

# Christmas Foretold

*Christmas Series*

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**Bible Text:** Romans 1:2  
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Romans 1. We want to read the first seven verses here.

1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have before us three Lord's Days until the end of this year and I want to give those three Lord's Days to three messages concerning Christmas or the purpose of Christmas, the meaning of Christmas, the intent of Christmas. In fact, I just want to state right off the bat that Christmas is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I didn't say that Christmas is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I said on purpose that properly understood Christmas is Christ himself because apart from him Christmas is nonsensical. Now what I mean by the phrase nonsensical is probably not a word that you use regularly in your speech, what I mean is that apart from Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Christmas has no meaning at all. In fact, this is our present situation in America. We've gotten to the place where if you say to someone, "Merry Christmas," it's a strange phrase in people's ears. I've actually said it to people and usually it's older people, and they've actually thanked me for saying "Merry Christmas," not "Happy Holidays." Catch the difference?

And not only is Christmas having no meaning among the majority, perhaps the supermajority of Americans, the season because it's been emptied of its meaning is now all about me. You may not have heard this statistic but I even hate to use the words Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, but this past Black Friday and so-called Cyber Monday, over 75% of the things that were purchased were purchased by individuals for themselves and billions of dollars, millions of dollars were spent on those two days. Now think about that. The season is now about, who? Myself.

Sometimes we say, "Well, we're gonna give gifts because God gave gifts." I just want to say that our \$10, \$20, \$50, \$200, \$1,000 gift does not compare to the giving of the Son of God by God the Father. There's no comparison. It would be as if you say if I'm really gonna be reflective of this, what I would do is liquidate all of my assets and I would give it to people. I daresay, we fall far short of even reflecting that itself.

And I want us to be warned and to be on guard about this season. This season is not about family getting together. It's not about having time off from work. This season from a Christian perspective, a Bible perspective, is not even about giving gifts or hearing entertaining Christian music. It's certainly not about Santa or reindeer or snowmen. Did you notice, or perhaps you will notice, that the music that we sing in December is Christmas music. Many of you look forward to that time of the year and have you noticed that we don't sing Jingle Bells in our service? We don't sing about Frost the Snowman or Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer? Have you noticed that? We sing about Christ, the Lord, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Christmas is not about rituals or family traditions or trees or, dare I say, food. It's not about a special Christmas Mass if you're Roman Catholic or even so-called church services. Some of these things might be involved but they should not, they are not to be preeminent in our minds or in our thinking, and I think if we pause and think about it just for a few moments, all of these things that are neutral have a tendency to take preeminence in our minds. We're concerned about getting the gifts, right, to give. We're concerned about times to get the family together. We're concerned about getting the time off and those things begin to creep into our mentality that we begin to lose the meaning just like the world loses the meaning.

Christmas is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christmas is the Gospel or it is meaningless. And so I want to propose to us that Christmas is the fulfillment of the things that have been foretold. It is the beginning of our understanding concerning the good news of an individual, of a person. It is about that person's future resurrection from the dead and so I want to look at these three Lord's Days about this. You'll notice in verse 2, "which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures," Christmas foretold. And you'll notice in verse 3 that it is "concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh," that is the person of Christmas. And then thirdly, verse 4, "who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," God's declaration about this person in his death, burial and resurrection. So I want to look at those through these three Lord's Days.

Paul, who wrote this epistle, presents himself in verse 1 as the slave of Jesus Christ. He presents himself as an apostle, one that has been sent forth by God, one that has been set apart completely for the Gospel, and you'll see that in verse 1 of this book. The Bible calls and Paul calls this and God calls this good news. This is the good news that should be making the front page of every media avenue in our nation. In fact, God is gonna hold our nation accountable for that.

It's a good news, you'll note in verse 1, it is the good news of God. It originated with God. It came from God. We could simply say this, that God is its author. He originated it. He is its sender. He's the one that is sending it forth through all the nations, all the ethnicities. And God is its source. Man could not have dreamt or imagined such good news and such events, and because God is its author and because God is its sender and because God is its source, man is under divine obligation never to redefine it. Amen? He is not to redefine it. He is not to compromise its demands. In fact, Galatians states that if we, including Paul or me, preach any other Gospel than that which has been presented, because there is no other Gospel. It is not that there is flavors of Gospel or varieties of Gospel or shades of Gospel or, you know, here's the milk of the Gospel but they got everything else wrong. No, there's only one Gospel and it is the Gospel of God. Even if an angel came down and appeared to you, if he gives any other Gospel other than this Gospel, he is to be damned. That's what the Scripture has to say and, folks, we need to realize that. When you let that really settle in your mind, you realize how important it is to get the Gospel right and to believe the right things about the Gospel, and that means that we are to get into this word.

