

Why Christ Came

By Paris Reidhead*

As we think of the birth of the Lord Jesus, we must consider that He came to die, and to be raised again, and to ascend into Heaven, and come back the second time. And we who rejoice at His birth the first time are the ones that are longing for His return the second time.

In 1937, I was called to the Pastorate of Leslie Presbyterian Church in Osakis, Minnesota. You may recall that that was a time of pressure, '37 just coming out of the worst aspects of the Depression. There was a man in Germany by the name of Hitler that had plans. There were others in other places that had plans. It was a wearisome decade, the '30s. Great financial loss, the rumblings of international war. 1940 began as a year of grave threatening, and December 7, '41 found the United States at war. And the '40s will be marked as the decade of holocaust and destruction. 1950, Christmas 1950, found a nation trying to recover from war, still engaged in fighting in Korea, fighting with their own domestic problems and needs. 1960, Christmas. I wonder what this decade is going to hold? Certainly we could not suggest to you that we are not in war today. There is a cold war on many fronts. There is fighting in Laos. There is fighting in Africa. There is fighting in South America.

Why did Jesus Christ come? Usually, because of its place in our thinking about Christmas, we associate His coming with the Angel Song. You recall how the Angel said, "Glory be to God in the Highest, and on earth Peace, Good Will toward men." (Luke 2:14) And as an unthinking and unbelieving world gathers around the Crèche, the replica of the Baby Jesus, they rather feel that His purpose for coming was peace in a wicked world. Now if this is the reason why He came, then He has certainly been a signal failure, because they tell us that there have only been seven years since the birth of Christ when there has not been known war going on somewhere. May I suggest to you that one's work should only be judged according to His purpose, His announced purpose before He begins the work. You have to find out what an individual is intending to do and planning to do before you can judge whether he is successful or not. And it is imperative that we understand what Christ was intending to do, what He was planning to do, what He announced His purpose would be if we are to judge whether or not He is successful, or whether He has had to live all of these centuries in stark, terrifying failure.

Again I say, the most important question for you on this December 25 in 1960 is, "Why Did Jesus Christ Come Into The World?" But before you can adequately answer that question, you have got to understand at least something of who He was before He came, and when He came, and after He came. Of Whom are we speaking? There are those who today will listen to the Christmas music and rejoice in the sentiment it expresses, and then behind pulpits here in our City will categorically deny the supernatural birth of Jesus Christ, and will announce to their people who sit in gullible ignorance that He was nothing more than a man who died a martyrs death for truths in which He believed.

Now we, of course, believe that...quite the contrary...that Jesus Christ was indeed God, the eternal God, long before He ever was born. Christ did not begin on Christmas. He began before the foundation of the world. In fact He was without beginning. He has always been, the only Begotten of the Father, the Eternal Son. There never was a time when God, the Father, began to beget the Son. He has always been the Eternal Son. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men, and the Light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:1-5) "In the beginning was the Word." All things were made by Him, the Eternal Son. This is our affirmation. Jesus Christ is God.

Our Lord confirmed this in John the 8th Chapter, and the 11th verse. We hear the Son of God as He speaks for Himself, and I propose to allow Him to speak this morning for Himself, for He does declare, I know whence I am come, whence I came. In John the 16th Chapter, verses 27 and 28, again our Lord Jesus declares that, "I came forth from the Father. At that day ye shall ask in My Name; and I shall say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." (John 16:26-28) And in the 13th Chapter of John, and the 3rd verse: "Jesus knowing

that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." (John 13:3,4) He knew from whence He had come.

He did come in the Father's Name. In John the 5th Chapter and the 43rd verse He says, "I came not in Mine own Name, but in My Father's Name am I come, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." Our Lord Jesus said, in Chapter 7 of John and verse 28 that, "I am not come of Myself, Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am, and I am not come of Myself. But He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me." (John 7:28,29)

Forty three times in the Gospel of John, Our Lord Jesus Christ declared that He was sent of the Father. We believe that He is none other than Emmanuel, Lord with us. In Isaiah, the 7th Chapter and the 14th verse we have that wonderful testimony that a virgin, a young unmarried woman, a virgin.... "Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His Name Emmanuel." And this was said of the Lord Jesus, in Matthew the First Chapter and the 23rd verse: "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." This was the revelation that came to Joseph while he slept.

