



**Pastor Kelly Sensenig**

I'm sure most of us are familiar with the famous poem by Clement Moore that begins this way:

“Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.”

Of course, there are other versions of this well-known poem.

“Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house  
I searched for the tools to hand to my spouse.  
Instructions were studied and we were inspired,  
In hopes we could manage ‘Some Assembly Required.’

The children were quiet (not asleep) in their beds,  
While Dad and I faced the evening with dread:  
A kitchen, two bikes, Barbie's town house to boot!  
And, thanks to Grandpa, a train with a toot!

We opened the boxes, my heart skipped a beat....  
Let no parts be missing or parts incomplete!  
Too late for last-minute returns or replacement;  
If we can't get it right, it goes in the basement!

When what to my worrying eyes should appear,  
But 50 sheets of directions, concise, but not clear,  
With each part numbered and every slot named,  
So if we failed, only we could be blamed.

More rapid than eagles the parts then fell out,  
All over the carpet they were scattered about.  
'Now bolt it! Now twist it! Attach it right there!  
Slide on the seats, and staple the stair!  
Hammer the shelves, and nail to the stand.'  
'Honey,' said hubby, 'you just glued my hand.'

And then in a twinkling, I knew for a fact  
That all the toy dealers had indeed made a pact  
To keep parents busy all Christmas Eve night  
With "assembly required" till morning's first light.

We spoke not a word, but kept bent at our work,  
Till our eyes, they went bleary; our fingers all hurt.  
The coffee went cold and the night, it wore thin  
Before we attached the last rod and last pin.

Then laying the tools away in the chest,  
We fell into bed for a well-deserved rest.  
But I said to my husband just before I passed out,  
'This will be the best Christmas, without any doubt.

Tomorrow we'll cheer, let the holiday ring,  
And not have to run to the store for a thing!  
We did it! We did it! The toys are all set  
For the perfect, most perfect, Christmas, I bet!

Then off to dreamland and sweet repose I gratefully went,  
Though I suppose there's something to say for those self-deluded...  
I'd forgotten that BATTERIES are never included!"

What really happened on the night before the first Christmas? What was Jesus thinking about before entering the world and before His birth into humanity? What was Christmas Eve like for Jesus Christ before He entered the world. We know Luke's version and Matthew's version of the Christmas story. However, in Hebrews 10:5-7 we get the Christmas story from the lips of Jesus Christ. This is what He was reflecting on the "night before Christmas" some 2000 years ago.

## The Night Before Christmas



**Hebrews 10:5 -7**

**"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:"**

**"In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure."**

**"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."**

Amazingly, Hebrews 10:5-7 reveals to us "the night before Christmas" from the perspective of Jesus Christ (the Messiah). It informs us what Jesus was thinking about and experiencing in His heart before entering the world.

Here is a record of what Christ was contemplating on the original Christmas Eve: “Wherefore when he cometh into the world (*or as He were coming into the world - the night before Christmas*), he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”

We may not know this part of the Christmas story, but it is very interesting to contemplate. We know about the angels and the shepherds. We know about Caesar’s decree that led to Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem. We know about the manger and the Wise Men and the star that led them from the east. We even know about Herod’s evil plan to kill the baby Jesus. But here is a part of the Christmas story we may not know.

This gives us some insight regarding what Jesus thought about on the original Christmas Eve long ago, before His incarnation into the world, and what it would be like for Him entering the world. This is a different angle on the Christmas story. The passage Jesus quoted (Psalm 40:6–8) was a Messianic Psalm. Hebrews 10:5-7 loosely quotes Psalm 40:6-8 and applies it directly to the coming of Christ into the world. If we want to know what Christ was thinking prior to His birth, these verses provide a glimpse.