It is this good news that radically changed a man whose name was once called Saul of Tarsus. It is the knowledge of the light of the glory of God that he saw on the road to Damascus. It is that light that changed who he was. It transferred him from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. It transferred him from the bonds of being a slave to sin, broken, to being a slave of the Gospel, to being a slave of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was something that was birthed inside of him by the very appearance and words of the risen Lord and Savior himself, and it is that transformation when the light of the knowledge of the Son of God occurs in our heart and life, we are born again by the grace of God.

And you'll note here, verse 2 which is where we're heading, that God promised this Gospel prior to the birth of Paul. He promised this Gospel certainly before our birth. Amen? And he promised it before Paul was born or Jeremiah was born or Isaiah was born or any of the prophets were born, although he revealed it through these same prophets. God promised the Gospel, look at verse 2, "He promised beforehand through His prophets," by his prophets, that is, they are the ones who proclaimed, "Thus saith the Lord," about the Lord. It is those promises through his prophets that they wrote down, look at verse 2 again, "in the holy Scriptures."

You say, "Well, where am I going to find these promises that the prophets proclaimed? Do I need to go to Jerusalem? Do I need to go to a mountain? Do I need to have a mystical experience where forms and allusions and images show itself to me and proclaim this?" No. It has been written down in a book, or better yet, a collection of books that we call the Bible. Specifically in verse 2, it is collected in what we call in our Bibles the Old Testament. God having breathed forth, in other words, he spoke, he breathed forth the words of promise in and through the prophets as they were moved by the Holy Spirit so that what they spoke and wrote down are the very words of God. Hallelujah! They wrote down God's own voice in the Scripture and, brother, when you are reading your Bible and you say, "Boy, if I could just hear God," well, here's how you

hear God. Not by audible voices. Not by mystical experiences. Certainly not by feelings that we may have. We hear God in the pages of our Bibles and that's an approach that we have to have.

We come to our Bible reading for 2020. Why is it so important? Because it is the words, it is the voice of God speaking to our spirit by our minds. And brethren, if I could be so dogmatic, we have every promise that God himself desired preserved in the Old Testament. We're not missing anything that God desired for us to have. There are other books, right? There are other books that claim to have the words of God in it, okay, but we have all the words in our Old Testament, completed in our New Testament, that God desires for us to have until at least he arrives in the person of his dear Son.

We have those words preserved and, folks, this is what makes this so critical and I've made this connection before but I want to make it again. Christianity, the new covenant, the New Testament, Christianity is not a religion that started at the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Everybody hearing this? Christianity was not born in a manger, beginning at that point. Christianity is the completion of what I'm going to call true Judaism, that is, properly understood Old Testament promises. So you say, "Well, when and where all did Christianity begin?" It began at the first promise given to Adam the day he fell in transgression. Amen? In a sense, Christianity, not in its completion but nor in its fullness, but Christianity has always been in the Gospel of God all throughout our Bibles.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ was declared by the prophets. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ was anticipated by the prophets. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ was believed on by all of God's true people since the days of Adam and Eve. Christianity or Christmas does not say anything more or say anything less than what Moses and all the prophets written down in the Old Testament foretold.

That's amazing and, folks, that means that the Old Testament, when we think about the Old Testament, do you realize that the Gospel is in the Old Testament? I used to think when I was younger in the Lord and not as biblically versed perhaps as I am today, not as hopefully mature in Christ and yet so far to go, I used to think how in the world did they preach Christ from the Old Testament with all those laws and tabernacle and sacrifices? How could they do that? Now I'm at the place where how could they miss it?

