

- **\*READ Isaiah 9:6,7\*** I have very little doubt that this text in Isaiah 9 has been and will be read time and time again throughout the world to draw attention to the common Christian belief that Jesus Christ was born on Christmas Day and the common practice of celebrating such during this time of year. If you're like me, then you've probably found yourself speaking with friends and acquaintances who hold to these beliefs and practices and in conversation then question has been as of us... "so what is your church doing to celebrate Christmas this year?"
- As we can all probably tell just from looking around and observing what has been taking place at this church, there hasn't been any sort of special celebration for the occasion of Christmas. This can put us in a little bit of a awkward position because than likely this friend of ours is next going to ask... "so why don't you care anything about Jesus's birth? Do you not think that it matters?"
- It could be at that very moment that we don't quite know what to say. Instinct might kick in and we start talking about the fact that the earliest Christians didn't seem to celebrate Christmas. We might try to talk about its pagan origins. We might even go into an explanation that the only regularly scheduled celebration we see taught, shown, or implied is the observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week when we come together.
- However, that still doesn't necessarily answer the questions posed to us. It doesn't answer the question of whether or not we think that the birth of Jesus matters. With this being a subject on the minds of so many people today and with the possibility of some of us being asked this question, I would like for us to consider the birth of Jesus and answer the question of whether or not it matters. Is the birth of Jesus a big deal? Does it carry any sort of great importance within our faith or the Gospel story? I'm going to go ahead and give you what I believe to be the correct answer with supporting evidence, and then we will finish up by discussing what this should mean to how we approach this subject.

#### **I. Yes, it matters because:**

##### **A. God's faithfulness with His promises matters.**

1. Our God is a God who has made grand promises to His people, and yet there doesn't seem to be a promise that has been of more importance to mankind than the promise that God made to Abraham many thousands of years ago that can be found in **Genesis 12:3** and that is expounded upon in **Genesis 22:18**. As God is establishing his covenant with Abraham in **Genesis 12**, we find the Lord promising Abraham three things: 1) A great new land. 2) A great strong nation of his family and descendants. 3) In him all of the families of the earth would be blessed. This in and of itself might not make too much sense, but that is where **Genesis 22:18** clarifies exactly what God meant when He made these promises. "***In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed...***"
2. Simply put...through the lineage of Abraham's descendants all of the people of the earth would be blessed. Surely Abraham wouldn't have had a true idea of what God meant when He made this promise, but his descendants would come to understand this as God's promise that He would one day send the Messiah who would come to rule over His people. We can see this as being something that the people looked forward to based upon what we read throughout the Gospels specifically in **John 4:25** when the Samaritan woman at the well makes mention of even her knowledge as a Gentile that there was going to be a Messiah who would come.
3. We must understand that generation after generation came and went, and all of them looked forward to the day when they truly would all be blessed through the seed of Abraham. This blessing was finally realized with the birth of Jesus, and Matthew makes this abundantly clear at the very beginning of his Gospel, "***The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.***" (**Matthew 1:1**) It was with Jesus's birth that God's greatest promise was fulfilled and realized! The long promised redemption of Jerusalem had arrived! (**Luke 2:38**)

## B. The Son of God dwelling as a man and with men matters.

1. Additionally, the birth of Jesus is a big deal because it introduced God into the world as a person just like you and me. Yes, there are many who would deny the deity of Christ or that Christ's fleshly body was in fact real flesh, but John seems to put this to rest very quickly in his Gospel account. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."* (**John 1:1,14**) John seems to be very convinced that the man Jesus of Nazareth was indeed God in human form, and this is certainly a big deal!
2. In fact, we could tie this in with our last point about God's words being fulfilled in the birth and life of Jesus on earth. In **Matthew 1:23** we read concerning Jesus, *"BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."* This is the fulfillment of the prophecy that was spoken hundreds of years prior in **Isaiah 7:14**. But why is this a big deal? It is a big deal because it is the Creator coming down and dwelling among the created.
3. It matters because God shows Himself as not being some distant Being that can understand the human experience. In fact, Jesus coming to earth allowed for Him to experience exactly what we experience on earth. Jesus was at times hungry. He was thirsty. He became tired. He cried and He bled just as we do. Most important of all, He was willing to endure temptation to leave us with the ultimate example of holiness, purity, and righteousness. (**Hebrews 4:13**) He came and dwelt among us a human being just as we do, and all of that was possible by Him being willing to be born of woman and live as a man.

## C. The Son of God becoming a Servant of men matters.

1. Yet, it wasn't just that Jesus was willing to be born into this world, but He was willing to live as a normal everyday person. He was willing to humble Himself to the level of a servant of men. **Philippians 2:5-8** clearly shows us that Jesus was willing to be born into this world and live in it without all of the characteristics that would normally be found within deity. He was willing to empty Himself to a degree of those characteristics so that He might get the true human being experience.
2. Consider that Jesus's coming to earth meant that He would no longer be omnipresent. God is able to be all places at once, but Jesus humbled Himself to only be in one place while on earth. He was no longer omnipotent because He experienced those things we mentioned earlier in being hungry, thirsty, and tired. He was no longer omniscient for He had to learn and grow in knowledge and wisdom like any other child born into this world. Surely Jesus's experience on earth didn't have to be like this, but He allowed for it to be so that He might be able to be a true servant to all of His creation.
3. Of course, this sacrifice of Jesus found its true completion in His willingness to go the cross and die for the sins of mankind as an innocent man. Jesus knew that His responsibility was to be obedient to God in all things (**Philippians 2:8**) and that this obedience would eventually lead Him to be hung on a cross (**Philippians 2:8**) so that He might give His life as a ransom for many. (**Matthew 20:28**) All of this was only made possible by Jesus first being born as God foretold would be the case. If there is no birth then the story of the Gospel wouldn't be what it is today. I truly don't believe we can leave these considerations without being convinced that Jesus's birth and entrance into this world matters a great deal, but I do want us to finish by considering what exactly this should mean to us as disciples.

