

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST -- A CONFIRMATION
Matthew 1:1-25

Intro: Christ is the main theme of Scripture--both the Old and the New Testaments.

He proved this as far as the OT was concerned on two occasions following His resurrection. Luke recorded both of these for us. See Luke 24:13-27. Note what the two disciples said in v. 32. Then see Luke 24:44.

Earlier, on another occasion, the Lord made the same claim as far as Moses alone was concerned. See John 5:46, 47; and cf. also v. 39 where the whole OT is included.

These were not empty claims, but they could be checked by anyone who knew the OT, or who would search through the OT. The same can be verified by anyone today.

One of the main problems in Israel throughout the time from Moses up to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was that of false prophets. The Lord God of Israel, knowing this, had Moses instruct the people with these words found in Deut. 18:22:

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord,
if the thing follow not, nor come to pass,
that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken,
but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously:
thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Consequently, the opposite is true:

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord,
if the thing follow, and come to pass,
that is the thing which the Lord hath spoken,
the prophet hath spoken it truthfully:
thou shalt be afraid of him.

To be afraid of him meant to believe him, to submit to his teaching as the very Word of God.

Thus, Christ ^{There has never been another person who even begins to qualify.} either confirms, or denies, the authenticity of the Old Testament. ^ And, if the OT is wrong in its prophecies concerning Christ, then we cannot be sure that any of it is really the Word of God. If it is wrong about Christ, it can be wrong everywhere--in history, in all of its doctrines--especially the doctrine of salvation, and in its exhortations concerning the kind of a life that is pleasing to God. What the OT says about Christ, the Messiah of Israel, is so vital to OT teaching that the OT stands or falls on whether or not what it says about Christ is true!

Matthew knew this. He, in particular, among the Gospel writers,

wrote for the Jews. Therefore, it was important for him, from the beginning of his Gospel, to show the relationship between Christ and the OT.

He did this at the beginning in two ways. First, by . . .

I. THE GENEALOGY OF OUR LORD (Matt. 1:1-17).

This may not seem like a very important part of chapter 1 in Matthew's Gospel, but it is important to Jews, and it ought to be important to us because it is a part of the Word of God.

But, you will notice that it is the genealogy of Joseph, not of Mary. How do we explain that if Joseph were not the human father of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Our answer is this: The Gospels give us two genealogies that have to do with Christ. One is here; the other is in Luke 3:23-38. The second genealogy is Mary's.

You will find, although they are given, one starting at Abraham and going down to Christ; the second starting with Christ and going back to Adam, that they are the same until we get to David. Joseph's line, given in Matthew, is traceable to David through Solomon. Mary's line, given in Luke, is traceable to David through Nathan. But both Mary and Joseph were descendants of David, and descendants of Abraham. His relationship to Joseph as Mary's husband gave our Lord the legal right to the throne of David; His relationship to Mary gave Him the blood right to the throne of David.

Solomon and Nathan are mentioned in 1 Chron. 14:3, 4.

Thus, both from Joseph and through Mary our Lord could claim Messianic rights--other things being what they had to be.

And so we can see that the ties between Jesus Christ and the OT were strong on both sides of the family--both through David and through Abraham, to whom the chief promises concerning salvation were given.

Therefore, the evidence is not only clear, but indisputable and overwhelming.

This is the first thing that Matthew did, directed by the Holy Spirit.

The second thing is this:

II. THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

See it in Matt. 1:20-25.

Actually there are two prophecies here: one, by the angel of

the Lord; the other by Isaiah. So both the angel and Isaiah were under scrutiny here. If they were wrong, then Joseph was probably wrong in his suspicions as to why Mary was with child.

The only thing that the angel added was that this is what Isaiah had predicted. What had he predicted in this particular passage from Isaiah 7:14? Three things.

Now remember that the angel made his prediction just weeks before the Lord was born; Isaiah made his prediction 700 years before our Lord was born!

Here are the three things Isaiah and the angel predicted:

A. That the Messiah would be born of a virgin.

(Refer to the controversy stirred up by the Revised Standard Version, the NT published in 1946; the OT, in 1951. It was over the translation of almah in Isa. 7:14 where they rendered it, a young woman, meaning a young married woman. A lot of the translators would like to have done away with the virgin birth. BUT they put virgin in a footnote, and the NT translators had to put virgin in Matt. 1:23 because that is what the word meant there. It, of course, would have been easier to expect the Messiah to have been the child of a married woman, but that would not have been a sign, and it would have altered completely the third point that I want to make from Matt. 1:23.)

We have Joseph's testimony that Mary was a virgin at this time, and she was still a virgin when our Lord was born!

So Isaiah and the angel passed the first test.

B. That Mary's child would be a son.

Now I am no medical expert, but I can say that there was a 50-50 chance that Mary's child would have been disqualified--IF THAT CHILD HAD BEEN A GIRL!

But her child was a son! So we have a second confirmation of the prophecy. The Messiah was to be a man, not a woman.

C. His name would be called, Emmanuel.

But Jesus was never called "Emmanuel" during His entire life here on earth. How will we answer that?

Well, what was often the significance of names in the OT,

particularly the names of Deity. They were given to reveal character. This name meant that Mary's son would not only be a man, but would be God--God with us.

