

The Attributes of God
Incarnate God

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. And what God thinks about you is even more important.

It's Christmas time and that brings with it joys, sorrows, excitement, exhaustion, hope, holiday spirit, and a real or imagined sense of "good will toward men."

Or MAYBE NOT – it might bring out the Grinch or early Scrooge in you, who knows? (somebody knows).

My guess is that most of you approach Christmas from a perspective of faith and reverence for the "true story of Christmas", and you hate to see it get swallowed up by tinsel and consumerism.

Some of you may not be into the "story" of Christmas, but you appreciate the spirit and the thought of well wishing and neighborly kindness.

Some of you may have taken up the mantle of pre-conversion Scrooge and adopted the attitude of "Bah Humbug".

Other than that last category, **can anyone suggest a good reason why someone would NOT want the biblical story of Jesus to be true?**

Even the "bah humbug" Scrooge might have a hard time saying why he wouldn't want the story of Jesus to be true. Not some watered-down story of Jesus or some altered version, but the real Biblical story line of the birth and life of Christ. Why someone want it to be false?

Does anyone wish that the biblical teaching of Jesus is Fake News i.e....

- That the angels were lying when they announced the birth of a savior?
- That the prophet Isaiah was lying when he spoke of the Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the one who bore our sin so that by his wounds we might be healed.
- That there is a savior who has come to bring peace between God and man and to bring peace between the various groups of humanity.
- That God so loved the world that He gave His son so that we might brought into a relationship with the Father.

Call me naïve, I find it hard to believe that someone would want the biblical picture of Jesus, with his life, actions, and teaching, to be FALSE.

You may not understand the life and teaching of Jesus. You may not agree with it. You may be skeptical, but does anyone really say, "I would not want that to be true.

Guess what? There are those who don't want it to be true and they are vocal about it.

2016 Boca Raton, FL and other cities had displays and signs went up that read (Freedom from Religion)

"At this season of the Winter Solstice, may reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."

(not exactly a "Hallmark" card, but it makes their point)

https://truthxchange.com/2011/12/io-85-the-real-christmas-nightmare-joy-from-the-world/?utm_source=joy+to+the+world&utm_campaign=prayer+letter+nov+17&utm_medium=email
<https://relevantmagazine.com/slices/worlds-largest-atheist-group-fighting-nativity-sets-reason-banners>

The Gospel writers and millions over the centuries have a different take on things...

EX: HOOK – Grown up Peter Banning has forgotten the real truth about his life so grown up Wendy says, "Peter, the stories are true."

This is the good news about Christmas - THE STORY IS TRUE.

Here the challenging new about Christmas – The Story IS true – so it should make a difference in our lives, all the time, not just one day, week, or month of the year.

To understand the Good News and the Challenge we must answer an important question:

What Child is This?

To answer this question, we'll look at two passages. I apologize for those who may have come expecting to hear the traditional Christmas narrative. We did that last week in the morning and evening.

This morning is more of a theology of Christmas rather than narrative as we consider the INCARNATE God. It's not the same as the other attributes, but it does tell us a good bit about God – He is willing to come down and dwell with us – Immanuel.

What Child is This???

Isaiah 9

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

John 1

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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it...
14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Those verses give us the Good News and the Challenge of Christmas.

J.I. Packer... KNOWING God p. 63

We talk glibly of the "Christmas spirit," rarely meaning more by this than sentimental jollity on a family basis. But what scripture says makes it clear that the phrase should in fact carry a tremendous weight of meaning. It ought to mean the reproducing in human lives of the temper of him who for our sakes became poor at the first Christmas. And the Christmas spirit itself ought to be the mark of every Christian all the year round.

WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

Packer points out that the Christmas narratives don't go into great detail about the circumstances of the birth of Christ. Their focus is not on the what, where, when, and how, but on the WHO... WHAT is the identity of this Child?

The buzz on the streets, in the fields among the shepherds, among the angels, and in Herod's palace isn't about a baby being born in Bethlehem – that happened on a regular basis. The buzz was about Who this baby is.

The Wise men heard about this "Kings of the Jews" and were curious

Herod heard the news of a new born King and he was "troubled"

The angels made the announcement about a Savior, Christ the Lord, and they were Jubilant

The Shepherds heard the announcement and they were frightened, then worshipful.
Mary pondered all these things in her heart (or wrote them down faithfully in her baby book – Cotton Patch version)

Who was this child?

As Isaiah prophesied, he was the promised Messiah. He was the child of Promise, or of The Promise that God had made to Adam and Eve in the Garden – Gen 3:15

God, speaking to the serpent after he deceived Eve and tempted Adam..

15And I will put enmity

Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."

The theme of a promised "seed" / child / messiah runs throughout the OT from Gen 3 to the promise of an offspring to Abraham to David to remnant of the people of Israel, to John the Baptist, who was preparing the way of the Lord, to Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Isaiah gave us the familiar and encouraging prophecy in chapter 9 and John gave us the profound words in chapter 1 of his Gospel. They give us a picture of WHO this child is:

He is The Word made Flesh; He is God incarnate.

Right here we run into the storyline that is at the crux of the Christian faith. – God IN THE FLESH "incarnate=made flesh" (a carnivore is a flesh/meat eater – non-vegan)

If you are here today and are skeptical about the whole Jesus thing – miracles, resurrection, etc, then this is a good day to be here because we are at ground zero of "the whole Jesus thing".

