

CHRISTMAS 2021

Message 4

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INTRO: During our Christmas thoughts this year we have mentioned the years of God's silence. The first time God breaks the silence is when an angel appeared to Zachariah when he served in the temple. Six months later, the same angel, Gabriel, appears to Mary. I do not know how much later, but yet again the angel appears to Joseph to inform him about Mary's condition and that he is not to be afraid to marry her. Nine months later, when Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, a multitude of angels appeared to the shepherds that were keeping watch over the sheep. These were the shepherds who had the special care of the sheep that were used for sacrifices at the Jewish temple.

After the wise men, or magi, had visited Jesus which was some time after He had been born, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and warned him to flee to Egypt. When Herod was dead the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream again, and they returned to Israel. That is six times the Lord visited Israel in a year or two. God is on the move once more.

The Christmas story is probably the most familiar story in the Bible to most of us. That is because at least once a year we are reminded of His birth. It is my view that He was born in the spring, not in the winter, and we do not know the exact date. But His birth has been commemorated at this time of year from not too long after Christ ascended to heaven. What we call the Christmas story has been told all over the world for almost 2,000 years. Through the commemoration of this day, this story has familiarized any searching heart with the only One that can save them from their sins.

We are looking at this story in chronological fashion and we have looked at how the angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias in the temple, when he offered incense there when the lot had fallen to him. The priests were scattered all over Israel. There were 24 courses of priests and you will find those in the OT. Each course served twice a year.

The year when Zacharias served at the altar of incense was the year the angel of the Lord visited Jerusalem. It was the year of the Messiah.

In our Gospels, Matthew is the first in order, and this is where we are now in our chronological coverage of the Christmas story.

Here is what we have covered so far and this is chronological. In Luke 1:1-25 we have the promise to Zechariah. In Luke 1:26-38 we have the promise to Mary. In Luke 1:39-56 we have Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Then in Luke 1:57-80 is the account of the birth of John the Baptist. And now, in Matthew 1-2 we will look at the birth of Jesus Christ. This morning we will look at His genealogy. It was of utmost importance that the Messiah's genealogy could be shown to come, first from Abraham, and second from David. So, Matthew begins with one of the most important pieces of information for the Jew there is with regard to the Messiah, and that was evidence for His lineage. So we will simply go through this genealogy and make a few notes as we go.

#### IV. THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Matthew 1:1-25:

##### A. His Genealogy

We begin with verse 1:

*1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David..*

Tell me, when we are at king David, how far before Christ we are now? We will put up a timeline and you can check it as we go through this genealogy. About 1,000 years. Turn to 1 Chronicles 17. For Jesus to qualify as the Messiah He had to be the son of David. God made a covenant with David through the prophet Nathan and we begin in verse 11:

*11 "And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom.*

*12 "He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.*

*13 "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you.*

14 *"And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever."*

We believe we are in the days just before the tribulation begins. If that is so, then after 7 years the Lord Jesus will come to rule on the throne of David. Before 2022 is done we might be in the millennium! And the promise is that this kingdom will never end. When the 1,000 years of His rule are finished, the kingdom will move into the time of the New Heavens and the New Earth. So it is most crucial that Jesus' lineage can be traced back to David. But it can be traced to another important covenant.

So we go on in our verse. Not only was He the son of David, but our verse further says He was:

*the Son of Abraham:*

How far back are we now? About 2,000 years. Here we are all the way back to the very first Jew. By the way, if you read Luke's genealogy he traces Jesus lineage back to Adam who was the son of God. Well, in Abraham we come to another very important covenant called the Abrahamic Covenant.

Turn to Genesis 12 to look at this covenant. Verse 1:

*1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.*

*2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.*

*3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Here is an amazing prophecy. 1 I will make you a great nation. Here was a man who had no children and God said He would make of him a great nation. Is it not a marvel that the Jews are still a separate people? Is it not humanly unexplainable how they have become their own nation after a 2,000 year break as a nation? Is it not a marvel after such story as the story of

Esther and the story of the Holocaust that there is now a Jewish nation?

Listen to Jeremiah 31:35-36:

*35 Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name):*

*36 "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."*

Well God added this in Genesis 12: *I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.* For years now we have watched a rise in antisemitism. Why is that so if they would be a blessing? Because if the devil can destroy the Jew, you and I will be lost and go to hell. He is pouring every effort into destroying the Jew. And then the Lord said:

*I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Let me give a word to our young people. Gain a soft spot in your heart for the Jew. Oh I know, there are some very bad Jews. Watch US politics and you will see men like Adam Schiff and others. But all in all, God has blessed them, and then let me say this: You and I are Christians because of the Jews. They gave us Jesus Christ, and they gave us the Word of God. Let me share a poem with you I found somewhere years ago. No author is named. It is titled: The Jew

#### THE JEW

Scattered by God's avenging hand,  
Afflicted and forlorn,  
Sad wanderers from their pleasant land,  
Do Judah's children mourn;  
And e'en in Christian countries, few  
Breath thoughts of pity for the Jew.

