

Have you Made THE Christmas Journey #2

Series: A Heavenly Christmas

Philippians 2:5-11

There are several things you can always count on seeing during the Christmas season. Houses covered up with Christmas lights, highways covered up with Christmas traffic, malls covered up with Christmas shoppers, fields covered up with Christmas trees, kids covered up with Christmas toys, either on a bumper sticker, or a car, or a billboard on the highway, or printed on a sweatshirt you will see these words, "let's put Christ back into Christmas."

Don't you get amused by that sign? If you truly understand Christmas then you understand you can't take Christ out of Christmas, because if you do, it really isn't Christmas. It is like saying, 'let's put the tomato back in tomato soup,' or 'let's put the bananas back into banana pudding.'

There is more to the glory of Christmas than just the story of Christmas. Christmas was just the beginning of a round-trip that Jesus took from heaven to earth and back to heaven.

You know the story. Joseph, the carpenter, and Mary, his engaged wife. They were making that journey because Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, had decreed that all the Roman Empire had to be taxed. So, they were going to Bethlehem. It was in that setting at the conclusion of that journey the Bible says that the Son of God, the Savior of the world, Jesus was born.

The Christmas story is a story of many journeys. It is the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It is the journey of the angels from heaven to earth. It is the journey of the shepherds from the hills and to the village of Bethlehem. It's the journey of the wise men from the east following a star for as much as two years.

The Bible tells us about the physical journey of the Lord when He was born. But the Bible also tells us about Jesus' spiritual journey as well. Jesus made a journey from heaven to this earth, from eternity to time, from spirit to body, from deity to humanity.

Our Christmas Series this year is called, ‘**A Heavenly Christmas.**’ We’re exploring the four great passages in the Bible which explain for us the meaning of the birth of Jesus. There is the Gospel of John, which we looked at last Sunday. There is Philippians 2 that we will study this morning. And God willing, next Sunday morning we'll look at Colossians 1, followed by Hebrews 1.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke, tell us the story of the birth of Jesus. These passages tell us about the significance of Jesus’ birth. What does Christmas mean to you and me, in the year 2025? What difference does it make? The question I have for you today is: **Have you made THE Christmas Journey?**

Unlike the disciples, the apostle Paul never physically met Jesus, but he did meet the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. He doesn’t talk about the birth of Jesus but rather shows us the full meaning of Christmas in Philippians 2.

Philippians 2:5-11

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” [NKJV]

Let’s PRAY

There's always some ladder to climb; the higher up we go, the more status we have. The status feels good. It makes us feel important. It gets us attention. If we don't have enough status, we'll even make some up, but here we see Jesus descending from the highest place in heaven.

Three dogs meet. The first dog says to the other two, "My name is Fifi—that's

F-I-F-I."

The second dog says, "My name is Mimi—that's M-I-M-I."

The third dog says, "My name is Fido—that's P-H-A-E-D-E-A-U-X."

What you are going to see this morning is something that most people miss every year and that is, the Christmas story begins with a babe in a cradle, who becomes a savior crucified on a cross and ends up at the right hand of God crowned as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Bible tells us that Jesus came down from heaven and was born in a cradle.

I. A Cradle.

VS. 5-6 says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,"

The Bible pulls aside the curtain of eternity and lets us see Jesus before He was born in Bethlehem. We found out last Sunday morning in John 1, ***"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God."***

Listen to some other verses. John 5:18, says, ***'For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.'*** [NIV]

John 10:38, ***'But if I do them (miracles), even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.'***

John 14:9, ***'Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' '[NIV]***

Jesus had these three attributes of God.

A. Jesus is in the FORM of God

Before Jesus was born, the Bible says He was in the form of God. The word 'form' refers to a Roman stamp. Back in the day, an official government document would be sealed with hot wax, and you would take a ring bearing the emperor's insignia and press it into that document and the impression in the wax would be the exact representation of the insignia on the ring. What Paul is telling us is that Jesus is the precise representation of God.

