

ADVENT 2021

2. CHRISTMAS: The Cross and the Kingdom

Isaiah 9:6-7

About 2 seconds after Halloween, America revved up its economic and marketing engines and began to prepare for Christmas — and as of 12:00am last Friday shifted into high gear. “Black Friday” will be followed tomorrow by Cyber Monday. From Black Friday through Cyber Monday Americans are projected to spend \$60 billion — that’s billion with a “B”!! Whether you made your way into brick and mortar retail locations, or if you hunkered down in your home and shopped online, apart from the almost extinct nativity scene placed here and there, virtually *nothing* you can see would even suggest that the day everyone is preparing for has something to do with the birth of a child in 1st century Bethlehem.

Somewhere around 450AD Christians considered the birth of this child to be such a profound event that they began to set apart four weeks to prepare their hearts to celebrate the birth of that child. Those four weeks became a fixed part of the calendar year for the church. Those weeks were given the title ADVENT — from the Latin word “adventus” which means “arrival.”

We spent last Sunday, and we’ll spend today and the Sundays leading up to Christmas Eve preparing our hearts for Christmas by walking around in the story line of the Bible — the story line that is all about this child.

We’re going to look at the Scriptures to answer questions that have life changing, eternity shaping implications:

What Child Is This whose arrival has been celebrated for nearly 2,000 years?

What did He come to do that makes His arrival so important?

We started our Advent gatherings with the first words of the first of the four Gospels.

Matthew 1:1 NLT This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah

Matthew 1:1 HCSB The historical record of Jesus Christ

Matthew began everything that he was going to say about this child with a historical record of historical people. He gave us a seventeen-verse genealogy to let us know that the Christmas story is grounded in over 2,000 years of Old Testament history.

THIS IS HUGE! The Christmas Story is not just some story; it is History. In fact — the birth of a baby boy in a dark alley of 1st century Bethlehem is THE point of Old Testament history.

The first book of the Old Testament is titled “Genesis” — literally “Beginning.” The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. In [Genesis 1-2](#) we have the record of HOW we got here, WHO we are, and WHY we’re here. More on that in a bit. In [Genesis 3](#) we have the record of the “origin” of our brokenness. From [Genesis 3](#) through [Genesis 11](#) we see the scope of the dilemma. All human pain, pathos and brokenness can be traced back to man’s betrayal of God — all of it is the result of sin. And throughout all of history since [Genesis 3](#) mankind (including you and me) has been oblivious to the way that each of us has betrayed God — each of us contributing to the brokenness of the world.

In the words of Bob Dylan: “Everything is Broken.” There’s SO much more to be said about what was lost in the Garden. But broken humanity is utterly incapable of the fix.

John Lennox — *So serious is that moral infection that the business of restoring men and women to fellowship with their Creator will involve something much bigger than creation itself:*

More from Lennox in a bit. But here’s the deal. Our first parents utterly betrayed their gracious, loving Creator. In a way that is incomprehensible, God’s response was to pursue the traitors.

In [Genesis 12](#) we are introduced to a man named Abraham who would become the father of the nation of Israel.

Genesis 12:1–3 (CSB) ¹The Lord said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ ...and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

REMEMBER how Matthew introduced the genealogy of Jesus

Matthew 1:1 HCSB *The historical record of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:*

Christopher Wright — *The Old Testament history is nothing less than God’s unfinished business with all nations. Old Testament Israel existed for the sake of all nations.*¹

Christopher Wright — *“...Who Jesus was and what he had come to do were both already long prepared for through God’s dealings with the people Jesus belonged to. We really must understand the distinctive claims of the Hebrew Scriptures if we are to get our understanding of Christ’s uniqueness straight also.”*²

Fast Forward approximately 1700 years from Abraham

In 740 B.C. the Prophet Isaiah wrote about the coming of Jesus.

Isaiah 9:6–7 (ESV) ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:6–7 (ESV) ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;

¹ Christopher J. H. Wright. “Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament.” (p. 47) Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois

² Christopher J. H. Wright. “Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament.” (p. 45-46) Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois

With two verbs Isaiah tells us about the child that all of history was anticipating and moving towards. One verb tells us that the child whose birth we celebrate on Christmas was like every child ever born. The other verb tells us why He is unlike every child ever born — why we should not only celebrate His birth — but why He is worthy of our worship — worthy of all we are, all we do and all we could ever hope to become.

