

From Christmas to Calvary

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A television interviewer was walking streets of Tokyo at Christmas time. Much like in America, Christmas shopping is a big commercial success in Japan. The interviewer stopped one young woman on the sidewalk, and asked, "What is the meaning of Christmas?" Laughing, she responded, "I don't know. Is that the day that Jesus died?"

Well, the woman knew nothing about Christmas. This is true of many people in the world today. However, her answer focuses on the REASON why Jesus was born. He was born to ultimately die upon the cross.

I'm amazed at how many in secular society today are moving away from anything that relates to the word Christmas and the true reason for Christmas. Many despise the name "Christmas" for it contains the name Christ! There are many in this world today who actually hate or despise Jesus Christ. This is why we see all the animosity toward manger scenes at this time of the year and singing Christmas songs in the school setting.

Jesus said in John 15:18:

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

There has always been hatred and animosity toward Jesus Christ. This is because mankind with his humanism and the silly notion that he is a "good person" recoils at the fact that he is a sinner who needs to be saved by Jesus Christ. He despises the thought that he must be morally accountable to Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:18-25).

Many people are making preparations for the special day (Christmas Day). They are hanging up their Christmas lights, buying gifts, and planning their Christmas dinners. However, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of this season, all of us need to pause and remember that there would be no reason for Christmas without the cross. In fact, the true reason for Christmas IS the cross. It has been well said that if you take CHRIST out of Christmas, it leaves MAS, which means Minus Any Significance.

The true reason for Christmas is the cross. Of course, the cross would have never happened without the birth of Jesus Christ. So in God's providential way and purpose, Christmas and the cross are inseparably linked together. You cannot have Christmas without the cross nor could you have the cross without Christmas!

Jesus was actually born in the shadow of the cross. Friend, Christmas leads to the cross. Jesus was born to die.



“He was born in the shadow of a tree,
The shadow of a tree,
Ever present was the knowledge He would be hanging on a tree,
The tree of Calvary.”

- Death entered through one man's disobedience (Adam)
- Life is restored through one man's obedience (Christ)
- Sin came through the temptation of a woman (Eve)
- Salvation came through one born of a woman (Christ)
- The enemy conquered humanity by tasting of a tree (Adam)
- Christ conquered the enemy by bearing suffering on a tree (the cross)

We know that CHRISTMAS stands for Christ's birth! However, we must also remember what CALVARY stands for in the Bible. It represents the hill near Jerusalem on which Jesus was crucified.



"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him."
(Luke 23:33)

The name is Latin for "Place of the Skull"; it is also called Golgotha. This place was the very hill that the baby which was born in Bethlehem was destined to one-day climb. He would climb Calvary's hill to be slain on an old rugged cross! And it was there that He would die for you and me – bearing the penalty of sin that we deserved,

which was the wrath of God and our hell, so we might be saved from this awful place of judgment and go to Heaven when we die.

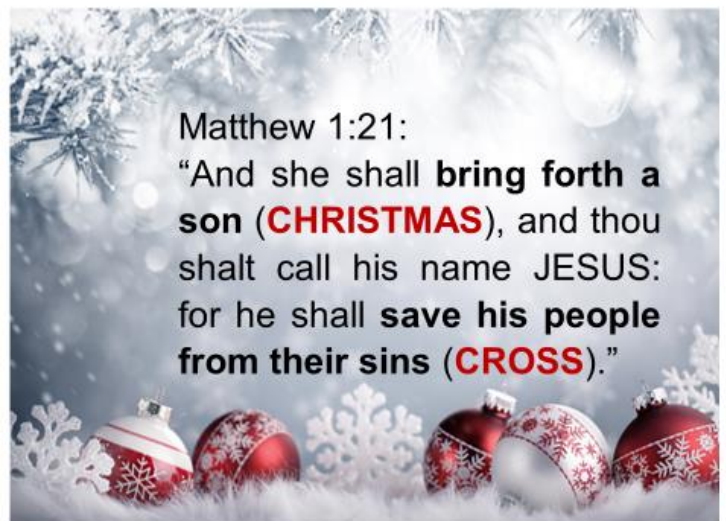
"I believe in a hill called Mt. Calvary
I'll believe whatever the cost
And when time has surrendered and earth is no more
I'll still cling to that old rugged cross."

The true reason for Christmas is the cross.

