

“The Christ of Christmas”

(Isaiah 9:6-7)

Introduction

- In the Peanuts comic strip, Snoopy (the dog) is sometimes found writing a new novel. He always begins with the same words, “It was a dark and stormy night.” On one occasion as he pecked out those opening words on his tiny typewriter, Lucy happened by and offered her unsolicited advice. She said, “That’s a terrible way to begin a story. It’s so trite. ‘Once upon a time’ ... That’s the way all the good stories begin. Do that. Begin your story with ‘Once upon a time.’” Lucy walked away and Snoopy sat still for a frame and then began typing a new first line to his novel: “Once upon a time, it was a dark and stormy night.”
- This aptly describes the setting for our passage this morning. For, in the ninth chapter of the book of Isaiah, we find God’s people shrouded in spiritual and political darkness. It is not difficult for us – at least, to some degree – to sympathize with their situation. Their nation was in conflict and disarray. They were seemingly always on the brink of war, including civil war. Immorality and idolatry were rampant. Even “God’s people” were ungodly, rebelling against God, and facing God’s judgment for sin. To put it tritely, “It was a dark and stormy night.”
- During the time of Isaiah (around 700 B.C. [he prophesied from 739-681 B.C.]), Israel was a divided kingdom – the northern kingdom of “Israel” and the southern kingdom of “Judah.” God called Isaiah as a prophet to southern kingdom, and specifically – in the passage before us this morning – to the wicked king Ahaz (Is.7:1 ff). In the context of Isaiah chapter nine, both the northern and southern kingdoms were plagued by evil leadership and ungodly people. Consequently, their cities were in ruins, their land overrun by their enemies, and all hope seemed to be lost. This darkness covered God’s people like a thick blanket of misery and despair.

Isa 8:20-22 ~ “To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. ²¹They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. ²²And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.”

- At this point in the book of Isaiah, we see God’s people – particularly the southern kingdom of “Judah”, and (the evil) king Ahaz (735-715 B.C.) – suffering under the threat of an Assyrian invasion. For the northern kingdom (“Israel”) had arrogantly formed an alliance with Syria against Judah, and as a consequence for their arrogance God allowed the Assyrians to devastate and occupy the northern kingdom. So, the Assyrian army – with its “scorched earth” military campaign – was making its way to Judah (the southern kingdom). God promised to protect Judah, but their evil king (Ahaz) spurned Isaiah’s prophesy, scorned God’s mercy, refused to trust the Lord, and rebelled against God’s will (by trying to bribe the Assyrians [with the gold from the temple; 2Kngs.16:8]).

God would therefore use the Assyrians – not the imminent attack from Israel and Syria – to discipline Judah. The Assyrians not only defeated the alliance between Israel and Syria (the northern kingdom), but they also brought destruction to the southern kingdom of Judah (Is.8:5-8). The Assyrians were God’s rod of discipline for His people, and the consequences for their unfaithfulness were devastating.

- However, even though Judah’s king (Ahaz) was wicked and unrepentant, God promised that the Assyrian invasion would not ultimately wipeout His people – for God will not forsake nor forget His promises. God’s salvific promise to His people comes through His promised Messiah! Though God would discipline His people for their disobedience and unfaithfulness, He would not remain steadfast to the covenant He made. By His sovereign love and saving grace, God would bring His people out of darkness and into His wonderful light (1Pet.2:9; Lk.1:79; Jn.1:1-5).

Isa 9:1-5 ~ “But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

³You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. ⁴For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.” (see Is.7:3-7)

➤ In Matthew’s Gospel, we find that God’s Messiah (Christ) is Jesus:

Matt 4:12-17 ~ “Now when [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – ¹⁶the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.’ [Is.9:1-2]

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

➤ The prophet Isaiah is replete with Messianic prophecies – that is, prophecies concerning the person and work of the Christ (both “Messiah” [Hb.] and “Christ” [Gk.] mean “the anointed or chosen one”; see Jn.1:41; 4:25). There are dozens of references to Isaiah in the New Testament. In the book of Isaiah, we find references to the virgin birth of Christ (7:14), the lineage of Christ (11:1-2), the attributes of Christ (42:1-4), the ministry of Christ (62:1-2), the rejection of Christ (Is.8:14; 53:2-3), the substitutionary death of Christ (Is.53:4-11) – just to name a few.

