

The Real Christmas Story

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles with me to Matthew chapter 1 if you would, Matthew chapter 1 and verse 18. This would be, Lord willing, our last Christmas in this building and in a rented building.

Lord willing, by next year we will be in our own building. And that ought to be pretty exciting to you, amen? We're praying that God will provide the funds and raise the money to get everything taken care of. I understand Brother John explained more of that to you the other day.

Before I read this Christmas story to you, I just thought I'd tell you I used to play the trombone. Not like those guys, but I did play the trombone. I was like, I was third seat or third string or whatever you call it.

And so the reason I was third was when there weren't four. And when there were four, I was fourth. And when there were five, I was five. And I was constantly being slapped in the back of the head and told what to do better. And so my wife said, does this bring back nightmares or pleasant memories?

Nightmares, amen. Matthew chapter 1, read with me the Christmas story. You may have the habit of doing this in your home. I want to call your attention to several things. I want to take you through what really happened at Christmas, at least in these two passages of Scripture.

[1 : 04] And then I'll bring up some other things as we go through. Matthew 1, 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. This is how it went. This is how it went. 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 privately. 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.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. And all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet.

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son. They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

Just before we keep reading, could you take your Bible and go back and please mark this in verse 18. She was found with child of the Holy Ghost. This is God giving, making a child be in her womb.

[2 : 20] This is God doing that and bringing this baby to this earth. And his name is going to be called Jesus in verse 21. He's coming to save people from their sins. I know I say it all the time.

But I want you to notice in verse 22 that everything that's happened has already been written about. And everything that's happened is just proven God's word is true, and it's going to happen. Verse 24. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.

And he knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son. And he called his name Jesus. You should underline he did not know her. No relations at all with her until she had her first son.

Underline firstborn son. She will have others, but this was her firstborn. Chapter 2, verse 1. 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 king of the Jews?

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

[3 : 34] This is the most interesting thing in the world. And they knew. Look at the verse. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea. For thus it is written by the prophet.

It's in the Bible. It's in the scriptures. And they said, And this is where it's found. And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah. For out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, privately 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. When they 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.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Now turn in your Bible to Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2 and verse 1. Probably a passage of scripture that you may read in your home.

[4 : 36] And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, everyone to his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth, unto Judea, unto the city of David, which was called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David. To be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, engaged to her wife, being great with child.

And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son. That's really important. Probably more important than you think.

Because the honored person in the story is not Mary. It's Jesus. And Mary didn't have just Jesus at a virgin birth and nothing after that. Jesus is virgin born.

She'll have more children later on. Firstborn son. And was wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

[5 : 40] And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

That ought to thrill every one of our hearts. Good tidings, great joy, all people. We are not, most of us are not Jewish. The promise is to get great tidings, good tidings of great joy to all of us, even us.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. I hope you paid attention to the special, which was a tremendous doctrinal message, which we should hear.

He's our Savior. That's why he came to earth. He came to earth to die for us. He came to pay our sin debt, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you.

You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 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, goodwill toward men.

[6 : 47] I could stop there for an hour with you. It's not God who's angry. It's not God who's mad at you. And it's not God that walked away. We walked away. We sinned.

We took our own path. God loves us. And God's been coming after us ever since. From the Garden of Eden all through the whole Bible, the great God of heaven has been loving you. Goodwill toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger.

When they had seen it, they made known abroad. They told it everywhere. The saying which was told them concerned the child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. Everybody was like, wow, what's going on?

They knew about sacrificing animals. They knew about keeping rules. They didn't understand that God loved them. And God was sending his answer. They were supposed to understand it, but they had misunderstood. But Mary kept all these sayings and pondered them in her heart.

[7 : 51] And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them. Father, I pray now that you would remind people who already know as much about this story as I do about how great a God you are.

And tonight, Lord, we give you praise. Tonight, I thank you for being our Savior. We thank you for being our Savior. We thank you for loving us. We thank you for being the one who came to seek us.

We thank you for your grace. We thank you for your mercy. We thank you for this great privilege. God, if there's somebody here tonight that doesn't know you as their personal Lord and Savior, I pray that you would show them from the word of God tonight how to be saved.

And I pray that this very night they would trust you and what you did when you sent Jesus to this earth to die and pay our sin debt. And then, dear God, I pray for us as Christians that tonight we would worship you, that we would raise our hearts in praise to you, and thank you for the great God that you are.

Thank you for the great salvation you've given us, and thank you for the privilege we have of knowing that you brought life eternal to us. And I'll give you praise and honor and glory in Jesus' name.

