

*Note: This is a machine-generated translation. It may not match with the audio source.*

Good morning! It's a special joy for me when we can gather as one church, with both the English and Spanish services.

We have not combined our English and Spanish services since August of this year. And that was for the campaign that we had. What a joy to be together to celebrate Christmas.

Originally Joe De Leon, a former pastor of our church, was scheduled to preach for our bilingual Christmas message, but unfortunately, there were medical concerns that kept him from traveling.

Many of you were praying for Pastor Joe, but he could not be with us this morning. He has already told us that he is getting better and is grateful for his prayers for him and his family.

So, it falls to me to bring us the message this morning, and it's a privilege to do so, especially for a bilingual service.

As you can see, I am experimenting with something different today. Giving a bilingual message is a challenge for everyone, and there is no perfect way.

It's nicer, I think, to have a message where almost everyone can follow along and stay focused on what's happening.

It is very easy, when we are changing languages, to be distracted. So, my wish is that having a translation on the screen helps us all, even those who are just beginning to learn the other language.

For today's message we will have subtitles on the screen in the opposite language of what I'm speaking. My hope is that it will help you rather than be distraction, but I really want to get some feedback from you afterwards.

Before continuing with our time in the word of God, let us pray. And let's ask God to teach us today through His Spirit.

Father, you are so kind to us. Thank you for this special time we have as a church family. It's such a joy for us to be able to do this today.

We ask you to help us today to be attentive to Your word, and that our unity here would be centered in our Lord Jesus Christ.

If there is anything said today that is helpful to our souls, we ask that it would remain with us. And whatever distractions there are for this morning, we ask that you would help us overcome them.

We want all of you here today to leave with more love for Christ, and with more zeal to proclaim His truth in our communities. We ask everything in the name of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Each family has its own Christmas traditions. Those might include decorations or gifts or food. But as the family of God, we want our Christmas traditions to always include a reminder of the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ.

I do not believe that the apostles imagined that we would have a special day each year to remember the birth of Jesus. But that's not to say that they did not understand how important that event was.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. "

Paul did not celebrate Christmas in the same way we do, but he definitely understood the meaning of Jesus' coming.

In Latin, the term for "arrival" or "appearance" is "adventus." That's where we get the more modern word "Advent."

Some churches and families celebrate Advent during this season. That is a time to remember and anticipate the coming of something.

From a Christian perspective, Advent is a reminder and an anticipation of the coming of Christ. But in a secular context, it simply becomes a time to celebrate the coming of Christmas.

My wife was in the store recently and she saw a book for children that had an Advent calendar, and each day had a different story.

Whoever made that Children's Advent book recognized how much children, and adults as well, like to hear stories. And Christmas is typically a fun time to tell our children stories.

Our children can hear stories of snowmen, or reindeer Santa Claus, or anything else, but infinitely more important of all that, is the true and biblical story of Jesus Christ.

Our focus this morning is going to be the true story of Christmas. This is the story of the Bible.

What we normally say "the Christmas story" is not a story that exists by itself. It's part of a much bigger story. It is a story that includes everything that exists.

If you're visiting with us this morning, and you do not normally attend Bible-teaching church, what are you going to hear today is much more than a story about baby Jesus born in Bethlehem. You'll hear the story of the world.

To understand the true meaning of the birth of Jesus, we have to go back to the beginning of everything.

In order for us to really understand what the biblical Christmas is all about, we have to go back to the beginning of everything. We need to look at the entire story of life.

To better understand the great history of the world, I want to divide it into 7 sections. They are like 7 chapters in the history of the world. We will cover each chapter briefly and see why the coming of Jesus is so important. Chapter 1 is called "**Paradise**."

Chapter 1 is called "**The Paradise**." This is the way God created the world. This is the opening chapter of the Bible. God made everything, and it was good. And the best part of His creation was mankind.

God put man and woman in a paradise. He blessed them, and gave them the responsibility to express the love and wisdom of God here on earth. And, to begin with, God put them in a beautiful garden. They had everything they needed.

The man and the woman were set up to live forever in a beautiful garden, enjoying a wonderful, loving relationship with one another, and more importantly, with God Himself. It was joyful, unbroken fellowship.