And this, in turn, meant two things:

- 1) One, that He would be God and man in one Person.
- 2) Two, that the purpose of His life would be to do a work for the people of God on behalf of God, to show that God had sent One just like Himself to work on man's behalf. How important the preposition with is in the Bible!

But now turn for just a moment to Matthew 2, and we will get another prophecy:

III. THE PROPHECY OF MICAH, a contemporary of Isaiah.

The prediction is in Micah 5:2.

Here we are told where the Messiah would be born. If Jesus Christ had been born any place in the world except in Bethlehem, it would have discredited Micah, and thrown a cloud over the OT.

But He was born there, and under the strangest circumstances which involved the Roman government. Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, and had to go down there just when Mary's baby was due, and they went for registration and taxation.

And so there is not a single flaw in the prophecies. More could be included, but this is all we need, or have time to consider.

Concl: What does this mean as far as the OT is concerned.

Remember that what Matthew has recorded from v. 1 on has involved the entire OT--from Genesis to the end.

It means that, if it is right on this greatest of all points, that which it says about Christ, the Messiah, then we should have no fear about trusting its reliability in any other area--in its history, in its teachings, in its promises, in its revelations of God, in anything!

Thus, as we come into the Christmas season again, let us remind people, as we have the opportunity, that the coming of Christ into the world was, among other things, God's way, His greatest way, of confirming that His Word is truly His Word, the unchanging and faithful Word of the living God.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST -- A REVELATION

John 1:1-18

Intro: There may be some people who do not understand the meaning of the word, incarnation.

It is not actually a Bible word, but it is a word which expresses a most wonderful Bible truth. It is a word that has come into the English language from the Latin, and it literally means in flesh. We use it to speak of the Deity of Christ being clothed in flesh. It speaks of the eternal Son of God coming to the earth in human form so that we have a divine nature and a human nature in one Person. When we speak of the incarnation of Jesus Christ we mean that the Son of God became a man; He became incarnate.

This is what happened when Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. He had no human father, or He would have been a mere man, a mere human being, such as we are.

And so, since He was God incarnate, God in the flesh, He was not a sinner like we are. There was no sin in Him. He could not have been a sinner even though He became a human being because He was, and continued to be, God the Son.

Both the Deity of Christ, and His perfect humanity, united in One Person, are basic truths of the Christian faith. Nobody can be a Christian who denies these truths.

But what is a revelation?

Revelation comes from the word, reveal, and to reveal is to make something known which had not been known, or fully known, before.

Therefore, according to the Bible, when we remember the birth of Christ we are remembering that time about 2,000 years ago when the Son of God became man, a time when God was making known something which had not been fully revealed before.

Last week we considered the coming of Christ as a confirmation, a proof of the truth of Old Testament Scripture. And we only examined a part of the proof, the part found in Matthew 1, 2. Christ was born in the right family, of a virgin, for the right purpose, and in the right place: Bethlehem. We do not have a greater confirmation that the Old Testament is the very Word of God than in the prophecies of the Messiah which were fulfilled when Christ came.

But what was God revealing in the advent of Christ? And, by the way, when we speak of a revelation in Scripture, we are speaking of something which has been made known which could not have been

known in any other way.

What was God revealing? Cf. John 1:18. This is our answer: Christ came to reveal God. He came to show us God, and He shows us God in Himself because He is the Son of God, "the only begotten Son," meaning that God has no other Son like Jesus Christ. And so, for Christ to come in the flesh, since He and the Father are identical in their nature, is just like it would have been if the Father Himself had come. If you want to know what God is, look at Christ. He told Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9m).

For this reason it is very important to see what John the Apostle said in vv. 1 and 14, with his use of the title, or name, of our Lord, "the Word." (Explain.)

Now I have just introduced one of the grandest, one of the most extensive, one of the most important themes in all of the Bible. Let me explain.

I. THE BIBLE, A REVELATION FROM GOD.

Our Bible came from God. It is divinely inspired. That is why we call it, the Word of God. It is God's revelation to us of truth which could not have been known otherwise. It is the only perfectly reliable history that has ever been written. It tells us where we came from, why we are here, and what our destiny is.

Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. Also 2 Pet. 1:21.

But there is another fact about Scripture that is also true:

II. THE BIBLE, A REVELATION OF GOD.

The main subject of the Bible is God! God gave us the Bible to tell us about Himself. But the amazing thing about what He revealed of Himself in the OT is that He never actually appeared Himself. The Gk is very intensive, a double negative, in John 1:18: **NO ONE EVER, AT ANY TIME, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, HAS ACTUALLY SEEN GOD THE FATHER.**

But we have many, marvelous revelations of God throughout the OT.

A. He revealed Himself as Creator in Genesis 1, 2. Cf. also Rom. 1:19, 20.

B. He revealed Himself by His Names.

Let me take just two illustrations. Cf. Ex. 6:3. See also Ex. 3:13, 14.

1. God Almighty to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 2. Jehovah to Moses.
- C. He made Himself known by His mighty works.

What is the reason given for the judgments that the Lord brought upon Egypt in the book of Exodus? "That they may know that I am the Lord."

- D. He made Himself known in visions, such as Isaiah had in Isaiah 6.

But this was Christ. It could not have been God Himself because of what we have read in John 1:18. See also John 12:37-41.

- E. He made Himself known in the Law--His righteousness in particular. This also included the priesthood.
- F. He made Himself known in His promises--especially the promises of salvation and of a Saviour.

