

“The Reason Jesus Came”

Over the course of the last few years, as I’ve prepared for numerous Christmas sermons during the past Christmas seasons, I’ve increasingly become uncomfortable with how Christians share the Christmas story. I believe that sometimes our knowledge of Christmas is more informed by the culture and sentimentalism than it is actually by the biblical accounts.

So I think of the song “The Little Drummer Boy,” and even recently as that song played on the radio, I commented to one of my children that there was no drummer boy. Then I went on to explain that I don’t even know the point of the song. Jesus is born, but the boy is making it all about his drumming capabilities. But then there’s a song like *Away in a Manger*, talking of animals there. And then it seems to deny Jesus’ humanity by saying he didn’t cry. But if a baby doesn’t cry after birth, there’s a problem, isn’t there?

Not only this, but then we have cultural influence. Nowadays, the big message of Christmas is simply, “Be kind. Give to others.” And there’s a certain feel we should be obtaining in Christmas – a nice warm feeling, like drinking a cup of hot cocoa. Now, I’d love to have that nice warm feeling for Christmas time. I also think it’s great to be kind and give to others. But is that the point of Christmas? We all nod our heads “no,” but in practice, I think that’s what we want. While we recognize the difficulties that took place with Mary, Joseph and Jesus; we tend to gloss over the pains of Christmas and we jump quickly to the “all is bright, all is calm” parts of the Christmas story.

If all is calm, how does that relate to us who live in a sinful, dying, broken world? If we sentimentalize the story of Christmas, we then cannot apply it to our lives. Christmas is just some nice story that we look at and wish would be a part of our lives. But that’s not the Christmas story. The Christmas story has amazing joys and amazing trials. Listen, Jesus is born to a teenage girl who is engaged to be married. A census is taken during her final portion of her pregnancy. She has to give birth to Jesus in the area where animals stay, in a different town with her new husband. Add to this, from a legal perspective, this baby isn’t Joseph’s unless he adopts the child. And, he must adopt this child so that Jesus can be from the lineage of David. And then we have Herod who wants this baby dead. So, he sends soldiers to murder male children. Thankfully Mary and Joseph flee with Jesus, but there is weeping and wailing. How many children died? Listen, Jesus’ birth speaks to a broken world.

Sometimes I think we talk about Jesus like someone talks about the wrapping of the present: “Ooh, look at that bow. Look at those ribbons. Look at the size of the present.” But what’s in the present?! Why is Jesus the greatest present of all? Why does it matter to know Jesus is the reason of the season? Because Jesus’ incarnation is the hope needed to save the broken world! In a world of brokenness, we also discover in the Christmas story the rescue the world needs. We also see how God is drawing all nations to himself through calling magi. We see how Jesus’ incarnation also grants hope to the needy and hope to those in darkness.

So this morning, I hope that I don’t over-sentimentalize the story of Christmas. Instead, I want to talk on an aspect of Jesus’ incarnation that relates to my sermon a couple weeks ago. It deals with him being the Serpent-Crusher. It’s probably not a topic many think about, but it’s one so needed. I want to open up the “present of Jesus” so-to-speak, and see more of why Jesus came to this earth. And this morning, I want to give one answer to that question: To bring a sword of destruction. How does that sound? Would Hallmark make a Christmas movie called “Sword of Destruction?”

You may already be wondering how I came to this conclusion. Let's first read Jesus' own words, and then we're going to move to another portion of Scripture. First, Jesus' words as recorded in Matthew 10:34 are, "³⁴**Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.**"¹ Jesus goes on to talk about how people are to love him above all. As a result of that love, family members will turn from his disciples. But Jesus continues to say that we need to take up our crosses and follow him – losing our lives, but finding real life.

There's a lot to expound in this text, but I simply want to share that verse as an introduction to the next one. We hear Jesus saying that *he came* for the purpose to bring a sword. The Prince of Peace came to sever certain things. And, by the way, that ought to make sense to us. In order to have peace, we have to destroy what takes away from peace. I cannot have peace with what is unpeaceable, right? Ok, so I think we at least get the concept. But what does this look like practically, and what does this have to do with the Christmas story?

Turn in your Bibles to 1 John 3, and I want to read verses 4-9: ⁴ Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.²

In verse 8, John says "**The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.**" The Prince of Peace came to destroy something. He will not make peace with the devil. He came to destroy the devil. This should be a part of our Christmas celebration! Talk about anticipation. Jesus came in the flesh as a little baby to destroy Satan and all of the evil that he brought with him! But before I expound on that, let's take some steps back and get the biblical context for John's words.

Again, let's go back to Adam and Eve's sin. Who tempted Adam and Eve? The serpent. And what's the punishment to the serpent? That there's going to be an offspring of the woman who will be bruised by the serpent, but this offspring will crush the serpent heads. He will destroy the serpent.

Can you imagine what life was like for Adam and Eve after they sinned? I mean, we know certain things that happened, right? They now experienced shame. They blame-shifted responsibility. They were no longer innocent. They then started to experience the decay of their bodies while also seeing death in an animal to cover them. To add to this, they were kicked out of the garden. There was pain, sweat and tears. The contrast between Garden of Eden life versus what happened after this had to be shocking to their system. But most of all in this, their relationship with the Lord was different. This earth, the sanctuary of the Creator King was broken. All aspects of creation was marred. And God would not walk in the garden with Adam and Eve like he did before their sin.

The sin of our first parents affected everything, and then it continued to Adam and Eve's children and grandchildren. Even their own son killed another son. Truly, Adam and Eve need the serpent-crusher to

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 10:34.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Jn 3:4–9.

come. And, actually, that's the yearning of the entire Old Testament Scriptures. Where is the serpent-crusher? When is he going to come?

Then we get to 1 John, and John explicitly tells us that Jesus is that serpent crusher. But the reality of Jesus being the serpent-crusher is not some aloof truth that's really cool to know, but has no practical significance. The reality of Jesus crushing the serpent affects *every single person who trusts in Jesus*. What John reveals here is that **Jesus' incarnation speaks to the devil-destroying power of our Savior. Jesus was victorious. Jesus is victorious. As a result, Christ-followers are victorious in Him.**

John starts off verse 4 with the problem: lawlessness. One man, named John Stott, writes this: "It is not just that sin manifests itself in disregard for God's law, but that sin is in its very nature lawlessness. Lawlessness is the essence, not the result, of sin." What happened when Adam and Eve sinned? They revealed that their hearts were lawless. They did not embrace the Law-Giver who gave them a law to not eat. So, they rejected the Law-Giver and his laws.

John says here, the essence of sin is lawlessness. We look around at the first Christmas and we also see lawlessness. Herod and death, for example. But lawlessness exists today as well, right? We humans have a problem. The lawlessness of Adam and Eve is in the heart of every human being at conception! Will God destroy the lawlessness?

Well, John writes in verse 5, "You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin." The first two words of verse 5 are very encouraging to me: "You know. . . ." It's like John is saying, "This is obvious! This is clear. Jesus didn't come for no reason. He clearly came for a specific reason that we should all say, 'Yes, this is the reason!'"

But John also says that he appeared. In other words, Jesus came in the flesh so that people could see him. He appeared on the scene of this broken, fallen, sin-cursed world for a reason. What's the reason? He appeared in order to take away sins. Jesus decided to come in human flesh to wage war and take away sins.

John says that Jesus appeared to "take away" sins. This reminds us of John the Baptist's words that said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"³ But how did Jesus do this? Hebrews 9:26 says, "**But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.**"- **Hebrews 9:26b** ⁴ Similar wording as John. Jesus appeared to take away sins. But how? By the sacrifice of *himself!* And only He could be the sufficient sacrifice because, as John says, "in him there is no sin." As the essential nature of sin is lawlessness, the essential nature of Jesus is sinlessness – and His perfection wars against and wins over lawlessness! Think of the beauty of this truth. Jesus satisfied the law's demands and then suffered the demands of the law. He did this not to prove Himself to us, but He did this to save people! He didn't satisfy the law's demands merely for Himself. He satisfied the demands for us! And He suffered the demands that we deserved so that sin could be cut out at the root and taken away! To quote from Peter in 1 Peter 2:24, "²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."⁵

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Jn 1:29.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Heb 9:26.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Pe 2:24.

Jesus' in the flesh gets to the root and destroys sin. This mirrors what was said of Jesus before his birth. He will be called Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins! So, Lawlessness covered the face of the earth. Jesus appeared, lived the perfect life, took away the sins. Now, anyone who is in Christ is viewed as guiltless because of the sacrificial Lamb. Therefore, John gives one concluding thought: "6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him."⁶ It makes sense that if Jesus came to confront lawlessness and in Jesus is no sin, then no one who abides in Jesus can keep on sinning.

Now, what does this mean to "keep on sinning." It doesn't mean that someone who loves Jesus is perfect. John says in chapter 1 that if we claim we have no sin, we're liars. The tense usage here indicates a person who pursues lawlessness without repentance. So, John says that Jesus conquered sin at the root, and those who have entrusted themselves to Jesus will have a changed life. Their lawlessness has been dealt with in Christ and they will begin to follow Jesus.

But at this point, John goes even further in talking about Jesus' victory. Look at verses 7-9 with me again: ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.⁷

Those who live righteously are righteous because of Jesus. Those who practice sinning are of the devil. There should be no deception here. Someone can't say they love God and live like the devil. The devil has been sinning from the beginning and humanity has followed the devil. And then John says "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."

Now, let me ask you something. If Jesus planned to do something, is he going to accomplish his plan? Yes. If Jesus says, "I came to destroy the works of the devil," will he do that? Yes! And if the devil's works are in the lives of people and Jesus promises to destroy the evil works in the lives of his followers, will he fulfill his promises? Yes! Faithful is he who called you who will also do it!

Here John emphasizes Jesus' plan to destroy lawlessness, which destroys sin. But he's also going to destroy the devil's works, too! Jesus coming in the flesh crushes the serpent. Here's the offspring of the woman doing what was prophesied! Now look at verse 9. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

Grasp this, Ventura. **Jesus became the offspring of the woman so that all who trust in Jesus would be the offspring of God.** And this is the most phenomenal promise that we will grow in obedience. John says that anyone born of God *cannot* continue practicing sin *because* they've been born of God. They are children of God. Jesus, being born in the flesh, purchased our *new birth* into the family of God.

As children of God, our tastes for godliness grow and increase. Our disdain for sin increases. And get this, as Jesus crushed the serpent, so now all who follow Jesus are serpent-crushers, too, because we are part of the family of God. Do you see how in this passage John says that because Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, then *we* are to not tolerate the works of the devil in our lives? Jesus

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Jn 3:6.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Jn 3:7–9.

continues his sanctifying work in our lives. And so, it makes sense what Paul says in Romans that the God of peace will soon crush Satan underneath *your* feet!

So, Ventura, as we think about Christmas – Jesus coming in the flesh to this world – think about why it's so glorious! In the flesh Jesus was born so that we can be born again. And, being born again, we are set free from lawlessness and we experience God's grace working in us to crush the serpent.

The turmoil of the fall has been attacked and is being attacked. And someday, Jesus is coming again. John talks about this at the beginning of this chapter in verses 1-3. We will see Jesus as he is, and in that moment, we will be like him in perfection. In that day, there will be no more works of the devil. And those who hope in him purify themselves today even as he is pure. In light of what Jesus has done and will do, in light of the fact that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, let's rejoice that we have real peace with God – eternal peace and hope in a restored relationship which guarantees eternal glory in Heaven someday – and as a result, we have the freedom to destroy the works of the devil today.

So, Ventura, REJOICE, Emmanuel has come. Joy to the World, the Lord has come. He came to destroy the works of the devil. Praise his name. If you are a Christian, you can rejoice! If you haven't entrusted yourself to Christ, I urge you now to turn from your sins and turn to God for forgiveness and grace! Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and you can go to him and be assured that he will rescue you, give you his peace and strengthen you to follow him forever.

As we conclude our time together today, I want to share with you some verses of an unfamiliar carol. They are the following:

**Holy Jesus ev'ry day
Keep us in the narrow way
And when earthly things are past
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide
Where no clouds Thy glory hide**

**In the heav'nly country bright
Need they no created light
Thou its light its joy its crown
Thou its sun which goes not down
There for ever may we sing
Alleluias to our King**