B. Jesus is EQUAL with God

Then in the latter part of that verse, it says He was equal with God. The Greek word for "**equal with God**" is the word, isos, from which we get the Isosceles Triangle. That is a triangle which has two sides which are equal. So, when it says Jesus Christ was equal with God, that means that in all ways He was God. He did not cease to be God when He was born into this world.

When you think about the birth of Jesus, you must keep in mind that there was no subtraction. Deity was not taken away from Jesus. He did not cease to be God. There was never a time when Jesus was NOT God. But there was a time when Jesus was a man and STILL God. There was never a time when Jesus Christ was man and not God. But there was a time when Jesus Christ was God and not man. So, there was no subtraction. Jesus was still equal with God when He was born.

There was no division. He was fully man and yet He was fully God. He was the God-Man. So, when Jesus was born, He was equal with God. There was no subtraction. He didn't cease to be God. There was no division. He wasn't part God and part man. But there was addition when Jesus Christ was born. He, who was God, now took upon Himself a human nature. Now you have deity in human form. You have God manifesting Himself in human flesh.

That's heavy theology. What does that mean? It means that Jesus Christ, in all ways, possessed the attributes of God.

1. God is all knowing. He is omniscient.
2. God is all powerful. He is omnipotent.
3. God is everywhere. He is omnipresent.

One kid said, "Tell me where God is." Another kid said, "I'll tell you where God is if you'll tell me where God isn't."

Psalm 139:7-12 says, ***'I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! 8 If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. 9 If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, 10 even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. 11 I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—12 but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you.'* [NLT]**

Jesus Christ possesses the attributes of God. He was in the form of God. He was equal with God. But that's not all. The story of the journey of Jesus Christ from heaven to the cradle is also the story that He had the attitude of God.

C. Jesus has the ATTITUDE of God

In verse 6 it says, ***"who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."***

What is robbery? It's taking something which doesn't belong to you. Jesus Christ didn't have to rob equality with God. It belonged to Him all along. Yet, the Bible says that even though it was not robbery for Him to be equal with God, He didn't hold on to it selfishly.

Application #1: Be Thoughtful that Jesus Identifies with us

Though he was a king, he took the form of a slave. It puzzled so many people who met him and even his own disciples. They were expecting the messiah to come as a conquering, reigning, king. They were expecting him to be born into royalty, to be surrounded with servants, not be a servant.

Instead, he took the form of a servant who lived just like a slave, because remember slaves owned nothing and Jesus never owned anything. In fact, he borrowed everything. He borrowed a place to be born. He borrowed places to sleep. He borrowed a boat to cross the sea of galilee. He borrowed a donkey to ride into town. He borrowed a room to have the lord's supper. He even borrowed

a tomb to be buried in.

We are told he was born in the likeness of man. The word 'likeness' means to '*be exactly like what it appears to be.*' Jesus was not a clone. He was not God in disguise. He was not just a facsimile of a human being. He was a real flesh and blood man just like you and me. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us.

Christmas means that Jesus understands what we are going through because He has been there. Jesus knows what it is to be mistreated. He knew what it was to be lied to and lied about. He knew what it was to be treated unkindly. He was tempted like you and I are. He understood sorrow. He knew what it was to weep over the loss of loved ones. He knew what it was to suffer.

Be Thoughtful that Jesus Identifies with us.

But the Christmas birth begs the Christmas question, "if Jesus was God why did he identify with us as a human being?" why would the son of God leave the glory of heaven to come to earth as the son of man? He left the place where he is exalted to come to a place where he would be executed?

He went from royal glory in heaven to the swaddling clothes of a cradle, then He went all the way to...

II. The Cross.

It says in verse 6, '***But he made himself of no reputation.***' With that statement you now have the descending rungs of the ladder of our Lord's humility.

