

The Bible and the Babe
2 Corinthians 9:10-15
December 9, 2015

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

There are millions of people, who call themselves Christians, but have no true concept of the spiritual significance of Christmas. Benjamin P. Browne, former president of the South Central Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventists, called these people Christmas Christians.

Browne writes: "Christmas Christians are limited Christians. It might seem safe to try to keep Christ wrapped as a baby and limited to a manger, a cradle, or a creche, but too much is lost. It is in the context of his life and ministry and, we should add his death, that Bethlehem has meaning."

Christians who properly celebrate this season want to shout with Paul: "*Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*" (2 Co 9:15 ESV). God's gift to us is himself in his Son. In Jesus we have the source of all of God's grace, blessings, and love. The gift of God's Son shows us his plan, his purpose, his passion, his presence, and his provision.

God knew what was best for us, and at just the proper time, he sent his Son into the world. Of course, when we look around and see the apparent collapse of morals, ethics, and right and wrong, we are tempted to doubt. But faith has always had to rise above what is seen to what is real.

God's gift of his Son is a constant reminder that there is hope. God doesn't forget his promises. He works his will in our world and his will is always for the good of those who love him.

However, the will of God is more than just Christmas. The traditional Christmas scene is only one of six stages of the total Christmas story. Tonight, we will examine the six stages of Christmas.

Naturally, the first stage of Christmas is the virgin birth. Isaiah foretold the virgin birth 700 years before it happened. A birth that changed everything in the world, right down to the way we count the years.

Isaiah said: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*

(Is 7:14 ESV). Hundreds of years later, Matthew would write: *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us)* (Mt 1:22-23 ESV).

Matthew also tells us that, when Jesus was born, he had an earthly mother but no earthly father. He was the God-Man. The virgin birth was essential for the inexplicable union of divine and human which took place when Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb. Our Savior needed a human body and a sinless nature, so as Paul writes: *When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law* (Ga 4:4 ESV).

The second stage of Christmas is Jesus’ virtuous life. Jesus accomplished something no mere human could ever come close to doing. Jesus lived a perfect life. Not even one sin was present in him. That sinless life was the primary qualification for him to be our Redeemer. The only suitable sacrifice for sin was innocent blood. Only a perfect life could produce innocent blood. This Christmas season, you should take some time to consider what it took for Jesus to live the life you cannot live.

The third stage of Christmas is Christ’s vicarious death. As our Savior, Jesus became a vicarious offering and died in the place of us sinners. The very heart of the Gospel story is that Jesus gave himself for our sins. He died as our substitute, bearing God’s wrath for our sins. The Sinless One was offered in place of the sinful ones.

This was all part of God’s plan for our salvation. Albert Barnes, a 19th century American theologian, argued against those who see Christ’s death as a horrible accident of history. Barnes writes: “The whole plan originated in the divine purpose, and has been executed in accordance with the divine will. If [it is] in accordance with [God’s] will, it is good, and is worthy of universal acceptance.”

The fourth stage of Christmas is the victorious resurrection. Christ’s death and resurrection are two of the bedrock doctrines of Christianity. It is Jesus’ death and resurrection that separates Christianity from all the religions of the world.

Paul tells us that: *[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification* (Ro 4:25 ESV). That is the heart of what we believe because, if that statement isn’t true, then, as Paul told the Corinthian believers: *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins* (1 Co 15:17 ESV). The Gospel Paul preached consisted of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus – just as Scripture had foretold hundreds of years earlier.

The fifth stage of Christmas is Jesus’ visible ascension. The first chapter of Acts describes for us a very important scene. *And when [Jesus] had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”* (Ac 1:9-11 ESV).

Jesus didn't just disappear. He ascended back to heaven in plain view. He left eyewitnesses to what happened just outside of Jerusalem that day. Furthermore, those disciples witnessed more than just Christ's ascension. They also heard the two angels explain that Jesus would return. His second coming was prophesied at the same time his first coming was ending.

The sixth stage of Christmas is Jesus making intercession for us. Do you know that, when Jesus was here on earth, he prayed for you? Jesus prayed for you 2000 years before you were born. On Maundy Thursday, in that upper room, as part of his high-priestly prayer Jesus said: *I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me* (Jn 17:20-21 ESV).

Jesus prayed for you, and he continues to pray for you. The author of Hebrews tells us: *Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf* (Heb 9:24 ESV). What a comfort to know that, at this very moment, Jesus stands before the throne of the Father making intercession on our behalf.

Jesus is our High Priest. He is interested in us. He intercedes for us. He intervenes on our behalf. He interprets the deepest desires of our hearts as both he and we wait for his return.

Christmas is not just about a baby in a manger. Christmas is about the Baby in the Bible. Christmas isn't limited to one day. Christmas is meant to last for eternity. As we move through this Christmas season, don't let God's only-begotten Son become God's forgotten Son. Don't get so focused on the manger scene that you forget that the baby in that manger lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.