Yet listen, Christian, do you love

The Bible's sacred page?  
Then let your hearts with kindness move  
To Israel's heritage;  
Who traced those lines of love for you -  
Each sacred writer was a Jew.

And then as years and ages passed,  
And nations rose and fell,  
Though clouds of darkness oft were cast  
O'er captive Israel,  
The oracles of God for you  
Were kept in safety by the Jew.

And when the great Redeemer came  
For guilty man to bleed,  
He did not take an angel's name  
No - born of Abraham's seed  
Jesus, who gave His life for you,  
The gentle Saviour was a Jew.

And though His own recieved Him not,  
And turned in pride away,  
Whence is the Gentiles happier lot?  
Are you more just than they?  
No; God in pity turned to you  
Have you no pity for the Jew?

Go, then, and bend your knee to pray  
For Israel's ancient race;  
Ask the dear Saviour every day  
To call them by His grace;  
Go, for a debt of love is due  
From Christian Gentile to the Jew.

Author unknown

We go now to verse 2:

*2 Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers.*

*3 Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram.*

4 *Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon.*

5 *Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab,*

Woa! Rahab? Go to Joshua chapter 2. Rahab is a great, great, great and I don't know how many greats, grandmother to Jesus. And what is a woman doing in a Jewish genealogy? I understand that women were not generally given in genealogies. In verse 3 we had Tamar. How did Tamar get into this genealogy? Well, Rahab, though she had a sordid past became a great woman of faith. Did you know that Rahab was a woman who listened to the news? We'll read what she paid heed to. We begin in verse 3:

3 *So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country."*

4 *Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from."*

5 *"And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them."*

6 *(But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)*

7 *Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate.*

8 *Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof,*

9 *and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you."*

10 "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

11 "And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

12 "Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token,

13 "and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

14 So the men answered her, "Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you."

15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall.

16 And she said to them, "Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way."

How did Rahab, a defiled woman become a distant grandmother to Jesus Christ? Listen to Hebrews 11:31:

31 By faith the harlot **Rahab** did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

Maybe someone is or will listen to this message and you say, "There is no hope for me." There is hope for everyone who wishes to be saved. Repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus, the Messiah, and you will be saved. This is the clear promise of Scripture! And when you do that, you never know what God will do with you.

Let me read all of verse 5 now as we go on:

*5 Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse,*

Well, Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab. That was about 1,400 BC. Then our verse says, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth. Now we are close to 1000 BC, so you see a number of names are missing. This genealogy is divided up into units of 14 generations, maybe for memorization purposes. What is most interesting is that we would have the names of two women in a row.

Turn to the book of Ruth. It is Christmas and we are not in a rush to get through this story. We begin in verse 1. As we read, tell me what you note that is familiar to the Christmas story:

*1 Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.*

*2 The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.*

*3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.*

*4 Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.*

*5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.*

What did you note that is familiar to the Christmas story? Well, this family was from Bethlehem. Ephratha is an ancient name of Bethlehem or it might refer to the area around Bethlehem. Rachel, the wife of Jacob, died when they neared this place and if you go to Israel, on the way to Bethlehem from Jerusalem you will pass Rachel's tomb.



Ruth's story is a sad story with a happy ending. After her husband and sons died, when she heard that things were better back home, she decided to move back to Bethlehem. And so she told her daughter's-in-law that they should go back to their homes and the Lord would be with them.

Now someone tell me roughly what Ruth said to her mother-in-law? Ruth 1:16 puts it like this:

*16 But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God."*

Well, you know the rest of the story. She met a very godly man and he married her, and Naomi became grandmother to Obed. And Ruth became the great grandmother to David, the king.

I will read verses 5 and 6 together now:

*5 Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse,*

*6 and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.*

For the fourth and last time we have a woman named in this genealogy. There is a lesson to be learned here. It does not matter if you are a man or a woman, nor what sins may have taken place in the past. Repent and put your faith in the Lord, and there is no telling what may yet happen. Never give up and never go back. Trust God no matter how dark things look. With God all things are possible.

And what is noteworthy is that during all these years Israel carried the hope that Messiah was coming. But it would still years before He would come. We have now had 2,000 years since Christ came the first time, and still He is not here. Many dark years had come and gone before the Lord came to earth the first time. We may yet face many dark years, we do not know. But the Lord has left us the blessed hope that He may come very soon.

