

Why did Jesus Come?

In the Bible reading that follows, Paul, the writer of two thirds of the New Testament is discussing in his letter - written to the early Jewish Christians in the province of Galatia (modern day central Turkey) - whether or not believers in God are saved (that is will spend eternity in Heaven with God, Jesus, the angels and all other saved believers), as a result of keeping the Old Testament laws, or by faith in Jesus Christ.

This is an important message for us today because sections of the Church are getting increasingly ensconced in liberal theology and starting to depart from Biblical truth.

Before I start reading, Paul refers to the term 'justification' and I would like to clarify for you what that means and rather than use my own words I will read out to you how the Amplified Bible translators define this term.

'Being justified is a legal or judicial declaration of righteousness. Justification has two parts: (1) Being declared free of blame, acquitted of sin—not guilty. Believers (in Jesus Christ) are justified because He personally assumed the guilt for our sin on the cross; (2) God declares the person righteous, that is, placed in a position of right-standing with Him. A person may not be made righteous by his personal behaviour, no matter how good, or by the declaration of any other human being.'

You will recall I have told you many times in the past, we cannot work our way into Heaven by doing good things. I urge you, do not be deceived, the truth from God's Word in both the teachings of Jesus and throughout the New Testament is very clear. Those who do good things but do not believe in Jesus Christ, and also those who profess to believe but do not obey His Word, are not promised a place in Heaven. Two groups of people will be abandoned in Hell. Those who never accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour (and repented of their sin), and those who profess to be believers but refused to obey God's Word.

Bible Reading from Galatians 2 verses 15 to 20

I will now read Galatians 2 verses 15-20 (AMP)

“We are Jews by birth and not sinners from among the Gentiles; yet we know that a man is not justified [and placed in right standing with God] by works of the Law, but [only] through faith in [God’s beloved Son,] Christ Jesus. And even we [as Jews] have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law. By observing the Law no one will ever be justified [declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty].

But if, while we seek to be justified in Christ [by faith], we ourselves are found to be sinners, does that make Christ an advocate or promoter of our sin? Certainly not! For if I [or anyone else should] rebuild [through word or by practice] what I once tore down [the belief that observing the Law is essential for salvation], I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the Law I died to the Law and its demands on me [because salvation is provided through the death and resurrection of Christ], so that I might [from now on] live to God. I have been crucified with Christ [that is, in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body I live by faith [by adhering to, relying on, and completely trusting] in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not ignore or nullify the [gracious gift of the] grace of God [His amazing, unmerited favour], for if righteousness comes through [observing] the Law, then Christ died needlessly. [His suffering and death would have had no purpose whatsoever.]”

SERMON

Last month - the month of December- is one of my favourite times of year because I find the season of Advent exciting....

The coming of the Son of God – God incarnate – a pure spotless babe born to an incredibly poor, but Godly, obedient family.

And I love the Bible passages we read over the Christmas period and the carols we sing at this time of year. And then, after Christmas Day, we here about the

arrival of the 3 Wise Men who brought expensive gifts to lay before the Lord of the Universe.

Last January, I spoke on Epiphany Sunday about the Wise men, and how they were the first recorded gentiles (that is non-Jews, like you and me) to actually meet with Jesus, and the significance and importance of that for you and I.

But today, on Epiphany Sunday 2018, I want to address the question '**Why** did God send His only Son to this cold dark Earth'. What was the real purpose of that first Christmas morning just over 2,000 years ago?

Over the decades different vicars and wise Godly men have shared with me and other members of their congregation, a number of reasons why they believe God decided he needed to leave the comfort of His warm, cosy Throne Room in Heaven where angels worship Him night and day, and come down to earth in the form of a fleshly human being, knowing many would reject him, curse and swear at Him, treat Him like a common criminal and then kill Him using one of the most barbaric and painful ways known to man at that time.

God is God – He knows everything, and He knew the suffering He, as the Messiah, would need to endure, but still He came. WHY?

What was so important to Him that He would be prepared, seemingly to suffer needlessly, here on the planet He so beautifully created for the enjoyment of all humankind???

And over the years many teachers and preachers of God's Word have given us their opinion that it was because prior to His coming, man had become so bad, so sinful, some very evil, that God needed to come and show us how to behave in order to act in the way He intended us to do, when He created mankind in the beginning.