His Humanity — Mary, a Jewish woman in her teens, gave birth to a child. Just like God promised in [Genesis 3](#) — the son born of a woman.

His Deity — God *gave His Son!* Jesus was not the son of Joseph ([Matthew 3:23](#)).

[Luke 1:34-35](#) ³⁴And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus referred to Himself as *“Son of God”* ([John 10:36](#); [19:7](#); [Matthew 26:63-64](#)). Lots of others called Jesus by this name. Disciples, demons, the Devil, even a Roman Centurion, recognized Jesus as *“the Son of God.”*

“What Child Is This” that was born in a back alley of 1st century Bethlehem? The PERSON whose coming was promised over the course of 4,000 years would be God himself.

Here’s the rest of the John Lennox quote

John Lennox — *So serious is that moral infection that the business of restoring men and women to fellowship with their Creator will involve something much bigger than creation itself: **nothing less than the Creator becoming human, dying at the hands of his creatures and rising again in triumph over sin and death.***

Think about this: The world God created and everyone in it is lost and broken because man went big — man put himself in God's place.

Ever since **Genesis 3** humanity has resorted to horizontal remedies for everything that is broken in him and around him. All of us have placed our hope in situations, locations, and relationships to fix what is broken in us and around us. Let me illustrate: How many times have you thought, “*If only I had _____*”? Or, “*If only I lived _____*”? That is “horizontal hope.”

Horizontal hope is doomed to fail because it’s based on broken people and things. Man resorts to those horizontal remedies because he has a wrong diagnosis of his problem. Men and women (you and me) think that our biggest problem in life exists outside us, not inside us. We like to think, and we constantly say, that our problems are situational, locational, or relational. But those are not the real problem. Your biggest problem, my biggest problem is vertical — it’s a personal problem between God and us.

Isaiah 59:2 (ESV) But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Everything broken in us and around is the result of **that** problem!

No horizontal remedy can ever fix a vertical problem. The vertical problem needs a vertical solution. Here’s the rest of that John Lennox quote —

John Lennox — *So serious is that moral infection that the business of restoring men and women to fellowship with their Creator will involve something much bigger than creation itself: **nothing less than the Creator becoming human, dying at the hands of his creatures and rising again in triumph over sin and death.***

Man went big — man put himself in God's place. The Bible tells us that God went small and put Himself in our place to redeem and rescue us. That’s the theme for another Sunday before Christmas Eve

WHAT CHILD IS THIS? — He is the matchless, immeasurable **gift** of God to be the ultimate remedy for our real problem.

This season of gift-giving helps us understand that the measure of a gift's value is seen in what it cost the giver. God could have rescued fallen man, you and me, by merely speaking into existence a remedy; legions of angels, galaxies filled with planets made of solid platinum — if those things could save us. If they could, what cost would those have been to God? But no other thing could have remedied **our** problem — because our real problem is sin. God made it clear that *the wages of sin is death*. No number of sinless angelic beings could satisfy the debt of *human* sin. No amount of treasure could satisfy the debt of human sin. No finite, flawed, fallen man, who has heaped up for himself *the wages of sin*, could satisfy the debt of human sin.

The one and only remedy for my sin, your sin, the sins of the world, would cost God everything. But God's love for us moved Him to provide our remedy at His expense! That is the nature of real love; real giving!

DON'T MISS THIS — God does not love in the realm of mere sentiment. God does not love in the realm of mere emotion. The Bible speaks of God's love as being efficacious — successful in producing a desired or intended result. In other words — God doesn't just *feel* loving — He *does* love. He acts. God doesn't just send a "wish you were here" card — He does something!

This was *son* was *given* to rescue us from our great enemies of sin and death!

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

This was *son* was *given* to make a way for rebels to be reconciled with their Creator.

