

PREPARED, WRAPPED AND PLACED!

Hebrews 10:5,6, Luke 2:7—Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Quoting Psalm 40: 6, a Messianic Psalm, the author of Hebrews 10 vs. 5-7 said, “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, “Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body have You **prepared** for Me; In burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.’” Then in Luke 2:7, we read, “And she gave birth to her firstborn son and **wrapped** Him in swaddling cloths and **laid** Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” The story of no room is repeated 1000nds of times across America and around the world. Some of you may have heard or read about the Sheep Wars or the Sheep and Cattle Wars out in the West, even here in Sweetwater County. The Sheep Wars refer to a series of armed conflicts in the western United States which were fought between sheepmen and cattlemen over grazing rights. The Cattlemen had no room for the Sheep ranchers. These wars occurred in eight western states though they were most common in Texas, Arizona, Wyoming and Colorado. Generally, the cattlemen saw the shepherders as the invaders, as ranchers who destroyed the public grazing lands, which they had to share on a first-come, first-served basis. Between 1870 and 1920, approximately 120 engagements—literally wars, occurred in eight states here in the West. 54 men were killed and between 50,000 to over 100,000 sheep were slaughtered because there was no room in the West for sheep herders or ranchers.

In 1896, right here in Wyoming, 12,000 sheep were slaughtered in one single night by being driven off a cliff right here, near North Rock Springs. The violence reached its height after the turn of the century. In 1902, near Thermopolis, Wyoming, several thousand sheep were slaughtered and their herders killed. During the summer of 1905, ten masked men attacked a sheep camp on Shell Creek, in the Big Horn Basin. There the cowboys clubbed about 4,000 sheep, out of 7,000, and they burned the sheep wagons and two sheep dogs. The owner of the massacred flock, Louis A. Gantz, lost about \$40,000 as a result—which was a fortune back then. But out of all the sheep raids, the most serious incursion was the Spring Creek Raid of April 2, 1909. Just southwest of Ten Sleep, Wyoming, the shepherd Joe Allemand and two of his companions were shot and killed by seven masked men. The raiders killed twenty-five sheep and two sheep dogs, and they burned the sheep wagons with kerosene. Because sheep raiders had never been prosecuted in a Wyoming court before, many sheep raiders believed that the murderers would get away with the massacre. Not so this time; these seven men were eventually arrested, five of them were sent to prison. The conviction of the Ten Sleep murderers brought peace to Big Horn County. After the 1909 attack,

cattlemen were reluctant to raid sheep camps because now they risked being caught, prosecuted and imprisoned for it. Though there were two more Wyoming sheep raids in 1911 and 1912, there were no more shepherders murdered.

I enjoyed studying the history of these wars this week. But one story really caught my eye. In 1988, Orvall H. Austin in New Mexico wrote about these wars and one of the ways the sheep wars of the early 1900nds were settled peacefully. The cattlemen on the range feared the sheep ranchers and the sheep ranchers feared the cattle men. Nevertheless, one sheep owner, one spring, always having many orphaned lambs, carried many lambs to neighboring cattle ranchers. To each rancher he brought what he called “a peace lamb.” To each rancher he said, “I’ve got so many orphan lambs I can’t raise them all. Would you help me? If you will raise this lamb on a bottle, it would be a special favor to me. The ranchers couldn’t turn the sheep rancher down. They couldn’t resist the charm of growing a little orphaned lamb. That is how the sheep and cattle ranchers in one area south of Wyoming, finally began to see each other with more understanding eyes. The peace lambs made a big difference. Turning to our texts today, that’s what God the Father did in sending His Son, His Peace Lamb, to woo us to Himself.

But like the wild west, where there was no room for sheep, in the days of Caesar Augustus, when Jesus was born, there was no room for the Peace Lamb, for Jesus in the economic world, no room for Him in the legal realm, no room for Him in the world of politics, and no room even among the religious leaders of His day. God is leading me to have us focus our hearts, our minds and our thoughts on the Father’s preparations for the Peace Lamb He sent as He prepared the way for Jesus’ virgin birth. There was room in God’s heart for us or He would not have sent us His only begotten Son. There was room in Mary and Joseph’s heart or they would not have followed the words of the angels. God did His part and so did Mary and Joseph on that night when Jesus was born. Today, I am calling us to meditate on three special provisions that God orchestrated for Jesus’ virgin birth and for immediately after His birth. I want to focus on three verbs—three Christmas verbs, **prepared**, **wrapped**, and **laid/placed** in a manger. God the Father did the preparing and Joseph and Mary did the wrapping and the laying of Jesus in a manger. Jesus, our Savior accepted all three provisions made for Him that He would be made the atoning lamb, the divine provision for us and our sin.

