

**Lk 2:1–7 (ESV)** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>(2)</sup> This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>(3)</sup> And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>(4)</sup> And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>(5)</sup> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <sup>(6)</sup> And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>(7)</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

### 1. Christmas sermons are hard – what do you say that hasn't been said

- A. Usually we start with the manger scene – or shepherds in a field  
We title things with clever titles – “Wise men still seek him” “The greatest gift”
  - 1). Nothing wrong with that but after 25 years of teaching – wanted something new
  - 2). This is new for me – hopefully for you too

### 2. The Goal: Today we are going to look at the big picture of Christmas

- A. To see that first Christmas morning and the manger was only one tiny aspect of an eternal plan
  - 1). A plan that began before the creation of the world  
**Eph 1:4 (ESV)** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love
    - a). There is where the plan of salvation began – before the world was created
      - 1a). Before there was anybody who lived or sinned

**Point:** IOW Christmas (Jesus coming to earth) was NOT an afterthought

It was not God scrambling to clean up the mess man had made

- A. It was simply a part of the divine purpose that started back before there was anything  
**An amazing passage: 2 Ti 1:8–9 (ESV)** Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, <sup>(9)</sup> who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, *which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,*
  - 1). God's loving grace was set on your life before the ages began
- B. Jesus Christ was chosen to be your Savior before the creation of the world  
**1 Pet 1:18-20 (NIV)** For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, <sup>(19)</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>(20)</sup> *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*
  - 1). Jesus didn't become Savior at the moment of incarnation – that Christmas morning
    - a). He was chosen to be Savior in that trinitarian counsel before foundation of the world
    - b). He would be the one to come to earth – to pay for man's sin – to go to the cross

**Point:** The incarnation – Christmas morning and that baby in the manger

was part of that big plan of God devised in eternity past – here it was arriving on earth

### 3. Our thinking about Christmas cannot stop at the manger scene

- A. But that's the problem isn't it? That's exactly what the world does!
  - 1). People get the little ceramic Jesus out – carefully put the wise men around him – a few animals
  - 2). All so cute – clean - sterile – ahhh  
Around New Years day they put that little ceramic Jesus away until next year
    - a). Every year my grandparents who raised me did that – they weren't Christians  
We sang all the great Christmas songs but Jesus never got out of that manger in our thinking
  - 3). We never thought through the issues – that little baby was God come to earth  
That little baby would grow up to be a man  
And that man would end up going to a cross to die for my sin

- Thought:** Don't get me wrong - that manger scene is important – vital  
But the world (we) didn't understand the implications of what it meant – what God was doing
- A. That manger in reality wasn't cute like the manger scene we set up each Christmas
    - 1). It was filthy - stinky – smelly – where animals went to the bathroom  
It was not a place any of us would choose to have a child
  - B. Like I've said before – God needs a better even co-ordinator for his events
    - 1). We're bringing in the Son of God! Let's see  
I'm thinking he arrives in gold plated chariot pulled by pure white horses  
Diamond encrusted crib of course  
Choir of angels singing heavenly praises – lightning flashes  
I've already lined up the photographers
    - 2). You have anything to add to that Lord? What we're you thinking  
HMMMMM.... Riding into Bethlehem on a donkey! Bethlehem there is nothing there!  
Can I suggest Rome or Athens – maybe Ephesus – it's beautiful at this time of year  
Excuse me did you say he'd be born in obscurity in a manger!
  - C. But God's amazing plan was characterized by humility and by death  
**Phil 2:5-8 (NLT)** Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. (6) Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. (7) He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. (8) And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.
    - 1). The whole plan – the reason there was that first Christmas morning  
Always contained a cross 33 years later
    - 2). Jesus was born into that manger with a death warrant already upon his life because of our sin
  - D. Christmas must be put into this context to know what it is about
    - 1). We must move from the manger to the cross
    - 2). From the birth of Christ – with the angels proclaiming it to the Shepherds  
To his death where he hung naked before a mocking crowd
      - a). But we can't have that can we – that won't sell a lot of presents will it?
      - b). You're not going to see that in a Mercedes Benz or Lexus commercial
- Question:** But why was this necessary? Why would God go to such extremes?
- A. I've already hinted at it – but let's dig a bit deeper
    - 1). I'm going to point out two things out of many – use scripture that gives us clues
  - B. Let's see why Jesus came to earth on that first Christmas morning

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## II. SCRIPTURE TELLS US THAT JESUS CAME BECAUSE OF SIN

### 1. We find this in his name

- A. Names today mean nothing – Bill – really!  
“Mom and dad you couldn't have tried a bit harder? Kind of phoned that one in!”
  - B. In Bible times names meant something  
**ADAM** = Man or mankind
    - 1). Man - because he was the man from which all other men came from
    - 2). Mankind - because he was the representative head of the whole human race
      - a). Therefore whatever he did would affect us all - when he fell we all fell in him
- EVE** = Life or Giver of life

- 1). She was called Eve and not anything else because Eve described who she was
  - a). She was the mother of all the living

**JESUS** = Savior

- 1). The angel came and spoke to Joseph in a dream before Jesus was born to explain things
 

**Mt 1:21 (ESV)** She (**Virgin birth**) will bear a son, (**The first Christmas morning – what we celebrate**) and you shall call his name Jesus, (**Why?**) for he will save his people from their sins.”

