

A Closer Look at The Christ of Christmas

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[0 : 00] In December of 1903, after many failed attempts, the Wright brothers were successful in getting their flying machine off the ground.

You can imagine what excitement they felt to actually fly for the first time. Well, they, as quick as they could, shared that news with their sister in this telegraphed message.

We have actually flown 120 feet. We'll be home for Christmas. Well, Catherine, their sister, she was excited and wanted to get that word out.

And so she hurried to the editor of her local newspaper and showed him that telegram, showed him the message. But he was busy and he just glanced at it and said, how nice, the boys will be home for Christmas.

He totally missed the big news that she was trying to communicate to him. He missed that they had flown, that man had flown for the first time.

[1 : 25] I wonder how many people will totally miss the big news of Christmas as they do all the different good things they enjoy during this holiday season.

The big news of Christmas is that God sent his son into this world to save sinners like us.

Hopefully, we will read something in the Bible related to this good news, this big news during the Christmas season.

And if we will, we can't help but see it. It comes through loud and clear. I want you to look at two examples at the beginning of this time. In Matthew's gospel, the angel of the Lord said this to Joseph, she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Then in Luke's gospel, the angel Gabriel explained to Mary who Jesus was.

[2 : 40] He will be great and be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

And of his kingdom, there will be no end. It's true that the Christmas story is found in just a small section of the Bible.

I mean, the true Christmas story, the events that took place in Bethlehem before and during right after the birth of Jesus, they're only found in Matthew's gospel and in Luke's gospel.

But what we need to remember as God's people, the Christmas story in the Bible really began hundreds of years earlier.

It begins in the Old Testament. Old Testament prophets wrote about a coming Savior, the Messiah.

[3 : 46] One of the best known prophecies is found in Isaiah chapter 9. And I'd like for you to turn with me to that chapter. And what we're going to look at this morning is something that is very familiar to most Christians because we sing about this every year at Christmas.

writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah described the power and glory of the coming Messiah, the coming Savior.

In chapter 9, what we're going to look at is verses 6 and 7. What I want us to see is the special names or titles that are used to describe this coming Savior.

Our children's choir did a great job in telling us about those special names when they sung last week. How many of you children's choir kids are in here this morning? Raise your hand high.

There's some scattered out through here. Well, you did a great job last Sunday morning in singing about who Jesus is. You better bundle up tonight because it's going to be cold.

[5 : 05] But we're going to listen for you to sing and tell us about, tell people maybe who've not heard this good news about Jesus. You're going to sing that tonight. And then again next Sunday morning.

Well, I want us to read from Isaiah chapter 9, verses 6 and 7. About who Jesus really is.

By these special names or titles that Isaiah assigns to Him. Isaiah chapter 9, verses 6, 7 rather, beginning in verse 6.

You know those names, don't you?

This is where they originate. It says in verse 7, Of the increase of His government and of peace, there will be no end.

[6 : 20] 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. This prophecy explains how the coming Messiah that we know, as we read back into the New Testament, is Jesus Christ.

This prophecy tells how He will reign in power, in glory. It says the government shall be upon His shoulder, and that it will be His government.

Now, that prophecy is only partially fulfilled at this time. Think with me like this. When Jesus came into the world as a baby, in that stable in Bethlehem, when Jesus came the first time like that, grew up and taught and did the things that we read about in the New Testament in the Gospels, when He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, and rose triumphantly from death, and then ascended into heaven, and then sent His Holy Spirit to indwell all of His people, that was Jesus coming in power, in glory, in power, in glory, to reign, to rule, listen to this, in the lives of those who believe in Him, in the lives of those in whom God has called to faith in Him.

This is like the first coming of Jesus. It's sort of like a secret or invisible kingdom that He has established, that God has established.

[8 : 46] We, as Christians, are citizens of that kingdom. God is our God.

Christ is our Savior and our Lord. But Christ rules in our lives us who believe in Him.

People outside the church, the real church, the people of God, they don't acknowledge Jesus as King. They don't acknowledge God's rule, God's authority.

That's just for us right now. But one day in the future, Scripture promises Jesus Christ will return to this world and there will be nothing secret or invisible about it.

When He comes back, He will come back and everyone will see Him. They'll see Him coming as the one who has ultimate authority and power.