Throughout the book of Isaiah, in the midst of their immorality and idolatry, is the message of God’s grace and mercy to those who repent. And this is certainly true in the ninth chapter of Isaiah. For the sermon this morning, we are going to focus on the Isaiah’s God-given prophecy concerning identity and authority of the Messiah. We find this prophecy, written almost 750 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, in the ninth chapter of the book of Isaiah (c. 720s b.c.).

➤ It is in this historical context – the dark and dire days of God’s people – that through the prophet Isaiah God spoke the following prophetic words:

Isa 9:6-7 ~ “For 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.”

➤ From these two verses, we can identify three essential elements concerning the birth of Jesus Christ.

A. The Gift (vs.6-7)

➤ Immediately, we see language indicating that the birth of Jesus Christ is a gift that is given: “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given*” (vs.6). The Bible is clear that God did not send His Son into the world, to be our Savior, because we deserved it, and that God’s salvation cannot be earned by good works. This is the crux of the Gospel message: salvation is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

John 3:16 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Rom 6:23 ~ “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom.3:24; 5:15-17)

Rom 8:32 ~ “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

Rom 11:6 ~ “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”

Eph 2:8-9 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (see Eph.2:1-5; 2Tim.1:9; Tit.3:5-7).

➤ No one can merit God’s salvation, for we all are sinners deserving God just and eternal condemnation (Rom.3:10-12, 23; Jn.3:18, 36). This Gift is not a thing or an object, but a Person. It is not a ‘what’ but a ‘who.’ This Gift is none other than the one and only Son of God and the one and only Savior from God – Jesus Christ.

➤ Isaiah 9:6-7 describes this Gift – the gift of the Messiah – in three distinct categories.

1. His Nature

First, we see the nature of the Gift. Isaiah described this a “*a child*” and, more specifically, “*a son*” (vs.6). This is a clear (prophetic) reference to Jesus being the Christ. For each one uniquely explains the two-fold nature of the incarnate Son of God – fully (truly) man and fully (truly) God.

The phrase “*a child is born*” (vs.6) clearly underscores the humanity of Jesus. It is a statement concerning the human birth of Jesus Christ. This of course, is the essence of our Christmas celebration: that in Christ God became a man. When the virgin Mary gave birth to Christ she bore God’s one and only Son wrapped human flesh. Jesus was truly born and therefore He was truly human.

Matt 1:24-25 ~ “When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”

Luke 2:6-7 ~ “And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

Luke 2:11-12 ~ “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” (see Lk.2:52)

This points to the important doctrine of the humanity of Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God. To “incarnate” means to become flesh. Simply put, Christ’s incarnation refers to the Son of God becoming human – being wrapped in human flesh. It is important to note that Jesus’ humanity did not replace His deity or even displace His deity. That is, Jesus was not part God and part human, nor was He only God or only human (He was neither God disguised as a human, or a human with only God-like qualities or abilities).

John 1:1, 14 ~ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh [*ginomai sarx*] and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Gal 4:4 ~ “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law”

Phil 2:5-8 ~ “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form [*morphē*] of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied [*kenōō*] himself, by taking the form [*morphē*] of a servant, being born in the likeness [*homoīōma*] of men. ⁸And being found in human form [*schēma*], he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Jesus was not only human; He was completely (truly) human. He did not merely take the physical nature of a human being, but the full psychological makeup of humanity as well. He felt the full gamut of normal human emotions, all the frailties of being human, and all the vulnerabilities to temptation – except without sin (2Cor.5:21; Heb.4:15; 1Jn.3:5).