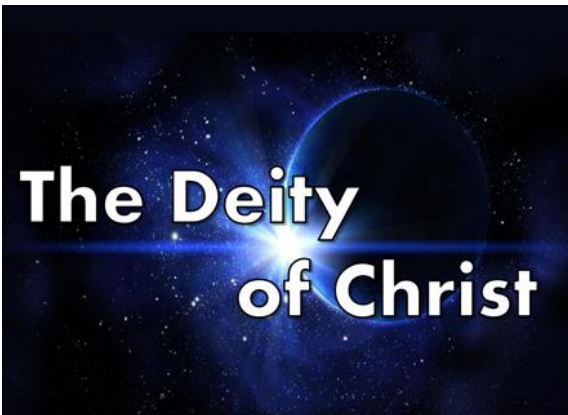
These verses express Messiah’s (Christ’s) commitment to offer His body as a sacrifice to God (at His First Advent – His incarnation) because animal sacrifices were inadequate to save people from hell. This Psalm prophetically anticipates some of Christ’s words and thoughts in relation to His First Advent (“when he cometh into the world”). This means these thoughts were essentially upon Christ’s mind before entering this world, since He was unified with the perfect plan of the Father in eternity past. So, in a very real sense, we might view these verses as “The Night Before Christmas.” Even before His incarnation Jesus was thinking about His entrance into the world and all that was associated with it.

In Hebrews 10:5–7, the author puts a variation of a quote from Psalm 40:6–8 in the mouth of Jesus as He comes into this world. Although the author is drawing the analogy between the repeated animal sacrifices and Christ’s sacrifice, these words

in verses 5-7 actually become the words and conclusions of Christ related to His incarnation. It's very clear that author is speaking about Jesus Christ.

What was Christ thinking about on the original Christmas Eve? There were three interesting thoughts that passed through Christ's mind.

### 1. I am entering the world to reveal the eternal God.



The writer of Hebrews chimes in by saying, "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world" or "as he was coming into the world." This has specific reference to the birth of Christ, when the Son of God took upon Himself human flesh (Jn. 1:14). Since the author concludes that Christ came into the world, this obviously means He existed prior to His incarnation as the preexistent

and eternal Son of God in Heaven. The author was reflecting on the Son's deity or the fact that He was God sharing the Father's glory and eternity in Heaven.

Hebrews 1:3 speaks of Christ's deity and personal existence in this way: "**Who being the brightness of his glory** (*Christ as God shares the same splendor and magnificence of the Father within the Godhead*), **and the express image of his person** (*Christ as God is the exact imprint, expression, and likeness of the Father in the sense that He shares the same essence and existence with the Father in the Godhead*), **and upholding all things by the word of his power** (*Christ as God sustains the universe, keeping it from exploding into oblivion*), **when he had by himself purged our sins**, (*Christ as God purified us through His perfect sacrifice*) **sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high**" (*Christ as God shares the throne with the Father being coequal in the Trinitarian oneness of the Godhead – Col. 2:9*).

But Christ was also reflecting on His descent into human history when He states: "a body hast thou prepared me." The purpose of giving Christ a body looks back into eternity when the Son agreed with the Father to bring about His perfect plan for the human race. This indicates that on the night before Christmas the Lord Jesus

Christ was reflecting on coming out of eternity as God incarnate and dwelling in a human body that the Father had prepared for Him in eternity past. In other words, Christ as God's Son was reflecting on what it would be like to take on human form (a body) after living with the Father throughout the eternal ages of time.

Because Jesus was the Son of God, sharing God's existence, we are reminded that only God can save us! And on that Christmas morning several thousand years ago Jesus as the eternal God entered the world. But Jesus as God's Son did not begin His existence at Bethlehem!

The Christmas verse of Isaiah 9:6 prophetically states: "For unto us a child is born (*His humanity*), unto us a son is given" (*His deity and eternal existence as the Son of God*). This means that as God the Son He existed in eternity past but was given to us at the time of His incarnation. The Son was given and God came down to earth in human form.

Jesus said in John 17:5:

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

This past glory is a reflection of Christ's deity – sharing the glory of Godhead with the Father.