The Old Testament prophets – please listen carefully – the Old Testament prophets foresaw the dispensation of the church. They didn't call it a church but they foresaw that dispensation. They foresaw a future people of God that was not just Jew but Jew and Gentile. They foresaw the New Testament, the additional revelation that would come by the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus Christ. They foresaw him as King, amen? They foresaw him as prophet. They foresaw him as priest. They knew, the Old Testament prophets knew that he would be God's own Son. "For unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son would be given. The government would rest on His shoulders. His name," what's his name? What's the name of this babe? What's the name of this child? "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor," are you listening, "the Mighty God." They knew this. They knew that the Son of God somehow, they didn't understand all the mechanics, they didn't

understand a few of those details, but they knew that this child would be God in human flesh hundreds of years before the Incarnation of the Son of God. He would be called the Eternal Father. Did not our Lord himself say, "He that has seen Me has seen," who? "The Father." They knew this in the Old Testament. They knew that he would be the Prince of Peace. They knew that this would not be accomplished through the means of sinful men, through the arms of the flesh. They knew that the zeal of the Lord of Hosts would do this and they believed it with all their heart and soul.

The prophets wrote down, they knew that Christ would suffer. They knew the glories would follow. They knew Christ would be born as a child. They knew that he would be raised by his Father. They knew that this child would speak forth the words of God. Moses himself warned that nation back in Deuteronomy that God would send a prophet like unto him. In other words, as Moses led the children of Israel in the exodus out of Egypt, there would be a prophet likened unto him who would lead an exodus to glory, and Moses said, hear what Moses said, "That prophet, that man, you'd better listen in everything He says." He told the children of Israel that some 1,400 years before the birth of Christ.

They knew that he would suffer beyond imagination. Isaiah wrote 700 years before Christ's birth that his appearance would be marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men. The Old Testament prophets knew that he would be despised and forsaken of men. They knew that he would be a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. They knew that God would crush him unto death and yet they knew that he would live 700 years before Christ came. They knew this.

They knew that Jesus would be born of a virgin. They knew that he would be a Jew. They knew that he would be born in Bethlehem. That's pretty specific, isn't it? They knew that he would be betrayed and sold for the price of a slave. They knew that he would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. They knew that his hands and his feet would be pierced. They knew that there would be a forerunner. They didn't know his name, John the Baptist, but they knew that there would be a forerunner before him. And they knew that this man, this Messiah, would initiate a new covenant that would replace the Mosaic covenant. They knew all that.

I mean, folks, it's like, right, it's like they read the New Testament. If you take just the few things that I have given to you this morning and you take those verses and you begin to meditate on those verses, what happens is that by the Old Testament Scriptures, you begin to see him, right? Even before the New Testament was written, you begin to see him. In fact, Peter, don't you love Peter? Peter on the day of Pentecost, he preached the Gospel. Do you agree with that? He preached the Gospel. Did people get saved? They got saved but let me tell you about that message of the Gospel: it was the explanation of four Old Testament passages. He just didn't stand up and say, "Thus saith the Lord. Here's new revelation," although new revelation did come. He went back to what God had promised beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, and he pulled those verses out and began to explain them and to apply them knowing, knowing that the person that he was talking about was and is the fulfillment of that, and he would end that

message by this, "I've explained to you from the prophet Joel. I have taken two passages from the prophet David. I have taken one passage from the Psalm of Assent," we don't know who wrote those, "I've taken those passages and here's my conclusion: therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ." Who? "This Jesus whom you crucified." All from the Old Testament.

Folks, as we think about this and it is worthy to be thought about, as we seek to saturate our hearts and our minds, you know, I can't imagine, I just can't imagine what happened in the soul of Saul of Tarsus when he said, you think about all the verses that man memorized, you think about all the passages, books that he memorized, you know, he didn't have a smartphone to carry his Bible around in his pocket, you think about all the interpretation through the ages that the Jews had written about those passages, you think about all that he knew that the Messiah was supposed to be and when he said, "Who are you, Lord?" he did recognize by the appearance, the glory, the Shekinah glory that shone around him, "Who are you, Lord?" when that person said, "I am Jesus," not only did his castle of self-righteousness collapse and fall into the dust pulverized by those few words, but the passages in the Old Testament begin to take on new light in the light of the Son of God. In fact, folks, you know this, right, you know that after the resurrection, Luke records that he breathed on them the Holy Spirit so that they would understand the Scriptures.

What happened those 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and the day of Pentecost? What's happening? Jesus is taking Old Testament passages, he's explaining them, he's giving them the understanding, he's giving them those passages. "How do you know that, pastor?" I know that because when you examine the sermons of what those men preached, they were sermons explaining Old Testament passages. Now he also gave them new revelation, right? But they're preaching those passages.