A. The first rung of the ladder was the EMPTYING of Himself.

The Bible says he made himself of no reputation. Literally, it means He emptied Himself. Does it mean He emptied Himself of His attributes of God? No. Does it mean that He emptied Himself of His deity? NO! Colossians 2, verse 9, says, '***For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,***' [NIV]

If he emptied himself of any of his divine attributes when he became a man, he was less than God. But the gospels are clear that Jesus did not surrender his omniscience, omnipotence, or omnipresence. He gave up his glory. The same

glory of God, that shone around the angels. That's a word we talk about some, sing about, but only have the vaguest sense of understanding about. It's a sense of majesty, beauty and resplendence. It's described with words like riches and compared to precious metals and jewels.

James, John and Peter got just the briefest glimpse of His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Paul was blinded by the glory of Christ on the Damascus Road. John struggled to describe what he saw when the glorified Christ appeared to him in a vision while he was in exile on the island of Patmos, a vision which became what we know as the Revelation.

According to Jesus' prayer for himself, just before his crucifixion recorded in John 17:5, This self-emptying, this humbling, means that his preincarnate glory was veiled. ***"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."*** [NIV]

Jesus emptied Himself...

B. The second rung was the HUMBLING of Himself.

He was born to a humble peasant girl named Mary, who was married to a humble carpenter. Jesus was raised in a small town named Nazareth. He devoted His ministry to a ragtag group of disciples who didn't always get it.

Important people are inaccessible sometimes and understandably so. But Jesus came down to be accessible. Jesus brings God close to us. Blind people had access to Him. Deaf people had access to Him. Outcasts had access to Him. Lepers had access to Him. The good news of the Christmas journey is that you and I today have access to God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

What a journey! The first rung of the ladder was the emptying of Himself. The second rung was the humbling of Himself. In the last part of verse 8 it says, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

C. The bottom rung of the ladder was His OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH.

Jesus was God who became an infant, who went as low as He could go. ***"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death- even death on a cross!"*** (Philippians 2:8, NIV)

When Jesus was born, He not only came to the cradle, but Jesus Christ went to the cross. The Bible says He became obedient unto death.

Too often modern people today think about a cross as something on top of a steeple of a church. Or they think about a cross as a piece of jewelry on a necklace around their neck. But when you read the Scriptures, you will find that the cross was a place of excruciating pain, scorn, and humiliation.

Do you remember the guy called Dr. Death, Jack Kevorkian, who assisted people in committing suicide. Listen to his observation about the death of the Jesus Christ. He said, *'Do you think it's dignified to hang from wood with nails through your hands and feet? Had Jesus Christ died in my van it would have been more dignified.'*

What Kevorkian didn't understand was that Jesus didn't come to die a dignified death. Jesus came to die a horrible, humiliating death. It was a place of pain.

1. Jesus Died a Submissive Death

Jesus makes a most remarkable statement in John, chapter 10. In verses. 17-18 he says, ***'The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.'***

When Paul says "He became obedient unto death," it does not mean that he surrendered or became subservient to death. In fact, we are told in Heb. 2:14-15... ***'Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.'***

Jesus did not become obedient to death he became obedient to the father so that through Him we might be saved.

2. Jesus Died a Substitutionary Death

Jesus not only died because of me, He died instead of me. He died in my place.

"But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus died in our place. Jesus came down out of glory and went up on a cross, paid the penalty for my sins, that I might go free.

- Jesus Christ died an initial death, as the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.
- Jesus Christ died an official death, as God's selected substitute.
- Jesus Christ died a judicial death, the judgment death for others.
- Jesus Christ died a sacrificial death, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.
- Jesus Christ died a criminal death and even his own heavenly father turned his back on him.

