

HEBREWS 10:5-7

CHRISTMAS ACCORDING TO JESUS

“When Christ came into the world, he said,

‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;
in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
Then I said, “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.”’¹

The best attested birth in the history of the world is that of Jesus of Nazareth. Though no physician attended the birth, all mankind knows that something momentous occurred under those leaden Judean skies the night He was born. Though no birth certificate is registered in musty files hidden in some political capital, His birth was noted in the annals of Heaven itself. Though no showers honouring the birth of this child were given for the mother, yet the birth was acknowledged by both poor and rich, by rude shepherds and polished magi.

Scofflaws would have us believe that this birth which we celebrate is nothing more than a fable. Modern mockers would relegate this most meaningful event to mere myth much as we have fairy tales about Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy. The ignorance of such hecklers is revealed when they attempt to discredit the Word of the Living God. They assert that His birth is known to only two writers—Matthew and Luke. Knowledgeable readers realise the fallacy of this position, for the birth of this One is well attested throughout the whole of the written Word.

Among the places where the birth of Messiah is acknowledged is a brief passage in the Hebrews letter. The writer of the letter cites **THE FORTIETH PSALM**, a prophecy relating to Messiah, in order to present the biblical faith of Christians as seen through the eyes of Messiah. I recommend to you that the verses of our text have ever presented Christmas according to Jesus.

THE CHRIST DID COME INTO THE WORLD. The first truth attested in this passage is that Christ did come into the world. A man named Jesus of Nazareth did walk the dusty Judean roads. He did preach a message of righteousness, calling men to faith in the Living God. Those who knew Him best received Him as the promised Messiah.

John says of Jesus, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” [**JOHN 1:11**]. The Christ was born under the law, a reference to His heritage as a Jew [**GALATIANS 4:4**]. Jewish society was not unaware of the promised birth; even the chief priests and teachers of the law knew where Messiah was to be born [see **MATTHEW 2:3-6**]. They knew the timing of His birth! Their knowledge failed to equip them to look for His arrival. They would have been thrilled to receive One who would affirm them and exalt them, but a Saviour who would fulfil prophecy was not at all welcome.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

You need to know that if the Christ has not come He shall never come. The whole of the Old Testament points to His coming. From the protoevangelium to the last prophetic word delivered by Malachi, God points to the coming of His Anointed One. The whole account of humanity narrows and narrows to a point finer than the point of a spear until it focuses on a young Jewish girl.

When our first parents sinned and plunged the race into rebellion, God in mercy promised that the Seed of the Woman would crush the serpent's head [see **GENESIS 3:15**]. As we trace the promise of God we see His sovereign choice of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob to form the lineage of the Messiah. The lineage of the Christ veers to include Judah [**GENESIS 49:10**] and through Judah we are introduced to Boaz who married Ruth who bore Obed, the father of Jesse who was the father of David.

David received the promise that the Anointed One would be one of his descendants [**2 SAMUEL 7:11b-16**]. Carefully, ever so carefully, God superintended the lineage and recorded that lineage in the accounts given in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Joseph was a descendant of David through Solomon [see **MATTHEW 1:1-16**] and thus any child who bore his name would hold legal claim on the throne of Israel. Mary was also a descendant of David through Nathan [see **LUKE 3:23-37**] and therefore avoided the curse placed on Jehoiachin, also known as Coniah [see **JEREMIAH 22:24-30**]. Thus, Jesus of Nazareth had both legal and theological claim to the throne of David.

Any scholar could have verified that the firstborn son of this young woman would hold a strong claim as the Messiah, and the claim was only validated through wedding Joseph. Moreover, the location of the birth of the Anointed One was known to Jewish sages. When Herod asked the chief priest and the teachers of the law where the Christ was to be born, they did not plead for time to return to musty tomes where they might study what had been written. Immediately they responded that the child would be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet Micah had prophesied in his ancient prophecy [**MICAH 5:2**]. These scholars even knew the time of His birth, for Daniel had accurately prophesied the time when He would present Himself [**DANIEL 9:25, 26**].