Isaiah, Chapter 9, verses 6 and 7, the portion that I read for you; "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." How marvelous it is to realize that God particularized. A child is born. He did not say, A Son is born. A Son He could not be born, because He was the eternal Son. As Son, He could be given. As child, He could be born. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor." Ah, here it is, "The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." And this child that was born in a stable in Bethlehem was none other than "the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father."

The other Sunday evening, after the service, a gentleman spoke to me at the close of the Service, and he said, "Can you tell me any place where Jesus Christ claimed to be God?" And I cited Scriptures. His mind and his heart were darkened and he refused to hear, but in John the 10th Chapter, and the 30th verse, Our Lord Jesus said, "I and My Father are one, I and My Father are one." And again He said to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9) He is not only the Mighty God by whom all things were made. He is the everlasting Father. One with the Father.

Now just with this wonderful testimony concerning the Lord Jesus from His own lips, and from others concerning Him, the question has to be asked, Why was it necessary for God to become flesh and dwell among us? What was the purpose for His invasion? Why did God condescend to take upon Himself your personality, your likeness, a body similar to yours? Why? What was the reason for it? And the answer, of course, is found in what He had to say as to those for whom He came. What was the reason for His coming? We will let the Lord Jesus speak.

First He said, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of the Father." (John 6:38) "As the Father hath taught Me, so said He, I speak." (John 8:28) "I do nothing of Myself." (John 5:30) "I only do that which I see My Father do." (John 5:19) "I do always those things that please the Father." (John 8:29) "I honour My Father." (John 8:49) There are those you know who feel that God in great anger stood looking at the world of sinners, and the Son in great love stood between the angry Father and the threatened sinner. But, no. It was God, His Father, who loved the world and gave His only begotten Son. And everything our Lord Jesus did He did as for the Father, and from the Father, and to the Father. Thus in the heart of God, in Trinity, the Triune God, was this love. It was not that the Lord Jesus was sort of, as it were, departing from the Godhead in order that He could protect you from the wrath of the Father. Not so at all. And if you have had such incorrect impressions about the coming of Christ may this somehow disabuse you of them. The Father loved the world. The Son loved the world. The Holy Spirit loved the world. God, the Triune God, loved. But you see, God can never act in any single attribute. Being a Person, God must ever act in the totality of what He is. In all that He is God is infinite wisdom, and every act that He performs must be in all wisdom. God is infinitely just, and every action that He performs must be in full accord with His justice. God is infinitely loving, and therefore in His wisdom and in His justice He must act in perfect accord with His love. It is impossible to conceive of God acting in sovereignty apart from wisdom, apart from justice, and apart from love.

There are those who would magnify one attribute of God at the expense of others, but such is disastrous to you. For in so doing you are but making God, if this would be your fault, making God in your own image. You perhaps, and I, might act in wisdom and not in love. We might act in justice and not in love, or in love and not in justice. But God can not be measured by the stick that would be used for us. And therefore as a just God, He must be angry with sin. And He has spoken in truth and said, "The soul that sinneth it must die, must surely die." (Eze. 18:20) Now if justice demands death, and His truth demands that His Word be verified. And there is nothing that He can do about that. God has spoken in wisdom, and said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Every sin shall come into judgment. But, you see, whereas this is true, it is also true that God is love. And thus God became flesh, took upon Himself our form and our likeness. He took a body like yours, given to Him by Mary, in order that He could be tempted as you were tempted, and tried as you have been tried, tested in the manner in which we have experienced testing, that in every point He could be as we are in this world, save without sin. The Lord Jesus underwent this in order that, being proved and shown and demonstrated, sinless and holy, He could take your place. The sword had been whet. Yes. And the arrow had been drawn. And it was aimed right at your heart. And there was not anything that justice could do or love could do to stop the arrow. God had said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

