

The Gospel in One Sentence

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[0 : 0 0] We're looking at this verse briefly this evening. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost, especially these words down to the word sinners.

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We've given the sermon this evening a title, The Gospel in One Sentence.

That's really exactly what it is. It's the gospel in one brief sentence, that sentence being, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

That's the gospel. That's really the whole gospel, if you like, in a summary form in that brief sentence. Of course, you have to add a lot else from the Bible, as you know, that explains something of what that contains, and something of the detail of that.

But that really is the gospel in one sentence. And it's also significant that Paul is saying here, this saying, this sentence in which you find the gospel, is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.

[1 : 2 0] Why is he saying that? What does that indicate to us? What is that a clue to? Well, scholars tell us that that's really saying to us, that by the time Paul actually wrote this letter to Timothy, this statement, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, had become an established truth, or if you like, a doctrine in the church of that time.

Even as early as that, this had come to be something that was set forth and established as an important truth, something that should not be diverged from, and therefore had come to be set, as of importance to the church of the time.

And then, of course, down from that time, it's maintained its importance for us as a church, for the church of Christ, all the way down to our own present day.

This is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. It's set as a fundamentally important truth, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

And as it remains crucially important for us at all times, not just at this time of year, when we particularly refer to Christ's coming into the world, there are three questions tonight that we want to look at in relation to trying to bring out what's in this important statement, this established truth, this gospel in one sentence.

[2 : 5 0] Let's see if we just follow through these three questions very briefly and see of something that's in the statement itself and its importance.

First of all, who came into the world? And that's answered in these words, Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy, deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world.

Secondly, we ask the question, how did he come into the world? By what means did he come into the world? And this verse itself doesn't actually give us that.

We need to borrow from other scriptures that tell us that he came into the world by becoming human and living the life of a human being in the very circumstances that you and I are living our lives in today.

How did he come into the world? By becoming human. We'll see two important words in relation to that. Thirdly, why did he come into the world? Why did Christ Jesus come into the world?

[3 : 57] Well, the answer there is in the text, to save sinners. Not to save special people and not to leave sinners partly saved, but to save sinners.

Three questions. Who came into the world? Christ Jesus came into the world. You'll find throughout the New Testament, especially in Paul's letters, that these words, Christ, Jesus, Jesus, Christ, are actually sometimes put one before the other.

Here, you've got the word Christ coming before the word Jesus. And the relevance of that basically is that Christ gives the emphasis to the one anointed by God.

As we heard this morning in the service, in the sermon, the anointing of Jesus by God is specially endowing him to be the Savior of sinners.

Here is the word Christ put ahead of the word Jesus, which really, of course, means Savior, but it's the anointed Savior, the anointed one who saves. That's the thrust of the emphasis there.

[5 : 05] But that's just really in passing in a sense. What's important is that you notice here, he came into the world. And that itself implies that he came from outside the world.

If he came into the world, then it means he must have been somewhere else before he came into the world. You can't come into something. You can't come into your home, your house, except as you are first of all outside.

It doesn't make sense to say he came into the world without also saying he was outside the world to begin with. And he came into the world. And that's, of course, indicative of what we'll see in the second question and answer to it, that he came by taking our human nature.

But he came from the position he had with God the Father. Go to the writings of John, especially his gospel for this. And just to pick out one example of what is meant by this.

Now this, of course, is something that you find people denying, especially those of a liberal mindset, liberal in the sense of theological liberalism, who don't believe in the supernatural in the sense of miraculous, who don't really at all commend the likes of Jesus' miracles as actual miracles, but try and explain them away in some other way.

[6 : 29] Well, here is the greatest miracle that the Son of God came into the world by becoming human. I saw that recently in the way in which he was found in the boat with the disciples, and there he was fast asleep.

And then he stilled the storm, the wind, and the waves. He gave them command, and they actually became stilled. The greatest miracle there, as we said at the time, was not Jesus stilling the storm, but Jesus being there in the first place.

The Son of God being in a little boat with these disciples as a human being. And here is John in chapter 16, where Jesus was teaching the disciples in these chapters, as you know, shortly before he went out to die on the cross.

