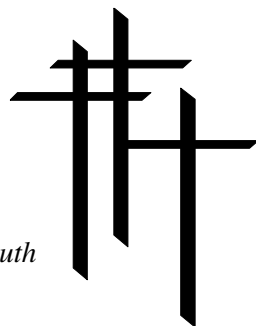


Timely Messenger



*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*

Volume 69 No. 4

Fall 2009

WHY CHRIST WAS BORN

by Charles Wages

Time is very important to God, but only as it relates to “His time” not the chronological cogitations and calculations of man. Sometimes men get carried away with “when” Christ was born and are prone to forget “why” He was born. Why did Christ come into this sin-cursed, impoverished world? This question must be carefully considered in depth, for it involves many purposes.

He Came to Fulfill the Prophecies in Regard to God’s People, Israel

The well-known and oft-quoted passage in Isaiah 9:6-7 speaks of His taking the government upon His shoulder and sitting upon the throne of His father, David.

“For 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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

Note that nothing is prophesied of His being the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

The lengthy words of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, in Luke 1 speak of Christ’s coming to fulfill the great expectations of God’s

people, Israel.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.” (Luke 1:68-70)

We find out from the gospel accounts and the book of Acts that His people Israel never really understood, believed, or accepted this wonderful Person, their Christ and Redeemer. They crucified Him! (Acts 2:22-24). They did not and still do not accept why He came.

He Came to Seek and to Save That Which Was Lost

However, we know, as has already been stated, that there were a multitude of reasons for Christ’s coming into the world, even if we don’t know when exactly. The Lord Jesus, while in the house of Zacchaeus, said very simply,

“For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

It seems as if He was enlarging upon this great truth of salvation. It was not just Israel, but the whole world was in His heart. It is remarkable to read what the Apostle Paul had to say in 1 Timothy 1:15,

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

This verifies the words of Jesus in Luke 19:10 and makes it ever so personal. Not just sinners in general, but a sinner in particular. This is what everyone needs to do. Not just to think of a birth on a certain day; not just the “world” given a time to celebrate; not just a time of economic boom, but of sober and serious reflection of our sinful state and our inability to save ourselves. He came to die for our sins. He came to die for the Apostle Paul’s sins. He came to die for my sins.

He Came to Reconcile All Things to Himself

“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things

in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20).

Note that “in earth” relates to God’s earthly people, Israel, while “in heaven” relates to His heavenly people, the Church.

How did He accomplish this? We are told in Colossians 1:22,

“In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.”

What a purpose! What an answer to, “Why did Christ come?”! We need to see that God’s great sacred secret, concerning the Church, which is His body, has now been revealed. This was accomplished by His death on the cross, His burial, His resurrection, and His ascension into glory. He is there now, officiating as the Head over His body, the Church (Eph. 1:19-23). When we come to realize why He came, why He died and arose, and believe it in our hearts, His wonderful birth becomes so much more meaningful. One doesn’t have to know when He came in order to be saved. One doesn’t have to celebrate a day in order to be

(Continued on page 4)

TIMELY MESSENGER

Published quarterly by:

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

1450 Oak Hill Road
Fort Worth, TX 76112-3017
(817) 451-0937

Website:

www.gracebiblechurch-fw.com

Email: gbcfw@sbcglobal.net

Gregg Bing — Editor

Sent **free** to anyone upon request. If you live in the Fort Worth area, we invite you to worship with us.

Sunday Services:

10:00 AM	Sunday School
11:00 AM	Morning Worship
6:00 PM	Evening Worship

Mid-Week Services:

Tues.	10:00 AM	Ladies Class
Wed.	7:00 PM	Bible Study

ADDRESS CHANGED?

If so, please notify Grace Bible Church. Be sure to include your name, your old address, and your new address. This will help us keep our mailing list current and reduce the cost of postage.

*Thanks for your help
in this matter!*

(Continued from page 3)

saved. However, none will ever be saved from sin until they know why He came and accept it in sincerity and truth.

How thankful we should be that He was born, lived among men, and died for the sins of the whole world. His birth means so much more.

Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:6-8



Youth Retreat

December 28-30, 2009

WHO? The retreat is for youth, ages 13 through college age.

WHEN? The retreat will run from Monday at Noon to Wednesday at 4:00 P.M.

WHERE? The retreat will be held at Three Mountain Retreat in Clifton, Texas. They have very nice facilities, good home cooking, and horseback riding.

WHY? The purpose of the retreat is to study God's Word and to enjoy Christian fun and fellowship together. The theme this year is "To Live is Christ."

HOW? To obtain registration forms, write to us at Grace Bible Church, 1450 Oak Hill Road, Fort Worth, TX 76112 or download from our website:

www.gracebiblechurch-fw.com

Deadline for turning in forms:

Sunday, December 20, 2009.

Another Jesus

By Bernice Whitman

The world sings of baby Jesus.
And worships the babe in the hay.
They call Him lowly Jesus.
Religion likes Him this way.

There's praise for the Man of Galilee.
The one who calmed the sea.
The Son of Man, Son of David,
But not the King He'll be.