And it's true, when we study the New Testament - and the Old come to that – and we study the lifestyle of the sinless spotless Lamb of God we see a God-man who fed the hungry, cured the sick, healed those possessed by evil spirits, calmed the storm, forgave, blessed, reconciled people to each other, and even raised the dead back to life.

A miracle working, gracious, selfless Deity who only ever did what was best for the people He created as He lived His life here on planet earth. And it's true, He **is** the perfect example of how the world would be such an amazing place to live, if **only... if only** we all behaved like him, ALL THE TIME.

Many have tried and I suspect you would agree with me, that most of us can behave like Jesus some of the time, but not all of the time.

And God must have known that few would be able, even if they were willing, to follow Jesus' example and live like Him day by day for the benefit of all.

Other reasons given for God becoming man, include the establishment of His Church. And it's true that in order for a Church that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ to be established, Jesus would have to have visited us and impressed us powerfully, in order for those who believed in Him to establish The Church, despite their certain knowledge that they would be persecuted for doing so.

And there is another reason given, and for me, I believe this reason is far more important than every other reason given for Christmas Day and the proven fact that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity Jesus Christ came to earth and dwelt among us, for 33 years on planet earth. And the reason was absent from the 'politically correct' Christmas card I read to you, despite the truth of its content

And the clue is in a phrase I intentionally used a moment ago when I referred to Jesus as a 'pure spotless lamb'.

John the Baptist referred to Him as ***'The Lamb of God'***.

In the Book of Revelation, the author – John, the Disciple closest to Jesus - told us the angels in Heaven sing to Jesus:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was sacrificed to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing."

And the disciple Peter who denied Christ three times, even though Jesus told him that He would use him to build His church, said this in his first New Testament letter:

"For you know that you were not redeemed from your useless [spiritually unproductive] way of life inherited [by tradition] from your forefathers with perishable things like silver and gold, but [you were actually purchased] with precious blood, like that of a [sacrificial] lamb unblemished and spotless, the priceless blood of Christ."

You will recall in Old Testament times, after God rescued His Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, they all had to daub the blood of a lamb over their door frames, because God was sending His Angel of Death to kill all the first-born

children of the Egyptians. The lamb's blood on God's peoples' door frames protected their family from death. And ever since that Passover event, (until the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70), a pure undefiled spotless lamb had to be sacrificed regularly, in order that each Israelite person could be forgiven by God of their sin.

It occurred to me as I penned this talk, that God surely decided - after giving the Jews nearly 40 years to believe that Jesus was the Messiah and because many of them would not believe – surely He decided at that point, in AD 70 to allow the very place to be destroyed where He had previously required the blood of animals to be shed to atone for the people's sins.

The Lamb of God's blood was shed!

No more blood sacrifices were required! Amazing.....

I digress.....

My talk today concerns why Jesus came to earth on a cold frosty winter morning. And the clue is also in the meaning of Jesus' Name. His Name means 'Salvation'.

We read in the first chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew and verse 21 that when an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, the angel told him that Mary, his betrothed wife, would ***'give birth to a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus (meaning The LORD is salvation), for He will save His people from their sins.'***

In his devotional of November 29th, early 20th century Minister and writer Oswald Chambers, says that some Christians of his time in the early 20th century, were content to look upon Jesus Christ as a Pattern for their religion. But, says Chambers, and I quote 'In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is **Saviour** long before He is Pattern. Today, He is being despatched as the Figurehead of a Religion, a mere Example. He is that, but He is infinitely more. He is Salvation itself, **HE** is the Gospel of God.'

Yes, He came to show us how to live, BUT primarily He came to SAVE US!

Learning to live like Christ, is what we are supposed to do, **once we have given our lives to Christ to save us.**

In Luke chapter 4 and verse 43 Jesus says to his audience: ***"I must preach [the good news of] the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because I was sent for this purpose."***

What purpose? To preach the Good News. And what is the Good News? That Jesus came to save us from our sins and offer us eternal life instead of what our life-style without Him deserves – death.

Jesus says **that** was His purpose, to tell of this Good News from God to as many people as He could. In fact, before Jesus came, all gentiles – people like you and me – were destined only for Hellfire.

Concerning what Jesus has saved us from, Oswald Chambers says in this book:

‘Our salvation is from Hell and Perdition!’ – (Ozzie original book p 235)

Initially, God’s offer of salvation was for His chosen people (Israel, the Jews), but because the majority of them rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God extended His salvation to the gentiles too. We read about this throughout the New Testament. A good example is in the book of Romans, Chapter 11 and verse 11 where it says:

‘By (the Jews) transgression [their rejection of the Messiah], salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous [when they realize what they have forfeited].’