[8 : 58] Amen. Well, it was very hard to preach about Christmas. Because I've been here 10 years. In 2013, I preached five messages about Christmas. And so, you know, there's not a whole lot of passages.

But this is a great story, and here's the simple truth. It's the story of God getting lost sinners saved. It's the story of God getting lost sinners saved.

It's the story of God sacrificing himself on the cross to save us. It's the story of man worshiping the God of glory.

It's the story of hope to all the nations. I want to take you through some truths in the Bible just real quickly. If you take the time to look with me, and they'll probably keep up pretty good back there. Look at Matthew 1.21 once again.

This is the story of salvation. This is the 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.

[9 : 58] And you realize we've sinned against the holy God. And you realize that our sin separated us from God. And every one of us need to remember this. Don't ever forget who you were.

Don't ever forget what you did. Don't ever forget that you walked out of his way, and you began to live life in your way the way you wanted to, and what you thought was important, and what you thought was good.

It doesn't mean you did wicked and dirty things. It simply means that you picked your own way. Some people pick a very wicked way, and they get all messed up maybe in drugs and sex and crime and wickedness.

And other people pick a very moral way. Other people are just the best people in the world. They're good neighbors, and they're hard workers, and they join the clubs and do all the stuff. But any way they do it, they're picking their way.

They think ever since they've eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Old Testament that they know what's best, and they can make decisions, and they understand things. And so man does his own thing. But sin separated us from God.

[10 : 55] We choose to do our thing. We go our own way. The Bible says in Isaiah chapter 59 and verse 2, Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear.

We can never forget. Hey, it's Christmas time, but you can never forget this truth I'm about to share with you out of John chapter 3 and verse 36. I hope you'll look it up. John chapter 3 and verse 36.

You know John 3, 16. You know for God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son. You know that verse. But did you know that the wrath of God abides on people? It is just on them living there.

Listen to what the Bible says in John chapter 3 and verse 36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. If you believed on him, say amen. Look at what it says right there.

You have everlasting life. You have everlasting life. And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life. He that hath not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

[11 : 59] That is a horrendous verse. It is a verse that ought to wake me up. If I were here tonight and I did not know Christ as my Savior, if I were here tonight and I had made a religious profession, but I didn't realize this, if you have not from your heart trusted God, the anger, the wrath of God abides over you.

It lives over you. It's over you and you're not getting away from it. You will not see life. We can talk about Christmas. We can sing all the sweet carols. We can play all the sweet music and we think all we want.

But if we don't know Jesus Christ, we shall not see life. And the wrath of God abides on us. Now, the purpose in Jesus coming at Christmas was that he was coming to call sinners to salvation.

And that's a very important thing. You see, I think we can say, yeah, I understand that he came to save sinners. But see, what he came to do, you have to be somebody who's willing to admit you've sinned.

Look at what the Bible says, if you would with me, in Luke chapter 5, verses 31 and 32. Luke 5, 31 and 32. You see, the problem is he came to save sinners, but not everybody thinks you're a sinner.

[13 : 05] So not everybody needs Jesus in their mind. They do need him because the wrath of God abides over them. But you may sit here and easily think to yourself, hey, I'm okay. I'm a real good neighbor and I pay all my bills.

I do all my work and I don't do wrong and I haven't mistreated anybody. And I'm just all the way around a pretty good guy. I'm not claiming to be the best, but if you want to compare me to a lot of people, I'm doing all right. Look at what it says in Luke chapter 5, 31 and 32.

And Jesus actually said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. People that are well don't need a doctor. Sick people need a doctor.

And then he said, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. There was a whole group of people that were religious. There were a whole group of people that were obeying the Ten Commandments, quote unquote.

There were a whole group of people doing all these great things, but they were not saved. But he said, I didn't come to call the righteous. What he meant was when he comes into the room and says, I'm here with salvation. If you're sick, if you're hurting, if you're on your way to hell, if you realize you failed God, you can be saved.

[14 : 08] And some of them were like, hey, you know, you really need to talk to him. And hey, you need to come to God because I can see it's obvious that you got problems, but I'm in pretty good shape. That was their attitude. He came to call sinners.

And some of us might have a heart issue with admitting, yeah, I've sinned. Yeah, I've failed God. Yes, I can believe. In John 3, 18, the Bible lets it be explained clearly about where man is.

Everybody we know all around the world, here in the church and everywhere else that's not saved, here's what he says, he that believeth on him is not condemned. We are not condemned. We will not come into condemnation.