**Mt 1:21 (ESV)** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

  - a). Call Him Jesus because that name describes who He is – Why he came

## 2. But who sinned? All of us

**Ro 3:23 (ESV)** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- A. He came because we were in great trouble – big trouble
- B. We need to know if we are guilty before a holy God

## 3. Btu right about here I'll get some objections: I haven't sinned

- A. Talking to William about Christ at the Spectrum Friday night – Do you think you've sinned?
 

“No” - Girl friends was elbowing him – YES you are! She knew!
- B. What is sin? How would you define it? This is important?
  - 1). Sin is breaking God's commands – the Bible calls it lawbreaking
 

And tells us all have been guilty of this
- C. Let's look at just one passage talking about his law to see if we're OK?
 

Jesus in his brilliance summed up the whole of the law into 2 commandments

**Mt 22:36–40 (ESV)** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” <sup>(37)</sup> And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>(38)</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>(39)</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>(40)</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

  - 1). There you have it – have you loved God with all your heart, soul and mind
 

Have you always loved your neighbor as yourself

    - a). That is what it takes to get into heaven on your own
  - 2). “Well I do that most of the time!” Really? I never have – not once
    - a). I have never loved God with ALL my heart – ALL my soul – ALL my mind – 100%
    - b). Love my neighbor in exactly the same way I love myself – care about them just as much
      - 1a). Why I need a Savior – I still fall short of what God requires

**Thought:** If that's not convincing enough let's try the Way of the Master way – Ray Comfort

- A. What I did with William on Friday night
 

“So you claim you've never sinned – your girlfriend isn't buying it – mind if we check that?”

  - 1). Usually people say “Sure” – because they are confident in their own goodness
- B. I went through the whole – have you ever lied – Bible says that is a sin - what do you call that? Liar
 

Stolen – Bible says that is a sin - = called a thief

Looked on another with lust – he said “No” – his Gf was right there – she said he had – Adultery in heart

Used the Lord's name in vain - blasphemy

  - 1). After answering YES – you've admitted yourself that you've sinned
  - 2). Here is the problem – that sin earns you wages
 

**Ro 6:23 (ESV)** For the wages of sin is death... = eternal separation from God - hell
  - 3). Does that concern you? YES
    - a). Wasn't willing to receive Jesus at that moment

- But he had moved from self-righteousness to acknowledging his guilt = HUGE
- b). John Piper's dad was an evangelist
    - "Johnny, it's not hard getting man saved. It's hard getting them lost"
  - 4). This opened the door to tell William the Gospel – that God has a solution for his guilt
    - a). But also to warn him that sin he admitted to committing will be judged
      - Either on Christ at the cross or on him for all of eternity

**Transition:** So Jesus came because of people like William on Friday Night – lost in sin

- A. I'm amazed at how it only takes a few passages from the Bible to convince them they are sinners
  - 1). It's what the law of God does – law doesn't tell you how good you are – but how bad
    - It doesn't tell you that you have merited heaven – but only that you deserve hell
  - 2). That is the power of truth – the bad news that opens the heart for the good news
- B. That brings us to the second reason Jesus came

### III. CHRIST CAME TO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

**Jn 18:37 (ESV)** Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and *for this purpose I have come into the world (First Christmas morning – why?) —to bear witness to the truth.* Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

#### 1. Truth about what? Truth about God

- A. Man had gotten the truth about God twisted and convoluted
  - 1). God was angry and you had to do all these things to please him
    - Thousands of rules and regulations that just crushed the sincere seeker
- B. God gave a simple command – rest on the Sabbath – but they added volumes of minute details
  - 1). Means you can only walk so far – can't cook – no fire
    - Can't spit on ground – it might hit a seed and grow – now you're farming on the Sabbath
  - a). Sabbath elevators – pushing buttons are work
  - 2). They had reduced God to mere externals – how you wash your hands
    - a). They made a show of that – holding hands up so water drained off elbows just right
      - 1a). Actually thought God in heaven "Did you see that! Nailed it!"