Thus the prophets of the Old Testament have given us great and wonderful revelations of God.

I am just able to give you now a small portion of the truth of the OT to confirm that the OT is a revelation of God.

But, having said all of that, let me now say this: If we could bundle up and learn perfectly all that is contained in the Old Testament about God, the picture would not be complete; the revelation needs to be filled in.

So this is where I come to the importance of my theme tonight:

III. CHRIST, THE FINAL AND COMPLETE REVELATION OF GOD.

No one has yet seen God. People may say that they have, but I believe the Word rather than people. But Christ came. His glory was veiled by His humanity, but the full revelation of God has been given to us in Christ. What God had been doing throughout human history from creation onward has now been completed in the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

Let me give you some other passages as proof.

- A. Hebrews 1:1-4.
- B. Colossians 1:15.

This is why we know that the Bible is now completed. Did you ever wonder why God was moving upon men to write the Scriptures for at least 1500 years before Christ came, but that that work of revelation was completed within 100 years after He came? It is because God can do no more to reveal Himself than He has done since Christ has come. And it is because all of the OT looked forward to Christ's coming. After He came, died, was raised, and ascended back to the Father, with the promise of His return, there is nothing more that God has to say to us. HE HAS SAID IT ALL IN CHRIST!

If you and I can only learn the truth that I have been speaking about just now, we will never go wrong. We will see the importance of the Word, the extreme importance, and we will see how we need to cling to Christ. Never let anyone turn you away from Him. The more we know of Christ, the more we will know of God--and there is nothing greater than knowing God.

But what effect should this truth of Christ as the revelation of God have upon our lives--what practical effect?

IV. THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF THE REVELATION OF GOD IN CHRIST.

When a person really sees this,

- A. He will come to Christ for salvation. Cf. John 20:30, 31.

Millions of people will sentimentally sing those wonderful Christmas carols this year which tell the same story I have been telling you just now, but they do not have the slightest idea of what was involved in the coming of Christ into the world. MAKE SURE THAT YOU DO!

If you have never trusted Christ as your Saviour, do it now.

- B. We need to make this knowledge, the knowledge of God, our greatest objective every day that we live.

Cf. 2 Peter 3:18.

Cf. what Paul had impressed upon his heart in that Roman prison: Phil. 3:7-11.

The fruit of such knowledge is immeasurably precious. Most of all, this brings us and keeps us in peace. Cf. Isa. 26:3.

- C. If you and I are growing in our knowledge of God and of

Christ, we are going to have a hard time keeping quiet about it. Probably the reason that we do not do more witnessing is because the truth we know has grown cold on us because we have not been adding to it day by day.

What better time could there be than at this Christmas time to ask people if they understand why Jesus Christ was born? It is good news--and there is so much bad news these days that it ought to be a joy to speak of Christ and salvation.

Parents, make sure that your children know about God, and about Christ. Pray that God will open their eyes to the glory and majesty of God in order that they will understand how much they need Christ.

Concl: (Conclude by reading as much of 2 Peter 1 as time will permit, beginning with verse 2.)

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST -- A CONSOLATION
Luke 2:25-35

Intro: The past two Sundays: A Confirmation,
A Revelation.

The next two Sundays: An Illustration,
An Expectation.

Tonight: A Consolation.

All are tied in with the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke is the only one who gives us this account of Simeon.

What about the expression, "the consolation of Israel"?

- 1) It can be, and probably is, a Name of the Messiah.
- 2) It is a synonym for salvation. See v. 30--which also can be a Name of the Messiah.

"Consolation" means comfort, encouragement. And this is related to salvation. God was comforting His people regarding their sins and the outworking of their salvation.

This was the message of the Prophet Isaiah in Isa. 40:1, 2 which began the part of his prophecy which gave special emphasis to salvation.

The most distressing thing for all of the world would have been if Christ had not come. But there is comfort. There is encouragement. There is a provision made for the forgiveness of sins, for a changed life, and for hope beyond death.

But let us notice a little more in detail how the coming of Christ was a consolation, a comfort, an encouragement, to Simeon--and how it should be the same to us!

First we see it in . . .

I. THE MAN, SIMEON, HIMSELF (Luke 2:25).

Do you ever need encouragement for yourself regarding Christ and the Gospel? After all, we Christians are a minority, and the things we believe are so fantastic that most people find it incredible that we believe what we do. How was it an encouragement, a comfort to Simeon.

A. He was just--righteous, before GOD.

In all religions, in corrupted Judaism, and today in corrupted Protestantism, salvation is that which man earns for himself. He is to keep trying to make himself acceptable to God.

But that is not what Simeon believed. He believed that

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the Messiah would do that work, and would do it completely, perfectly, so that nothing else needed to be done. This was not the message that was being preached in his day--except by a very few. But he believed it, and preached it.

How consoling it is to know that you are righteous before God, that the Lord did not leave anything for you and me to complete.

B. He was "devout."

This means that he was godly, that he loved God and feared in the right sense of the word lest he might be or do anything that would displease God. He did not want to leave anything undone that should have been done if it were pleasing to the Lord.

There was clearly a new dimension in his life. His obedience was not for himself, but for God. See what is said about Zacharias and Elisabeth in Luke 1:6--a verse which says the same thing as the first two statements about Simeon in Luke 2:25.

