



## Christ the Babe Was Born For You

**Advent 2015**

**Isaiah 9:6**

**David Sunday**

**December 24, 2015**

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Lord, it is wonderful beyond imagination that the eternal God Who created all things without beginning or end came into our world and created in the womb of the virgin Mary the body of a Child. You became Man, joining Your divinity to our humanity so there might be one Mediator between God and man Who can bridge the gap caused by our sin—the Man Christ Jesus. We thank You for Your indescribable gift. We pray that we would be filled with wonder and amazement and that You would receive the glory that is due Your name from our lives and our lips this week. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The nostalgic notes of "I'll be Home for Christmas" remind us that Christmas is a time of travel for many people, going home and meeting with loved ones. If you are traveling, we pray that you would go with a strong sense of God's peace and presence and that you would be filled with the warmth of His love for you.

Traveling is also a significant motif in the difficult story of Christ's nativity. We think of the angel Gabriel who traveled from heaven to earth to bring the announcement of the Savior's birth. We think of Mary, arising and going with haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth in Judea—perhaps in part to avoid the suspicious, accusing stares of her neighbors in Nazareth as they watched the Baby growing inside the womb of this unwed mother.

We think of the pilgrimage to Bethlehem, where Joseph and Mary went to be registered according to the decree of Caesar Augustus. Later they would flee to Egypt and then return to Nazareth. We also remember the magi who came a long distance from the East to bow at the feet of Mary and the Child, worshiping Him with their costliest treasures. Herod's soldiers also traveled as they carried out the murderous decree of their wicked king. There's a lot of traveling in the Christmas story.

But Peter Mead has pointed out that there are two journeys that stand out and matter most in this story. The first is the journey of God's Son down to earth. He traveled all the way

from the heights of heaven's throne to the depths of a crude manger in a lowly cattle stall. *"This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger"* (Luke 12:2), messy and dirty and smelly. That's where the Lord came.

There's a hymn that says, "Lo, within a manger lies He who built the starry skies." He traveled far. *"Sacred Infant, all divine, what a tender love was Thine, thus to come from highest bliss down to such a world as this."* (See, *Amid the Winter's Snow* by E Caswell). No one has ever traveled further. No one has stooped so low or sacrificed so much as He who left heaven's splendor to dwell here in earth's squalor to experience our poverty, need and wretchedness.

The Gospel of John says, *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14). What a great journey God's Son made to bring us salvation!

I love the way Ray Ortlund described the gritty, undiluted humanity of the Incarnation of God the Son. We have to grapple with the fact that God became Man. He became human. Ortlund describes it like this:

He came out sticky and wet, with wrinkled skin and a red face. His first sensation may have been the smell of manure in the stall where His mother lay. He had tiny hands that would grow and work hard, and then be ripped by nails on the cross. He had tiny feet that would learn to crawl and stand and walk, then run—not away from the Father's will, but eagerly toward His will, all the way without holding back or even hesitating once.

As He grew, He scraped His knees, bumped His head and had to be comforted. He learned to pray and depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. He was tempted and He overcame. He went to school and learned from His teachers. He concentrated hard and memorized the Bible.

He worked with Joseph in the family business and became a carpenter. He got splinters in His hands. He learned the difference between various grades of lumber. He dealt with customers who were hard to please and ungrateful and short-changed Him.

People whispered behind His back about His questionable birth, but He didn't strike back when they tried to embarrass Him. God had come down in humility and true glory out of love for us, and His love made Him willing to get hurt.

What a wonderful, wonderful mystery: the majesty and the mercy of our God! The magnificent Master Craftsman of all creation comes down into the ruins of this created world to make a new creation. We marvel at the journey of God from heaven to earth. It tells us He is a

God Who is accessible. He's a God Who travels the distance. He's a God Who spans the gap caused by our sin. He's a God Who draws near to us. He's a God Who steps into our shoes. He's a God Who clothes Himself with our frailty, puts on our skin, bears our griefs and sorrows and shoulders our burdens so He can lighten every load we bear.

