

Redeeming Christmas
Message 1 of 3 – Jesus: Before His Birth

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at johnny@stoneharborchurch.org.

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherds heart,
Johnny

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

Date: December 13, 2009
Series: Redeeming Christmas
Section: Jesus: Before His Birth
Topic: Jesus in Promise
Message Title: Jesus: Before His Birth
Short Title: Jesus: Before His Birth
Text: Gen 1, John 1
Key Words: Jesus, created, seed

Message Outline

Jesus: Before His Birth

- I. Old Testament Record of Jesus
- II. New Testament Preparation for Jesus
- III. Why Bother Considering Jesus Before His Birth

Related Scripture

1. Gen 1-3
2. Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-5, 17:7, 21
3. 2 Sam 7:12-16
4. Mat 1
5. Mark 1:1-8
6. Luke 1, 3:23-38
7. John 1:1-34

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What is your favorite memory or Christmas?
2. What does our culture give most attention to during the Christmas holiday?
3. In what way could Christmas in our culture stand to be redeemed?
4. How can we redeem Christmas time to honor Christ?
5. In God's grand plan, what person and role would Jesus ultimately fulfill?
6. How did God prepare mankind for Jesus coming before His birth?
7. What do you need to do to live in this season as an adopted child of God?

Memory and Meditation Verse

“In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.”

John 1:1

Homiletical Idea

Christmas, if it is to honor God, needs our redeeming; and we can do so by listening to the full story of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Goals of Message

- That we would take a season overrun by the world and redeem it for the glory of God

Service Plan

- Greeting (Johnny)
- Worship in Song (Chuck & Co.)
- Community Life Announcements (Leslie)
- Pastoral Prayer (Johnny)
- Scripture Reading
 - Reading 1: _____ (Becky)
 - Reading 2: _____ (Lori)
- Message (Johnny)
- Closing Prayer (Dave)
- Benediction (Johnny)

Redeeming Christmas – Jesus: Before His Birth

Introduction

How can we best love God as Christians (those reconciled to Him by the redemptive work of Jesus the Christ) living in California, USA in this Christmas Holiday season?

I propose that we can do it by worshiping and honoring Him above all else; we do it by thoughtfully recognizing and appreciating Jesus and what is important to Him.

ILLUS. -- Can you imagine throwing a birthday party for a teenage boy who loves the outside by having a tea themed on Barbie dolls in the Victorian room of a local historic house/museum? As great as that would be for a pre-teen girl in love with Ann of Green Gables, for the hiking snowboarding teenage boy it misses the mark. Why? Because it does not thoughtfully consider who He is and what is important to him.

If we are to genuinely attempt to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas time, then we need to do it thoughtfully considering who He is and what is important to Him.

So, in preparation for Christmas this year I'd like us to choose to actually make it a celebration of the birth of Jesus. To do so, this Sunday and next, the only two Sunday's left before Christmas, -- oh no, I haven't got a present for Aunt Mildred yet -- Don't go there, focus. Remember it is about Jesus. Come back, come on! There we go. It's about Jesus. Jesus. Right. This Sunday and next we will honor Jesus by thoughtfully considering what is most significant to Him – What He wouldn't want us to miss about Him.

Unlike human biographies which are most frequently bounded by the dates of the subject's birth and death, Jesus' story can NOT be properly told, NOR His life properly celebrated, when we only consider the period beginning at His birth and ending at His death. This is because Jesus' existence preceded His birth and extends beyond His death.

This Sunday we'll look back recognizing what God has revealed of Him before His birth; and then next Sunday we'll look at His actual birth, why He came, and what He accomplished (Redemption and Reconciliation). Then on the Sunday after Christmas we'll look at how Jesus' accomplishments impact us today.

Then as we begin the new year we will also begin a time of study as a church family discovering what God intended the church to be and do. Is the church what God intends it to be? Is Stone Harbor Church being the church God intends it to be? Are we doing what God would have us do? Are we leaving something of His will out because we are too busy doing something(s) He never asked us to do? That will be the nature of our new series beginning the first Sunday of the New Year.