**Point:** So God came himself to clear things up – to straighten out man's thinking about himself

- A. Reminds me of a story Chuck Smith told about a man and a little bird
  - 1). The man couldn't understand why God would come to earth to live as a man
    - As the family went to church – he stayed home – fools
  - 2). One morning a bird flew into his house – afraid – kept trying to fly out but was hitting wall
    - The man thought the bird was going to injure itself badly –
    - He tried to help – shoo him towards and opening
    - But it just frightened bird more causing him to hit the walls harder
  - 3). Finally he thought to himself "If only I could become a little bird then I could communicate that I don't want to hurt him – I just wanted to help – to save him"
    - a). Then it hit him why God in the person of Jesus Christ came to earth
      - 1a). All of a sudden it made perfect sense
      - 2a). He became a man so he could show men what he was really like
- B. He came to show that God loves them and wants relationship – not a bunch of rules and regulations
  - 1). He came to bring rest to those wore out by religion
    - a). Religion is based on man's work for God – attempting to earn his love

- 1a). This continual guilt-producing treadmill
  - 2a). Trying to live up to a standard they can't hit
  - b). Christianity is based on God's work for man – He came and did all that was necessary
    - 1a). Instead of relying on our feeble work for him – religion – stressful hard  
We rely on his perfect work for us – relationship – we rest
  - 4). That is the thing about Christianity it brings great rest
- Mt 11:28–30 (ESV)** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>(29)</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>(30)</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
- a). I'm right with God not because I'm good enough – not because I'm perfect  
But because I've gone to the one who is – God views me through his work! – I can rest

**Thought:** So he came to earth to tell lost man about God

A. God sees their pain and cares – God wants to be their loving Father – loving provider

**Transition:** But Jesus also had to tell them the truth about themselves

## 2. He came to tell the truth about man

A. For us to want the good news we needed to hear about the bad

- 1). We don't naturally think the good news is good news – why – it demands change
  - a). It tells us to turn away from the sin we love
- 2). But once convinced of the bad news the good news becomes important

B. My testimony – Patrick wouldn't shut up

One day: “Here's what you think hell is like – hanging out partying with your friends – let me tell you what God says hell is like. (He detailed it.) And Jesus came to save you from that. He is your only hope.”

- 1). As soon as I saw the truth about me – I had sinned and that sin earned me hell  
And when I saw the truth about God – that Christ came to rescue me
  - a). I felt this urgency – I had to meet the only one who could keep me from that place
  - b). The one who loved me enough to come to earth to die – to rescue me

**Point:** This is why you have to get Jesus out of that Nativity scene isn't it?

That is just the beginning of why Christmas is so important

A. Christmas was part of a plan that began in eternity past with a decision that God himself would come to earth to save sinners

B. Then that plan was put into action when Mary became pregnant – and Jesus was born in that manger

- 1). But it didn't stop there – Christmas means nothing if Jesus didn't grow up and go to the cross
- 2). It means nothing if Jesus didn't bear my sins - receiving the wrath I deserved

**Summary:** Jesus came to earth on that first Christmas story

A. To be the Savior of sinful man

B. To proclaim the truth about God and about man

**Transition:** But who will benefit from the Christmas story?

A. Hint: It's not who gets the most gifts

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## III. THE TRUE BENEFICIARIES OF CHRISTMAS

### 1. The world has really gotten this wrong

A. They quote a scripture but end to quickly – stop short of an important piece

- 1). They say “Peace on earth and good will to man” – Printed on Christmas cards
  - a). IOW Christmas is a time of blessing to everybody  
But that isn't what God said

## 2. Remember the story – the shepherds in the field

- A. The angels come to announce this incredible move from God – the Christmas story

**Lk 2:8–14 (ESV)** And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>(9)</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>(10)</sup> And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>(11)</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>(12)</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>(13)</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>(14)</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace *among those with whom he is pleased!*”

- 1). There is the first part that most quote - “Peace on earth. Good will to men”
- 2). But the adds a condition – not universal

*“among those whom he is pleased -or – on whom his favor rests”*

**Question:** Who is that? Who does God’s favor that brings peace rest upon?

- A. Those who have trusted in Christ

Those who have embraced the truths that make Christmas necessary

- 1). That this was God coming to earth to reaching out in love to rescue lost – guilty - man
- 2). It’s those who have responded to that truth by placing their faith in Christ

**Ro 5:1 (ESV)** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- a). God’s favor rests on those who have embraced his Son
- b). Those who haven’t can’t have peace when they are at war with their maker
  - 1a). That makes no sense at all!

**Rom 15:13 (NIV)** May the God of hope fill you with all *joy and peace as you trust in him...*

## THE CALL

### 1. Have you done that?

- A. Have you admitted you are a sinner in need of a Savior?
- B. Have you seen that you cannot merit heaven and forgiveness through your good works?
- C. Have you turned from your sins and embraced Christ as your only hope of heaven?

**Ac 4:12 (ESV)** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”