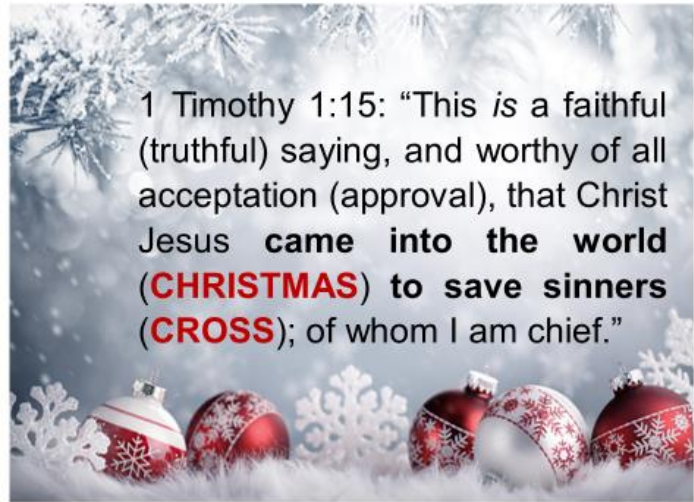
This is seen in five Bible declarations.

1. A pre-birth declaration

The expression "to save his people from their sins" means that Christ was born to die on Calvary's tree (the cross) so that people could be spared from the punishment of hell. This is the inevitable result and judgment we receive for the many sins that we have committed against God (Rom. 3:23).



The Bible says that “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14) in order to provide redemptive salvation for you and me. Jesus was born to die. The birth of Jesus Christ loses its amazement and wonder if you take away the cross for the cross is the reason for Christmas!



I saw a dedicated Salvation Army woman sitting and ringing the bell at Walmart. It was windy, very cold. She was bundled up and you could only see her eyes. You know, Christmas is not really about giving to charities and gifts to other people. Yes, I enjoy giving gifts to my family at the Christmas season. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact, there is nothing more wonderful than seeing the eyes of a grandchild light up when they open up a gift that you have given to them. But Christmas really is not about giving gifts to others. It's about God the Father giving to us! We've turned the meaning of Christmas upside down! Christmas is about the Father giving His Son to die on the cross in order to save lost mankind from hell.

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

To die with unforgiven sin hanging over our head is to go to hell and the Lake of Fire forever (Rev. 20:15). It is to suffer spiritual death or separation from God forever. This is what this Bible verse is teaching.

Jesus said in John 3:36:

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Friend, you can't get around what the Bible says. You cannot wiggle out of it. Without salvation through Jesus Christ we are all going to hell. I cannot bypass this truth or candy-coat it. If I do, we will all miss the true reason for

Christmas. This is why Jesus came into the world. Let's not miss the true reason for the season.

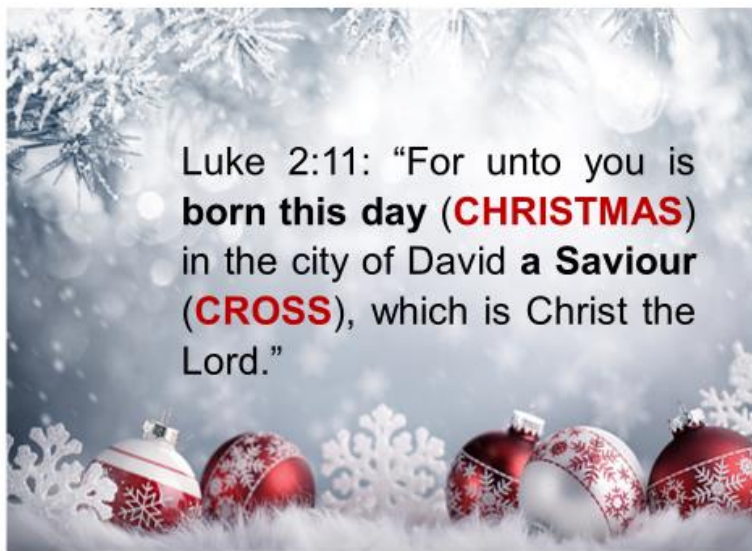
Someone said:

“If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator; If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist; If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist; If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer; But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior – which is Christ the Lord!”

For many today, Christmas has become nothing more than a financial crisis as they purchase the newest computer games and other expensive toys for their children and grandchildren. We have all seen the mad rush in the stores and the fights that occur on Black Friday. Christmas has become highly commercialized and the true reason for Christ's birth has been lost in the minds of many people and the midst of the shuffle.

2. A post-birth declaration

The angel announced something wonderful in Luke 2:11.



The angel also said in Luke 2:14: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. The "good will toward men" (Luke 2:14) that was expressed at the birth of Christ does not mean that we are to express good will (yuletide cheer) to other people at the Christmas season.

