

**“What if Christ had not been born?”  
1 Timothy 1:15**

**Christmas 2011**

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The elders of this church take turns preaching the Christmas message on the Sunday closest to December 25<sup>th</sup>.

Today is about as close as it gets to Christmas Day.

Because this church emphasises the authority and the sufficiency of the Bible you have been taught the Christmas story; the wonderful truth of God taking on a human nature and coming into the world; the eternal Word became flesh, in the Man, Jesus of Nazareth.

Brother Gables, last Sunday preached, “What Child is This?” Brother Jim asked and answered six questions about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Someone has well summarized the Gospel in asking “Who is Christ; what did He do; and why did He do it?” If you can correctly answer those questions you will know the Gospel.

What happened over two thousand years ago in a stable with the only witnesses being Joseph, oxen, and other animals? What happened? God became a Man!

The incarnation of the eternal Son of God is to me, the most amazing thing that a man can know and believe. That Christ invaded human history, a Man who is God, is more wonderful to me than, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” An honest observation of the creation demands a Creator. Nothing as complex and precise as the universe and living creatures could happen just by chance. For example, how did the process of eyesight “evolve?” But to believe the infinite stoop of God, for God to stoop so low in humility as to become a Man, requires special revelation from God. You can see the evidence of the Creator in creation but there is no way that you can believe that Jesus of Nazareth is God in human flesh apart from that truth being **revealed** to you.

Matthew 11:25-30

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>27</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. <sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." ESV

See also, Matthew 16:16ff

So when you can read the Bible; read and believe it in saving faith,  
e.g., John 1:1 & 1:14, it is because the Son has chosen to reveal Himself to you.

“You see the s-u-n in its own light.”

And you see the S-O-N in His own light.

The apostle John left to us this singular truth.

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:14

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory,  
glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This Christmas message is so much more than the story of the incarnation; the travel of a very pregnant young girl to the town of Bethlehem be registered in the census; the “No Vacancy” sign at the Inn; the birth of a Child in a stable; the glory in the heavens; the announcement to the shepherds; the obedience to the law on the eighth day when Jesus was circumcised; Mary’s going to the temple in Jerusalem after sixty-six days for her purification; the return their home in Nazareth; the visit of the Magi to the house where the young boy was; the flight into Egypt; are all part of the story of the first Christmas.

But this sermon is on another theme. As I was thinking about how to preach the Christmas message for 2011 it occurred to me to ask and answer the question:

**“What if Christ had not been born?”**

If Christ had not been born there would be no hope for a single one of the human race to be delivered from our just condemnation. There would be no humans in heaven; there would only be a place of eternal darkness; a place of indescribable anguish of soul; a place called hell.

The **reason** that Christ came into the world was to save sinners.

The real story of Christmas is that Jesus came into the world with the exclusive purpose of dying in the place of a people given to Him by God the Father before the creation of the world.

**If Christ had not been born there would be no way for God to save sinners.**

It is approaching blasphemy to say that God could have devised another way to save sinners. God does not labor in thought; imagining a plan and then discarding that plan and coming up with another plan until He thinks He has a plan that just might work. It **is** blasphemy to believe that there **is** any other way to be saved except by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Postmodernism's pluralism is a sure pathway to hell!

Jesus made astounding claims about who He is.

There is a story about a man from Japan who was reading John's Gospel in a Gideon Bible in a hotel room. After reading John he said: "I am not sure who this Jesus is, but He says He is God!" Take one example:

John 8:12-24

<sup>12</sup> Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." <sup>13</sup> So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." <sup>14</sup> Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. <sup>15</sup> You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. <sup>16</sup> Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. <sup>17</sup> In your Law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. <sup>18</sup> I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." <sup>19</sup> They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." <sup>20</sup> These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

<sup>21</sup> So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." <sup>22</sup> So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'" <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. <sup>24</sup> I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

What an astonishing claim! Either true or not true!

Paul writes to Timothy:

1 Tim 1:15

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.

When the announcement of the birth of Christ was made to Joseph, the angel told Joseph the **reason** that His name would be Jesus:

Matthew 1:18-25

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

“He shall save His people from their sins.”

What does it mean to be saved from your sins?

Luke records the time when Jesus saved a tax collector.