Jesus had to be human, in order to live a sinless life; He had to be human to die a sacrificial and substitutionary death for our sins; He had to be human in order to rise from the dead; and He had to be human in order to experience the temptations that we encounter as humans, and do so without sin (Heb.2:14-18; 4:14-16).

In addition, the phrase “*a son is given*” (vs.6) clearly underscores the deity of Jesus. Jesus was not only “*born*” but He also was “*given*.” Jesus was born naturally but He was conceived supernaturally. This is why the birth of Jesus was definitely a (supernatural) miracle. This was a display of the sovereign power of God, but enabling Mary to conceive was not difficult for God. He is the Creator of all things. He who made Adam from dirt, and Eve from a rib, He who created the world out of nothing, is more than able to create life in a woman’s womb.

John 3:16 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Isa 7:14 ~ “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Matt 1:20-25 ~ “But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”

Luke 1:26-38 ~ “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!’ ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’

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. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.’ ³⁸And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.”

While Jesus was fully (truly) human, He was also fully (truly) God. This concept is known as the “hypostatic union.” While deity was veiled by His humanity – divesting Himself of divine rights and abilities (Phil.2:7) – He never ceased to be God or to possess the divine attributes of God.

John 1:1-3, 14 ~ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Not only was the Word (Son) of God with God from all eternity, but Scripture explicitly declares that the Word of God actually is God: “*and the Word was God.*” The fact that this is a reference to the deity of the Son of God is abundantly clear in both the grammar and context of this passage [“was God” not “was a god”]. As the Son of God, Jesus is not half God and half man. He is fully God and fully man. Jesus is not half God, mostly God, or even sometimes God. He is fully God always and forever.

The Son is not merely a reflection of God, or merely similar to God. He is the exact and definitive representation of God’s divine being. Unlike every other human being, Jesus is the full and exact manifestation of God’s divine being. Furthermore, unlike every other human being, Jesus is sinless and therefore unmarred by sin and therefore He is not only the full and exact manifestation of God’s divine being, but also the perfect manifestation of God’s divine nature.

Scripture tells us that in His humanity Jesus willingly divested Himself of some of the divine rights and privileges He had as God in order to be born as a human (Phil.2:6-8), but at no point did He ever cease to be God in any way or to any degree (God retrained, not God reduced). Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God – fully God and fully man.

Col 2:9 ~ “For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (see Col.1:19)

2. His Attributes

Secondly, Isaiah described various attributes concerning the Gift of the Messiah: “... *his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*” (vs.6). These attributes are categorized with four two-word names (in Hebrew). Each name represents an explicit attribute of God’s promised Messiah, who is Jesus Christ.

“Wonderful Counselor”

Although some translations separate these two names (e.g., “*Wonderful, Counselor*”, KJV), it seems as though Isaiah was intentionally giving four names each with two parts. Therefore, the word “Wonderful” here serves as qualifier to the word “Counselor” – giving Christ the title “*Wonderful Counselor*” (vs.6). But this Hebrew word translated “wonderful” (*pele*) means much more than something that is “neat” or “pleasant” (i.e. “that was a wonderful meal”). In its truest sense, this word is descriptive of something that is miraculous, marvelous or wondrous – that which is exceedingly great, extraordinary, or supernatural. Christ is not simply a good counselor or even a really good counselor. He is an infinitely amazing, brilliant and magnificent counselor! Jesus Christ is the omniscient (all-knowing) God.

As the Son of God, Christ has supernatural wisdom to rule as the Messiah. The term “counselor” (*ya’ats*) has the expected meaning of an advisor, instructor or guide. This speaks to Christ’s infinite knowledge of all things – past, present and future. Do you know that Christ knows everything about you? He knows everything you need. He understands both your fears and your dreams. He knows what you have been through, where you are, and where you need to be. He knows all about you. And He knows what is best for you. He is the Answer to every one of your problems. He will never fail you, never forget you, never forsake you (Matt.28:20; Heb.13:5-6). Jesus Christ is the Wonderful Counselor.