Chapter 16 and verse 27-28, For the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father. Now, of course, they couldn't, at that stage, understand all of that the way they did afterwards, as the Holy Spirit taught them following Pentecost.

[7 : 41] But there is Jesus telling them, I came from the Father. I was outside of where I am now, of this world, and of the environs of this world, and the conditions of this world.

I was with the Father. And the Father sent me into the world, and I came from the Father into this world. Now, there is the first wonder of Christmas.

This is really the story of Christmas. This is the meaning of Christmas in this sentence where you find the gospel in a sentence. Who was it who came into this world?

You see, some people, some will still, insisting that there is no such thing as God actually becoming human, or the virgin birth, and all of these things that we find precious in the teaching of the Bible, will say that, yes, Jesus was a very important person.

He was a very important man. And God endowed him specifically at the time above those of his contemporaries. And by the endowment with which God endowed him with gifts, and with a special blessing, and with his Spirit, he became someone associated with salvation, associated with revealing God, and teaching about God.

[8 : 59] That's not what is told us here in this verse itself. He came into the world. It wasn't God looking upon human beings and saying, well, here is the person I'm going to choose to actually be a leader of my people, and through whom I'm going to reveal myself as the God who saves from sin.

It's God himself who came. The Son of God. God in the person of his Son, in the mystery and wonder of the triune God, the Trinity that God is.

God in the person of his Son came. This saying is trustworthy, that Christ Jesus came into the world. The one who always existed, the one through whom all things were created, and for whom they were created, came himself into this world.

How did he come? Secondly, how did he come into this world? Well, two words, two key words, and I'm going to try and explain them because they're big words for the children, for the young ones this evening.

The first word is incarnation. The second word is humiliation. How did he come into the world? He came into the world by incarnation.

[10 : 22] And for the children, that really simply means he became human. He took our humanity, our human nature, to himself. Remember, he is outside of the world.

He's the Son of God. He is God, the Son. And coming into the world, he didn't just come into the world as God, though he didn't stop being God. He came into the world by adding something to himself, by something he never had before, by joining to himself as the Son of God, a human nature, by becoming human.

That is what we associate with Christmas, with the Lord Jesus Christ, and with his birth, and with all that's associated with his birth in the gospel narratives, especially of Matthew and of Luke, where you find the details about his being born into the world, and the circumstances of the day, the situation in the world at the time.

The Son of God was born. He took our human nature to himself. In other words, and this is such a very precious thing for us, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our Savior, went through absolutely every stage of human life.

from prenatal life, that's before he was born, just like any other baby, he developed in the womb, had a prenatal life as a human being, after being conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

[11 : 56] And after the time that usually elapses, in the case of a woman bearing a child, he was born. He was born, just like any other baby is born, into this world.

And he developed as an infant, and then as a young child, and then as a teenager, if you like, and then into adulthood, until he became a mature human being in adulthood, reaching up to the death that he died on the cross.

Jesus, every single stage of human life, Jesus has passed through. And every child in here should find that precious. Jesus knows your life just now as a child.

He knows what it's like to be a child. He knows what it's like to be raised in a home. He knows what it's like to go to church. He went to the synagogue. He went to the temple with his parents.

Jesus knows every stage of human life. And that means that at every stage of human life, Jesus knew of the temptations that we faced.

[13 : 06] We're told in the Bible, in the epistle to Hebrews, that he was tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin. And why is that precious? Why is that precious to you and to me, who know not only of temptation, but often giving in to temptation?

And then coming to have to confess to God that we've sinned, that we've fallen into sin, that we've given in to temptation. That we've not resisted the temptation. Well, it's important because Jesus is described in the Bible as the last Adam.

Sometimes referred to as the second Adam, but really the last Adam. There are only two Adams. The first Adam who was created perfect by God, who was given a command by God not to eat of one tree in the Garden of Eden.

and if he would eat of it, then he would die. And all who came from him would die also. That's what he did. And death came upon all human beings because of that.