People want the miracle worker.
The gentle, meekly One.
But reject Christ the Creator.
He who is God the Son.

Don't speak of the crucifixion.
Lay no blame for His loss.
Don't mention the resurrection.
Nor the merits of the cross.

The world denies Him as Savior.
The Almighty God is He.
Robed in filthy rags of sinners.
And paid the sinner's penalty.

I'll behold Him as my Savior.
I'll believe the record too.
For the world has its imitations.
But the Word of God is true.

*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve
through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted
from the simplicity that is in Christ. (2 Cor. 11:3-4)*

THE COMMON BOND

by Lori Gardner

Does it matter to God who we choose as friends? The people that we spend the most time with are naturally going to have the greatest impact on our lives (Prov. 22:24-25). That's why we need to choose our friends wisely.

The Bible tells us of two men who became best friends for life. One of them was a young shepherd named David. The other was Jonathan, the son of the king of Israel. It doesn't seem as if these two would have very much in common, but they came to have a bond that even death could not break.

David was the youngest of eight boys and tended his family's sheep. He is described as a good looking youth that became a skillful musician and a mighty, valiant man of war (1 Sam. 16:12, 18). He must have been tough and rugged because at times he had to live out in the open countryside. There was even a time when he single handedly killed a lion and a bear that were stealing his father's sheep (1 Sam. 17:34-35).

Jonathan, on the other hand, was probably raised in a very different way. He was the son of King Saul and was raised

in a royal household with many servants. He probably had the finest clothes and some of the best weapons in Israel (1 Sam. 18:4).

In spite of their differences the Bible says that the souls of Jonathan and David were knit together (1 Sam. 18:1). They even made a covenant before God concerning their friendship. They both solemnly promised to be the closest of friends for the rest of their lives. Their enduring friendship was built upon faith and trust in the Lord. Even though they came from different backgrounds and lifestyles, the main thing they had in common was their love and commitment to God.

David and Jonathan went through many tough times together. Because David was God's choice to be the next king of Israel, Jonathan's father, Saul, was extremely jealous. In fact, the king wanted David dead. Two different times Jonathan warned David and saved him from Saul's plots. Jonathan even stood up to the king to convince him to let David live (1 Sam. 19:4-6; 20:32-34). However, Saul was determined, and David was forced to live as a fugitive for many years.

When David and Jonathan were older, they made another

covenant with each other. They both were married and had children by that time and this covenant involved their two households. They promised before the Lord to always remain true friends and to help each other's families throughout their future (1 Sam. 20:8-17, 23). They vowed, "...behold, the Lord be between thee and me forever."

A few years after that, Jonathan was killed in a battle against the Philistines. David was deeply distressed at the loss of his friend, but he held up his part in the covenant he made. Eventually, David became the king of Israel and he took care of Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth. He made sure that his best friend's son inherited all of the property he was entitled to and that he regularly ate at the royal table for the rest of his life. Even death could not break the covenant that the two friends had made before God.

Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." During Biblical times iron weapons were sharpened with either an iron file or a stone made from iron ore. A dull, useless sword could be made smooth, sharp, and ready for battle by using the same material: iron. That's what David

and Jonathan did for each other. Their constant encouragement kept each other sharp and ready to serve the Lord.

Do you have friends who sharpen you? If they are not the kind of friends that are encouraging you in your walk for the Lord, then they could make you dull and useless in His service. What about you? Are you the kind of friend that sharpens others? It works both ways. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us that all believers should comfort and edify (build up) one another.

John 15:13 says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Very few of us will ever be called upon to die for a friend, but we do have Someone who willingly laid down His life for us. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Faithful Friend. The closest and longest lasting friendships are those where each person knows and trusts this Friend. When you are choosing who to spend time with, it is always best to choose someone that loves the Lord and is committed to Him. You will find that you have a special bond that the rest of the world cannot share in or fully understand. If you both have Him in common you can have a friendship that will last for eternity.

SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST

by Gregg Bing

Paul's letter to the Colossians was written to correct false teaching which was prevalent in his day and which continues to lead people away from the truth even today. The Colossians were being exposed to a combination of ideas from gnosticism, legalism, and asceticism. These false teachers denied basic truths about Jesus Christ which are critical to our salvation. For instance, they denied the superiority of Jesus Christ, refusing to acknowledge His deity and relegating Him to the position of a created being. Paul addresses this issue in the opening chapter of Colossians.

Image of the Invisible God

Jesus Christ is declared to be "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15a). The word "image" is translated from the Greek word "eikon" from which we get our English word "icon." It is used of an image, a figure, or a likeness. Jesus Christ, however, is not just "like" God or "similar" to God, He is an exact representation or manifestation of God. John refers to Him as the eternal "Word" (Greek "logos") who, in the beginning,

existed "with God" and who existed "God" (John 1:1-2). This Word then became flesh and dwelt among us, allowing us to behold the glory of God (John 1:14). Jesus Christ, in His incarnation, "declared God" to men enabling them to see the invisible God (John 1:18). This is what Jesus meant when He said to His disciples, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The writer of the book of Hebrews described Jesus as "the express image of His (God's) person" (Heb. 1:3), an exact reproduction of the person, substance, essence, and being of God.

