

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

The Glory of Christmas

As I think of the glory of Christmas, it is not a Christmas carol that comes to my mind but instead a modern chorus.

Oh, the glory of Your presence, we Your temple give You reverence
Come and rise from Your rest and be blessed by our praise
As we glory in Your embrace as Your presence now fills this place
So arise to Your rest and be blessed by our praise
As we glory in Your embrace as Your presence now fills this place

The Glory of Christmas – Immanuel – God with us! Let’s always remember to bless Him with our praise.

Part of most family “Christmas traditions” include reminiscing about Christmases past. I shared the following with my class in 2001, the year my mother died. As I think on Christmas this year, I feel compelled to reminisce again. When my father died on December 3, 1981, it was the faith of my mother that led us to observe a joyous Christmas even in the sadness of that year. Also, a friend at work had reminded me that since I had one parent left, I could still “go home.” In December 2001, as I faced my first Christmas without my Mother I felt a sense of sadness coming over me. Simple things like the song “*I’ll Be Home for Christmas*” reminded me that I would no longer be able to “go home.” I asked the Lord how can I be joyous this Christmas? And the message came to me, focus on the real meaning of Christmas. As I did that, I realized that the things about Christmas that bring sadness to the human heart come from the secular side of Christmas. When I focus on the glory of Christmas my heart is glad.

Let’s rejoice together in the glory of Christmas – the time when Christians celebrate the coming of the Redeemer to earth. This Redeemer was first promised to Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3:15**. Because of what the Redeemer did when He came, we have the privilege to possess the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus. And if Jesus is not yet your Savior, please accept God’s “perfect Christmas gift” immediately by inviting Him into your heart.

I understand that there are pagan connotations to almost everything Christmas. Please do not allow anything to take your focus from the Truth that no matter the specific time of Jesus’ birth or all the pagan holiday trappings that surround Christmas, this fact remains the Son of God came to earth, conceived by the Holy Spirit of God, born to a virgin mother for the specific purpose of shedding His innocent blood as a sacrifice for our sins.

Christmas is God’s message of redemption. In the secular worldview, Christmas is only a holiday – a time to decorate, eat, drink and be merry. As “Christians” we may pride ourselves on knowing the “true” meaning of Christmas. However, we must heed what the LORD said in

Isaiah 1:14 (ESV) ¹⁴ *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.*

We should always celebrate the glory of Christmas with the same joy that the angels did on the night of Jesus' birth!

Read Luke 2:13-14 (ESV) ¹³ *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,* ¹⁴ *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

God becoming a Man is the key to our Redemption Story and that is the glory of Christmas! In the Old Testament, Adam and Eve were promised death for their sin in the Garden. However, God in His infinite mercy prepared a way for the sons and daughters of Adam to be redeemed. Redemption consists of someone paying the required price to secure the release of a convicted criminal. Each of us has been convicted and sentenced to death because of our sin. The glory of Christmas heralds the birth of our Redeemer who paid the price to secure our release from the grip of sin. **John 3:16 (ESV)** 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.*

Read John 1:1-5 (ESV) ¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* ⁴ *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

It is popular to say one believes in God. The trouble is, most people do not take the next step by putting their faith and trust in Jesus – God's Son. They don't believe Jesus is the only way to heaven. The gospel of John was written with one purpose in mind. **John 20:31 (ESV)** ³¹ *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John wrote to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Redeemer. The theme of John's Gospel is the deity of Jesus Christ. There is no genealogy of Jesus recorded in John. There is no account of Jesus' physical birth since John's purpose in writing was to take us back to the beginning: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Jesus who was physically born in Bethlehem has always been and always will be the Living Word. We read of Jesus in **Revelation 19:13 (ESV)** ¹³ *He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.*

We may assume we know what someone is thinking but we really can't be certain of those thoughts until that person actually put those thoughts and feelings into words. Jesus in His life and death is the expression of God the Spirit that human beings can understand. He loved us enough to die for us. Just like the Holy Bible is God's Word to us, God the Son, Jesus, is God's Living Word for us.

Genesis 1:4 (ESV) ⁴ *And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.* **John 1:4 (ESV)** ⁴ *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* John personally knew Jesus. He had walked with Him, talked with Him, and even leaned on His breast. John saw the Light in Jesus. He was not able to comprehend that Light until after the Resurrection. John wrote of his own experience in **John 20:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.* When John “saw the Light,” he was able to connect that Light of Jesus to the beginning of our world. In one of His “I AM” statements, Jesus had said, in **John 8:12 (ESV)** ¹² ... *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

At the moment we accept Christ into our lives, the Light of His Presence begins to burn within us and it is His Light in us that allows us to live forever! Jesus said in **John 11:26 (ESV)** ²⁶ *and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* I pray that you do!

John 1:14-18 (ESV) ¹⁴ *And 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.* ¹⁵ *(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”)* ¹⁶ *For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.* ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* ¹⁸ *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.*

It is fun to meet someone in person we have spoken with many times over the phone. Often, we are surprised when we finally meet that individual— they may look nothing like we expected! The Jews had been studying about and waiting for the coming Messiah for centuries. Yet, when the Jews finally met God in person, the long-expected Messiah did not appear as they expected. Do you recognize the Messiah for who He really is? God became flesh so that we can know Him personally and one day we will behold Him face to face in all of His glory!

How was the Word made flesh? Exactly how God SAID in the Old Testament it would happen. **Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)** 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.* Now, we read in the New Testament: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory.* The Son of God who scripture defines as being the Word was not an abstract concept of philosophy, but a real Person born to a Virgin as Isaiah had foretold. The Son of God was seen, touched, and heard. Christianity is Christ, and Christ is God Almighty – the Everlasting One!

The birth of Jesus was not the only birth foretold by the prophets. **Isaiah 40:3 (ESV)** ³ *A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* This voice was that of John the Baptist who was born shortly **before** Jesus. John the Baptist who was born for the purpose of preparing the way of the LORD understood through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus existed before John was ever conceived. That is why John said, *He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.*

*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The Law was engraved on cold tablets of stone. Grace was wrapped up in human flesh and brought into the world by Jesus. Moses turned water into blood, which speaks of judgment. Jesus turned the water into wine which speaks of joy. The truth of the Law says that our sin brings death. The truth of grace is found in Jesus. **Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.**

*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. If you want to know God, get to know Jesus. **John 14:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *Jesus said ... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...* That, my loved ones, is the glory of Christmas – God sent His Son – they called Him Jesus and because He lives we can face tomorrow!*