Luke 19:1-10

He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Tax collectors [publicans] were Jews who worked for the Romans and they were known for cheating the people by charging excessive taxes. They were despised by the Jews because they would collect excessive taxes and turn over what the Roman government required but they would keep the rest and that is how they became rich. But in the presence of the Savior of sinners, Zacchaeus owned his guilt and he repented. He promised to restore what he had defrauded and Jesus saved him.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

To be saved from your sins is to be delivered from the power and guilt of sin. While it is true that saved people still sin, they have the power by the Holy Spirit not to sin. An unsaved person does nothing but sin.

Prov 21:4

A haughty look, a proud heart,  
And the plowing of the wicked *are* sin. NKJV

Have you come to know that you **were** a lost sinner?  
Have you been convicted of your guilt and condemnation?  
Are you in a state of repentance?  
How long does repentance last? "Until we sin again."

Do you know this Savior of sinners?

So if Christ had not been born, neither Zacchaeus, nor Jim Gunn, or you, or anyone else could be saved.

**If Christ had not been born the entire Bible would be a lie.**

What is the first promise in the Bible?  
God spoke to Satan in the Garden of Eden.

Gen 3:15  
I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."

This is the first promise of grace in the Bible.  
The Lord told Satan that He would put hatred between him and the woman.  
The rest of the Bible tells how Satan tried to keep this promise from being fulfilled;  
but more than that the Bible tells us how God defeated Satan.

Zech 4:6  
Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor  
by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

God used the weakness of humanity in the offspring of Mary to defeat Satan.  
The "heel" of the offspring of the woman is His humanity.  
The child that was born in Bethlehem grew up and is the Savior of sinners.

If Christ had not been born, none of the Bible would have any meaning.

2 Cor 1:20  
For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.

Rev 19:10  
For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

“LONG before our blessed Saviour was manifested in the flesh, the particular circumstances of His humiliation and death were revealed to the ancient prophets, and by them made known to the people. Neither can there be a more unanswerable proof given of the Messiahship of Christ than that all the prophecies from the least to the greatest, that were descriptive *of* the Messiah, were accomplished, to a tittle, in Him. Thus, for instance — Isaiah, who flourished about eight hundred and thirty years before the coming of Christ, foretold of Him that He should be despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; that He should be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that He should be numbered with transgressors, and make His soul an offering for sin. Zechariah expressly foretold, that Christ should be delivered up for thirty pieces of silver, and that a potter’s field should be bought with the money. And David, who died upwards of a thousand years before the birth of Christ, prophesied of His fast in the wilderness; of His arraignment and condemnation through the instigation of false witnesses; of His being scourged, crucified, and buried; and likewise of His resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven.”

The Suffering and Death of Christ, by Augustus M. Toplady

Toplady wrote, “Rock of Ages.”

So to me, as much as I enjoy hearing and telling the Christmas story of the birth of Jesus, it is essential that we tell the lost and dying world that a Savior was born. Jesus was born for the purpose of dying. We all are born to die but that is not the purpose we were born. Our purpose is to worship God and enjoy Him forever.

But Jesus knew the purpose for which He was born.

Turn to Luke 2:41.

Luke 2:41-52

<sup>41</sup> Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. <sup>43</sup> And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, <sup>44</sup> but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, <sup>45</sup> and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

<sup>48</sup> And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." <sup>49</sup> And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" [Or, "About My Father's business"] <sup>50</sup> And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. <sup>51</sup> And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

<sup>52</sup> And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

As a boy of twelve how did He know that God was His Father?

Read the Gospels and you will see, or you should see, that Jesus understood that He was the "Sent One" from God; that He was the Good Shepherd that gives His life for the sheep; that He is the Light of the World; that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no one can come to the Father but by Him; that He has authority over all flesh and that He gives eternal life to as many as the Father gave to Him; that He has the power to lay down His life and the power to take it up again; that He can say to a dying thief, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Do you think of this Jesus when you celebrate the Christmas season?

So what if Christ had not been born?

The world would forever be in sin and darkness; there would be no truth in the Word of God; we would have nothing to hope for!

But Jesus the Christ was born!



Let me close with this word from the apostle Paul.

1 Cor 15:1-11

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. <sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

ESV

Repent and believe in the Gospel!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!