The changes that the Lord makes in our lives are, to say the least, most consoling!

C. He was a believer, "waiting for the consolation of Israel," and his faith was turned to sight.

He was waiting expectantly, sure that his faith would not be disappointed. He had no doubt but that the Messiah would come; the only question was, when?

This should encourage our faith as well--faith in the Word of God in connection with all of the promises.

To Simeon it had been revealed that he would not die until he had seen "the Lord's Christ." See v. 26.

D. "The Holy Spirit was upon him."

He knew the presence and favor of the Lord in his life. He knew that the Holy Spirit was teaching him, and was making him a blessing to his generation. He was tasting of that which was to be the portion of all true believers in Christ.

So the coming of Christ had brought great consolation to the heart and life of Simeon.

But there is a second thing that was and is consoling about the

coming of Christ:

II. IT HAS TO DO WITH DEATH (Luke 2:26, 29).

Where is the Gospel any more consoling than it is in death? Christ came not only to deliver us from sin's power, but from sin's penalty--and a major part of that is physical death!

Simeon could "depart in peace." The Lord has not delivered us from dying, but He has delivered us from the "sting" of death, and the time is coming when He will deliver us from death itself by resurrection.

How we ought to revel in the truth of 1 Corinthians 15! And do you remember how it begins? With a reference to the Gospel. 1 Corinthians 15 could never have been written if Christ had not come!

How are we comforted when loved ones are taken from us? We are comforted in this way, with the fruit of the Gospel.

But let me mention a third consoling aspect which is traceable to the coming of Christ:

III. HIS COMING WAS FOR GENTILES AS WELL AS FOR JEWS (Luke 2: 25, 30-32).

It is called "the consolation of Israel" in v. 25 because the promises were given to Israel. Abraham was an Israelite. So was David. And so were the prophets. The message was preserved for us by Hebrew prophets, chosen of God, and directed by the Spirit of God in what they wrote.

But over and over again we are told in the prophets that the salvation the Messiah came to provide was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. Simeon knew this. He even placed the Gentiles before the Jews in verse 32 after mentioning "all people" in verse 31.

Simeon was raised in a day when there was a great deal of anti-Gentilism among the Jews. But he was not anti-Gentile. Whenever a person comes to the Lord, one thing you can always expect to see is a desire on the part of that person to see others saved, to see all kinds of people saved, to see as many people saved as possible.

What a tragedy it would be to have to tell anyone that salvation is not for them! We go to Gentiles with the same Gospel which we preach to the Jews. It makes no matter what color a person's skin might be, there is no race prejudice in the Gospel. It is for all the world. And that

is most consoling!

One more thing:

IV. IT HAS TO DO WITH THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN SALVATION (Luke 2: 34, 35).

These words were spoken to Mary on what was to have been a very happy occasion when she had come to Jerusalem to give her Firstborn to God.

"Set" means ordained, solemnly appointed, predestined. It indicates that God had a sovereign plan. What was it? "The fall and rising again of many in Israel." To fall means to turn away from Christ, and be lost. To rise means to turn to Him, and be saved. He will be a stumblingblock to some (Isa. 8:14; 1 Pet. 2:6 ff.); some will prefer the darkness to the light (John 3:19).

Why would anyone come? Who would possibly come? The Lord Jesus said, "No man can come (is able to come) unto me, except the Father whiĉh hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). Our Lord also said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

With man's heart the way it is, how do we know that anyone will listen to us, that anyone will be saved? Instead of worrying that anyone might be excluded even after the Lord has promised that whoever calls upon the Lord shall be saved (cf. Rom. 10:13), we ought to wonder what makes men call. Even our experience should tell us that men do not do that on their own!

What do we learn here?

Well, we learn that it never has been God's purpose that everyone should be saved. One thief on his cross blasphemed Christ; the other believed in Him. What was happening? Were they both responsible for their decisions? Absolutely! Well, how can you account for the salvation of the penitent thief? I am not surprised that one of them blasphemed; I am surprised that both of them did not blaspheme. What happened in the case of the one is that the Father had chosen him before the foundation of the world, the Son was dying for him, and the Father through the work of the Spirit drew him to Christ.

That happened in your salvation. That happened in mine. We never know when it is going to happen. But this is the

consoling fact about the divine side of salvation: God has a people, an elect people, whom He will raise at the last day, raise them to everlasting life and eternal joy, and therefore Christ did not die in vain.

Do you take credit for your salvation? Of course not--if it is true salvation. Maybe you know what the Lord specifically did in your case to wake you up. And you can see that He was working in your life long before you listened to Him --at least you can see it now. Oh, how we need to praise Him that He would think with favor upon us! Salvation is of the Lord.

But look what Simeon said to Mary in verse 35. God even moved upon Mary's heart to cause her to give her Firstborn to Him, not knowing the full significance of what she was doing. But it was to be through her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His work in coming into this world to suffer and die for sinners, "that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Do you know what happens when "the thoughts of many hearts" are "revealed"? This means that they see what their hearts are like: deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). When this happens to a person you do not need to convince him that he is a sinner. He will know it.

But do you know what else will happen?

That person who sees his heart as it is in the sight of God will forget all of the arguments he ever had concerning Christ and the Gospel, and he will turn to the Lord in order to be saved.