But for now, let's get to the task of: Redeeming the Celebration of the Birth of the Redeemer -- Redeeming Christmas. It is my contention that we can best redeem Christmas by recognizing and appreciating Jesus Christ – and Him according to all God has cared to reveal to us of Him; not according to the Cliff Notes our cultural Christianity hands out, and not according to the little slice of time our worldly-imposed busyness affords. If we want to redeem Christmas, it will require giving Christ His proper seat at the table, a seat which may currently be taken by something else.

I. Jesus: before His Birth

(Christ/Messiah in Promise & Preparation)

Jesus is the person in whom God has chosen to come in the flesh to serve a very clear purpose. It is the purpose that God has championed from the very beginning of creation. Thus, the story of Jesus begins at the beginning of all beginnings.

A. Old Testament Record of Jesus

1. Jesus as Fulfillment of OT Promise

The NT gospel writers explained Jesus from the OT Scriptures. They explained the events surrounding His life, what He did and what He said as happening “to fulfill” the OT Scriptures.

a) The Events Surrounding Jesus Life

(1) “To Fulfill”

- See Mat 1:22 and context
“Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet...”
- Mat 2:15,2:23; 3:13ff, 8:16ff; 12:15ff; 26:56 (Mk 14:49);

b) What He Did He Did as a Fulfillment

(1) “To Fulfill”

- Mat 5:17 – Do not think I came to abolish the Law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.
- Mat 13:34 – Jesus spoke in parables to fulfill...

c) What He Said He Said as a Fulfillment

(1) “Fulfill”

- Luke 24:44 – “Now He said to them, “**These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**””

d) When He Explained Himself He Used OT Scriptures

(1) Luke 24:27 – On the Road to Emmaus

²⁷Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Because Jesus is the fulfillment of OT promise, to know Jesus the way He revealed Himself we must look back to what the OT Scriptures promised. To not do so would be to miss the first 2/3’s of a movie and come in for the last third. So to the beginning we go.

2. Creation

a) Jesus Was Co-Creator w/ Father and Spirit

(1) *Implicit in Gen 1:26*

Let Us make man in our image, according to Our likeness...

(2) *Explicit in...*

(a) **John 1:1-14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (1-5)
“...and the world was made through Him.” (10) “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” (14)

(b) **Paul’s Writings**

(i) 1 Cor 8:6

⁶yet for us ^(A)there is but one God, ^(B)the Father, ^(C)from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and ^(D)one Lord, Jesus Christ, ^(E)by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

(ii) Col 1:16

¹⁶For ^(A)by Him all things were created, ^(B)both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether ^(C)thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--^(D)all things have been created through Him and for Him.

(c) **Book of Hebrews**

Speaking of God the writer of the Hebrews says He...

(i) Heb 1:2

²“...has spoken to us in ^(C)His Son, whom He appointed ^(D)heir of all things, ^(E)through whom also He made the ^(E)world.”

b) The Nature of God’s Creation

(1) It was a Kingdom – The Kingdom of God

(2) It was Light and Life out of Darkness and Death

(3) It was the Dwelling Place of God with Man

c) The State of God’s Creation

(1) “It was Good... very good.” (Gen 1)

(2) Shalom (Peace) and Shabbat (Rest) (Gen 2:1-3)

d) The State of God with Man in the Garden

(1) Intimate Communion between God and man

(2) Man as image-son of God

(a) Luke 3:38 -- “...Adam, the Son of God.”

God intended His relationship with mankind to be the relationship between a father and his son. This speaks to: closeness, mutual love and the son’s dependence upon the Father.

