

Christmas 2008

I. Introduction

- A. If the world thinks of Christmas at all, it mostly thinks of Santa Claus, presents, parties at work and families getting together.
- B. When the church thinks of Christmas it usually sees a nativity scene – with Baby Jesus at the center. This is certainly a more accurate picture, but probably one which we don't understand well enough.
- C. Our goal today will be to try to better communicate what happened when God the Son came down from heaven and became Jesus of Nazareth.

II. **John 1:1-18** My favorite Christmas text.

III. Incarnation John 1:14

- A. Definition: The word *incarnation* means “in flesh” and denotes the act whereby the eternal Son of God took to Himself an additional nature, humanity, through the virgin birth. The result is that Christ remains forever unblemished deity, which He has had from eternity past; but He also possesses true, sinless humanity in one Person forever.
(Moody Handbook of Theology)

IV. Deity: This is the first point that John makes. That Baby in the manger was actually the eternal, unchanging, Creator of all things. Compare John 1:1-3 with the following:

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

V. Self-Existence: This goes along with being God the Creator. When God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, He emphasized that it was simply part of His nature to exist.

Exodus 3:14 (NKJV) And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

- A. This is what John means when He says, “In Him was life.” (John 1:4)
- B. You and I don't have to live, don't have to exist. We are here only because He made us.

VI. Light: Jesus Christ is light by His very nature (John 1:4,5,9) and light and life go together:

Psalms 36:9 (NKJV) For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. (Columbia U. motto)

1 John 1:5 (NKJV) This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

VII. Glory (John 1:14) John is writing in Greek, but as a Jew. He is using his Greek vocabulary with Greek definitions, but also trying to convey all that the Hebrew Bible had to say about the glory of God. Definitions:

A. Greek: a good opinion, resulting in praise and honor; also, splendor or brightness.

i. This also takes us back to the concept of light. Now consider how Christ's glory and light, splendor or brightness are related. Revelation 21 speaks of the New Jerusalem:

*Revelation 21:23-24 (NKJV) ²³The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. **The Lamb is its light.** ²⁴And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.*

B. Hebrew: from a root that means weight or heaviness. Massiveness, seriousness, importance, significance. Let's focus on the idea of weight or mass.

i. A good-sized adult weighs about 100 kg +/- 50%, anywhere from 100-300 lb.

ii. **Mass of the Earth** is about 6×10^{24} kg. That's 6 followed by 24 zeros.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth#cite_note-earth_fact_sheet-8)

iii. **The Mass of the Sun** is about 2×10^{30} kg or about 332,950 times the mass of the Earth.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solar_mass)

iv. **The Mass of the Milky Way Galaxy** = 6×10^{11} times the mass of the sun.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milky_Way)

v. **Size and Mass of the Universe:**

a) The radius of the visible Universe is estimated at 1.7×10^{26} m (18 thousand million lightyears) plus or minus 20 percent or so. This yields a total mass of the visible matter of about 6×10^{51} kg (1.3×10^{52} lb).

b) When one studies the movement of matter in and around galaxies, then it appears that up to about 10 times more mass is pulling at the matter (through its gravity) than is accounted for in the visible stars. This is the "missing-mass" problem. If this factor of ten holds throughout the Universe, then the total mass in the Universe would be about 6×10^{52} kg. (<http://www.cs.umass.edu/~immerman/stanford/universe.html>)

c) That's a lot of mass – a lot of glory. But consider all this

Psalms 19:1 (NKJV) The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

John 1:3 (NKJV) All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

John 1:14 (NKJV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

vi. God, through Jesus Christ, created the universe from nothing, speaking it into existence.

*Hebrews 11:3 (NKJV) By faith we understand that the worlds [aiōnas, “eons” a combined space-time concept] were framed by the **word of God**, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible [more literally, “not out of things appearing the thing being seen has become”]*

vii. Compared to Jesus, God the Son, the Word who became flesh, the incomprehensible size and mass of the universe are as nothing. Consider His glory.

VIII. Truth

*John 1:14 (NKJV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld **His glory**, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and **truth**.*

- A. Definition: Reality; actuality. Also, that which is considered to be the supreme reality and to have the ultimate meaning and value of existence. (*American Heritage Dictionary*)
- B. We may be tempted to think the opposite: This is the real world. The spiritual realm is unseen and, therefore, less real than this one.
- C. Let's remind ourselves: Jesus is eternal and self-existing, we were created. We are finite, He is infinite. He is light, while all of us once walked in darkness. He made the universe and all that is in it “from nothing” – and that includes you. Jesus is so very much more real than you and I are.

IX. Grace The Biblical Concept

*John 1:14 (NKJV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld **His glory**, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, **full of grace** and **truth**.*

Grace = favor, especially *unmerited* favor – an undeserved positive standing.

*Illustration: You are speeding and a police officer pulls you over. In that situation, **Justice** is really done when he gives you a ticket. It might be unfair to someone else to do otherwise.*

***Mercy** is when he tells you that you were speeding, but he doesn't give you a ticket.*

*Biblical **Grace** works more like this: The policeman's radar clocks you as speeding and he pulls you over. Then he tells you that you were speeding, by exactly how much, and lets that sink in for a while as he takes your license and writes the ticket. As you fully realize just how guilty you are and how deserving of a big, fat fine, he asks you, “Do you intend to drive more carefully from now on?” How do you respond?*

“Oh yes sir, officer, very carefully. You will never ever catch me speeding again.”

Then he hands you the ticket along with a check made out to the county treasurer, written for the same amount. Then he hands you a second check, his own paycheck, which he has signed over to you. Then he lets you drive off. You now have the choice what to do with that ticket and those checks.

X. Our Response

A. Example of a negative response: King Belshazzar of Babylon confronted by Daniel

*Daniel 5:22-23 (NKJV) ²²“But you ..., Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, ... ²³And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. ... And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and **the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.***

Foolish King Belshazzar. He refused to pay any attention to this infinitely great and glorious God, who was holding Belshazzar's breath in His hand.

Daniel 5:30-31 (NKJV) ³⁰That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. ³¹And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

So God simply gave his kingdom to someone else. Eventually Darius died too. And so will I, and so will you.

B. What about you? How will you respond?

- i. Consider that there is not one single sin that you have ever committed that Jesus doesn't know about.
 - a) That lie – and every lie you've ever told
 - b) That little thing that you stole – and every other thing
 - c) Those times you cheated on your homework or your test back in school and you let the teacher give you a better grade.
 - d) The time (or times) you got angry over something stupid and used those cutting awful words against your friend.
 - e) That person or persons you slept with
- ii. How does Jesus know about all these things? Besides being God, He felt the pain and the punishment for each and every one of those sins on the cross.
- iii. Becoming that Baby in the manger was, without question, a humbling experience for Jesus, and one we should appreciate. Nonetheless, that is not where the Bible puts its focus. The Bible rather draws attention to the cross:

Philippians 2:8-11 (NKJV) ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.