[9 : 56] He'll come in great glory. And then, He will establish His kingdom visibly in this world and as Paul tells us in Philippians chapter 2, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That's what's going to happen when Jesus comes the second time and He will truly rule and reign not just over His people, not just over people who believe in Him, but He will rule and reign over the entire world.

The authority and rule of Jesus Christ over our lives now and over all lives in the future far exceeds the authority and rule of all earthly leaders.

and what Isaiah is doing in these special names or titles for this Messiah in verse 6, what Isaiah is doing is helping us to understand the unique features, power, and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ.

these names help us to understand why He can be trusted to rule over our lives now and for all eternity.

[11 : 25] So as we go through this, looking at wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, I want you to think, do I know Jesus in this way in my life?

Make it very personal. Let's begin. Jesus Christ rules with wisdom. He is wonderful counselor.

The King James Version separates the word wonderful and counselor with a comma as if they are two. Well, most translations keep them together and that makes the most sense because it makes this a two-word description of Jesus just like the other three.

As wonderful counselor, the idea is that Jesus Christ has supernatural wisdom. And you know, during His earthly ministry, the way that He related to people, the things that He taught, He demonstrated that He is wonderful counselor by the wise teaching and counsel He gave to people. Jesus always knew exactly what to say and how to say it to people. I mean, if you stop and think about it, most of you, you've read the Gospels.

[13 : 00] Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You've read how Jesus interacted with people. For example, when Jesus reached out to genuine seekers, I mean, people who came to Him wanting sincerely to learn about Him.

For example, like the man Nicodemus. It says in John chapter 3 that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He was a religious leader. It doesn't say why He came by night. Maybe He was afraid of

being seen.

We don't know. Maybe it was just the end of a long day. But Nicodemus came inquiring of Jesus, trying to learn more about Him. And Jesus got His attention and responded to questions like this. Nicodemus, unless a person is born again or born from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Now that was something that intrigued Nicodemus.

He was confused. He didn't understand. Maybe He grinned when He looked at Jesus after Jesus said that. He said, Jesus, you try and say a person's got to enter his mother's womb and be born again.

[14:17] You know, something ridiculous. And Jesus went on just to explain in a little bit different words. And the point I'm trying to make is Jesus knew how to relate to Him in a way that got His attention, held His interest, made Him think.

And it worked. Because at the end of John's gospel, when Jesus is crucified, His body is taken down from the cross, Nicodemus joins with Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus' body for the tomb.

All the other disciples had left. Nicodemus, at that time, surfaces as one who believes. We know how Jesus demonstrated His wisdom and the way that He dealt with hurting people.

You know, time and time again, people who were in great need, blind people, lame people, all kinds of issues, they came to Jesus and they found compassion in Him.

Someone who looked, not just their physical issues or physical problems, but He looked deeper at the spiritual issues. That's why He would say things like to the person He healed who was crippled, in addition to rise, take up your pallet and walk, He's talked about having their sins forgiven.

[15:44] And then, Jesus demonstrates great wisdom. He knew how to relate to people of all walks of life when those religious hypocrites came and tried to trick Him, tried to trip Him up, tried to make Him look bad.

Jesus always knew their heart, knew the lack of sincerity, knew their hypocrisy, and a lot of times He called them out. He called them just point-blank liars, children of the devil, people who weren't concerned about really the truth.

They were just concerned about themselves, about their position and prominence. Jesus taught in such a way that those who heard Him said things like this that you read about in John 7, no one ever spoke like this man.

When people heard Jesus, they heard someone who was different, someone who embodied the wisdom of God. Jesus was able to speak and teach like He did because He is the source of all truth.

He embodies truth as He said in John 14, 6 of the familiar passage. Jesus said, I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Me.

[17:10] It's because Jesus is the ultimate source of truth and wisdom that you and I need to turn to Him to find ultimate answers in our own lives.

That's the only way we're going to be able to make sense out of the confusion and chaos and contradictions that we find all around us in this world.

I want you to think right now. The Lord Jesus Christ knows you. He knows your life situation right now that you're dealing with. No one else may know but He knows.

