

CHRISTMAS: FROM FACT TO FAITH

INTRODUCTION

- A. There is confusion over the meaning of Christmas.
1. Businessmen - the most profitable season of the year.
 2. Shoppers - the most stressful time of year - highest suicide rate.
 3. Sentimentalists like Ricky Bobby in the movie, Talladega Nights:

Ricky Bobby: *Dear Lord Baby Jesus...we thank you so much for this bountiful harvest of Domino's, KFC, and the always delicious Taco Bell. I just want to take time to say thank you for my family... Dear tiny infant Jesus -*

Carley: *Hey. You know, Sweetie, Jesus did grow up. You don't always have to call him baby. It's a bit odd for you to pray to a baby.*

Ricky Bobby: *Look, I like the Christmas Jesus best. When you say grace, you can say it to Grown Up Jesus, or Teenage Jesus, or Bearded Jesus, or whoever you want.*

Ricky Bobby: *Dear Eight Pound, Six Ounce, Newborn Baby Jesus, in your golden fleece diapers, with your curled-up, fat, balled-up little fists pawing at the air...*

Chip: *He was a man! He had a beard!*

Ricky: *I like the baby version the best, do you hear me?*

- B. Christmas is much more than baby Jesus in the manger. It is the means to an end, not the end in itself.
1. Jesus was born for a purpose that is beyond compare.
 2. His purpose is seen in three parts: cradle, cross and crown.

CRADLE

- A. It is incarnation.
1. God became man, John 1:14, *And 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.*
 2. What does that mean? The baby in the manger existed before His birth in Bethlehem.
 - a. Pre-existence : Jesus existed before His birth in the manger as God the Son.
 - b. Eternality: Jesus not only existed before His birth or before creation but He has existed eternally.
 - c. Trinity: God exists with one nature but in three persons.
 3. Why is that important? Who Jesus is determines what He can do.
 4. How do we know Jesus is more than human?
 - a. He defined Himself in the Bible.
 - 1) He is co-eternal with the God the Father, John 8:58, *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."*
 - 2) He is co-equal in nature with God the Father, John 10:30, *I and the Father are one.*
 - 3) He is co-equal in power, Matthew 26:64, *Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."*
 - b. He made statements that identifies Him as God, and if not true, a lunatic.
 - 1) John 6:51, *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*
 - 2) John 6:53, *So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.*
 - 3) John 8:12, *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
 - 4) John 11:25, *... I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.*
 - 5) John 14:6, *...I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

5. What is meant by Trinity?
 - a. The one God is three eternal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while remaining one in nature.
 - b. There is unity and diversity within the one, true God.
 - c. A biblical picture of this diversity to Trinity.
 - 1) Diversity is seen in Genesis 1:26a, *Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*
 - 2) Tri-unity is seen in Isaiah 48:16, *Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there.*” And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.
 - 3) Names and functions are seen in 2 Corinthians 13:14, *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

B. It is identification.

1. If Jesus is God, how can He relate to us?
 - a. It is because Jesus is fully man, as well.
 - b. He is one person with two natures, human and divine. He has the same nature as the Father in deity and the same nature as man in humanity but without sin.
 - c. Hebrews 4:15, *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.*
 - d. John Eadie, *Jesus has not only the fulness of Divinity, but has it in a human shape-has a heart of a brother to love you, and the arm of God to protect and bless you.*
 - e. Council of Chalcedon (450 A.D.), *The birth of flesh reveals human nature; birth from a virgin is a proof of divine power...the divinity was concealed by the veil of flesh...For it is from us that he gets a humanity which is less than the Father; it is from the Father that he gets a divinity which is equal to the Father.*
2. But, how can a person who is God and man relate to us who are only human?
 - a. Jesus voluntarily relinquished the independent use of His divine attributes, Philippians 2:5-8, *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.*
 - b. His divine power was veiled but not surrendered, John 18:6, *When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.*

C. It is beyond compare.

1. Jesus was born in a manger but He existed before Abraham.
2. Jesus is God yet was the son of Mary.
3. Jesus died on the cross but He is the resurrection and the life.
4. He was sentenced to death by religious leaders but sits at the right hand of God the Father.
5. Jesus does not need us.
 - a. Because of trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit have love, relationship and fellowship.
 - b. But, He wants us!, and He alone can make it happen, Mark 10:45, *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