But he that believeth not is condemned already. Condemned already. Condemned already. You're not waiting to get to heaven and have them pull out the scales and put all your good on one side and your bad on the other side and hope and pray it works out.

Let's just hear it. Here's how it works. The bad's already won. You're already condemned. You're already marked for hell. You've already failed because you didn't believe in Jesus Christ. You are on your way to hell.

[15 : 09] The Bible said, he that believeth on him is not condemned. But he that believeth not is condemned already because he had not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. We must believe.

Those of us in the room that have, there's salvation. We believe God and when we believe God, he forgave us and he saved us because he came to rescue sinners. He came to rescue people that knew they needed salvation.

The Bible says in Romans 5, 8, But God commended his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While we were still sinners. While we were still in our sinful condition, that's when Jesus died for us.

And there's no other name under heaven given among men whereby you could be saved. You don't get to heaven with the Muslim route. You don't get to heaven with the Hindu route. You don't get to heaven with any other route.

There's only one. That is knowing you're a sinner, knowing you deserve to go to hell, and knowing that Jesus died for you and believing him and believing what he did on the cross of Calvary. It's a story of salvation for sinners, but it's a story of sacrifice.

[16 : 12] It's a story of sacrifice. When we think in terms of Christmas, we think in terms of all this abundance that we Americans know. We think of all the Christmas trees and you have probably spent hundreds of dollars and bought tons of stuff to give to everybody you love and everything's beautiful and your house is decorated.

And we think in terms of that, but in all honesty, the story of Christmas is a story of the greatest sacrifice ever made. It's a story of God becoming man. Listen to what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 8 and verse 9.

And let's never forget it. 2 Corinthians 8 and verse 9. The Bible says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet he became poor, that through his poverty you might be rich.

You should mark that in your Bible. He was rich. He was in heaven, street of gold, angels praising him all the time. All the wonders and glory of everything God had in heaven was his.

And one day he stood up and looked down at us and said, There's no hope for them. I have a plan. I will pay their sin debt. I will bring them to heaven. And he humbled himself and became poor so we could be rich.

[17 : 21] Did you know those of us in this room that have trusted Christ, we've got an eternity in front of us in the presence of God with everything Jesus ever had. It's ours. He became poor that we could become rich.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is in Philippians chapter 2. You're probably thinking, what's this got to do with Christmas? Everything. It was a story of sinners getting saved, but it's a story of the sacrifice our great God made for us.

In Philippians chapter 2 and verse 6, the Bible says, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. So you understand what's going on? He's up in heaven.

And it's not wrong for him to say, I'm equal to God because he is equal to God. And he was in the form of God. And that's where he was seated. He was up in heaven. In verse 7 it says, And he made himself of no reputation.

No reputation. He went from being the number one to none. He went from great reputation to no reputation. And he took upon himself the form of a servant.

[18 : 24] And he was made in likeness of men. I think it's amazingly crazy for me to understand that the very creator who could speak the world into existence, who existed from time past, eternity past.

He's always existed. He is the preexistent Christ. And he is now in a little baby's body, letting a lady take care of him. And at the age of 12, that lady will act like she ought to have a right to say, You should have been with us when we came back from the temple.

And he's working in a carpenter's shop, and he's being just a regular guy among everybody else when all along he knew. Now, he did grow, and we don't know exactly when all this took place, but he was made of no reputation.

He took on the form of a servant, and he was made in the likeness of men. You should underline that in your Bible, likeness of men. You know, you understand what that means? When you're the eternal, all-wise God who never had a daddy, never had a mama, never had a beginning, and has no end, when you're the creator who speaks things into existence, and you limit yourself, for the first time in his life, he wasn't everywhere.

For the first time in his life, he didn't use all the abilities and all the powers that he had as the Almighty God. He became man in the form of likeness of men.

[19 : 40] Verse 8, And being found in fashion as a man, he looked like a man. He had a man's body. He was a man. And he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, the death of the cross.

And I know this is Christmas, and I know it's not about the crucifixion, but it is about the crucifixion, because that cross was a shadow across his cradle as a little baby. And you know, you think about this, in just 33 and a half years, they will put a crown of thorns on his head, they'll wrap his body in a kingly, quote-unquote kingly robe, they'll put a reed in his hand, and they will mock him, and they will punch him, and they will slap him, and they will hit him, and they'll make fun of him, and the whole time he'll take it.

