

# The Real Christmas Story

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Let's take our Bibles, if you would, and turn with me to the book of Matthew.

Matthew chapter 1. And we're going to talk to you tonight about the real Christmas story. The real Christmas story. And I want to read with you starting in Matthew chapter 1, verse 18.

And we're going to read the story. Then I will take a few minutes and go through some of the main things about the story with you. And I'll still get you out on time to get out and celebrate and enjoy things tonight.

So look, if you would, in Matthew chapter 1 and verse 18. The Bible says, Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph, her husband being a just man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

[ 1 : 12 ] And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not, till she had brought forth her firstborn son, and he called his name Jesus.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born, the king of the Jews?

For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and the scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah?

[ 2 : 25 ] For out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search diligently for the young child. And when you have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

And when they had heard the king, they departed. And lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

Father, I pray that tonight you might help us to understand the real meaning of Christmas. And I pray, God, that you'd help us to take these verses and understand them and apply them to our lives and get the idea of what you have in mind for us as we think about Christmas and the birth of your son.

Thank you so much for sending your son. Thank you, Jesus, for coming. God in human flesh dying on a cross for us, paying the sin debt for us so that we could be saved.

[ 3 : 31 ] I thank you and I praise you and I pray, God, tonight that you would be more real to us than you've ever been. You would draw your people to you and we'll give you great honor and glory and praise. In Jesus' name, amen.

What's the spirit of Christmas? Is it giving presents, fun and fellowship, partying and drinking, family, love? What is the spirit we see surrounding the truth in the Bible?

This is one of our favorite holidays, but honestly, the birth of Christ gets lost in the shuffle. We gripe that they do not say Merry Christmas. We did it so much they started saying it again.

But we might not really understand nor practice what we see in the Bible as the story of Christmas. The real story of Christmas is getting lost people saved. The real story of Christmas is God sacrificing himself on the cross to save us.

The Christmas story is a time to worship the God of glory. The real Christmas story is a story of hope to the nations. Look, if you would, with me at Matthew 1 and verse 21.

[ 4 : 34 ] And I'll give you some things to write down. Number one, write this down. It's a story of salvation for sinners. It's a story of salvation for sinners.

The Bible says in Matthew 1, 21, and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

This is the story of Christmas. If you want the true story of Christmas, it is that man was completely separated from God. There was no way back to God. There was no way to fix things with God.

And God fixed things by God taking on human flesh and God coming to earth and God dying on a cross for us. That was Jesus. The Bible says in Isaiah 59 and verse 2, your iniquities have separated between you and your God.

Your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. In John chapter 3 and verse 36, so you know where our condition, and where our condition was before Christ, the Bible says, it says, the wrath of God abides on all that do not believe in Jesus Christ.

[ 5 : 39 ] In Luke chapter 5 and verse 31, he said, or verse 32, he said, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Jesus came to earth to find sinners and call them to repentance.

He came to find those of us who would recognize our need of him so that we could be saved. The Bible says that man without Christ is condemned already.

The great majority of us were raised with the idea that one day we'll die and one day we'll go before God and one day they'll weigh our good against our bad and we'll see which one tops it over and which one wins.

Do we get the good side or do we get the bad side? But the Bible says in John chapter 3 and verse 18, the Bible said, he that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already.

John chapter 3 and verse 18, he that believeth not is condemned already. That means here's a person who has not died, who is a person who has not accepted Christ.

[ 6 : 40 ] They're not in a neutral position. You need to listen to this. You're not in a neutral position. See, you're either saved or you're lost. You're either a child of God or you're not.

You're either on your way to heaven or you're on your way to hell. You say, well, I haven't decided yet. Well, then you have decided because you see, if you have not trusted Christ and what he did on the cross of Calvary, the Bible says you are condemned already.

Jesus came to rescue us because of our sin. The Bible says in Romans chapter 5 and verse 8, but God committed his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were yet sinners. He's not waiting for anybody to fix their life. He's not waiting for anybody to turn over a new leaf. He's not waiting for anybody to become a better person. He said, I died for you when you were still a sinner.

I died for everybody when they were still a sinner. He died for us while we were yet sinners. The Bible says in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12, wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned.

[ 7 : 50 ] What's the story of Christmas? You said, well, you're just preaching the gospel. That is the story of Christmas. The story of Christmas is that man sinned and man separated from God and there's no way to get to God.

And the God of glory loved us enough that he devised a plan. He's the author and the finisher of our faith and he devised a plan whereby we could get saved and he came to earth to save us.

And it's clear, by the way, there aren't a lot of plans. You might think, well, I could leave the church tonight and if I don't agree with what you say, I'll go out and I'll find another religion. Actually, there is only one way to God and that is through Jesus.

The Bible says in John chapter 14 and verse 6, Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.

