

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT CHRISTMAS?
How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 11 of 12
Philippians 2:5-11
Rick Warren

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

1. THE RELEVANCE OF CHRISTMAS: _____

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God ... " vs. 5-6a

" ... He had always been God by nature ... " (Ph)

John 1:1-3, John 8:58

"Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and in fact, Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth ... " Col 1:15-16a (LB)

John 10:30, John 14:9

II. THE REALITY OF CHRISTMAS: _____

"He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man ... " vs. 7-8a

" ... He became like men and was born a human being " (Amp)

How was Jesus like us?

- _____ like us (Lk. 2:6-7)

- _____ like us (Lk. 2:52)

- _____ like us (Heb 4:15)

- _____ like us (Mt. 26:38)

III. THE REASON FOR CHRISTMAS: _____

"... He humbled himself and became obedient to death ... even death on a cross!" vs. 8b

Why did he do it?

1. To _____

"God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." Rom. 5:8 (LB)

Jn. 15:13, Jn. 3:16-17, I Jn. 4:9

2. To _____

"He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when he died on the cross, so that we can be finished with sin and live a good life." I Peter 2:24 (LB)

IV. THE RESULT OF CHRISTMAS: _____

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that **JESUS CHRIST IS LORD** ..." vs. 9-11a

What does it mean to call Jesus "Lord"?

It means that I ...

- Acknowledge:
- Believe:
- Commit:

"If you confess with your mouth, 'JESUS IS LORD', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Rom 10:9

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We're going back to a passage I skipped, that I've been saving for the Christmas season. This week the whole world will focus on one event -- Christmas. Everything will become secondary for one 24-hour period while we celebrate Christmas. It is amazing to me that an event that happened nearly 2000 years ago can still cause traffic jams. That is the power of God.

What is so special about Christmas? It is the centerpiece of our history. Even our calendar is dated from the reference point of Jesus Christ. God split history with the event of Christmas. Everything is either A.D. or B.C.

What is so special about Christmas? I think Philippians 2 answers it. We have here the greatest explanation in the Bible of who Jesus Christ is and what He came to do. This is the bedrock, the foundation of all that we believe.

1. THE RELEVANCE OF CHRISTMAS: GOD CAME TO EARTH

When the allies landed on Normandy on D-Day, that was big news. That is nothing compared to the news when God invaded earth. It was big news when man landed on the moon and walked there. It's bigger news when God landed on the earth. Jesus Christ is God Himself. It was God that came to earth.

v. 5-6a "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who being in ver nature GOD ..." Phillips: "... He had always been God by nature ..." Jesus was God. God invaded earth. That is the relevance of Christmas.

There are people who would say that Jesus was a great man, even a great prophet. There's only one problem with that: Jesus never claimed to be a great prophet. Over and over the Bible repeats and Jesus proclaims that He is God. I have a problem with a man who was just good saying he is God. Jesus repeatedly said, "I am God."

It also says "...he had always been God by nature..." Jesus didn't start at the stable. He's existed even before creation. Theologians call it the preeminence of Christ.

Col. 1:15-16a "Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and in fact, Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth..." He is the exact likeness of the unseen God. I have a hard time related to a vague thing in the sky. But when I see God in the flesh, in Jesus Christ, I can relate to that. The Bible says, if you've seen Jesus, you've seen God. John 1 "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him and there was not anything made by * * In Him was life and the life was the light of

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men. And the light shines in darkness but the darkness did not understand it." Jesus is God. Jesus said "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father."

If Jesus really was God and God came to earth, then Christmas is the most relevant event of history. God came to earth. Jesus said, "Before Abraham existed, I AM."

II. THE REALITY OF CHRISTMAS: GOD BECAME A MAN

This is even more difficult to understand. If you were God and were going to come to earth, of all the ways you could choose to reveal yourself, would you come as a baby? as a human being?

v. 7-8a "He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man ..." Amplified: "...He became like men and was born a human being."

The reality of Christmas was that Jesus Christ was a real man, flesh and blood, bones, hair. He was a real person, not a myth, fable, a nice story. In the Encyclopedia Britannica there are more pages on Jesus Christ than anybody else. The reality is that God came to earth and God became a man.

Why would he? If God had wanted to communicate with dogs, He would have become a dog. If He wanted to communicate with birds, He would have become a bird. But God wanted to communicate with people so He became a person. That is what the Bible calls the incarnation. God came to earth but He came as a human being, a person, like us.