Even if you're not yet convinced that the Christian faith is true, doesn't this story at least make you wish it were true? Isn't there something in this story that captures your imagination and fills you with wonder and leads you to behold beauty? I tell you tonight, this story is true. God has come down into our world to redeem our humanity. It's the greatest journey ever taken. It's the epic journey of all time—Christ's journey to come and rescue hell-bound sinners from God's wrath for our sin and to make us part of His family.

It was the greatest journey ever taken, but that journey makes possible another journey that is also great and unimaginable. Because God came down to us—because He made that journey to us—it is now possible for sinners like us to make that journey to Him one day. It's possible for us because He came from heaven to earth to one day go from earth to heaven.

He came down to us so that we might go to Him, enjoy Him and have fellowship with Him. He came so we might experience His presence in our lives and know Him as our Father, just as He is Jesus' Father. He came so we might enjoy the communion that Father, Son and Holy Spirit have had together for all eternity. This is an amazing journey as well, that our humanity can be lifted to the heights of heaven's throne because He came down to us to redeem us.

Think about that for a minute. Think what it would be like if someone remarkable came to visit you, to bring you the costliest gifts, to bless you with light and life and joy and peace. Think if he came to your house, knocked on your door, went through much danger, toil and weariness to bring these gifts to you and to enjoy fellowship with you. How rude would it be to leave him out in the cold and to refuse to welcome him in?

Yet John tells us that's exactly what we did. John says He came to His own and He was in this world that was made through Him, yet we did not receive Him. We did not recognize Him. He came to His own people and His own people did not receive Him. But He did not go away. Instead He went to the cross where He died for our sins, and then rose from the dead.

And He still comes today. He still draws near to people today. He still enters in today—at the end of 2015. He still welcomes sinners into a relationship with Him today. "To us a Child is born. To us a Son is given. He is a gift that God wants you to take very personally. He's been given to guide you with wonderful counsel, with wisdom that can transform your life.

He's here to be your Mighty God, to defeat the enemies of sin and death and hell that separate you from God's love and to bring you into relationship with God that nothing can defeat and nothing can sever. He's here to be Father-like in His care for you forever—your Everlasting Father. And He's here to be your Prince of Peace, to rule over all the wind, waves and turmoil of your life—everything that causes stress, everything that troubles your mind—and to say to you, "Peace, be still."

Christ the Babe was born for you, and every year at Christmas God invites you and me "to ponder anew what the Almighty will do if with His love He befriend thee" ("Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," by Joachim Neander). God has befriended us. He has come to us at Christmas and He is able to do for us exceedingly beyond what we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

What does it mean to welcome Christ into your life, to receive Him as your Savior? It means trust Him to forgive your sins. It means believe in Him to heal your wounds and your hurts caused by the brokenness and sin of this world. It means to lean on Him to fill your loneliness. It means to look to Him to relieve your stress, lift your burdens and give you life more abundantly (John 10:10). It means to look to Him as the Treasure that far exceeds anything you could buy in this world and to find your satisfaction in Him alone.

I tell you, friends, Jesus is real. Jesus is alive. He is here tonight, and He is coming again into this world. He's going to make all things new. He's going to make a new creation. And tonight He can make a new creation out of you, if you will put your trust in Him.

There's a wonderful poem that describes the power that is in Jesus for every sinner who trusts in Him:

That night when in Judean skies  
The wondrous star did shine so bright  
A blind man moved while in his sleep  
And dreamed that he had sight

That night when magi traveled far  
While o'er the house the star drew near  
A deaf man stirred in slumber's spell  
And dreamed that he could hear

That night when safe in Joseph's arms  
The little King was held secure  
A captive child smiled in her sleep  
And dreamed that she was pure

That night when o'er the newborn Babe  
The tender Mary rose to lean

A leper slept a happy sleep  
And dreamed that he was clean

And all the while the dreamers dreamed  
The Child Who would redeem them  
Lay weeping for the world  
He would waken

That night when in the manger lay  
The Son of God Who came to save  
A man moved in the sleep of death  
And dreamed there was no grave

[And Dreams by Michael Card, 2013]

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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