When I was a young man, I heard Bible teachers speaking about the "councils of eternity." What they meant is that through the divine agreement among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Son would enter the human race, taking on a human body and form, and offered Himself as Savior of mankind (Titus 3:4). Christ in eternity past existed as part of the eternal Godhead. This is why Jesus said, "a body hast thou prepared me" (Heb. 10:5). In other words, He was coming out of eternity past and into eternity present with a body that the Father ordained He would one day possess. Again, Christ did not "begin" His existence at Bethlehem.

Again, Christ did not "begin" His existence at Bethlehem.

Micah 5:2 prophetically declares:

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.”

We need to get our theology straight at the Christmas season! The 2nd Person of the Trinity (God the Son) had no beginning. This is what Jesus meant when He declared in John 8:58: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” The Son existed eternally with the Father within the Godhead. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

I want to bring up a question at this point. Why is the birth of Christ recorded only in Matthew and Luke but not in Mark and John? The answer goes back to the purpose of these two gospels. Mark wants to emphasize Christ as the great servant (not His birth) who came to give his life for others. By contrast John’s gospel goes back to the ultimate beginning, far beyond Bethlehem (John 1:1-3), so Christ’s birth is not mentioned in John’s gospel. You see, everything starts with the eternal preexistence of Jesus as the true Word or revelation of God.

John 1:1 reveals:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

This verse literally reads, “God was the Word” (logos – revelation of God’s eternal existence, being, and nature). There are many mysteries related to all of this, things that we can only accept by faith, but let us remember one important fact. Christmas marks the human birth of Jesus, but it does not mark the beginning of His existence. “A body has thou prepared me” (Heb. 10:5). In other words, Christ would be given the body that the Father ordained and prepared to give Him in eternity past. As the Son of God, He existed with the Father long before He was conceived in Mary’s womb and born.

It would seem that Christ was reflecting on His eternal existence and the specific body the Father had planned (in the past counsels of eternity) to give Him when entering the human race in the lowly place of Bethlehem. There was an eternal Son

and eternal plan to give the Son a human body. Christ was reflecting on the specifics of these things the night before Christmas.

## 2. I am entering the world to express the grace of God.

What else was Christ thinking about before entering the world? On the night before the first Christmas (His entrance into the world) Christ was also reflecting on how He would display God's grace to the world through His suffering and death on the cross. He knew the plan and purpose of God for His entrance into the world.



Hebrews 10:5-6 goes on to say:

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure.”

In the night before Christmas, Jesus was contemplating His future gracious sacrifice on the cross which was the real reason He was entering the world or mankind. These verses are teaching that Jesus came to replace the failed Jewish system of animal sacrifice. In speaking to the Father Jesus clearly states: “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not.” In other words, “You did not want sacrifice and offering.”

This would have come as a shock to the Jewish priests who for centuries had offered bulls and goats as God had prescribed in the Old Testament. They did that because they sincerely believed that is what God wanted from them. They were not wrong in what they did, but they did not understand the truth being presented in the epistle of Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:4

“For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”



Hebrews 10:11 helps us to grasp the futility of the old Mosaic system:

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

Priests in the Old Testament spent their days in a routine of sacrifice and offerings— one after the other, morning, noon and night, day in and day out, week in and week out, month in and month out, year after year, decade after decade, century after century.

During the 1500 years from the time of Moses to the time of Christ, tens of thousands of lambs and goats and bulls were offered on the altar before God to make atonement (a temporary covering) for the sins of the people.

This is what the writer of Hebrews means when he says, day after day and time after time the same sacrifices were offered. So in the book of Hebrews, God in some sense is explaining His dissatisfaction with the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Covenant. God had instituted these sacrifices, yet they were never His ultimate intention. They were never designed to put away sins but rather to point forward to the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) who would take away the sin of the world through His sacrifice on the cross.

Animal blood can never take away sin. What does all that animal blood amount to? How many sins could it forgive? Not one! This is a shocking fact, a stunning reality, and a sobering truth.

In 1709 Isaac Watts wrote about this in a hymn called “Not all the blood of beasts.”

“Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain  
Could give the guilty conscience peace  
Or wash away the stain.”