But, that brings us to the next chapter of the story. After paradise, comes chapter 2-**The Problem**.

Chapter 2 of the story is "**The Problem**. Paradise did not last. The first problem was Satan, who opposes everything about God. Satan deceived the man and the woman, leading them to distrust God and disobey Him. The Bible calls that "sin."

Then we have the problem of Satan, and we have the problem of sin. And because of that, there came a third problem, the problem of suffering. God is just, then sin receives a punishment.

God holiness will not let go unpunished. So, the result of mankind's disobedience was a curse upon the world, a separation from the paradise of God. Pain came into the world, sickness and death. And mankind's nature was corrupted.

That's because we have so many problems today. The sin of man and the pain of life are connected. We have natural disasters, and we have nations at war, and we have problems in our families.

This is why life is so difficult and full of tension. All the negative things in this life came as a result of mankind's sin. We had a paradise, but we caused the problems.

However, when God proclaimed a punishment on earth, he also prophesied a solution. And that brings us to chapter 3-**The Promise**.

After the paradise, and the problem, chapter 3 is "**The Promise**." God promised to fix it. I have promised that a man would come one day and destroy Satan and the problems that were brought into this world.

The history of the world is basically to see the tension between the problems of man and the world and the promise of God. That is one of the great themes of the history of the bible.

Mankind continues in wickedness, so God floods the world in judgment. But His promise remains. God has not forgotten what I've promised.

Nations begin to form, and still do not want to thank God. Then God confuses their languages, and scatters them throughout the earth. But the promise of God remains. Some, still waiting for the fulfillment of the promise.

And in His faithfulness, God repeated His promise, and I specified it. The awaited Restorer would eat man named Abraham. Abraham would become a great nation, and that nation would produce a king and would bless the entire world.

A few generations later, God specified His promise again. The promised King was to come through the tribe of Judah.

Well, if you're familiar with the history of Israel, you know that they had many problems. They were enslaved in Egypt, and they struggled to walk in faith and obedience to God. But God continued to preserve them.

Through Moses, God delivered them from Egypt, and gave them His law. Moses was not the promised Savior, but it was an image of what was to come. The people of Israel, and the whole world, still expected a greater Prophet.

Well, as time went on, Israel finally got a king for itself. And their hopes were that if they got the right kind of king, they could start moving back toward the blessing and the peace that God had promised them.

The first king was in disaster. It did not please God. But the second king was fair. He was a man of God. That king was David. And because of his righteousness, God makes a promise to David as well.

King David was not the perfect King that Israel was waiting for, but God's promise was that the end, perfect King would come from David's line. So now, Israel and the world are waiting for a promised Son of David.

Well, the sons of David continued to be sinners. None of them was the perfect and promised king. And instead of leading people to justice in the ways of God, the kings of Israel led people to idolatry and war.

Eventually, because of the people's rebellion of the nation of Israel was divided and taken into captivity by Assyria and Babylon and Persia. Things were not getting better. They were getting worse.

But during all this time without hope, God had not forgotten His promise. And he sent prophets to remind people. "This is not the end. Your nation will be restored. And the whole world will return to peace. David's son, the perfect King will come. "

One of the prophets, named Micah, even told the people where He would be born. The eternal King would be born in the city of Bethlehem.

Perhaps it was a surprise for people to think that a glorious king was born in such a humble winepress. A town whose name means "house of bread."

The basic message of the Old Testament is that Israel can not stay faithful to God, but God remains faithful to them and to His promises. A perfect king will come, and He will reign forever and ever.

That is the third chapter in the history of the world. God makes His promises, and the people are waiting. After the last prophet of the old testament, 400 years passed. Maybe some stopped believing, but some did not lose faith.

And this brings us to the center of the story, chapter 4. Chapter 4, we can call "**The Presence**." This is about the presence of God Himself. This is the true story that we remember at Christmas.

God had manifested to His people before, in different ways. But at last, God Himself would demonstrate His personal presence with His people. Therefore, chapter 4 is called "**The Presence**."

Turn with me now to Luke chapter 1. Keeping in mind the grand story of everything and how the people are waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled, let's read what happens in Luke 1: 26-27.

26In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27a a virgin committed to marry a man named Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Luke wants to know from the very beginning that we are dealing with a family in the line of David.