But there was only one thing that love and justice could do, and that was for the lawgiver to be joined to the law keepers in order that He could take the place of the Law breaker. And so the Lord Jesus, as it were, stepped between you and that drawn sword, and that bent bow. It had to be sheathed, did the sword. It had to drink the blood of vengeance because the Law must be upheld. It had to satisfy the demands that law exercised upon it. It was necessary for it to be this way. And it had to be. But the Lord Jesus lay bare His breast, And said, "This sword is a just sword. This arrow is rightly aimed. This one for whom I stand deserves all the wrath of a wise and just and righteous God." So when our Lord Jesus comes to Calvary's cross, He is giving the highest tribute possible to the justice of God, and the righteousness of the Law which condemned me and condemned you. And He invites that sword to be sheathed in His heart, and that arrow to be buried in His bosom, and that justifies by the invitation that it was a just condemnation that was pronounced upon you. This constituted the reason for His coming as He saw the cross. He said, "Father deliver He from this hour. But for this hour came I into the world." (John 12:27) This is the reason for My coming. What was the hour? It was the hour when that sword that had been so long held in abeyance, that arrow that had been so long held against the string of the bow should be released to you in your Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. God loved the world, and He gave His Son. And He was, in doing this, representing the mind and the will and the purpose of the Father, and of the Spirit.

Then our Lord Jesus came not only for the Father, but He came also for His own, for Israel. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. To think that He came to the people who had the oracles of God, and the testimonies, and the promise and were the descendants of Abram, and the very One of whom all the types of the Old Testament had spoken, and all the prophecies had been aimed, and yet they received Him not. But unto as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God.

He came for the world. I am come, a Light into the world. He is the Light that is to light every man that comes into the world. He says, "For judgment I am come that they which see not might see." (John 9:39) He said, "I came that the world through Him would not be condemned but that the world might be saved." (John 3:17) "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) We must see that in the heart and mind of the Father was the world of sinful men.

But then of course, it was not just for the world in the nebulous sense that He came, but more particular than that. You might not know what part of the world He actually was directing Himself toward if He had not spoken. But I say that He came not only for the Father and for His own, and to the World, but He came to the vilest of men, to sinners such as we were, such as you may be today. He said, "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17) "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)

Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, is good news for bad people. Bad people. Vile people. And such were we. And such you may be. And Christ Jesus came into the world not... You know the world has a mistaken idea. They say, "You know the church is for people who are good" No. No. The church is for people who were bad. I think perhaps the people who are most aware of

how vile they were are the people in the church. The ones that are most cognizant of the sinfulness of sin are the ones in the church. You go out and find a people that are living today, stupefied by drink and intoxicated with pleasure, and talk with them. They have no sense of sin, no sense of the vileness of their hearts, the depravity of their nature. And if I look at you, knowing the testimonies of many of you, I know that you would be the first to say, I was the chief of sinners. In me and my flesh dwells no good thing. And, oh that the world could find out that Jesus Christ came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. What a wrong impression we have given to the world. How wrong we have been in making them that we are better than they are. If they knew the truth, they would probably know that before God's grace found us we were far worse than they. This is the message of the birth of Christ. He came for the sinners.

And then again we find that our Lord Jesus said "that He came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18:11) But you know, Lostness is not just a judicial state. Lostness is a state of consciousness. And the reason there are so few people being saved today is because there are so few being lost, and as we pointed out, one of the reasons there are few being lost is because there is so little preaching of that which produces the sense of lostness. The Law. The preaching of the truth of what God requires and demands. It was for the lost person. If I am speaking to someone today and they say, "I am hopeless and helpless. I am at the end of myself. I do not know where to go. I am living in a moral fog, and moral gloom. I can not see the path. I do not know whether I am climbing up the mountain or down the mountain. I am just at wits end corner. I am lost." I have good news for you. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came for you if you are lost today.