Then he gives the Gospel answer in the next verse:

“But Christ, the heav’nly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away;

A sacrifice of nobler name  
And richer blood than they.  
Jesus was God's lamb."

Jesus entered the world to do what the animal sacrifices could never do. He came to deal with our sin once and for all. He came to actually remove all our sins forever through His sacrifice on the cross (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) and grant us eternal acceptance before the throne of God. This is because Jesus Christ as the Son of God has "passed into the heavens" (Heb. 4:14) and is now seated at God's right hand (Heb. 1:3) to declare He has "put away our sin" (Heb. 9:26), to provide us with no condemnation (Rom. 8:33-34) before God's throne and to grant us "eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). The fact that Jesus "sat down" beside the Father (Heb. 1:3) indicates His saving work was completed and that He provided the necessary sacrifice to grant forgiveness of sin and acceptance in God's presence forever.

In speaking to the Father in Hebrews 10:5, Jesus again says: "but a body hast thou prepared me." He was saying to the Father, "You have in the divine councils of eternity past prepared a body for me that will be just like a human body that could be sacrificed on a cross, and which would be the vehicle used to take away man's sins forever."

A body was prepared! On one level this means that Christ's birth was NOT an afterthought in God's plan. The cross was not an accident or an unforeseen tragedy that took Jesus by surprise. It was not a temporary setback that God figured out how to turn around for good. Rather, the cross was God's predetermined plan, before the beginning of time, long before the incarnation took place, to deal with our sin.

When James Montgomery Boice preached on this text, he pointed out that Christ came into the world knowing his purpose from the beginning. That could not be said of any other baby.

Someone remarked:

"A thousand times in history a baby has become a king, but only once in history did a King become a baby."

On a deeper level it means that Christ's body was prepared for Him so that years later He could offer himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:12, 28; 10:2) when he died on the cross.

1 Peter 2:24 reveals this about Christ:

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

The Old Testament lamb's body was prepared for sacrifice. In a similar way, Jesus came as the New Testament Lamb of God to take away our sin (John 1:29). In fact, Christ and His body was said to be "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). It was all arranged in eternity past – a body, a sacrifice, a Savior!

"His grace has planned it all,  
'Tis mine but to believe,  
And recognize His work of love  
And Christ receive."

A man shared this story. "One year at Christmastime, my wife wanted some wrapped boxes to use for decoration. She took eight empty boxes and had them wrapped to use as a decoration at our front door. Those boxes sat in front of our house, impeccably wrapped, topped with bows, but empty. I didn't worry about a thief coming and stealing any of the wrapped boxes in front of our house- there wasn't anything in them.

In a similar way, many people are well wrapped on the outside, but there is nothing going on within their hearts. They have not allowed Christ to soften their hearts and by faith respond to the grace that was displayed in Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Ephesians 2:8 -9 declares in unmistakable terms:

"For by grace are ye saved (*the expression of grace in the sacrifice of Christ*) through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

When Jesus entered the world grace came down to mankind. This is because Jesus Christ was the promised sacrifice who could rescue mankind from the penalty for His sins. He came to provide legal forgiveness of our sins before God's throne and save us from God's wrath and judgment.

Luke 2:11

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

In expressing amazing grace to the human race, Jesus Christ came to be your Savior. If you want to be delivered from hell in the next life, you can receive Christ's promised deliverance from God's wrath and judgment. When you place your own personal faith in the provisional sacrifice of Christ on your behalf, you can be born again, be given spiritual and eternal life, forgiven of all your sins, and be saved from hell.

"Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Ris'n with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by,  
Born that man no more may die;  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth."

### **3. I am entering the world to do the will of God.**



On that original night before Christmas, Jesus was also contemplating His obedience to the Father.

Hebrews 10:7 goes on to say:

"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."

Jesus came to do God's will which was to give Himself as a sacrifice on the cross, fulfilling the Old Testament sacrifices in the saving work of the New Covenant. In

Think about this. Jesus was not some dumb animal that offered its life without knowing what it was doing. He consciously, voluntarily, and deliberately offered His life in obedience to God's will.