Perhaps it was Daniel's prophecy which disturbed these scholars and caused them to discount the coming of the Messiah. Daniel prophesied His presentation, but he also indicated that the Anointed One would be cut off. The words are strongly suggestive of One who surrenders His life instead of conquering the enemies of the state. The scholars appear to have been looking for a political entity instead of anticipating a theocratic reign. They thought as mere men, failing to see the beauty and the glory of God in presenting this Messiah as a sacrifice for sin. This is the message of Christmas which is lacking in far too many churches even in this day remote from His birth. The Christ was presented so that He might give His life as a sacrifice for sinful man. That is the message which Jesus Himself, speaking through the words of our text, would emblazon across skies growing ever darker as sin seemingly grows more powerful in this day.

GOD BECAME MAN. What transformed this brief life from being just that of another unknown Jewish prophet to One who divided all human history is the fact that He was unique. I don't say that this Jesus was unique in the sense that He was a good man or even that He presented a challenging message. He was man—indeed, He was perfect man. He thirsted and hungered and knew fatigue; but He was so much more than mere man. This One was also very God. He was the unique God-man.

This Jesus is very God. Throughout the Word of God He is presented as God. He called God His Father and religious Jews understood that by that statement He made Himself equal to God [see JOHN 10:22-33]. There is not a hint of arrogance either in His repeated conversations with the Father or in His intimacy with God the Father. This One demonstrated power over creation, revealing His divine nature. He walked on the water, calmed raging storms, turned water into wine and multiplied loaves and fishes so that thousands were fed. The record stands that He is God of creation.

When John the Baptist was in prison and discouraged he dispatched some of his disciples to verify the identity of Jesus. When they inquired of Jesus as to His identity, He said, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me” [MATTHEW 11:4b-6]. Without question, Jesus is God with power over the body of man.

Confronted by the powers of darkness this Jesus freed men, women and children held captive by demonic powers [cf. MATTHEW 8:31; MARK 16:9; LUKE 9:42]. He is God over the world of spirits. By His resurrection, He is “declared to be the Son of God in power” [ROMANS 1:4], and He has received authority to judge all mankind [JOHN 5:24-30].

If He is God over nature and God of the human body and God of spiritual beings, should it be thought a surprising thing that He is able to forgive sin? Indeed, this One is granted authority to have life in Himself [see JOHN 5:26]. Perhaps you recall the incident recorded of one particular time when Jesus did forgive sin.

It was in Capernaum where Jesus often resorted. A crowd had surrounded the house in which He was staying. Some men carrying a paralysed friend tried to enter into His presence; but because of the crush of people they could not get the paralysed man near Jesus. So they broke through the roof and lowered their friend on his bed through the roof right into Jesus’ presence. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

“Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ‘Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, ‘Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven,” or to say, “Rise, take up your bed and walk?” But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— ‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home’” [MARK 2:5-11].

His disciples worshipped Him as God. When Thomas at last saw the Risen Saviour he cried out, “My Lord and my God” [JOHN 20:28]! This was not simply an exclamation or an oath such as thoughtless people might utter in this day. Thomas was a Jew; he would never blaspheme by misusing the Name of God. He was confessing that Jesus was very God! The magi worshipped the babe in the manger [MATTHEW 2:11] as did His disciples when they witnessed His power over nature [MATTHEW 14:32, 33]. Those who were healed often worshipped Him [e.g. JOHN 9:35-38]. The women who witnessed His resurrection worshipped Him [MATTHEW 28:8, 9]. The eleven disciples worshipped after He was risen from the grave [MATTHEW 28:17; LUKE 24:40-53]. Why would you wait to worship? He is God! He is worthy to receive honour and glory and praise. Amen.

This Jesus is God in human flesh. The Scriptures affirm this truth repeatedly. Consider a few pertinent examples of the scriptural teaching of the deity of Christ Jesus. Of the Jewish nation, Paul wrote: “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” [ROMANS 9:5]. Amen, indeed!