And when Jesus entered into this world, he came as the last Adam. He came to stand the tests of temptation. He came actually to stand against all that was thrown at him in order to try and get him away from this path that he was on in being obedient to God the Father who sent him into the world to do a specific work and to die the death of the cross.

[14 : 35] Now, where Adam, the first Adam, gave in, where he actually did not keep the command of God, where he sinned, and therefore where sin passed upon all his descendants, except for Jesus himself, this second Adam, the last Adam, stood all the temptations so that we would, as sinners, have salvation provided for us.

You know, in this world, you find very sophisticated security systems nowadays. You only think of banks or other important places.

Even homes are very sophisticated security systems. They cost a lot of money, the expensive ones, especially if it's a big thing like an important building or a bank or whatever that really has a lot of stuff inside that you need to secure.

But you know, every single security system in the world, however sophisticated and however expensive it was to install and to maintain, they all have one potentially serious flaw.

Do you know what it is? It's the possibility or the potential of someone on the inside actually being untrue to what they're about and just switching off the security system so that thieves can come in and steal.

[16 : 08] It doesn't matter what security system you have. If somebody inside is dishonest, that security system can be easily breached. But it never happened like that with Jesus.

Here's our completely reliable security system that provides us with ultimate security in the presence of God. Nothing can actually undo what Christ has done.

Nothing could get through to break him as the ultimate security. Not that the devil didn't try. Everything had happened in that description in Matthew and Luke's gospel about Jesus in the wilderness and the devil coming to tempt him.

If you're the son of God, command these stones that they be made bread. It wasn't testing whether Christ really understood himself to be the son of God or not.

What the devil was trying to do was to get Jesus to see that as the son of God he knew very well that he was the son of God. But what the devil was saying, well you're the son of God, what's leaving you in this wilderness?

[17 : 16] Why are you actually in this deprivation? Why are you in hunger? Why can't you not just as the son of God perform a miracle and turn these stones into bread and at least have something to feed yourself when you're hungry?

Well Jesus was there so as to resist temptation, and the security system remained completely untouched, unbroken.

For all the devil's attempts he could not break. Christ as our Savior in the work that he was doing. That's why it's precious to you and to me when you know that we failed and I failed and you failed, when you come to God again to confess your sin, to confess Lord, I should have stood against that temptation, I knew it was wrong, I saw it coming in advance and still I failed.

Well you then are thankful that you can come to rely on someone who didn't fail and that God's acceptance of you is not on the basis of your own perfection and on you never having failed or never failing again.

He is accepting you on the basis of what Jesus has done and that in his incarnation and life on earth he came into this world to live in this world, to face temptation, to overcome temptation, to defeat the devil and sin and provide us with salvation.

[18 : 49] That's the first word. The second word is humiliation because not only did the Son of God come from outside the world, from heaven, into this world by incarnation, by taking our nature to himself in doing so and in living in this world, it was a huge step down for him.

Some of you may have recently seen on television a very good program about what's called Sleep in the Park, that massive exercise in Edinburgh where many people came to camp out for the night.

people along the gardens there in Edinburgh to really show affinity with as far as possible those who have a problem with homelessness, who have to sleep on the streets most nights, if not all nights, and also to show support for Bethany, for other organizations that I know you're praying for that are actually dealing with homelessness and the problems of homelessness and social deprivation and poverty and addiction, all that goes along with these things.

But what was interesting was the comments of those who were coming out as the interviewer was going about and then some of them left quite early but others stayed on for most of the night, but virtually all of them that came out as they were asked the question, could you do this for more than one night?

Absolutely not. It's freezing out there. No way we could do that for more than one night. Even one night was just too much. And of course, those who are sleeping out and have no option just have to do it every night.

[20 : 32] That's why it's important that we do remember them that tonight and at this Christmas time and on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day there will be people on our streets who don't have a place to call home other than a cardboard box and spend the night in freezing temperatures.

But here's the thing. These people said there's no way we could do that for more than one night. Well, you just imagine the Queen. If the Queen were to say tomorrow in her Christmas speech to the nation, I have decided as the monarch of the nation that from today onwards I'm going to sleep in the park.