“Mighty God”

Not only is Christ our “*Wonderful Counselor*”, He is also the “*Mighty God*” (vs.6). He is not only the one with perfect divine knowledge to give instruction or guidance, but also the one with perfect divine power to act on our behalf, defeat any enemy, and accomplish anything He desires. The word “*Mighty*” (*gibbowr*) describes Christ as exceedingly powerful or strong. Of course, the word “*God*” (*el*) clearly denotes Christ’s deity as God – the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity. Together these words speak to Christ’s infinite power and ability. Jesus Christ is the omnipotent (all-powerful) God.

Christ is almighty, all-powerful God. Nothing is impossible for God. Christ is able to do anything He desires. Meaning, there is nothing that can thwart His plan and there is no one who can defeat Him. Consequently, His plans will always succeed, and His enemies will all be defeated. He is absolutely able to meet any need, solve any problem, settle any issue, guarantee any promise, and conquer any foe. There is nothing – absolutely nothing – that Christ cannot do as God. He is the “*Mighty God*”!

“Everlasting Father”

This could literally be rendered, “father of eternity.” Christ is not only the Son of God, but the father (Author, Creator) of all eternity. This not only affirms the eternality of Christ as God but also describes Him as the Creator of heaven and earth (Heb.1:10-12). While the Son was born in human flesh, as the Christ, He was never created (Jn.1:1,14). From eternity past and through eternity future He has always been God. Jesus Christ has never been created; He has always been Creator God (Col.1:16-17; Heb.1:2).

Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End – the Everlasting Father (cf. Rev.1:8). Jesus Christ, with all His omniscience and omnipotence, is a sovereign protector and provider. All the power of God, and the benevolent care of the Father. He is the one and only Son of God and the Father of all eternity. “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*” (Heb.13:8).

“Prince of Peace”

“Peace” (*šālôm*) is the absence of chaos, conflict, anxiety, or fear. Thus, perfect peace is absolute order, prosperity, blessing, reconciliation, and righteousness. But true peace is not created out of a vacuum. Ultimately, as the “Prince” (*šar*; ruler,) of peace, Jesus will establish peace through His eternal destruction of the devil, condemnation of all who have rejected Him as the Messiah, and His elimination of all evil and sin (Eph.2:14-18). He will ultimately establish eternal prosperity and blessings in His eternal kingdom. But even now, He is the “Prince of Peace” (vs.6). For even now, He reigns as the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords (see Lk.2:13-14; Jn.14:27; 16:33).

✓Illust: “[Christ] offers *peace from God* (Rom.1:7) to all who are the recipients of His grace. He makes *peace with God* (Rom.5:1) for those who surrender to Him in faith. And He brings *the peace of God* (Phil.4:7) to those who walk with Him” (John MacArthur, *The Miracle of Christmas*, p.22).

3. His Sovereignty

The third heading for the Gift of God’s Son is His sovereignty. “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; 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.*” (vs.6-7). The absolute, perfect and infinite reign of Christ will be literally realized in the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy. For Jesus will rule eternally as the Messiah God.

The sovereign authority and power of the Messiah is spoken in terms of “*government*” (vs.6, 7) and “*kingdom*” (vs.7). Both carry the same idea of ruling supremacy. The Messiah here is pictured as “shouldering” “*the government*” (vs.6) and sitting on “*the throne of David*” (vs.7). Jesus is the promised Messiah who will reign on David’s throne forever and ever (2Sam.7:13, 16; Lk.1:32-33; Heb.1:8).