Do you think it was easy for Mary to see Jesus die? A sword through the soul is worse than a sword through the body--and she had a sword through her soul! But she never recanted on her Gift, the gift of her Son. Why should we think that proclaiming salvation would be an easy thing for us?

But even in this Mary must have been consoled.

Concl: Who is the only true and lasting consolation for the human heart? His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ. All other consolation is only temporary and meaningless.

Illus: The young man on TV who said that, in turning from his drug problem, he was gradually learning to feel better about himself. What he needed was to see himself as he really is, that he might see that only Christ can save him from his sin.

WHY DID JESUS CHRIST COME TO EARTH?

John 6:22-40

Intro: On the Sundays surrounding Christmas Day we have been looking into various passages of Scripture to learn what we can about the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. We have seen, and will continue to see, that the incarnation of Christ is the major theme of Scripture--the fact that He came, how He came, who He was and continues to be, and the many reasons for His coming.

It runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation--from the beginning of the first Book to the end of the last Book:

- 1) In Genesis 3:15 it is our Lord Who is referred to as the Seed of the woman.
- 2) In Revelation 22:16 we have these words of our Lord:

I Jesus (His Name given to Him when He was born) have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

The incarnation of Christ even portrays for us what the outstanding characteristic of our lives as Christians should be. We will be considering that tonight.

I have been considering passages found at the beginning of the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, but today we are moving on in the Gospel of John, and tonight we will be looking at a passage in the Book of Philipians. Next week, in the evening, I will conclude this present series from a passage in Hebrews. So I trust that you are being impressed with the magnitude of this theme.

When men, even supposedly Christian men, many of whom are pastors and theological seminary professors, have wanted to attack the Deity of Christ, or His resurrection, or His miracles, they have had to deal basically with the birth of Christ. If the birth of Christ was what the Scriptures claim that it was, then we have no problem with those other great doctrines. If this doctrine stands, the others stand--and men antagonistic to the Bible have always recognized this. It is perhaps not so amazing that this truth of the incarnation of Christ was being denied in the first century during which our Lord lived here on earth.

Today I want to take you mainly to three verses found in our Scripture reading: John 6:38-40. (Read.)

Note that, first of all, we have . . .

- I. THE UNIQUE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST: "For I came down from heaven" (John 6:38a).

There never has been, and there never will be, a birth like that of our Lord Jesus Christ because there never has been, and there never will be a Person like our Lord Jesus Christ. He "came down from heaven"!

What should we learn from this statement? Let me mention three things:

A. His pre-existence.

No other person who has ever been born could rightfully claim this. Some have claimed it, but not truthfully. Jesus Christ is the only Person ever to be born Who did not begin His existence when conceived in the womb of His mother.

Remember what we learned from John 1:1 and 14.

Secondly, this statement should make us think of . . .

B. The manner of His coming.

The details are not given us here, but we know them well from what we have seen in other passages.

1. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. See Luke 1:34, 35; Matt. 1:20.

2. He was born of the virgin Mary.

Joseph was not Jesus' father. He had no human father.

3. He was God.

You see, the virgin birth of Christ is essential if we are to believe in the Deity of Christ. Christ came from God, having the very same nature as that of God, the Father, and was born of the virgin Mary, a real, perfect human being, but He continued to be the One Who is the eternal Son of God.

Note these other passages in the Gospel of John: 3:13; 8:14, 42; 9:39; 11:27; 13:3; 16:27, 28; 17:8.

But there is another thing that the verses of our text tell us, and it is mentioned once in each of these verses (38-40):

II. THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST -- A MISSION (John 6:38-40).

He did not come on His own; He was "sent"--"sent" by God, the Father.

See also John 7:28; 8:42.

It is in this statement, actually in this word "sent," that we come to the heart of the matter with respect to the birth of Jesus Christ.

And this leads me to my third point:

III. THE INTENTION OF JESUS CHRIST IN COMING TO EARTH (John 6:38).

This is what we would expect when we say that He was "sent" on a mission by the Father. HE CAME, NOT TO DO HIS OWN WILL, BUT THE WILL OF THE FATHER WHO SENT HIM."

You will never find that there is any conflict between the will of the Father and the work of the Son. And this is important to remember when we think also of the work of the Holy Spirit. God has without any question (if you believe what the Bible says) chosen certain ones for salvation, Christ came to die for them, and they are the very ones whom the Holy Spirit is, in every age, drawing to Christ. The Son did not attempt to do more than the Father had willed should be done from eternity past.

Think of this, and ask the Lord to give you the ability to understand it. Christ came to do the Father's will.

But this leads me to my final point.

IV. THE FATHER'S WILL.

See it in verses 6:39, 40. (Read.)

These two verses say essentially the same thing. But can you see any difference between them?

In my study of these verses I made a distinction which I want to point out to you, but it was encouraging to me to learn later that David Brown in the JFB commentary had seen the same thing. It is this:

- 1) V. 39 speaks of salvation from the divine standpoint;
- 2) V. 40 speaks of salvation from the human standpoint.

And the order is important.

If you do not have the divine point-of-view, you will not be able to have the correct human point-of-view regarding salvation. The divine comes first.

A. The divine side (John 6:39).

David Brown, as I have said, spoke of

the divine side of man's salvation, whose every stage and movement is inscrutable to us, but infallibly certain (Vol. V, p. 389).