When they come to get him in the garden, all he does is say, here I am, and they fall over backwards. He is almighty God, but he has humbled himself, and he has become obedient unto death. But even more than that, the death of the cross.

In Matthew chapter 20 and verse 28, we know why he came. He said, I came to give my life a ransom. He came to give his life a ransom for many. He came to seek sinners. In 1 John 2, 2, the Bible says, and he is the propitiation of our sins, and not for ours only, but the sins of the whole world.

So John's writing, John knows Jesus well. He's not only a savior and his lord. He was personally a friend of Jesus during those years that he had here on earth. He laid his head on his chest. He said, he said, guys, let me explain something to you.

[21 : 02] Jesus doesn't just die for us. He didn't just die for us Jewish people. He didn't just die for these Gentiles that are joining our churches now. He didn't just die for the seven churches I'll mention in Revelation. He died for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

He paid for everybody's sin. He paid for the sins of the whole world. So he came to take the penalty of sin. And by the way, he came knowing he would die and he laid down his life.

Don't ever forget that. He laid down his life. You know that when it came time for him to die and they came after him, he didn't run. He didn't hide. He didn't fight. He didn't try to deny the accusations.

He didn't try to set them straight. He didn't say, I need a lawyer. He didn't say, let me show you where you're making mistakes. He didn't use any of the power he had as almighty God. He didn't have the, he didn't use the power he had to walk on water, raise the dead.

He didn't use the power he had to control the elements. He just said, you can take my life because that's why I came. Bible says in John chapter 10 and verse 18, no man taketh it from me.

[22 : 07] I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it again. This is the commandment I've received to my father. He came for sinners. He came for sinners and he came to sacrifice.

Last thing quickly. It's a story of worship. It's a story of worship. I'm not sure we even understand what that means. In our society, a gal will say, well, I'm the worship leader at my church.

What that means to him is I lead to singing. What that means, I mean, it's just a fancy way of saying I lead to singing. I lead to, I lead to musicians and I lead to singing. But in the Bible terms, it was, I recognize you as being greater than me.

I recognize you as being all powerful. I recognize you as being the owner of my life. And if I had the time, I'd walk you through it. Do you remember Mary's pregnant? She goes to see Elizabeth and Elizabeth's pregnant with John the Baptist and she walks in the room and the baby leaps in his womb and worships.

The baby's filled with his spirit like, hey, I know somebody great is here. He was still in the womb. He was still in the womb. You remember the story? They get to the temple after he's born and Simeon and Anna are there.

[23 : 13] And they hold him up and worship and they say, God, my eyes have now seen, my eyes have now seen the salvation of the Lord. Mary, when she found out she was pregnant, she didn't brag on herself.

She said, my soul doth magnify the Lord. And then she said, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. She never thought herself as a queen of heaven or the mother of God or the Savior.

She said, I need a Savior. And she rejoiced in her Savior. She said, he is mighty, has done to me great things. Holy is his name, not holy is my name. The angels sang, the angels sang, the shepherds worshiped and glorified God and praised him.

The wise men came to worship. By the way, they had been traveling somewhere in the neighborhood of two years on their way. They didn't find him in the manger. They found him in the house. He wasn't a baby. He was now a young child, but they'd been traveling with gifts they prepared, with sacrifices they'd made.

They were rich and they were wise and they were strong and they, for up to two years, they'd been traveling to see Jesus, to lay down their gifts and to worship him. It's the story of worshipping our God.

[24 : 22] So here's the question for you tonight. Number one, do you know for a fact that you're born again? He came to save sinners. That's what Christmas is about. It's certainly not about Christmas carols or fires that we're going to have outside or train rides.

They're fun. We can do that, but let's get down to the real thing. God loves you and he loves you from before you were born and he has sought your salvation.

He has come from heaven. He has died on the cross. He has paid our sin debt and all you got to do is believe him. Will you believe God? Will you believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God come to pay your sin debt?

Are you a sinner that's willing to trust Christ and be saved? Do you realize tonight this is a story of sacrifice? It's not the story of great riches and great power.

It's the story of God being willing to limit himself and come down from heaven and die for us and will you worship? You worship in your giving. You worship in your living.

[25 : 22] You worship in being in church. You worship in the way you lead your home because in every way in every part of your life you're saying he is God and I recognize him. I respect him. I reverence him.

I honor him because he is almighty God because that's what Christmas is really about. What Christmas is really about is when our God interrupted history, interrupted time and came to this earth to say I'm here to pay your debt and you can be saved.