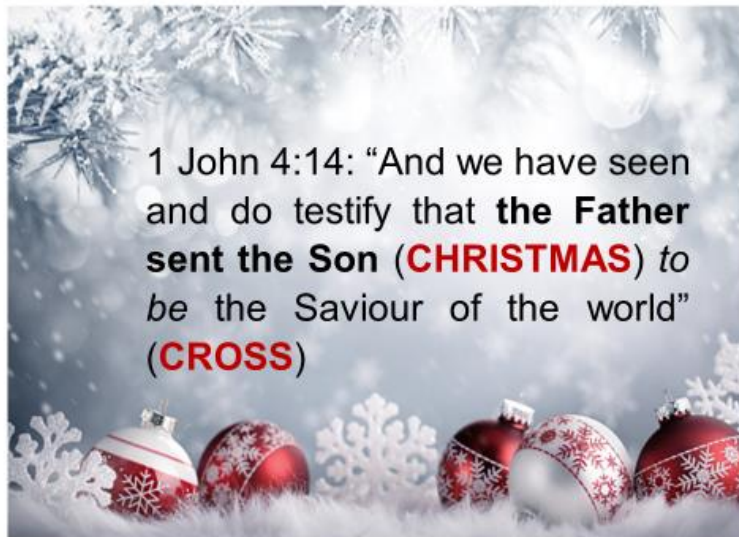
I know that many people think we are to go around with “holiday cheer” spreading good will toward others. Now, there is nothing wrong with this. I would rather meet a cheery person instead of grumpy person!

Mark Twain said:

“The best way to cheer yourself up is to try and to cheer somebody else up.”

A Christian should not live like an Ebenezer Scrooge! However, having good cheer (yuletide cheer) toward others is NOT what Christmas is all about. The “good will toward men” that the angels spoke about means that God was reaching out to a world of lost sinners to ultimately save them from hell and bring them into a peaceful relationship before God (Rom. 5:1). With the entrance of the Savior into the world, the human race that was once separated from God could now be reconciled to Him, through faith in Jesus Christ’s saving provision on the cross (2 Cor. 5:19).

Jesus Christ came into the world to pay the price of sin (judgment) for all mankind so the entire world of lost people can be saved. This does not mean everyone is saved or will be saved but Jesus came to make salvation available to all!



This means that Jesus wants to be your personal Savior today from hell. You can escape God’s wrath which must be meted out against sin and the sinner. Christ wants you to express personal faith in Him so that you can go to Heaven when you die. Have you ever given your heart to Jesus Christ by expressing faith in Him and his finished work on the cross?

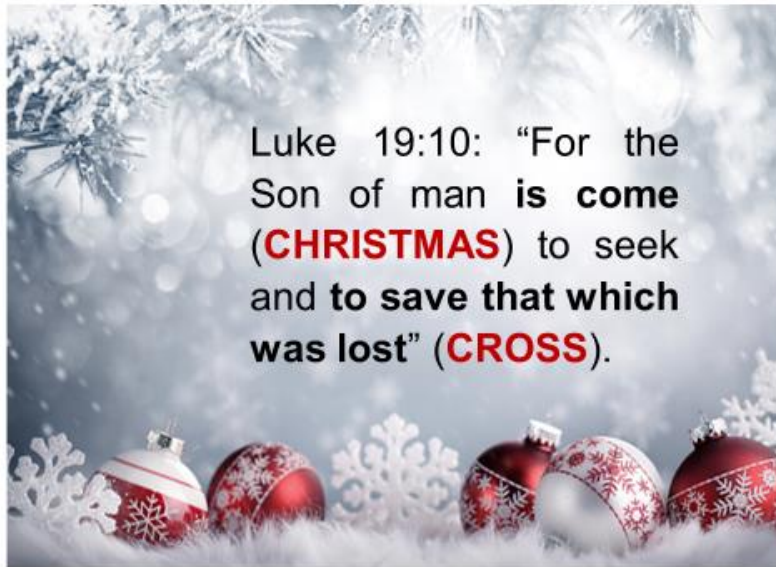
“The Savior is waiting to enter your heart
Why don't you let Him come in?
There's nothing in this world to keep you apart
What is your answer to Him?”

Time after time
He has waited before
And now He is waiting again
To see if you are willing
To open the door
Oh, how He wants to come in.”

This brings us to our next Christmas and cross declaration.