For whom was the Father pre-eminently concerned when He sent His Son into the world? He was concerned about those whom He had given to His Son. Who were they? They were those whom the Father had chosen before time began.

For whom did our Lord pray in John 17? See John 17:9.

What was our Lord's intention then in doing the Father's will? It was that those whom the Father had chosen and who had been given to Him might have everlasting life and be raised up "at the last day."

So did Christ go to the Cross hoping to save all men when that was not the will of the Father? No, He went to the Cross to secure salvation for all of the elect of God.

Let me ask you which is more consistent with what you know about God--that God wanted to save everyone, but obviously is not able to do it, or that He has chosen certain ones to be saved, that Christ secured their salvation, and that they are the very people the Holy Spirit draws to Christ that they might be saved.

Only the latter view is supported by Scripture, and only the latter view is consistent with the character of God. We must reject any idea that God cannot do what He wills to do.

But let us look at the human side also. It is not inconsistent with the divine side, but in perfect harmony with it. How can you know that you are one of the elect, that you are one who has been given by the Father to the Son?

B. The human side (John 6:40).

The only people who have "everlasting life" are those who (1) see the Son, and (2) believe on Him.

No one will be in heaven who does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. And no one believes on the Lord Jesus Christ who has not seen Him--that is, who has not come to understand Who He is, and the mean-

ing of His death on the Cross.

We need to be concerned about the human side. It is our responsibility to preach the Gospel, and to tell people everywhere that, if they will receive Christ, they will be saved. And this is absolutely true.

But, if we know the divine side, we know that God is the One Who uses His Word, and He is the One Who causes people to see and to believe, to understand and to place faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The outcome--stated twice (John 6:39, 40).

What will happen to those whom the Father has given to His Son, to those who see and believe in Christ?

They have "everlasting life," and Christ, when He comes, will raise them up "at the last day," the day when the work of salvation will be concluded. The last day is the concluding day.

What does this mean?

It means absolutely security for those who have truly believed. It means that you can expect that they will persevere in salvation to the end, not in order to keep their salvation, but because they are saved.

Concl: You see, salvation is all of God after all!

What does such a salvation require?

It requires a Saviour Who is perfect, and who lived a perfect life. It requires His death for the sins of those who are to be saved. It requires His resurrection in triumph over sin and death, and to guarantee the final resurrection of those who believe. And it requires the faithful intercession of the One Who died. Cf. Heb. 7:25.

This is the basis of our assurance. This is why the Gospel message is a message of peace.

And this also gives us peace through all of the trials and testings of our lives. This is where Rom. 8:28 means so much. And this is why Phil. 1:6 brings such encouragement to us on a day by day basis.

All of this explains WHY JESUS CHRIST CAME TO THE EARTH.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST -- AN ILLUSTRATION
Philippians 2:1-11

Intro: Thus far in our series on The Incarnation of Christ we seen that the first coming of Christ was:

- 1) A confirmation of the truth of the Old Testament.
- 2) A revelation, the final and complete one, of God.
- 3) A consolation, a comforting act of God, with regard to the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles.

Tonight I take up the fourth:

- 4) THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST -- AN ILLUSTRATION of what we as believers should be and do, the way that we should live.

My text is mainly this great Christological passage found in verses 5-11 in Philippians 2. There is probably no passage in all of the Bible that is more important than this in what it has to say concerning Christ. IT GIVES US THAT WHICH TOOK PRECEDENCE IN THE MIND AND HEART OF OUR LORD OVER EVERYTHING ELSE WHEN HE CAME TO THE EARTH TO BE OUR SAVIOUR. He was concerned about us, but He was mainly concerned about doing the will of God, about pleasing the Father. And we must recognize this if we are to get the main point of what Paul was teaching the Philippians.

Cf. our Lord's words in John 6:38 (which we had this morning); John 8:29; 18:11; 19:30. See also the issue in the Garden of Gethsemane: Matt. 26:39.

Now, in approaching this, let us note, first of all,

I. THE CONTEXT OF OUR TEXT.

This Epistle has been recognized by many as Paul's spiritual autobiography.

This is an excellent place for a young Christian to begin reading his Bible. And it is an excellent Epistle for the most mature Christian to be reading and re-reading.

What were Paul's thoughts during his confinement there? He was well-acquainted with suffering, with hardship, for the sake of the Gospel. But it all had to be a fresh testing of his faith, and so what he wrote is extremely important for us to read and to learn.

Phil. 1:12 tells us that he could see the hand of God upon him even in those circumstances. More people were hearing about Christ, and that had been the object he had had ever since he had been drawn to the Saviour. So he was happy. And, even if it meant death for him, that would only mean being "with Christ" (Phil. 1:23).

Paul's life purpose is given to us in Phil. 1:20. Whatever

would glorify Christ was what he wanted, whether by his own life, or his own death, because He knew that this is what would glorify and please God. Paul probably came closer, or as close, as any other man in wanting to be like the Lord Jesus. He was consumed with a desire to glorify God by doing God's will.

And he found great joy in this.

And he found great opportunities for serving the Lord even in his restricted circumstances.

And so, from his own heart, he could give the Philippians (and us) . . .

II. HIS EXHORTATION in verse 5.

What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?

Well, it means that we need to think about things the way He did. It means to have the same objective. It means to seek, to strive, for the same thing that He sought (because this verb has a very practical emphasis to it).