The story of Christmas is a story of salvation. The story of Christmas is God loving us. One of the reasons there's so much joy is because we figured out something.

[ 8 : 52 ] He loves us. We figured out something. We got a gift. We figured out something. He gave his son that we could be saved. And Jesus is the absolute only way you can be saved.

The Bible says in Acts chapter 4 and verse 12, Neither is there any other for there's none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved. Only one name, the name of Jesus.

So number one, if you take Bible notes, if you study what the Bible says, the story of Christmas, the spirit of Christmas is the spirit of salvation. It is God saving man.

The second thing you might write down there, not only is it God saving us, not only is it salvation, but the story of Christmas is the story of sacrifice. The story of Christmas is the story of sacrifice.

By the way, most of us know that for good, often for Christmases, we do make big sacrifices to be able to buy that gift, to get a hold of that for somebody. But the real story of Christmas is Jesus and his great sacrifice.

[ 9 : 55 ] He was rich and he became poor for our sakes. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 9, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you might be rich.

Let's get the picture so we understand it's a picture of sacrifice. Man created, placed in the Garden of Eden with everything he could possibly ever dream of. Only one rule.

That rule was don't eat of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But man, tempted by Satan, decided, I'll do things my way. I'll live life my way. I'll do what I want to do.

And he did. And when he did, he sinned. When he sinned, he was cast out of the garden. He was separated from God and he was alone on the planet. Abandoned on the planet all alone.

And God was still God. And God still had everything under control. And heaven was still a wonderful place. And the river of life was still there. And the tree of life was still there. And everything in heaven was perfect.

[ 11 : 00 ] And God, Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, stood up and he takes off his robes of righteousness and holiness and majesty. And he steps out of the great place in heaven and he comes down to earth to die on a cross.

And he that was rich became poor. He gave up who he was at the right hand of the Father to come to us. He didn't give up being God, but he gave up who he was as far as seated at that place being praised all day and enjoying that to come to earth to die for all of us.

The Bible says in Philippians 2, verses 6 and following and I'll paraphrase them. They can flash them up behind me so you can see that it's in the Bible. But it's the wildest story. Here's what it says.

Jesus was in heaven and he was God. He didn't even think it was robbery to think of himself as God. He wasn't bragging when he said he was God. He is and was and always will be God.

And he looked down at man and he saw man's horrible condition and he humbled himself. He gave up his position. He lowered himself and became a man. That's like you becoming your creation.

[ 12 : 08 ] It's like your child becoming the little chalk drawing they drew on the sidewalk. It's like your child becoming the little creation they made out of clay. He lowered himself all the way down to become a human being, his creation.

And he came to earth. But he didn't just come to earth. He didn't just humble himself to be part of his creation. He humbled himself to death. He didn't just humble himself to die. He humbled himself to die on a cross, ridiculed and mocked and mistreated.

He did that. It's a story of sacrifice. The Christmas story is a story of salvation. It is a story of salvation. He came.

You need to know he came and he knew it when he came. He came to die. The beautiful picture that you see of the Christmas nativity scene and the angels are singing up here above us and the animals are there and the shepherds are there and the wise men are there.

You know how the story you know how we always make it look. You need to know there was a shadow of a cross over the top of that place because Jesus came to die. Nobody took his life.

[ 13 : 14 ] He gave it. The Bible says in Matthew chapter 20 and verse 28 that he gave his life a ransom for many. He on purpose gave his life a ransom for many.

The Bible says in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 2 that he gave himself a propitiation. That's the big word. It means a sin payment. The God of glory looked down and said you deserve to pay for your sin.

You deserve to pay for your sin. You're the one that did wrong. You're the one that rebelled against God. You're the one that lived the way you wanted to but I will become your sin payment. I will be your substitute.

I will die in your place. I will take death on myself so that you can be saved and he did it not just for us. He said not for our sins only but for the sins of the whole world. He came and he died.

He gave his life and died on the cross so that we could all be saved. One more verse before I leave that and that is this. Did you know he died on purpose? You need to listen to this.

[ 14 : 14 ] He died on purpose. It was not an accident. It wasn't a footnote. It wasn't a second thought in the story of Christianity.

It wasn't like the apostles had to write a PS on the story and say this is what happened. He came to die in John chapter 10 before he ever died. In John chapter 10 verse 18 he said this.

He said no man takes my life from me I lay it down. He died because he wanted to die. He died because he loved me. He died because he loved you.

He died because he loved everybody. Christmas is a story number one of salvation. It is a story of salvation. Number two Christmas is a story of sacrifice and great sacrifice not our sacrifice but his sacrifice as he died on a cross for us.

Third thing it is a story of worship. It is a story of worship. Look if you would at Luke chapter 1 and verse 41. Amazingly when Mary enters Elizabeth's presence being with child the baby John leaps in the womb and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit.