And in Acts 14 and verse 46 we read:

‘Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and confidently, saying, “It was necessary that God’s message [of salvation through faith in Christ] be spoken to you [Jews] first. Since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, now we turn to the Gentiles.’

And so now, – praise God – we are living under the New Covenant of God’s Grace. God is a merciful God but also a God of justice. The Bible tells us ‘the wages of sin is death’ and the same writer who wrote that verse also told us ‘all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’.

Without Christ, despite the good things we sometimes do, by God’s perfect standard - by the standard of the O.T. Law – eternal death is the outcome. It’s a harsh truth seldom taught in Churches today. Not one of us deserves or has a right to spend eternity with God in Heaven, in a paradise-like, unfathomably beautiful place, where there will ***‘no longer be death, sorrow, anguish, crying or pain’*** (Revelation 21 verse 4).

For that to be made possible we need to be justified, redeemed, made right with God. You and I need a Saviour – someone who died in our place so we can go to Heaven when we die. And the only sinless spotless human who could satisfy this requirement of God’s righteous law was? - His only Son, Jesus Christ!

And the kind of eternal life Jesus offers us, starts the day we accept Him as Saviour. We are saved from the pain of sin, in this life. Yes, others can still harm us, but Jesus takes away our need to worry, to be anxious. He alone offers us God’s ‘Shalom’ peace. A peace that passes human understanding.

His Spirit in us enables us to be full of joy, even when everything around us seems to be going pair-shaped. His gift of faith and eternal life enables us to live a life of peace because we know and have hope of our eternal destiny, and surely that far outweighs any short-term pain and suffering we may have to endure along the way.

Let’s now turn to the passage of Scripture I have chosen for us to look at today.

I’m nearly finished but I would like to summarise each of the points from this Bible reading, in simple easy to understand English.

This is what I see. Eight key points from today’s Bible reading:

1. We are not saved by the OT law (when the Bible talks about the law, it is referring to the OT Law of Moses). The Ten Commandments stand, and indeed form the bedrock of the laws of the Western World. The other laws relating to Jews – what to wear, how to wash, what they may and may not eat, circumcision of men, etc, etc – these do not apply to believers under the New Covenant.
2. We are justified by faith in Christ.
3. Jesus is not an advocate of sin.
4. If I try to earn salvation by obeying the law, I am a transgressor.
5. Salvation is provided ONLY through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!
6. I need to crucify my flesh (that is what I believe to be my right to do what I want, and to live how I want) and I need to ask and allow Jesus to live in me so that my ways become His ways.
7. I need to live totally by faith in Christ. He loves me and died for me and I can trust fully in Him and in Him alone.

8. Salvation is a gracious gift from God – totally unmerited – I simply receive it – if I could earn my way into Heaven, then Christ died needlessly.

In a sentence this passage says, 'I cannot work my way into Heaven, I can only be saved by having faith in Jesus Christ and by giving up my right to myself and allowing Jesus to live in me, the life that is impossible to live without Him.'

The hymn writer John Mason Neale understood exactly why God the Father sent His only Son to earth. In the hymn we have just sung, he pencilled these words around 150 years ago:

'Now ye hear of endless bliss:

***Joy! Joy! Jesus Christ was born for this. He hath opened the Heavenly door
and man is blessed for evermore.***

Now ye need not fear the grave:

Peace! Peace! Jesus Christ was born to save;

Calls you one and calls you all, to gain His everlasting hall.'

So when we think about Christmas, it should cause us to think about Easter and know that Christ has paid the price on The Cross.... The price owed by each of us to God because of our sin – a price too high for anybody to pay in cash or works of the flesh.

To close then, trust in Jesus, our only Saviour, ask His Holy Spirit to come into your life – if you struggle with sin, He will not condemn you but will convict you it, offer you the gift of repentance, and then you will find it not only possible to obey Him but will find that as you do so, a new peace and joy invades every aspect of your life.

Will you still struggle at times with life and health issues as Michele and I do? – yes probably, although God is in the business of healing. But the rewards of your belief and faith in the One who came down to Earth as our Saviour will be eternal and unimaginably wonderful.

Believe it – it's true – God's Word tells us so! Praise His Holy Name for ever more, for His indescribable gift of eternal life.

AMEN