I'm going to share my life with the homeless. I'm going to become one of them and I'm going to stay there not just for a night. I'm going to stay there until the problem is solved. Imagine the reaction throughout the nation.

If the Queen was going to say that and genuinely say this is what I am committed to from now on. This is what my life will be about until this is actually solved.

It would cause absolute amazement throughout the nation. sin. And yet, that's as virtually nothing compared to the Son of God saying, I'm going to go into that world of sinners.

[21 : 59] I'm going to take their nature. I'm going to take their life, their circumstances, their conditions. I'm going to live there until the problem is solved.

God didn't come into this world that we belong to, this world of our sinfulness and our lostness. He didn't come into this world just as it were to dip his toes into this ocean of lost humanity and all the consequences of our sin with all its grime and all its dirt and all its offensiveness to himself.

He didn't come into the world just to test it, to see what it was like and then quickly dug out again. He came into this world to live this life, to take to himself that ugliness of our sin and our lostness and our depravity and to bear its consequences right through to the death of the cross.

Ah, for Jesus, he came not just by incarnation, don't just think of that innocent looking baby in the manger image that you get on Christmas cards.

There is that aspect to him, sinless, but he's a sinless human being in situation, in a situation of utter, utter depravity and taking the sin of his people to himself.

[23 : 34] as Isaiah himself put it in Isaiah 53, all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And to do that, he came down, he came into this world, incarnation and humiliation, beyond our description. That's who came.

That's how he came. But why did he come? Well, he came into this world to save sinners. You begin with that word, sinners, because without beginning with the word, sinners, you can't understand the word, save.

You can only understand save as you see it against the dark background of sinners. Because if they're not sinners, they don't need to be saved.

And he came into this world to save sinners, to save people who are sinners and in need of salvation, whatever their condition in life is, whatever their social status is, it doesn't matter as you look out over the whole world of humanity tonight.

[24 : 54] The richest people in the world are sinners. The poorest people in the world are sinners. Without distinction, people are sinners, though there may be many distinctions in terms of social status, of their circumstances in the world, of riches, of poverty, or whatever else.

But there is no distinction in this regard. Every single human being that's born into the world, apart from Jesus, is a sinner in need of salvation. And Jesus came into the world to save them, to save us, to save us the kind of people we are.

That's where you have the great images in the Bible of, for example, just picking one of them, the shepherd coming to rescue the lost sheep. It's all about salvation. It's all about taking those who cannot and are no condition to save themselves, themselves, and yet coming into their circumstances to do that for them.

And it is really to save them from their sins. Jesus didn't actually come to enable us to rescue ourselves, to get some self-help so that somehow we could graduate out of the ways of sin and reach finally that level of salvation.

He didn't come into the world to merely sympathize with us. He didn't come into the world just to educate us in such a way that we would come by that education to take one step after another till we had come out of this sinfulness, out of this lostness, and saved ourselves.

[26 : 28] That's not what it says. He came into this world to save sinners. Not to leave them half saved. Not to do something for them by which they would afterwards be able to save themselves.

He came to save. That's what He does. salvation in the full sense of the word. Salvation from sin.

Salvation from its guilt, from its defilement, from its very presence actually at the end of the day when you think of what heaven is about. He came to save sinners.

And every aspect of that save is what He came to do. He came to save them by dying for them. I remember when Jesus actually came to the cross and was on the cross and around the cross there were various people, some of them weeping for Him, others just casting accusations at Him.

And in Matthew 27 and verses 40 to 42, we find it recorded of that occasion that people were saying to Him as they passed by they wagged their heads and saying you who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.

[27 : 57] So also the chief priests with the scribes and elders, these are the important religious people remember, they mocked Him saying He saved others, He cannot save Himself.

He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross and we will believe in Him. And you know what that's really saying is something that you find right to this very day in the minds of people, in the thoughts of people, in the statements of people because all that really is saying is this, if He were a different Christ to what He claims, then we would accept Him, but not as He is.

if He were to come down from the cross, if He were to actually turn His back upon all of this shame and the suffering and this dying, this death that He's dying, then we would actually believe in Him.