Jesus died as He did to prove that he was the savior, the perfect sacrifice for sinners. Galatians 3:13, put it this way. ***"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" [NIV]***

Jesus died a submissive death...He died a substitutionary death...and

3. Jesus Died a Shameful Death

Jesus didn't die a peaceful death on a soft bed surrounded by friends and family. Almost unbelievably Paul says, ***"even the death of the cross."***

Crucifixion was not just a barbaric way of carrying out capital punishment. It was designed to bring total humiliating shame upon the person being crucified. Crucifixion not only had the goal of killing the individual but degrading him totally before he died. The condemned person was frequently flogged before he was crucified. Then he was forced to carry the crossbeam upon which he was going to

die, which just added insult to injury.

His clothes were parceled out to others so that he had to bear the humiliation of being naked in public. Once he was nailed to the cross, he was exhibited as powerless and was used for public entertainment. The victim was ridiculed; people could watch the humiliating body contortions and bodily excretions in public view. Many times, the bodies were not buried but left on the cross until the birds came and ate the flesh. In other words, crucifixion meant death with great dishonor, with public degradation, with total shame. That's why Heb. 2:2 says that ***"Christ endured the cross, despising the shame."***

From below Satan's demons assailed Him. From around Him, the people mocked and jeered and scorned and ridiculed Him. From above the heavenly Father turned His back, as Jesus cried, ***"My God, why have you forsaken me?"***

Jesus died for us to be saved! That's what Christmas is all about.

Application #2: Be Thankful that Jesus was Crucified for us

Jesus went from sitting on a throne, to lying in a manger, to hanging on a tree. He went from being a king with a crown, to a baby with swaddling clothes, to a criminal on the cross.

Why? Because your eternal life was more important than his earthy life. He gave up his place, so you could have your place.

In other words, the one person who had the right to demand his rights gave up his rights for us. When his father asked him to leave the glory of heaven, for the grief he would get on earth, He said, 'yes.' When the father asked him to die for sins that we committed He said, "yes." It was the father's will that he died, but it was the Jesus's decision to carry out His father's will. The Roman soldiers didn't forcibly take him to the cross. Jesus allowed them to take him.

Be thankful that Jesus was crucified for us...

Finally, the Christmas journey took Jesus all the way to,

III. The Crown. [verses 9-11]

That is great that we celebrate that babe in a cradle. We ought to be thankful for our savior who died on a cross. We ought to celebrate that Jesus came back from the dead, but if you are fully going to take the Christmas journey, you can't leave Jesus in a cradle, on a cross, or in a cave. You must put Him on His heavenly throne.

That is why Paul climaxes everything he says about Jesus with these words, ***"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name."*** (Phil. 2:9, NIV)

The word ***'therefore'*** is important. Since Jesus was willing to go to the lowest, he will wind up exalted as the highest. God has given Jesus the name which is above every name. Jesus is his earthly name. Lord is his eternal name. Jesus is his human name. Lord is his heavenly name. Jesus, he is our redeemer, but as lord he is our ruler.

Jesus was born as a human so he could relate to us. He died as a savior, so he could redeem us. He was raised as the lord to rule over us, and this is how the entire world is going to respond to him.

"That at the name of Jesus' every knee should bow,' in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is lord, to the glory of God the father." (Philippians 2:10-11, NIV)

A. Everyone is Going to Acknowledge His Lordship - V.11

The word 'confess' means 'to agree with and openly proclaim'. Every pagan tongue, every atheist tongue, every Buddhist tongue, every Muslim tongue, every humanist tongue, every demonic tongue; every angelic tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

One of these days, if they haven't already, everyone will bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Everybody will make the Christmas journey.

Not all the world loves Jesus, not all the world knows Jesus. Not all the world has acknowledged his Lordship, but it will. Much of this world is just going to observe

another religious holiday, because you cannot truly celebrate Christmas if you have not acknowledged the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

B. Everyone is Going to Accept His Lordship V.10

To bow the knee is a sign of obedience. It is an act of humility and respect. It is something you do when you are going to worship someone. That is why the wise men fell and worshiped the Jesus. They acknowledged his Lordship.

