

December 18, 2022

The Story of Reality: CHRISTMAS (Week 3) Christmas - Celebrated

Culturally, the pressure to celebrate Christmas is overwhelming for some people because celebratory feelings are not what they are feeling. Consequently, the holiday season can be the most challenging season of all for some people.

Whether it is easy to celebrate this week or difficult to celebrate this week I believe this message might help us, precisely because celebration sometimes is a battle, an everyday battle!!

Every day I am faced with a choice to make, and you are too. What will be my focus today? Will I **CELEBRATE** who God is, what he has done, and will do, or will I let the mundaneness or madness of the world be my focus?

I. God gave you a **PERSONALIZED** and **WRAPPED** gift

God's Christmas gift came wrapped in a person—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you recall how the story of REALITY began?

Genesis 1:1 (NIV) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Now let's compare this with how the story of Jesus began.

*John 1:1–3 (NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was God.** ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

*John 1:14 (NIV) **The Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus is the one called the WORD, and this Jesus, the WORD is the same one who started the Story of REALITY!! Jesus is the main character that the whole story is all about.

John 1:14 is a CHRISTMAS verse. Possibly the most important Christmas verse. Although it is kind of a toss up. **Here's another one.**

Hebrews 10:5–7 (NIV) Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷ Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.’ ”

I highlighted when Jesus said this: when Christ came into the world. **This is a Christmas Verse!** Has anyone ever heard this taught as a Christmas text before?

Jesus Christ who was fully God from eternity past volunteered to come in “a body prepared” for him to complete a rescue mission! The other Christmas verses agree with this!

Matthew 1:21 (NIV) She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

The Hebrews verse explains HOW Jesus will save us from our sins. He will do so through his sacrifice to save us from our sins.

PLEASE NOTE: This can only work if two things are in place.

1. Only the reality of a volunteering fully human person can function as a substitutionary sacrifice.
2. AND Only a person that is PURE and POWERFUL enough can save “whoever believes” (John 3:16) in the whole world and all of history. **Only a DIVINE person is that PURE & POWERFUL enough to pull that off.**

Conclusion: This rescuing substitutionary sacrifice can only work if the volunteer is **fully man and fully God!**

- I. God gave you a **PERSONALIZED** and **WRAPPED** gift
- II. **HIDDEN** by his HUMANITY and HUMILITY

Luke 2:7 (NIV) and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them

The wrapper hides the content of the gift. This gift was doubly wrapped. How many of you have ever opened a present that was in a wrapped box and when you

unwrapped it you found another wrapped box inside the first wrapped box? It's like that.

- **First, God wrapped** the everlasting almighty SON of God in a surprising place: in a tiny, tiny body within Mary.
- **Then Mary wrapped** him again and laid this little one in another surprising place: an animal feeding trough in a stable!

In C. S. Lewis Chronicles of Narnia, book 7, The Last Battle, listen to this excerpt that takes place after King Tirian is thrown into a small stable and discovers an entire world inside:

Tirian had thought—or he would have thought if he had time to think at all—that they were inside **a little thatched stable**, about twelve feet long and six feet wide. In reality they stood on grass, the deep blue sky was overhead, and the air which blew gently on their faces was that of a day in early summer...

“The door?” said Tirian.

“Yes,” said Peter. “The door you came in—or came out—by. Have you forgotten?”...

Tirian looked and saw the strangest and most ridiculous thing you can imagine. Only a few yards away, clear to be seen in the sunlight, there stood up a rough wooden door and, round it, the framework of the doorway: nothing else, no walls, no roof. He walked toward it, bewildered. . . . He walked round to the other side of the door. But it looked just the same from the other side...

“Fair Sir,” said Tirian to the High King, “this is a great marvel.” ...“It seems, then . . . **that the stable** seen from within and the stable seen from without are two different places.”

“Yes,” said the Lord Digory. “Its inside is bigger than its outside.”

“Yes,” said Queen Lucy. **“In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world.”**

I can't resist giving you another interesting detail:

- Jesus was wrapped in cloths and laid in a trough at birth.
- Jesus was wrapped in cloths and laid in a tomb at death.

His whole life, death, burial, and resurrection is WHY he came, and HOW he saves us!

PLEASE NOTE: Any other story of Jesus that does not include both his humanity and his deity is a **very different story than the story of REALITY!** Be careful which story you are following.

I. God gave you a PERSONALIZED and WRAPPED gift

II. HIDDEN by his HUMANITY and HUMILITY, HOWEVER...

III. Many people can't see past the WRAPPER

While earth was oblivious to his glory, Angels were not! They OPENLY celebrated!!!

Luke 2:8–12 (NIV) And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

This gift is for “all the people” (2:10). He’s for everyone who will have him! You want great joy, seek Jesus!

- The Shepherds did! They ran to find this baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger!
- Matthew 2 tells us that Magi, Royal Wisemen did as well, and bowed and worshiped before him!!
- Wise men still seek him and worship him!

This has nothing to do with IQ but something deeper. People rejected Jesus because **he made CLAIMS only God can make.** They couldn’t see past the wrapper, so they never opened the gift.

Whatever you do with a GIFT, reveals what is in your heart toward the GIVER of that GIFT. Whatever you do with JESUS, reveals what is in your heart toward God.

Next Step:

What can you do to “*elevate your celebrate*” between now and Christmas?

The Story of Reality-CHRISTMAS
(Week 3)
Christmas Celebrated

SMALL TALK

1. How do you celebrate Christmas? When does your Christmas tree go up? How do you decorate it or your place? Are there any traditions from your youth that you still keep?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Luke 2:1-20.** In light of the promises of Luke 1:30-35, how might Mary feel as she awaits delivery in a stable? How does this tie into God's plan (Micah 5:2)?
3. What does this story of reality tell us about God's control of political affairs and "closed doors"?
4. Of all the people the angels could have visited, why did God send them to the shepherds? How does what Mary said (or sang) in Luke 1:46-55 support your answer?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. How did God take your "hopeless" situation and turn it for good? What does that teach you?
6. God brought a message to Zechariah, Mary, and the shepherds, while they were in their everyday jobs, and ordinary experiences, just being themselves. What does that imply about what it means to be "spiritual"? How has God spoken to you in the ordinary flow of life?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

7. What can you do to *elevate your celebrate* between now and Christmas?