How is Jesus like us?

- 1) He was born like us. He made himself nothing. He came into the world like billions of other babies. But the whole history of the world rested in that one fragile infant. That must have blown the minds of the angels -- "What is God doing?" No flashy entrance to let the whole world know He's there. He just comes in in the middle of the night in a stable in Bethlehem.

Jesus didn't stop being God when He became man. He was 100% God and 100% man. He was God in human form. He was born like us.

- 2) He grew like us. Luke 2:52 "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." He grew and developed and had growth spurts. Can you imagine what it would have been like to have gone to school with Jesus? You would know that He was a little bit different but would you believe that He was God. He did not parade the fact that he was God. He was a human being and grew like us. He looked every inch a carpenter and a Jew from Palestine. He was a real man. That's the reality of Christmas.
- 3) He was tempted like us. Hebrews says "He was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin." Jesus experienced the same pressures that you and I do, the same

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temptations, desires, drives. The same temptations to lie, to cheat, to steal. He had the same drives but He never gave into them. This is important because He can relate to you when you're struggling.

- 4) He suffered like us. He felt pain, disappointment. He got tired, fatigued. He felt lonely at times. He grieved, He cried, He was human. In Gethesemane (Matthew 26:38) He said, "The sorrow is so great it almost crushes Me." He knew what it was like to feel pain. He can relate to your pain, problems, pressures. He was God but He became a man. Jesus became what we are so we can become what He is. That is the reality of Christmas.

III. THE REASON FOR CHRISTMAS: JESUS CAME TO DIE

v. 8b "...He humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross!" Jesus didn't stay in a crib in a manger. He went to a cross and voluntarily laid down His life for us. Why? He didn't have to. He was God. He could have called 10,000 angels and stopped the process at any point. He did not have to go to the cross. Nobody put Him there without His permission. Why did He allow Himself to go to the cross?

The Bible says He did it for two reasons:

- 1) To demonstrate God's love.

Romans 5:8 "God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." His motivation was love. If you want to know how much God loves you, look at the cross. The Bible says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." A lot of people may give their life for their friend or family or children. But the Bible says that God gave His life for us when we were rejecting Him, before we even knew Him, before we were even born. He gave His life for us. That's love.

That is the reason for Christmas -- to demonstrate His love for me. "God so loved the world that He gave His life..."

2. To pay for my sins.

When you break a law you've got to pay a penalty. When you break man's laws you pay man's penalties. When you break God's laws you pay God's penalties. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." But "... the gift of God is eternal life."

I Peter 2:24 (LB) "He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when he died on the cross, so that we can be finished with sin and live a good life." Somehow what He did 2000 years ago can make a difference in my life right now. I can be completely forgiven for everything I've ever done wrong or will ever do. That's the reason for Christmas.

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The angels said, "For unto you this day is born a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." What does it mean to be a Savior?

A lifeguard is taught that when they swim out to a person who is drowning usually you will not grab them right away. You tread water and wait. They are panicked. If you grabbed them immediately, they would most likely grab onto you and pull you down. You've got to wait until they are going under for the last time. When they become limp and have given up, you put your help them back to shore. As long as a person is trying to save themselves you cannot save them.

Jesus came to be the Savior of the world. As long as you think, "I'm OK. I'm not that bad." you are the person in the most danger. The person who realizes he needs a Savior is much more open to receiving a Savior. If you think you don't need a Savior -- that is your problem! If you didn't need a Savior, God wouldn't have wasted all the effort to send one. The very fact that Jesus Christ did come to earth, give up all the glory of Heaven, become a human being, be born as a little baby, grow up, have pains, pressures and temptations, die on a cross, be raised again on Easter means that you need what He has to offer. God would not waste all that energy.

The relevance of Christmas is that God came to earth and it split history. It's the focal point -- A.D./B.C. But He came as a man with real flesh and blood, problems and tears and emotions so He can understand exactly how you are so He could communicate. You can look at Him and know what God is like. That's the reality. And the reason is He came to show how much God loves you and to pay for your sin and mine by dying on the cross and give salvation. Salvation is freedom -- freedom from guilt, worry, fear, purposelessness in life, to know that your eternity is settled, freedom to live the way God meant for you to live. That's the reason for Christmas.

IV. THE RESULT OF CHRISTMAS: JESUS IS LORD

v. 9-11 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD ..."