And then, He said, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) How many the people there are that think that the church is a place where you work for Christ. Ah, No. It is a place where you discover the work that Christ has done for you, that He gave Himself a ransom for you. A lifetime of ceremony, a lifetime of penance, a lifetime of religious activity will not atone for one sin. No one. In what are you trusting? There is only one way that any one of the smallest of yours sins could ever be forgiven and pardoned, and that is through. (Interruption--All right. You do that) And "Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost." And if you are here today, I commend to you this one who loved you and gave Himself for you. And He gave His life a ransom for you. There was not one thing that you could do that would add one iota to your acceptance with Him. The only possibility would be for God to make full, complete provision by the giving of Himself. And He did.

Now I want you to see something else in closing. We have already seen something of who He was before He came, and those for whom He came. And I would like to have you think with me for a moment, What is the result of receiving Him? What is the result? First, to receive Jesus Christ is to be born into God's family. "He came unto His own. His own received Him not. But unto as many as received Him, to them gave He the authority, the right, to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:11,12) The right to become the sons of God. The right. The privilege. The authority. But, whom do you receive? A babe, lying in a manger, a Saviour on a Cross? Who is this One that you are asked to receive. He is that. He is the wee one. But you remember the gifts that were brought to Him, gold and frankincense and myrrh. They received Him, did those Kings, as He is indeed, a King, and brought kingly gifts to Him. And He has been made both Lord and Christ. So to be born into God's family is to receive Jesus Christ as He is, a Prince and a Savior, Lord and Christ. And to as many as receive Him, as He is presented by the Father, unto Him a child is born, a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And He was born to govern. And your crime against God was that you put the government on your shoulder and you ruled your life. And to come to Jesus Christ is to transfer it from your shoulder to His shoulder, and put the government on Him. Have you received Him? He gives the authority to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name.

And again He said, "You must be born again." (John 3:3) Born not of the will of man, nor of the will of flesh, but of God, born of the Spirit. This is the first glorious result. And you know you are born of God, because God Himself tells you. He witnesses to your Spirit that you are born of Him.

Then the second thing that you will receive is not only pardon from past sins, but deliverance from the power of sin. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21) He did not come to save His people in their sins, not to go on living...I think of the man in the hospital who said to an unsaved person in the next bed. He said, "Look. The difference between you and me is, I am a saved sinner, and you are a lost sinner. Now accept Jesus, and be a saved sinner."

No. He did not die to save you in your sin and to have you go on living in treason and revolt and rebellion against Him. He...His Name is Jesus (Jehovah Saviour), for He shall save His people from their sins. From their sins. This is what He died to do, and this is what He does. He said, "I did not come to destroy the Law." (Matt. 5:17) How many there are that say, "Well, Jesus Christ kept the Law for me; it doesn't make any difference what I do." No. This is not the reason for His coming, to give you carte blanche, a sort of a heavenly charge account that you can go out, and I can go out and live in sin, and say. Well all my sins, past, present, and future, are forgiven, and therefore I can just go and fill it up and He pays the bill at the end of the month. This is not what He tried to do. Let me read it to you. He said, "I did not come to destroy the Law." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:" (Rom. 8:1-3) Why? Now listen. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. He did not come to immunize you to justice. He did not come just to give us a charge account, I said. He came so that by the presence of Himself and the Spirit living in us, the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. So it was deliverance from sin.

The third result of receiving His is tribulation and persecution. In Matthew, the 10th chapter (And do turn to this, for it will only take you a moment. I want you to see these words from the heart of the Son of God.) Matthew 10: verses 35 and 36. Begin now with the 34th: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace. I came not to send peace. I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." (Matt. 10:34-39) This is what He is saying. He did not come to send peace. Yes, peace on earth, indeed. And the only peace there can be is when you know God who made peace through the Blood of the Cross of His Son. But the reason for His coming was not world peace now. He said, "I am not come to send peace, but I am come to send a sword." And it will not be your sword against the world, but it will be their sword against you. For He demands a commitment to Him that supersedes all other loyalties. "If a man hate not his father and his mother, he cannot be My disciple." To receive Christ is to make Him above all other interests and loyalties of life. This is why He came. All the Lordship of Christ is a commitment to Him. "And to everyone that lives godly in Christ Jesus he shall suffer persecution." (II Tim. 3:12)

But the last thing the last result we will consider of His coming is found in John the 10th Chapter, and the 10th verse. And let me read it to you: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have Life, and that might have it more abundantly." In John, the 14th Chapter and the 18th verse, our Lord says, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." And in the 21st verse, He says that, "I will manifest Myself to him." And in the 23rd verse, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love Him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is why Christ came.