(3) Man was to exercise dominion over creation under God

(a) [Genesis 1:28](#)

“God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

e) The Singular Prohibition

(1) Not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil

(a) Gen 2:16-17a

¹⁶The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, ..."

f) The Reason for the Prohibition

(1) It would cause Death

Gen 2:17b – “...for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” (cf. also Gen 3:3)

(2) Death

(a) Meaning of Life

To live according to God’s intentions in intimate communion with God as His image son in shalom and shabbat; and in that intended relationship to exercise dominion over creation. That is life.

(b) Meaning of Death

Not life as defined above. It is the antithesis of the life God intended. Alive but dead. Paul says of mankind that we were dead in our trespasses and sins, our transgressions (Eph 2:1,5). This is speaking to a spiritual death, i.e., dead with respect to our relationship with God.

3. The Fall

a) The Temptation

(1) Read Gen 3:1-5

(2) Gen 3:4

“The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die!’”

(3) Gen 3:5

⁵“For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

(4) Interpreted

God is a liar who knows something you do not. He sees something He is hiding from you. If you eat from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil you will see what He is hiding and you will be like God yourself and that is better than what you are like now.

b) The Sin of Adam & Eve

(1) They Were Tempted to Experience Freedom & Autonomy from God

- Freedom from God who constrained them
- Autonomy from God who commanded them

(2) They Were Lured by an Improved Life

Added value of:

- being like the Creator
- having the knowledge of good and evil and particularly being able to determine that themselves

(3) They Exercised Autonomy from God

(a) They Rebelled against God By Disobeying God’s Prohibition

- They listened to (obeyed) the serpent and not God.
- They determined that they would decide what was good to do.

c) The Consequence

(1) Exactly What God Had Said

(a) Death (Gen 2:17b)

(i) Not death as in the cessation of biological life, but death in the sense of the end of life as God intended.

(ii) "...death refers biblically not to the cessation of animate existence, but the destruction of the creation's ability to fulfill its intended design." Kit Culver Sacred Space p. 24

(iii) The life of intimate communion between God and man was replaced by man's estrangement from God

(a) Evidence: they were cast out of the Garden where they had enjoyed God's presence

(iv) They were to live in spiritual death

(v) They were separated from the tree of life!

(2) Knowledge of Good and Evil

(a) Prerogative/Right

They took upon themselves that which rightfully belonged only to God: the prerogative to determine good and evil.

(b) Man is Ill Equipped

Kit points out that this is something the creature – even one created in the image of God -- is ill prepared to exercise because of the limitations of their creatureliness. Man is **like** the Creator in some ways, but he is **NOT** God Himself. God did **not** create little Gods. God created man in His image. He was intended to live in intimate communion with God and depend on God -- and here for His infinite wisdom and perspective to determine good and evil. He did not intend man to live in independence and autonomy from Him. To live in this condition is to live in spiritual death.

4. God's Promise and Developing Portrait of a Messiah

Here, in the context of the Fall and the death it brought, is where the purpose of God (a purpose that existed even before the historical occasion of the Fall) begins to be made explicitly clear in the Biblical record. God has intended to redeem estranged mankind and all of creation thereby reconciling all His people to Himself. And He has further intended to do this work of redemption leading to reconciliation **through a Man** -- one particularly designated and anointed by Him to accomplish this cosmic task of restoration.

The scope of the work involved in God's purpose for this Man staggers me. I have a hard enough time preparing a weekly message and still being a relatively civil person to live with. I get stressed out when I have to do more than my normal routine -- when I have to brush my teeth, get dressed and come to church. I have lofty goals and visions of goodness for my family and my church, yet life experience has proved out that what I can do -- the impact I can have on my own power -- is

small. What I seem particularly capable of is doing is creating problems. In fact, doesn't it seem true that, for all of the good that mankind has brought into the world, what we particularly excel at is harm. For all our creative abilities, we appear to be much better problem makers than problem solvers.

In contrast to our time proven limitations to effect true goodness, God has from the very beginning purposed and so brought one very exceptional and ultimately capable Man into the world to redeem all of His people and reconcile all of creation to Himself. Stack your aspirations up next to that and you will begin to get a glimpse of the grandeur of God's plan and the unique ability of God's anointed Man this Messiah this Christ.