If He could rescue Himself out of the death that He's dying now, then we would believe in Him, then He would be worthy of our faith. But no, God is saying, that's what makes Him worthy of your faith and my faith, that He didn't come down from the cross, that He didn't shirk seeing it through to the end to die, the death that is actually nothing less than hell.

That's what He experienced. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That is what Jesus experienced on the cross. That's the death He died, not just merely a physical death, death.

[29 : 34] But the death that is in fact the wages of sin, He died that. He came into the world to do that. That's what He accomplished.

That's how He saves. Who came? The Son of God came. How did He come? By incarnation and in humiliation.

Why did He come? He came to save sinners. And He came indeed to save them. To save them fully. I'm sure everybody here knows of Robert Murray McChain, a famous minister in Dundee in the mid-1800s.

During his ministry, there was one man who had a lot of troubled, had a troubled mind because he just couldn't get any peace in his mind or in his conscience about his relationship with God.

And one day he was listening to McChain preaching, and McChain was actually preaching on that occasion mostly to Christians, mostly to those who were saved. And as this man was listening to him, he actually got this peace that he didn't have up until then.

[30 : 50] And he asked if he could go round and see McChain, so yes, he was shown through to the vestry to see the minister, and he told McChain what had happened. And McChain asked him, well, how did you come to have such peace on this occasion?

And this is what he said, he said, well, he said, all this time I've been trying to enter in by the saint's door, but while you were speaking, I saw my mistake, and I entered in at the sinner's door.

You see, the door into salvation is not marked above it for saints only. It only has one thing above it, and that's this.

It's for sinners. That's how you go in. It's the door for sinners. And as long as we try the door for saints, we will always fail, because that's not what we are until we go in.

And when you're in, then God makes you a saint, because Jesus saves from our sins.

[32 : 02] So tonight, maybe you've been listening to this, and know that you're still not saved yourself. Well, from all that you've heard, even from this one text tonight, surely you're leaving here with this prayer of that man recorded in the Gospels.

It's one of the great prayers of the Bible, and it's one of the shortest. God, be merciful to me, the sinner.

Let's pray. Lord, our God, we do give thanks that you came into this world with the purpose of salvation.

salvation. We give thanks that you fulfilled that purpose through your death on the cross, that you entered into our condition as sinful human beings without becoming yourself sinful in practice.

We bless you, Lord, tonight that we look to you as the saviour of the world, who came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through you might be saved. So bless us, we pray, as we hear once again of the wonder of your coming into the world, the wonder of what you did while you were in it, and the wonder of your invitation to us through the gospel to come to participate in the salvation that you have procured.

[33 : 29] We receive our thanks. Be with us now, we pray in the fellowship after them. We receive our thanks for Jesus' sake. Amen. We'll conclude now in singing in Psalm 23, the whole psalm.

Now we sang this psalm this morning, and we're singing the other version of, the older version, traditional version this evening. When I sent through the notes to those who make up the bulletin, I did say that if Kenny had chosen Psalm 23 for the morning, or any psalm, just to let me know if there was a duplication and that we might change it.

Well, the message came back, yes, he's chosen Psalm 23, and the sing Psalm's version of it. And you know, that gave me a great deal of encouragement that both of us had come to focus on this psalm to sing during the services today, in our family services.

So we'll sing this psalm, Psalm 23, The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want, he makes me down to lie in pastures green, he leadeth me the quiet waters by.

That's the whole psalm to God's praise. praise. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want, he makes me down to lie in pastures green, he leadeth me the quiet waters by.

[35 : 17] My soul, he doth restore again, and me to walk, doth make within the path of righteousness, him for his own name's sake.

Yet for I walk in death's dark fail, yet will I fear none ill, for thou art with me and thy rod, and staff may comfort still.

My table, thou hast furnished, in presence of my foes, my head thou dost, with oil anoint, and my cup overflows.

goodness and mercy, all my life shall surely follow me, and in God's house, forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

Amen. Amen. I'll go to the main door after the benediction. Lord, we pray that you'd bless to us all that we're about to receive of food and the fellowship, and grant to us, Lord, your continued blessing.

[37 : 49] And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen. Amen.