What was the Lord's primary concern during the whole time of His life here on earth?

We have already noted that: it was to please the Father, it was to do the Father's will, it was to finish His work so as to glorify God.

This is what it means to fear the Lord. The person who has the mind of Christ does not want to do anything that will displease the Lord, nor to leave anything undone that will please Him.

So it will be evident in our lives if we have the mind of Christ. It is the result outwardly of what we desire inwardly above everything else. To have the mind of Christ is to live like He lived and to seek what He sought. He, not Paul, is our greatest Example, and the very circumstances of His birth introduce for us THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE LIVES WE SHOULD LIVE.

Let us look, then, at . . .

III. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST (Phil. 2:6-8).

Paul stated three things here:

- 1) Our Lord's attitude toward His Deity in v. 6.
- 2) What He became--in v. 7.
- 3) What He did--in v. 8.

A. His attitude toward His Deity (v. 6).

We cannot possibly comprehend in all of its fulness what this meant to the Lord, His equality with the Father, His Deity, and the honor that had always been His as the Son of God.

He was willing to take a lower place, a most lower place, if this were the will of the Father. It was even lower than angels.

B. What He became (v. 7).

He emptied Himself, not of His Deity (He could not do that), but of His place as Deity, and of the manifestation of His Deity, and of the honor accorded to Him as a Member of the Godhead. He left that behind took on Himself the attributes of man. He became even a servant to men. He was the lowest of the low.

As a result, He not only had the attributes of God, but the attributes of man. He was a real human being, and not something else like the Gnostics were saying, or would say.

C. What he did (v. 8).

But this was not the extent of His humiliation.

Verse 8 gives us what Robertson called,

The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed Cross" (Vol. IV, p. 445).

Some say that they would be willing to die for the Lord, like Peter did, but they are not living for the Lord. Others say that they will live for the Lord, but they do not want that to go beyond life. IF WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST, WE MUST BE WILLING TO DO BOTH.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCE (Phil. 2:5-11).

The greater the humiliation, the greater the glory. And since none can humble himself like our Lord did, none will have a glory like He has and will yet have.

And note how this all ends: "To the glory of God the Father." This is what the Lord wanted, for the Father to be glorified. He never sought His own glory.

But the Lord knows the value of a living example. We can study

the life of Christ (and we should), but it becomes emphasized and clarified through the godly example of His people in every generation.

And so note:

V. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL (Phil. 4:9).

Elders, deacons, parents, Sunday School teachers, friends, all of us: We should each strive to set an example for those for whom we are responsible so that they will have a living illustration of what God wants all of us to be and do.

And what should that be?

That in all things we seek to do what is pleasing to God. (Call attention to, In The Sweet Fear of Jesus.)

Concl: In conclusion let me give you an encouraging word if you are beginning to realize how difficult, in fact, how impossible this is.

Look at Phil. 2:12, 13. It is no mistake that these verses come where they do.

As we sing the Christmas carols, and hear them sung; as we read the story of the birth of Christ, or hear it read; even as we come to the Lord's Table tonight--let us remember that the incarnation of Christ is the greatest possible illustration of how we are think about ourselves, and what we are to be concerned about every day that we live.

After all, who are we but sinners saved by grace. And we would never have been that apart from the grace of God. All we are is because of what Christ has done for us. Let us live for the glory of God, not for the glory of ourselves, and we will have the joy of knowing that by our lives, and by the grace of God, we will accomplish that which can never be taken from us, and which will eternally bring glory to our wonderful God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST -- AN EXPECTATION
Hebrews 10:1-18

Intro: We hear a lot about problems every day that we live.

In fact, our problems are so great both in character and number, that it does not take a lot of intelligence to realize that they are consuming us.

There is the drug problem--of gigantic proportions. It has gone all of the way from marijuana to crack. It is not just an adult problem either. Even unborn babies are being affected by it. Apparently the rate of survival for babies who have been born from cocaine addicted parents has been fairly successful, but that is not the case with crack. It has also become a major problem in professional sports. There is not a segment of our population that has not been affected, and the end is not in sight.

Then there is the sex problem. Promiscuous living has become a way of life in America. Millions of our people live together without being married. When they get tired of one partner, or that partner gets tired of them, they start in again with someone else.

Homosexual living is now recognized as an alternative for marriage between a man and a woman. This has brought on the deadly disease known as aids. Various other diseases are the result of such ungodly behavior. The Bible makes it clear that a homosexual society is a society under the curse of God; what can we than say about the diseases which are the result of homosexual activity among both men and women.

If Malachi rebuked Israel because they did not hesitate to put away their wives, what would his message be to Americans where divorce is also accepted, and it is not difficult to find people who have been married a number of times--a situation which used to be characteristic of people in the entertainment world--but not so any longer!

And then we have crime increasing so that it is no longer safe even for men to be on our streets at night. People have become prisoners in their own homes. If a person does not protect himself with a burglar alarm, it is only a matter of time until he will be burglarized, and he may get it anyway. We do not punish our criminals; we try to reform them. Our prisons are so full that our authorities have to release those who ordinarily would have to be behind bars. We do not have the answer there. And children are criminally active as well as adults.