With God's purpose in mind, let's look at some of the major brush strokes on the portrait of the promised Messiah God which God has painted for us in the OT Scriptures.

a) This Messiah Would Be the Seed Eve

(1) Gen 3:15

- In the midst of pronouncing a curse upon the serpent and all of creation, God promised to reverse the curse through the seed of Eve.
 - “¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”
- “This promise of a triumphant human seed is God's first indication of His intention to address and reverse the calamity of the Fall...” Kit Culver Sacred Space p. 25

b) The Messiah Would Be a Descendant of Abraham

Biblical history focuses on the man Abram who God would rename Abraham. He would be the target of God's special blessing and would himself, through his descendents, be the vehicle for God's blessings to come to the whole world. As the biblical record unfolds we see that Abrahams descendents and ultimately the Messiah who would come in his line would bring blessings in the form of a place for them to dwell with God (Canaan at first) and the blessing of the knowledge of God – the relational knowledge of intimate communion that had been lost in the Fall.

(1) Gen 12:1-3

¹Now the LORD said to Abram,
"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;
²And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,

And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
³And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

This promise would be refined and clarified as God's plan of salvation was worked out in the history of His people.

(2) More Precisely a Descendant of Abraham's Son Isaac

(3) Even More Precisely, a Descendant of Isaac's Son Jacob

(4) And Still More Precisely, a Descendant of Jacob's Son Joseph

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all contributed to our understanding of how God intended to bring about His plan of cosmic redemption and reconciliation through one man. But Joseph has perhaps the most accessible story.

Joseph, abandoned for dead, but by the hand of God raised to a position of prominence and authority, saved the descendents of Abraham from death by starvation.

In so working in history for the good of His people through Joseph, God also added to His portrait of the ultimate Redeemer who would save (not only the biological descendents of Abraham Isaac and Jacob from physical death as Joseph did but) His people of all the world from spiritual death – the fallen life lived in estrangement and from God.

We look into the pages of the OT at the life of Joseph and we see how God saves and we get a clearer picture of how He would ultimately save.

c) The Messiah Would Be Like Moses

Most here know his story. Moses too lived as one used by God both for the good of his contemporaries and for the good of all who would come after him, even us, who see in his life the progression of God's portrait of redemption. Like Moses the Messiah would be...

(1) A Mediator of the Covenant between God and His People

- Moses stood between God and man to administer the covenant that God made between them. This covenant formally defined God as Father and the Nation of Israel as His son obligated to do all that was written on the tablets of stone upon which God inscribed the Law.
- Jesus would ultimately stand as the mediator of what the Bible clearly declares a new and better covenant, not written on tablets of stone but on the flesh of their own hearts. It would be a covenant that would depend on God and His faithfulness and was not dependent on the obedience of men.

(2) A God Anointed Deliverer

- Moses delivered the nation of Israel, the people of God, from their bondage in Egypt not only to release them from slavery to them but to draw them to Himself as His redeemed people.
- The Messiah would deliver the true Israel, the global people of God, from their bondage of sin, i.e., the life of estrangement that we have seen is not true life at all but death; and He would give them the true life of God's intention, i.e., the life marked by intimate communion shared between the covenant son and his heavenly Father.