## **II. Therefore, we should:**

### **A. Never downplay the significance of Jesus's birth.**

1. I know it can be easy for us to look around and see all of the things being done during this time of year in celebration of Jesus's birth and be tempted to have the knee-jerk reaction of going the complete opposite direction by not giving any attention or not crediting any importance to the birth of Jesus. I know what that feels like because I have felt that way in the past. Any mention of Jesus's birth or really any mention of religious things at all around the holiday season has caused me great discomfort in the past. However, I have come to believe that reaction theology isn't the best course of action when it comes to the missteps or misapplication of others.
2. For example, instead of people responding to the Catholic teaching of earned penitence by simply going to the Bible and considering what it actually says about forgiveness and grace, many people went to the complete opposite end of the spectrum by determining that salvation is completely up to the will of God and mankind has no part whatsoever. This overreaction is exactly how we got the teachings of Calvinism. The same thing can be true of this discussion. When we see people going overboard with Jesus's birth, it can be tempting to completely ignore this monumental event in history and behave as if it doesn't carry any importance or significance at all.
3. In fact, if we are going to be consistent in this approach then there will be a Sunday coming up this next April when we will have to completely ignore Jesus's death and resurrection because there are going to be a great number of people who are going to give those important events some special attention. Therefore, it is my judgement that we not allow the missteps of others influence the way that we do things in this church. If the Bible shows something as being important then let's give that thing the honor, respect, and appreciation that it deserves.

### **B. Always wholeheartedly rejoice concerning His coming.**

1. Does this mean that I am saying that we must participate in the celebration of Jesus's birth during this holiday season like the rest of the world?? That is not what I am saying at all, but what I am saying is that we recognize that Jesus isn't the reason for this single season...We must recognize Him as being the reason for every season! All throughout the year we ought to give appreciation to God for Jesus's coming, and I would argue that we do that very thing here in this church.
2. I would suggest to you that we focus on Jesus's birth and life more throughout the year than most places do only in the month of December. One of the ways we do that is through our singing. Nearly all of the songs that we have sung this morning have had some sort of mention or allusion to the birth and life of Jesus, but do you realize that we have been singing those songs all year long? I can personally attest to having certainty that I have sung every one of those songs except one at some point during this year. That means that I have given thanks and celebrated the Lord's birth all throughout the year!
3. Further, there have been times throughout this year where we have considered some of the same verses that we have looked at this morning. There have been times where we have studied these verses and even pointed out some of the things we have talked about this morning in different contexts. In fact, I'm pretty sure I preached about something concerning the birth of Jesus back in the early spring as we were going through our daily Bible reading. I mention all of this to simply show that we should always be ready and wholehearted to worship and praise God for what His son was willing to do for us in being born and living in this world. That praise and adoration is appropriate at all times whether it be the beginning, middle, or end of the year. God is always worthy of our grateful hearts for sending His Son to be born of a virgin, to live as a man, and to die on the cross for our sins.

### C. Remember that Jesus is about more than a manger.

1. That last point is something that I would like for us to finish up thinking upon this morning. The reality is that each of us probably have friends who are decent and good people, and yet they only truly get religious around the holiday season. It is during this time of year that we will hear them give thanks to God and talk about Him more than any other time of the year. It is during this time of year that they might even seek to have religious discussions with us, and they might even ask those questions that we used to set the stage for this lesson. My question is...what are we going to do when those people actually open up and begin having those religious conversations with us. Will we stop them in their tracks and give them a dissertation on why Jesus's birthday more than likely wasn't actually on December 25th?
2. Or could we maybe do better by affirming that we certainly are thankful for Jesus's birth, but that we are equally thankful for the mission that He came to earth to accomplish? Could we take that opportunity and conversation and turn it into an opportunity to let that person know that Jesus's story is about way more than just a manger? Could we use that opportunity to tell or remind that person that the whole reason Jesus came was so that He could die for our sins? Could we remind that person that Jesus expects for us to come to Him in faith and trust? Could we remind our friends that Jesus grew up into a faithful Son of God who desires our like devotion to the Father?
3. What I'm trying to say is that we are in a time of year where people are the most religious minded that they're going to be all year long! What prime opportunities to direct their minds to what truly matters in Jesus's desire for our holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and obedience! Friends, let's not shy away when people start talking about Jesus this season. Instead, let's use those times as opportunities to point those people from the manger to the cross where Jesus died so that our sins might be forgiven. That is the whole reason Jesus was willing to be born into this world, and it is the only way we have the chance to be with Him forever.

Again, if you're like me then you've probably had an awkward conversation or two during the holiday season about the birth of Christ and whether or not the Christ should truly be in Christmas. However, I hope that this study this morning has reminded us that the birth of Jesus is nothing that we should be ashamed of. In fact, it was a historic event with deep theological implications. It is an event in which God is worthy to be praised, and we actually do that quite often. I hope that we will be able to take these thoughts and be at least a little more prepared to handle those conversations in a way in which those we are speaking with will take a closer look not just as the manger but at the cross where their Savior died so that they might put their faith in Him and be saved. Yes, Jesus's birth matters. It matters to me and it matters to you, and I hope that we are always ready to praise God for it!