We go on in verse 7:

*7 Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa.*

Somebody tell me what was significant in the time of Rehoboam? Well, in his time the kingdom split. Do you remember that when he became king he consulted the old men and then he consulted the young men? And the old men advised him wisely and the young men were the liberals of the day and advised him unwisely, and he heeded the advice of the young men and it led to a split in the country. This is where the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah separated.

The northern kingdom had 20 kings and the southern kingdom had 20 kings. The northern kingdom, with Samaria as their capital, did not have one good king. The southern kingdom, in my calculation had 8 good kings of the 20.

Verse 8:

*8 Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah.*

*9 Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah.*

Ahaz was a bad king, but his son Hezekiah was a good king. But Hezekiah begot another bad king. This was king Manasseh.

Verse 10:

*10 Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah.*

Manasseh, what an evil king! He began to reign when he was 12 and no doubt he had bad advisers, likely those who despised his father for removing the high places. Manasseh was later taken captive by the king of Assyria, and then later returned. Can anyone tell me anything good about Manasseh? When he came back to Jerusalem he repented of his sins and tried to reverse his former life.

At the end of verse 10 we have Josiah, one of the few good kings. Josiah was only 8 years old when he became king, and no doubt he had good advisers. The Zondervan

Pictorial Bible Dictionary says: "Josiah's religious leadership ranks him with Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah as an outstanding righteous ruler. Gross idolatry - Baal altars, asherim, star and planetary worship, Moloch deity acknowledged in the sacrifice of children in the Hinnom Valley, astrology, occultism, altar for worshiping the host of heaven in the temple court, and the shedding of innocent blood - all these permeated the land of Judah during the reign of Manasseh..." (451). So Josiah had the task of trying to clean this up. That is a task as daunting as trying to clean up America today.

Now notice that dark times have come and gone. How many must have thought that if Messiah does not come now, it will forever be too late. We too, may have some time yet before Jesus comes. But we are left with the blessed hope that He may come any day.

You see, even at this time they were still 600 years from when Christ did come. That is 100 years longer than from the time when our Mennonites first began to be converted from Catholicism until today.

Verse 11:

*11 Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.*

When we come to Josiah we have the last king before the Babylonian captivity. The northern kingdom had spurned the message of God's prophets, and 136 years before Babylon took the southern kingdom, the northern kingdom went into captivity. But at the captivity we are 586 years before Christ. When the southern kingdom went into captivity the times of the Gentiles began. Israel was never again a nation on their own until 1948 of our time. At the Babylonian captivity, 70 years of captivity began for the southern kingdom. It is during this time that Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon.

Turn to 2 Kings 24. What can we learn from all this so far? God had promised a Messiah, and though it took long, Messiah did come. In 2 Kings 24 we have an account of when Nebuchadnezzar took Judah captive.

Before we read, let me mention that the Jeconiah of Matthew 1 and the Jehoiachin of this passage are the same person. Jehoiachin was the son of Jehoiakim.

Verse 1:

*1 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.*

*2 And the LORD sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon; He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servants the prophets.*

*3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done,*

*4 and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon.*

Let me insert here that there are times when man gets away with sin, but God, in His own good time remembers. Notice in this verse that when man sheds innocent blood, it is a very terrible sin to God. Think of our world and the shedding of innocent blood. We need to pray for the huge decisions being made in the US courts right now on the subject of abortion. If our nations should repent and turn now, yet some day all this innocent blood must be avenged. The Lord will not forgive this.

Verse 5:

*5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?*

*6 So Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.*

*7 And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore, for the king of Babylon had taken all that*

*belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates.*

*8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.*

*9 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.*

*10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.*

*11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it.*

*12 Then Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took him prisoner.*

*13 And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.*

You can imagine what a horrifying time this is for Israel. No begging, no crying out to the Lord is of any avail. It is too late.

Verse 14:

*14 Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land.*

*15 And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.*

*16 All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit*

*for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.*

*17 Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.*

*18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.*

*19 He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.*

*20 For because of the anger of the LORD this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, that He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.*

And what I want to remind us of is that in all this time, with all these horrible things that happened, things far worse than our generation has experienced, the promise of the Messiah has not been forgotten by the Lord. He is coming. May I remind us today, Jesus is coming again? He will come.

Verse 12 of Matthew 1:

*12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel.*

*13 Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor.*

Shealtiel and Zerubbabel are mention in the book of Ezra. Zerubbabel was alive at the end of the 70 year captivity. So we are now just over 400 years from the time of Christ.