Paul makes such a powerful assertion of the deity of this Jesus in TITUS 2:11-14. “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Note especially that we await the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

What more powerful statement as to His divine nature can be provided than that which is given us in JOHN 1:14, 16-18? “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.” “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

Since He is God, we should humble ourselves now. Now we should worship. “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” [PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11].

I’m not waiting! I’ll worship now! I’ll call Him Lord now! And you should call Him Lord, as well. Amen!

The text states that a body was prepared for the Christ. To this point, I have emphasised His deity. The text is quite clear in emphasising His humanity, however. We must not neglect this vital truth. The Son of God shared our condition. God became a man. This was in order that we might have confidence before Him. That is indeed a powerful statement which is presented in HEBREWS 2:14-18.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

One great purpose for Jesus’ humanity is clearly stated in this passage, and that purpose is that we might obtain confidence in His priestly service. We no longer approach a God who is distant and remote and terrifying, but we come before that God who became as we are.

Christ has shared our humanity and therefore we are confident before Him when we need help. The Word of God teaches, “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” [HEBREWS 4:14-16].

It pleased God to have all the fullness of the Godhead dwell in Christ the Lord [see COLOSSIANS 1:19]. The knowledge that He has identified with us gives us still greater confidence before Him. But we are also reconciled to God through His physical body. Now, “He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,” [COLOSSIANS 1:22]. More than simply reconciling us to Himself, God has purified us and made us holy through the sacrifice of His Son. Underscore the significance of this truth: it was necessary that Jesus have a body in order to bear our sin in His own body. Through His sacrifice, we are reconciled.

GOD GAVE HIMSELF AS A SACRIFICE. Christmas is a happy season. Most of us get a warm, fuzzy glow whenever we think of the Christmas Season. The brilliant lights and bright decorations create an air of anticipation in young and old alike. Old familiar carols resonate with our most precious thoughts of Christmas’ past. The exchange of Christmas cards and the ubiquitous greeting of “Merry Christmas” from everyone we meet compels us to smile in spite of ourselves. Even the few Scrooges among us are driven to expressions approximating joy during this happy season.

I would not wish to dash that spirit of joy and happiness, but as Christians, we are ever conscious of a pall which dampens the seasonal merriment. There is great joy in the knowledge that God became a man, but we also know that His coming demanded that He would taste death for every man. This babe was born to die; and His death was to be for sins that He did not commit; He would provide a sacrifice for wicked people.

The Messiah is quoted as acknowledging that God did not desire sacrifice and offering, even going so far as to say that burnt offerings and sin offerings were displeasing. We will read but a scant few verses further to see the confession that we believers “have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” [HEBREWS 10:10]. It was the will of God that Messiah should offer His own body as a sacrifice. What is vital to grasp is that this is the last sacrifice required; it is the only sacrifice sufficient to put away sin and to make us perfect. “By a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” [HEBREWS 10:14].

No man could ever offer a sacrifice great enough to propitiate God’s wrath. Instead, God must provide a perfect, an infinite sacrifice in the place of all mankind. Christmas is the strongest possible argument against man’s goodness. Christmas is a powerful argument against futile religious exercise designed to compel God’s grace toward mankind. Had man been essentially good, the Son of God would have never have needed to come. Sacrifice and offering would have been sufficient—if man were good. Burnt offerings and sin offerings would have no doubt sufficed—if man were able to be good. However, not only was man incapable of offering a suitable sacrifice which would assuage the wrath of God, but God would not find any such effort pleasing.

How is it, then, that people still think they can be good enough to make God love them? How often have ignorant people musing on heaven commented about their good works? “Well,” they foolishly say, “when God judges me, he’ll weigh my good deeds against my bad and if my good outweighs the bad I’ll go to heaven.” No one ever acknowledges (in fact, they secretly hope it isn’t true) that their bad deeds outweigh their good! Ever and always people imagine that they are essentially good.

