

The Original Christmas Miracle

11-30-22

1. The Miracle of the Moment

I. Slide1 Intro: *The Miracle of the Moment*

- A. In this **4-Part Series**, taking us up to Christmas (on Wed nights) is entitled: **The Original Christmas Miracle**. Our 1st one will be: *The Miracle of the Moment*.
 1. Followed by **The Miracle of the Message/Method/Manger**.
- B. C.S.Lewis (Mere Christianity), *The son of God became a **man**, to enable **men** to become sons of God.*
- C. **Outline**: We'll first look at **The Moment & then The Miracle**.

II. Slide2 **THE MOMENT** (Galatians 4:1-7) **READ**

A. Slide3a **Jesus Coming Was At The Perfect Time**

1. **It was a right time theologically**. Moses' law had done its work in preparing people. (4:1-3)
2. **Jesus, his time was always perfect**. Many times in the gospel he would say, *my time has not yet come*.
 - a) Paul says in Rom.5:6 *at just the right time Jesus died for the ungodly*.
 - b) **And** His Res was predicted on the 3rd day, *just at the right time*.

B. **Do you hear the precision of the timing of God?** Trust in his timing folks.

C. **Slide3b Let's Connect 2 Phrases**: Until the date set by his father (2). **And**, **But when the fullness of time had come**, God (the father) sent forth His Son.

1. As a human father chose the time for his child to become an adult son, **so** the Heavenly Father chose the time for the coming of Christ, to make provision for peoples transition from bondage under law to spiritual Sonship. This **time** was when the **Roman civilization** had brought **peace** (pax romana) **and a road system** which facilitated travel (pretty safe also as *Romans Legions* guarded them); with a **Grecian civilization** provided a

language, which was adopted as the *lingua franca* of the empire; when the Jews had proclaimed **monotheism**, and **the Messianic hope** in the synagogues of the Mediterranean world. Donald Campbell (BKC)

2. After 1300 years, the Law had done its work, preparing people for Christ, as it held them *under its tutelage* and *in its prison*, so that they longed to be **set free**.

III. Slide4a **THE MIRACLE**

A. When a child is **adopted** or **fostered**, or even brought into a **blended** marriage, often they wonder, *can I or should I call you mom/dad?*

1. Asking, **will they accept me not just into their home but also into their family?** ... there is a big difference!

a) It's important that it is more than a **positional** relationship, but that it is an **experiential** one.

B. Slide4b The great **miracle** about Christmas is that, *"Jesus left glory, came to earth on a rescue mission, to bring us into the family of God"*. That's what Christmas is about. It's intensely personal.

C. Timothy Keller, *"Easter proves Christmas is real."*

1. Paul uses this word for adoption 5x's. And it's always to readers who knew about Roman law: *Romans, Galatians, Ephesians*.
2. The Romans had a history of notorious adoptions. Julius Caesar adopted Octavius, Luke 2:1.
 - a) Imagine for a moment with me that you're *a little Roman orphan*, and Caesar adopts you, saying, *"All of Rome is yours."*
3. Paul draws on this metaphor and explains ... this is what happened to us in the Gospel.
 - a) The only sovereign has said, *This is all yours*. (heirs)
4. Slide4c J.I.Packer *"Adoption is the highest privilege that the Gospel offers"*

D. Slide5a God Had A Plan

1. It was a Trinitarian plan: The Father sent the Son. The Father sent the Spirit of the Son.
2. The Father administrated our adoption. The Son accomplished our adoption. And The Spirit applied it to our hearts.
3. Ephesians actually lets us know that this plan was already together *before foundation of the world.* (1:4,5)
 - a) For some adoption is Plan B. But for God it was Plan A from the beginning.

E. Slide5b What We Believe About Jesus Makes our Faith Unique!

F. Hypostatic Union (the combination of divine & human natures in the single person of Christ)

G. The Athanasian Creed recognized this doctrine and affirmed its importance, stating that *"He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time; and he is human from the essence of his mother, born in time; completely God, completely human, with a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father as regards divinity, less than the Father as regards humanity. Although he is God and human, yet Christ is not two, but one. He is one, however, not by his divinity being turned into flesh, but by God's taking humanity to himself. He is one, certainly not by the blending of his essence, but by the unity of his person. For just as one human is both rational soul and flesh, so too the one Christ is both God and human."*

H. Slide6 The oldest known icon of Christ Pantocrator (ruler of all) at Saint Catherine's Monastery. The 2 different facial expressions on either side emphasize Christ's **dual nature** as both divine and human.

1. We don't believe Jesus is just one teacher amongst many other religious options.
2. We believe Jesus, is in a category all by Himself.
3. He really was born in Bethlehem and yet He really was pre-existent.

4. He really did get hungry in His humanity, **and** He really did feed the multitude.
5. He really did go to sleep in his humanity, **and** He really did calm the storm
6. He really did get thirsty **and** he is the living water.
7. He really did grieve at Lazarus' tomb, **and** He really did raise him from the dead.
8. He really did get nailed to the cross in agony **and** on the 3rd day he really did step out into the sunlight, **as** the **vindicated** **and** the **victorious Son of God**.

I. **Slide7a He moves from Christology to Soteriology** in vs.5.

J. Jesus lived a life we couldn't live (that's *under the law*). **And** died the death we should've died (to *redeem* those under the law).

K.(6) Ok, God is in your **mind** ... you know about Him ... **but what about His Spirit living today in your heart?**

1. Just as the **Father** sent forth His **Son** into the World, So **He** sent the **Spirit of His Son into our hearts**.¹

L. **Abba** – more associated with **intimacy** *than* infancy.

1. **Before that**, it had been much *too familiar & personal*. **But now** if you are *in Christ* you enter into this **intimate** relation w/God **& inherit** the promises of God.

M. **Slide7b Redemption to Adoption**.

N.(7) **God has freed us from slavery** **and** brought us into a **family**.

1. **In the Roman Empire**, people were either **slaves** **or** they were **free**. These 2 statuses were central to the **social** and the **legal** fabric of the Roman world. **Unlike** in recent history, **slavery in Rome** was not based on race or ethnicity; anyone could become a slave, **and** nearly any slave

¹ Shepherd's Notes; pg.54

could become free. Consequently, the Roman world was composed of these 2 groups of people who lived & worked together & were distinguishable by their social status.²

2. Adoption is about **rescuing** children who are *in terrible situations*.
3. Paul uses this metaphor, and reminds us **that we** have been lifted out of this dark situation, **and we** are loved and brought into this household.
4. **And** He adopted us not because we were *cute*, **but** only because of *His mercy, not our merit*.

O. **Slide7c He has changed our status ... you are a son/daughter!**

1. **Not a believer yet** - *do you want to be adopted?*
2. **You are a believer** - meditate on your adoption, *pray from that place*.
 - a) This should crystalize our identity question. **I am not** how much \$ I make. **I am not** how well I perform. **I am not** how well I'm known. **I am not** where I'm from. **I am a son/daughter of God** (& we are brothers & sisters).
3. If we have **experienced** this grace we should **display** this grace to others.
 - a) Which should motivate a life of *compassion, generosity, hospitality*.
 - b) A life of *caring for the orphan, the widow, the stranger, the broken*.
4. May the doctrine of adoption, **not be** an abstract idea, **but** actually **saturate** into your whole life **and spill over** into acts of compassion.

P. Keywords: freedom, gospel, relationship.

² Faith Life Study Bible. Logos.