And in Jesus’ submission to these three provisions, I see for us a model that we beloved, ought to accept as we ask God to give us an incarnational ministry to others—that is, a Christ in you, the hope of glory kind of ministry. Paul says to us in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, or Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” What then are

these three special provisions for Jesus' birth that our Lord accepted? How are we allowing God to make these preparations for us so we like Jesus can have a "Christ in you, the hope of glory" kind of ministry to others?

PROVISION # 1 – JESUS HAD A BODY PREPARED FOR HIM. Turn to Hebrews 10:5. "Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, "Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body have You **prepared** for Me; Now stay in Hebrews 10 and notice the context in verse 4 which declares, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Despite all the animal sacrifices offered up by the people of Israel for their sins, over all the centuries, only one sacrifice offered once for all would do. It would require a once for all offering of "the Peace Lamb of God." As John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner cried out in the wilderness by the Jordan, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) That perfect peace Lamb could be none other than God Himself in the person of His Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. No ordinary man, no matter how powerful or wise or morally upright he might be, could ever accomplish such an impossible task. No angel could ever remove human sin from the world. Only God could do that, but He must become man in order to pay the death penalty for man's sin. As the God/man incarnate, He must also defeat death and live forever with those who would receive Him as Savior. This perfect peace Lamb must be the eternal God and yet perfect man. And for this mission, He must have a human body, a very special body with no inherited Adamic sin nature and no genetically inherited mutational blemishes. So God alone had to be the author of this miracle—"A body have You prepared for Me."

The Greek word for prepared is **katartidzo**. It means to complete thoroughly, to perfectly join together, to frame. In most passages in the Bible, katartidzo is translated **to make perfect**. But this Greek word is used only one other time in Hebrews in Hebrews 11:3. The text there reads, "By faith we understand that the universe was created/framed/prepared--katartidzo by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." This use of the word katartidzo helps us understand God's preparation of the body of Jesus to become the perfectly framed sinless body that cruel soldiers would nail to a cruel cross. The human body of Jesus was formed, created, framed and prepared sinlessly in the virgin Mary's womb with the same perfect wisdom and care with which Jesus Himself framed the worlds. Both the creation and Jesus' prepared incarnate sinless body were made "very good"—perfectly and sinlessly designed, created, and made to accomplish God's great eternal plan. Now there is a very strange part to this prophecy of a prepared body for Jesus. In the Messianic Psalm which Hebrews quotes, in Psalm 40: 6—it reads a little different. It reads, "In sacrifice and offering You have not delighted, but You have given Me an open ear. Burnt offering and

sin offering You have not required.” Interestingly, “but You have given Me an open ear” in Psalm 40: 6, is translated by the inspiring Holy Spirit—“But a body Thou hast prepared for Me.” God’s Word makes clear in numerous places that burnt offerings and sin offerings were indeed once required from God’s people under the Law of Moses. Yet, these sacrifices were not an end in themselves. In fact, these sacrifices were meaningless unless they were offered out of a willing heart as obedient expressions of submission to our forgiving God.

Now David’s words in Psalm 40: 6 state, “But You have given me an open ear.” The implication of the “opened ear” was that a servant or slave who would not accept liberty or freedom from his master then was willing from that day on to hear only the voice of his master and to submit to His will in all things. Exodus 21:5,6 tells us, “But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever. This picture of a bondservant whose ear is bored through with an awl is the Messianic picture of Jesus and His body being prepared by the Father to be pierced through for you and me. Somehow, the Holy Spirit who is His own perfect interpreter of the inspired Word of God translated, from Psalm 40:6—“But You have given me an open ear” by another phrase, “but a body have You prepared for Me—a body to be pierced through.” Just as the perfect submission of a slave who would not leave his master, required that he have his ear opened by an awl upon a doorpost, so the perfect submission of the Son of God required that Jesus must become a man, with a very special body prepared by His Father so He could go to the cross as a spotless sinless Lamb for our sins. Hebrews 10:7 reads, “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God, as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.’” Then Hebrews 10:10 tells us, “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.” Think of it—a body prepared. Jesus accepted this provision for Him even though He created the world. That is the ultimate in humility and love.

Now I ask us today—what provisions that God has in mind for us are we willing to accept and which provisions are we balking at receiving? Are we bond-slaves who will go to the doorpost and have our ears opened for our Master? What provisions that He has asked for us to receive and follow have we fought and refused? Paul’s words now ring in my ears, in Romans 12:1,2—“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Christmas is all about Jesus having a prepared body—and beloved, it’s all about us having prepared bodies, souls and spirits. It’s about God desiring our bodies to be prepared too. Jesus had a prepared body because of the unity of the Godhead—the Trinity. Jesus, God the Son was submissive to the Father. And the preparation of our bodies (plural) as a living sacrifice (singular) requires that we submit together to God’s will. We must submit as husbands and wives together, and parents and children together, as pastors and people together. Independence is not the hallmark of a prepared body—but submission in unity is. Is our body prepared for Christmas? Is our family as a body prepared for Christmas? Is our church body prepared for Christmas? That’s the first provision for Christmas. Secondly,