✓Illust: “Ultimately, beloved, this is a political statement, because the One who holds the government of the universe upon His shoulders is not the president of the United States, nor the king of this place, or the president of that place. But the One who reigns over the entire universe is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and the weight of ruling the entire universe will be on this Son’s shoulder. Because the Father gives to His Son all authority on heaven and earth, and puts the weight and the burden of the kingship over the cosmos on the Christ child” (R.C. Sproul; “The Government Shall Be upon His Shoulders”; Dec. 13, 2024).

Christ’s kingdom will have “*no end*” and will continue “*forevermore*” (vs.7). This is two ways of saying (emphasizing) the same thing – that Christ reign is infinite (space/capacity) and eternal (time/longevity). His sovereignty knows no limits and no expiration date.

The sovereign reign of Christ will never end, and never be defeated: “*The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*” (vs.7). The Lord’s “*zeal*” (*qin’ah*) is His passion. His love and/or jealousy for His people (Is.26:11, Zech.1:14; cf. Ex.34:14). The Messiah’s eternal Kingdom is accomplished by the Lord’s relentlessly passionate love for those He has redeemed. God loves His children so much that He sent His Son – to be born of a virgin, to live a perfect life, to die on the cross for your sins, to rise from the dead conquering both sin and death, to ascend back to His right hand – in order to forgive them and bring them into His eternal kingdom forever. Christ came to earth to accomplish this, and He is coming again to establish this for all eternity.

B. The Giver (vs.6)

➤ The second essential element, in Isaiah 9:6-7, concerning the birth of Christ is the Giver. The fact that “*a son is given*” implies that there was a Giver. By very definition, gifts are unearned and do not require reimbursement. As the Divine Giver, God does not give out of obligation or coercion.

John 3:16 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Titus 3:4-6 ~ “But when the goodness [*chrēstotēs*] and loving kindness [*philanthrōpia*] of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy [*eleos*], by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior”

➤ Apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ – His sinless life, His substitutionary/sacrificial death, and His supernatural resurrection – no one could be saved; we all would remain spiritually dead, justly and eternally condemned. Salvation – God’s saving grace – is neither earned nor deserved. It is the gracious (getting what we do not deserve) and merciful (not getting what we do deserve) gift of God through His Son Jesus Christ. It is only through faith in Jesus Christ that a person can be raised to spiritual life unto salvation and spared the just judgment of eternal death. The gift of God’s saving grace indicates that God is the Giver of saving grace.

➤ This is important to note for another reason. Namely, that we worship God for who He is (as the Giver) and not just for the gifts He bestows us on. We must not make the grave mistake of turning the worship of God into a worship of self. If we are not careful, our love for God can be primarily (if not exclusively) motivated by a love for self. That is, we love Him because He is so good to us; we serve Him because He blesses us; we give to God because, in doing so, He gives us more in return. In short, we love the gifts from God more than we love God Himself. Or, to put it another way, to only make much of God because He makes so much of us!

✓ Illust: “The [hypocrite] rejoices in himself; self is the first foundation of his joy: the [true saint] rejoices in God. ... True saints have their minds, in the first place, inexpressibly pleased and delighted with the sweet ideas of the glorious and amiable nature of the things of God. And this is the spring of all their delights, and the cream of all their pleasures. ... But the dependence of the affections of hypocrites is in a contrary order: *they first rejoice ... that they are made so much of by God; and then on that ground, he seems in a sort, lovely to them*” (Jonathan Edwards; quoted in “God is the Gospel” by John Piiper, p.150).