[ 15 : 22 ] The Bible says in Luke chapter 1 and verse 41 and it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary the babe leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

You know what just knowing that baby knowing that mother knowing that Mary walked in and when Mary walked in she was carrying Jesus. She was carrying the physical body of God come to earth to die on a cross to pay our sin debt and when that happened Mary's baby Elizabeth's baby John the Baptist who will soon be John the Baptist left in her womb.

They were filled with the Holy Ghost. God you are so great that you would look down on sinful men and men that have failed you and men that have no reason to ever expect that you would take them to heaven but you did so that they could be saved.

It caused Mary to worship. When Mary found out she was pregnant she was going to be the mother of Jesus the Bible says she worshipped. In Luke chapter 1 and verse 46 the Bible says my soul Mary says my soul does magnify the Lord.

God you are great you look down on us and you saw us as sinners and you saw us knowing we deserved to go to hell and you cared enough and you sent your son I magnify you.

[ 16 : 34 ] In chapter 1 and verse 47 she rejoiced the Bible says that my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. Mary knew Mary knew that it was God who was her Savior.

Mary knew that it was God who was her Savior. God come in human flesh. In Luke chapter 1 and verse 49 Mary recognized it was God and she said he that is mighty God that is mighty had done great things had done to me great things holy is his name.

She recognized that was his name. His name was holy. The angels worshipped. You got John the Baptist in the womb worshipping you got Mary worshipping the angels worshipped. In Luke chapter 2 and verse 13 and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill toward men.

Glory to God in the highest. The shepherds worshipped. In Luke chapter 2 and verse 20 the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God.

There were two people hanging around the temple. Two old people. One old man one old woman. Simeon and he'd been hanging around the whole time he knew what the Bible said. He knew that the Bible is clear that every man had sinned.

[ 17 : 51 ] He knew that the Bible was clear that every man deserved to die and go to hell when he died. He knew that. He knew that. He also knew that God had promised to send a Savior and he kept waiting on him. And he was out there waiting for any day now somebody would bring a baby and that baby would be circumcised and that baby would be brought to the temple and he kept waiting to see that.

He was dying to see salvation get to Israel. And the Bible says in Luke 2 28 then he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said Lord now let us thou thy servant depart in peace mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

When he saw Jesus he said I have seen salvation because God was come in human flesh. By the way there's another lady there named Anna and she came in at that very instant in Luke chapter 2 verse 38 and she likewise said unto the Lord and spake to all them that redemption had finally come that salvation had finally come.

You see Christmas is the time of salvation that's the story in the Bible it's the story about salvation it's the story about sacrifice it's the story about worship. You remember the wise men they came and they came to worship they came to worship him and bring gifts to him in Matthew chapter 2 in verse 2 they said we are come to worship we are come to worship salvation Christianity Christmas is about worshiping the God of heaven even Herod said I'd like to go worship him he was lying so many of us do that we play the religious game like Herod did we act like we don't want to know God we act like we want to serve him but it's not true and Herod was playing that game but they rejoiced with exceeding great joy and when they saw Jesus they fell down and worshipped and they gave him their offerings they gave him their offerings so here's your story what's Christmas about first Christmas is about salvation you see the whole story most of us tend to think of Christmas as oh it's such a purity little thing this little baby was born in

Jerusalem or in Bethlehem little baby is born in Bethlehem this little baby comes and there's Mary and there's mother and there's a sheep and we don't understand he came as God with full intentions of dying with salvation it was sacrifice he came knowing he was going to die he came humbling himself to be a human being he came humbling himself to die on a cross for us it was a time of worship but it's also the story of hope it's also the story of hope we have a relationship with God that he intended you know what they said in Matthew name him Emmanuel one of his many names Emmanuel God with us God with us you know what's the significance there don't you it's been roughly 4,000 years since the creation when you get to Matthew it's been roughly 4,000 years and God wasn't really with them it wasn't God God had walked with them in the garden God had spent time with them they had known God in an intimate way

[ 20 : 59 ] Adam and Eve had and over the 4,000 years a few people had had this very special relationship with God but very few people could say God is with me but when Jesus was born they said name him Emmanuel God with us God came down from heaven to be with us death defeated by the one who overcame death and hell Satan defeated as he finishes Romans chapter 16 and you'll see it next Sunday morning as we finish the book it says and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you Jesus gives hope Satan who defeated us Satan who made us lose our relationship with God we get that back through what Jesus did in Luke chapter 2 and verse 14 glory to God in the highest and on earth peace goodwill toward men that's what the statement is that's what the whole story is peace goodwill toward men there's two kinds of peace