In fact, in chapter 3, Luke gives us the genealogy of Mary, and shows us that she is also in David's line.

Well, let's see what the angel says to Mary. Luke 1: 28-And I came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel will tell you what kind of favor he has received. Verse 30-And the angel said to her, "Fear not, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31You shall conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus.

Now, the blessing is more than just having a son. It comes in the identity of this Son. Verse 32-He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David

The name "Jesus" means "the Lord saves." Then this child will be a Savior. But to say that he will have the throne of David is to say that he himself will be the one that everyone expected. This is the King who will bring a blessing to the whole world.

This King will have a universal and eternal rule. He will reign over Israel and over the nations forever.

Verse 33-And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom shall have no end.

Well, Mary responds with faith, but she has a question. Verse 34-And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" So, Mary believes this will happen immediately, but the marriage has not been finalized yet.

Verse 35-The angel answered him: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; that is why the Child that will be born will be called Son of God.

This Child will not be conceived in the ordinary way. And He will not inherit to sinful nature, like every other man.

This child will be God in human flesh. That is what it means to be called "Son of God." God himself is going to fulfill His promise. And for Him, nothing is impossible.

Verse 38 tells us how Mary responded-And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let's be to me according to your word. "And the angel departed from her.

Well, as we can imagine, having a pregnant virgin is a scandal. And Jose had to make a decision. What does he do with Maria? Well, the Gospel of Matthew tells us that he planned to divorce her secretly. But God sent him an angel.

The angel appeared in Joseph's dream and confirmed to him what the angel had told Mary. The child is from the Holy Spirit. You shall call him Jesus. And He will save the people from their sins. What does that last part mean?

What does it mean to say that it will save the people from their sins? Well, that takes our mind to the beginning of the story. Satan brought sin into the world. And through sin we have death and suffering. But this is the one who is going to beat all of that.

And He's not just going to change this world externally. He's going to change people on the inside as well. He's going to undo the effects of without before God and in the world, and He's going to free people from the cause of without in their own hearts.

This Son is the fulfillment of the promises of God. This is He who will make up the problem of the world. It will return us to Paradise with God and with the rest of the world.

You see, what makes the Christmas story truly special is not the details about the events. It's not the drama of a journey to Bethlehem or the

tenderness of a newborn baby. What makes this story unique is the identity of the Baby.

Matthew tells us that this baby is Emmanuel. It is "God with us." This is the coming of God's presence with the world.

Well, Luke continues the story in chapter 2. The Roman Caesar called for a census, and so every head of household was forced to return to his hometown to register. And for Joseph, being in the line of David meant taking his family to Bethlehem.

The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem would be about 80-100 miles, depending on the direction they took. And they probably traveled with a caravan, and lasted more than a week to get there.

Luke 2: 6-And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The word used to describe an "inn" can also describe a bedroom. So, they were probably staying with relatives, but because of the census there was not a free bed. Then, they put the baby in a manger.

They just had to make do with what they could. So, in order to lay the baby in a comfortable place, maybe some well-meaning uncle stuffed some extra grass in the feeding trough and said: "Here, use this."

Everything that night was so normal, so ordinary. But we know that it was a very special day. And in the joy and mercy of God, He sends an invitation.  
Luke 2: 8

Luke 2: 8-And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

Verse 10-But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for I bring you glad tidings of great joy that will be for all the people; 11 For a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, was born to them today in the city of David.

Again, this is the fulfilment of God's promise. This is the Savior. This is the Christ, the Anointed One, God's perfectly chosen representative upon the earth. He is the Lord. He is God in human flesh.

Well, they are good news, but what does it matter to know what has happened if they can not experience it? Where is this baby? The angel gives them a key.

Verse 12-And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

But before the shepherds can run away, the announcement continues. 13 Suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is pleased."

And once the angels disappear into heaven, the shepherds make their way into the city and look for the Baby. And they found Him, just as they were told, lying in a manger.

Let's go back to the words of the angels. They proclaimed that this child would bring peace to the world, peace to those of all the nations to whom God is pleased. What kind of peace were they talking about?

How does someone gain access to the peace that the angels promised this child would bring? Well, the greatest peace you or I could possibly have not financial peace. It's not even peace in our families.