✓ Illust: The following song, however, rightly portrays the Gospel, and rightly declares that true worship is about making much of God; not God making much of us:

*How could I stand here and watch the sun rise; Follow the mountains, where they touch the sky;
Ponder the vastness, and the depths of the sea; And think for a moment, the point of it all was to
make much of me; Cause I'm just a whisper, and You are the thunder and ...*

Chorus:

*I want to make much of You, Jesus; I want to make much of Your love; I want to live today and
give You the praise that You alone are so worthy of; I want to make much of Your mercy; I want to
make much of Your cross; I give You my life take it and let it be used to make much of You*

*And how can I kneel here, and think of the cross; The thorns and the whip and the nails and the
spear the infinite cost; to purchase my pardon, and bear all my shame; to think I have anything
worthy boasting in except for Your name; Cause I am a sinner And You are the Savior and...*

This is Your love, oh, God not to make much of me;

But to send Your own Son so that we could make much of You for all eternity

(“Much of You”; Words and Music: Stephen Curtis Chapman © 2004)

- The truth is this: God is absolutely, infinitely, and eternally worthy of worship – in and of Himself. While we praise and thank God for His goodness to us, we must not worship Him conditioned upon any earthly circumstance or blessing. We are to worship God, first and foremost, for who is and not for what He gives (Job 1:21; 2:10; 13:5; Phil.3:7-8). Everything else attempts to rob God of His glory, which is the essence of idolatry.

C. The recipients (vs.6)

- The third essential element concerning the birth of Christ is the Giver, in this passage is found in the subtle phrase: “*to us*” (vs.6^{x2}). This is an incredible – almost unbelievable – part of the birth of Christ. The one and only Son of God, took on humanity, in order to live a sinless life (the life that we could not live), died on the cross for our sins (the death we deserved to die), and rose from the dead conquering sin and death and Satan forevermore. And He did this for us! We are the beneficiaries of Christ’s redemptive work – His birth, His life, His sufferings, His death, His resurrection!

- We see similar language in the New Testament:

Rom 5:8 ~ “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Eph 5:2 ~ “... as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Titus 2:14 ~ “[Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

1 John 3:16 ~ “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us ...”

- The immediate – most pressing – question here is, “Who is the ‘us’?” Is it all humanity (i.e., universalism)? Is it only the good or religious people (i.e., moralism)? Is it only the Jews? These are important questions as we read, “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given*” (vs.6).

Fortunately, Scripture is abundantly clear that Jesus came to save all who would ever believe. In opposition to what universalism teaches, not everyone will be saved. In opposition to what moralism teaches, no one is good enough or religious enough to be saved. And in opposition to what many of the Jewish leaders believed, salvation is not just for the Jews.

John 1:11-13 ~ “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (1Jn.5:10-12)

John 3:16-18 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ... ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (Rom.5:1-2)

Gal 3:26-29 ~ “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” (see Rom.1:16-7; 3:22-25)

Eph 2:8-9 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

- This, of course, is the greatest Christmas gift. For everyone who truly puts their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be completely forgiven of all their sins, and eternally saved in Christ (Jn.14:6; Acts 4:12). This means You! *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”* (Acts 16:31).

Conclusion

- At Christmas time, we celebrate the birth of our Messiah Jesus Christ. But Christmas is not the whole story. On Christmas we recognize and rejoice in the fact that through the supernatural miracle of the virgin birth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a man – to live and die and rise from the dead in order to free us from our slavery to sin and make us Children of God (Jn.1:12; 1Jn.3:1). Christ’s birth was the beginning of the end for the devil.

Thus, Christmas proclaims that God came to save sinners. Christmas testifies to God’s sovereign and merciful grace for sinners. Christmas shouts that God has made a way for the unrighteous apart from Christ to be righteous in Christ. Christmas declares that (in Christ) God came to earth as a man so that we could one day go to heaven to be with Him for all eternity. Without Christmas (i.e., the birth of Christ), Christ could not have died on the cross for sinners. Without Christmas, there would never be a resurrection. Without Christmas, every person would be forever without forgiveness, forever without hope and forever without God.

- Like a lighthouse on a dark stormy and perilous night, Christmas shines the beacon of God’s love to everyone. The light of God’s salvation has a name: He is Jesus the Christ!

John 8:12 ~ “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (see Jn.1:4-5; 3:19-21)

2 Cor 4:4-6 ~ “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”