Tim 6:13-15**, the apostle Paul says – *I charge you in the presence of God . . . to keep the commandment [the walk of faith] unstained and free from reproach [free from legitimate blame] until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords*

Why embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior, and keep the faith?

B/c as King of kings, he’s coming again

And this time it’s not to *save* the world, but *judge* it

Like he says in **Mt 25:31-33** – “*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.*”

Punishing/banishing those on his left who haven’t followed him, and haven’t confessed him as Savior/Lord – while receiving/blessing those on his right, who have

Those who *have* repented of their sin and trusted him to save them fr its consequences

Those who *have* crossed over from death to life through faith in him

Those who *do* worship him as King of kings and Lord of lords *****

He’s coming; And this time it’s as a king, not a baby

• The question is, are you ready?

Do you *believe* in Jesus to save you and keep you?

And have you *repented* of your sin and *confessed* him as Lord?

If not, there’s no better time to do so (**Summary**)

No better time to make the Christmas story *your* story, paradox and all

To humble yourself just like he did, listen to what he says, embrace him for who he is, seek him with all your heart, and worship him as King

There’s no better time, and I’m going to give you an opp to do so right now as we pray

Pray – if your heart burns within you, if you want to embrace Jesus as your Savior, and submit your life to him as Lord – pray with me

Lord Jesus, I believe that you died in my place, for my sins, taking the punishment I
deserved; And then rose again to be my Savior
Please forgive me of my sin – I'm done with it, and I'm sorry; I need your mercy
I now confess you as Lord – to rule and reign in my life, no matter what . . .
And worship you as King

- If you just prayed with me, I want you to do 2 things
 1. Pick up a New Believer Packet at the door from one of the ushers
 2. Tell someone about the decision you just made – the person who invited you, or
maybe someone in the lobby with a name tag

We praise God for you; Let's stand and worship *Jesus Messiah*