

SERIES: **The Paradox of Christmas**

TITLE: **Born for Burial**

HOOK- One of my fav things to do as a dad: sneak into a room when my kids are doing something they shouldn't

XMAS= God has entered the room...and it is bad, we've made a mess!

Don't answer this question out loud, I know you know the answer, but I want us to think this through:

Q: Should God coming to earth be good news or bad news?

It SHOULD be bad news! Think about it; God entered the room, to find you in your sin!

How many times did we have thoughts we shouldn't have had this week?

Lust, Envy, Hidden Resentment, Hate, Pride

How many times were you disrespectful to people made in the image of God?

Spouse; Children; Coworker; People in traffic;

Public figures that you will never meet but find so easy to curse

How many times did we fail and did the things we said we would no longer do?

It should be a terrifying thought, that God has come down to us!

Hebrews 4:13 No creature is hidden from him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

You want a paradox, try this one on for size:

The message that the Holy God has come to a sinful people is... GOOD NEWS!

Luke 2:8-11 In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: ¹¹Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Many people in our day have a negative view of God. They believe He is judgmental, distant, an egomaniac.

If that were the case, God's appearing would be our worst nightmare.

The Christmas story challenges the notion that God is distant; that God is unloving; that God is anything but good.....

but it does so while simultaneously exposing our darkness

Here's what you need to understand:

Sin has a name....

YOURS

You are responsible...and accountable for your part in the rebellion against God

The gospel is the shocking news that Jesus took your sin and put His name on it.

He claimed ownership over your every fault and rebellion and took the brunt of its consequences

Kevin DeYoung- *"We must always remember that union with Christ is possible because of the Son's descent to earth, not because of our ascent into heaven. The basis of our union with Christ is Christ's union with us in the incarnation. He became one with us so that we might become one **with Him.**"*

That's what Christmas, the incarnation of Jesus is all about- that He came to claim ownership over the sin that was killing us and damning us

Notice the emphasis in Matthew's narrative:

Matthew: 1:18-21 The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹So her husband, Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly. ²⁰But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him **Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.**"

On several occasions: My daughter's room= a mess everywhere; my daughters= a mess themselves
I walk in an exercise my dissatisfaction and frustration and anger;
I let them know how unhappy I was with them;
and that they could not leave their messy room until they cleaned it up

that's what most of us would expect from God ("*prove yourselves*")
because we know ourselves- we know we're all jacked up inside

God saw the mess that we had made.... the mess that we had become, and His reaction, His response, was not to *move away* from us, **but to move towards us!** (Immanuel prophecy)

The Message of the Manger:

There is NOWHERE God will not go to save you

Max Lucado- *"The moment Mary touched God's face is the moment God made His case: there is no place He will not go to save us. If He is willing to be born in a barnyard, then expect Him to be at work anywhere—including on a cross."*

There is nowhere God will not go to save you

The deb of your sin before God was so great, that the only thing greater with which to settle that debt was for God Himself to pay it with His own life as a ransom for yours.

It was tremendously costly- yet He was willing to go there

John 12:27 "Now my soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save me from this hour?
But that is why I came to this hour.

Augustine- *"Man's maker was made man that He, Ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother's breast; that the Bread might hunger, the Fountain thirst, the Light sleep, the Way be tired on its journey; that Truth might be accused of false witnesses, the Teacher be beaten with whips, the Foundation be suspended on wood; that Strength might grow weak; that the Healer might be wounded; that Life might die."*

If He went to the cross to die for you,
You think a bad day will deter Him from loving you?
Just because you were a bad mom or a bad dad in that moment?
Just because you realize now that for the past 15 years you have been a terrible spouse?

Tell me, where is He unwilling to go for you?

He knew all things before He extended grace to you!! He was aware of your every lie, failure, sin.
What could you possibly do that would cause Him to turn away now?

This is the great hope of Christmas!

*J.I. Packer- "The Christmas message is that there is **hope** for a ruined humanity—hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory..."*

There is hope for you sinner; there is hope for you sufferer;
There is hope for your future; there is hope for your addiction;
there is hope beyond your mistakes and backsliding;
there is hope for your marriage; there is hope for your relationships;
there is hope for your problems and uncertainties-
because if God became a babe and was later killed and buried for us- what is there to hinder His hand of hope towards us?

He was born for burial...but he was buried for resurrection!

Now, odds are that most of you have heard all this before.

Christmas has lost it's "magic".....let me help us get it back-
After we have been walking with Jesus for some time, here's what tends to happen in our thinking.

Yes, we know that Jesus was born to free us from our sins... BUT...

the more I walk with him, the longer I am a Christian, the more sin I seem to find in me,
the closer I get to him, the more exposed I feel. (grace feels like a burden, not a gift)

And so, deep, deep, deep in our psyche we conclude: **God must be pretty fed up with me at this point.**

We believe He forgives sin... but what is His disposition towards me when I still sin??