Major Thomas stood here during our Convention and he said, The destination when Christ left Heaven was not a manger in Bethlehem, nor was His destination a carpenter's shop in Nazareth, nor a Temple in Jerusalem, nor a Cross on a hill, nor a grave under the hill, nor was it even the right hand of the Father on the Throne on High. The destination of Jesus Christ when He left heaven was your heart. It was your heart. All that He underwent in leaving and coming, and living and dying, and being raised from the dead, and ascending, was that He might come to live in you. This is the destination of Christ. This is why He came. You were made for God, and sin had kept you from Him. This is the meaning of Christmas. Not just pardon and future deliverance, but the meaning of Christmas is that Christ now can come and live in you. And if you are a Christian, Christ is in you. For Christ be in you except you be reprobate. And again, we hear the summation of all of His purpose in His high priestly prayer in John 17, verse 21 to 23. For our Lord Jesus is putting it here in this simple, lovely way, "That they all may be in union, as Thou, Father, art in union with Me, and I am in union with Thee, that they also may be in union with us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given them that they may be in union even as We are in union. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in union, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent

Me.” What is He saying? The only way the world will ever know that the Father sent the Son is when the Son finds the resting place that was in His mind when He left Heaven, which was your heart, to live in you, and to fill you. And Paul prays for that Church at Ephesus as he says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you being rooted and foundationed in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height, and to experience the love of Christ which passeth intelligence, that you might be filled unto all of the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:17-19) This is why He came, that He might fill you with Himself.

Let me ask you. Are you walking today as a normal Christian, filled with the fullness of God? You can be. You ought to be. He has accomplished everything necessary for you to be. What stands in the way of your being filled with the fullness of God? Why be less than a normal Christian? This was His destination. This was where He was aiming. This was His goal. Not world peace, but your heart. Is He living in you, filling you with Himself? Have you turned over to Him? Or is it a sense in which you have fitted up a little stable underneath, Sunday and Wednesday, but you have not turned the whole in over so that the Lord may move in. Perhaps I am looking at someone who has found that it is hard to open the door and invite Him in. This is where He was aiming when He left, to fill you with Himself. This is why He came. Why do you not do something about it today? Mary presented her body, and He was born into the world. Now why do you not hear Him say, I beseech you, brethren by these mercies, that you present your bodies as the Inn to allow Him to dwell and fill you with Himself? This was the goal He had when He left Heaven.

Let us pray.

Father of our Lord Jesus, what grief must fill the heart of Thy dear Son, when He sees multitudes who have met in houses dedicated to Him, and understand so little of why He came. Some think that He just came to be an example. He is an example. But that is not why He came. Some think He came to teach us a new law to live by. He did, But that is not why He came. Some think it was the He might die for what He believed. He did. But that is not why. Some, Father, even think that He died just to save us from Hell. He did do that. But that is not why. Show us, Father, that Thou hast longed for us from eternity past, that Thou didst make us for Thyself, and Thou in a sense art not at rest until Thou art at rest in us. And certainly we will never rest until we rest in Thee. Grant, Heavenly Father, today that the reason why Christ came may become so clear to everyone that is here today, and that to a person, everyone, the youngest to the oldest that are able to understand will present their bodies living sacrifices, to invite the Lord Jesus Christ to live in us His own life of resurrection power and victory. Seal now to our hearts Thy truth, and press it deeply on us. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Let us stand for the Benediction. “Now may the God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom be the glory, now and forever. Amen.” (Heb. 13:20,21)

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, December 25, 1960 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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