The Eternal son of God became man – he took on flesh and came to dwell with us. Christmas is the foundation for all the rest. If Jesus is God in the flesh, then the sinless life, miracles and resurrection are a piece of cake.

The great mystery of the Christian message is the Incarnation. This is, so to speak, "the room where it happens".
"This is the real stumbling block in Christianity. It is here that Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many of those who feel the difficulties concerning the virgin birth, the miracles, the atonement, and the resurrection have come to grief... Once the incarnation is grasped as a reality, these other difficulties dissolve."
Packer

If you came here today with a degree of skepticism, I don't expect that all your questions will disappear based on one sermon, but I would encourage you to give careful thought to reading through the Gospel of John to get a better picture of WHO Jesus IS.

In Isaiah we see that he is exactly what we need. Remember that the gospel teaches us that we are bigger sinners than we dare admit, and Jesus meets us as sinners at the point of our need. He meets us where we live in a world that is broken by our stubborn, willful, self-centered, rebellion against God and one another.

How does Isaiah describe this child?

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

And the government will rest on His shoulders: We need to be freed from our self-governed lives. We need to be freed from the tyranny and guilt that rules in our hearts.

And His name will be called ...

Wonderful Counselor- “experts” and counselors would say that we all need counseling. At least we need a “wonderful” counselor. Jesus embodies wisdom which is what we all need from a counselor. Jesus comes and changes our hearts so that we see the world from a new pair of lenses and values. He counsels us out of the darkness and foolishness which are ours from birth.

Mighty God – sin has left us helpless, hopeless and defiled, but Jesus is might to save. He does for us what we can not do for ourselves. The result of sin is that we are unable to do what God calls us to do, and honestly, it also makes us not even want to do what is right at times.

If you’re thinking, “preacher, I’m really doing OK. I think I’ve got power over my life”, then try this simple test for the next week- it’s called the tongue test:

**Don’t boast, brag, lie, exaggerate, complain, gossip or run any one down for the next 7 days
Do only speak true words in love that will encourage and build up**

Listen to yourself and take note of how much you need a mighty God to save you. If you are hard of hearing when it comes to yourself, then ask your spouse or a child to listen and give you some updates on your Tongue Test.

Do an honest self-assessment to see if you actually live up to your own standard of morality. Do you EVER do what you criticize others for doing?

Eternal Father – By his obedience on our behalf, Jesus opens the door of access to the Father. Countless movies, books, songs, poems and court cases have dealt with “daddy” issues. We could do a whole series on this topic. Through faith in Christ we are made sons and daughters who are delighted in by the Father. When you know Jesus, it changes the “parent tape” that you have in your head. The message is now one of forgiveness, acceptance, value, and affirmation. We are more loved and forgiven than we dare imagine.

Prince of Peace.

There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.

I’m 62 and one constant in the history of this world is War and the elusive reality of peace. I doubt that there has been a single month in my 62 years where there hasn’t been a war of some sort going on in the world. Some of the wars are big and get headlines; some you rarely hear about.

“All we are saying is, ...give peace a chance”

The long-term promise of the scripture is that one day Jesus will establish His Peace, and of that peace there will be no end. The government on his shoulders will be one that is upheld with justice and righteousness.

Today, all sides of the political spectrum fight over “justice and righteousness”. Sadly, people on both sides think they have a monopoly on truth, justice and righteousness. Sadder still is the reality that both sides are skewed and blinded by their own sin. It will be that way until Jesus comes to set up His reign of Peace, justice and righteousness.

In the meantime, those who claim to follow him should keep a loose grip on the political and power structures of this age. We must remember that God is in control. He raises up and brings down. We should have a posture of humility as we see our own weakness.

In the weekly prayer list, I sent a link to the letter by a Chinese Pastor who was recently arrested. The letter was prepared prior to his arrest for release in the event of his arrest. It was a powerful statement of faith and a perspective that believers have regarding the relationship between the church, the state, and God’s sovereignty over both.

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/read-chinese-pastors-powerful-letter-released-after-his-arrest/>

If trusting God when politics don't go your way is a struggle for you then read the letter from the Chinese pastor, remember the words of CS Lewis from last week (online or app), and prayerfully take to heart the truth that we are ALL bigger sinners than we dare admit, but in Christ we are more loved and forgiven than we dare imagine.

And that is also true for OTHER believers who may disagree with you about politics, worship style, education choices, theological non-essentials, and godly choices in how to invest your time, talent, and treasure.

Those things should never divide the body of Jesus for our identity in Christ IS and should be seen as greater than our identity according to the values of the political or social world.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. God IS NOT FINISHED WITH HIS PLAN.

This Christmas we can take courage that Christ will fulfill the promises because God is zealous to make it all happen. His timetable may not be our, but He is zealous for it. He is also zealous for his plan to conform us into the image of Christ, if we know him.

The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity—hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory—because at the Father's will Jesus Christ became poor and was born in a stable so that thirty years later, he might hang on a cross. It is the most wonderful message that the world has ever heard or will hear. PACKER

A, B, C'S OF FAITH for Christmas

A - Admit that you aren't God, that you can't control life and you need help. Hope comes by being honest with yourself. Own up to the clear evidence of your own life that you need a savior, not just an example. When you do that it means there is GOOD NEWS FOR YOU

B- Believe that Jesus is the only hope and Savior who can heal your heart. The Christmas story reminds us that hopelessness is the only doorway to Eternal Hope. Hope isn't an idea; it's a person.

C- confess to God that you want to trust Jesus as your savior and Lord.

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