Colossians 1:19–20 (NKJV) ¹⁹For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Romans 5:1 (CSB) ¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But Isaiah has much more to say about this child born — this son given.

Isaiah 9:6–7 (ESV) ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

There is so much there for us in the NAME of this *child born* — this *Son given*. I hope to get to that next Sunday. But I want to close this morning by zeroing in on the SCOPE of what this child came to accomplish.

⁶.... and the government shall be upon his shoulder.... ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

From start to finish, the great overarching theme of the Bible is the Kingdom of God. Follow me here. Jeremey Treat explains the forever Kingdom of Jesus like this:

The concept of the kingdom of God has its roots in the soil of Eden.

First — we have to understand the creation account as something infinitely greater than God creating the garden of Eden as a place where Adam and Eve could live in perfect health in the perfect neighborhood, make perfect babies and live on an eternal vacation.

Man was created to be governed by God and to bear the image of God. In **Genesis 1-2** Adam and Eve were given a task to care for the garden and to extend the blessings that came from living under the reign of God throughout the entire world. But there came a moment when our first parents refused to be governed by their Creator and King. Rather than going forth from the garden to expand the blessings of God's rule on the earth, they were banished from the garden. But God never abandoned His plan to establish His Kingdom on earth.

The *child born* — *the son given* would inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth through His atoning death on the cross. Look at the Kingdom language of **Colossians 1** and **Revelation 1**.

Colossians 1:13 (CSB) ¹³*He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.*

Revelation 1:5–6 (ESV) ⁵*... To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood* ⁶*and made us a kingdom*

In **Colossians 2** we're told that this happened because there on the cross Jesus disarmed the rulers by paying the penalty for our sin.

Colossians 2:14–15 (NLT) ¹⁴*He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.* ¹⁵*In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.*

From the bruised heel of Genesis 3:15 to the reigning Lamb of Revelation 22, the Bible is a redemptive story of a crucified King who brings the kingdom through his atoning death on the cross.

The Kingdom is the actual goal of the Cross! The Cross establishes the Kingdom!

No wonder the early church took time to prepare their hearts to celebrate the birth of this child — the giving of this son!

I pray that are hearts our overflowing with awe and joy to know that Christmas is all about the Kingdom of God!

It's my prayer that Christmas 2021 will move us to pray more earnestly than ever for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done in our lives!

CLOSE

⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore

The Kingdom of God is begun — but it's not done. The Kingdom inaugurated will one day be consummated.

Isaiah says that the Son of God given for our sins will one day return and sit upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and rule as King over the entire earth and He will usher in a new heaven and new earth and will exercise supreme rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.

But there is at this very moment very real ways that we can see *the government upon His shoulder*.

Gayle Erwin — *What might such a government look like? First of all, it would look like its king.*

Politicians of this day look for what they can get from you. Jesus looks for what He can do for you.

Leaders of this day surround themselves with servants. Jesus surrounds us with His servanthood.

Leaders of this day use their power to build their empire. Jesus uses his power to wash our feet and make us clean and comfortable.

Leaders of this day are desperate to be seen and heard. Jesus sought anonymity so He could be useful.

Actually, His government shows its workings in wonderful ways. Whenever I see someone who miraculously leaves a life of drugs or alcohol and is restored to his family and work, I can see that he is now governed by God.

Whenever I see loving Christians gently caring for orphans and those rejected by family, I know I am watching people governed by God.

Whenever I see people eagerly learning the Bible and joyously praising, I know who the governor is.

Whenever I see people give up lucrative careers simply to go and share the Good News of Jesus, I know they are governed by God.

When I see pastors carefully teach and lead the flock God has given them, I know they are getting signals from the great King.

When I see people leave family to live and teach in distant lands because they love the people who have not heard, I know they are governed by God.

In a very *here-and-now* way — the government of Jesus is alive and working.

HERE'S THE POINT — We can be, and are by choice, governed by God. Real hope, real joy, real peace, *cover* those who gladly submit to the government of God's Son. Righteousness and Justice, steadfast love and compassion exist under the government of God's Son.

I love this Kingdom because I love the King! The borders are open for anyone to become citizens within it because *unto us a Son is given*. Come on in.