Firstborn Over All Creation

Jesus Christ is described as "the firstborn over all creation" (Col. 1:15b). Cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses use this statement to try and prove the inferiority of Jesus Christ to God the Father. They claim this statement implies that Christ was the first creation of God. A careful analysis of this passage, in its context, shows that these assumptions are absolutely false.

The word "firstborn" is not the same as the idea of "first created." What does "firstborn" mean? The underlying Greek

word is “prototokos” which literally means “first born,” and is found eight times in the New Testament. It is used three times for a firstborn son in a family: two times of Jesus as the firstborn of Mary and once of the firstborn sons killed in Egypt at the first Passover. The other five times “firstborn” is used, they speak of Christ, but with a different emphasis.

In Hebrew culture, the firstborn son was in a position of prominence over the children who were born after him and was given special privileges as his birthright. These privileges included a double portion of the inheritance, spiritual headship over the family, and the father’s blessing which officially recognized the firstborn’s position and authority over the rest of the children. However, firstborn privileges were not always given to the physically firstborn son. Jacob was chosen of God over his older brother, Esau, to have both the birthright and the blessing of his father, Isaac. God would later say of Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel), “Israel is My son, My firstborn” (Exo. 4:22). Similarly, Ephraim was blessed above his brother, Manasseh. Though Manasseh was Joseph’s oldest son, God referred to Eph-

raim as “My firstborn” (Jer. 31:9). In the 89th Psalm, God speaks of anointing “My servant David” (verse 20) and making him “My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth” (verse 27). Though David was the youngest of Jesse’s sons, God made David the firstborn giving him the authority and privileges of this position. While this passage does refer to David, the son of Jesse, it also seems to point beyond him to the greater Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as God’s Firstborn, will one day reign as King over all the earth (Psalm 89:27-29).

When Christ is called “the firstborn over all creation” it does not have anything to do with Him being born of or created by God the Father. It simply means that He holds the position of authority and blessing over all created things. Why does He hold this prominence over all creation?

In Him All Things Created

Jesus Christ is the One by (in) whom “all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Col. 1:16-

17a). The word “all” means exactly that. Because He is God, everything that was created was created by (in) Christ. Who else but God has the wisdom and power to do so? John said of Him, “All things were made through Him, and without (apart from) Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3). These verses are devastating to the blasphemous idea that Christ Himself was a created being. That is why the Jehovah’s Witnesses, in their perversion of the Scriptures, add an extra word to Colossians 1:16 so that it reads: “For by him all [other] things were created.” The word “other” is not found in any Greek text. Christ is “the Firstborn over all creation” because all things were created in Him (sphere), through Him (agency) and for Him (purpose).

He is Before All Things

Jesus Christ is “before all things” (Col. 1:17b). Being the eternal Word, Christ is before all things as to time. In the beginning, when the universe came into being, Christ already existed (John 1:1-2). Being Almighty God, the Creator of all things, and thus the “Firstborn,” Christ is before all things as to position and authority.

In Him All Things Consist

Not only did Jesus Christ create all things, bringing them into existence out of nothing, He is also the One by (in) whom “all things consist (hold together)” (Col. 1:17c). Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ, “being the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of His person” upholds “all things by the word of His power.”

Head of the Body, the Church

Just as Jesus Christ is over all the created universe, He is over the new creation as well, being “the Head of the Body, the Church (Col. 1:18a). After His death on Calvary, God raised Christ from the dead, exalted Him to His own right hand, “far above” all authority and rule and every name that is named, and gave Him to be “the Head over all things to the Church” (Eph. 1:21-23).

He is the Beginning

Jesus Christ is Head over the Church, because “He is the beginning” (Col. 1:18b). The word “beginning” is from the Greek word “arche” which speaks of that which holds the highest position. For example,

Michael is called the archangel. “Beginning” carries the ideas of both originator and ruler. Christ says of Himself: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 1:8). He is the beginning of life, not just physical life, but spiritual life as well, for “in Him was life” (John 1:4).

Firstborn From the Dead

Jesus Christ is not only the “firstborn over all creation,” “He is the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18c). Jesus was not the first man to be raised from the dead, but He is the first to be raised unto eternal life, never to die again. Christ’s resurrection ensures resurrection and eternal life to all who will trust in Him as Savior. Paul assures us of this truth from the negative standpoint in 1 Corinthians 15:17-18: “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished;” Then from a positive standpoint in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For

as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.” Christ is, therefore, both “the Author and Finisher of our faith,” having endured the cross for our sins and being raised from the dead (Heb. 12:2). He is our risen and glorious Savior and Head.

That He May Be Preeminent

Jesus Christ, simply because of who He is, is to “have the preeminence (first place)” in all things (Col. 1:18d), for He truly is superior to all things. He is the eternal God; He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things; He is the Firstborn from the dead; He is the Alpha and Omega; He is the Head over all things to the Church, His Body. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” and, because of this fact, those who trust in Christ as Savior are “complete in Him” (Col. 2:9-10). How important it is to acknowledge the superiority of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to give Him the preeminence in our hearts and lives.

Next Issue:

“Sufficiency of Christ”