There are so many international problems that it would take a long time to mention them all. Dishonesty in business is on the increase. Scandals are the order of the day. Our national debt is so high that disaster seems certain; the only question is

when!

One feels like raising the question for all of our politicians, our business people, our military leaders, our youth, our people in general--the question that Pharaoh's servants raised with him: "Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (Ex. 10: 7b). And yet we seem to go on like nothing is happening to this beloved country of ours. People seem more indifferent to the things of God than ever before, and the message of the church is so watered down that it seems like the Gospel only promises more of the kind of a life which we already have--people able to do whatever they want so that they can enjoy themselves to the full.

It may sound like an old cliché that has no meaning any more, but the fact could never be more obvious than it is today: our problem is sin. God is not in all of our thoughts. We disregard Him, and despise His Word. People resent any reference to sin, and the suggestion that we are experiencing the judgment of God stirs up the severest kinds of reaction.

God has been very patient, very longsuffering. It seems safe to say that no nation, with the possible exception of Israel, has ever been blessed like the United States has--at least no more than we have. But we refuse to recognize Him, or to glorify Him, or to think that we ought to try to find out what it is that will please Him. No, we just go on doing what we want to do, sinning to our heart's content, not concerned about God at all.

I repeat: our problem is SIN!

Paul knew by the wisdom given to him by the Holy Spirit that these days were coming, and he wrote about it in 2 Timothy 3.

In view of all of these things, and more, it is paradoxical to the extreme for people to piously sing of "peace on earth" at this season of the year. We are repeating history, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. There is no peace in sinful hearts. There is no peace for a sinful nation. There is no peace for a sinful world. Peace only comes through Christ, and only when people turn to Him repenting of their sins. And some day (mark my words), some day the Lord Jesus Christ will be recognized by all men to be the Person the Bible says that He is. That was guaranteed by His first coming. But when that takes place, it will be forever too late for countless millions of people who have been too busy doing what they have wanted to do during their lifetimes, instead of seeking Him.

The writer of Hebrews expressed it this way in Heb. 10:12, 13. This is the ultimate outcome of His incarnation. This is His expectation as we meet here tonight, an expectation which will

not be disappointed because it rests upon the faithfulness of an omnipotent God. And remember that the requests regarding the the enemies of God in the imprecatory Psalms all were uttered in anticipation of this glorious day when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

But it all has to do with the removal of sin from this world. How will that come about?

From the book of Hebrews, chapter 10, we learn:

I. SIN WILL NEVER BE REMOVED BY THE MOSAIC LAW.

The Law never brought about the forgiveness of a single sin. The Law never turned a sinner into a saint.

The Law, by the sacrifices which it required, was a shadow of the good things to come, but it was not the reality.

The Law foreshadowed by its sacrifices a greater sacrifice which would ultimately do away with sin, but the Law itself is not the answer.

Cf. Heb. 10:1-4, 11.

II. THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE ANTICIPATED THE ANSWER TO SIN.

See Heb. 10:5-9. Also vv. 15-18.

Here the writer of this Epistle was quoting from Psa. 40: 6-8 and Jer. 31:33, 34. A key to understanding the OT is to see how it is used in the NT. And it also will show you, when you compare the two, that there is only one salvation--the same in the OT as in the NT.

And so we are brought to the following conclusion:

III. THE ONLY HOPE THAT THE WORLD HAS FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS IN THE INCARNATE CHRIST.

It is already too late to say that we will not sin, because "all have sinned . . ."

It is a waste of time to say that we will not sin any more because we only get deeper and deeper into sin. If we do reform ourselves to some extent, we only take the glory to ourselves, or give it to some other human being, both of which are abominable in the sight of God.

But we are not saved by reformation.

No, forgiveness can only be found in Christ. See Heb. 10:

9-18.

What can we say about the sins of the sinner who turns to Christ?

A. They are forgiven (v. 18).

"Remission" means forgiveness. What a wonderful word--a word of grace! We do not deserve it. It is ours because of the sacrifice of Christ. What we could never deserve or earn, we have because of His death.

B. They are forgotten--all of them! (v. 17).

You and I remember of sins; God forgets them. They will never be charged against us again.

C. This salvation is forever! (v. 14).

We may sin again, and we undoubtedly do, but God will not go back on His Word. God in Christ made provision for all of our sins--past present, and future. They were all future for us when Christ died.

D. This salvation includes a new desire and a new capacity to please God (v. 16).

The world does not care what God wants. The world will defy God, and think that they are getting away with it. But the person who turns to Christ, and trusts in Christ, has a new heart, and a new power (the Holy Spirit), and an entirely different purpose in life: to please God.

What about Christ now?

IV. CHRIST EXALTED AND HIS EXPECTATION (Heb. 10:12, 13).

The Christ Who is eternally the Son of God became a man. He lived a perfect life, then suffered and died for the sins of men, was raised again, and is now seated at the Father's right hand, making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25)--but there He awaits God's time when the work of the Cross will finally be culminated in His glorious victory over all of His enemies. For them, there will be no hope. For them, there will be the endless suffering in hell. But for all who have trusted Christ, there will be endless and boundless joy in heaven for all eternity. Then there will be true and lasting peace because for us there will be no more sin.

Concl: Are you going the way of the world, or God's way. God's way is Christ. It is a happy way because it is a holy way. Philip Henry--wishing a bride and groom all happiness be-then they would have all happiness.