The most significant peace we could have is peace with God. God opposes sin. God is always going to judge sin. And because of our sins, we all deserve eternal judgment. God has been patient, but He is also holy and exalted.

Well, how does it look like you and me, find peace with a perfectly righteous God? For than answer, we need to continue the bigger story. The birth of Christ is at the center, not at the end. Chapter 5 is called "**The Passion.**"

We have paradise, the problem, the promise, and the presence. And chapter 5 is called "**The Passion.**" This chapter not only speaks of the love

of God, but also of the suffering of Jesus. He lived a perfect life, but died as a sinner.

The passion of Jesus Christ is a reference to His suffering and His death by crucifixion. This was God's perfect plan to restore the people and save them from their sins. No demands a penalty. Without demands judgment.

But in the love of God, Christ paid the price of sinners. Being God, His perfect life paid for all his people. Using the words of the angels, he brought peace to those in whom God is pleased. Who is that group?

Who is that group with whom God is pleased? The Bible tells us it is those who believe in Jesus. Those who believe, not just in the Christmas story, but in the larger story of God.

To believe in Jesus is also to believe that he did not stay dead. On the third day Christ rose from the dead, demonstrating His power and authority over sin and death, especially that it was part of the curse. Jesus is the King that God promised.

The resurrection of Jesus was God's way of authenticating everything about Him. What Adam (the first man) brought into the world, Jesus (the second Adam) came to undo. Jesus came to restore mankind. And He is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

God's call in his life is to surrender to Jesus Christ. God calls you to turn from your sins, to repent for your sinful life, and to believe in what Jesus Christ has done.

This life is not there there is. And if you live like it is, it will end in judgment. Come to Jesus Christ. Believe that I died for a wicked sinner like you. Turn from your sin, and He will restore your fellowship with God. God will adopt you as His child.

Yes, but "what happened to that paradise? Even if I believe in Jesus, this life is not going to be composed automatically. Where is that paradise that God has promised us? "

Well, that's chapter 6 in the story. We could call it "**The Patience**." This is the gap between what Jesus did when He first came to this world, and what He will do when He comes again.

Chapter 6, which is called "**Patience**," is a reminder of the patience of the saints, who believe in Jesus, and of God's patience for sinners who reject Him. God is patient. And the more that is expected, the more they come to salvation.

2 Peter 3: 9 says: The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient to you, not wishing that any should perish, but that should all reach repentance.

Well, the patience of God will end one day, and His judgment will come. But all those who have received Christ will be saved for eternity. And if they have already died, they will be resurrected, just like Christ. Everyone will receive a new body.

And when Christ appears, He will take His rightful place on the throne of David. And all who rejected Him will be cast out, including Satan and all his demons. And He will bring in the new heavens and the new earth.

This brings us to the last chapter of the story of God. Chapter 7 is called "**Perfection**."

The final chapter is called "**The Perfection**" because it points to the eternal perfection Jesus will bring when He comes again. And if you'd like to read more about it you can look at the final chapters of the Bible Revelation 20, 21, and 22.

Speaking of that coming time, Revelation 21: 3 says: God will dwell among them and they will be His people, and God himself will be among them. He is talking about a restored relationship.

Verse 4 continues: He will wipe away every tear from his eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

We could say in other words, that the end of the story says, "And they all lived happily ever after." When does that end come?

When will Christ return? Well, three times in the final chapter of the Bible, here's what Jesus says: "I am coming soon."

"I come soon. I come soon. "Jesus came once, to save us from the penalty of sin, if we receive it. And it will come once again to finish His story. Let's do our part to proclaim that story to everyone who will hear us. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank You because we know the whole story. You have made it known to us. We know the true significance of that little baby in the manger.

Your heart and your desire is that all here today recognize Your truth, and that they recognize their sin, and that they recognize the salvation that You have provided in Christ Jesus. Open the hearts of those who do not know You.

Open the hearts of those who are running from you. And open our mouths to call them to Yourself with love and gentleness. We ask that we would take a joyful part in the eternal story You have written.

We ask everything of you in the name of the only Redeemer, Christ Jesus. We ask for the glory of our King. Amen.