D. It is the beginning of His journey to death so we can live.

1. Simeon saw Jesus’ life beyond the cradle.
2. Luke 2:27-32, *And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”*

E. Is your view of Jesus too short-sighted? Look to the cross!

1. He is much more than a child born in a manger.
2. The next view is at the foot of the cross.

CROSS

- A. Many misunderstand Jesus' reason for coming to earth.
1. Some believe He was a religious fanatic confused by his zeal.
 2. Some believe He was a good man who is an example for how we should live.
 3. Christians believe He is God the Son Who came to save us from our sins.
- B. Jesus came to be the Savior of the world.
1. Galatians 4:4-5, *But 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.*
 2. Philippians 2:8, *...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
 3. Anonymous, *He came to pay a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay.*
- C. It was a costly endeavor.
1. A view of the cross paints a painful picture of what Jesus endured for you and me.
 2. Below the surface, there was pain much deeper than the physical torture Jesus endured.
 3. The deepest pain was the spiritual break in fellowship between the Father and the Son.
 - a. Jesus cried out in deep agony, Mark 15:34, *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*
 - b. For the only time, past, present or future, the Father turned from the Son, eternal fellowship was broken.
 - c. Jesus became the sin-bearer of the world. He took your sins and mine upon Himself. The Father will not allow sin in His presence.
 4. The most wondrous thing took place a few moments later when fellowship was restored.
 - a. Jesus proclaimed, John 19:30, *...he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*
 - b. His payment for sin was accepted by the Father and forgiveness of sins is available based on Jesus' work.
 - c. It was an amazing moment as noted in Matthew 27:51-54
 - 1) The temple veil was ripped in two from top to bottom. Now, man has direct access to God through Jesus.
 - 2) The earth shook, tombs were opened and many who had died in faith were resurrected.
 - 3) The Roman soldier in charge of the crucifixion responded, *Truly this was the Son of God!*
- D. It is good news that demands a response.
1. It is a message of hope, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.*
 2. It is a call to repentance, sorrow for sin and a desire not to sin, 2 Corinthians 7:10, *For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*
 3. It is a matter of belief, John 3:16, *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
 4. It is saving faith - Chair Illustration
 - a. Chair
 - 1) I believe the chair is real.
 - 2) I believe it can hold me if I sit in it.
 - 3) I am trusting the chair to hold me up - No, not until I sit in it.
 - b. Jesus
 - 1) I believe Jesus is God the Son Who came to die on the cross to pay for the sins of others.
 - 2) I believe Jesus died to pay for my sins.
 - 3) I am trusting Jesus for eternal life - No, not until I place my trust in Him alone.
 5. Faith in Jesus alone has eternal results.
 - a. Forgiveness, 1 John 1:9, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
 - b. Righteousness, 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
 - c. Eternal life, John 5:24, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*
- E. It doesn't end at the cross! Can you see His crown?

CROWN

- A. God the Father declares Jesus, King of Kings.
 - 1. Philippians 2:9-11, *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.*
 - 2. 1 Peter 3:21-22, *Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*
- B. One day Jesus will have a second coming to earth, not as a servant but as Lord.
 - 1. His authority will be acknowledged by all, Philippians 2:10, *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.*
 - 2. He will take believers to heaven, John 14:2, *In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*
 - 3. His reign will be spectacular, Rev. 5:11-14, *Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.*
- C. The baby in the cradle was destined for a crown. May we see the baby in the manger for Who He truly is.

CONCLUSION

- A. D. James Kennedy, *The great tragedy of the Christmas holiday is not so much its commercialization (gross as that is), but its trivialization. How tragic it is that people have forgotten Him to Whom they owe so very much.*
- B. There is more to Christmas than the cradle. Christmas is a reminder of Jesus Who is more than an 8 pound, 6 ounce baby. He is Immanuel, God with us.
- C. A prayer by Joseph Bayly,

Praise God for Christmas. Praise Him for the incarnation, for the word made flesh.

I will not sing of shepherds watching flocks on frosty nights, or angel choirs. I will not sing of a stable bare in Bethlehem, or lowing oxen, wise men trailing star with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Tonight I will sing praise to the Father who stood on heaven's threshold and said farewell to his Son as he stepped across the stars to Bethlehem and Jerusalem. And I will sing praise to the infinite, eternal Son, who became most finite, a baby who would one day be executed for my crime. Praise him in the heavens, Praise him in the stable, Praise him in my heart.