Paul points out exactly who is going to do this. When he said every knee, he meant of those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth. That means every angel in heaven is going to confess Jesus as Lord. That means that every person on earth who has ever lived, is going to confess Jesus as Lord, believers and unbelievers alike. That means that every demon in hell and the devil himself is going to confess that Jesus is Lord.

Everyone is going to acknowledge His Lordship...accept his Lordship, and...

C. Everyone is Going to Acclaim His Lordship

Then finally, we are going to acclaim his lordship. Paul goes on to say ***"it will all be done to the glory of God the father."*** The purpose of this universe, the purpose of all of history, the purpose of your life and mine is to bring glory to God the father.

Application #3: Be Mindful that Jesus is Magnified over us

An ordinary baby is no cause for celebration. A dead savior is not worth commemoration, but a risen lord calls for a coronation. So, Paul gives us the climax to this great passage when he says in v.9, ***"therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name."***

If you want to know the real story of Christmas, you cannot leave Jesus in a cradle. If you want to know the real story of Jesus, you cannot leave Jesus on a cross. For the cradle without the crown is useless, but the cross without the crown is senseless.

When Jesus Christ died on that cross, that wasn't the end of the journey. When Jesus left heaven, He did not have a one-way ticket. Jesus had a round-trip ticket. The journey wasn't complete until Jesus went all the way back to glory.

Christmas is more than a day in the year. It is the reason why we should put our focus on Jesus, place our faith in Jesus, and proclaim our future with Jesus all year round. Jesus was a king who was born, a king who died, and a king who is going to reign forever and ever.

Conclusion: There was a plastic surgeon named Dr. Maxwell Maltz. He tells a remarkable story about a man who had been injured in a house fire, while attempting to save his parents. In the process, his face was burned and permanently disfigured. He wouldn't let anyone see him - not even his wife.

She went to Dr. Maltz for help. He said to the woman, "I think I can restore his face to where he would be willing to see other people." She knew that wouldn't help, because the husband refused any help. She said, 'I want you to disfigure my face so I can be like him. If I can look like him and hurt like him, maybe he will let me back into his life.' Dr. Maltz was shocked! Of course, he denied her request, but he was so moved by this woman's love that he went to see the husband. He knocked on the door, and said, 'sir, I am a plastic surgeon, and I want you to know that I can restore your face.'

Still speaking through the door, Dr. Maltz told the man what his wife had done. He said, 'sir, she wants me to disfigure her face like yours so you will let her back into your life. That is how much she loves you.' After a moment of silence, the doorknob turned, and the man came out.

The way that woman loved her husband tells you just a fraction of how much God loves YOU. He became like us. He suffered like us, he physically died like us, and most important, **Jesus died for us**, so we could be like him. You cannot separate the birth of Jesus from the death of Jesus.

Without the incarnation, the crucifixion would have been meaningless, and the resurrection would have never happened. **Bottom Line: Christmas was the beginning of God's journey to us to save us from our sins.**

Christmas is not just what Jesus did for us, but what we should be doing because

we are in Him. The way he lived his life is the way we must live our life. That is why Paul began this entire passage with verse 5, ***"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."***

Jesus spent his entire life doing two things: obeying God and serving others, and so should we.

We are not God, but we can be gracious.

We are not heavenly, but we can be humble.

We are not sovereign, but we can be servants.

Because Jesus made the long journey from heaven to the cradle, and to the cross to die for your sins. He now is at God's right hand crowned with all the glory of heaven, and He invites you to make a short journey, repenting of your sins and by faith inviting Jesus into your heart.

So, let me ask you again. Have you made THE Christmas journey? You don't have to travel as far as Jesus did. In fact, the Christmas journey is very close. Even now Jesus is knocking on your heart's door. Will you let him?

Song – IN CHRIST ALONE