In John 10:18 Jesus said this about His life:

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

In Luke 22:42 Jesus said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." The cup of Calvary's cross was the will of God for the Son of God.

We as parents often have certain plans for our children. A farmer may hope his sons take over the farm someday. A business owner may dream that his sons and daughters will join him in his business when they are old enough. Very often parents hope that their children will attend a certain college and follow in their steps. These hopes, while understandable, are nothing more than that - the hopes of parents who dream good things for their children.

But these dreams sometimes do not come to pass. Children often go their own direction. They might choose a different school. They choose a different career. They aren't interested in the family business. Sometimes the will of God for our children leads them in a different path. We must accept this and go with it!

Well, it was different with Jesus. Jesus came to do the Father's will. That was His number one priority. It's not like the Father had to convince the Son by saying, "Now I want You to go down there, be born of a virgin, be laid in a feeding trough, forgotten by the world, have Herod attempt to kill You, flee with your parents to Egypt, grow up in Nazareth, be rejected by Your own people, be hated, reviled, scourged and then crucified."

The Son knew all of this before He was born. This is the night before Christmas! And here is the wonder of it all - Jesus came anyway! He came to do God's will, knowing that it would mean His own bloody death on the cross, and He came anyway.

“Fragile finger sent to heal us  
Tender brow prepared for thorn  
Tiny heart whose blood will save us  
Unto us is born,  
Unto us is born.

So wrap our injured flesh around You  
Breathe our air and walk our sod  
Rob our sin and make us holy  
Perfect Son of God  
Welcome to our world.”

Christ came to earth with a definite purpose—to do God's will. He fulfilled that will when He died on the cross, bearing the sins of mankind, providing the provisional sacrifice necessary to save the unsaved.

Matthew 1:21

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

“There is a green hill, far away,  
Without a city wall.  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.

There was no other good enough,  
To pay the price of sin.  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven to let us in.”

Christ came to die! Nothing else explains the purpose for His birth. This was God's will for Jesus Christ. He came to perfectly fulfill God's will when no one else could do it. He was the only sacrifice that the Father would accept (Heb.9:14). No one

else could have done what Jesus did. No one else was qualified. No one else was willing. No one else was available.

The night before Christmas! This is what Jesus was reflecting on long ago before entering this world on that original Christmas Eve.

Hebrews 10:5 -7

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”

In the night before Christmas, His incarnation and entrance into the world, Jesus was reflecting on these very things:

- I am entering the world to reveal the eternal God.
- I am entering the world to express the grace of God.
- I am entering the world to do the will of God.

Harry Ironside liked to tell a story about Czar Nicholas I of Russia. It seems that the czar had a good friend who asked him to provide a job for his son. This the czar did, appointing the son as paymaster for a barracks in the Russian army. However, it turned out that the son was morally weak and soon gambled away nearly all the money entrusted to him. When the word came that the auditors were going to examine his records, the young man despaired, knowing that he was certain to be found out.

He calculated the amount he owed and the total came to a huge debt—far greater than he could ever pay. He determined that the night before the auditors arrived, he would take his gun and commit suicide at midnight. Before going to bed, he wrote out a full confession, listing all he had stolen, writing underneath it these words, “A great debt. Who can pay?” Then he fell asleep, weary from his exertions.

Late that night the czar himself paid a surprise visit to the barracks as was his occasional custom. Seeing a light on, he peered into the room and found the young man asleep with the letter of confession next to him. He read the letter and

instantly understood what had happened. He paused for a moment, considering what punishment to impose, then he bent over, wrote one word on the paper, and left.

Eventually the young man woke up, realizing that he had slept past midnight. Taking his gun, he prepared to kill himself when he noticed that someone had written something on the ledger. Under his words "A great debt. Who can pay?" he saw one word: "Nicholas."

He was dumbfounded and then terrified when he realized that the czar knew what he had done. Checking his records, he found that the signature was genuine. Finally, the thought settled in his mind that the czar knew the whole story and was willing to pay the debt himself.

