

Walking with the Characters of Christmas

Jesus: The Savior

Part 4

Intro: Everyone has a back story. What do I mean? The current person we see in front of us is a result of a lifetime of experiences, circumstances, pain, joys and events that have shaped them into who we see. We may know nothing or very little about people's back story. BUT, if we truly want to know people at a deeper level, understanding their history is essential.

Understanding their journey how they became who they are is something I love.

- I have a back story as well. I wasn't always like this. I had no intention of being a pastor. I was just a farm kid from Molalla. I had no intentions of starting a church.
- In some ways, I feel like God tricked me into ministry (another story for another time).
- I served at another church for 12 years before Foothills and was voted out.
- I was a professional window cleaner for over a year before starting Foothills.

My backstory influences who I am today. Your backstory influences you as well.

Today we are going to try to see the Christmas story through Jesus eyes. In order to do this, we must see it through a cosmic backstory. We need to see Bethlehem in the proper context.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to get Jesus' perspective on the Christmas story? How can we see the Christmas story through Jesus' eyes? We see baby Jesus in a manger with shepherds, animals, Mary and Joseph and wise men. BUT...is there more? We've learned from various characters of this story but I never hear anyone talking about Jesus' perspective. He is the main character of this story. Some of you may be thinking, "How is it possible to have Jesus' perspective? He's a baby." Yes, but He is also the Creator of the universe. Jesus existed before He showed up in Bethlehem. In order to understand Christmas, we have to understand the back story. We need to see Jesus in the light of a bigger narrative. The story didn't begin in Bethlehem or in Nazareth. It started long before.

1. We have to understand the problem

- It all began in the Garden of Eden. The story begins here. Sin entered the world. Relationship with God was altered forever. A spiritual enemy was identified who would influence humanity from this point forward.
- The beginning of the story starts pretty rough with sin destroying our relationship with God, Satan now becomes a constant enemy and death is now part of the entire world's reality.
- As God handed out punishment for sin and rebellion it felt like all was lost, but from the beginning God gives hope of deliverance someday. Someone would eventually come and set us free.
- Explain -

Gen. 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (NIV)

- This is the first Messianic prophecy in the bible. This is the first reference of Jesus coming. There is a plan. There is hope. Someone will come from a woman who will crush Satan’s head.
- The plan didn’t start in Bethlehem. It didn’t begin with the angel Gabriel telling Mary she would become pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. It began thousands of years earlier.
- There has been a cosmic battle for humanity going on since creation. Sin, Satan and death impacts every part of our existence as human beings. The severe brokenness of this world is not an accident. It’s not bad luck.
- Humanity is not evolving into better people. Even a casual glance at world history shows that violence, hatred and death defines it. The bible is the only place that tells us why this is. It’s the only place that gives us a context to understand the chaos we see in this life.
- The global issues we are facing is simply a manifestation of this conflict since the beginning. Remember Satan’s conversation with Jesus after He was in the wilderness for 40 days? Remember how Satan showed Jesus the Kingdoms of the world? “All this has been given to me and I can give it to whoever I want.” - Explain
- To not understand the problem is to never understand Christmas. The manger scene is simply part of a bigger story. Bethlehem was the solution showing up!

2. We have to understand the plan

Before the time was right for Jesus to show up, God still wanted people to know Him. God has always desired relationship with those He created. So what did God do?

- God created a nation to represent Him to the world.
 - We know this nation as Israel. This is what the Old Testament is about. This is why when you read the OT it is talking about Israel all the time. They were God’s representatives to the ancient world. It all began with a man named Abraham.

Gen. 12:2-3 “I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” (NLT)

- God put them strategically at the crossroads of the ancient world in order to have the greatest influence. Where they are located geographically was by design to influence. The world would come to know God as Israel fulfilled their role in God’s plan.
- God’s plan plays out through Israel. This is why Jesus was born to Jewish parents, born in the nation of Israel. Jesus is a fulfillment how all the families on earth are blessed through Abraham’s descendants.

As God created the nation of Israel, He gave them something to practice that we see as very strange.