3. A personal salvation declaration

There are other Bible verses that shed light on the purpose or reason of Christ’s birth. The personal salvation experience of a man by the name of Zacchaeus resulted in Christ giving a declaration of the true reason for Christmas (the birth of Christ).



Luke 19:10: “For the Son of man **is come (CHRISTMAS)** to seek and **to save that which was lost’ (CROSS)**.”

The whole story is seen in Luke 19:1-10. “And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up

into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.”

Next we see the salvation of this man Zacchaeus: “And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”

These manifestations of good deeds stated above are the fruit of a repentant heart and saved life! Zacchaeus was saved on this day. The passage goes on to say: “And Jesus said unto him (here is the personal salvation declaration of Zacchaeus), This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” This was the day of the personal salvation of this man Zacchaeus. It was a day of all days! This man came down from a tree to meet the Son of God and in meeting Jesus he placed his faith in Him! How do I know this? It’s because of what Jesus said.

“This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come (CHRISTMAS) to seek and to save that which was lost (CROSS).

There may be some reading this today who need to meet Jesus as Zacchaeus did. Like Zacchaeus, you can stop searching, since Jesus is the very One that you need to encounter Who can give you eternal life forever in Heaven. This Biblical story brings back a lot of Bible School memories.

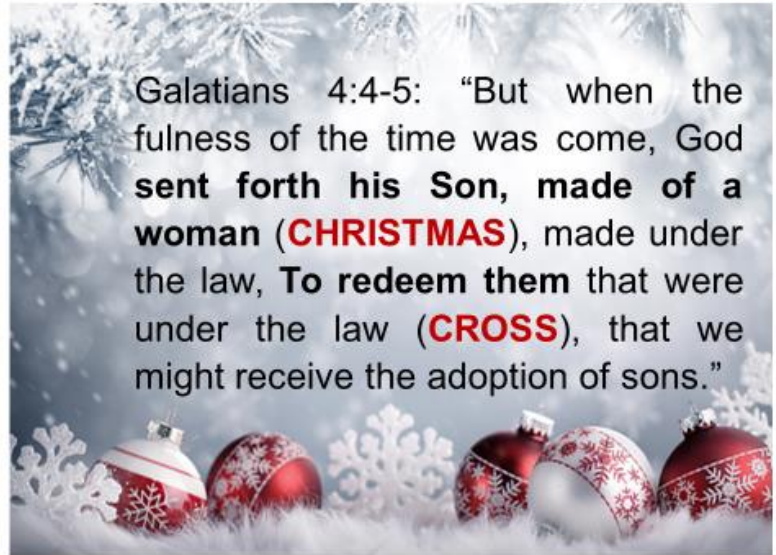
“Zaccheus was a wee, little man,
And a wee, little man was he.
He climbed up in a sycamore tree,
For the Lord he wanted to see.
And as the Savior came that way,
He looked up in the tree,
And he said, "Zaccheus, you come down from there,"
For I'm going to your house today.
For I'm going to your house today.”

Like Zacchaeus, will you invite Jesus into the home or house of your heart today? Jesus said, “for to day I must abide at thy house.” Will you let Christ come into your heart at this Christmas season? Will you in faith reach out to Jesus Christ and let Him save you? This is the reason He came into the

world. He really loves you and wants to save you today from an everlasting hell.

4. A purpose declaration

The Bible states the purpose of Christ's entrance into the world in unmistakable terms. It tells us why He was born. The purpose is clear to see if someone wants to know why Christ was born or why Jesus entered the world in a place called Bethlehem.



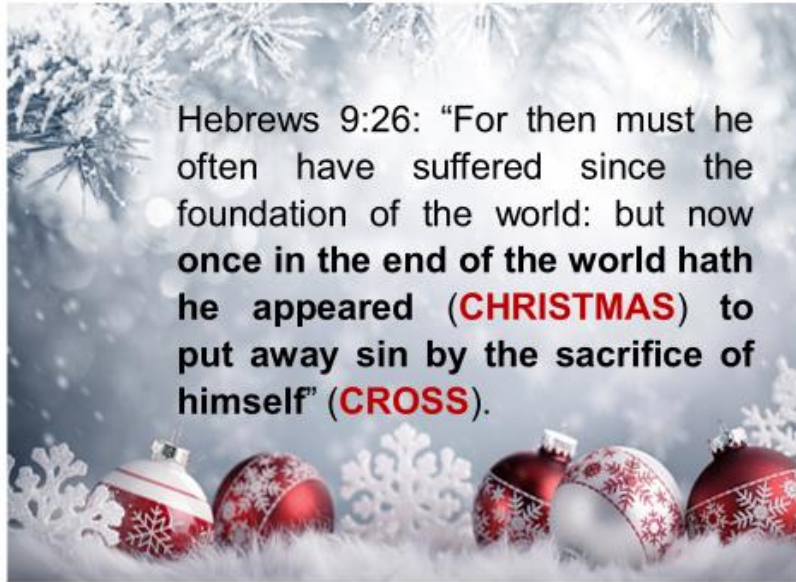
You and I have been trapped by sin, but Christ has purchased your redemption ("To redeem them that were under the law"). Jesus dies so we could be redeemed which is a word that means to be set free from the penalty and power of sin.