Listen to Ezra 5:1-2. The Jews are returning to Jerusalem after the 70 year captivity:

*1 Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.*

*2 So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.*

Note that Ezra mentions Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel is the last name in this genealogy that Matthew gives that we find in the OT. We still have over 400 years to go until Christ was born. All the names after Zerubbabel are only mentioned here. It is without doubt that the tribes kept track of their genealogies and each Jew knew what tribe he was from.

The names we have no history of are Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eleazar, Matthan, and Jacob. Those eight names take us some 400 years until Joseph, the husband of Mary. Keeping genealogies was something that was closely followed by the Jews and if anyone should ever claim to be the Messiah, he would have to have a genealogy traceable to king David. And here we have the father to Joseph, his grandfather, great grandfather etc... until we get back to Zerubbabel, and then back to David, and then back to Abraham.

Verse 16:

*16 And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.*

I am always amazed that it seems that of the Jews scattered all over the land of Israel, Galilee seemed to produce the godliest people. Amazing, I say, because it is so far from Jerusalem and because it is called Galilee of the Gentiles. Here, Mary grew up. Here Joseph grew up. Here a number of the disciples grew up. And here Jesus spent most of His time when He ministered.

Now note it says in verse 16, "of whom was born Jesus." We would not know from the English language if the pronoun "whom" refers to Joseph or to Mary. But in the NT it is a feminine word and refers to Mary. The Scriptures carefully note that Jesus was not born of Joseph, although He received His right to the throne of David from him.

And then last, we note that it says, "who is called the Christ." Who can tell me what this name Christ means? It means "the anointed One." In Hebrew it is Meshiach, and we say Messiah. He is the One anointed By God Almighty to be the deliverer of mankind!

Verse 16 says:

*16 And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.*

The only way anyone can truly learn to know themselves is in Jesus Christ, and this is the way of humility. We must discover what we are truly like inside before we can know ourselves, and Jesus is the light of the world. Only when His light shines on our hearts and exposes the ugliness of our own sinful hearts, can we begin to know ourselves. Here is what Christmas is all about.

And so verse 17 sums this genealogy up like this:

*17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.*

CONCL: Well, we started with Abraham, some 2,000 years before Christ. Think of this, 2,000 years have passed already. And with the promises of a Messiah, no Messiah yet! Then we move from Abraham to David. Three thousand years have passed and no Messiah. How long does one wait and still believe the promises? Then the northern kingdom goes into captivity. At this time 3278 years have passed and no Messiah. And then the southern kingdom goes into captivity, 3,414 years have passed, and still no Messiah. Then the Jews return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

And now 3,484 years have passed and there is no Messiah. Not only is there no Messiah, now they don't hear from God any more. There are fewer and fewer who still believe He will come. And then one day a strange thing happens. A priest in the temple has heard from an angel. And then other strange things happen. A young woman is with child and they are told that an angel has said this will be the Messiah, but who can believe such stories.



I read a comment on these Christians who went to do ministry in Haiti and who had escaped from their captors. And one comment I read said something like this, "Oh yeah sure. Somebody quietly paid a ransom and they were let go and then they made a great story out of it." How many do you think there were in Israel who believed the story of Mary and Joseph?

Well, the facts are Jesus Christ was born. When things seem almost hopeless; He came! I listened to a clip by Jordan Peterson, who grew up around Fairview, here in Alberta. And he said this:

"The Greeks had the maxim, 'Know thyself.' How do we come to know ourselves, and more importantly, our potential? Well, one of the first ways to come to know yourself is to understand that you don't. You can kind of learn to watch yourself like you're watching a stranger. But you have to adopt a position, this is a position of radical humility, I would say, humility in two senses. So one sense would be, humility of recognizing your ignorance. So you have to understand that you don't know who you are, and that's not easy to understand, 'cause you think you know, but then you remember, you can't control yourself very well, you're not disciplined, you're full of flaws, maybe you don't know yourself as well as you think. But it's hard to get low enough to understand how deeply it is the case that you are ignorant about who you are."

I propose that until we truly know Jesus Christ we don't know ourselves. And when we get to know Him, we have just begun to know who we are. He is the light of the world, and when the light of truth begins to shine in our hearts, we have begun to know ourselves. And only in Jesus Christ is there any hope at all for any of us to know ourselves. And as to our potential? It is never even off mark zero, until we bow in humility, in repentance and faith before this One whose birth we commemorate. And then, if we live in true repentance and faith we will get to know ourselves more and more.

When Pilate had judged Jesus John 19:1-5 says:

*1 So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.*

*2 And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe.*

3 Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands.

4 Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him."

Now listen to this verse. Here is the Creator of the universe.

5 Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!"

And I say, "Behold the divine Man!"

And in closing I ask, what lies before us? Here is our hope; before we reach 2022, He may come to lift us out of this dark world! Our Lord comes. Maranatha! Come now Lord Jesus!