The cross is not the end. He's alive! That's what Easter is all about. There was two results. The Bible says all through Scripture that those who humble themselves will be lifted up. And those who lift themselves up with pride will be humbled. Jesus is a clear example of that.

Because He humbled Himself, God has done two things:

- 1) He has given Him the place of top honor in the universe. He's honored above all else -- the highest place.
- 2) He has been given a new name. The name "Jesus" in New Testament times was a very common name. It wasn't unusual -- like John or Jim today. "Jesus" means "salvation is of the Lord." The Greek word is Joshua. That is why they had to distinguish which Jesus it was they were talking about -- Jesus of Nazareth, etc. Even when He was born He was given many names: Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

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What is the name He has been given as a result of going to the cross for us? LORD. Jesus is Lord.

I think the word is misused, misunderstood, used flippantly by many people, even Christians. They don't understand the meaning of LORD. Lord in Greek is the word that means "master, ruler, number one, Mr. Big, the one in control, total sovereign, king". Over 600 times in the New Testament the Bible calls Jesus, Lord.

Lord in New Testament times was a word used for Ceasar. It was used in the Roman Empire because the Emperor was treated as god. They worshipped the ceasar as god. The Romans would say "Ceasar is Lord". It became a test of loyalty in the Roman Empire. When Christians refused to say that and would only say "Jesus is Lord" they were put to death -- thrown to the lions, made to fight gladiators... Many of them lost their lives simply by one phrase -- Jesus is Lord.

What does it mean to say "Jesus is Lord"?

- a) I acknowledge that He really is God. He's more than a man or a prophet. He really is God. He is the Lord. It is a test of my commitment to Him.
- b) I believe that He has everything under control. Since Jesus is God then God has everything under control, Jesus has everything under control. To say Jesus is Lord is a statement of comfort and encouragement. Although everything looks bleak, Jesus is Lord and I know He's got everything under control. I may not see it, the pattern and what is happening, but Jesus is Lord and I recognize the fact that He has everything under control. Nothing escapes His care or concern. Because He is Lord. To say Jesus is Lord is to say I don't know what the New Year holds but I know who holds the future, because Jesus is Lord.
- c) I commit all of my life to Him. He calls the shots because He is God, has come to earth, died for me and rose again. Because He has done those things He has the right to determine what's right in my life and to direct me. I'm seeking to live according to His plans.

Don't use the word Lord lightly.

"If you confess with your mouth, 'JESUS IS LORD', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

What does it mean to be a Christian, to be a believer, to be saved? It means to say, Jesus is my Lord. I acknowledge the fact that He is God, I believe that He has everything under control, I commit everything I have to Him.

Phil. says one day every knee will bow, every tongue will confess what God has known for the ages, the truth of all truth -- Jesus is Lord. It will happen. One day every knee will bow and

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every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and He will be given His due honor. All of the arrogance in this world that puts itself up against Christ and all of the denial and pseudo scientific and psychological and philosophical arguments that are put up will fall by the wayside, and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. The Judgement Day. Everyone stands there throughout history, everyone will acknowledge it is true. Every nationality, every agegroup, every male, every female, every religion will say "Jesus is Lord." All of the politicians will be there and say "Jesus is Lord." All of the rock stars will say "Jesus is Lord." All of the scientists, professors, business men, homemakers will say "Jesus is Lord." Everyone will admit it.

The issue is not, will you admit that Jesus is Lord? You will one day. The issue is simply, when? You will either admit it now in love and honor and respect or you will admit it later and find you have been wrong and made a big mistake. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

That is the result of Christmas.

The greatest need in American Christians is the need to rediscover the phrase used for centuries as the test of a believer: JESUS IS LORD. It may look like the other side is winning right now, but Jesus is Lord. You may think you cannot cope any more, there is too much pressure, but Jesus is Lord. You may think your problems are too great and you can't handle them, but Jesus is Lord. Circumstances may pile up against you and people may thwart you and fight you, but Jesus is Lord.

Say that phrase when you're discouraged -- Jesus is Lord. When you're tired, when you're worried, afraid -- Jesus is Lord. Say it when you don't think you can go on another mile. Say it when you're grieving and you don't know why somebody has died -- Jesus is Lord. Say it when you're lonely. And say it at Christmas. Make it the theme of your life. That's what it means to be a believer. "If you confess with your mouth, 'JESUS IS LORD', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.."