- God gave them a system of sacrifice
 - The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. God delivered them through a series of supernatural events. On the night before their deliverance from Egypt, God gave them something very specific to do.
 - It was the very first sacrifice. It is called the Passover – (Explain) The final judgment upon Egypt was the death of every first born throughout the land. The blood of a lamb on the doorpost would cause judgment to pass over their homes.
 - Sacrificing animals became part of their worship of God. Why did they have to sacrifice animals? Seriously, that seems creepy. God had to remind humanity that the wages of sin is always death. The consequences of sin will always result in death. Something has to pay the penalty for sin so there is no judgment.
 - The death of animals did not remove sin, but it was a foreshadowing of the final sacrifice that would.

Heb. 10:1, 3-4 “The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship... But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. ⁴ For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (NLT)

- This is why Jesus was called the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. This is why Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law. He became the last sacrifice. He was the final Passover lamb. Now judgment can pass over all of us!

3. We have to understand the timing

Why did Jesus show up in world history when He did? History matters. We may not know all the reasons why. God’s wisdom is far beyond ours. But we can observe a few things from world history.

Gal. 4:4-5 “But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.” (NLT)

- Why was 2000 years ago the “right time”?
 - At no other time in world history was there a universal language. The Greeks accomplished this. Alexander the Great – explain
 - At no other time in world history was there a complex maintained road system throughout the known world. The Romans accomplished this. – explain
- Jesus showed up on the world stage at the precise moment to have the greatest global influence. There was nothing random about Jesus showing up when He did. The gospel could spread rapidly unlike any other time in history.

- God used world events to advance His plan. As world events even in our day seem out of control, we are reminded by the Christmas story who is really in charge of history.
- World leaders are not in charge. The fate of humanity is not in the hands of the United Nations or the World Health Organization or some power crazed dictator. God simply uses world events to advance His agenda. God's timing is still perfect!
- Christmas reminds us that God uses world events for His Kingdom plan.

4. We have to understand the cost

- The cost was motivated out of love

John 3:16-17 "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him." (NLT)

- Christmas is a global search and rescue mission motivated out of a profound love God has for His creation. God loves you! When you see that baby in a manger please see God's love for you.
- The entire plan that took thousands of years in the making is because God loves you. He did not send Jesus to judge the world. Jesus came to save the world. Jesus came to save you.
- Love embraces sacrifice for the sake of others. Every parent understands this. The love we have for our children would motivate us to pay any price to save their lives...even if it was an exchange of our lives for theirs.
- This is what God's love for you caused Him to do. Jesus gave His life to ransom yours because of how much He loves you. This is Jesus' perspective.

- The cost was infinite

Phil. 2:6-8 "Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross." (NLT)

- There is no possible way for us to understand the humility Jesus embraced to be born as a human being. The Creator of the Universe with ultimate power and authority became a baby in a manger.
- The One who spoke the cosmos into existence by the power of His word is now a helpless baby born to peasants in Israel. He chose to give up His divine privileges – which are beyond our comprehension – and infinitely humble Himself for us.
- The distance He traveled to humble Himself as a servant on our behalf is infinite. No matter what you think you've done to embrace humility, it pales in comparison to what Jesus did for us and how far down He stepped.
- If we want to understand humility we can look at the manger.

- The cost required a cross

Col. 2:13-14 "Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross." (NLT)

- This was always the plan. This was always going to take place. The beauty of the Christmas was always going to lead to the horror of the cross. The final payment for sin had to be made by the only One who could make it.
- Only the Creator could save His creation. Only through His sacrifice could He defeat sin, Satan and death itself.
- This is why when Jesus was hanging on the cross the final thing He said before He died was, "It is finished!" The payment has been made. The mission has been accomplished. All humanities charges have been paid in full.
- The problem that began in the Garden of Eden has finally been solved. This is why Jesus is called the Savior. That little baby in that manger came to save us. He came to save you.

To understand how Jesus views the Christmas story, we have to see it through the Cosmic problem – We have to see it through understanding God's plan throughout history – We need to see it through the lens of God's perfect timing – AND we can never lose sight of what it cost Jesus to truly save us. This is how Jesus would see the Christmas story.

BUT, there is one more perspective Jesus has. What is it? Have you let Him save you? Is Jesus still waiting for you to embrace Him as your Savior? Now that you know the back story, now maybe you understand why a relationship with Jesus is so important.

Prayer: