

“The Presentation of the Savior”

a Christmas sermon given on
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I want to share a verse to open. 2 Timothy 1:10, “But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Amen.

Our Father God, we come before You. We thank You for this night. What a night it is, Lord, where we can celebrate Your birth. God, I pray that You would go before us, Lord, that You would be our teacher and our guide, reveal the truth of Your word to our hearts and our spirits. I pray, Lord, that I would not get in Your way, that I would hide behind Christ, that we would all decrease, that You would increase, Lord, that You would be high and lifted up, that You would draw all men unto Thyself. God, we thank You for the work that You are doing, that You began and that You have committed Yourself to the finish, Lord. We thank You for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And for this day, Lord God, that we can still celebrate His birth as a nation, that we can lift His name on high. God, we pray that You would have Your way tonight. I pray that You would help us to see clearly, to understand what Your spirit's revealing to us, Lord, and God, that we would just enter into all that You have. We love You, Lord. We need You. We worship You. We thank You for the time of worship. We commit our time to You now, Lord, and we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

“Come and see what the Lord has done. Come and see what the Lord has done.” I love that part of that song. Come and see what the Lord has done. Have you ever considered the God side? And I don't mean it's all God, but the Father God, when it comes to the birth of Christ. So many times we look at Mary, and we can see that young virgin, and many believe she was really young, maybe 14, 15 years old. She was a virgin. She's conceived by the Holy Spirit. I mean... all of a sudden this baby's growing. She knows it's real. She knows, and then she comes to the time when she's got to give birth.

But what about Joseph? We looked at Joseph as we studied the Gospel of Matthew and how Joseph wouldn't send her away publicly, but that he desired to send her away quietly and divorce her that way because if she was found to be with child before they actually went through the ceremony of the wedding, she would be called the harlot, and she could be stoned to death. So, he decided to put her away.

We've looked at it through the shepherds and how they were watching the flock, the very flock that would become the sacrificial lambs for the temple. I mean, just amazing.

About the angels. God rends the heavens, the angels come down, and all of a sudden a light shines around them. And then a multitude of angels come, and the angels begin to start proclaiming the Lord. I mean, it's endless.

We looked at the three kings, and you'll notice the kings aren't there. We put them in the back, because they had a long way to travel. They didn't get there for a year and a half later, so that's the furthest away we could put them in the chapel. And when you look at it, and the gifts they gave; one of the gifts was myrrh, and it's used for the burial of the Savior. You can't help but see all these things.

But as I was meditating, and I've said before, there are so many different approaches that you can take through the word of God on the birth of Jesus Christ. So I started, thinking about God the Father. What about God the Father? What was it like for Him? Now, They had to discuss this at one point in time, to have a plan for mankind. To say that They were going to do this creation job, you know. They were going to create this world, and were going to create mankind, and that They desired for mankind to desire Them. They had this plan that was all laid out. And yet They knew, in the plan, man wasn't going to choose Them. I would have scratched it. Nobody would be here right now, including me. I would have said, you know what, this ain't working! But that wasn't God's heart. God's heart was to do whatever it took to draw us to Him. And I know many of your testimonies, and I know my testimony. God did whatever He had to do to draw me to Himself. And the Lord will do that. But where did it all begin?

I've got a great Christmas verse for you. It's in Hebrews chapter 10. In Hebrews chapter 10, verse 5, it says, "Therefore, when He comes into the world," meaning Jesus, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me." When did Jesus say that? It's not recorded that He said that. Did He say it while He was in the womb? Did He say it before He was conceived? It's taken from Psalm 40:6-8. And it's actually not in Psalm 40, verses 6 to 8. It doesn't say that He has a body to

prepare for Him. That's from the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. And yet, at some point in time, they were discussing it, and Jesus says to the Father, You prepared a body for Me. Psalm 139 says that God has fashioned and formed each one of us while we were yet in the womb. God did that. That's why God doesn't make mistakes... Ever. So when we look at that, we realize that the whole purpose of Christmas and the incarnation was for a body. It was for a body.

They would put Him in a manger. In the manger... I used to think it was this wooden trough that they put hay in, but I realized that it was actually made of stone, and it was elevated off the ground because the sacrificial Lamb had to be a perfect Lamb. They didn't want it to get harmed by any of the other animals, so they would protect it, and they would wrap it up in the cloth and they would keep it preserved at a high level so that it would be protected from the other animals. Do you see the picture? We're talking Jesus. Some conversation with the Father at some point in time took place when He says, "a body You prepared for Me."

Let me go on. Verse 6 says, "in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, You have taken no pleasure. Therefore I said, behold, I have come in the scroll of the book. It is written of Me to do Your will, O God." The whole point of the body of Jesus Christ, the second person in the Trinity, God Himself, is to take a body to do the will of the Father. And we know all through His life that's exactly what He did. He said, I do nothing of My own initiative. Everything I do is that of the Father. Wherever the Father leads Me, that's where I'm going. Whatever He desires that I say, that's what I'm saying. Whatever miracles He wants me to perform, those are the ones that I perform. Whoever died and He wants Me to raise them from the dead, those are the ones that I'm raising from the dead. Some commentaries say nobody ever died in the presence of Jesus, because He would raise them. I'm sure He raised more than three.

A body... That's the reason for Christmas. It's great to celebrate baby Jesus. I don't call Him baby Jesus. No more than anybody calls me baby Donat. That'd be weird. "A body You prepared for Me." What would please God could only come through Jesus, the incarnate Son of God. So all the sacrifices that they performed in the past were nothing more than pictures to reveal the Son. And if they didn't see that, they missed it all. But they were no substitute. They could not be. In the incarnation, the body of Jesus was perfectly prepared and suited to live as fully man and fully God. He was 100% man. That means He felt emotions, He felt pain, He felt everything you and I feel. But He was fully God.

We know that He laid aside His glory. He laid aside that power. He laid aside even comparing himself to God. His incarnation itself is viewed as an act of submission to God's will and as such an anticipation of His supreme submission to the will even unto death. It's amazing what we'll do to live. The human body can endure unbelievable pain and suffering through the will to live. But Jesus came for one purpose, to die. He came as that sacrificial Lamb. "To do Your will, O God", Jesus' ultimate fulfillment in His obedience to the cross.

The desire began at the birth and then went all the way through to the garden. I mean, when you think of the garden in Luke 22, when He prayed, "Lord, take this cup. Take this cup, Lord"... Now listen, Jesus wasn't saying, Lord, make it so I don't have to go to the cross. He said, "for this hour I have come." The cup was more than that. The cup was the wrath of God. The cup was the separation of God's judgment on the sin man, Jesus Christ. He who knew no sin became sin so that we might become the very righteousness of God.

So the sacrifice of Jesus was determined before the foundation of the world. It was God's plan from the beginning. Listen to 1 Peter 1:20. It says, "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you." Of you. God provided the sacrifice, not man. Man could not. And that's what Jesus was saying in Hebrews chapter 10. "When He comes into the world," it makes it clear that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament covenant sacrifices. The idea is that the Lord was willing, a willing servant. Now in the Old Testament, in the Psalms, it talks about the ear being bored out. What would happen is a slave would complete their time where they were a slave for that family and they were set free. But they didn't want to be set free. They wanted to stay and serve that family. And they said, "no, we're way better off here than going out on our own." And so they used to do that. They would literally put a hole in their ear from the doorpost. They would just make a big hole in there and when people saw that, they would know that that slave belonged to someone for life... for life! Now some believe it didn't mean that, but it simply meant that God was opening the ears of the Savior to receive all that He can from the Lord so that He lives according to the will of God.

It's amazing how He came to this world in total humility. Again, not in a king's palace. We just sang, He's a king. He's a king that came to the world. He's the King of kings in Revelation 17. And yet there was no room in the inn. There's a message all in that, in and of itself. That's where most people are at today. There's no room. There's no room. I've boxed Him out, I've cluttered my life with so much, I haven't got time for God. They

think their religion will save them. They think that they could be saved some other way. "Well, everybody goes to heaven in the end." I wish that were true.

This is the presentation of the Savior, the presentation of Jesus' humanity. He comes to a virgin and a young man and He's lying there in this manger. The shepherds would be the first to see Him. That's so cool, because the shepherds... they didn't shower a lot. And being out with the little woolies all the time, they weren't invited to the weddings. They weren't invited to the birthday parties. They just did what they did. They were the lowly. That's me. That's you. Those are the ones. You know, in the Gospel of Luke, the text that really culminates the whole book, is 19:10. That the Son of Man, because He's portrayed as the Son of Man, came to seek and to save that which is lost. And then all you see is seekers after that. Then they realize, you know what happens when you seek the Lord? Those who seek Him with all their heart, you know what happens, right? They'll find Him. They'll find Him! Jeremiah 29:13. Those who seek Him with all their heart shall find Him. And once you find Him, you know what you realize? He's been seeking you the whole time. He's been seeking you. That's the beauty of it. That's the before that God has done for this narrative.

It's interesting because in Luke's Gospel, in chapter 2, one verse. Chapter 2, verse 7; one verse on the birth of Jesus Christ. Now, there's a lot. There's preparation. There's what happens after. But this is it, Verse 7. It says, "And she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped Him in cloths, laid Him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn." That's it. The shepherds got more air time than that!

Luke now tells us about three important meetings in the temple in Jerusalem. The child Jesus met Moses, Simeon, and Anna. In chapter 2, verse 21, this is the presentation. It literally says "Jesus presented at the temple." It says when the eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus. That's when they had to name the child, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And when the days for His purification, according to the Law of Moses were complete, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. Mary and Joseph are presenting God the Son to God the Father in the temple. The presentation of the Savior. He's being presented to the Father. I thought that was amazing! As it is written in the Law of the Lord, every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. And to offer a sacrifice according to what was said by the Law of God, of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. The awesome thing is, going back to the circumcision, He didn't come to destroy the Law. He didn't come to abolish the Law. He came to fulfill the Law. So because He lives in us, it's as though we've kept the whole Law.

Now, we can't keep the Law. We know it's impossible. We can't get out of our own way, if we're real honest, but that's just my thought. But listen, His circumcision was the first time that He suffered for us. Donald Gray Bonhoff said this: "It symbolizes the work the Savior did on the cross in dealing with our sin nature, which is our flesh." It's a removal of flesh. So Mary and Joseph gave Him the name Jesus, which means "Jehovah is salvation."

So here He is presented when the child was 40 days old. He was brought to the temple for purification rights described in Leviticus 12. They had to pay five shekels to redeem the Redeemer, who one day would redeem us with His precious blood. They followed the law "to a T", but they were too poor to bring a lamb. And so it says they brought two pigeons, two turtle doves. You know why they didn't bring a lamb? Because they had the Lamb. They couldn't bring a substitute because Jesus was the substitute. And so the Lord made sure they couldn't afford it. They couldn't buy the lamb because they already had it.

He meets two other people in the temple. One is Simeon. Simeon was a man who was led by the Spirit, taught by the Word of God and obedient to the will of God. And therefore, he was privileged to see the salvation of God. In verse 30, he sings a salvation hymn, "For my eyes have seen Thy salvation. Now he was ready to die. He said, My eyes have seen Your salvation," verse 31, which you have prepared in the presence of all the people, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel. It's so cool because it says, and there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Aser. And she was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage. And then as a widow to the age of 84, she never left the temple serving night and day in fasting and prayer. At that very moment... God's providence, God's timing; at the very moment she came up, she began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Israel. Her name means grace. She was a godly widow of age, who devoted herself to serving God by worship, through fasting and prayer. She remained in the temple waiting for the appearance of God, the Messiah... for the presentation of the Savior. And there she is, and she gets to see it. The last verse I want to share is actually in Daniel. Remember, we're looking at it through the Father. And the Father gives the Son the body. He has the body. The Father has Him presented in the temple to the Father. And then the Father has Him shown to Simeon. He has Him shown to Anna. When the Lord lives His whole life, He comes to the end, and He's presented to the Father once again.

It's in the book of Daniel, chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. Literally, the heading is, "the Son of Man presented." It says, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, one like a Son of Man was coming. And He came up to the Ancient of Days." That's the Son coming to the Father, and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all the people, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. This event takes place before the kingdom of Antichrist is destroyed. And so it probably parallels Revelation chapter 4 and chapter 5, when Christ is gone up into heaven and He sees the Father after the ascension. The Ancient of Days, He is God who has existed from eternity past and has planned all things, and is working out His plan. First, he learned that history is under the ultimate control of God. All of it. Two aspects of the kingdom are seen here. The kingdom of God, which is the spiritual reign of Christ over all who belong to Him, and the glorious kingdom on earth prepared for God's people. There will be a millennial kingdom, a thousand years, and Jesus will reign for that thousand years, and then Satan at the end will be bound and thrown into the pit, never to return. And Messiah will set up an everlasting kingdom. And he will always, always be the King of kings. He will always be the King of kings.

That body that was prepared was temporal. Your body that God prepared, it's temporal. It's all going to pass away. The only question to be answered is what do we say about Jesus, the Savior? That's what Christmas is. Listen, He's the gift, and He's the Giver. And the only question to be answered is, what do we think of Him? Who is He to us? Do we believe in Him? Do we trust Him? Do we worship Him? Is He truly Christ, the Savior? He had everything. He became poor. He gave it all up to come to this earth. He gave it all up. He still has a body today, which to me, the incarnation itself is just so mind-blowing, that God took on the form of a man. But He still has it. Listen to this verse, and I'll close with this. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says, "Then comes the end when He hands over the kingdom to God, to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power." So Jesus came to take back what the devil had taken. He gets it all back. He gets the kingdom. He gets earth. He gets everything. He redeems it. And then He gives it to the Father again.

Verse 25, "for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says all things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is accepted who put all things in subjection to Him." In other words, He had it all. God had Him come to take it back, to redeem it. When all things are subjected to Him, the Son Himself will also be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all. So that He may be all in all!

The presentation of the Savior. You see it in the past, where He was presented before the Father. A body, He needed a body. He needed to be the Lamb. He needed to have something to sacrifice once and for all. You see it in the present. Not our present day, but in that day. How when Jesus was born and... it could have been so much greater, but it wasn't. It was simple. It was hard. You ladies gave birth. Us men, praise the Lord, we never have to go through any of that! We're okay with that, trust me. But can you imagine 14, 15 years old in a strange place? She's in a cave-like structure, and she's giving birth for the first time. It doesn't say they had midwives there. Doesn't say Joseph was a doctor, he was a carpenter. But God. But God! And they would present the Savior to the world.

Mary, I think, (Ed came up with this), Ed said he believes Mary is a picture of the church. Because we carry Christ and we present Him. And that's what the church does. We carry Christ, and we present Him. We present Him to a world, to a dying world, to a broken world, to a world that needs a Savior.

And then we see Jesus, when it's all said and done, at the end of the ages, He's presented again before the Father, the Ancient of Days, so that He could give back to the Father everything that He gave Him. And He will live like us, with us, for all eternity, for those who have trusted Him. That's Christmas, amen?

Let's pray. Our Father God, we do thank You for Your word, Lord. Thank You, Lord God, for presenting Christ to each one of us, Lord. Thank You for presenting Him tonight. For each one that came out, Lord. God, we thank You that You will do whatever it takes to draw us to Yourself, Lord. God, that You will work all things out for the good so that we would become conformed into Your image. God, we thank You, Lord, that You have gone before us, that You live in us, that You're working things out, Lord. God, we thank You, Lord, that You will be faithful to those who know You, and even to those who don't, Lord, to reveal Yourself more and more. We just love You, we thank You for this celebration that we have tonight, and we give You all the glory. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.