Jesus can love you regardless of your faults, not because your sin isn't serious, but because it's settled

The judge of righteousness saw your sin and decreed mercy
The All-knowing God remembers your sin no more
Because, the holy One became the human One
And the faithful Son became forsaken with sin

With this in mind, we can echo the sentiment of Mary when she burst out in song:

Luke 1:46-47 And Mary said: My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior

This Xmas: behold your sin, behold His claim over it and you,
MAGNIFY the Lord and REJOICE in your Savior

I'll end with the words of a song from one of my favorite bands:

Come and Stand Amazed by The Modern Post

*Come and stand amazed you people,
see how God has reconciled,
See His plans of love accomplished,
See His gift, this newborn child.*

*See the Mighty, weak and tender,
See the Word who now is mute.
See the Sovereign without splendor,
See the Fullness destitute.*

*See how humankind received him;
See him wrapped in swaddling bands,
Who as Lord of all creation
Rules the wind by his commands.*

*See him lying in a manger
Without sign of reasoning;
Word of God to flesh surrendered,
He is wisdom's crown, our King.*

*O Lord Jesus, God incarnate,
Who assumed this humble form,
Counsel me and let my wishes
To your perfect will conform.*

*Light of life, dispel my darkness,
Let your frailty strengthen me;
Let your meekness give me boldness,
Let your burden set me free.*

*Oh, Emmanuel, my Savior,
Let Your death be life for me!
Let Your death be life for me!
Let Your death be life for me!*

BULPEN-

Jesus is not a fictional character; He's not even a mere historical figure; He is the good news of God!

Jesus is the Paradox of Christmas:

He is the good **Shepherd** who cares for His flock (John 10:11)

He is the **Lamb** of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29)

Jesus was born to die

Jesus died to resurrect

Jesus came back to life to bring us to life

Here's how that (Jesus willing to be born to be crucified) translates to us

1- the stain and grip of your sin is that penetrative, that immersed, that impeded and contaminated, that vile, that heinous that repulsive, that the only possible way to get the debt of sin off, is for a greater price to be paid- Jesus

2-because Jesus incarnated and died and resurrected, He's not deterred or put off when you sin

When you....xyz

He's still there....not because your sin isn't serious, but because he settled it.

Sin can no longer separate us from God if we are in Christ Jesus

One day every tear will be wiped, every wrong made right...

The agony we face now, is a special opportunity to experience God in such a way we will not be able to in eternity

You may know the God who sits in the mud, in the pit with you...in the manger

Jesus doesn't just sympathize with us in our weakness;

He doesn't just receive the punishment for our weakness;

He overcomes our weakness

He adopted our sin so that we might adopt His holiness

Spurgeon- *Bethlehem's babe had Golgotha's cross in view.*

Athanasius of Alexandria- *"He became what we are so that He might make us what He is."*

Augustine of Hippo- *"The Lord of all entered into life through a lowly virgin, that He might die on behalf of the proud."*

Martin Luther- *"Christ took our sins and the sins of the whole world as well as the Father's wrath on His shoulders, and He has drowned them both in Himself so that we are thereby reconciled to God and become completely righteous."*

Consider this paradox- **Christ Himself drowned in sin and wrath, and drowned them in Himself**

Scholars in the field of biblical archeology believe there is good reason to think that Jesus was born in a cave

Which means He laid in a cave wrapped in cloth at His birth, He laid in a cave wrapped in cloth at His death

Joel P. Kramer- “So how exactly does God being born human save us? Like Isaac on Mount Moriah, what mankind needed was a substitute sacrifice. Sinful man needed someone sinless to die in his place. **God is sinless, eternal, immortal, and indestructible, and he cannot die. So in order to save the world, God had to take for himself a human body that was capable of dying.** Jesus was born in order to die... and yet, three days after He died, He would rise from the dead.”

Son of David by Ghost Ship-

*I can not leave this gate
Since I can not see my way
But I can stand and call His name
No, I could never leave this gate
But I will stand and shout His name
And I will count on His grace
Son of David, have mercy on me
Son of David, have mercy on me
Son of David, I want to see
Son of David, have mercy*

Luke 1:52 he has toppled the mighty from their thrones
and exalted the lowly.

Philippians 2:5-11 Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,

⁶who, existing in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God
as something to be exploited.

⁷Instead he emptied himself
by assuming the form of a servant,
taking on the likeness of humanity.
And when he had come as a man,

⁸he humbled himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death—
even to death on a cross.

⁹For this reason God highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow—
in heaven and on earth
and under the earth—

¹¹and every tongue will confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

John MacArthur- *Did you know there is no way that Old Testament prophets could ever have understood the fullness of the coming Messiah just on the virtue of the apparent contradiction in their own prophecies? For example, a prophet would sit down, and the Holy Spirit would inspire him, and he would write that there was coming a conqueror who would rule the world, who would be the Savior and Deliverer of men. The same prophet would sit down later and write about a Man of Sorrow, who was lonely and rejected.*

The prophet would write a King of glory, a King of heaven, the eternal Savior, the desire of all nations. And then a prophet would sit down and write that there was no beauty that men would desire Him; and that He was a servant, bloody, suffering, crucified, and dead. How do you resolve these things? The prophet would write that He would come in flaming fire to take vengeance on His enemies. The other prophet would write that He would come preaching peace. And so the prophets couldn't even understand what they themselves wrote about Christmas. It was a paradox to them.

John the Baptist was caught in this paradox-

Matthew 3:2 God's word came to him. To say what?

John 3:3; 7-17 proclaimed a baptism of repentance/ produce fruit consistent of repentance
John expected a fearful judge, a powerful ruler, a glorious king. And then Jesus showed up. Being merciful and loving and healing the sick and calling people to himself.

Matthew 11:2-3 Now when John heard in prison what the Christ was doing, he sent a message through his disciples ³and asked him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus is the paradox of Christmas

"Instead of military might, they got the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9). Instead of slaying their enemies, He dies for them (John 3:16 Romans 5:10). Instead of raising the religious leaders to higher places of authority, he raises the weak and marginalized."