I hope you know both peace both kinds of peace the Bible says in Romans chapter 5 and verse 1 the Bible says therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ you do understand and I hope you get this you hope you get this you've been at war with God the Bible actually calls you an enemy of God if you're not a born again believer if you've not trusted him if you've not confessed your sin if you're not asking to forgive you of your sin if you've not repented of your sin the Bible I might not be an all Christian but I'm not his enemy the Bible says you are the Bible says you are the Bible says you're dead the Bible says you have no peace the Bible says you can't expect peace here and you can't expect peace there but when you come to know Jesus you're put at peace with God things are fixed there's no longer a big gulf between us there's no longer a separation that's what Christmas was about it was about coming and getting me and saying

Austin I can make things right with God for you peace with God that's what happens when Jesus becomes your savior not only do you get peace with God you get peace of God Philippians chapter 4 and verse 7 the Bible says and the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts you see not only do you have peace with God but as Christians you can learn to have peace of God God can help you enjoy peace satisfaction trust God can do a work in your life and you can know that peace I would ask you this morning do you know that peace I would ask you do you have peace with God do you know that there's nothing between you and God do you know that there's nothing anybody could bring up nothing anybody could say there's no need to be afraid of him because all your sin debt has been paid do you know that do you know that you're a new do you have that confidence that's what

Christmas is about it's about salvation it is the happiest time of the year it ought to be the happiest time of the year but it's not because somebody buys me a present or I get to buy somebody a present it's because God came in human flesh and came down to earth to live amongst us down a cross and pay our sin debt do you know that peace if when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying it's not just peace for us not just hope for us but for everybody let's take the message to the entire world so everybody can know it so let me go over real quickly with you what Christmas is salvation that's what it's about there's no Christmas gift anybody can give you that will last as long as this gift it's the gift of the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believed with him should not perish but have everlasting life no one could ever give a gift like that

God gave his son he didn't just give him to come and live among us he gave him to die on a cross it's a story about salvation it's a story about sacrifice God gave his only begotten son Jesus came to die there is not a dad in this room who's a decent dad anyway who wouldn't do anything in their power to save their kid if you had your chance if you had your opportunity you would rather take the hurt you would take the pain you would take the suffering than see your own children go through it but our God loved us enough that he sent his son to die for us it is a story of sacrifice for Jesus because he didn't have to die the father didn't make him come and die God didn't say Jesus you got to go and die Jesus said I give my life God the father even gave me permission to do it he said I give my life God the father sacrificed himself Jesus sacrificed himself and by the

[ 26 : 14 ] Holy Spirit sacrifices himself he's been dealing with your heart he's been convicting you you've been thinking all these things all along on your own while you've been off doing things you ought not do while you've been trying to forget about him he's been like a hound on your trail he's been telling you you need to get your life right with God he's been telling you that it's time to quit playing games he's been telling you so even the Holy Spirit is sacrificed you don't even want him around you don't want to hear from him you don't want him dealing with your heart but you know good well something inside of you keeps beating and saying it's time to trust God it's time to trust Jesus it's time to put your faith in Jesus so sacrifice it's a time of worship because as soon as you figure out what God did for you through Jesus you're going to be so stinking happy you won't know what to say you're going to be like he loves me he forgave my sin he cleaned up my past he cleaned up my present he cleaned up my future I'm a new creature old things are passed away I can't believe it I serve a wonderful

God that's why everybody was singing that's why we sing tonight so it's a time of worship it's also a time of hope because maybe you have a family member who doesn't yet know God and is not serving God but I tell you this Jesus came to bring hope hope to people that were hopeless one old preacher that I used to like said don't ever give hope on people until they been dead four days because we've known Jesus to raise them up after four days so we know through Jesus there is hope so I have a question for you tonight are you saved look at me listen to me are you saved do you know that you would go to heaven if you died do you know that your sins have been forgiven do you understand that there was this big gulf between you and God there was this big chasm this big open space between you and God and you know that your sin separates you from God and no matter how much you'd like to talk about it down deep inside of your heart you know no no no I am not I'm not what I ought to be I got problems I got problems you don't ever tell that to anybody in public but your gut eats you alive because you know that's really you you know that sin is there you know that you're far from

God tonight you can be forgiven tonight you can know beyond a shadow of doubt you will go to heaven when you die tonight you can have forgiveness of sins and salvation he offers that to you tonight tonight tonight tonight you can say I was born again I got new life I got my past a race and given a new past a new present and a new future I would like for you to know God gave the greatest gift of all he gave Jesus and he's yours tonight if you'll trust father in heaven I love you and I praise you and I thank you for the opportunity to preach your word I pray to your God that maybe somebody here tonight from their heart would trust you and be saved and I give you praise God show your power and work in our lives this message was recorded at vision Baptist church in Alfred Georgia for more information log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com) where you can find our service times location contact information and more audio and video recordings