He knows what you need and He knows the best way to meet your needs. And that may not always be the way you want to meet. Jesus always gives wise counsel to those who will humbly come to Him, listen to Him, and be willing to obey Him.

that means you. I hope that you have already, if not that you will experience this wonderful counselor who will help you with His wisdom in ways that will make a difference in your life.

[18:34] Christ rules with wisdom, Isaiah is telling us. We also see that Jesus Christ rules with power. He is mighty God.

As a wonderful counselor, Jesus tells us what to do. As mighty God, He supplies us with the power to be able to do it. You know, human counsel can only go so far.

haven't you talked to people about various problems in their life? And in many of those situations the solution was obvious.

You see, every one of us in this room, we are counselors to some people. There's some people who would never dream of talking to a pastor or actually going to a licensed real counselor.

But they talk to you. You are the person that some people go to to get help with serious issues in their life.

[19 : 36] And sometimes when they go to you, sometimes you just sort of think to yourself, I don't know what to do. Sometimes they come to you and they ask questions and you have the answer.

The problem is, you have an answer but you can't give them the power that they need to change. Jesus Christ has the power to bring about change in our lives, in any person's life because He is mighty God.

He is God in the flesh. That's a part of what the whole Christmas story is. Jesus Christ has always existed as the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity.

He came into this world as a man, a baby born in Bethlehem. He is God incarnate.

That means God in the flesh. John tells us about that in his first chapter, verses 1 and 14. Look at it. In the beginning was the Word, he's describing Jesus.

[20 : 47] And the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus, on one occasion, trying to clear up some confusion among His disciples, in particular with Thomas, He just couldn't grasp, you know, who is God?

Who are you even, Jesus? Jesus said to him, whoever has seen me has seen the Father because I'm God in the flesh. I've come that you might be able to see what God looks like in terms of Him coming into the world as a man because Jesus is mighty God.

I want you to understand, He has the power to forgive sin. guilt is a lot of people's real burden. It could be yours this morning.

It could be that things are not good in your life because they're sin and you're weighted down by guilt.

[22 : 04] I want you to understand that that weight can be lifted if you're not a Christian by putting your faith and trust in Jesus as you turn from your sin, as you admit it, forsake it.

God can forgive you. He will forgive you. It may be that you are a Christian but you, there's some things in your life or a thing in your life that you've just rebelled against God about and the result is there's a lot of guilt, maybe some anger and frustration.

I want you to understand that Scripture says if you will confess your sins, God is faithful and just to forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Our Lord has the power to rebuild a person's life. When I was growing up in the community that I lived in, there was a man who was known by everyone as the community drunk.

drunk. Now, he was such a guy, lived such a life, no one thought of him as an alcoholic because that was too good a word for this guy.

[23 : 18] He just looked and acted, treated people as just a drunk. No one respected him.

No one thought anything positive about him because of the way he mistreated his family, because of the way he couldn't be trusted.

He did a lot of funny as well as foolish things. One of the stories of the community that everyone knew, on one occasion, he was driving drunk.

he was driving real slow and he went out, it was on the Clemson Highway. He ran into a highway patrolman.

It wasn't a major wreck, the patrolman saw him coming, just couldn't get out of the way. He was going slow and he hit the highway patrolman's car. The patrolman got out of the car and came up to his window and I can't tell you to use all the words that he used, but he basically looked at the patrolman and said, you sure got here in a hurry.

[24 : 29] That was the guy. But somewhere in his 60s, after I'd grown up and gone away, my dad told me about him.

Sometime in his 60s, he was saved. And my dad said, his life just totally changed.

180 degree turn. For years, all I ever saw in him was just somebody who looked like he'd lived a hard life.

He looked it in his face, unkempt, bent over, sort of. Not just when he was drinking, slurred kind of speech.

But this is the honest truth. When God saved him, he stood up straight. The countenance on his face was changed.

[25 : 31] He became a more articulate person. And everybody noticed it. Everybody was just taken back by it. And after he demonstrated the reality of his faith, of his relationship with the Lord, after several years, his church actually elected him to be a deacon in that church.

And nobody thought it was funny. Nobody thought it was a joke. He became in that community a testimony of God's grace and God's power.

power. And what I want you to hear in this story is, the Lord Jesus Christ, mighty God, he has the power to change any person's life.