The Bible takes a dimmer view of mankind’s goodness, however.

“The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?”

[JEREMIAH 17:9]

The only ones to be judged by their deeds are those already under condemnation. Before the Great White Throne when the dead are judged we see an awesome scene. Listen to John’s frightful words as he unveils what judgement for the lost shall be.

“I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” [REVELATION 20:11-15].

If someone should insist that he will stand by his own efforts, that one needs to hear my words—words which are now spoken in compassion and with gentleness. Brother man, your good deeds will condemn you. Sister woman, will you really argue that you are righteous? Will you actually defend your goodness? Do you actually think that you can compare your goodness as worthy of God? Are you so blind that you truly believe that you have lived a righteous life? God, through Isaiah spoke to that moot issue over seven hundred fifty years before the birth of His Son.

“We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”

[ISAIAH 64:6]

It is insufficient to claim that you have never committed a serious crime. Have you ever felt hatred toward another? Have you ever experienced greed? Did you never tell so much as a little fib? Can you honestly say that you have never longed to possess another for your own gratification? We *have* sinned and our character is always sinful. We need a Saviour—One who will take away our sin through becoming a sacrifice for our sin. Jesus, the Son of God, has presented Himself as that sacrifice for sinful man.

I spoke with a librarian at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Dallas on one occasion. I asked of his relationship to Christ and he responded that he tried very hard to be a good man. “Do you succeed” I asked?

“Well,” he responded, “I certainly try. I keep the Ten Commandments, you know.” Then he offered, “I just believe that will be enough.”

“So you keep the Ten Commandments? Name the fifth commandment,” I said abruptly. The young man was nonplussed. He sputtered and stammered and at last admitted that he didn’t know what the fifth commandment was. “How can you maintain that you live by the Ten Commandments when you can’t even name them” I asked? “Wouldn’t you like to know a better way to live?”

He was sufficiently Intrigued, to ask if I knew a better way. I told him of the story of God’s love revealed through His Son. I explained that the Son of God was born so that He might present His life as a sacrifice. Seeing the beauty of this glorious truth, the young man soon yielded to the call of the Spirit of God as he received the sacrifice of the Messiah in his place. What a rich Christmas present—life, salvation, forgiveness!

In **2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21** Paul testified, “The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

God “made Him to be sin who knew no sin...” These words summarise Christmas story! The Son of God came in order to present Himself as a sacrifice for sinful man. We are free in Him, and only in Him are we free.

THE CHRIST WAS OBEDIENT TO THE FATHER. “I have come to do your will, O God.” Do you know the will of God for your life? We know a great deal of the will of God because He has revealed His will to us. The will of God is that we give ourselves to the Lord and to the church which He loved [see **2 CORINTHIANS 8:5**]. Saved people know that the will of God is to do good in order to silence the ignorant talk of foolish men [**1 PETER 2:15**]. The will of God is that we “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances” [**1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18**].

Godly lives clearly lie within the will of God. Paul writes in the first letter to the Thessalonian Christians, “This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness” [**1 THESSALONIANS 4:3-7**].

It is God's will that we be saved and that we honour Him through godly lives. Salvation is provided through the sacrifice of His Son. Hear Him speak of this provision through His obedience to the Father's will. "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" [JOHN 6:35-40].

The Messiah was obedient to the will of the Father and so we can be saved. Since He promises us salvation when we accept His sacrifice because of our sinful condition, can we doubt that He will also enable us to live a life that glorifies Him? Our great Saviour will not only redeem us from the sentence of eternal death, but He will give us power to live godly lives. He not only will bring many sons to glory, but they will forever glorify His Name as they reveal the beauty of His work throughout all eternity.

I confess that I used to tremble at the thought of facing Jesus. No longer is that true; now I long to see Him. Here is the reason we can have confidence before Him. "We know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

"So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" [2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10].

Surely, the admonition issued by the Apostle of Love applies to us today. John wrote these words in 1 JOHN 2:28-3:3. "Now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." Amen.