Brethren, as I conclude, how in the world could we ever wonder how to preach the Gospel from the Old Testament? It's only our lack of understanding and knowledge of our Old Testament. But I want to stand before you today both declaring the work of the Holy Spirit in my own life, that the more I see what the prophets wrote down, the more grounded I become in my faith in the Son of God. Do you know what? An unstable faith is not what you want as you close your eyes and take your last breath. An unstable faith is not what you want to give to people. You don't want to give to people, you know, the impression as you're talking to them, maybe through the tone of your voice or by the expression on your face, you don't want to give them the impression, "You know what? I'm not really sure they believe this." Because, folks, most people out there think that Christianity started in 4 BC. They think it's something new and distinct from Judaism, which the form of Judaism today, that answer is, yes, it is distinct, but it is not distinct from true Judaism understanding of the Old Testament. It is the completion.

Folks, how could we go about the Christmas season, I'm speaking secularly now, how in the world could we go through the Christmas season as if Christ is unknown? I would guess that the 75% of people who are treating the Christmas season as a season of greed and covetousness, I would gather that perhaps some of them are professing Christians.

How could we just pepper Christmas day with just a few words or just a few thoughts about Christ while we go on and talk about everything else? How could we take an event like Christmas and make it secular?

Now I realize that most of us here aren't doing this in at least in our hearts but, folks, I wonder what other people if they were asked, "What does," and you can fill in your name, "What does Frank Jones think about Christmas?" And they remember everything you've ever said about it, what would they say? Would they say, "You know, they're always talking about Christ." I know this, I know that if you gather your family and extended family and you begin to treat Christmas day as if it's about Christ, you will get rebuttal, you will get push-back because to them it's not about, who? It's not about Christ. It's meaningless to them. But folks, though he is unknown to unbelievers, he is well-known to believers.

Christmas was foretold. The hope of eternal life was foretold. God who cannot lie – did everybody hear that because we're always doubting whether or not he's really gonna do what he says, right? God who cannot lie promised before eternity, Titus wrote, and do you think they connected the New Testament back into the prophets? Because, folks, if Christmas, if Christ, if the Gospel is not tied back into the Old Testament prophets, we're believing a lie and the Jews who are unbelievers are right. But I stand here before you today and say it is not a lie, that the string of this extends from Genesis through Revelation.

Christmas has been foretold. It is foretold. The Incarnation of the Son of God has occurred, amen? Now the Incarnation is not the Gospel. The Incarnation began the fulfillment of the Gospel. The Gospel is the – can we say it – the death, burial and resurrection and the appearance of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation in and of itself is not the good news. The good news is that the Incarnation occurs just like it was promised and that child would grow up to give his life for the sins of all mankind. That's the good news. And I love what 1 Corinthians 15 says, "according to the Scriptures." Amen? According to the Scriptures.

Folks, I just want to throw out to you not because I'm really down on this, but I want to throw out to you that has not, has not the culture redefined the Gospel? And has not the culture crept into our hearts? Not in big ways, but in enough ways that we're in danger here, right? Folks, it's like redefining church, you redefine church, you redefine the Gospel. You redefine Easter, you redefine, what? The Gospel. You redefine Christmas, you're in the process of redefining the Gospel. These cultural events are important. The culture has redefined the Gospel of God into what Jude writes, into lasciviousness, into greed, into covetousness. Now please don't take me where I'm not going. I'm not saying it's sinful to give gifts. I'm not saying it's sinful to buy something when it's on sale for yourself, okay? You know, people go out and they carry to some logical absurdity something that might be said and missing the point. The point is that we are in danger but, brethren, certainly not in a New Testament church. Not among God's people.

Brethren, this season is a wondrous opportunity to declare what God promised beforehand, the Gospel, the Gospel of God. One of my favorite images in the Bible is an old man who was in the temple. Mary and Joseph had brought the baby, eight days old. Can you imagine an eight day old baby? They bring the baby into the temple and this aged feeble man takes the baby from Mary and he lifts that baby up and says, "My eyes have seen the salvation of God." That is an amazing image. How could that man know? Well, the Scripture says the Holy Spirit revealed it to him in the pages of the scrolls of the prophets.

Let's pray.