PROVISION # 2 – JESUS HAD HIS BODY WRAPPED FOR HIM! Now let’s turn to our familiar Luke text in Luke 2:7. ““And she gave birth to her firstborn son and **wrapped** Him in swaddling cloths and **laid** Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” What a provision for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! One time I preached a Christmas message called “Wrapped In Flesh.” And it was so. But here the picture is that this little tender newborn infant Jesus was wrapped in cloths. Swaddling clothes were just this—They consisted of squares of cloth with a long bandage like strip coming diagonally off one corner. The child was first wrapped in the square of cloth as a diaper. Then the long strip was wound round and around the baby and finally tucked in. The baby was tightly wrapped. This second provision for Christ at Christmas was the confining of Jesus’ infant body even as it happened to you and me when we were babies. It seems so normal for us, but it wasn’t normal for Jesus. He wrapped us as people, in flesh, and we came into the world as babies, wrapped in diapers. But think of our Redeemer accepting the confining of Himself to the swaddling wrappings of his human mother, Mary.

The Greek word for wrapped is **sparganoo**. It comes from the verb **spao** which means to draw tightly, to pull. **Spao** can speak of drawing a sword from a sheath. But in **sparganoo**, it means to pull the infant child tightly with the diagonal strip wound round and round. Jesus was willing to be confined tightly for us. Think of it. As we come nearer to Christmas, 2014, how have you allowed the Lord to confine you for His purpose? Being a living sacrifice for God isn’t about getting our way or feeling comfortable. Being a living sacrifice for God is about accepting the yoke He gives us, the way He leads us, the confining of our lives to His molding hands. Someday, ask Sarah Gillingham, a potter who works with clay to let you watch her. She wraps the clay in her steady hands and tightly confines the clay putting pressure on the clay to mold it. Are we accepting the provisions of God this Christmas or are we breaking out? Are we saying—“I want my own way, my own will, my own place I choose, my own plan I have, my own design I

desire?” Christmas is about wrapping—not just the wrapping up of gifts to open, but the wrapping of Jesus by Mary which He accepted as a baby for us, so that we might learn to be wrapped/confined in His will, regardless of its shape or size, if it is His will for His glory. Christmas is about a body prepared and wrapped. Thirdly,

PROVISION # 3 – JESUS HAD HIS BODY PLACED/LAID IN A MANGER.

Notice Luke 2:7 “...And she gave birth to her firstborn son and **wrapped** Him in swaddling cloths and **laid** Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” The Greek word is **anaklino**. In this verse, Jesus is passive—that is, He is allowing Himself to be wrapped and now to be laid/placed in a manger. The word **anaklino** thus means to be leaned back, to be made to sit down or lie down. The Son of Man who had no place to lay His head was laid, made to lie down in a cattle’s manger—it was a trough used for feeding cows and horses. There was no room for Jesus in the inn. That’s why Mary laid Him in a cattle manger. There was no room in the hearts of those to whom He came, so He allowed his **prepared** body to be **laid** down upon a cross so He could die for us. There was room for Him on a cross, so that now there is room at the cross for us. The whole issue of the verb **anaklino** is that someone else is doing the placing of us. It appears Mary was doing the placing of Jesus, but ultimately, the placement of the baby Jesus in a manger was the placement of God.

Beloved, at this Christmas season, Christmas is about **prepared** bodies, **wrapped** in God’s will, and **placed/laid** in His placement, not our choice. His placement needs to become our choice, but it isn’t always or often that where God chooses for us to work, where He calls us to go, what He calls us to do, and why He chooses us to do what He requires—is our first choice. Many of us may be struggling at our job or in our home. Has God placed you in this manger for His glory? You may be bucking God’s will for your future service. But the question is, Has God placed you in this manger of a place for His glory? Remember, God’s placement of us, as of Jesus, may seem out of place. Didn’t Jesus deserve to be in the most beautiful cradle ever built? Yes, He did, but what He deserved was not the Father’s will. Being out of place in a cattle manger was the Father’s will. Being called to Rock Springs may be your manger placement. Will you receive God’s placement of you as His will, accepting it as Jesus did? Christmas is about accepting the place God calls you to serve, wherever it may be, and accepting the way God calls you to serve, accepting the people God calls you to serve, accepting the lessons and the limits of God’s placement. God make us all like Jesus, prepared to do His will with bodies presented as living sacrifices to Him, wrapped in His confining, conforming hands and laid or placed in His placement for us, even if it seems out of our place. I love you all. May this message prepare us all to have a Blessed Christmas! Amen.