(3) An Intercessor

- When the newly formed nation of Israel faltered and took matters into their own hands crafting the golden calf and worshiping it, Moses interceded that God would turn from His wrath and spare the people for His own glory (see Ex 32).
- The Messiah would be like Moses. He would turn God's just wrath away from the His people effectively interceding for our eternal best.

d) The Messiah Would Be the Sanctuary of God

(1) Tabernacle

(2) Temple

Both add to the portrait God was painting in redemptive history of the Messiah who Himself is the ultimate tabernacle, temple, sanctuary – the ultimate dwelling of God with man.

e) The Messiah Would Be a Son of David

(1) 2 Sam 7

- (a) God would establish His kingdom forever
- (b) He would be a son to God
- (c) He would build a house for God
- (d) God's lovingkindness would never depart from Him

f) The Messiah Would Be the **Servant of God**

(1) Isaiah 53

¹⁰But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,

And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.
¹¹As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.
¹²Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.

g) The Messiah Would Somehow Be God Himself

(1) [Isaiah 9:6](#)

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

All of this was God’s word and dealing with man in the OT Scriptures regarding that One who God would bring to redeem and reconcile. The portrait of the Messiah was almost complete. But it only is to be appreciated by those who look at it. We look this morning at what God had promised so that we can recognize and appreciate the fulfillment we know to be Christ Jesus. Now we turn our attention to the NT additions to the portrait of the Redeemer which God added just before the birth of the Messiah Himself.

B. New Testament Preparation for Jesus

Final preparation for the coming of the Messiah

1. Angelic Announcements

a) Regarding Birth of John

(1) Luke 1:5-25; 36-37

b) Regarding the Birth of Jesus

(1) Luke 1:26-33

c) Regarding the Virgin Birth

(1) Luke 1:34-35

(2) See also Mat 1:18-25

2. Activity of the Holy Spirit

a) Regarding Elizabeth, John the Baptist's Mother

(1) She who was barren like the former covenant matriarchs

(2) Luke 1:39-35 – Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

b) Regarding Mary

(1) Prediction of Holy Spirit

(a) Luke 1:35

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you...”

(2) Demonstration of Holy Spirit in the beautiful words of Mary's Magnificat

(a) Luke 1:46-55

c) Regarding Zacharias, John the Baptist's Father

(1) Luke 1:67-79

This is no ordinary time in history. This is the in-breaking of light into darkness and of life into death. We are poised at the moment before the King of the Kingdom of God will come. We stand on the very edge of the birth of the Messiah God had promised. The One able to redeem and reconcile is about to come from heaven to earth in the person of Jesus the Nazarene.

C. Why Recognize & Appreciate Jesus Pre-Incarnate Life

1. It's Better for You

a) Difference between and Acquaintance and an Intimate Friend

- Think of one of the people you enjoy and respect the most. Now, humanly speaking which would you rather have, a superficial acquaintance with that person or an intimate friendship?
- We generally recognize that good people are worth knowing more than superficially. Likewise, if we limit our knowledge of Jesus (the best of all people) to only what we know of Him from the NT we are missing a huge portion of Him.

b) Kit's Question

- Can we really know Jesus who the Bible reveals as the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures without knowing what those OT Scriptures say about Him?
- At the very least we will know Him less than He can be known.

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- At the very worst, we will think we know Him but we will have turned a deaf ear to how He has revealed Himself and we will have fashioned an understanding of a God according to our own making, not the God who really is and who has revealed Himself in history and Scriptures.

c) My Hope for Looking Back

My hope for us this morning and for our devotions this week in the Scriptures is that such a thoughtful consideration of the OT Scriptures would increase our knowledge and appreciation of God and His Savior. With that increased awareness, I hope we can do a better job of living in the awareness of the ultimate reality of the intimate communion God has secured for us via the redemptive and reconciling work of the Messiah who is Jesus.

2. It's Better for God

a) Redeeming Christmas so God Gets the Glory

If we can live in that awareness of God we are better positioned to give Him the glory due His name.

Conclusion

Having recognized and appreciated Jesus from the true beginning of His story we are now poised and ready to recognize and appreciate His actual birth and subsequent life and ministry that we will consider next Sunday. For this week, examine the Scriptures on your transformation cards that we have discussed and appreciate the longstanding thoughtful plan of redemption and reconciliation that God has executed in Jesus.

This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To redeem Christmas in a way that honors God, this is the beginning of the story we need to tell. This is the beginning of the story we need to live in.

Let's pray!