Resting on the words of his commander-in-chief, he fell asleep. In the morning a messenger came from the palace with the exact amount the young man owed. Only the czar could pay. And the czar did pay.

Friend, only Jesus could pay our sin debt to God. This alone explains why "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Christ pitched his tent with us for 33 years that He might pay in His own blood the debt we owed because of our sin. We stand today precisely where this young man did. When we look at our sins and realize our hopeless condition, we say, "A great debt. Who can pay?" Then the Lord Jesus Christ comes into this world, steps forward, and signs His name to our ledger: "Jesus Christ." Only Jesus could pay. And He did pay our sin debt in full. This was the will of God for Jesus and the true reason for Christmas. This is why He came.

When Christmas arrives, families gather to open their gifts. God has a Christmas gift for all of us.

Romans 6:23

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

You can never truly enjoy Christmas until you can look in the Father's face and tell Him you have received His Christmas gift of eternal life. Have you ever done this? Have you ever opened your heart to God and received the free gift of eternal life?



“What shall I give him, Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I’d give him a lamb.  
If I were a wise man, I’d do my part.  
What shall I give him, I’ll give him my heart.”

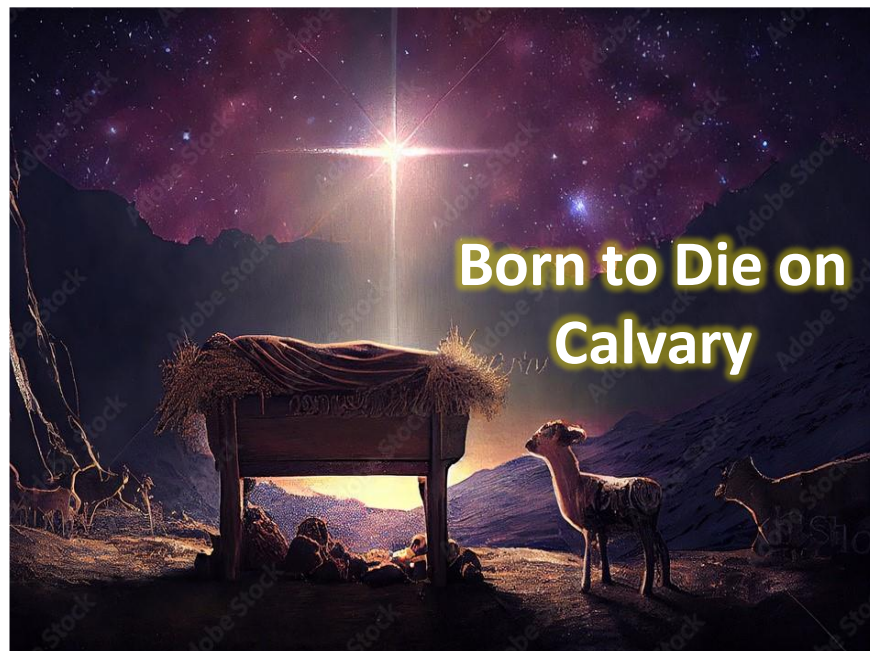
Have you ever given Jesus Christ your heart by expressing your faith in Him to be your Savior?

John 1:12

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name.”

To receive Christ means you believe on Him, trusting fully in Him to save you through His saving work. Would you like to do that right now? Is anything keeping you from believing on Christ and receiving Christ as your Savior? You must exercise faith in God’s provision through Jesus Christ to be saved and go to Heaven when you die.

Jesus was born for you. Jesus died for you. The Son of God came to make us the “sons of God” (His children) so that we might live with God forever in Heaven. If you want to become a son of God today, then truly and fully place your faith in Christ’s saving provision upon the cross and His resurrection to grant you salvation and eternal life forever.



“On the night Christ was born  
Just before break of morn  
As the stars in the sky were fading.  
O'er the place where He lay  
Fell a shadow cold and gray  
Of a cross that would humble a King.

Born to die upon Calv'ry  
Jesus suffered my sin to forgive  
Born to die upon Calv'ry  
He was wounded that I might live.”