But you've got to come to him on his terms. Confess your need for a Savior. Not just trust in him, but submit to his authority as the mighty God over your life.

Jesus Christ rules with wisdom, rules with power. But we also see in these titles, Jesus Christ rules lovingly and sovereignly.

[26 : 52] He is everlasting father. And don't be confused by that word father. The everlasting father title is not intended to cause us to think that Jesus Christ is the same person as God the father.

That he's God the son and he's God the father. That wouldn't make sense. In the Old Testament, what this means is kings were sometimes called fathers of the people that they ruled.

God the ESV study Bible explains this, I think, very well. It says that as everlasting father, he is a benevolent protector, which is the task of the ideal king and is also the way God himself cares for his people.

It should be comforting to every one of us, we're Christians, to know that our Lord is our benevolent protector. He's our loving, sovereign Savior who always works for God's glory and our good.

Now you know, hopefully you know, that doesn't mean everything as God works in our life, that doesn't mean everything will be easy. It doesn't mean that everything will always work out the way that we want it to.

[28 : 21] But our Lord can be trusted to take care of us. He can be trusted to never let anything take us out of his protecting hand, just as Jesus promised.

Look again at John's gospel, this time the 10th chapter. Jesus says, my sheep, that's how he's describing his people, people who believe in him. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

I and the Father are one. The Lord's promising us here that no matter what, we can count on him. We can count on our heavenly Father to take care of us. That is, we who are his sheep. We who follow him.

[29 : 35] What that means is we need to make sure we're one of them. Isaiah is telling us that the Christ of Christmas, he rules with wisdom, he rules with power, he rules with loving protection.

And there's one more way. Jesus Christ rules in peace. He's the Prince of Peace. And I want to come back to that, either on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, and just focus on him being the Prince of Peace.

You know, we all have our Christmas traditions. Some of us have already started them, and we're going to be participating in them throughout this holiday season.

Some of you have put up your Christmas tree already, or you will, because you always do it on a certain day in a certain way. Some of you have already or will enjoy going out shopping with a certain family member or a certain friend.

You do it every year together at Christmas. Some of you, one of your Christmas traditions is you do things around the house with a Christmas CD on. Or maybe you like to watch Christmas specials on TV, hopefully that are more edifying than something like Christmas vacation.

[30 : 59] Now, a lot of us, we like to gather with family members. You know, you're going to meet with certain, one set of family, one side of the family, maybe, on Christmas Eve, another side of the family on Christmas Day.

We all in this room, we have some Christmas traditions that really are big events to us. And that's good.

Every family, every member of every family should have Christmas traditions that mean something to them. But let's be careful that we do not miss the real big event of Christmas.

The coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to save His people from their sins. The names or titles of Jesus that we see in Isaiah, they help us to understand that our Savior is able to meet our deepest needs as He provides us with wise counsel, power to change, loving protection, and perfect peace.

Two questions. How have you responded to the Christ of Christmas? Jesus Christ? If you're not a Christian, if you've not experienced the salvation that God freely gives through faith in Jesus, I want to invite you right now to turn to Him.

[32 : 43] That means you've got to admit that you are a sinner separated from God by your sin and be willing to admit that, change your mind about living that way, grieve over your sin, turn from that and turn to Christ, trusting that when He died on the cross, He took your punishment.

He paid the penalty for your sins. Put your faith in Him. Call upon Him to save you. Surrender your life to Him now. How have you responded to Christ, the Christ of Christmas?

If you are a Christian, if you have experienced His salvation, I want to encourage you this day, this Sunday, December the 11th, make sure you are honoring Him as the Lord of your life.

not just during Christmas season, but every day that you live. Make sure that this Christ of Christmas, that He's also the Lord of your life.

Is He? And if He's not, would you come back to Him now? Let's pray together. Father, help us this morning to understand just what a great, powerful, loving, wise Savior Jesus is.

[34 : 22] Show us, Father, how we should respond to the Lord Jesus. Give us the wisdom and the power, the desire, the ability to respond the way that we as individuals need to.

You just pray now. You listen to the Lord. You respond to Him as He speaks, as He shows you what you need to do. If I could pray with you or help you here at the front, I will be here.

I would love to do that. Let's just listen to the Lord and obey Him now.