God's perfect moral law condemned us as a sinner, separates us from God, and leaves us with no way of escape. But Jesus came to free us from this awful plight and predicament. We can now be redeemed! We can be set free from the curse of the law by the very One (Jesus) who was cursed in our place (Gal. 3:13). Jesus became a curse for us to redeem us from the dreadful curse of the Law which said "The soul that sinneth must die" (Ezek. 18:4).

Two women who were having lunch in an elegant hotel were approached by a mutual friend who asked the occasion for the meal. One lady replied, "We are celebrating the birth of my baby boy." "But where is he?" inquired the friend. "Oh," said the mother, "you didn't think I'd bring him, did you?"

This is a picture of the way the world treats Jesus at Christmas. They don't bring Him into the Christmas season and they miss the true reason why Jesus came into the world – to redeem us!

5. A pardon declaration



The expression "to put away sin" means that we can be forgiven and pardoned of all our sins before God forever through the death of Jesus Christ.

If you want to be given a clean slate before God's presence, pardoned of all your sins forever, then you must by faith take Jesus Christ to be

your own personal Savior. When I ask Christ to save me, He pardons me for all my sin (past, present, and future). His death wipes the slate clean forever. Never again must I fear God's wrath but rest in the amazing grace of His eternal forgiveness and pardon. Jesus says, "thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:20). This is the pardon of sin we can all receive. It is an eternal pardon.

During this season and special time of the year, let us not forget that in God's providence and purpose, Christmas was designed to result in the cross. Jesus was born to die. The reason for Christ's birth was His sacrificial death on the behalf of sinners (you and me). Dear friend, will you recognize why Christ came into the world and place your faith in Jesus Christ today? Jesus was born to die on the cross to save you and me forever. Cast your faith on Him today. You may need to take time during this busy Christmas season to pray to God and express faith alone in Christ's saving provision. Jesus died on the cross for you, taking God's wrath and judgment for your sin, and rose again the third day to give you eternal life (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). To believe on Christ is much more than just a head knowledge about Jesus. To believe or express faith in Christ means that you are willing

to commit your faith to Him alone for your salvation (2 Tim. 1:12). In doing this, you will “come” to Christ (Rev. 22:17) and “receive” Him as your personal savior (John 1:12).

One family had a tradition where the Mother and children would go to the Christmas Eve service, and the Father would stay home and read the paper. When the family returns home from church, they would all gather to open up their presents. The Father was not an evil man to his family, but he just couldn't believe in the childhood stories anymore of God coming as a baby in a manger. As the family left for church, he opened up the evening paper and began to read by the fireplace.

Suddenly, he heard tapping on the window. It was a bird flying against the glass of his window trying to get out of the snow into the warmth of his home. The man had compassion on the bird, and he went outside, hoping to bring it in. As he approached the bird, the bird just flew against the window even harder. Pretty soon, the bird flew into the bushes below the window, half frozen, yet too afraid to be caught by this huge man. The more the man tried to reach for the bird, the more the bird flew frantically into the snow and thorns of the bushes.

After a few minutes in the cold and seeing the bird continue to injure itself, the man yelled out in frustration, “Stupid bird, can't you understand that I'm trying to help you?” The man paused and thought, “If only you understood - you wouldn't fly away ... if only ... if only I could become a bird, and get you to understand.”

Just then, the Christmas Eve church bells rang. But when the man heard the bells this Christmas season, he fell to his knees and began to cry, saying, “Oh, God, like this bird, I didn't understand why Jesus became a man. Oh, God, I didn't understand. But now I do. I know Jesus became one of us and He was born to die on the cross to save my soul from hell. I receive you as my Savior today.”

Will you express this same kind of faith in Jesus Christ today so you can be saved from hell? Jesus was born to die for you. The Bible takes us from

Christmas to Calvary (the cross). Don't miss the cross in the Christmas story.
Don't miss the salvation that Christ came to freely give you.

